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Mahidol University
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The **7**th
MAHIDOL MIGRATION CENTER
Regional Conference

(Im)Mobilities in Turbulent Times:
Navigating Global Crises, Policy Shifts, and New Pathways
for Justice and Resilience

Rapporteur Report

24–25 November 2025

Mahidol Migration Center (MMC) and
Institute for Population and Social Research
Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Rapporteur Report

## The 7ᵗʰ Mahidol Migration Center Regional Conference

" (Im)Mobilities in Turbulent Times: Navigating Global Crises, Policy Shifts, and New Pathways for Justice and Resilience"

Prepared By

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(All IPSR, Mahidol University)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over two days, the 7th Mahidol Migration Center (MMC) Regional Conference addressed the multifaceted nature of human mobility and immobility under conditions of global turbulence. Key themes emerging from the scientific evidence included:

1. The Nexus of Demographic Crises and Policy Design: Discussions on "Replacement Migration" highlighted that maintaining productivity amidst population decline requires a portfolio of long-term strategies, emphasizing the need for well-governed, non-restrictive migration pathways and robust integration programs to treat migrants as long-term contributors.

2. Climate and Conflict as Amplifiers of Vulnerability: Multiple sessions demonstrated that environmental and conflict pressures are not standalone drivers but forces that amplify existing inequalities, often leading to both displacement and forced immobility, particularly for marginalized groups, demanding integrated humanitarian and environmental responses.

3. The Imperative of Rights and Dignity: Across topics from occupational safety to border policies, a consistent message emerged: protection gaps remain wide. Effective policy and advocacy must adopt rights-based frameworks, address structural inequalities (such as exclusion from unionization), and actively center the agency, dignity, and legal visibility of migrants in data and policy.
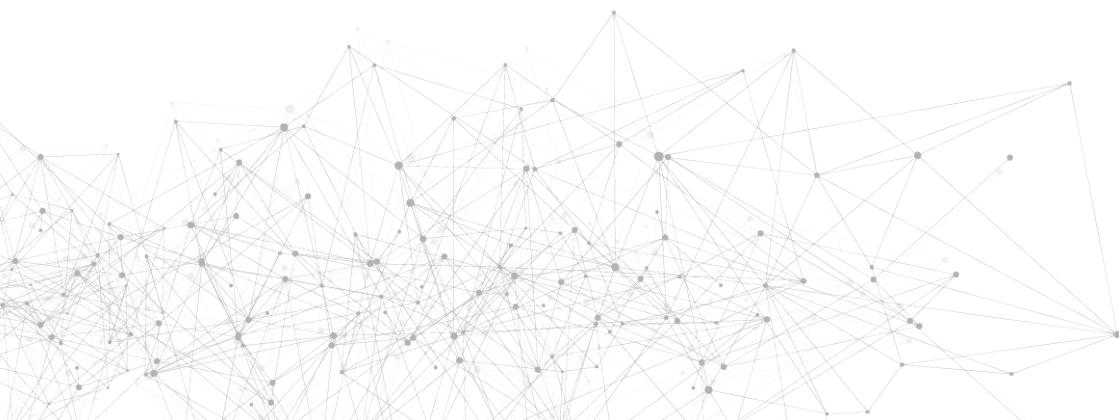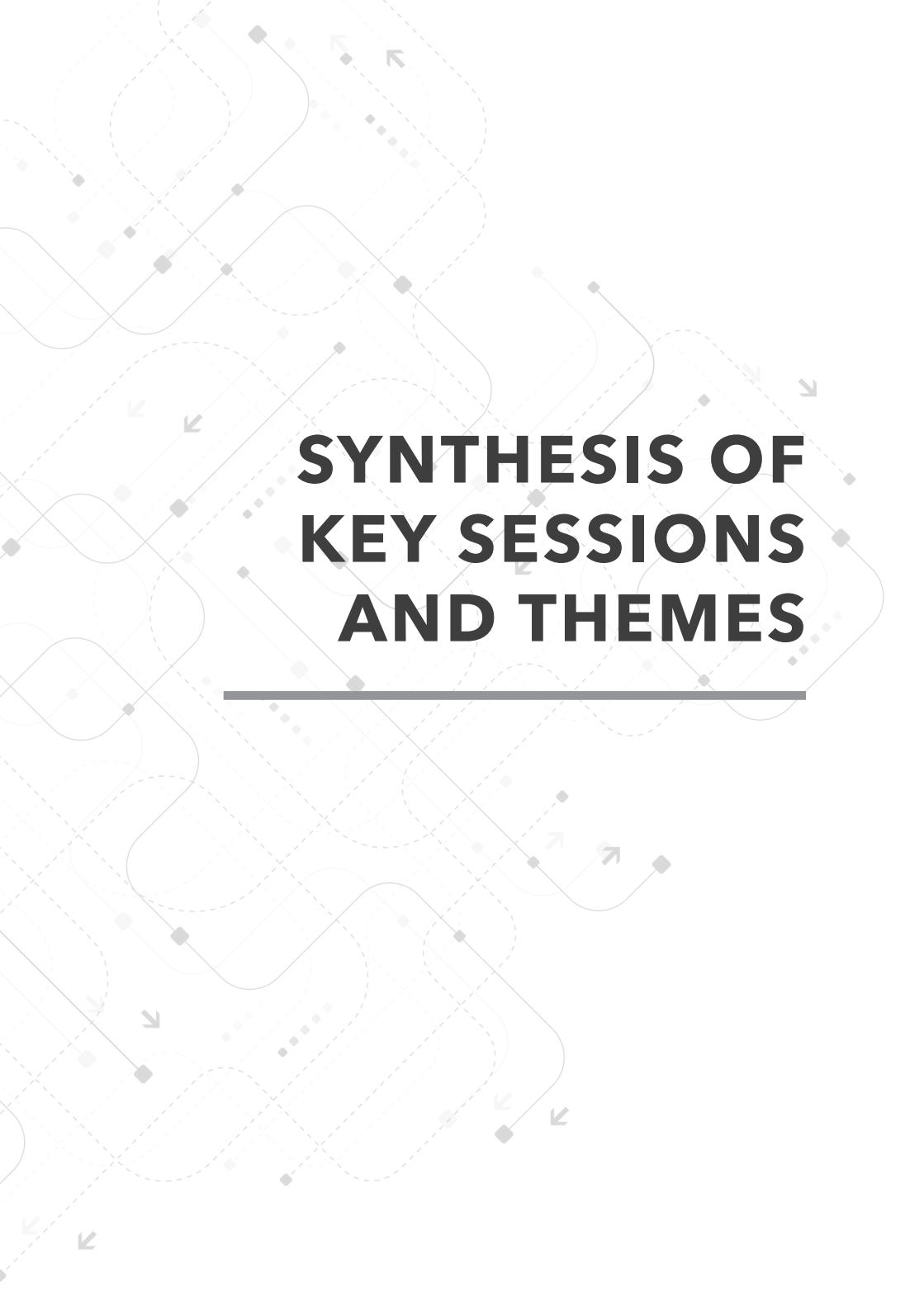
SYNTHESIS OF KEY SESSIONS AND THEMES

PANEL DISCUSSION 1:
Replacement Migration: Securing Thailand's Future Workforce

Chair: Sakkarin Niyomsilpa (IPSR, Mahidol University)

Panelists: Aphichat Chamratrithirong (IPSR, Mahidol University, Thailand), Pataraporn Laowong (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), Thailand), and Marja Paavilainen (International Labour Organization (ILO))

The discussion focused on the urgent challenge of Thailand's demographic decline and the need for replacement migration to sustain the nation's workforce and economy.

Apichat laid out six specific actions required under the Replacement Migration Theory framework, which was recommended by the UN in 2001 to address population decline. His projections show Thailand's population will decline by 34% by the end of the 21st century, potentially falling to between 23 and 64 million, depending on policy implementation.

His six recommended actions are:

1. Target Setting: Establishing a desired number of migrants per year; Apichat suggested 200,000 per year alongside childbirth promotion.

2. Policy Integration: Implementing replacement migration policy together with a pro-natal policy.

3. Equitable Recruitment: Ensuring recruitment focuses on civil engagement and social equity, aligning with the needs of local communities and SMEs.

4. Institutional Reform: Establishing a dedicated governmental body, such as a "Ministry of Immigration, Citizenship and Population."

5. Less Restrictive Pathways: Creating easier pathways for migrants already residing in Thailand, including children of migrants.

6. Effective Integration: Providing integration programs such as language and civic education to help newcomers adjust.

Pataraporn focused on the size of labor demand and the required quality and quantity of migrants. She acknowledged that while increasing productivity, embracing automation/robotics, and tapping into untapped resources (e.g., increasing healthy

life expectancy, engaging the NEET group of 1 million persons) could reduce labor demand, these measures are not fully realistic, making replacement migration still important.

She stressed the critical need for high-skilled workers (doctors, nurses, engineers), noting that targeted migration programs are needed but can be difficult to implement due to regulatory hurdles (e.g., importing doctors). She advocated for ensuring high-quality human capital through the education and training system and suggested creating a new organization to manage migration. She noted that the current 14th National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) draft does not yet include replacement migration.

Marja Paavilainen focused on the care economy, drawing from ILO reports on care for older persons and domestic workers. She noted that these are mostly skilled labor positions but face poor working conditions and a lack of protection. Thailand is projected to face a shortage of 250,000 care economy workers by 2037.

Her recommendations focused on improving labor standards and pathways for care workers:

- Promoting and protecting the labor rights of care workers.

- Ratifying and implementing the Domestic Workers Convention.

- Ensuring regular migration pathways for medium and high-skilled care workers.

- Formalizing skilling and skill recognition.

- For migrants in general, she recommended matching admission to labor demand, ensuring fair recruitment, and promoting freer labor market access (e.g., ability to change employers).

Audience Discussion

The Q&A highlighted the need for a long-term response that allows migrants to stay for many years to create stability. Both Apichat and Marja Paavilainen agreed. Apichat supported granting long-term residence and citizenship, while Marja emphasized the need to shift from a reactive, restrictive approach to a proactive, flexible system that allows for career progression and employer changes. The audience also raised the importance of a contributory pension system and questioned whether an optimal population size, such as 50 million, had been considered.

PANEL DISCUSSION 2:
Climate Change and Migration

Chair: Marc Völker (IPSR, Mahidol University)

Panelists: Hélène Syed Zwick (Migration Data and Research Unit, IOM, Thailand), Raya Muttarak (University of Bologna, Italy), Evgenia Moiseeva (IDR FCTAS, Russia), and Mongkon Thongchaithanawut (University of Vienna, Austria)

- This panel discussion on "Climate Change and Migration" featured Raya Muttarak (University of Bologna, Italy), Hélène Syed Zwick (IOM-Thailand), Evgenia Moiseeva (IDR FCTAS, Russia), Mongkon Thongchaithanawut (University of Vienna, Austria), chaired by Marc Völker (IPSR). A lively debate on climate change and migration, exploring their relationship, including how climate change influences where and how people live and move, climate adaptation, and implications for researchers and policymakers.

- Raya pointed out that people move around the world regardless of climate change, for many reasons. However, in recent times, climate change has caused major displacements, which is a growing area of research in demography and social science. Research on how climate change affects different aspects of impacts, adaptation, and resilience in this field remains limited. She emphasized that several debates exist and need evidence-based solutions as well.

- Hélène has discussed what IOM, as the UN's focal agency for migration, is doing on climate change and human mobility. She mentioned that IOM is making a significant contribution to the current state of knowledge and working to promote safe and orderly human migration. She mentioned that gaps exist in the form of fragmented evidence, incomplete data, and a lack of a common understanding of the issues. She has pointed out that IOM defines human mobility with a broader sense by seeing the dimensions of 'migration as adaptation, as displacement, as planned relocation, and also includes the people who are trapped as well. IOM wants to better understand mobility dimensions, policy, and operational issues, and is interested in working with researchers and academics in this area. IOM has also established a climate action division, institutional tools, and is implementing related projects.

- Evgenia discussed the situation in Russia and around the region, particularly answering, from a demographic perspective, how climate change is affecting the rural population, population distribution, sectors, etc. She has pointed out that across different parts of Russia, there are distinct problems and needs. Some areas face winter-related impacts, permafrost, infrastructural issues, threats to industrial facilities, frozen ground (which impedes agriculture), etc. It was also observed that climate-related disasters often trigger technical disasters and have combined effects. Major human mobility due to climate issues is observed in the southern parts, whereas among non-human populations and biological species, movements are recorded northwards. She has also mentioned that, generally, people are moving out of areas where their lives and livelihoods are at risk, but interpreting the broader population distribution changes can be complicated without adequate evidence and conventional statistics. Climate impacts are evident in ecosystems, people's livelihoods, businesses, and rural areas. She has also mentioned that climate change is affecting socio-economic and political situations, but it lacks concrete evidence; hence, it needs research on rising mortality and heat-related impacts, etc.

- Mongkon has discussed the issues on a micro level/rural household perspective and mentioned how the onset of events (time) and the capacity of the agency of the populations play out in climate change and decision making. He gave examples of how people often decide what to do and even 'cope locally' (e.g., diversifying income rather than migrating), and adopt multiple diversification strategies locally. He has pointed out that people often migrate due to climate change affecting livelihood issues as coping and sending remittance back home, where there are two sides: a) ex-ante: remittance for the new incoming disaster period, and b) ex-post: restoring the house, etc.

PANEL DISCUSSION 3:
New Migration Trends in Eurasia and America
During Turbulent Times

Chair: Sergey Ryazantsev (IPSR, Mahidol University)

Panelists: Joni Virkkunen(University of Eastern Finland, Finland), Bhavna Dave (SOAS, University of London, UK), Leila Delovarova (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan), Seonjing Kim (Duksung Women's University, South Korea), Irina Molodikova (International Association "Dialog", Hungary), Biriz Karacay (Istanbul Commerce University, Turkey), Andrey Korobkov (University of Tennessee, United States)

The panel, chaired by Sergey Ryazantsev (IPSR, Mahidol University), examined current migration dynamics across multiple regions in the context of conflict, security concerns, and shifting policy environments.

Joni Virkkunen (Finland) discussed how the war in Ukraine and Russia's hybrid tactics have reshaped Finland's migration landscape. Finland has closed its border with Russia due to the "weaponization" of migration, as asylum seekers from third countries have been channeled through Russia. Asylum seekers from Ukraine and especially Russia now face longer and more complex routes, influencing national migration discourse.

Biriz Karacay (Turkey) highlighted that migration flows from Russia and Ukraine have slowed, while arrivals from Afghanistan are increasing. Turkey faces major social integration challenges with Afghans and Syrians, accompanied by rising anti-migrant sentiment and securitized border control. While stricter policies have prompted many Russians and Ukrainians to leave, Turkey continues cooperating with the EU on integrating Syrians under temporary protection.

Leila Delovarova (Kazakhstan) described Kazakhstan's increasingly diversified migration profile. The country functions as both a sender and receiver of migrants and as a transit corridor. More Kazakh workers are going to the UK under seasonal schemes, as well as to China and the UAE, while about 100,000 Kazakh workers remain in Russia. Migration flows in Central Asia are becoming more external than internal, creating new regional challenges.

Irina Molodikova (Hungary) explained Hungary's cautious migration stance as an EU semi-periphery state bordering Ukraine. Historically oriented toward attracting ethnic Hungarians, Hungary now draws workers from ASEAN and other regions but has reduced support for migrants since the Trump era. Despite political rhetoric against migration, new regulations enable temporary recruitment from countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines—reflecting economic demand amid politically sensitive elections.

Andrey Korobkov (United States) emphasized migrants' substantial economic contributions but noted increasing resistance to large-scale immigration. He linked this to demographic shifts: the declining share of the white population, growing Hispanic/Latino and Asian American populations, and stable African American representation. U.S. policy has oscillated between strict enforcement under Trump, lack of coherent policy under Biden, and even tougher approaches under Trump's second term, including measures targeting Chinese nationals such as students.

In his concluding remarks, Sergey Ryazantsev highlighted emerging factors shaping migration, including new forms of ethnic and conflict-driven movements. He stressed the need for more proactive migration policy and civil society engagement, while noting that migration policies are becoming increasingly restrictive and often influenced by electoral politics.

PANEL DISCUSSION 4:
Mobilities in Turbulent Times: Navigating Global Crises, Policy Shifts, and New Pathways for Justice and Resilience

Chair: Rachapoll Phromyarat (Thai CDC, Los Angeles/Bangkok)

Panelists: Panida Rzonca, Phatchara Udomsin, and Rinrada Jongthawornsatit (TCDC, United States)

Key Themes and Policy Shifts

- The panel highlighted the dismantling or non-renewal of protective statuses such as Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).

- There is a significant shift away from formal judicial proceedings toward "expedited removal." This allows immigration officers to deport individuals without a court hearing, bypassing due process and increasing the speed of deportations.

- The speakers emphasized that while statutory laws haven't necessarily changed, the executive branch has empowered individual immigration officers with broad discretionary power. This has led to inconsistent and often arbitrary application of the law.

Enforcement Tactics and Human Rights Concerns

- Advocates reported that immigration enforcement officers often use deceptive tactics, such as dressing in plain clothes, driving unmarked cars, or identifying themselves vaguely as "police" to gain entry to homes.

- Mass raids often result in "collateral arrests," where individuals (including U.S. citizens or permanent residents) are detained solely based on their presence or appearance, regardless of their legal status.

- The panel described inhumane conditions in detention centers, including the withholding of medical care (specifically during COVID-19) and the frequent transfer of detainees across state lines (e.g., California to Texas) to sever their access to legal counsel.

Case Studies

The panel presented two case studies to illustrate systemic failures:

1. Marriage Visa Denial
   - A marriage-based petition for a Thai national was denied due to an officer's cultural incompetence. The officer cited the couple's "minimal possessions" as evidence of a sham marriage, failing to recognize their adherence to Buddhist principles of minimalism.

2. Labor Trafficking Victims
   - Venezuelan migrants, trafficked to clean up hazardous waste following LA wildfires, were arrested by ICE agents at a courthouse while attending hearings to dismiss their deportation charges. Despite being identified as trafficking victims eligible for T-Visas, they were detained and eventually deported.

Conclusion

The session concluded with a discussion on the shrinking cap for refugee admissions and the precarious nature of federal funding for advocacy groups. The speakers urged for stronger collaboration between legal practitioners, academics, and policymakers to gather data and advocate for the protection of immigrant rights and due process.

PANEL DISCUSSION 5:
Safety at Work in Southeast Asia

Chair: Rosalia Sciortino Sumaryono (IPSR, Mahidol University)

Panelists: Reiko Harima (Asian Migration Center & Mekong Migration Network), Benjamin Harkins (ILO), and Wasurat Homsud (Raks Thai Foundation)

Key Takeaways from the presentations

1. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is a rights issue requiring multiple entry points: training, enforcement, and social protection — not just technical safety measures. Practical measures (PPE, language-appropriate training, first aid) must pair with legal/policy reforms (coverage in social security, clear employer responsibility across subcontracting chains).

2. Reporting and enforcement gaps — especially where labor inspection is conflated with immigration enforcement — prevent migrants from reporting dangers or seeking compensation. Establishing firewalls, anonymous reporting channels, confidential mechanisms and whistleblower protections are critical to build trust and increase reporting.

Sector- and context-specific approaches work best: fishing, construction, agriculture and manufacturing each present unique OSH and trafficking risks. Effective responses combine local-level interventions (provincial inspections, migrant learning centers, CSO-led pre-departure training) with upstream changes (supply-chain accountability, buyer pressure, cross-border benefit payment mechanisms).

Benjamin Harkins — Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Rights for Migrant Workers (Ship to Shore Rights / ILO)

- Framed OSH as a fundamental right for all workers, including migrants, referencing ILO standards (Conventions 155, 197, 190). Emphasized training in migrants' languages and gender-specific risk info.

- Presented alarming global sector data: hundreds of millions of non-fatal injuries yearly, ~3 million work-related deaths, large numbers of fishing-related deaths, and high prevalence of forced labor among migrant fishers.

- Shared program approaches: pre-departure OSH orientations through Migrant Worker Resource Centres (reached tens of thousands), media campaigns (BBC Media Action videos), innovative training tools (board game, playing cards), joint multidisciplinary vessel inspections in Indonesia, and workplace training plus collective agreements and first-aid kits in Thailand.

- Stressed links between abusive labor practices (excessive hours, forced labor) and higher injury rates, and noted gaps in labor inspection coverage for fishing.

Reiko Harima — Case studies: Migrants' Safety at Work in ASEAN (Mekong Migration Network)

- Presented case-collection across sectors (agriculture, fishing, construction, manufacturing) illustrating recurring workplace accidents and barriers to compensation and social protection.

- Key sector findings:

    1. Agriculture - isolation, lack of PPE and exclusion from protection;

    2. Fishing - hazardous conditions, trafficking/forced labor;

    3. Construction - subcontracting complicates responsibility and denies entitlements;

    4. Manufacturing - speed/targets increase injuries, visa status often excludes workers from SSF/compensation.

- Case examples: severe amputations, deaths in building collapse with families unable to access benefits due to documentation/subcontracting confusion, and terminated workers denied adequate compensation.

- Recommendations: require free adequate PPE and multilingual OSH training; increase and reorient labor inspections; create confidential reporting and whistleblower protections; ensure compensation, rehabilitation and access to social protection (including for precarious workers); consult migrant representatives and CSOs; enable timely cross-border payment of benefits; strengthen wider labor rights (change employers, organize).

Wasurat Homsut / Raks Thai Foundation — Thailand-focused findings and cases (Raks Thai Foundation /MMN member)

- Overview of Raks Thai's work across provinces delivering health, HIV/TB services, outreach, community mapping and referrals; described migrant demographics in Thailand and low SSF enrollment (~21% registered under SSF).

- Shared a human-rights assessment in southern Thailand seafood supply chains (240 migrant workers): high accident risk, poor PPE, document confiscation, low access to health services, day-to-day contracts, unfair wages, heavy lifting, chemical exposure and pregnancy discrimination.

- Detailed case of a fisher's death where family faced major hurdles receiving Workers' Compensation (documents, border conflict, bank access) — process took >10 months and they received only partial payment. Also TB cases where workers were fired or isolated by employers.

- Conclusions: echoed sector vulnerability, systemic exploitation, weak enforcement, subcontracting abuses, and need for multi-stakeholder solutions.

- Recommendations: included enforcing safe workplaces, inclusive health checks, access to SSF/compensation, participatory monitoring, and policy coordination.
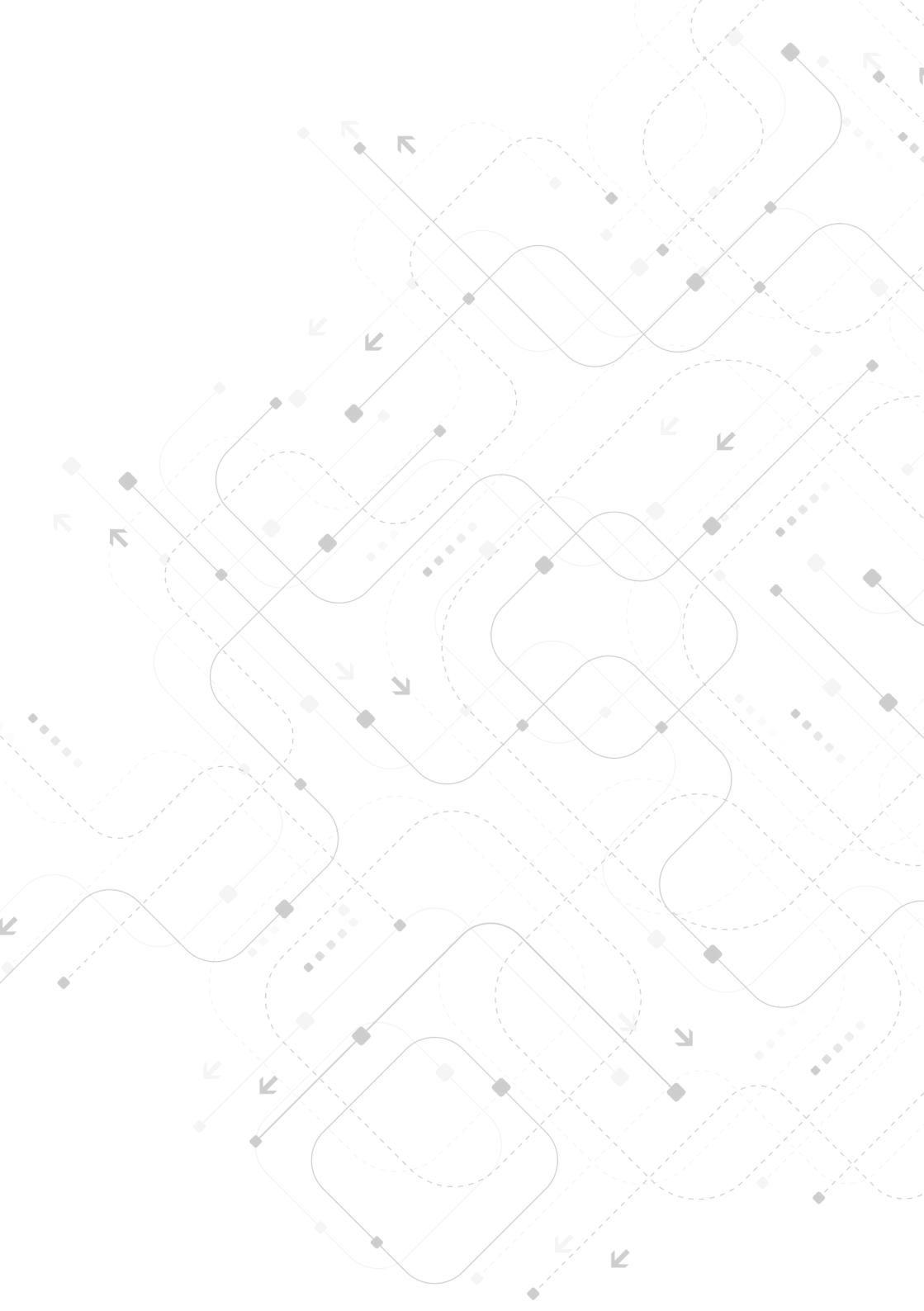
PRESENTATION SESSION **1**

Politics, Policy, and Migration Governance • Scenarios in Forced Migration and Conflict

Chair:
Chalermpol Chamchan
(IPSR, Mahidol University)

Factors Influencing the Resilience of Migrant Workers Experiencing Recurrent Flooding in Mueang Pattani District, Thailand

Anlaya Smuseneto, Prince of Songkhla University, Thailand

The presented research found that migrant workers in Mueang District, Pattani Province, who frequently face recurrent flooding, show only a moderate level of resilience. Their ability to cope with these floods is mainly shaped by income, disaster-preparedness knowledge, length of residence in Thailand, and community support, which together explain slightly over a half of the variance in resilience. Strengthening economic stability, preparedness knowledge, and community support turned to be essential to improve migrants' resilience to future floods.

Sustainable Strategies for Recurrent Flood Management: The Role of Government and Community in Southern Border Provinces and Migrant Workers in Southern Thailand

Surainee Sainui, Prince of Songkhla University, Thailand

The research indicated that in Pattani Province, where recurrent flooding affects both locals and migrant workers, government policies on flood management often fail in practice due to weak continuity and limited attention to migrant needs. Local communities did manage to develop their own adaptive strategies, but migrant workers remain only partially included in these support networks. Sustainable flood management depends on coordinated government action, strong cooperation between state and community, and the use of different inclusive mechanisms, ensuring that migrants are fully integrated into local resilience efforts.

Protecting Domestic Migrant Workers Amidst Incomplete Reforms: Indonesia and the Philippines' Strategies Under the GCC Kafala System

Lulita Sauman Nur Fajriah, Universitas Pasundan, Indonesia

The research presented that migrant domestic workers from Indonesia and the Philippines working in GCC countries remain highly vulnerable under the kafala sponsorship system, which restricts their mobility and excludes them from basic labor protections. Despite only partial and selective GCC reforms, Indonesia has strengthened its recruitment governance through the One Channel System, while the Philippines has enhanced its institutional framework via, e.g., the Department of Migrant Workers. Genuine protection of domestic workers requires deeper structural changes in destination countries and more effective bilateral mechanisms to address ongoing risks and violations.

Navigating Precarity in the Context of Southeast Asia's Migration Governance Systems: Theoretical and Empirical Insights into the Experiences of Urban Refugees

Mary Rose Geraldine A. Sarausad, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

The research highlighted that urban refugees in Southeast Asia keep their lives in a constant state of precarity shaped by restrictive migration policies, lack of legal status, persistent invisibility in city environment, etc. These conditions create a form of "permanent temporariness," where uncertainty, fear of deportation, and limited access to resources severely constrain refugees' ability to rebuild their lives. Stronger legal protections, recognition of refugee rights, and more sustainable support mechanisms to ensure meaningful integration and greater stability for displaced populations in host communities, are required in this sense
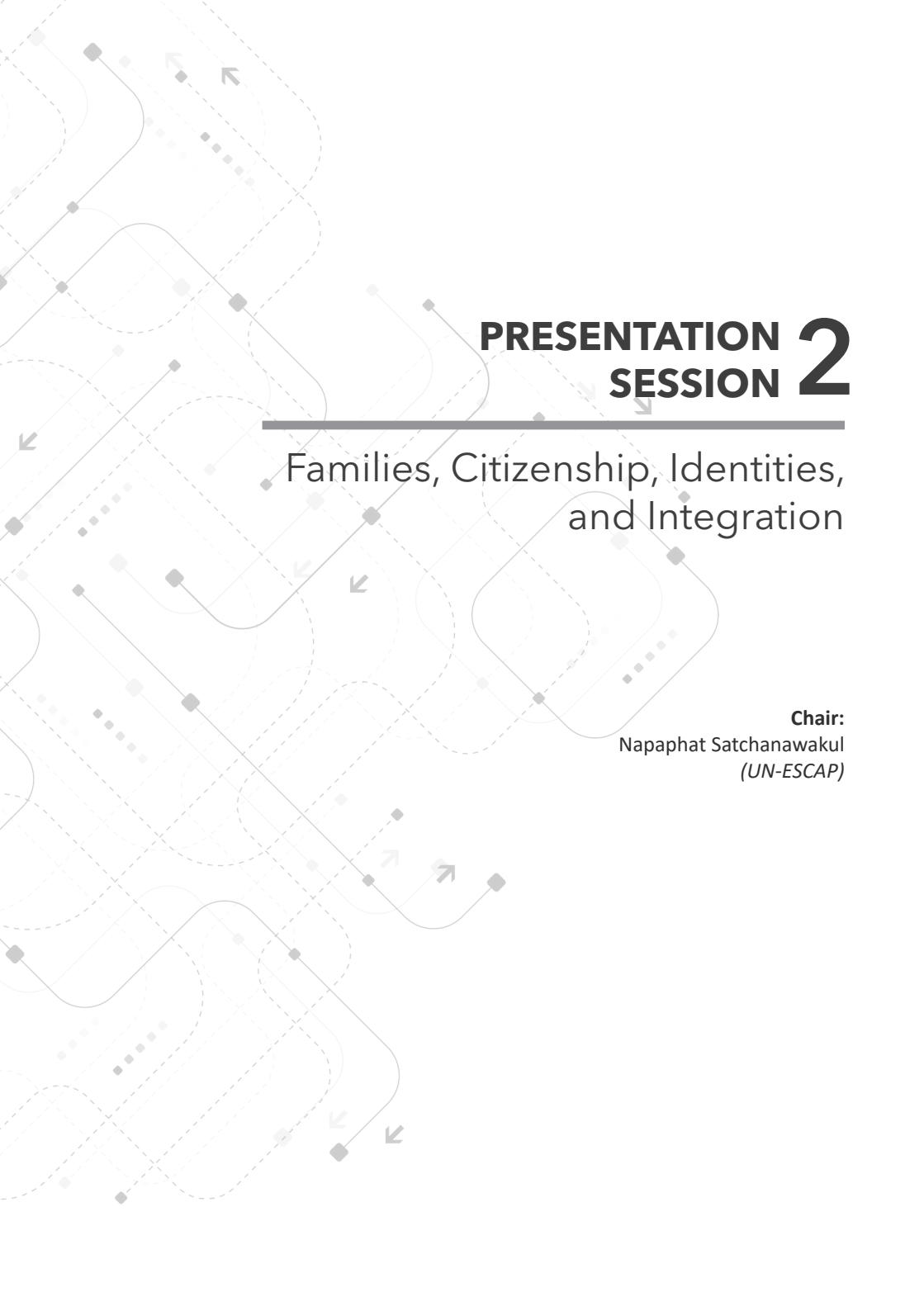
PRESENTATION SESSION 2

Families, Citizenship, Identities, and Integration

Chair:
Napaphat Satchanawakul
(UN-ESCAP)

The session highlighted how migration aspirations and outcomes among youth and workers in Southeast Asia are shaped by overlapping forces of family context, household migration histories, conflict conditions, mental health trajectories, and transnational digital practices. These factors were shown to interact in complex and mutually reinforcing ways, producing diverse mobility pathways. Together, the presentations underscored the importance of situating migration decisions within broader social, cultural, and psychological environments.

Influence of Family, Religion, and Migration Contexts on the Intention of Youth Living in Thailand's Southernmost Provinces to Migrate for Work Abroad.

Kathleen Ford, Michigan University, United States

Kathleen Ford and colleagues' research in Thailand's Deep South demonstrated how religion, social networks, and parental absence collectively influence Muslim youths' intentions to migrate. Their work showed that these influences operate not in isolation, but through deeply rooted community expectations and long-standing family disruptions. This highlights how culturally embedded social structures shape the moral and practical frameworks of migration decision-making.

Childhood Experiences of Parental Migration and the Mental Health of Young Adults in Indonesia and the Philippines

Lucy Jordan, James Cook University, Australia

Lucy Jordan's comparative life-course study showed how childhood instability and caregiver mental health shape long-term well-being among young adults in Indonesia and the Philippines. Her findings explained how early adversity translates into later vulnerabilities, including those linked to migration stressors. This reinforces the need to consider mental health and family stability as structural determinants of migrant pathways.

Effect of Household Migration History on International Labor Migration Aspirations among Filipino Youth: An Inverse Probability of Treatment Weighting using Propensity Score

Queenie Rose E. Chico, University of the Philippines Population Institute, the Philippines

Queenie Chico's nationally representative analysis from the Philippines demonstrated that household migration histories causally increase youths' aspirations to work abroad. The study provided evidence that migration becomes normalized through intergenerational transmission, establishing a self-reinforcing mobility culture within families. This offers a clear empirical foundation for understanding how long-term migration patterns persist across generations.

Living between Places in the Digital Era: Translocal Embedding and Anchoring among Thai Migrant Workers in South Korea

Reena Tadee, University of Vienna, Austria

Reena Tadee's presentation showed how information and communication technology (ICT) enables Thai migrant workers in South Korea to sustain social, economic, and emotional ties across translocal spaces. Her study illustrated how digital connectivity mitigates distance-related stressors and enhances migrants' ability to maintain participation in home communities. The findings point to the growing centrality of digital practices in shaping contemporary transnational migration experiences.

Issues and Discussion

The session identified both similarities and context-specific differences across the studies, each contributing to a richer regional understanding of migration processes. Several common mechanisms such as intergenerational transmission of migration ideologies, socio-digital influences, and household embeddedness were consistently observed. At the same time, differing structural contexts such as conflict exposure, unstable family systems, and migrant-sending norms shaped distinctive patterns of mobility. In general, the collective discussion emphasized the need for cross-country collaboration to better understand and respond to the evolving dynamics of youth and migrant mobility in Southeast Asia.

Cross-Cutting Themes during the discussion

- Intergenerational Transmission- all studies demonstrated how migration is formed by norms, and expectations which were passed across generations

- Household embeddedness-Families serve as the primary anchor that shapes migration aspirations, mental health, and the willingness to pursue mobility. Parental migration, family disruptions, and caregiving environments collectively create conditions that either facilitate or deter migration.

- Socio-Digital Influence- the use of ICT emerged as a powerful determinant for both aspirations (Philippines) and lived experiences (Korea).

- Need for Integrated Approaches-The session revealed the value of combining demographic, psychological, sociological, and digital methodologies to understand modern mobility.
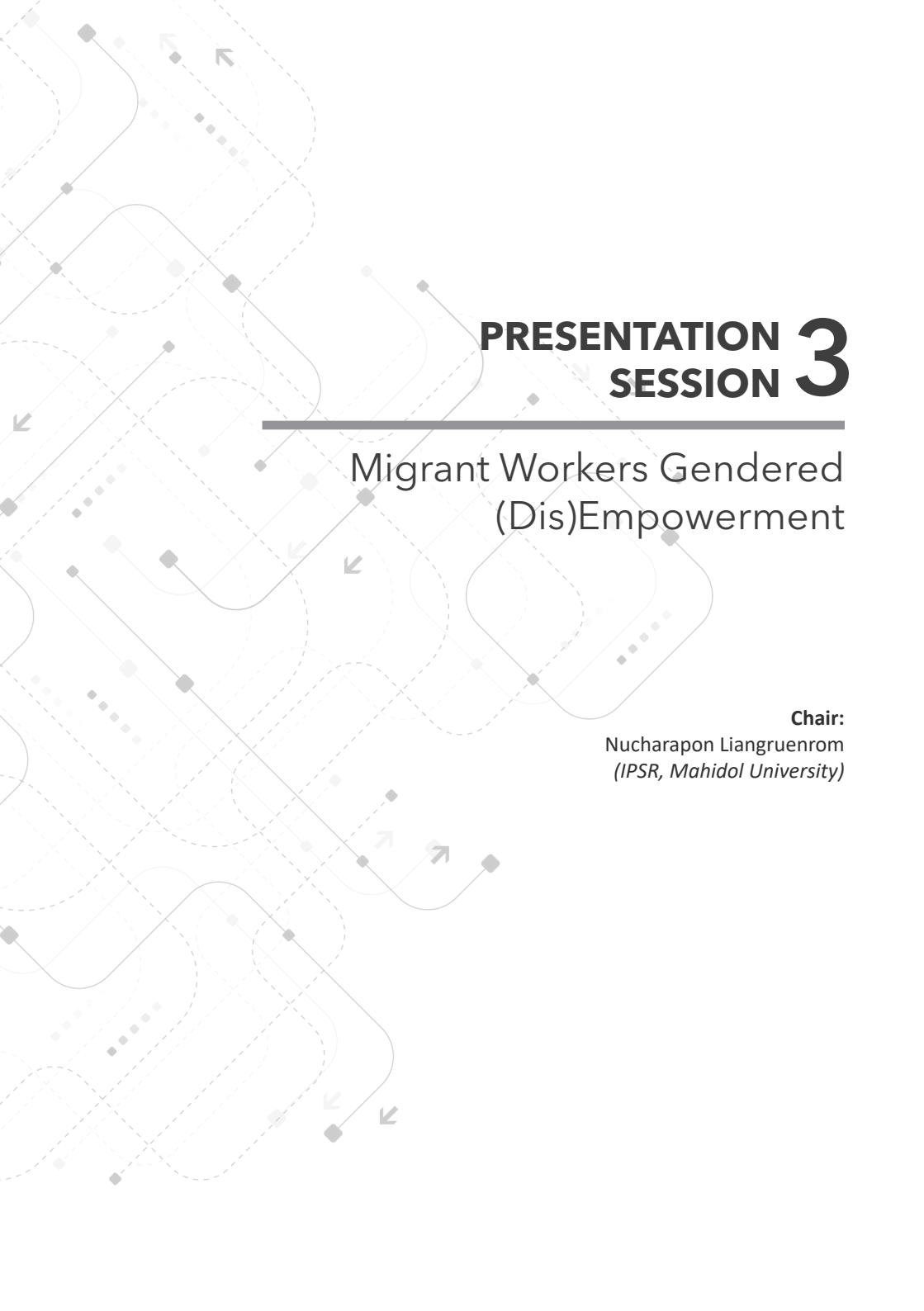
PRESENTATION SESSION 3

Migrant Workers Gendered (Dis)Empowerment

Chair:
Nucharapon Liangruenrom
(IPSR, Mahidol University)

**Impact of International Labour Migration on Women's Empowerment:
A Case Study of Urban 'Underserved' Community, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Purnima Dehiwela, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

The report showed that international labour migration increases women's access to financial resources and strengthens their agency, giving them greater influence in household decision-making compared to their pre-migration situation. Yet, these gains do not automatically translate into broader empowerment, as women's achievements depend heavily on the social, economic, and environmental conditions that shaped their lives before migrating. Policies should go beyond economic benefits and also address social empowerment, which is essential for achieving meaningful gender equality among underserved urban women in Sri Lanka.

Gender and Seasonal Migration from Thailand to Finland for Wild Berry Picking

Sirijit Sunanta, Mahidol University, Thailand

The presentation explained that seasonal migration of Isan farmers to Finland for wild berry picking grew out of earlier marriage migration of Isan women, who first connected Thai villages to Finnish berry networks. As the industry expanded, recruitment became highly organized and increasingly male-oriented, with women accepted mainly when accompanying husbands and required to prove physical capability. Women's involvement is shaped by gender norms, care responsibilities, and their negotiated roles within families and communities.

Mothers at the Margins: Displacement Pathways, Daily Stress, and Caregiving in Northern Thailand

*Stephanie M. Koning, University of Nevada, Reno, United States*

The presentation covered the point that migrant mothers along the Thailand-Myanmar border face constant stress due to conflict, restrictive migration policies, and policing. Caregiving pressures differ by location, but all women experience limited mobility, fear of authorities, and financial or emotional strain. Here, stronger protection and support systems might reduce structural insecurity and help displaced mothers build resilience.

Evaluating Health Literacy and Stigma: Knowledge, Perceptions, and Gender-Based Participation in TB and HIV/AIDS Interventions Among Migrant Communities in Mahachai

Wai Yan Phyo Naing, Raks Thai Foundation (CARE International Thailand)

The presentation mentioned that migrant communities in Mahachai have significant gaps in knowledge about TB and HIV/AIDS, shaped by language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to healthcare. Misconceptions (especially related to HIV/AIDS stigma) and gender differences in participation highlight the need for culturally sensitive, targeted health education. So, stronger cooperation between health authorities and community organizations is the solution to improve communication, raise health literacy, and reduce disease rates among migrants.

PRESENTATION SESSION **4**

International Migration in Sex Work

Chair:
Kaoru Aoyama
(Kobe University)

This session brings together four studies that critically examine the intersections of migration, sex work, and policy environments in Asia and Europe, challenging conventional narratives and highlighting the lived realities of migrant sex workers navigating structural inequalities, criminalization, and stigmatization.

Crossing Borders, Crossing Narratives: Rethinking Migrant Sex Work and Trafficking

Kaoru Aoyama, Kobe University, Japan

The first presentation introduces a nine-country collaborative project that reconsiders the binary framing of sex work versus trafficking. By applying feminist and participatory approaches, the study reveals that migrant sex work and trafficking exist along a continuum shaped by restrictive migration policies, social stigma, and unequal power dynamics. The research engages sex workers as partners in knowledge production, emphasizing equitable research practices and the need for policies grounded in their actual experiences rather than ideological assumptions.

Using Sociogram as a Participatory Method to Visualise Networks of Migrant Sex Workers in UK

Chihiro Toya, SOAS University of London, UK

Complementing this, the second presentation discusses the use of sociograms to visualize migrant sex workers' networks in the UK. This participatory method enables sex workers themselves to map their relationships, identify influential actors, and reflect on how networks impact safety, mobility, and decision-making. Findings show that although UK laws restricting collaborative work force many sex workers into isolated conditions, community-based spaces enable mutual support and sharing of crucial information. The study also critiques increasingly punitive anti-migration and anti-trafficking policies, calling for rights-based alternatives that reflect the diversity of migrant experiences.

Migration and sex work in France. Safety and Violence in an Abolitionist Context

*Hélène Le Bail, French National Research Center, Science Po Paris, France*

The third presentation contextualizes migrant sex work in France, where the 2016 abolitionist law decriminalized selling sexual services while criminalizing clients. Despite intentions to combat trafficking, the legislation has intensified risks, exposing sex workers—many of whom are migrants—to police harassment, public hostility, and reduced access to protection. Interviews illuminate how legal structures can push migrants toward exploitative networks while limiting their ability to create supportive safety nets. The findings highlight a disconnect between policy intent and sex workers' lived realities.

Policy Challenges and Pathways: Thai Sex Workers' Migration Experiences Abroad

Nucharee Srivirojana, Mahidol University, Thailand

The final presentation examines the migration experiences of Thai sex workers abroad, emphasizing both agency and vulnerability. Economic need and social stigma drive migration, often facilitated by informal networks, brokers, or traffickers. While some migrants secure better earnings and improved circumstances, others face coercion, legal prosecution, and repatriation processes that deepen marginalization. The study underscores the importance of policy reforms distinguishing consensual labor migration from trafficking, alongside measures such as safe migration channels, legal support, and peer-based protections.

Collectively, the four studies underscore the urgent need for policies that center sex workers' rights, agency, and lived experiences, rather than criminalization and ideological frameworks.
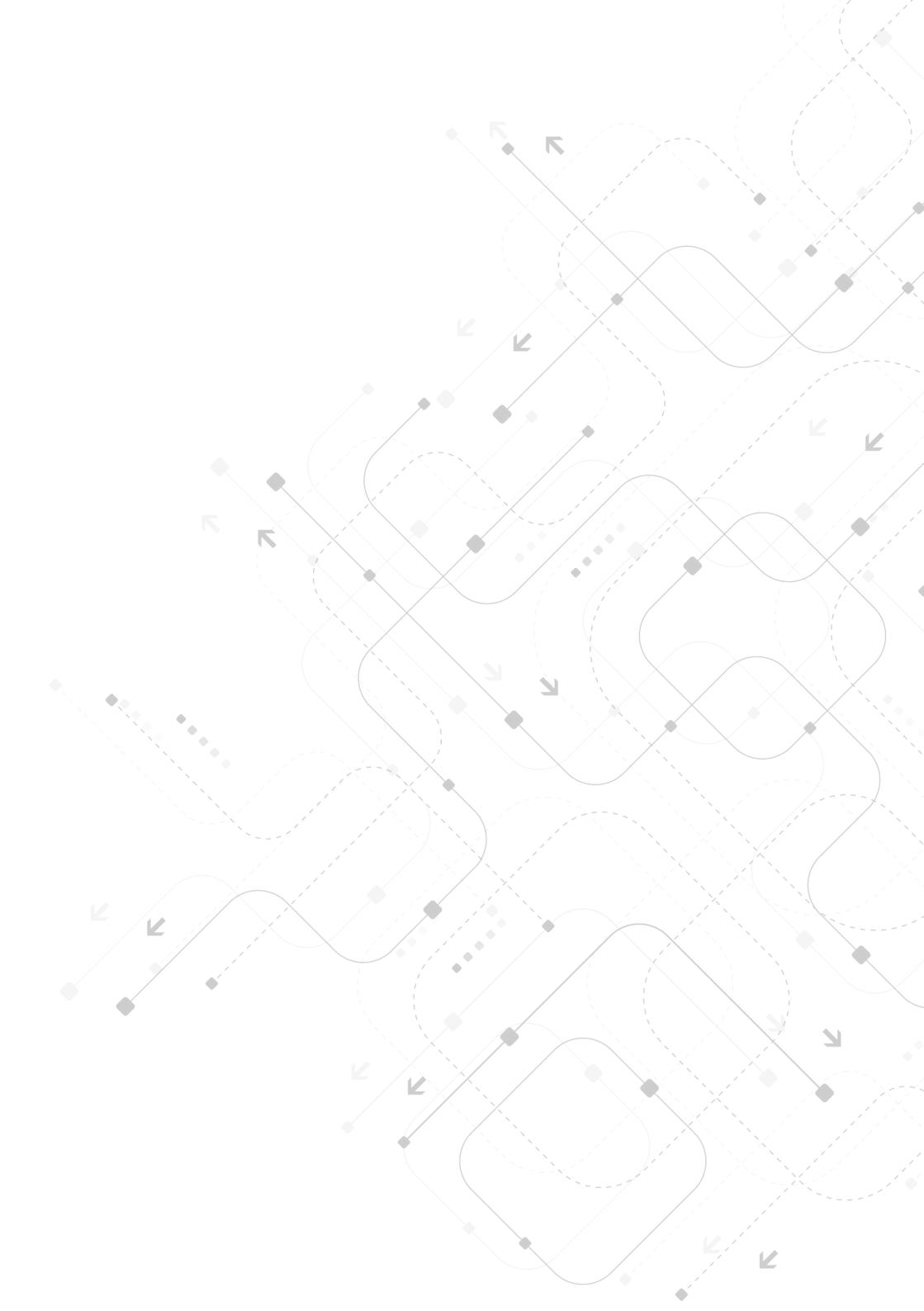
PRESENTATION SESSION 5

Migration Research Methodologies

Chair:
Aree Jampaklay
(IPSR, Mahidol University)

This session presents four research contributions that explore innovative approaches to understanding migration dynamics, data systems, demographic change, and the critical role of social networks in migration processes across different regional contexts.

Using Admin Data to Create Cost-Effective, Policy-Relevant Measures of International Migration

John Bryant, Bayesian Demography Limited, New Zealand

The first presentation discusses the potential of administrative border-crossing records as an efficient and policy-relevant alternative to traditional demographic data sources. With many countries facing declining census responses and rising survey costs, the authors demonstrate how nations such as Australia and New Zealand compile individual travel histories to generate official migration statistics. The study argues that similar systems could be adopted more widely, especially given contemporary advances in data processing. Using Sri Lanka as an example, the research highlights how linked administrative data can offer valuable insights into the mobility, deployment, and characteristics of migrant workers, while also outlining the practical challenges of implementing such systems.

Scenario-Based Migration Flow Projections: A Probabilistic Approach

Jakob Zellmann, University of Bologna, Italy

The second paper introduces a hierarchical Bayesian model for scenario-based migration flow projections. The approach addresses a key limitation in conventional migration forecasting, which often assumes future patterns will mirror those of the past. The proposed framework allows users to incorporate alternative scenarios—including political, environmental, and economic changes—into projections of migration inflows and outflows. The model combines origin- and destination-specific migration flows, integrates future covariate projections, and quantifies uncertainty. This flexible and transparent approach supports evidence-based policy planning in contexts where migration dynamics are increasingly volatile and uncertain.

From Local to Transnational: The Interconnectedness of Multi-Level Social Networks in Seasonal Migration of Thai Wild Berry Pickers in Finland

Sura Chandaeng, Mahidol University, Thailand

The final paper explores transnational seasonal migration of Thai wild berry pickers to Finland. Drawing on interviews and social network mapping, the study demonstrates how multi-level networks—ranging from family ties and village groups to private recruitment agencies and government offices—shape migrants' recruitment, working conditions, and risk exposure. Strong social connections facilitate trust, coordination, and problem-solving, while those with weaker networks face heightened vulnerability. The study calls for greater transparency and stronger institutional protections in this labor migration system.
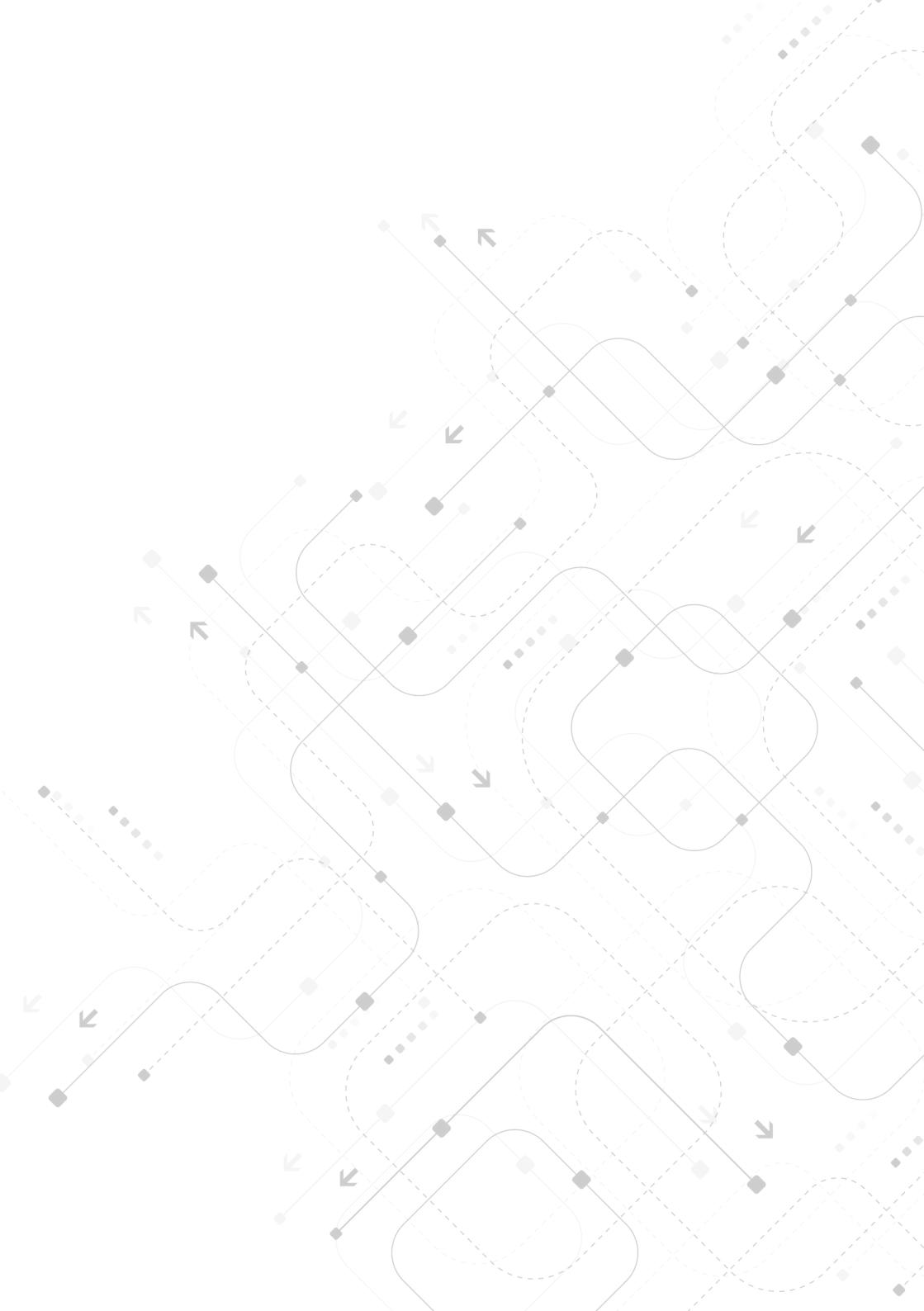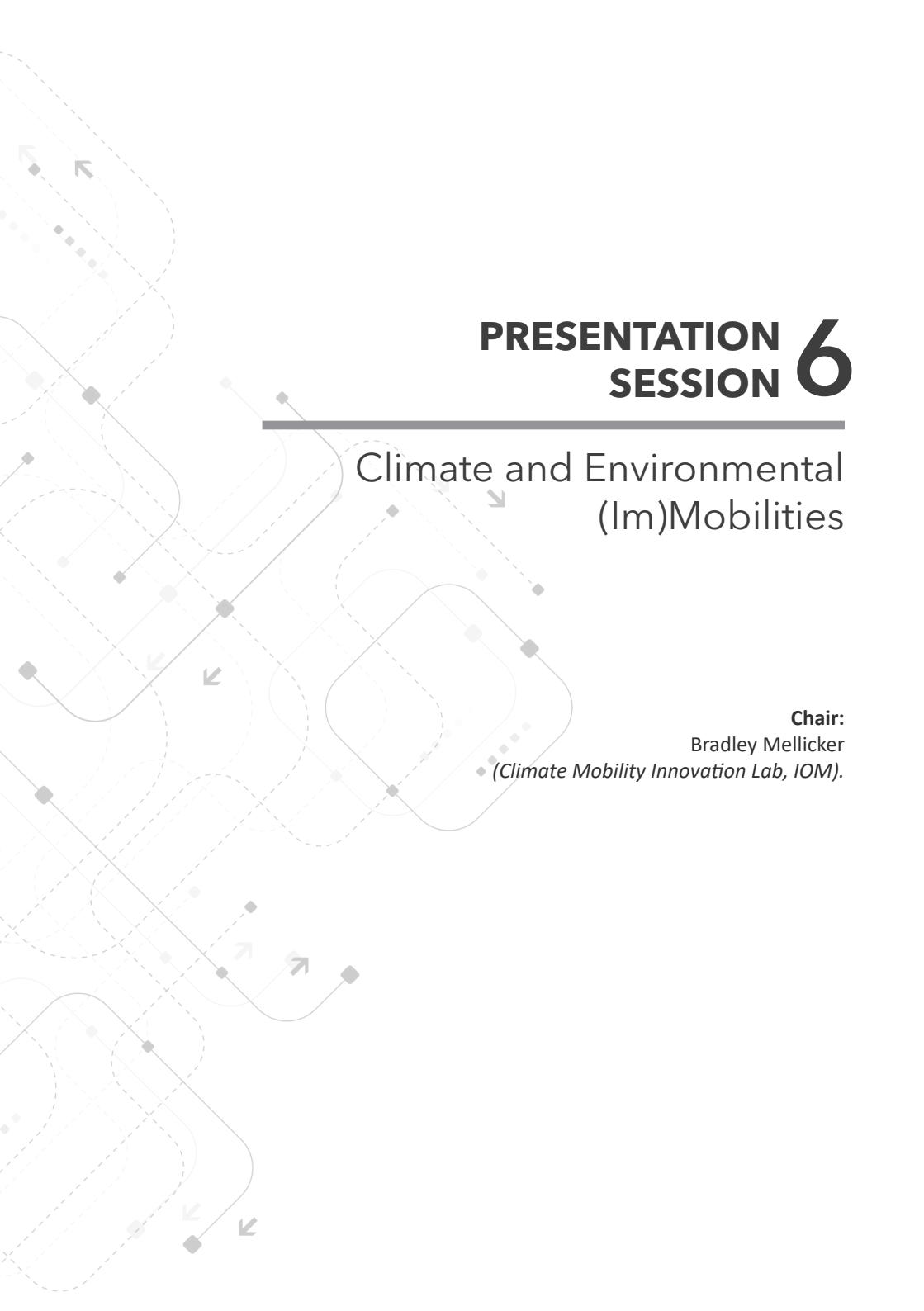
PRESENTATION SESSION 6

Climate and Environmental (Im)Mobilities

Chair:
Bradley Mellicker
(Climate Mobility Innovation Lab, IOM).

The session on "Climate and Environmental (Im)Mobilities" featured four different cases from Italy, India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. Presentations were made by Lorenzo Casprini (University of Bologna), Manish Mamgai (IIPS, Mumbai), Jannatul Ferdous (Comilla University), and Sut Ring Htoi Awng (Chiang Mai University). Bradley Mellicker from the Climate Mobility Innovation Lab of IOM moderated the session.

Climate migration in European soil? Exploring drought exposure and internal migration in Italy

Lorenzo Casprini, University of Bologna, Italy

Lorenzo discussed climate migration in Europe and explored the case of drought exposure and internal migration in Italy.

- He has mentioned that climate-driven internal migration occurs in Italy, despite Italy being a developed country, due to drought-related climatic vulnerability.

- His findings challenged the notion that climate migration is a problem only for developing countries.

- Foreign-born residents are more likely to migrate during adverse climatic conditions than Italian-born citizens, and pointed out that migration responses often have a time lag, reflecting complex household adaptation before relocation.

- Proactive policy and early warning systems are needed for effective climate adaptation.

Between Eroding Resources and Emerging Pathways: Migration as an Adaptive Response to Environmental Change in the Rural Himalayas

Manish Mamgai, International Institute for Population Sciences, India

Manish has made the presentation of the case from Uttarakhand of India discussing the migration as an adaptive response to environmental change in the far Himalayas.

- He has mentioned that environmental degradation and unpredictable climates are reducing the viability of rural agriculture and forcing adaptation.

- He has presented evidence that a significant number of households reported declining yields and that many face seasonal disasters and shrinking water resources. Migration, especially male outmigration, is a key coping mechanism to secure household finances. He has also pointed out that migration success is linked with education and caste, but benefits are unevenly distributed.

- This study recommended promoting socially inclusive and sustainable strategies in mountain areas.

Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: A Humanitarian Crisis and Its Environmental Ramifications

Jannatul Ferdous, Comilla University, Bangladesh

Jannatul has brought the case of Rohingya refugees and environmental Impacts from Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

- Conducting a systematic review and secondary situational analysis, she has reported that over a million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar have caused significant deforestation, resource contamination, and biodiversity loss. Pointed out that current governance and interventions are insufficient for reversing ecological damage.

- She recommended integrating humanitarian activities with ecological sustainability (e.g., afforestation, renewable energy, eco-friendly waste management) and the need for a unified policy among the government, donors, and local communities for long-term solutions.

Impacts of Armed Conflict and Rare-Earth Extraction on Local Livelihoods and Environment in Chihpwi and Pang Wa, Kachin State, Myanmar

Sut Ring Htoi Awng, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Sut Awng has presented the case of rare-earth mining and conflict in Myanmar.

- He has pointed out that rare-earth mining in Kachin State causes significant water contamination, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss. Local livelihoods from farming and herding have declined, with rising income inequality and social challenges (e.g., youth addiction).

- Some households benefit briefly from land sales or mining labor, but gains lack stability and come with social costs.

- He has stressed that weak regulation and a lack of accountability intensify insecurity, and there is an urgent need for policies to protect communities and ensure equitable outcomes.
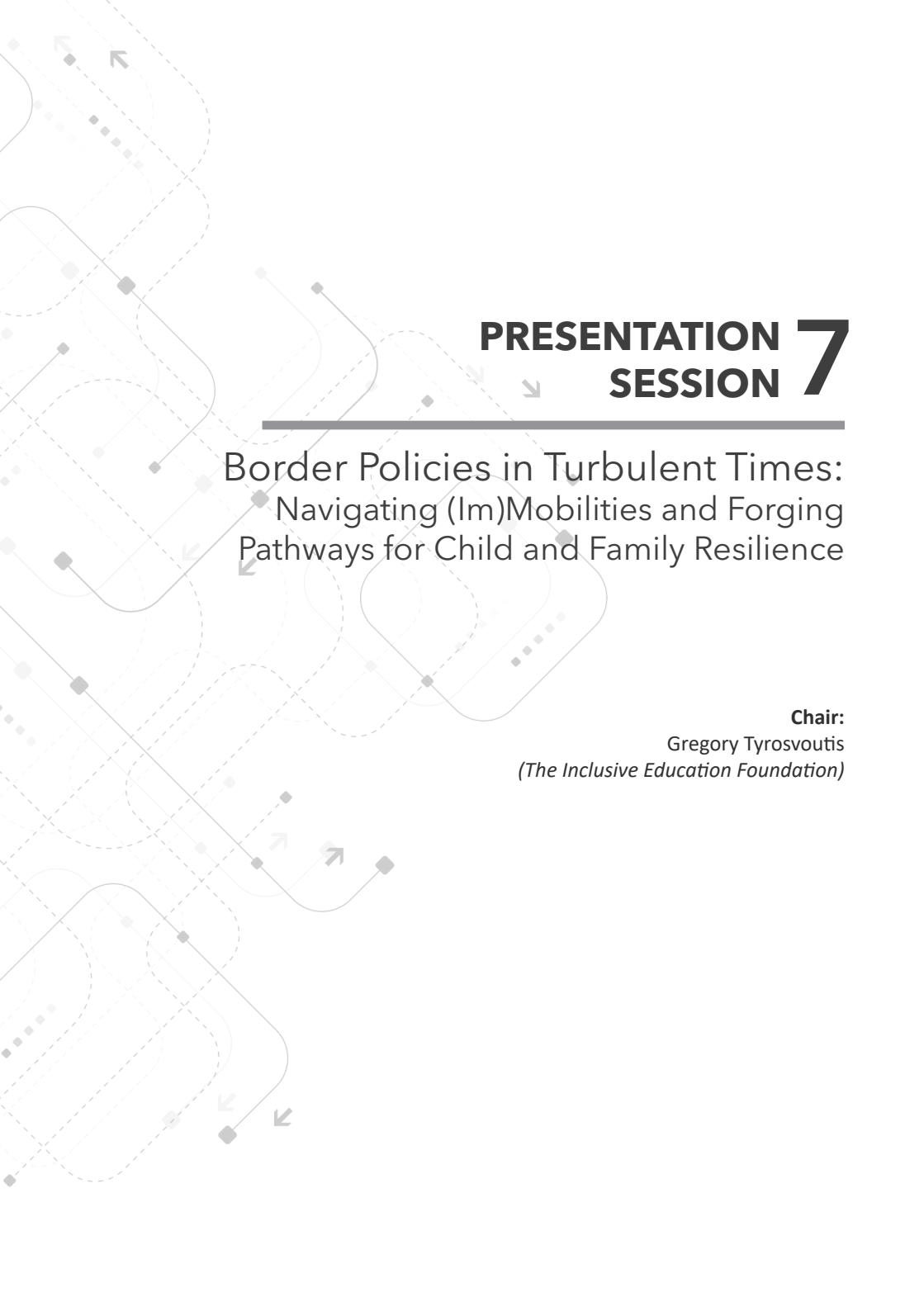
PRESENTATION SESSION 7

Border Policies in Turbulent Times:
Navigating (Im)Mobilities and Forging Pathways for Child and Family Resilience

Chair:
Gregory Tyrosvoutis
(The Inclusive Education Foundation)

This session explored the compounding challenges facing displaced Myanmar communities along the Thai-Myanmar border, focusing on healthcare access, educational equity, and psychosocial support through positive parenting interventions.

Situational Update: Migration, Health Care and Protection on the Border

Saw Than Lwin, Mae Tao Clinic, Thailand

Healthcare and Protection Challenges

Saw Than Lwin (Mae Tao Clinic) provided a situational update on the increasing strain placed on border healthcare services following the political crisis in Myanmar.

There has been a significant increase in outpatient and inpatient cases, surgeries, and maternity needs, overwhelming civil society organizations (CSOs).

Migrant populations face instability, lack of legal documentation, and high levels of stress and domestic violence.

To manage the overflow, Mae Tao Clinic has strengthened referrals to Thai public hospitals and is developing a referral coordination center by 2025. The speaker emphasized the necessity of formal collaboration between CSOs, the Thai government, and academic institutions to sustain these systems.

Half Left Behind: Policy Pathways to Educational Equity Along the Thai-Myanmar Border

Sunantha Inkhamchuea, The Inclusive Education Foundation

Sunantha presented findings from the report "Left Behind," analyzing educational access in Tak Province. Despite a high demand for education, significant out-of-school rates persist due to financial costs (transportation/fees), lack of documentation, and language barriers.

A survey of migrant households indicates a drastic shift in intent; while 50% wished to return to Myanmar in 2019, nearly 98% now view their long-term future in Thailand. Consequently, families are increasingly prioritizing Thai public school enrollment for integration.

The presentation called for streamlined enrollment processes, expanded nursery support to free up older siblings often burdened with childcare, and financial assistance for transportation.

Mini Film Screening: "Being Family": A Documentary about a Film Promoting, Positive Parenting and Mental Health
(Documentary film by Sermpanya Foundation)

Nway Nway Oo, Mae Tao Clinic, Thailand

Well-being in Contexts of Migration: Strengthening Positive Parenting and, Reducing Violence Against Children through a Community Film Intervention,

Khaing Zar Lwin, Global Parenting Initiative (GPI)

Psychosocial Support: The "Being Family" Film Intervention

Nway Nway Oo and Khaing Zar Lwin presented a community-based intervention designed to reduce violence against children and promote positive parenting in high-stress migrant environments.

The team co-produced a film, "Being Family," involving migrants as actors and consultants to ensure cultural relevance.

A cluster randomized control trial demonstrated that the film intervention was feasible and low-cost. Results showed a significant reduction in physical violence against children and an increase in positive parenting behaviors among viewers.

The project illustrates the efficacy of "edutainment" and media-based approaches in changing social norms within low-resource, displaced communities.

Conclusion

Chair Gregory Tyrosvoutis concluded the session by noting that the region is currently failing to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). He reiterated that because displaced families now intend to settle permanently in Thailand, there is an urgent need for the Thai government and international bodies to shift from short-term emergency responses to long-term integration strategies in health and education.
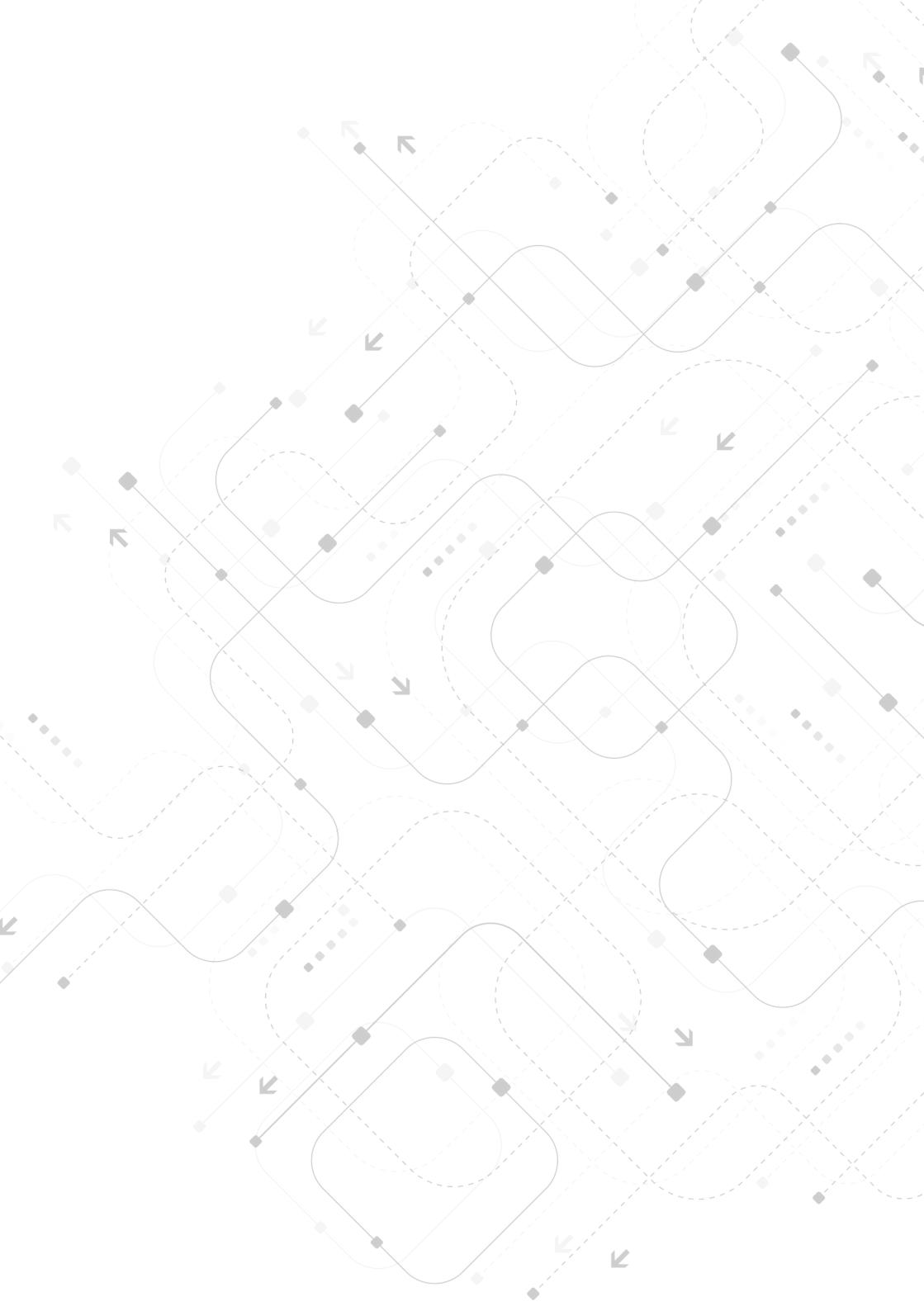
PRESENTATION SESSION 8

Migrant Vulnerable Groups: Quality of Life, Community, and Wellbeing

Chair:
Bhubate Samutachak
(IPSR, Mahidol University)

Key Takeaways from the presentations

1. Legal invisibility + economic precarity are the main drivers of poor quality of life — undocumented status causes exploitation, limited services, and mental health stress.

2. Families and local networks are primary resilience sources — transnational remittances, churches/communities and multi generational roles keep households afloat.

Disability and gender amplify vulnerability — disabled migrants are largely invisible in data/policy (double jeopardy) and women/girls carry disproportionate care and economic burdens.

Rohingya Refugees Family Dynamics: Stuck in a Limbo

Nur Nadia Lukmanulhakim, University of Nottingham Malaysia

Study: ongoing PhD fieldwork in Malaysia (case study: a multi household Rohingya family — pseudonym "Nira"). Preliminary findings from participatory observation of second generation Rohingya in Malaysia.

Context: Rohingya form a large share of Malaysia's registered refugees (≈117,000 of ~200,000 in 2025); repatriation not possible; resettlement quotas very small → many children born in Malaysia (growing 1st–3rd generations).

Key findings:

• Family as agency: families supply finance (remittances from resettled members), social connections (job introductions), and emotional support.

• Family as conflict source: tensions over money use, gendered care burdens, early/child marriage among some second generation women.

• Family as navigational resource: second generation helps with documents, hospital/court visits; transnational ties sustain livelihoods in limbo.

Implications:

Need refugee policies supporting family livelihoods, material & psychosocial support, and recognition of social media/technology in maintaining transnational ties.

The Resilience of Chin Migrants Who Migrated to Bangkok after the 2021 Coup in Burma

Jimmy Rezar Boi, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Study: qualitative MA research (Sukhumvit/Bangkok site) on Chin people who migrated after the 2021 coup in Burma.

Context: Chin State has many displaced; most Chin migrants go to India/Malaysia; Thailand receives fewer but has visible Bangkok communities (church gatherings ~1,000–2,000 people observed).

Key findings:

- Insecurity from lack of legal status, language barriers (Thai), limited job options, lower wages, discrimination, risk of debt and deportation, mental stress.
- Common jobs: restaurant work, housekeeping, part time/manual labour; some find white collar work after legalization.

Livelihood & resilience strategies:

- Job seeking via networks, online ads, door to door; skill adaptation (learning Thai, new skills); strict budgeting and remittances; churches and kin provide financial, informational and emotional support.
- Coping: religious faith, hobbies, peer support, learning Thai (classes/online/interaction), use of Google Translate/body language.
- Outlook: many wish to return when political situation stabilises; others plan long term settlement or onward migration.

The Disability and Cross-border Migration in Thailand: Examining the Gaps in Migration

Nara Khamkhom, IPSR Mahidol University, Thailand

Research Focus: visibility, data gaps and protections for disabled migrant workers in Thailand.

Context: Thailand hosts ~4 million migrant workers, but migrants with disabilities are largely invisible in policy, research and statistics.

Key points from literature & national data review:

- Very limited research globally on migration + disability; almost no disaggregated Thai data (official reports don't separate migrants by disability; work injury and social security data are not publicly disaggregated).

- Disabled migrants face compounded vulnerabilities: unsafe 3 D work (construction, fisheries) causes injuries; employers often avoid responsibility; limited rehab/return home support; discrimination in access to healthcare and employment.

Implications & recommendations:

- Urgent need to make disabled migrants visible through coordinated research (qualitative then quantitative), improved data collection and classification (align with Thai disability policy categories.

- Coordination among universities, ILO, IOM, NGOs and government to generate evidence and design protection/rehab policies.
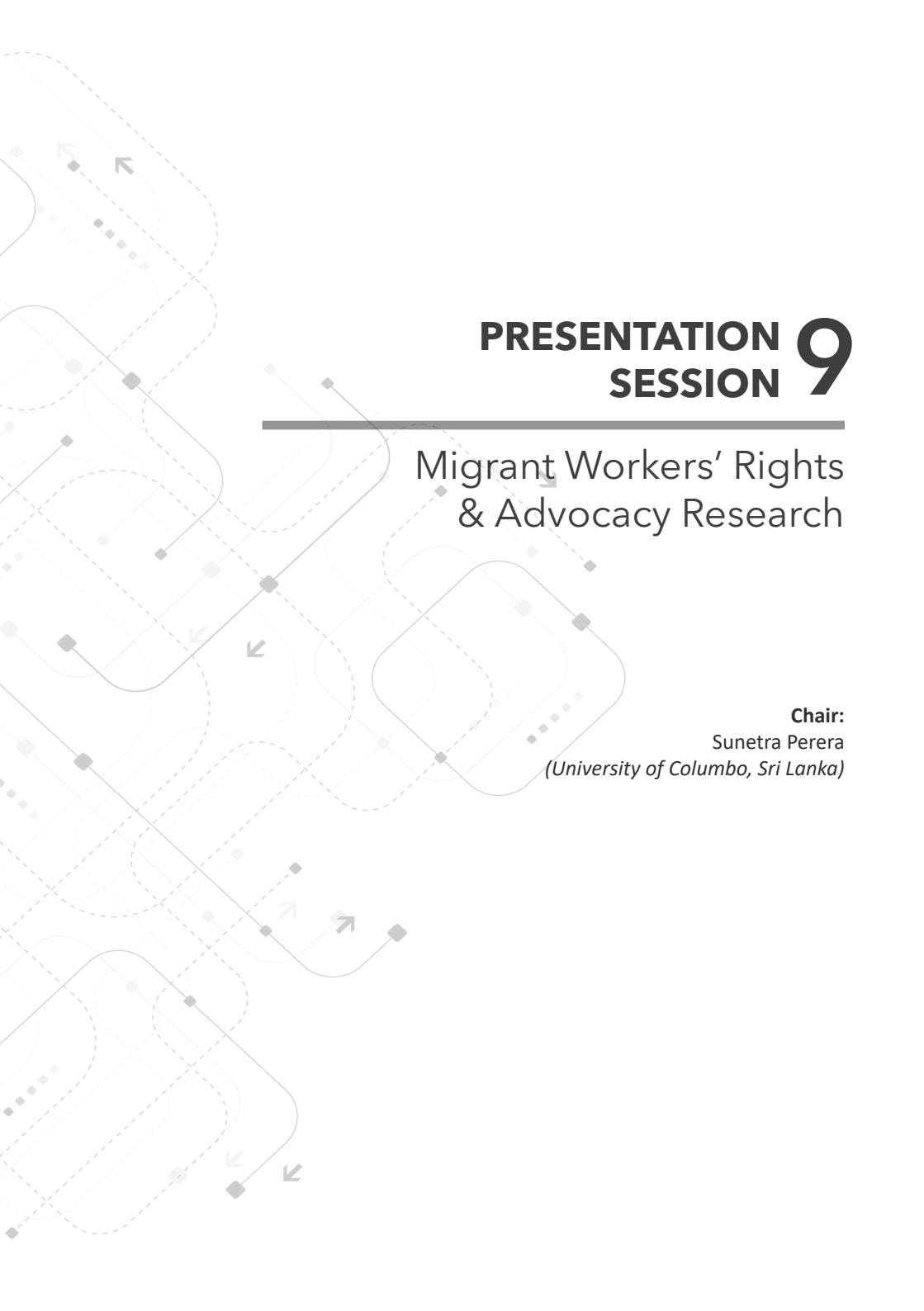
PRESENTATION SESSION 9

Migrant Workers' Rights & Advocacy Research

Chair:
Sunetra Perera
(University of Columbo, Sri Lanka)

The session examined the various challenges faced by migrant workers across sectors in Southeast Asia, with presentations highlighting how structural barriers, weak policy enforcement, and fragmented labour systems shape migrants' vulnerabilities. Discussions underscored persistent issues in recruitment and subcontracting practices in Thailand's construction sector, gaps in labour rights protections for migrant fishers, and the strategic role of Migrant Worker Resource Centres in providing legal, psychosocial, and community-based support. Across all presentations, wage insecurity, limited collective bargaining power, and reliance on informal intermediaries emerged as cross-cutting themes, alongside the need for stronger evidence, institutional collaboration, and policy reforms to better safeguard migrants' rights and well-being.

Recruitment and Employment Practices of Migrant Workers in Bangkok Metropolitan Region's Construction Industry

Rosalia Sciortino, Mahidol University & SEA Junction, Thailand

Rosalia Sciortino highlighted how subcontracting structures, the use of brokers (increasingly replaced by family intermediaries), and irregular employment practices shape widespread precarity among migrant construction workers in Bangkok. She emphasized risks linked to wage delays, absconding of payments, and unsafe working conditions that intensified during COVID-19, when construction camps became infection hotspots and migrants' vulnerabilities deepened. Recommendations focused on ensuring transparency, fair wages, and fixed payment schedules.

Empowering Migrant Workers: Lessons learned from ILO Migrant Worker Resource Centres in the ASEAN Region

Andreas Schmidt, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Andreas Schmidt presented lessons from the ILO's Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs), showing how weak policy enforcement contributes to persistent exploitation despite existing legal frameworks. He explained how MRCs provide legal aid, health and psychosocial support, partnership building, community outreach, and targeted services for vulnerable subgroups. Key learning points included selecting trusted local partners, strengthening monitoring and evidence systems, planning for long-term sustainability, building capacity, and expanding network-based support.

Examining the Impact of Exclusion of Migrant Workers from Freedom to Form Labour Union in the Thai Labour Law: A Case Study of Documented Migrant Workers in Fishing Industry in Songkhla Province

Shwe Zin Thin, Mahidol University, Thailand

Shwe Zin Thin examined the exclusion of migrant workers in Thailand's fishing sector from forming or leading labour unions. Her findings underscored wage exploitation, document withholding, recruitment debt, health and safety risks, and discrimination that heighten migrant workers' social and legal vulnerability. Because migrants cannot create legally recognized unions or sign binding agreements, they face retaliation and limited negotiation power, reinforcing structural marginalization in the sector.

**Understanding International Migration Decisions of Sri Lankan Youth: A Life Course Perspective**

Wathsala Anuradhi, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Wathsala Anuradhi explored Sri Lankan youths' international migration decisions using a life-course lens, showing how key transitions—such as finishing or leaving school, entering employment, or marriage—shape intentions to migrate. Gendered patterns emerged: men often migrate after education discontinuation, whereas women commonly migrate after marriage or in pursuit of employment abroad. Overall, migration choices were closely linked to economic opportunity gaps and social support networks.

Issues and Discussion

- Wage payment systems were widely discussed, particularly migrants' preference for cash due to limited access to banking, digital tools, or formal accounts, which increases vulnerability to delayed or missing wages.

- Participants raised how academic institutions can support evidence generation, policy reform, and legal advocacy, especially in strengthening upcoming responsible business conduct guidelines and improving protections in high-risk sectors.
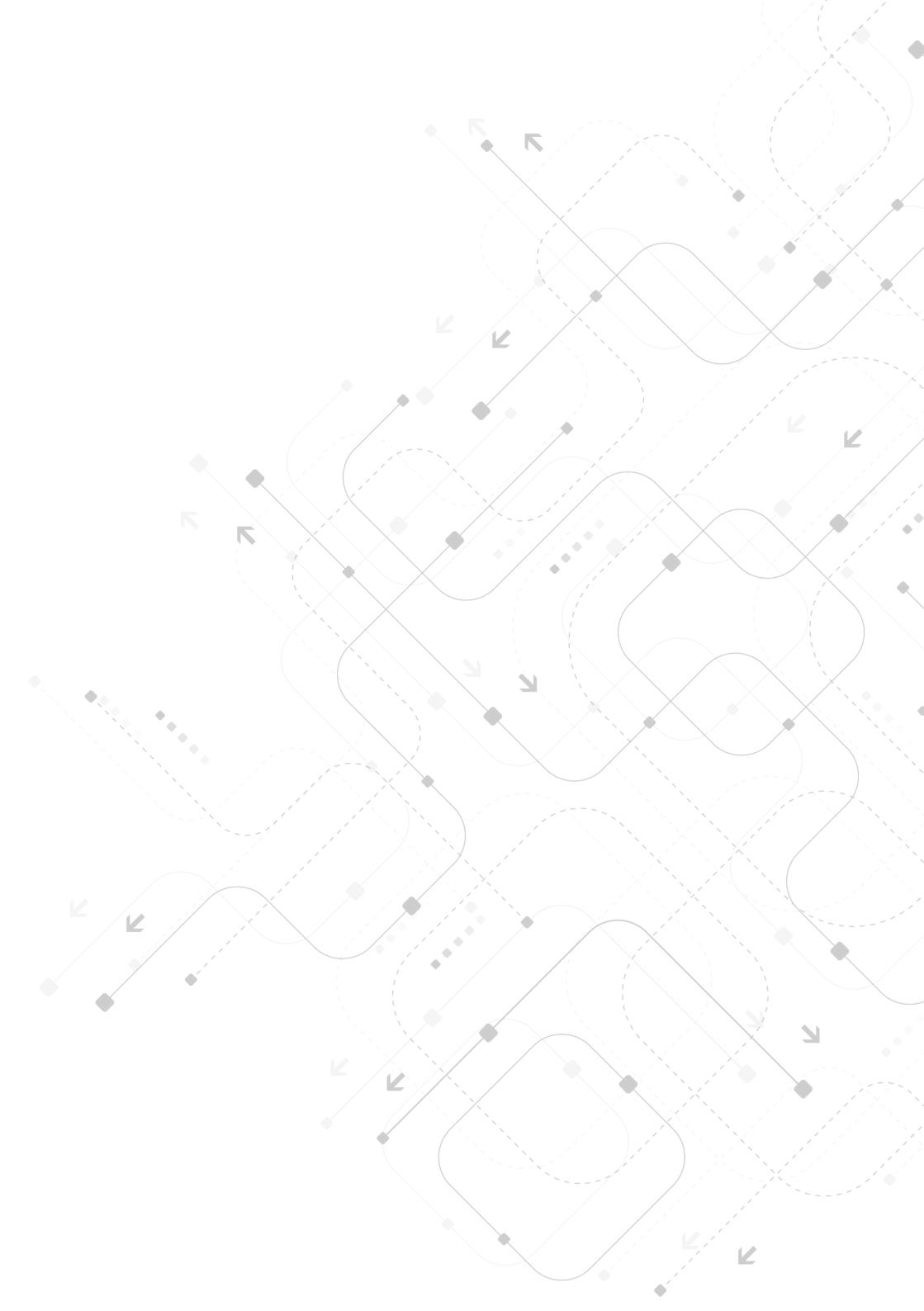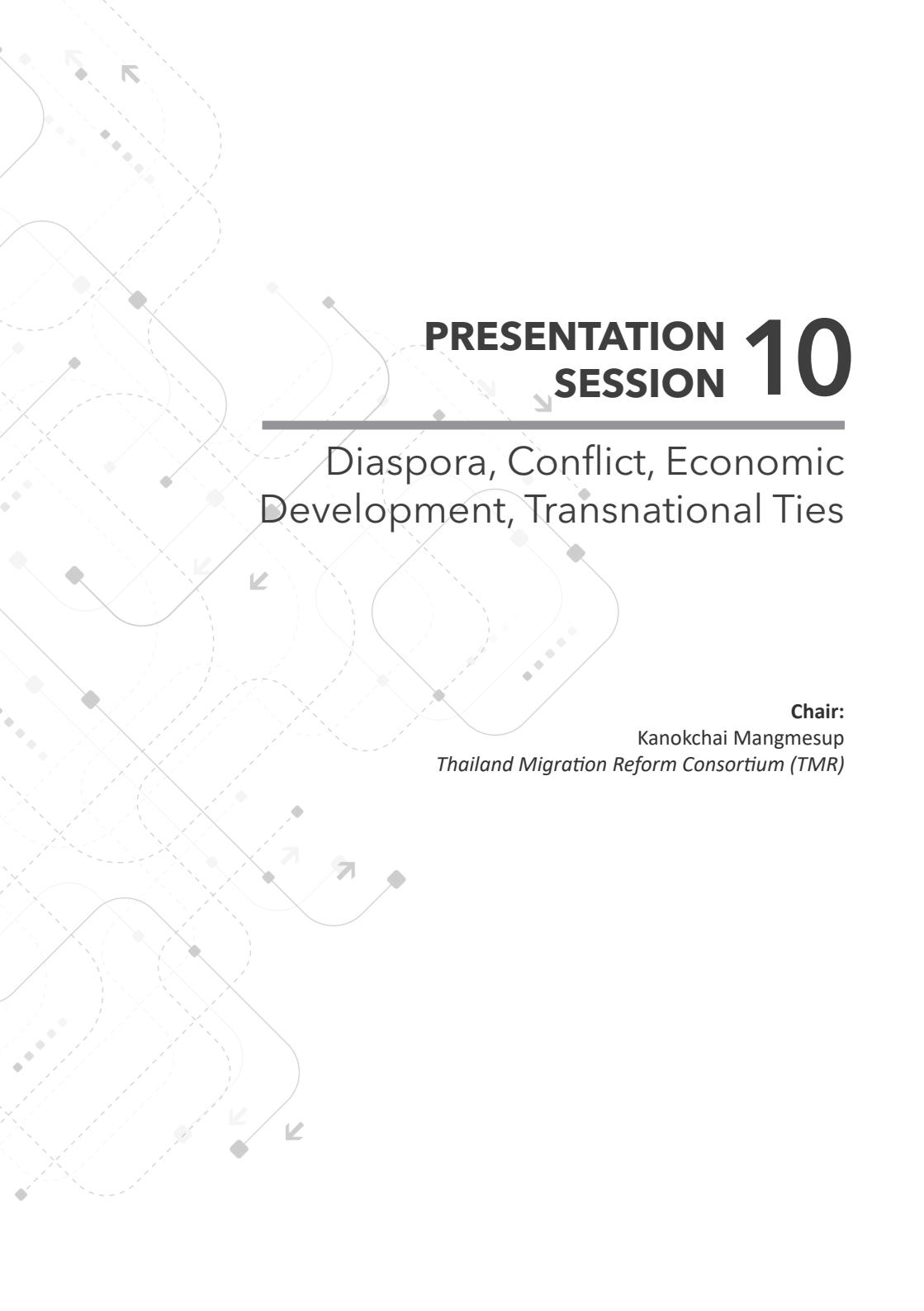
PRESENTATION SESSION 10

Diaspora, Conflict, Economic Development, Transnational Ties

Chair:
Kanokchai Mangmesup
Thailand Migration Reform Consortium (TMR)

Session 10 examined studies of Thai migrants in Finland and Israel and Indian migrants in Thailand, showing how gaps between migration policies and migrants' lived realities create widespread precarity through contradictory visa systems, conflict exposure, weak labor protections, and limited institutional support.

Thai Wild Berry Pickers in Finland under Contradictory Mobility Regime

Kwanchanok Jaisuekun, Mahidol University, Thailand

The first presentation by Kwanchanok Jaisuekun analyzed how a contradictory mobility regime, where workers are officially admitted on short-stay tourist visas (Schengen visas) between Thailand and Finland, governs the seasonal migration of Thai berry pickers, highlighting how these inconsistencies contribute to the precarious status and vulnerability of these workers. It examines the historical context, regulatory changes, and the impact of policy shifts on the pickers' experiences, ultimately revealing how both countries benefit from low-cost labor without fully ensuring the workers' rights.

Conflict and Marginality: Understanding the War's Impact on Thai Migrant Workers

Yahel Kurlander, Tel-Hai Academic College, Israel

The second presenter, Yahel Kurlander, identifies how the October 7th attack by Hamas in Israel severely impacted Thai migrant workers, with 39 killed and 31 kidnapped. The crisis highlighted the vulnerability of these temporary agricultural workers, revealing a critical need for interventions and emergency protections for migrant populations in conflict zones. The discussion with attendees also covered the distribution of Thai workers across sectors, agriculture (99%), construction, and healthcare in Israel, and ongoing efforts to implement protection policies ensuring migrants receive entitled support.

Crisis-Driven Solidarity: Migrant Workers and Employers in the Agricultural Frontier

Avinoam Cohen, College of Management , Israel

The third presentation by Avinoam Cohen and Yahel Kurlander also explores the evolving dynamics of relations between employers and migrant workers in Israel's agricultural frontiers, particularly focusing on how shared vulnerabilities during crises, such as war, influence patterns of solidarity and potential exploitation, moving beyond traditional state-centric views to examine situational and temporal inclusions. The presenter shared that his solidarity is highly conditional and exposes a deeper transformation where state withdrawal and neoliberal policies have rendered migrant workers simultaneously indispensable and invisible, reinforcing their precarious position.

How Temporary Indian Migrants Get Entrepreneurship in Thailand

Poonam Ingle, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

The final presentation by Poonam Ingle, Dusadee Ayuwat, and Rukchanok Chumnanmak discusses the temporary Indian migrant entrepreneurs (TIME) in Thailand, primarily skilled and educated men from North and West India residing in Bangkok and Pattaya. Their qualitative phenomenological study reveals that migrant success is not solely dependent on formal state support, which is often inaccessible due to language barriers. Instead, entrepreneurs require a hybrid support ecosystem combining NGO assistance, informal social networks, and selective engagement with state institutions.

The session concluded how migrants navigate contradictory policies, conflict-driven vulnerabilities, and structural inequalities and highlighted the urgent need for coherent migration governance, improved labor protections, and inclusive support systems.
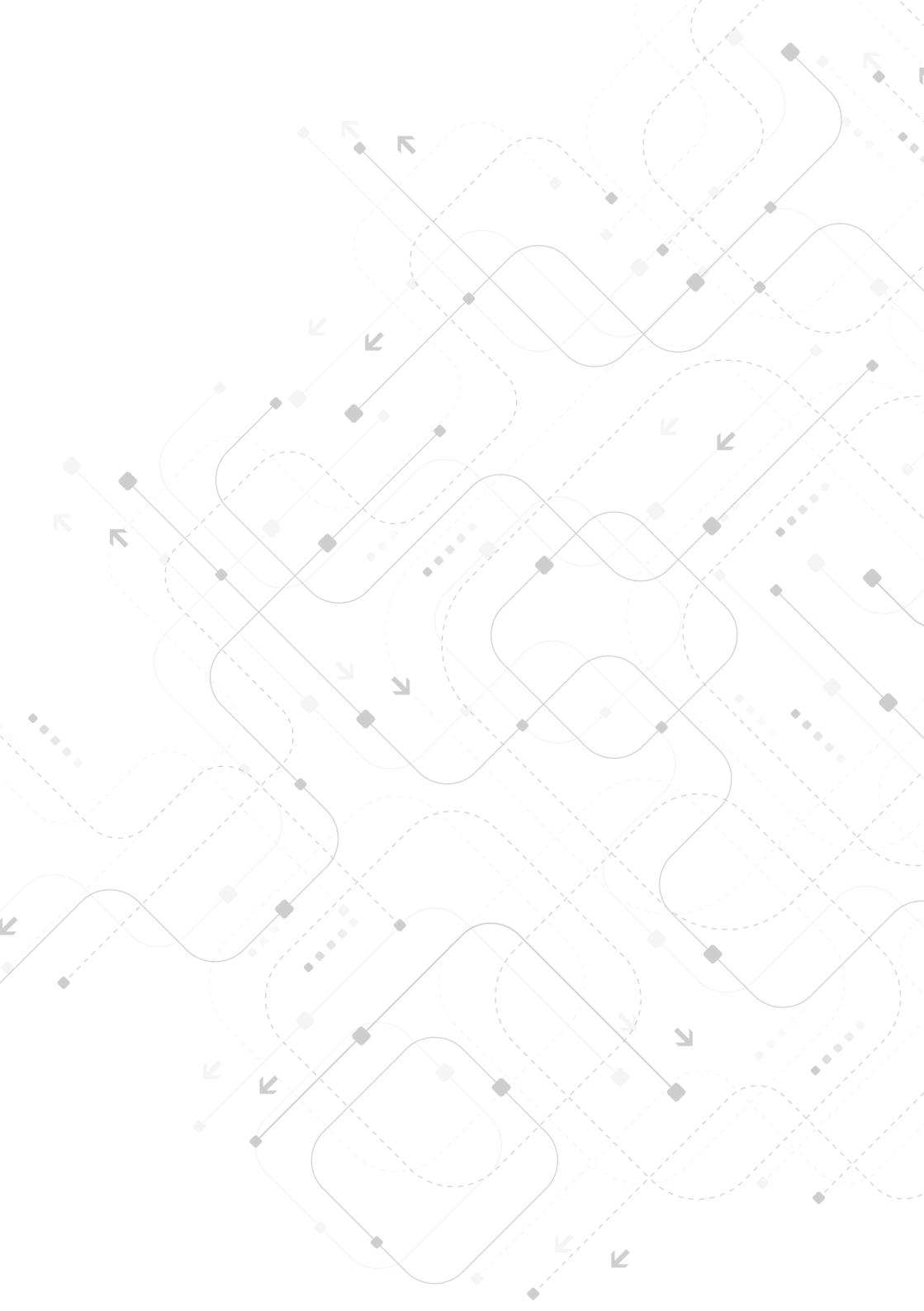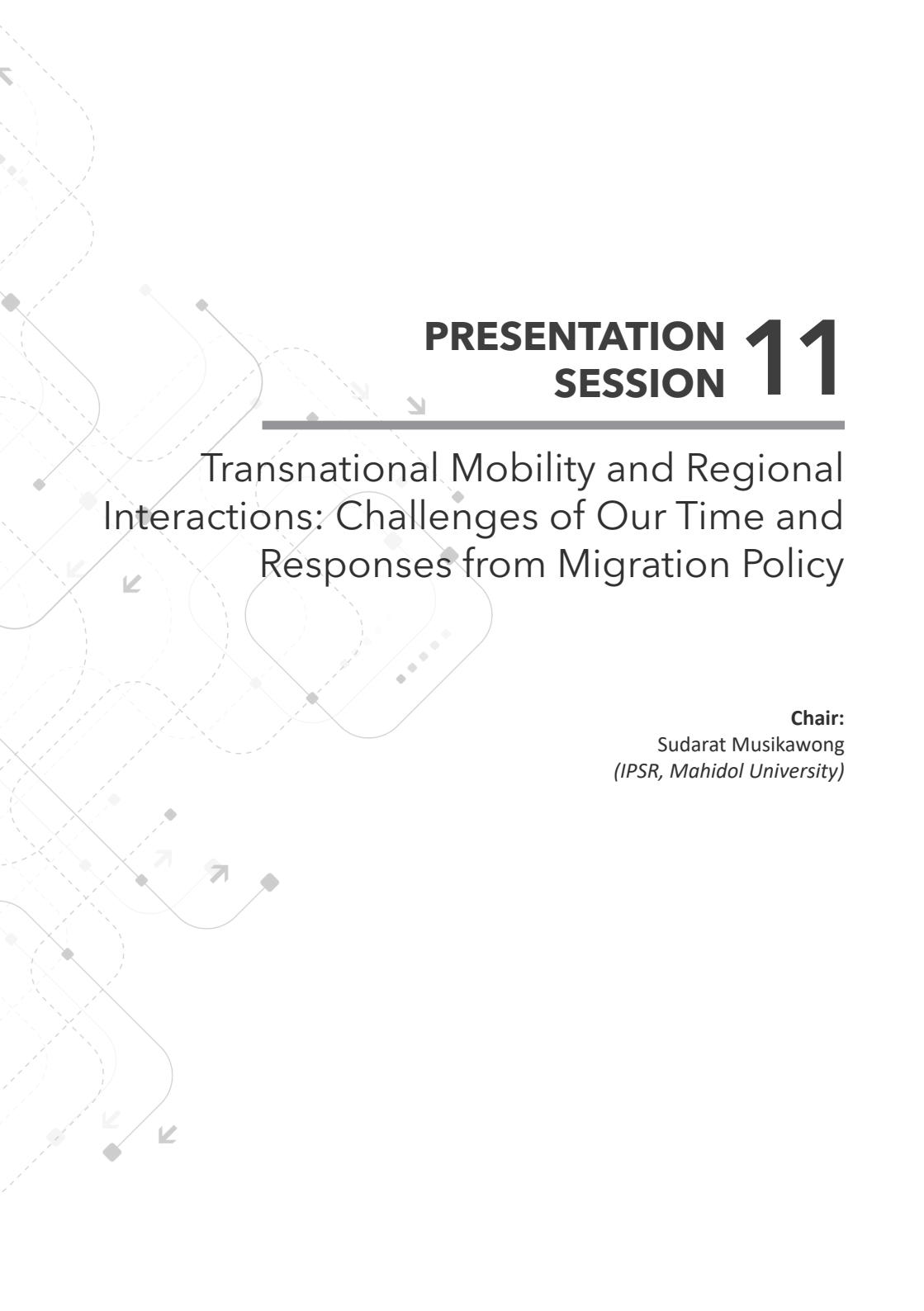
PRESENTATION SESSION **11**

Transnational Mobility and Regional Interactions: Challenges of Our Time and Responses from Migration Policy

Chair:
Sudarat Musikawong
(IPSR, Mahidol University)

The last session brought together perspectives from Central Asia and the Russian Federation, Brazil, Vietnam, and China, highlighting the diverse dynamics of migration across regions and their interactions with environmental, economic, and geopolitical factors across regions.

Migration and Environment in Brazil: Internal Dynamic

Roberto do Carmo, State University of Campinas, Brazil

The first presentation by Roberto do Carmo explored Brazil, focusing on internal migration across 6 biomes: Amazon, Caatinga, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, Pampa, and Pantanal, by using the two census indicators related to migration and how demographic occupation of Brazilian biomes has changed in recent years. Migration patterns vary across Brazil's biomes: the Cerrado is attracting people due to agricultural and industrial growth, while the Atlantic Forest remains the most populated despite environmental stress. The Caatinga shows notable return migration linked to its semi-arid vulnerability, and both the Pampa and Pantanal are losing population. Overall, these trends show how mobility responds to environmental conditions and economic opportunities.

Trends of Labor Migration in Central Asia and the Russian Federation

Sergey Ryazantsev, IPSR Mahidol University, Thailand

The second presenter, Sergey Ryazantsev, analyzed Central Asia and the Russian Federation, emphasizing that labor migration has remained the most significant form of mobility over the past twenty years. Despite the clear need for labor, host countries' migration policies remain inconsistent, with no explicit long-term strategy and periodic tightening. While Central Asian migrants still mainly move to Russia and Kazakhstan, their flows are increasingly diversifying to new destinations. Overall, Central Asian countries' policies have developed unevenly, reflecting asynchronous regulation of labor migration.

Russian Tourism Economy in Nha Trang in Viet Nam

Kenichi Ohashi, Rikkyo University, Japan

The third presentation by Kenichi Ohashi examined Nha Trang, Vietnam, where a Russian-speaking tourist enclave thrived until the pandemic and the Ukraine war disrupted flows. Since 2022, Central Asian tourists have emerged as a major segment, while Russian visitors are increasingly becoming long-term residents. This shift is transforming the migrant society, becoming more diverse and showing how geopolitical and socio-economic events can reshape local migration patterns and social structures.

Highly Skilled Immigration to China: Current Status and Prospects

Marina Khramova, The People's Friendship University of Russia (RUDN) and Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS, Russian Federation

The last one by Marina N.Khramova discussed that China's economic upgrading has prompted a shift from passive migration acceptance to actively attracting high-skilled migrants, especially in high-tech sectors. Current policy challenges include insufficient cultural inclusiveness and household registration restrictions. Further, easing visa and work-permit rules is essential to support this transition.

Overall, the session revealed how transnational mobility is shaped by labor demand, environmental pressures, and geopolitical shifts, demonstrating the diverse strategies governments use to manage migration while adapting to changing global and local conditions.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

1) Post-Pandemic Tourism Recovery in Thailand: Abubakr Rakhmonov *(IPSR Mahidol University, Thailand)* presented an analysis of Russian-speaking tourism in Thailand, highlighting the "V-shaped" recovery of tourist flow. Following a decline of 46,000 tourist arrivals in 2021, visitor numbers rose to 1.81 million in 2024, marking a return to pre-pandemic levels. This inflow is now a vital economic driver, with Russian tourists generating approximately $3.64 billion USD in 2023—roughly 0.7% of Thailand's total GDP. The study was categorized into two groups: Russian nationals, who constitute the largest volume (1.48 million), and Kazakh tourists, who are high-value visitors with longer stays (15 days) and higher daily spending (5,650 THB). To sustain this revenue, the presenter recommends that Thailand prioritize flexible visa policies, Russian language accessibility, and direct flight routes, particularly in tourist attractions like Phuket and Pattaya.

2) Educational Migration Strategy Shifting the focus to outbound mobility, Nikita G. Kuznetsov *(Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS, Russian Federation)* explored the educational migration from Southeast Asia nations to Russia. With the ambition of hosting 500,000 international students by 2030, Russia is looking to expand beyond traditional markets like Central Asia. The researcher found that while 30% of Southeast Asian youth are interested in studying abroad, significant barriers exist, including family separation (72.9%), linguistic barriers, and financial obstacles. Those academic offers alone are insufficient to successfully recruit the "undecided" demographic, and Russia must offer career integration. Policies reformation focusing on scholarships and, most importantly, employment guarantees (favored by 60% of respondents) are essential to attract those who are hesitant to leave their homeland.

3) Migrant Vulnerability and Climate Risks: Patana Tonghuy *(Prince of Songkla University, Thailand)* offered a critical look at the intersection of labor and climate in Pattani Province, focusing on Myanmar migrant workers. This study introduced the concept of the "spatial trap," where low-skilled workers are forced into hazardous living areas prone to recurrent flooding. Due to their inregular legal status, these workers are systematically excluded from official disaster assiatance. The presenter argued that their vulnerability is not merely environmental but structural; the denial of social rights transforms predictable weather events into "chronic precarity" and deep social suffering.

4) Antonius Maria Indrianto *(INVOLVEMENT Program, Yayasan Perdikan, Indonesia)* examined how Islamic communities in Java are renegotiating gender norms, showing how expectations and roles are shifting across multiple social levels.

5) Syahrul *(Khon Kaen University, Thailand)* reviewed the evolution of Indonesian migrant labor policy, identifying major policy trends, reforms, and ongoing challenges in protecting and managing migrant workers.

6) Sudarat Musikawong *(IPSR Mahidol University, Thailand)* explored whether Thailand can incorporate migrant elderly care workers into its long-term care system, addressing labor shortages, policy barriers, and prospects for sustainable eldercare integration

CONFERENCE EXHIBITIONS

The booths of SEA Junction, IOM, World Vision, and Raks Thai presented a complex picture where systemic exclusion meets human resilience. True inclusiveness requires not just legal recognition, but a holistic approach, understanding the health, language, and dignity of migrants.

The concept of "invisibility" was a central theme for the SEA Junction digital exhibition, "Snapshot: Migrant Labor in Thailand". This effectively humanized the often-unseen workforce powering the seafood industry in Phuket and the Chanthaburi region. This show presents personal ambition of migrant workers, marriage, and dreams with the reality of working at unstable piece-rate wages (e.g., 70–100 baht/kg for crab carving), the exhibition argued that inclusiveness initiates with acknowledging migrants as people, not just economic units.

Likewise, IOM photo booth highlighted the consequences of legal invisibility in Northern Thailand. Titled "Migrant Rights Are Human Rights," frame undocumented status as a "trap." Without any documentation, migrants face a systemic void where they are denied basic services and are prone to fraudulent agencies. The exclusion is not passive; it is an active barrier to safety and justice.

Both World Vision and Raks Thai Foundation highlighted that healthcare access is the most critical consideration for the inclusiveness framework.

- Systemic Integration: World Vision's "Health Equity" model moves beyond emergency care to systemic inclusion, utilizing Migrant Health Volunteers (MHVs) to bridge the gap between mainstream services and the community. Their focus on birth registration and protecting women/children highlights that health and legal rights are inextricable.

- Practical Accessibility: Raks Thai (Samut Sakhon) provided an example of operational inclusiveness through their "RRTTPR" model. Their campaign to end AIDS and TB is notable for its bilingual approach (Thai and Burmese). By producing educational materials like flyers in the migrants' native language, they address the language barrier, ensuring that life-saving information regarding HIV prevention and stigma reduction is actually accessible.

The exhibitions suggest that an inclusive society removes the "trap" of undocumented status while actively extending social safety nets. Their message is clear: migration policy must pivot from simple labor management to a framework of human dignity, ensuring that no one—regardless of their legal status—is left behind in the fight for health and justice.

The Labour Protection Network Foundation (LPN) highlighted the insight of the everyday realities of migrants and their families through the documentary film Ghost Fleet (2018). The film captures how migrants navigate work, mobility, and care responsibilities within unequal social and economic conditions, revealing the constraints and uncertainties embedded in their migration journeys. By highlighting migrants' own perspectives, the exhibition encourages a deeper understanding of migration as a lived and ongoing process shaped by both structural forces and personal aspirations.

Rapporteur Report

The 7th Mahidol Migration Center (MMC) Regional Conference
(Im)Mobilities in Turbulent Times: Navigating Global Crises, Policy Shifts, and New Pathways for Justice and Resilience

24–25 November 2025
Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

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