

Health Promotion for Street Vendors in Bangkok

Although Bangkok is world-renowned for its vibrant street food and street vendors, the lives of these workers remain fragile—heavily affected by urban “clean-up” policies that push them out in favor of gentrified spaces. The project **“Health Promotion for Street Vendors in Bangkok,”** funded by the **Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth/สสส.)** and jointly implemented by the **Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University** and **HomeNet Thailand**, in collaboration with the **Bangkok Street Vendor Federation**, was launched to strengthen the wellbeing of this group of informal workers and to protect their rights.

The project has carried out a range of **notable and diverse activities**, such as the following examples:

1. Public Forum: “Singapore’s Hawker Center”

On **10 June 2025**, a public forum was held on the topic “*Singapore’s Hawker Center: Lessons for the Development of Street Vending in Thailand*” at the Asia Hotel, Bangkok.



Experts from Singapore were invited: **Dr. Lai Chee Kien** and **Mr. KF Seetoh**, founder of **Makansutra**, who played a key role in having “Hawker Culture” recognized as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The forum aligned with our aim to send a strong message to policymakers: while Singapore’s hawker policies and vision may be admired, they also come with **drawbacks and consequences**. Even Singaporeans themselves—and experts from Singapore—advised:

“Please do not copy Singapore. Copy and improve Thailand... it’s very beautiful and unique.”

This remark highlights the direction Thailand should take: **not to imitate others, but to create its own model** that reflects the richness and uniqueness of local culture.



The discussion was filled with questions such as: Can Singapore's Hawker Center model really be applied in Bangkok? Would it suit the effort to uplift street vending into something more permanent—an institution that is at once a food culture, a social space, and a stable livelihood for low-income groups?

The full recording of the forum (English version) is available [\[here\]](#).





สถาบันวิจัยสังคม
SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Chalalongkorn University



Singapore's Hawker Centers

Lessons for the Development of Street Vending in Thailand

10 June 2025 : 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Phetchaburi Room, Asia Hotel, Ratchathewi, Bangkok

"If Thailand is to draw lessons from Singapore's Hawker Centers in developing its street vending sector, What should be the critical starting point, given our local context?"



Keynote Speech and Lecture
Policy – Architecture
Culture – Civic Movement

"From Street to Structure: The Architectural and Policy Evolution of Singapore's Hawker Centers"
By Dr. Lai Chee Kien

"From Structure to UNESCO: Stories, Struggles and the Soul of Singapore's Hawker Culture"
By Mr. KF Seetoh



Public Forum
"Singapore's Hawker Centers":
Lessons for the Development of
Street Vending in Thailand

Dr. Lai Chee Kien

Author of Early Hawkers in Singapore and Hawker Center Food



Mrs. Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan
Managing Director of HomeNet Thailand



Mr. KF Seetoh

Founder of Makansutra and Advocate of Hawker Culture



Ms. Wichaya Komin

Deputy Director of Social Research Institute



LIVE

HomeNet Thailand -

มูลนิธิเพื่อการพัฒนาแรงงานและอาชีพ



Registration



2. Driving Change Through Complaints to the National Human Rights Commission

Beyond policy dialogues and public forums directed at Bangkok Governor Chadchart, the Federation also advanced the issue of **the right to livelihood** by submitting a petition to the **National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRC)**. The petition called for an investigation into the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration's (BMA) management of street vending.

This move highlighted a contradiction: while the BMA had previously collaborated with the NHRC to promote the concept of a *Human Rights City*, it simultaneously enforced sidewalk clearance policies that drove tens of thousands of vendors out of business within just two years—without remedies or compensation.

The Federation's key demand was for the BMA to **review policies that may constitute human rights violations**, pointing to rights already guaranteed under the Constitution:

- **Article 40:** Freedom to engage in an occupation.
- **Article 71:** Basic right to welfare ensuring security in life.

As one street vendor put it bluntly:

“Street vending is life. It is not merely commerce, but our right to survive in the city we love.”



In response, the NHRC carried out field investigations in affected areas, holding dialogues with vendors across **eight Bangkok districts** and documenting the struggles of more than 1,000 vendors. Voices from different districts revealed a range of needs: some demanded **permanent designated vending zones**, while others called for a **transparent licensing system** to prevent extortion.

These diverse testimonies underscore the inconsistencies and double standards of Bangkok's urban governance: in some districts, exemptions were granted for vending spaces, while in others such solutions seemed unattainable.

The joint effort by HomeNet Thailand, the Federation of Street Vendors of Bangkok, and the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute has thus gone far beyond promoting occupational health. It has evolved into a movement for rights and dignity—a call that Thai society can no longer ignore.