

“Who pays for the kids?”: Childcare arrangements of cross-border workers in Thai-Burmese border towns

Kyoko Kusakabe and Ruth Pearson

Abstract

The border development and industrialization policy of Thailand and Myanmar have created several border towns where factories are concentrated. One of the more recent industrialized border towns is in Three Pagoda Pass. The border at present is officially closed. However, there is a large influx of workers from Myanmar to come to work in Three Pagoda Pass. There is a local agreement across the border that states that Burmese workers can cross border and work without work permits, if they do not stay in the Thai side overnight. Many Burmese workers live in the Burmese side of the border and commute to Three Pagoda Pass Thai side of the border to work in factories there. The children of these migrant workers are taken care by childcare facilities, both run by Burmese government as well as private, in the Burmese side of the border. In order to support the industrialization of border town in Thai side of the border, reproductive work is carried out in the Burmese side. The paper will compare the situation of migrant employment and childcare in another border town, Mae Sot and in the inner city in Thailand, Samut Prakan, to explore how childcare is being juggled by Burmese migrant workers who are providing essential labor force to sustain economic growth in Thailand. The paper explores how borders are irrelevant for women migrant workers who have to manage their childcare responsibilities as well as economic responsibilities for their families, how border creates an opportunity for women to juggle their responsibilities, and how social services have to be conceptualized across the state in the face of large movement of people cross-border.
