Flood relief has been sent to hundreds of thousands of Thais affected by floods and even some animals. But how much of thought is being given to migrant workers whose suffering due to the floods is no less than that of the Thais?

Floods have inundated their workplaces and residences. They have lost their incomes as many factories have been temporarily shut. Living without food and money in a foreign country is a nightmare for them. The plight of those migrant workers who cannot speak Thai in this time is even worse.

With limited numbers of officials and volunteers reaching out to flood-hit areas, many Thai people have not received any assistance but struggled on their own, while the alien workers have been almost forgotten.

Once, a truck conveying relief bags parked in front of a migrant worker community in Pathum Thani's Lat Lum Kaeo district. A Burmese translator talked to them via a megaphone, calling the workers there to get the relief bags. Hundreds of them waded through knee-deep flood water to pick up the bags with hopeful eyes and smiles on their faces.

"I have been full of fear and anxiety from the time this area became flooded. I'm feeling stressed as I cannot go back home to Burma to visit my sick mother," a migrant woman staying at the community, who identified herself as Loolee, told The Nation. She is an alien labourer at CP's factory in the district. "Flood waters are all around is. I haven't met my mother since I started working here six years ago. I don't know what to do, where to go and how I can get to my home," she said.

Thia Zar Moe, a 26-year-old member of the community, who has worked in Thailand for more than three years, said: "I'm running out of food and money. My parents told me to go back to Burma as soon as possible but I will wait until the situation is back to normal and go to work again though I don't know when."

Aung Thanoo, head of the community said that most of them had not stored food and drinking water because the flood waters came unexpectedly in the middle of last month.

"Many of us who stayed in communities nearby, about 200 people, therefore decided to go back home while many more want to do the same but don't have enough money, or the agencies refused to take them back home," Aung said.

He added that previously the community had been given relief bags twice, but it was inadequate. "Everybody had to eat just a little and preserve the food for as long as possible."

About 150 workers are staying there, most of them Burmese with 10 Cambodians in their midst.

Pakpoom Sawangkhum, technical officer of Raks Thai Foundation that offers assistance to alien workers, said about 50 per cent of workers he had met could not speak Thai, so it was more difficult for them in this tough time. They could not ask for help from Thai people.

"These alien labourers have worked for Thailand. Therefore, they should obtain assistance, rehabilitation and rights like Thai flood victims. However, the government doesn't pay enough attention to them," said Pakpoom.

The truck recently transported relief bags and necessities donated by a group of migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, the foundation, and locals in Samut Songkhram and Prachuap Khiri Khan.

They distributed about 2,000 relief bags to migrant workers from Laos, Cambodia and Burma in Pathum Thani's Lat Lum Kaeo, Sam Khok and Muang districts.

Pakpoom called on the government and concerned agencies to reach out to the migrant workers and help them cope with the flood situation. He also wanted the government to think up long-term measures to assist them after the flood waters recede and rehabilitation begins.

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