



ASEAN SOCIAL WORK JOURNAL

Volume 11, Issue 01, June, 2023

ISSN : 2089-1075

e-ISSN : 2963-2404

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.58671/aswj.v11i1.32>

www.aseansocialwork.com

Transnational Social Work Practice in Thailand

Puchong Senanuch*

Affiliates; Thammasat University Center of Excellence in Social Work and Social Policy,
Faculty of Social Administration, Thailand

Correspondence: puchongs@tu.ac.th

Received: 16 January 2023 Accepted: 18 June 2023 Published: 30 June 2023

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the problems of Thai nationals abroad, analyze transnational social work practice and propose a transnational social work practice approach drawing on documentary research and in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that 1) There is an increasing number of Thai nationals migrating to live in foreign countries and facing economic, social and cultural problems as well as being unable to access social welfare services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic,. 2) Transnational social work practice relies on cooperation between government agencies, domestic and foreign public benefit organizations, including social workers, a process which started in 2012, when the National Social Welfare Promotion Board of Thailand determined that Thai nationals abroad are target groups that deserve social welfare services and established the Center for Promotion and Coordination for Thai Social Development Abroad, and 3) This study proposes that new knowledge and skills for social workers, as well as measures and mechanisms including social welfare services necessary for transnational social work, should be developed as part of an integrated and effective transnational social work practice approach.

Keywords: Transnational Social Work Practice, Thai Nationals Abroad, Public Benefit Organization

Introduction

The transnational migration of Thai people has developed over a long period of time and can be seen in many countries across the world. In 2017, there were 1,267,370 Thai people living in foreign countries, ranging from the United States and Europe, to Asia, Africa, and the South Pacific (Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad). In 2021, there were 1,408,824 Thai people living in every region of the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Based on the aforesaid information, this reflects that Thai people migrate to live in different regions across the world, and the number tends to continuously increase every year. While Thai people legally live abroad for working, studying, and marriage, some people would prefer not to identify themselves due to problems related to immigration laws. A great number of Thai people living abroad need to confront economic, social and cultural problems, as they are unable to access state social welfare, from Thailand as the origin country and from the destination countries due to some restrictions (Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad, 2018). According to the National Social Welfare Promotion Commission Regulation on prescribing a target person or group of persons to receive social welfare, B.E. 2555 (2012) prescribes that "groups of Thai people living abroad" are persons or group of persons who are eligible to receive social welfare from social welfare organizations. It can be said that "being transnational migrants" of Thai persons or groups of Thai persons in foreign countries is considered vulnerability, making those people confront problems and in need of assistance, not different from other target groups living in Thailand.

The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is aware of, and views the necessity to play its role in, improving the quality of life of Thai people living abroad. Therefore, the Center for

Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad has to watch out, monitor, analyze and report the diverse situations of Thai society in foreign countries so as to help and protect victims of human trafficking and risk groups of Thai people living abroad, including promoting Thai people living abroad to be able to access state social welfare and social security, and promoting and developing working networks of Thai people living overseas to help each other, coordinate and cooperate at policy level and operational level in a strong and efficient manner. Consequently, it is essential for the implementation of knowledge development and development of transnational social work practice to achieve the goal of improving the quality of life of Thai people living abroad.

Objectives

1. To study the diverse situations and problems of Thai nationals abroad.
2. To synthesis of the body of knowledge about transnational social work practice
3. To offer a guideline for developing the transnational social work practice.

The scope of the study can be divided into 1) the scope of content – a study is conducted on the situations and problems of transnational Thai people living abroad and analyzing the transnational social work system including a guideline for developing the transnational social work system to be consistent with the current situation, 2) the scope of area – an emphasis is placed on collecting data from public benefit organizations working on transnational social work in European countries, and 3), the scope of time – the study was conducted from September to December 2021.

Definition of Terms

Groups of Thai nationals abroad includes Thai people with Thai race and Thai nationality who live in foreign countries, including Thai people who relocate to another country, Thai people living abroad for specific purposes, i.e. working, studying, travelling, groups of adopted children and Thai people illegally living in foreign countries who confront problems or trouble, such as Thai sex workers, victims of human trafficking, Thai women who are deceived into marrying, Thai people who are conducting legal proceedings in foreign countries, workers who are tricked into working abroad, etc.

Transnational social work refers to the provision of assistance, protection, and rights defense for Thai people living abroad who have problems or face trouble, implemented in accordance with the principles and methods of social work on the basis of the principles of social justice, human rights, several liabilities, respect for individual differences and human dignity.

Public benefit organizations refers to foundations, associations, associate networks, or organizations whose objectives are to assist, oversee, develop, and promote the provision of social welfare for Thai people living in the country and overseas, and which are legally certified to be public benefit organizations in promoting the provision of social welfare.

Methodology

The analysis was conducted based on a qualitative study design using documentary research. An emphasis was placed on analyzing documents and assistance given to Thai people living abroad who have difficulties or troubles (during 2017-2021) in conjunction with an in-depth interview with representatives of Thai social development networks in 4 foreign countries namely the Association of Thai Women Network in Finland (TWIN), the Thai Women Network in Europe in Switzerland, the Thai Smile Association in Germany, and the Thai-Norse Samfunn Hordaland in Norway, as well as representatives from the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, who are relevant to the provision of assistance to target groups of Thai people living abroad. Data was collected from relevant documents related to assistance provided to Thai people living abroad, Thai people networks in foreign countries, including the roles and duties of agencies providing assistance to Thai people living abroad, during September-December 2021. As for data analysis, the data was categorized and examined for its accuracy. Content analysis was conducted according to the Miles & Huberman method of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), namely, 1) data reduction, 2) data display, and conclusion drawing and verification in conjunction with thematic analysis and data triangulation before conducting synthesis and arrangement for the report of the study results.

Results and Discussion

1. Situations and problems of Thai nationals abroad

Social and cultural changes and communication through modern and rapid technologies have had an acute effect on the perception and exchange of information and borderless migration caused by current global trends, giving rise to a phenomenon of cross cultural migration in the form of border crossing to other countries across the world. This phenomenon is clearly seen in the case of many communities of Thai nationals abroad. It is consistent with a research study's findings that Thai migration to work abroad has been occurring since the end of the 1960s and has continued until the present day. This study, conducted by the Bureau of International Workers (Wichai Roopkamdee et al., 2019) on the dimension of feminization and masculinity of migrant workers, found that in 1960 there were 47 out of 100 migrants were female, accounting for 47%. Since then statistics of female migrants have increased continuously. 40 years later (2000), there were 95 million female migrants, accounting for half of all international migrants worldwide. As time goes by, the statistics of women who relocate to foreign countries seem to be increasingly higher. However, most female workers are temporary workers and their jobs related to the traditional role of women, such as working in the hospitality industry as housekeeping assistants, children and caregivers for the elderly, cleaning jobs, entertainment jobs, and sex workers. Besides, information from the Coordination Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in March 2013 regarding out-of-country voting, identified that there were 1,001,070 Thai nationals abroad in 66 countries with most of them living legally. In 2017, there were 1,267,370 Thai nationals abroad with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand the countries with the largest number of Thai people (507,082). South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East had the least number of Thai people (80,260). Details are shown in Figure 1.

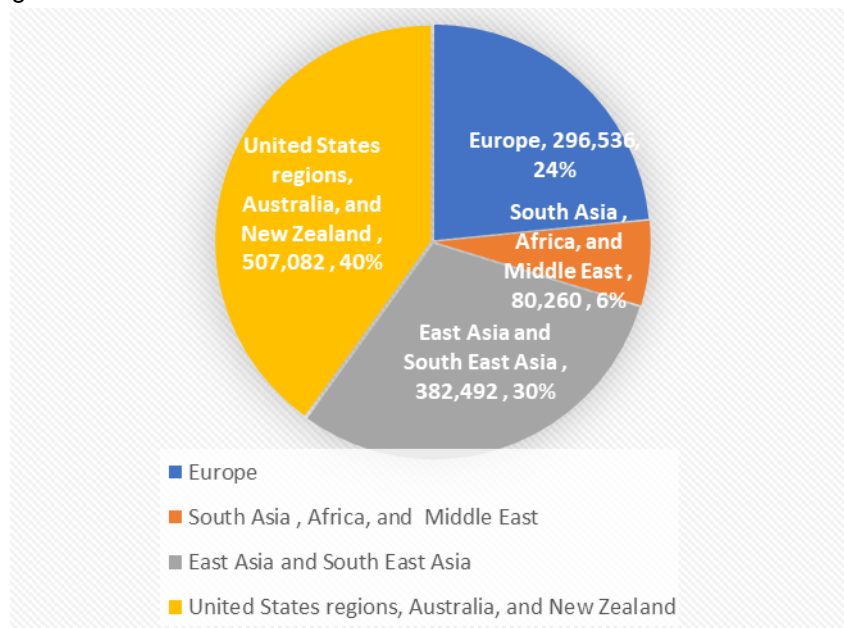
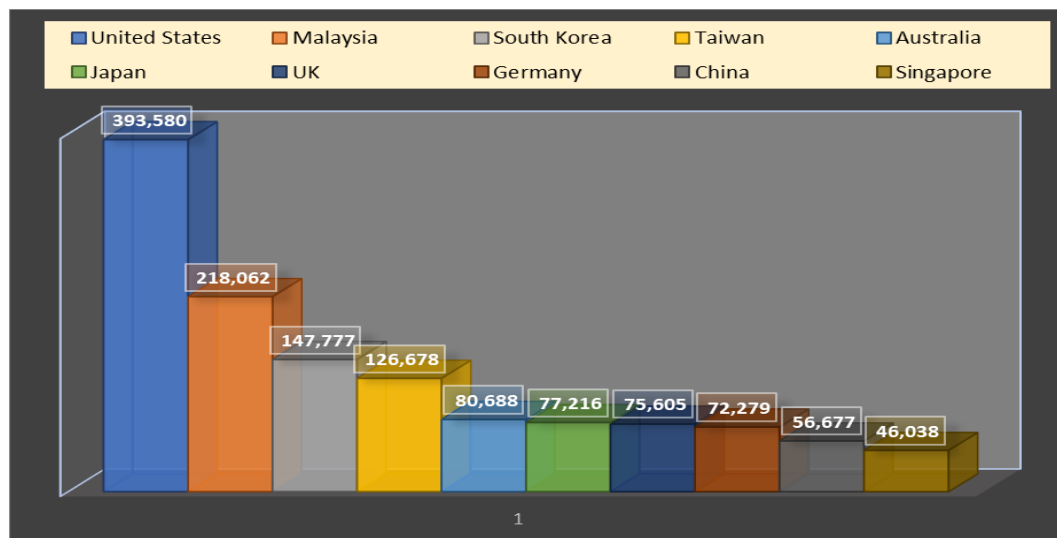


Figure 1: Number of Thai nationals abroad in 2017.

Source: Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad, 2018.

The country with the largest number of Thai people was the United States (393,580), followed by Malaysia (218,062), South Korea (147,777), Taiwan (126,678), Australia (80,688), Japan (77,216), the UK (75,605), Germany (72,279), China (56,677), and Singapore (46,038), respectively, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Top ten



countries with the largest number of Thai people in 2017.

Source: Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad, 2018.

The statistics from the Protection of Thai Nationals Abroad Division, Department of Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2017 identified 106,512 Thai people who were married to foreigners. The country with the largest number of Thai inhabitants married to foreigners was Sweden (46,000), followed by the UK (17,272), and Denmark (16,354). In 2020, the statistics from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that there was an increase in the number of Thai people legally living in foreign countries (1,276,546) and in 2021, the statistics of Thai nationals abroad increased continuously as it was found that there were 1,408,824 Thai people living in every region of the world, with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand holding the largest number of Thai people (571,970), followed by East Asia and Southeast Asia regions (511,308), Europe (251,324) and the South Asia, Africa, and Middle East regions (74,222) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). In other words, the number of Thai nationals abroad in 2021 increased by 150,000 people from 2020, and increased by 400,000 people by 2013, reflecting a continuously increasing trend in the number of Thai nationals abroad and pointing to a future where the number of Thai people living in foreign countries for work, education and marriage will continue to show an annual increase. This is consistent with the results of a study by Chaiwat Panjapong (as cited in Wichai Roopkamdee et al., 2019) which finds that factors attracting migration are 1) high opportunities of employment, 2) higher opportunities of security in life for oneself and families, 3) higher opportunities for education and training, 4) good environment, attraction, convenience for living a life, nice weather and climate, convenient transportation, good house, good public health system and 5) relocation following their spouse or children. In addition, the study found that the migration of Thai people to live abroad gives rise to several problems that must be confronted, i.e. social problems, cultural adaptation, and language, especially among groups of women, older adults, children and youth. This is consistent with a considerable number of studies pointing that Thai nationals abroad have to face various problems, such as communication problems, adaptation of Thai women to husbands, children and relatives or problems facing the children of Thai women. Problems are most likely related to violence, lack of parental warmth, and relationships among family members. Some groups of Thai people like gambling, have problems related to being new to a place and language, lack correct information including a lack of legal knowledge, rendering them victims of those who try to take advantage of them. Moreover, it was found that a great number of Thai women were taken advantage of by their husbands, relatives, employers, and other people, causing them to pay for some commission for going abroad and ending up drowning in debt. Such problems have accumulated and have been connected to human trafficking (Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad, 2018).

It can be said that from the past to the present, millions of Thai people increasingly relocate and settle down in foreign countries, giving rise to communities of Thai people distributed across different regions worldwide. The emergence of Thai communities abroad has given rise to numerous problems faced by these Thais such as economic, social, language and cultural problems including the inability

to receive social welfare provided in Thailand as the origin country and social welfare provided by the country of destination due to various restrictions. Therefore, a challenging point is the provision of easily accessible and suitable social welfare for Thai nationals abroad which will help improve their quality of life.

2 Synthesis of the body of knowledge about transnational social work practice

2.1 Development of transnational social work practice

Transnational social work began as a discipline in the United States in order to study globalization and international social work (Midgley, 2001). Transnational social work is engaged in transnational migration, connection to people, problems, and impacts. Importance is given to social justice and the better livelihood of humans. Emphasis is placed on knowledge sharing and seeking cooperation for problem solving on the basis of paying respect to each other (Willey-Sthapit et al., 2019). The development of transnational social work in Thailand started in a concrete manner in 2012 when the National Social Welfare Promotion Committee determined Thai nationals abroad as a target group eligible to receive social welfare. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security subsequently implemented the promotion of social welfare provision to Thai people, in collaboration with public benefit organizations abroad, continuously, in particular in the UK and Germany where a large number of Thai women living there with the purposes of working, and married to UK and German nationals, confronted different social problems. Naparat Charoenrat (2012) confirms this in his study of Thai women living in Germany who experienced family problems, such as violence, divorce, etc, pointing out that Thai women frequently do not have rights. They are often intimidated by their husbands and threatened to be repatriated to their country of origin. A determination to provide assistance to Thai nationals abroad is considered a fundamental aspect of the operations of transnational social work, in harmony with the concept of Hugman et al., (2010), who identifies that “transnational social work is the operations of social work in other countries in addition to the country of origin of social workers. It is collaborative working with agencies, international organizations, and communities in destination countries to provide assistance to target groups, such as migrants or persons suffering from social problems”. In 2014, the learning center for social and welfare development was established in Buddhavihara Temple, Berlin and in 2016 the National Social Welfare Promotion Committee for Thai nationals abroad was appointed as well as the appointment of the National Social Welfare Promotion Sub-committee for Thai nationals in Germany. Training was organized for volunteers of social development and human security for Thai nationals in Germany. Principles and conditions for applying to be certified as public benefit organizations in foreign countries were determined. Social development and human security volunteers in Germany were propelled to be an important mechanism to move forward transnational social work. These actions can be considered as the creation of social innovation to improve the quality of life of target groups, consistent with Furman et al., (2020) who claim that “transnational social work is a new practical guideline designed to provide services to transnational population, implemented across international borders implicitly or through new technologies to solve complex problems, related to local cultures and response.” Significant development of transnational social work is shown below:

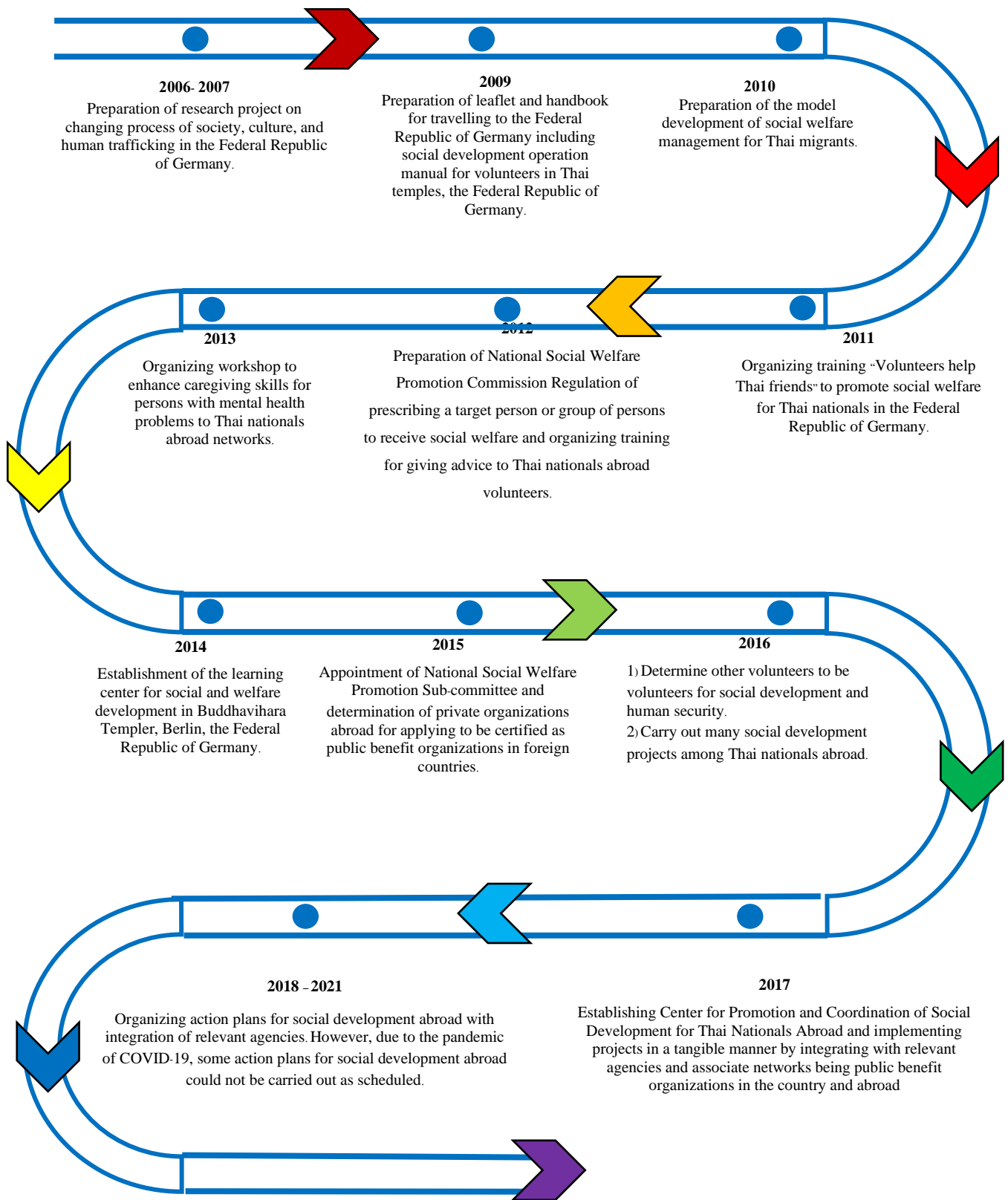


Figure 3: Development of transnational social work practice in Thailand

2.2 Transnational Social Work Practice

Transnational social work practice is carried out to provide assistance and rights protection for Thai nationals abroad in distress. A large number of Thai people relocating to foreign countries have to confront various problems in terms of economy, society, adaptation to language and culture, consistent with the statistics of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017) regarding assistance provided to Thai nationals abroad that identified that 11,262 Thai nationals abroad needed assistance. Thai people living in the Middle East needed assistance the most (4,621), followed by 3,366 Thai nationals in Southeast Asia, 1,962 Thai nationals in East Asia, 438 Thai nationals in Europe, and 648 Thai Nationals in the United States. In 2019, the number of Thai nationals needing assistance increased to 24,847 people; 15,188 Thai nationals in East Asia and Southeast Asia, 5,238 Thai Nationals in South Asia, Africa, and Middle East, 2,886 Thai Nationals in Europe, and 1,562 Thai nationals in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Considering the different types of assistance, the number of Thai nationals abroad in distress was the highest (7,186), followed by Thai nationals who were arrested (6,744), assistance given to workers (3,238), searching for relatives (1,756), and assistance given to victims of human trafficking (497). The number of cases of assistance provided increased to 148, 679 people; Thai nationals in East Asia and Southeast Asia (67,694), Europe (43,111), South Asia, Africa, and Middle East (21,530), the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (16,344). Concerning the different types of assistance, assistance given to Thai nationals in other cases was the highest (73,251), followed by assistance given to Thai nationals in distress (56,310), assistance given to workers (10,146), Thai nationals who were arrested (3,365), and victims of human trafficking (126). It can be said that the number of Thai nationals abroad in distress has increased rapidly and continuously. This is consistent with the analysis of document files about a case-by-case assistance given to service receivers from the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai nationals abroad during 2017 – 2021 from Singapore, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Portugal, Germany, Finland, and Norway, including foreigners staying in Thailand. In this study, it was found that transnational social work practice categorizes service receivers into 3 groups; 1) Thai nationals abroad in distress, 2) foreigners in distress who stay in Thailand and 3) Thai nationals abroad who request assistance for their families living in Thailand. As for Thai nationals abroad in distress, most of them are women with the following problems: they were physically abused by their husbands since they refused to have sex with them, they were murdered by their husbands, they worked illegally abroad and were repatriated or worked without work permit by using tourist visa including being victims of human trafficking since they were forced to be workers, while others suffered from physical and mental sickness or had problems related to adaptation to culture and language causing stress. The impact from the Covid-19 pandemic led to unemployment, with insufficient income to earn a living. As for foreigners in distress staying in Thailand, there was not a significant number. Most of them were foreigners married to Thai women and were bedridden patients. They did not keep in touch with their relatives, making them unable to receive rights and social welfare. In addition, it was found that Thai nationals abroad coordinated with the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad to ask for assistance to give to their relatives living in Thailand who are in distress. In this regard, the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad coordinated with relevant agencies to provide assistance for the protection of the rights for those target groups. A multidisciplinary team was assigned to do home visits, make plans to provide assistance and carry out case management to ensure people in distress are able to adapt themselves to the environment and help themselves and their families, a fundamental systematic social work practice in helping people and groups of people to get better, and in promoting social adaptation. Social workers shall work collaboratively with service recipients to develop resources from within and mobilize resources from outside to ask for assistance for changing such environments (IFSW, 1959; Schrooten, 2021).

With regard to transnational social work practice, the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad carries out the work process through the 1) study of facts and problems arising (Fact finding) by coordinating with social workers, local administrative organization officers, associate networks, public benefit organizations including Royal Thai Embassy officers to pay home visits to search for facts, 2) assessment and diagnosis – information obtained from the home visit is examined and analyzed for problems and causes in the form of a multidisciplinary team while social workers act as case managers, 3) planning for intervention, 4) implementation of assistance by

mobilizing resources and cooperation from associate networks and 5) follow up and evaluation to investigate if the assistance provided meets the plan and if it is enough or not, what assistance service receivers require to make them live their life normally. This is consistent with the research study of Hugman et al., (2010) who find that transnational social work is a systematic social work practice in other countries in addition to the country of origin of social workers. It consists of collaborative work with communities in other countries or destination countries in order to provide assistance to target groups of their country and it requires working together with agencies/international organizations. Meanwhile, transnational social work relies on knowledge sharing and international cooperation.

2.3 Mechanism propelling transnational social work practice

The implementation according to the mission of the development of Thai society in foreign countries of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security focuses on promoting social welfare management for Thai nationals abroad, promoting and developing networks and Thai volunteers abroad, promoting the quality of the life of Thai nationals abroad including other implementation prescribed by laws. Agencies affiliated to the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security that represent significant mechanisms to carry out Thai social development in foreign countries comprise of 1) The Office of Permanent Secretary, 2) The Department of Children and Youth, 3) The Department of Older Persons, 4) The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 5) The Department of Social Development and Welfare, and 6) The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Each agency has a different mission according to their roles and duties assigned. Later, the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad was established, an internal agency of the Office of Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, supervised by the Standard Division Social Development and Human Security, with the purpose of achieving One Home administration and which has the authority and duty to integrate, promote, and coordinate the development of Thai society in foreign countries including developing strategies and transforming ministerial policies into action plans and bureaucratic administration in order to integrate all sectors in order to reach its goals. In the past, support for Thai society in foreign countries emphasized promotion and protection to enable Thai nationals abroad to access social welfare, participate in self-development and hometown development through "5 steps to success", namely 1) empowerment - increase self-reliance, 2) integration - integrate all mission, 3) partnership - having a work partner, 4) linkage - connecting online information and 5) networking - building networks of Thai nationals abroad (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Another important mechanism that the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security adopted as a tool for implementing Thai social development in foreign countries is associate networks of public benefit organizations in foreign countries. Currently, there are more than 50 networks spread across different regions of the world. It can be said that these associate networks of public benefit organizations play an important role in promoting and developing Thai society in foreign countries. Studies of the vital reasons for gathering as a group of associate networks/public benefit organizations abroad found that the importance of sharing the same interest and of sharing the same goal of providing assistance to Thai nationals abroad and to share and deliver good things to Thai people living in foreign countries through advice, preparedness training to protect, and also support Thai nationals abroad to receive the rights they should have by the rule of law, roles, and duties appropriately.

The study also found that the work characteristics of members in public benefit organization networks in foreign countries are focused on an informal flat structure. They are not paid and do not receive remuneration. They work voluntarily according to their proficiency. Emphasis is placed on providing assistance to each other, harmony, listening to the opinions of others, and having the same goal. This includes providing assistance to Thai nationals in distress to ensure they are taken care of appropriately in accordance with the human right principles and the rights they are eligible to receive by taking human dignity into consideration and emphasizing promotion and protection to ensure Thai nationals abroad are not deceived or become social problem victims (Association of Thai Women Network in Finland (TWIN), Thai Women Network in Europe, Switzerland, Thai Smile Association in Germany, Thai-Norse Samfunn Hordaland in Norway, Thai Smile Association, 2021). This is also reflected in research studies conducted by Wichuta Kaewchur (2021) and Songsak Rakpuang (2018) whose findings suggest that social networks resemble a net that ties people, groups of people, and organizations together to achieve the set goal, giving rise to a learning process, higher opportunities for

problem solving, self-reliance and power of negotiation. Networks bring about the process of policy moving forward that helps stimulate social development in different aspects continuously and efficiently.

Furthermore, the study finds that transnational social work practice has the structure of a work system separated by the mission of each agency, different power and duties, with their own budgets according to the mission they are assigned. In this regard, the operations are deprived of unity and integration, and become obstacles between agencies. It is necessary, therefore, to develop the work system of transnational social work, measures, and operational mechanism to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness.

3. Guidelines for developing the work system of transnational social work should be implemented as follows:

3.1 Structure/mission

1) The structure of the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad should be clearly divided into 2 divisions;

- Transnational social work division performs duties in being notified of causes of problems and primary assistance to target groups, fact finding, planning for giving assistance, work team meeting, coordinating with multidisciplinary team, coordinating with resources, coordinating with associate networks, home visit, giving advice, coordinating and transferring cases, considering types of assistance, preparing operational performance report.

- Management division performs duties in integrating action plans of social development for Thai nationals abroad, coordinating the propelling or action plans with relevant agencies, developing database and information systems for managing and moving forward the action plans, directing, monitoring, and evaluating action plan results continuously, and preparing operational performance report.

2) The operational structure of the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad should be determined to comprehensively cover all relevant agencies, especially the committees of administration division and operation division, who should add more representatives from the Department of Older Persons and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities to play their roles in the structure so as to truly build participation and support the integration of collaborative work.

3) Identification of mission, roles, and duties of government agencies in Thailand should be explicit; for example, in which aspects does the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security have a mission, role, and duty to support assistance provided to Thai nationals abroad, etc. Meanwhile, such mission, roles and duties should be publicized to relevant persons to build a clear perception, which may lead to efficient coordination and generating the integration of collaborative work among related agencies in a more tangible manner.

3.2 Social work practice/body of knowledge

1) The operational capacity should be increased in Thai social development in foreign countries to have more internationality by improving and planning collaborative working among relevant agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labor including associate networks/public benefit organizations and to render this process more explicit and appropriate.

2) Social workers and relevant workers should be literate in the important body of knowledge about Thai social development in foreign countries, such as the applicable laws of each country and the rights to social welfare, to continuously generate and build on the work process of the transnational social work model. Moreover, new bodies of knowledge should be developed and added to social workers and personnel working in the development of Thai society in foreign countries regularly so as to keep pace with current situations and global context that rapidly change.

3) A transnational social work operation manual should be developed as a tool or guideline for the operations, enabling the operations to be more systematic and efficient.

4) More support and promotion should be given to projects or activities of associate networks, public benefit organizations, and social development and human security volunteers abroad, especially support concerning budgets and resources necessary for the operations.

5) Support should be given to generate cooperation among associate networks/public benefit organizations in countries across the world by holding projects or activities for knowledge sharing online

to strengthen relationships among associate networks/public benefit organizations, and support should be given to the process of knowledge management on the basis of existing social capital.

In addition, the Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad should implement the following measures:

1) Measures on database

1.1) Prepare a database of assistance provided for Thai nationals abroad to be beneficial to assist Thai nationals abroad.

1.2) Publicize assistance guidelines including the rights and social welfare for Thai nationals abroad to Thai communities and relevant government agencies and private agencies.

2) Measures on protection of rights, dignity, and maintenance of benefits

2.1) Give legal advice and information regarding legal cases, and provide legal consultants who are stationed at every embassy and consular office.

2.2) Support the availability of a hotline direct to Thailand to allow Thai nationals abroad to be able to make contact, coordinate, seek advice, notify problems and ask for assistance 24 hours a day without payment.

2.3) Collect, monitor, and publicize laws in different countries related to the rights and social welfare of Thai nationals abroad who stay in or travel to those countries for their preparedness for travelling in a serious, well-informed and continuous manner.

3) Measures on assistance

3.1) Financial assistance by following laws and regulations on financial assistance provided to Thai nationals abroad to enable to assist those in distress in a serious manner, including reviewing the regulations to be consistent with current situations, such as the regulations of the Ministry of Finance on government advance payment for providing assistance to Thai nationals abroad, B.E. 2549 (2006), funds for the assistance of job seekers to work abroad, and funds for prevention and suppression of human trafficking.

3.2) Assistance for protection and care, i.e.

1) To improve the service system for giving advice to be comprehensive and efficient for Thai nationals and their families.

2) To provide shelter or accommodation for Thai nationals abroad in distress.

3) To promote family problem solving for Thai people working abroad.

4) To take care of Thai nationals abroad having problems in returning to Thailand.

5) To take care of Thai nationals who suffer from physical and mental health problems.

3.3) Establishing a learning center for social and welfare development in each country where a large number of Thai people resides, to be a center for development, welfare protection and assistance including building understanding and raising awareness among Thai nationals abroad about the country image and dignity of Thai people.

4) Measures on promotion and development

4.1) To promote the volunteer system abroad for Thai volunteers and volunteers who are foreigners including promoting the availability of volunteer interpreters.

4.2) To develop a course for training social development volunteers abroad to ensure they can perform their duty as volunteer social workers (Para-Social Worker).

4.3) To promote the gathering of Thai nationals abroad to develop, protect, take care of and help each other while staying in foreign countries.

4.4) To promote the establishment of a Thai nationals abroad fund to help each other in the country where they are staying and to develop their own country.

4.5) To promote the role of Thai temples and Buddhist missionaries in foreign countries to take care of and help Thai nationals abroad in every region across the world, especially in countries where a large number of Thai nationals reside.

4.6) To promote the role of networks in protecting and taking care of Thai nationals abroad, in particular public benefit organizations registered with and certified by the National Social Welfare Promotion Committee and Thai temple in each country.

- 4.7) To continuously promote subsidies or budgets to agencies working on developing and assisting Thai nationals abroad.
- 4.8) To promote, support, and develop the strength of Thai nationals abroad communities.
- 5) Measures on developing mechanisms for the protection of Thai nationals abroad:
 - 5.1) To support the establishment of civil society networks to coordinate with all implementations related to Thai nationals abroad by developing and promoting a mechanism model suitable for providing protection, development, and assistance to Thai nationals abroad, in particular in the countries where a large number of Thai nationals live, study or work.
 - 5.2) To support budgets for devices and equipment necessary for the operations of organizations or civil society networks to work more efficiently.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Transnational social work practice has existed in Thailand for more than 10 years. It provides assistance and rights protection for Thai nationals abroad in distress. Its operations focus on the principles and methods in accordance with the social work profession on the basis of social justice, human rights, shared responsibility, and respect for individual differences and human dignity. Emphasis is placed on collaborative working among relevant agencies. Civil society, Thai community networks, public benefit organizations in the country and foreign countries form the essential core of this work and play an important role in propelling transnational social work. It can be said that transnational social work practice is social innovation operated across international borders, consistent with the principles and objectives of international social work. However, Thai transnational social work practice should be promoted and developed in terms of both the body of knowledge and skills of social workers and the measures and mechanisms used to propel transnational social work including social welfare services, aligned and in harmony with the constantly evolving social context.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank you Ministry of Social Development and Human Security for funding and all key informants to support this research project.

Author/Authors Brief Bio

Puchong Senanuch (PhD), is an Associate Professor of Social Work and former Associate Dean in Academic and International Affairs at Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University, Recently, He is a Chair of Thammasat University Center of Excellence in Social Work and Social Policy and Vice President of Thailand Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education (TASWE). He also served on the Board of ASEAN Social Work Consortium for Thailand (ASWC) as well as International Council of Social Welfare-Southeast Asia and Pacific (ICSW-SEAP) His areas of expertise include, social work and social policy, international social development, urban poverty alleviation, women and family development. He has published numerous articles and public reports. A graduate of economics, community development and social work in Thailand and received a Ph.D. in Social Work and Policy Studies from the University of Sydney, Australia

References

- Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad. (2015). Performance summary of social welfare promotion for Thai nationals abroad 2006 - 2015. Bangkok: Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
- Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad. (2017). Annual Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2017. Bangkok: Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
- Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad. (2018). Report on Thai social society abroad according to the mission of Ministry of Social Development and

- Human Security. Bangkok: Standard Division Social Development and Human Security, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
- Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad. (2019). Annual Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2019. Bangkok: Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
- Furman, R., & Casey, E. (2010). Transnational men. In N. Negi & R. Furman (Eds.), *Transnational social work practice* (pp. 143-154). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hugman, R., Moosa-Mitha, M., & Moyo, O. (2010). Towards a borderless social work: Reconsidering notions of international social work. *International Social Work*.53 (5),629-643.
- IASSW General Assembly & IFSW General Meeting. (2014). Global definition of social work. International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), <https://www.iassw-aiets.org/global-definition-of-social-work-review-of-the-global-definition/>
- IFSW. (1959). Report of the international studygroup on the function and working methods of the personnel social worker. https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/ifsw-cdn/assets/ifsw_34833-6.pdf
- Midgley, J. (2001). Issues in international social work. *Journal of Social Work*. 1(1), 21-35.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. New York: SAGE Publications.
- Modderman, C., McMahon, M., Threlkeld, G. & McPherson, L. (2021) Transnational Social Workers: Understanding of Australian First Nations Perspectives in Statutory Child Protection, *Australian Social Work*. 74 (4), 394-406.
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. (2016). *5 Steps: Pursue the dream abroad*. Bangkok: Peeramit Creation Co., Ltd.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020). Ministry of Foreign Affairs is committed to assisting Thai nationals abroad and facilitating foreigners travelling to Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic. <https://cutt.ly/RTteciy>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2021). The number of Thai nationals abroad in 2021. <https://cutt.ly/sTtiTcX>
- Naparatt Charoenrat. (2012). Lives of Thai women in Germany. <https://www.gotoknow.org/posts/505324>
- Schrooten, M. (2021) Transnational social work: Challenging and crossing borders and boundaries. *Journal of Social Work*. 21(5), 1163-1181.
- Songsak Rakpuang. (2018). *A study of social network of marathoners*. (Master of Arts Thesis). Bangkok: National Institute of Development Administration.
- Wichai Rookkamdee, Aimorn Imcharoen and Teerapol Witchurangsi. (2019). The study and development of a guideline for promoting social welfare management for Thai nationals abroad. Bangkok: Center for Promotion and Coordination of Social Development for Thai Nationals Abroad. Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
- Wichuta Kawechur. (2021). Strengthening social partnership concept in social welfare provision of public benefit organizations. *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*.
- Wiley-Sthapit, C., Valdovinos, M. G., Teyra, C. & Borja, S. (2019). Addressing global social relationships in transnational social work research processes and institutions, *European Journal of Social Work*. 22 (5), 819-830.

Interviews

- Thai Smile Association. (Interview with the President of the Association). October 2021.
- Thai Women Network in Finland. (Interview with the President of the Network). October 2021.
- Thai Women Network in Europe (Interview with the President of the Network) October 2021.
- Thai-Norse Samfunn Hordaland in Norway (Interview with the President of the Association). 28 October 2021.