

Abstract

The objective of the study “Rights Status in Medical Care for Migrant Workers in the Kingdom of Thailand” is to study the rights status, problems and obstacles found in the medical care of migrant workers working in Thailand as a result of the announcement and requirement that migrant workers are to register for insurance and medical care rights. This is a document-based study together with interview with officials concerned from the National Security Health Office, Ministry of Public Health, government and private hospitals, Ministry of Labor, and employers, using a structured interview and observation as tools. The contents are analyzed in comparison with the measures and 2009 guidelines for health inspection and health insurance for migrant workers which are in effect until 30 June 2010.

The findings are as follows:

The Ministry of Public Health is charged with the policy and implementation of health inspection and insurance of migrant workers of Burmese, Lao and Cambodian nationalities. Its activities fall in four areas: annual health inspection, medical care, health promotion, and health prevention as well as health surveillance. Migrant workers who wish to work are required to enter into the health inspection or health insurance scheme. For their dependents, health inspection or health insurance is voluntary. However, unregistered migrant workers or those with no migrant worker ID cards can buy health insurance cards in order to earn the right to inspection although they are allowed to exercise these rights only at the province in which they register. The problem is that after the announcement and requirements that the migrant workers are to register to earn the rights to access to health service the government policy is unclear. This has resulted in the situation in which the authorities in the provinces with migrant workers cannot decide how far they can plan and allocate resources for the purpose. In addition, some migrant workers do not realize the necessity of buying health insurance cards, while others are unaware of the rights that follow. There are also problems of

inter-agency coordination, coupled with the fact that services provided by medical establishments are still discriminatory in practice.

The study recommends that the State put in place a policy based on the participation of several agencies concerned, focusing on coordination to ensure that migrant workers join the insurance scheme. The State should also set principles and performance standards in a consistent unified manner. It should make known and improve the health system so that it is easy for migrant workers to get better access to the health insurance scheme.