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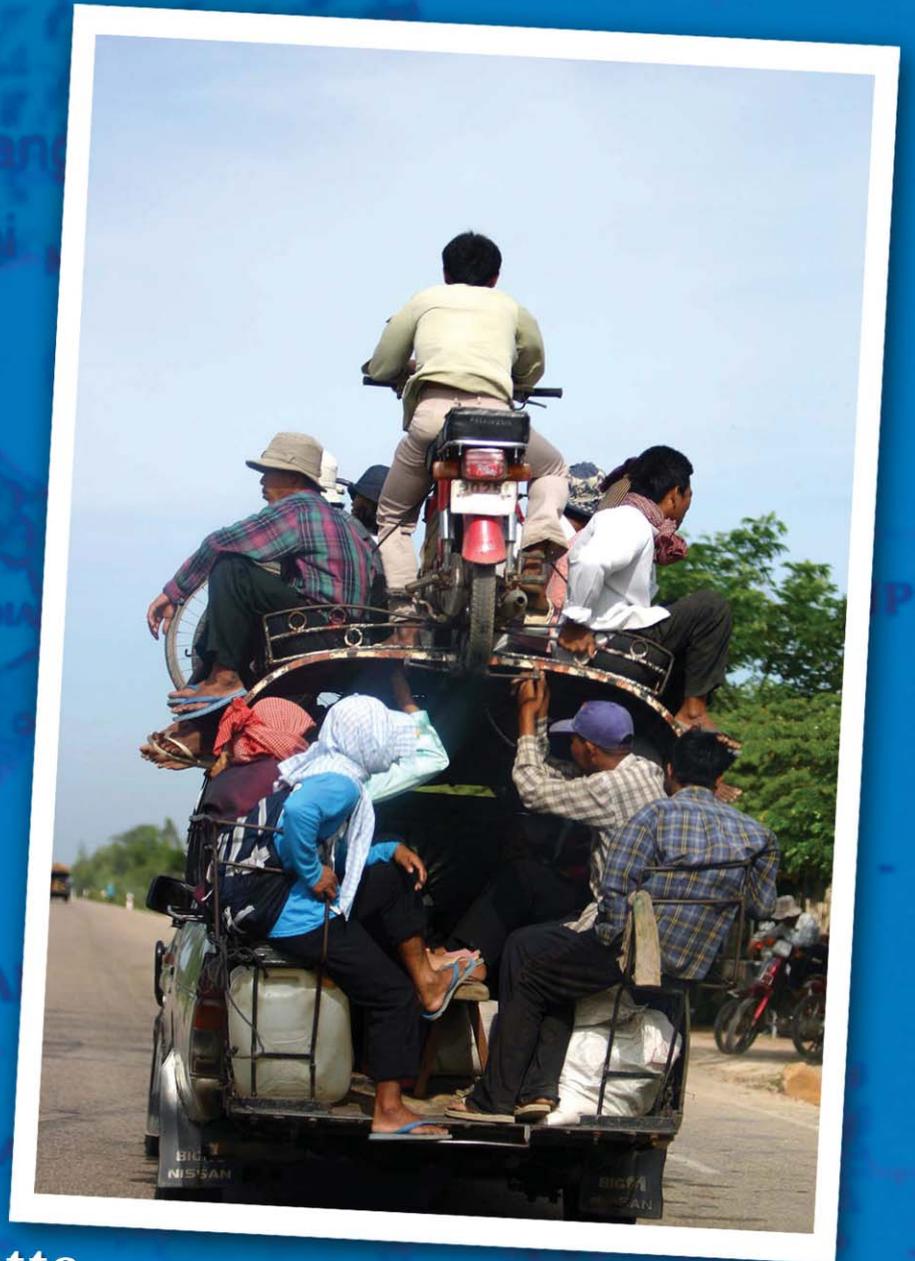


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Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



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Rosalia Sciortino
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1

Learning from a Transnational Grant-making Approach to Migration in the GMS

I. Program Background

In 2001, the Rockefeller Foundation's Southeast Asia Regional Program (SEARP), through the Learning Across Boundaries (LAB) Area of Work, began to address the dynamics of regionalization in the Greater Mekong Sub-region or GMS, an emerging economic area encompassing the watershed of the Mekong River and comprising Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and two provinces of southern China —Yunnan and Guangxi.

The process of market and infrastructural integration in the GMS was set in motion by the Asian Development Bank in the mid-1990s. Strengthening the competitive position of GMS countries as an economic bloc vis-à-vis other regions has presented opportunities for economic growth. The recent rise of India and China is also benefiting the GMS as a region strategically positioned between these two growing economic giants. However, there are concerns that relative poverty across groups and countries is increasing and that a large proportion of people in the GMS remain excluded from the benefits of regional growth: 30 percent of the 240 million inhabitants still fall under the poverty line, and many more live at subsistence levels. The Foundation therefore has chosen the GMS as a pivotal place for ensuring that the benefits of regional economic dynamism get to those who are being left behind—by promoting more equitable development and the formulation of protection systems for vulnerable groups.

LAB has emphasized understanding transnational trends and disparities resulting from regional integration and developing capacity to address negative impacts emerging from unequal regional development through interventions and recommendations for policy reform. Our regional efforts combine grants for research, for strengthening educational and advocacy institutions, for transnational collaboration among strategic organizations, and for bringing successful efforts and recommendations to the attention of key stakeholders, policymakers and the public. LAB has also served as a platform for specific evidence-based interventions that leverage the Foundation's knowledge and expertise in the areas of health, food security and culture through the following shared initiatives:

- **Cross-Border Health**, in collaboration with Health Equity, has been directed at stemming the cross-border flow of diseases, especially AIDS, TB, malaria, dengue fever, and, more recently, SARS and avian flu, while enabling protection of vulnerable mobile and ethnic minority populations.
- **Upland Communities in Transition**, in collaboration with Food Security, has been directed at increasing agricultural production in upland ethnic minority communities to improve their livelihoods and foster access to regional markets.
- **Bridging Diversity**, in collaboration with Creativity & Culture, has sought to enhance recognition and appreciation for the religious and ethnic pluralism of the region, while aiming to reduce sectarian and discriminatory tendencies towards mobile and ethnic populations that are emerging in the process of regional integration.

It is in this programmatic context that migration trends have been examined and addressed. This report argues that the rapid expansion of infrastructure and the increase of financial, trade, and information flows within and among GMS countries, when combined with growing geo-political and socio-cultural inequities, shape movements of people within and across borders. After years of relative in-country isolation, millions of people are today on the move in the GMS, striving to adapt their livelihoods to meet their basic needs and to achieve stability for themselves and their families. For some, the political environment at home is forcing them to move.¹ Many others, struggling to survive, are drawn towards border trading towns, urban areas and to more industrialized countries throughout the region and beyond. The pace at which change has come to the peoples of this region over the last fifteen years, particularly those living in rural and often remote areas, is dramatic, with minority groups who live in mountainous border areas being the most challenged by increased migration outflows and returnees.

GMS governments are struggling to respond to these new realities, and find themselves ill-equipped to stem the flows or accommodate to the needs of migrants and of their sending and receiving communities. Increased mobility is leading to new social and health concerns related to the spread of infectious diseases, and to migrants' vulnerability to disease and abuse. Migration also poses the challenge to the region's governments of how to deal with new inter-group dynamics and potential inter-ethnic and religious conflicts, and of how to define regional and national identities, establishing conditions and criteria for citizenship in societies that are more and more diverse.

Taking into account these many challenges, Foundation grant-making has aimed at building the knowledge base and institutional mechanisms for regional intervention and policy responses that promote migration that is both humane and socially beneficial. To provide an understanding of the work to date, and what lessons can

¹ This is particularly the case in Myanmar (Burma), though to a lesser extent it is happening elsewhere in the GMS.

be drawn from it for future planning, this report will analyze the programs that have been supported and summarize the main conceptual and programmatic insights. Before proceeding to the next chapters to answer the core question of this report—“What have we learned about migration in the GMS?”—a brief description and analysis of migration-specific grants is provided below.

II. Grant-Making Features

Since 2001 twenty-seven grants specifically related to migration have been given under LAB and its shared components for a total amount of US\$ 3,398,583 (see list in Appendix A). Of these, thirteen are for renewal support. Reflecting the programmatic objective of addressing migration as a manifestation of regionalism, most of the grants focus on migration within the GMS and are regional and bilateral in character. They therefore promote exchanges and partnerships among groups and institutions with different geographical connections, technical skills and capacities for reaching migrants and addressing their vulnerabilities. A key partner is the Asian Migrant Center and its Mekong Migrant Network (MMN). Established with Foundation support, MMN today constitutes a unique region-wide alliance of more than 40 academic and non-government organizations concerned with migration, providing a system for monitoring and addressing migration dynamics at the regional level. The network’s engagement with government institutions and international organizations has drawn public attention to the realities of migrants’ lives and led to important policy discussions on how to transform migration for development.

The highest concentration of grantees is in Thailand, reflecting the fact that it is currently the main destination for most migrants in the GMS (see figure 1).

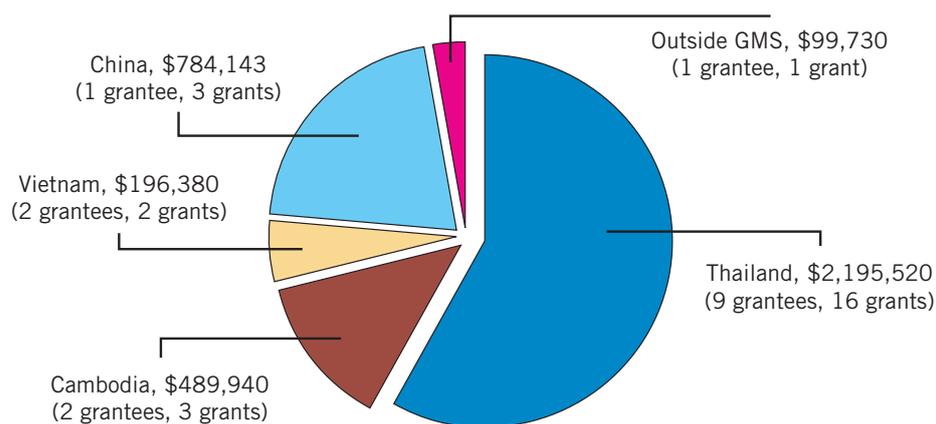
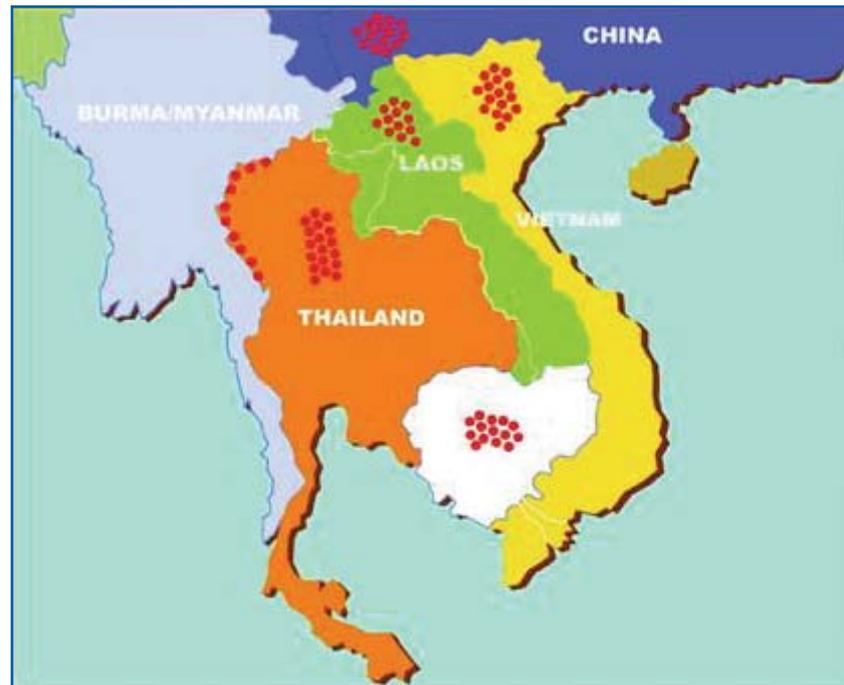


Figure 1:
Location of grantees

The projects supported focus on cross-border areas and areas with a large concentration of migrants (see figure 2). The Thailand-based grantees primarily work with migrants from neighboring countries and minority populations without documentation, who largely reside along the Thai border and in other key destinations across the country. In some instances, Thailand-based grantees received support to work with partners in neighboring countries and build their capacity and skills. This has led to the establishment of strong partnerships among organizations throughout the region to comprehensively address migration flows from source to destination communities and back.

Figure 2:
Location
of Projects
Activities



The PROMDAN Program (*promdan* = 'border' in both Thai and Cambodian) deserves special mention for linking the source provinces of Prey Veng and Kampong Cham in Cambodia to the destination provinces of Rayong, Pattani, Songkhla, Chonburi and Trat in Thailand (see figure 3). The program helped build essential transnational mechanisms to address migration flows in a comprehensive way, thus enhancing the resilience of both migrants abroad and in their home communities.

Direct and indirect support to partners in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Yunnan (China) focused on building an understanding of the situation and testing innovative intervention models with migrant groups in each country, as well as establishing partnerships to address the flows from both sides of the borders. The focus on migrant populations along shared borders is producing some of the first published research and pilot interventions in these areas. A regional research collaboration, led by a grantee in Indonesia, has contributed to new knowledge on transnational sexual exploitation and trafficking. Sending communities are also covered by work in the uplands under LAB's Upland Communities in Transition component and within the scope of other grants that propose models of interventions linking source and destination communities such as the PROMDAN collaboration project.

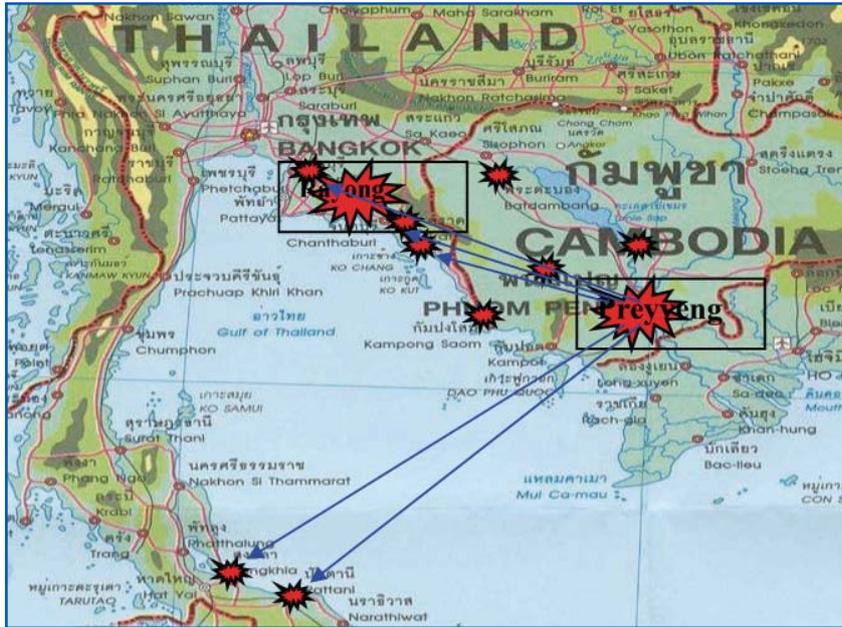


Figure 3:
PROMDAN
Source-
Destination
Locations

As shown in figure 4, half of the grantees are academic institutions, which usually have governmental affiliations, and half are non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These NGOs operate in locations with a large concentration of migrants and have been in the forefront of raising public awareness of migrants’ situations, and in providing social and health services that governments have been unable or unwilling to provide. Although grants were not given directly to community-based organizations, NGO grantees have worked in partnership with them. They have also worked in varying degrees with national and local government agencies, academic institutions, and international organizations, thus creating multi-sectoral networks to maximize coverage of the target migrant populations.

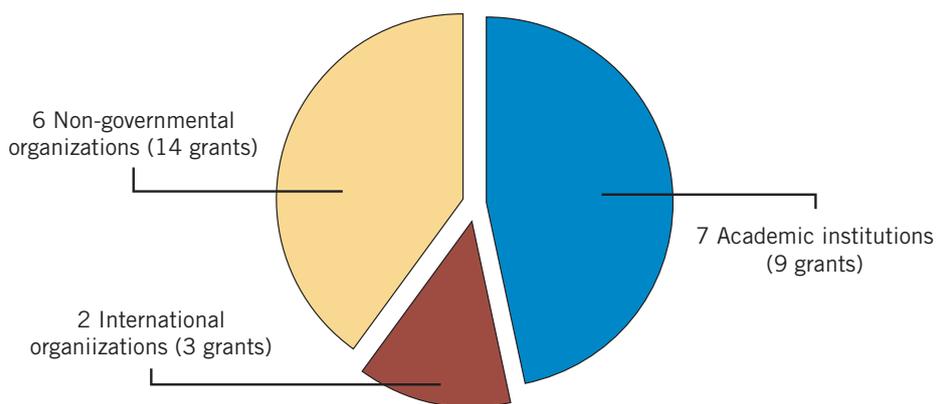


Figure 4:
Type of
Grantees

The remaining three grants were given to the Bangkok-based offices of two international organizations, namely the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for activities undertaken in coordination with government institutions to improve migrant management systems and establish safer repatriation practices. These grants have enhanced partnerships among diverse stakeholders, and have contributed towards building a momentum for change in how migration and migrant protection are viewed in the region.

The mix of partners from international organizations, academic institutions, to NGOs, provided a sound balance for identifying issues, presenting diverse perspectives and introducing strategies for change at a time when governments were disinclined to focus on migration. More recently, governments are starting to confront migration issues under the prompting of civil society groups and international agencies. The recent policy summit meeting held by the Mekong Institute with Foundation support and attended by high-level country delegations and representatives of major international donors is a prime example of how alliances are broadening and how migration is being placed on the regional agenda.

Overall, grants have made a contribution to:

- harnessing and building local expertise to document and understand the many inter-related aspects of migration and regional transformations;
- dissemination of local knowledge through publications and forums (often in multilingual versions to reach wide readerships);
- new partnerships and networks (formal and informal) that have stimulated new policies and programs to address the vulnerabilities of migrants and communities affected by migration; and
- implementation of evidence-based pilot interventions to better accommodate migration flows and enhance migrants' livelihoods and welfare.

In terms of focus, a number of grants explored the transitional and cross-border economies of the GMS and how regionalization comes to shape migration dynamics, trends and vulnerabilities. Grants have documented migration flows throughout the GMS and the unique conditions along selected border areas, linking perspectives from countries of origin, transit and destination to better understand the realities of migrants and their vulnerabilities. These insights have contributed to increased knowledge concerning the decisions to migrate and the entire migration experience, including reintegration upon return. They have thus highlighted a wide-range of issues relating to health, livelihoods, family life, culture, discrimination and exploitation.

Many of the grants went beyond promoting a new public discourse on safer migration to contribute to a more favorable policy environment. Such grants supported interventions to address the critical conditions of migrant workers, their families and their communities. To reduce the occupation-based risks migrants encounter because of their status as migrants, the projects focused on critical labor sectors, such as the

fishing and manufacturing industries, domestic workers and sex workers. Special consideration was given to health and welfare using models that open up access to health services and limit the exposure of migrants to infectious diseases, especially AIDS, TB and malaria. Grantees also piloted integrated approaches that broaden livelihood options for migrants both in source countries, especially in the uplands and other marginalized areas, and destination countries, and that facilitate mutual cross-cultural understanding between host and migrant communities.

By spotlighting the many challenges migrants experience, while acquiring the necessary knowledge and building the institutions to support and advocate for their well-being, our partners have generated momentum for proposing national and regional policy solutions to these challenges. An exemplary outcome has been the establishment in Thailand of a migrant health coordinating unit under the Medical Services Division of the Ministry of Public Health and the related development of a migrant health policy initiated by a network of Foundation partners that is now being carried forward by the Ministry of Public Health.

These migration-related efforts over the last four to five years provide a strong knowledge and experience base from which lessons can be drawn for future strategic directions and programming. This report is a first attempt at articulating such lessons by reviewing the programs supported to date. Drawing on a very large body of material produced under LAB—and complemented when necessary with information from other relevant sources²—the following chapters will highlight the main features of intra-regional migration in the GMS.

The report will document that in the GMS:

- labor migration flows on a large scale are recent and are shaped by unequal development;
- migration is mainly irregular;
- migrant labor is mostly unskilled;
- receiving societies do not recognize the contribution migrants make;
- the benefits of migration to sending households and countries have yet to be maximized; and
- intervention and policy responses are at a very early stage.

In conclusion, some ideas will be presented on possible strategies to break the existing cycle of vulnerability, and make migration a source of development for the migrants and their sending communities. It is hoped that this review, although not exhaustive, can contribute to the Foundation's overall strategic process and help identify its comparative advantage in addressing migration realities worldwide.

2 Unless otherwise noted, all the information provided in the report derives from staff's observations, and publications, meetings and reports funded by the Foundation. An extensive bibliography of these works is included for those who wish more detailed information (Appendix B).

2

Inequitable Regional Development Drives Migration Flows

I. Market Integration Transforms Migration Systems in the GMS

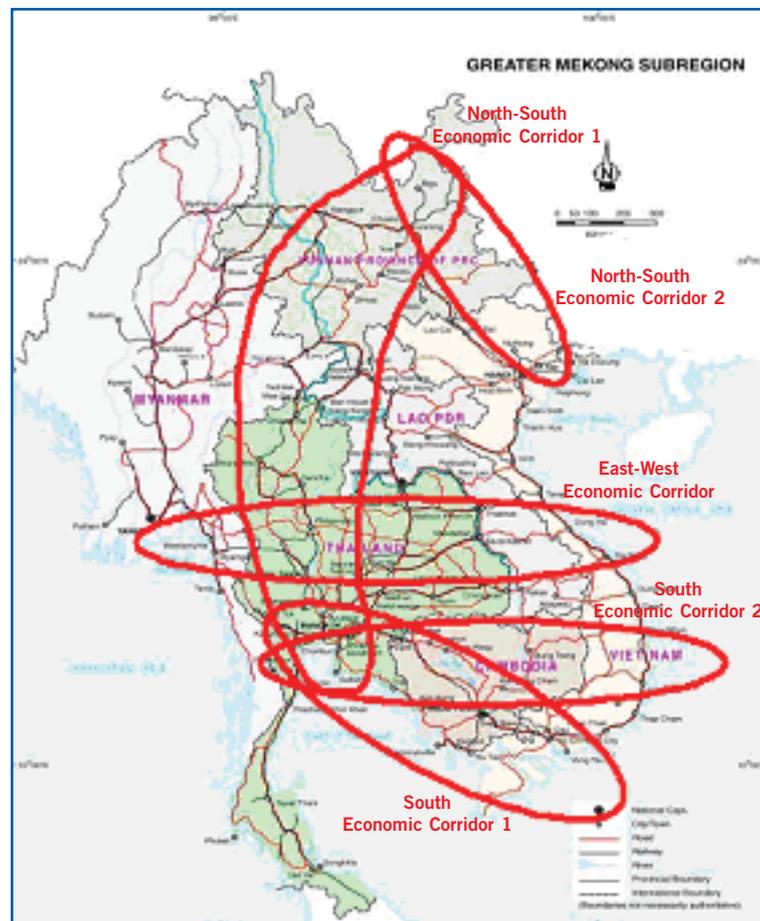
Population mobility is not a new phenomenon for the countries of the GMS. However the nature and size of the flows are now very different from the past. Previously, large-scale population movements within the region occurred primarily as part of the expansion of frontiers, with resettlement of populations defeated during warfare an important form of movement. At a time when national boundaries were not yet established, ethnic minority groups living in border areas moved freely in the region. From outside the region, large numbers of Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indians came to mainland Southeast Asia and were assimilated with local populations. More recently, political conflict and civil war throughout the GMS have compelled large numbers of persons from neighboring countries to seek refuge in the relatively stable environment of Thailand. This included an influx of Kuomintang Party followers from China in 1949; Vietnamese in 1959 and again in 1975 together with refugees from Laos and Cambodia; and, since as early as 1972, an ongoing flow of people from Myanmar. The mid-70s to early 90s was a period of isolation for most GMS countries that significantly reduced cross-border movements, with the exception of the continuous flow of displaced persons and refugees from politically and economically unstable Myanmar to Thailand.

These past migration systems were embedded within political and socio-economic contexts that structured the composition of migrant flows and populations and determined migrants' identities, living conditions and opportunities. Similarly, today the emerging political, economic and demographic contexts are changing intra-regional migration systems, fostering a sharp increase in population mobility and a shift in migration flows from politically to economically motivated. One of the major forces underlying this transformation has been the process of regional integration spurred by the Greater Mekong-Subregional (GMS) Cooperation Program. Launched in 1992 by the six participating governments and the Asian Development Bank, the GMS Cooperation Program implied a development model of market liberalization and integration of previously isolated economies into the regional and global economy. GMS economies thus began moving from subsistence farming and command economies to more diversified, open, market-based systems. An export-led industrial strategy, first adopted by Thailand over three decades ago, is now being pursued by all countries in the sub-region, although often adapted to their political, mostly socialist, orientation. The GMS Cooperation Program, linking less developed economies to

more dynamic ones in the grouping, also offered the participating countries the opportunity to integrate and harmonize their markets, thus strengthening their joint competitive position as a trading bloc in the global economy, while enhancing regional stability. Integration at the sub-regional level was soon to be followed by entrance into larger regional and global economic bodies. In the second half of the 1990s, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar all gained access to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its ASEAN-Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), joining Thailand, which had become a founding member in 1967. Again long after Thailand joined as initiating member, China and Cambodia recently acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO), with Vietnam and Laos expected to follow in the near future. When this is accomplished, the political and economic isolation from international commerce and interaction that characterized most of the countries of the GMS up to the early 1990s will have been fully broken, and borders opened to allow circulation of goods and investments in the region and beyond.

In the resulting multi-level configuration of sub-regional, regional and global systems, the GMS is considered pivotal not only for the concerned countries, but also because it provides ASEAN with greater access to China (since the Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Guanxi are officially part of the GMS), and links it, through geographic proximity, to the growing Indian market. In response to this geo-political context, at the heart of the GMS Cooperation Program is the creation of a system of transnational rail and road routes to increase interconnectivity of transport systems, power grids and markets across and beyond the sub-region. These so-called “economic corridors”

Figure 5:
GMS Economic
Corridors
(ADB)



are meant to foster economic growth and social development in the sub-region both by facilitating cross-border trade among GMS countries and by broadening their trade reach to their powerful neighbors, thus making them vital gateways between China, India and other ASEAN countries. Currently, three “economic corridors” (North-South Economic Corridor, East-West Economic Corridor, and Southern Economic Corridor; see figure 5) and a number of alternative routes linking major cities and ports across the sub-region are being developed. In addition there are efforts afoot to increase the navigability of the Mekong River for trade and tourist purposes.

The creation of an extensive infrastructural system integrating all GMS countries into a “growth area” that spans across borders that were tightly controlled only a decade earlier is one of the most tangible signs of the rapid pace of regional integration, and one that deeply affects mobility in the region. The rapid improvements in road, rail, and water transportation and checkpoint facilities, in combination with the easing of land travel restrictions for tourism and business purposes, are facilitating and instigating unprecedented flows of people across borders. The numbers of inbound visitors across GMS land borders are climbing steeply, with Thai and Chinese dominating mass cross-border travel, and with a growing number of border-pass migrants from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar traveling to Thailand supposedly for one-day visits. No data are available on the numbers of irregular migrants crossing borders, but it is generally accepted that infrastructural development has facilitated their in-country travel making it easier for them to reach unofficial entry points.



Photo 1:
Construction
of a Road in
Simao, Yunnan
Province,
China PDR.

Infrastructure development and the related growth of the transportation sector also affect labor flows in other significant ways. For example, they lead to the creation of mobile work forces that include bus and truck drivers and migrant construction workers. Construction companies from Thailand and China working in Laos, the impoverished, land-locked country in the middle of the GMS where much of the road construction is happening, often bring their own workers to the sites. The numbers and the resultant social impacts are expected to be profound: 75 percent of construction contracts in Laos have been assigned to Chinese companies, and some of the construction settlements comprise up to 20,000 Chinese workers each, often in sparsely populated areas where previously only local ethnic minorities had been living.

Another impact of the rapid build-up of the infrastructure system is its impingement on the environment of the sub-region from the uplands to plains to coastal areas. These environmental impacts in turn affect people's livelihoods, particularly the three-quarters still living in rural areas, where they lead subsistence or semi-subsistence agricultural lifestyles. The extensive network of roads, bridges, and railways exposes those in previously remote and isolated communities to a world where their life skills do not easily transfer and where few support mechanisms are available for coping with emerging socio-economic shocks, potentially placing them into conditions of landless poverty and pushing them to move in search of better opportunities. Construction and other development projects have led to large scale displacement and resettlement of local communities, especially ethnic minority populations, and in turn the migration of those who have lost their land and other sources of livelihood, or who find their new places of residence untenable or unacceptable.

The most far-reaching impact of enhanced transportation in the sub-region for intra-regional migration, however, is that it has made labor opportunities previously considered as too distant to reach now easily accessible, therefore making cross-border migration a more feasible option. Moreover, as communication, transportation and markets have expanded throughout the region, economic inequities deriving from unbalanced development have become increasingly obvious. It is clear, too, that low-cost labor from the less economically advanced countries in the GMS is abundant while the more economically advanced countries' wage costs are rising sharply and unskilled jobs are no longer sought by the local population.

II. Inequities as Push Factors for Migration

In spite of the collective faith in the benefits of regional integration for all participating economies, overall economic growth has failed to reduce gaps between rural and urban areas, and between more industrialized and less industrialized countries, with Thailand, Vietnam, and Yunnan showing the biggest proportionate gains with regards to trade, investment and economic growth. The uneven spread of opportunities spurs both internal and cross-border migration and provides the larger context for the increase in the volume and the directions of the flows.

More particularly, the urban bias in national and regional development, with the shift of resources from rural to urban and semi-urban areas, coupled with the intensification of capital- and technology-intense commercial agriculture, is widening the urban-rural divide and fostering large-scale urbanization. The GDP of each GMS country is increasingly earned in urban or peri-urban industrial areas or from tourism (largely based in or near major GMS cities), notwithstanding the fact that a large proportion of the GMS population—ranging from approximately 50 percent in Thailand to over 80 percent in other countries in the sub-region—is still engaged in low-earning agricultural activities. Unable to access and compete in emerging agricultural markets due to a lack of capital, productive land, and technological know-how and tools, farmers have been pulled to the rapidly expanding construction, service and manufacturing sectors in booming urban and semi-urban areas, becoming a source of low-wage labor. China and Vietnam in particular are in the midst of this urbanization process, with unprecedented numbers of internal migrants currently moving to the cities and other industrial locations. Vietnam census figures show that at least four million people migrated internally in the second half of the 1990s. Estimates for China place the number of unrecorded, circulating population at between 50 million and 120 million.³ Other GMS countries are at different urbanization stages, with Laos and Cambodia at a relatively early stage and Thailand in the process of completing the shift from a rural-based to an urban-based society, with internal migration flows leveling off after having peaked in the 1980s. Interestingly, as rural residents in more urbanized countries flock to work in town and cities, they leave the way open for rural dwellers of less urbanized countries in the sub-region to migrate across border and find work in the deserted agricultural sector (see further chapter 4).

As the most advanced in the shift from an agricultural to a production and export-driven economy, Thailand has the most diversified industrial base in the sub-region, with Vietnam and Yunnan following at a distance. Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar lag much further behind, in spite of initial successes with commercial agriculture, tourism and selected export industries. The different stages of industrialization of countries in the GMS also create a differentiated sub-regional labor market: Thailand faces a labor shortage in certain low-skilled sectors, while Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar face an unskilled labor surplus due to rural poverty, underdeveloped infrastructure and low or poor-quality education. These different conditions are accompanied by disparities in incomes. As a country with a middle-income status, Thailand is clearly advantaged when compared to Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, all countries that to this day are among the 14 least developed countries of Asia. Thailand's per capita GNP (\$2,291) is 12 times higher than that of Cambodia, seven times greater than Laos, and six times more than Myanmar.⁴ The higher incomes and wage levels, together with the growing demand for low-skilled labor in Thailand, make the country a magnet for the large, poorly trained and impoverished rural population of Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

3 Le Bach Duong. "Social Exclusion among Rural-urban Migrants in Vietnam: Diagnosing the Need for New Approaches in Social Protection." Unpublished Document.

4 J.W. Hugué & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

Migration to Thailand is further strengthened by the dramatic demographic differences within the GMS. Sixty percent of the Cambodian population and 50 percent of those in Laos are aged less than 20 years, while Thailand's percentage of youth population is about 30 percent. In addition, the average annual growth rate of the population in Thailand is now only 0.8 percent compared to averages of 1.2 to 2.4 percent in neighboring countries.⁵ Differences in projected population growth rates for 2000-2010 are even wider for people in the work-force age (15-39), respectively 3.0 percent for Cambodia, 2.9 percent for Laos, 1.3 percent for Myanmar and zero growth for Thailand. This implies that the number of Thais newly entering the labor force is declining, while in neighboring countries the youth populations are expanding and placing tremendous pressure on the economy to absorb ever larger numbers of labor force entrants each year.

The oversupply of young and cheap labor in the region has not passed unobserved and industries that rely on low-cost, physically taxing, and relatively unskilled labor, such as the textile industry, have moved from the more advanced economies of Asia to poorer countries in the GMS. The establishment of these industries spurs movement both within and among countries with, for example, Chinese workers increasingly moving to Cambodia to work in factories often owned by Chinese businesses. In some cases, such as in Thailand, these industries establish themselves at border locations in order to take advantage of abundant and low-cost labor in neighboring countries and this again facilitates cross-border movement.

Regional economic and demographic differences are complemented by social development disparities in driving migration flows. GMS countries differ markedly in their level of education, health, and other social and human development indicators (see table 1). For example, maternal and infant mortality is strikingly high in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia when compared to neighboring Thailand. Formal social protection and safety nets are also inadequately distributed, covering fewer than 10 percent of the population in the majority of GMS countries, and, with a growing emphasis on privatization, are less robust overall. Poor quality and limited services, particularly in education and health, in the poorest GMS countries are major forces behind the creation of an unskilled and poor workforce and constitute a push factor for migration to Thailand, a country where services, albeit difficult to access for migrants, are at least available and of a higher quality.

The inequities emerging from uneven regional integration in the GMS are articulated not only along geo-political borders, but also according to the very real boundaries of ethnic identity and gender. The benefits and opportunities brought by trade liberalization, improved cross-national transportation networks and new communications technologies often do not reach the more than 100 ethnic groups populating the GMS. Many of these groups live in the uplands on both sides of the borders, and have their own specific cultures, languages, and social systems, and long-standing ethnic-based social networks that span the historically recent demarcation of national borders. This cultural richness, which is also a testimony to the shared cultural heritage and interconnected history of GMS countries, is not

5 Ibid.

Table 1: Social Indicators of GMS Countries⁶

Item	Latest Year					
	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Vietnam
Total Fertility Rate (births per woman)	3.7 (2004)	1.8 (1995–2000)	4.8 (2002)	2.9 (2001)	1.8 (2002)	2.3 (2000–2005)
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births)	437.0 (200)	50.0 (2001)	530.0 (2000)	100.0 Urban /180.0 Rural (2001)	24.0 (2002)	165.0 (2002)
Infant Mortality Ratio (per 1,000 live births)	96.0 (2002)	31.0 (2002)	87.0 (2002)	48.3 Urban /50.1 Rural (2001)	22.0 (2002)	30.0 (2002)
Life expectancy at birth						
- Female	63.4 (2004)	73.2 (2002)	56.0 (2002)	63.9 (2001)	74.9 (2002)	71.4 (2002)
- Male	57.2 (2004)	68.8 (2002)	53.0 (2002)	61.0 (2001)	69.9 (2002)	66.7 (2002)
Adult Literacy (%)	73.6 (2004)	90.9 (2002)	66.4 (2002)	91.8 (2001)	92.6 (2000)	90.3 (2002)
- Female	64.1 (2004)	86.5 (2002)	56.0 (2002–04)	91.4 (2001)	90.5 (2000)	86.9 (2002)
- Male	84.7 (2004)	95.1 (2002)	77.0 (2002–04)	92.2 (2001)	94.9 (2000)	93.9 (2002)
Population Below Poverty Line	35.9 (1999)	16.6 (2001)	32.7 (2002–03)	22.9 (1997)	9.8 (2002)	29.0 (2002)
Population with Access to Safe Water (%)	30.0 (2000)	75.0 (2000)	37.0 (2000)	89.2 Urban / 65.8 Rural	97.0 Urban / 91.0 Rural (2000)	56.0 (2002)
Population with Access to Sanitation (%)	21.0 (2000)	40.0 (2001)	30.0 (2000)	83.6 Urban /56.5 Rural (2000)	99.5 Urban / 97.0 Rural (2000)	47.0 (2000)
Human Poverty Index	74 (2002)	24 (2002)	66 (2002)	45 (2002)	22 (2002)	39 (2001)

fully appreciated by governments. In general, it can be said, that GMS governments are wary of the long history of inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts, and in promoting national identity have often adopted exclusionary policies in favor of the majority population, leaving minority communities marginalized and without full access to citizenship, basic education, health services and labor protection. Furthermore, the targeting of mountainous border areas for road construction, logging and development of large hydro-electric dams have led to a loss of habitat and bio-diversity upon which ethnic communities depend for their livelihoods. As a result of these and many other factors, poverty and exclusion within the sub-region tend to correlate with ethnicity and minority status. In all countries, ethnic minority groups fare worse than majority populations on almost every indicator of well-being, and have the highest

6 Data compiled from ADB Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program Update (2006-2008).

rates of poverty, illiteracy, and maternal and child mortality. Feeling constrained in their own country, many decide to cross borders in hopes of improving or achieving stability in their lives.⁷ Attaining a better future abroad is, however, not always feasible. Their disadvantaged position at home makes ethnic minorities particularly vulnerable to exploitation during the migration process, and a disproportionate number, especially women, end up being trafficked (see chapter 3).

Photo 2:
Migrant
Women
Working
for Textile
Factories in
Vientiane,
Laos.



Women generally are also at a disadvantage, as prevailing gender attitudes often do not allow them to benefit from the new opportunities created by regionalization and industrialization. The process of feminization of poverty in the region, with two-thirds of the poor in rural areas and in new urban settings being women, is leading to a growing feminization of both the work force in emerging industries and of migration flows, with an increasing number of women migrating internally and abroad. The gender breakdown for registered migrants from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar in Thailand indicates that in the course of the last eight years the percentage of migrant women has grown from about 30 percent in 1998 to about 45 percent in 2005, with Lao migrant women actually outnumbering migrant men (see table 2). The growth of manufacturing and other industries provides a broader array of employment alternatives for women in the region, especially those who previously lived in the countryside, attracting them to leave for the cities and for other countries in search of more autonomy and a better future for themselves and their families. However, a long history of societal attitudes of discrimination and subordination, as reflected in education disparities and the biased structure of the labor sector, still persists in determining the sectors in which women are employed and the job

⁷ Dang Nguyen Anh & S. Chantavanich (2004). *Uprooting People for their own Good? Human Displacement, resettlement and trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.

Table 2: 1998-2005 Registered Migrants per Sex and Nationalities in Thailand (Ministry of Labor)

Year	Burmese		Cambodians		Laotians		Total		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1998	59,968 (67%)	29,350 (33%)	8,418 (89%)	1,074 (11%)	849 (73%)	315 (27%)	69,235 (69%)	30,739 (31%)	99,974
2000	58,701 (65%)	32,023 (35%)	6,898 (87%)	1,023 (13%)	749 (74%)	262 (26%)	66,348 (67%)	33,308 (33%)	99,656
2001	257,354 (57%)	193,981 (43%)	43,216 (75%)	14,340 (25%)	25,771 (43%)	33,587 (57%)	326,341 (57%)	241,908 (43%)	568,249
2002	192,169 (57%)	147,860 (43%)	28,149 (76%)	8,669 (24%)	13,166 (40%)	19,326 (60%)	233,484 (57%)	175,855 (43%)	408,339
2003	134,812 (54%)	112,979 (46%)	13,976 (71%)	5,699 (29%)	8,611 (40%)	12,703 (60%)	157,399 (55%)	131,381 (45%)	288,780
2004	335,558 (55%)	274,548 (45%)	73,352 (70%)	31,437 (30%)	44,708 (45%)	54,644 (55%)	453,618 (56%)	360,629 (44%)	814,247
2005							375,729 (53%)	329,564 (44%)	705,293

conditions under which they work. Having fewer occupational skills than men in their cohorts, leads women to find work in sectors where they are more vulnerable to exploitation, such as textiles, domestic work and prostitution; or it limits them to lower-level jobs. Gender biases are reflected in lower wages, greater exploitation, and less legal protection for women workers and migrants when compared to their male counterparts. In addition, even with more economic opportunities, women are still expected to fulfill the traditional female roles in the household, taking care of parents, husbands, and children, thus increasing the burden and stress on many. The low status of women and girls also makes them vulnerable to trafficking, not only for sexual purposes, but also for servitude in domestic work, sweatshop labor, unsafe agricultural work and other sectors. Although it is difficult to arrive at reliable numbers, there are indications that trafficking at different stages of the migration process is growing in the GMS.

III. Labor Migration Flows

The economic, demographic, and socio-cultural divides caused by uneven development provide the backdrop for labor migration dynamics in the GMS, and affect the volume and composition of the three major kinds of flows, internal, across borders in the sub-region, and further abroad. These different types of movement are linked and it is often difficult to differentiate among them because they often overlap and involve many of the same people. Discussions of migration in the GMS have often referred to the “one-step two-step” dynamics of migration, which describes how experiences of internal and temporary migration support decisions to migrate across borders or further abroad, and for longer periods of time. Many of those who move across borders frequently move within their destination country, while those who migrate abroad often do not go back to their origin communities when they return home.

As elsewhere in the world, most migration in the GMS takes place within national borders. In Cambodia, for example, it is estimated that 35 percent of the total population are internal migrants who mostly move short distances within their province, while intra-regional migration, mainly to Thailand, involves less than two percent of the population. This mass internal migration, which, as previously mentioned, is spurred by industrialization and infrastructural growth, increasingly consists of people moving from rural and often remote areas to cities and other industrial and tourism destinations. Following the same path as Thailand forty years ago, the other GMS countries are currently shifting from an agricultural and primarily seasonal male migration pattern to an increasingly female and longer-term migration pattern to fulfill the demands of the service and export industry driven economy and labor markets. Cambodia's recent economic growth has been driven largely by its garment and textile industry, which employs over 200,000 largely female migrants from rural areas. Similar trends are emerging in other GMS countries such as Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar.

Such industries, however, are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economic market and the impact of geo-political decisions. As a result, rapid growth may come abruptly to a halt, forcing workers to look for other opportunities in the country and abroad. For example, the tightening of sanctions against the Myanmar regime over the last several years has had major impacts on the previously rapidly expanding textile industry there. Many young women, drawn from rural areas to work in peri-urban based textile factories, lost their jobs. Some migrated further, and there were reports of a number being economically pressured to enter the sex industry.

More generally, as cities, towns and other economic centers reach their absorptive capacity, and internal migrants feel that working and living conditions are no longer tolerable, further relocation of labor may take place to other industrial areas or abroad. Those living close to borders, and far from cities, may opt to directly cross borders to take advantage of the many Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and trading markets that have cropped up in border areas. Typically, until very recently, rural-to-urban laborers in the GMS who decided to pursue international migration would have two main choices: 1) migrating within the GMS by crossing borders on their own, or 2) migrating further abroad under official labor export programs. In most cases, the first option has been and still is the preferred choice.

The emerging transnational trend for the sub-region is intra-regional cross-border migration, most of it involving undocumented and low-skilled migrants and managed through an informal network of family, friends and brokers.⁸ Interviews and qualitative research provide us with some sense of these intra-regional flows, but assessing their exact extent is far from easy, as official documentation generally does not exist, and quoted figures are often inconsistent. Governments, with the qualified exception of Thailand, are rarely able to provide clear statistics on the number of cross-border migrants and of those who have legal documents, have overstayed, are working outside of the visa status or have entered the country illegally. Data mostly comes from small-scale research. Nonetheless, MMN has tried to provide

8 On the legal status and skill levels of intra-regional migration, see chapters 3 and 4.

estimates of the numbers involved by collating information from multiple sources. The numbers vary greatly, with conservative estimates in 2005 ranging from 1.8 to 4 million intra-regional cross border migrants in the GMS. It is generally accepted that the largest migration flow, accounting for about 70 percent of the total movement, is from Laos, Cambodia and especially Myanmar, to Thailand, with the remaining percentage migrating to their closest neighboring country, and eventually transiting to a further location (see figure 6).



Figure 6:
Major Intra-
regional
Migration
Flows in the
GMS

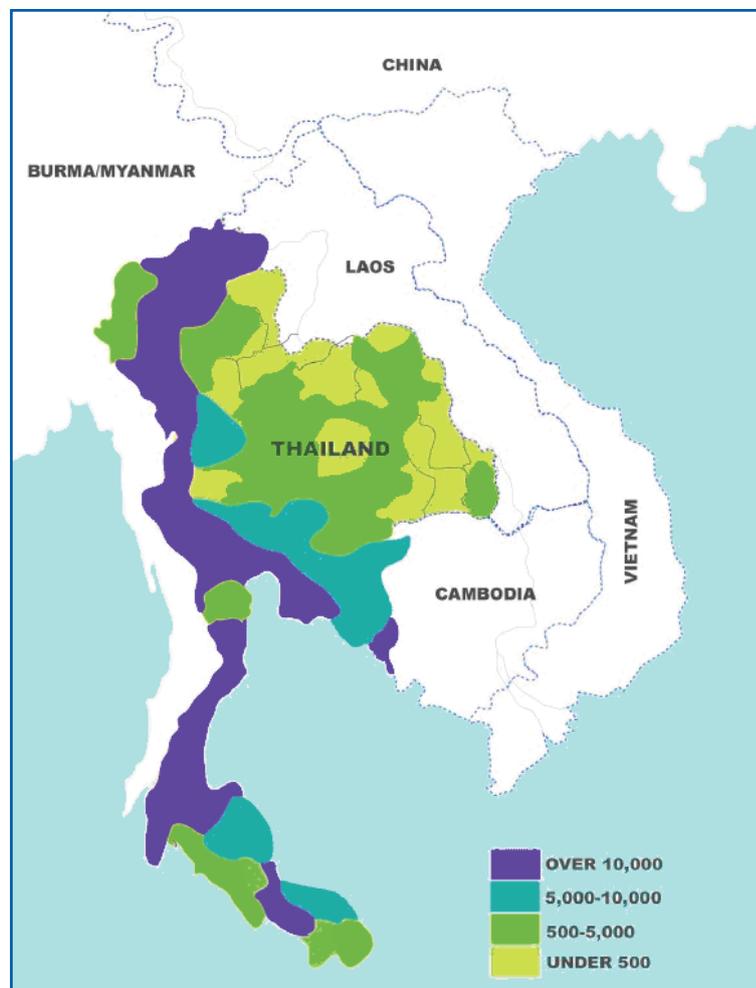
Official, and far from complete, figures from the annual registration efforts undertaken by the Thai government indicate that in 2004 Thai employers requested work permits for nearly 1.6 million undocumented migrant employees, though only 1.2 million registered and only 815,000 were actually issued work permits. Of those registered, 610,000 were from Burma, 105,000 from Cambodia and 100,000 from Laos.⁹ No figures are available for the significant numbers of persons born in Vietnam who have been living in Thailand for decades, but are still not fully recognized as citizens, or for the growing number of Chinese irregular migrants.

The main industries employing migrant labor in Thailand are domestic work, construction, commercial agriculture, fishing, and service industries. The specifics of migrant labor in these employment sectors will be discussed in chapter 4, but for now it is important to note that the economic sectors in which migrants tend to concentrate operate throughout the country, thus resulting in a widespread distribution of migrants in urban, semi-urban, coastal and rural areas. Twenty percent of migrants, mostly employed in domestic, construction and service work, are in Bangkok, with a large majority of the remaining migrant population

9 For more information on the registration process, see chapter 3.

concentrated in the Central, North and South regions close to the border with Myanmar, where fishing and fish-processing industries and other export-based industries are located (see figure 7).

Figure 7:
Distribution
of Registered
Migrants in
Thailand



Thailand is not the only receiving country in the GMS. Though in much smaller numbers, all other GMS countries also host workers from their GMS neighbors. Cambodia has significant long-term Vietnamese and Chinese populations, mostly concentrated in the capital city of Phnom Penh. Over 150,000 Vietnamese are estimated to be residing in Cambodia with a large proportion coming from bordering provinces. This population is mixed in with the roughly 1.1 million Vietnamese immigrants who relocated to Cambodia between 1985 and 1998 and are still considered irregular. Vietnamese males work in construction and the service industry and many Vietnamese women work in the entertainment industry. Chinese immigrants differ in that they normally work with a contract and have a relatively higher status as semi-skilled and skilled workers.

The Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi have received workers from Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. With the normalization of relations between China and its neighbors in the 1980s and the successive phase of regional integration, Yunnan, historically one of the three main Chinese provinces sending migrants to Southeast Asia, has increasingly become a recipient of migrants from Myanmar, Laos and

Vietnam. Laos hosts Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese workers, who work in both professional and low-status types of jobs, with many arriving with Thai and Chinese companies investing in the country. A limited number of migrants from China also travel to Myanmar and settle near the border, in trading cities or in labor settlements established by Chinese companies.

Not only do migrants travel to neighboring countries as a final destination, they also use them as transit countries before going to other countries within the sub-region or elsewhere. Vietnam is a gateway for migrants from China to Cambodia and Laos. Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are in turn transit countries for migrants from Vietnam and China making their way to Thailand. For a small proportion of migrants to Thailand, Thailand is also a transit point to Myanmar, Macao, Hong Kong, Singapore and other countries.

Albeit still poorly documented, the fragmented information on the flows briefly described above shows a complex reality of increasing intra-regional migration. Today GMS countries have become closely connected to each other through cross-border labor migration flows. Each of them has become, to different degrees, sending, transit, and destination countries for workers from the sub-region. The growing intra-regional flows have been mainly irregular, but this may soon change as GMS countries embark on officially exporting workers to ensure an economic boost of foreign remittances and a better management of migration flows. A notable signal of this change was the signing by Thailand of bilateral agreements with Laos (2002), Cambodia (2003) and Myanmar (2003) to import 100,000 workers from each country with the logistics subcontracted to labor recruiting agencies overseen by government institutions (see further chapter 3).

Until these agreements become operational, however, official labor exports in the GMS remain limited to the sending of laborers outside of the GMS to richer economies in Southeast and East Asia and in decreasing numbers to the Middle East. The largest exporter is Thailand having officially deployed approximately 170,000 overseas contract workers yearly since 1995. Twenty years ago the majority of Thai workers were sent to the Middle East (especially Saudi Arabia). However, today about 85 percent of the migrants exported through bilateral agreements work in East and Southeast Asian countries (particularly Taiwan). Of the remaining 15 percent working in the Middle East, seven percent work in Israel and the occupied territories. Eighty-two percent of those sent abroad were male with 56 percent between the ages of 25-35 years with only a primary school education.¹⁰ The only major destination for female Thai contract migrants, generally with a higher level of education than their male counterparts, is Hong Kong, where they find work as domestic workers. Japan, traditionally a significant destination for regular and irregular women migrants working mostly in the entertainment sector, has been sharply declining in importance due to competition with other labor-supplying countries and a crack-down by the government to reduce irregular migration.

10 J.W. Huguet & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

Labor export to peninsular Southeast Asia and East Asia is also increasingly being pursued by the Vietnamese government. The number of contract workers was 70,594 in 2005, with an increase of 4.7 percent as compared to 2004, and a 100 percent increase when compared to 2001, of which the majority was sent to Taiwan and Malaysia and to a lesser extent Japan and Korea.¹¹ Myanmar has also expanded the export of labor, with many workers finding work as seamen in the global maritime industry.

The growing interest for stronger economies in East and Southeast Asia in GMS migrants who have somewhat higher entrepreneurial skills is also reflected in a parallel flow of irregular migration. There are rough estimates of close to 100,000 Thai who overstayed their visas or took employment not permitted by their visa, particularly in East and Southeast Asia (with the majority in Taiwan, Japan and Singapore). Reports of others, primarily from Cambodia and Vietnam, migrating to Malaysia and Singapore as well as East Asia are increasingly common.

The research summarized above shows that migration within the GMS, and from the GMS to other countries, is structured along a chain in which unskilled and irregular workers move from weaker economies to relatively stronger economies in the sub-region, and slightly more skilled, and generally more regular, migrants move to the even stronger economies in Asia. In Asia cross-border migrants most often complement rather than compete with local labor. As will be discussed in details in chapter 4, intra-regional cross-border migrants from Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia tend to work in occupations that are no longer attractive for local workers in Thailand because of the low wages and status and the poor working conditions. The same comparisons are found between Thailand and Vietnam and East Asia where Thai and Vietnamese workers fill the demand for low-skilled and semi-skilled labor in East Asian nations necessary to sustain the development of small and medium size businesses amidst a diminishing and aging local labor force.

IV. The Future of GMS Migration

How the dynamics of migration in the GMS will change in the future is difficult to predict, especially considering the weak evidence base and the rapid pace of change in the sub-region. Based on what we have learned from our programming and a review of relevant sources, we can, however, speculate on a number of probable developments.

First, the GMS development strategy towards increased regionalization will continue to facilitate exchanges in the GMS of commodities as well as labor. With the fast-growing and labor-short economy in Thailand and large unemployed working age populations elsewhere in GMS, labor migration will likely increase throughout Thailand, in pace with increased regionalization and expansion of infrastructure. The World Bank and the Asia Development Bank have assumed this trend in their assessment of the socioeconomic impacts of regional integration in their attempts to identify potentially negative effects of the GMS development strategy, while

11 Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM) (2006) *Vietnam's Economy in 2005*. Hanoi: The Publishing House of Political Theory.

supporting governments to develop a fairer environment for legal labor migration.¹² A problem in this context is the unwillingness of the Myanmar government to even recognize the occurrence of migration from the country. If the political and economic situation there is not resolved, the large migration flows from Myanmar to Thailand and elsewhere will continue unabated.

Second, in the longer term other countries may begin to attract greater numbers of GMS migrants. Though Yunnan and Vietnam lag behind Thailand to a considerable degree in terms of per capita incomes and the extent of market-led industrial development, their annual economic growth has reached impressive rates, for example seven percent in Vietnam this year, while Thailand managed only five percent. In addition, the two Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Guansi, although much poorer compared to the rest of China, may become an attractive transit destination to migrants as gateways to other provinces in China.

Third, China may not only become a receiving country, but it may also become a major source of labor for the GMS in view of its large population numbers, the relatively lower capacity of absorption of its labor market, and its increasing role in stimulating trade in the GMS. Disadvantaged ethnic populations in China's border areas, if not integrated into the new emerging economy, may look for opportunities across the borders, or may become vulnerable to trafficking, as research indicates has already been happening. As Chinese business expands in the region, and in view of the preferred practice of Chinese firms to bring workers from their own countries, especially to fill managerial positions, it is to be expected that larger numbers of workers and businessmen from China will be working in the GMS. This trend is already becoming visible in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia.

Fourth, we can anticipate that the composition of migration flows will change. There will be more women involved in cross-border migration as well as a larger proportion of the poorest populations. This will occur because of the decreasing cost of migration in conjunction with more developed cross-border social networks, and the growing market for imported unskilled labor in industrializing countries. In view of the heightened vulnerability of women and poor migrants on a number of dimensions, it will be essential to start putting in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure their protection.

Finally, in exporting labor to East Asia and peninsular Southeast Asia, Thailand, Vietnam and other GMS countries will face increasing wage competition from other Asian labor-supplying countries, such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, which could reduce labor deployment as has happened in the past for the Middle East. Exporting labor within the sub-region, however, may become more common, requiring the formulation of comprehensive intra-regional policies that not only manage flows, but also ensure the well-being of migrants. That said, whether contract labor becomes a more common form of migration or not, governments will still need to pay more attention to the situation of millions of irregular and unskilled cross-border migrants already working in the sub-region.

12 P.Y. Fallavier, et al. (2005). "Greater Mekong Subregion Labor Migration Program: Impacts and Regulation of Labor Migration in the GMS." Unpublished paper presented at the World Bank Workshop, Bangkok, March 24, 2006..

Photo 3:

Queues at the Myawaddy Checkpoint in Myanmar Leading to Mae Sot in Tak Province of Thailand.



3

Migration in the Shadow of the Law

I. Unregulated Migration Exposes Migrants to Risks

The rapid progress achieved by GMS countries in integrating trade and infrastructure has failed to include the integration and regulation of the labor market in the sub-region. This does not imply that policy makers and international donors are not aware of the realities of migration in the GMS and its close links with market and infrastructural integration. On the contrary, they are conscious of the importance of migrant labor for regional development. The “free flow of people” is often mentioned as a goal of regional integration in official documents, as for example in the following quote from one of ADB’s program strategy papers: “the objective is a highly efficient system—allowing for goods and people to travel freely around the GMS without significant impediment, excessive cost, or delay.”¹³ Still, when it comes to the realization of this broad goal through harmonization of visa processes and removal of barriers to movement, only the flows of tourists, students, and highly skilled labor are taken into account, without any provision for the main flow of unskilled migrants across borders.

On the occasions when labor movements, other than those of the highly skilled, are referred to, it is in the context of forced migration or trafficking, indeed a serious problem in the region, but one of much smaller proportion when compared to voluntary migration flows. All GMS governments have expressed their commitment to fight trafficking of people, as reflected in a recent regional Memorandum of Understanding and the establishment of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) in 2004, but they have been careful not to emphasize links with labor migration. This is despite the fact, as it will be argued below, that the two are clearly connected. The focus of proposed intra-regional action has centered on sexual exploitation and trafficking into prostitution, ignoring the more diffuse form of trafficking for general labor purposes, and blurring the distinction between forced and voluntary sex work. At times, trafficking has even been pictured as equivalent to irregular migration, which reinforces calls for harsh security and border control measures to protect potential victims, and delays dealing with the much more difficult policy question of how to regulate voluntary labor flows

¹³ Asian Development Bank. (2005). *Building on Success: GMS Flagship Programs and Development Matrix*. ADB Website: <http://www.adb.org/GMS/Projects/1-overall-summary.pdf> accessed on September, 6, 2006.

and protect the much larger number of voluntary migrants. As noted earlier, the policy summit meeting organized with Foundation support by the Mekong Institute last February was the first to facilitate dialogue among high-level government representatives and other stakeholders on the need for coordinated migration policies and interventions on human and developmental terms. But institutionalized venues for continuing such important interaction have yet to be established.

To date no clear policies on intra-Mekong labor migration and migrant protection have been formulated at the regional level, and no system has been put in place to regulate the increased flows of workers for the region as a whole. At the bilateral level, agreements signed by Thailand with its neighbors have yet to be put into full effect and therefore their value is for future migrants rather than for current ones (see discussion below). Most countries, including Thailand, do indeed have provisions for professionals to legally enter the country with work permits, but those provisions do not apply to unskilled or low-skilled workers notwithstanding the great demand for this category of worker. In addition, in Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and China it is illegal to leave the country without notifying the authorities, and returnees face fines, detention or rehabilitation on arrival if caught.

The policy environment leaves intra-regional cross-border migrants, with the exception of a handful of professionals, with little option but to migrate through irregular means or become irregular in successive phases of the migration process.¹⁴ In Thailand, the country with the major influx of migrants from neighboring countries, there are claims that 90 percent of the estimated two to three million migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos are irregular and about half are without any legal and valid travel documents. The actual numbers of irregular migrants elsewhere in the GMS are harder to determine since scant data are available, but from research the Foundation has supported it is clear that irregularity is a common feature of migrants throughout the GMS. While the irregular status of migrants is often tolerated, and indeed to a certain extent encouraged, as this report makes clear, that status places migrants at risk of exploitation and exposes them to vulnerability on several levels. For many of those profiting from the migration system—although pointedly not for the migrants themselves—risk and vulnerability can be a valued aspect of the system. In the legal shadows there are large profits to be made at origin, transit and destination points.

Migrants travel through different routes, usually starting in their home communities, stopping at various places on the way, before reaching the borders. The duration of the travel varies depending on proximity to the border location, the quality of the infrastructure, and the measure of control of the national government. Along the way, migrants experience many challenges, including having to pay bribes to authorities on both sides of the border, deception by brokers, physical and sexual abuse, exhaustion and hunger, arrest and confinement, and accident, injury and even death. In this journey, members of ethnic minorities moving from Vietnam to Cambodia, and especially those that migrate from Myanmar to Thailand, are exposed

14 As a conceptual or legal category, irregular (or illegal) migration generally refers to various kinds of movement that include among other things, illegal entry, overstaying visas, remaining as a rejected asylum-seeker, engaging in prohibited work, and being *sans papiers* (or undocumented). In a single journey or process of migration, a migrant might enter into and out of irregularity at various points.

to relatively greater risks in their efforts to migrate because of restrictive political conditions.

Contrary to the hardships of the internal journey, physical borders as such do not present a major challenge to migrants, since in the GMS they are long and porous. If people cannot go through the official checkpoints, they can access, with the help of relatives, friends or brokers, the many unofficial entry points at river crossings, local piers, and mountain routes. Official check-points have only recently been set up, and there is a long history in the region of ethnic groups, and other upland populations, living on both sides of a border and moving freely back and forth.



Photo 4:

Across the Mekong River, Thailand is Easily Accessible from Vientiane, Laos.

Most migrants in the GMS do not have passports or identity cards, since the process to obtain them is difficult, lengthy and costly. GMS migrants enter a receiving country without documents, or with only a one-day permit that can be obtained at selected official border crossings by showing an identity card, without the need of a passport. Some may carry or later acquire fake identity or travel documents. Very few come as tourists and overstay their visas. Maintaining documentation is also an issue. Migrants have reported confiscation or loss of their legal documents to military, immigration authorities or employers, and it is difficult and costly to apply for new identity documents, especially if they have to first go back to their own country.

Typically, migrants will use personal contacts or informal intermediaries and brokers to navigate their passage. It is after crossing the border that the majority turn to more established informal recruiting networks for passage further into the interior where jobs are considered to be better. These unofficial recruiting systems, though operating in the shadows of the law, are in place throughout the GMS to facilitate the hiring process. In responding to the increasingly competitive market, employers are willing to engage underground recruitment channels and pay local officials bribes to accommodate irregular workers in order to ensure cheap labor. Recruiters' fees in Thailand range from Baht 3,000 to 24,000 (approximately \$80–640), depending on the route, distance and services provided. The vast majority of migrants are unable

to pay recruiters' fees in advance and consequently begin their employment in debt. Migrants consistently report that their jobs and debt were negotiated and agreed to verbally, with terms and conditions rarely explained in any detail. Efforts to negotiate with recruiters and employers are difficult due to language differences and, with limited options for locating other work, migrants often have to endure exploitative conditions until debt is repaid, sufficient savings accumulated, and more reliable recruiting networks identified to assist in the search for alternative jobs.

When migrating through informal channels, migrants not only rely on these networks to transport them directly to jobs, but also to facilitate communication and the sending of remittances to those back home. The loss or confiscation of documentation also forces migrants to pay recruiters to assist them in finding substitute documents or in helping them return without having to cross checkpoints to avoid fines, arrest or detention. As a result, the unofficial recruitment system has a strong influence on the migrants and on the migration process. The recruiters clearly benefit from and are sustained by the system: the more migrants remain in irregular status, the more the recruiting networks prosper.

For the migrants themselves irregularity presents serious risks. Not only, as following chapters will show, do they find themselves in vulnerable work and living conditions, but they also risk being arrested and deported from the receiving country, and even being arrested on return for violating their countries' travel laws when they left. Research shows that irregular migrants are targeted for prosecution more often than recruiters, brokers, traffickers or employers. In Thailand, workers without a work permit risk arrest and deportation. GMS migrants are by far the largest number of those detained in immigration centers and of those deported from Thailand. Under a project supported by the Foundation, IOM noted a steady increase in the number of GMS migrants detained from 1999 to 2004 in the Bangkok International Detention Center. From 1999 to 2002, of the total of 176,777 persons detained, 164,216 were from the four countries of Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and China, with an average of 41,000 a year from these countries being detained. In 2003 alone, the number of GMS nationals was 57,558 and in the first half of 2004 it had already reached 39,963. While in the past the highest numbers by far were from Myanmar, followed by Cambodia, Laos and China, in 2003 Myanmar and Cambodia had almost an equal number detained, and in the first half of 2004 Cambodia had surpassed Myanmar, reflecting the increase in migration flows from Cambodia in more recent years. This also suggests that recent migrants experience a higher degree of risk when compared to migrants who have stayed longer in the country and have learned to navigate the system.

Deportation numbers are close to detention numbers, with deportation being carried out informally by bringing deportees to the border and allowing them to walk across so as to reduce complications on the other side. In addition to arrest or fines for illegally leaving the country, returnees, especially if from Myanmar, may be refused entrance if they cannot prove that they are indeed citizens of that country, not an unusual circumstance considering their lack of valid documents or even statelessness. More generally, being deported is rarely a deterrent to trying to re-migrate. Deported migrants attempting to cross back over the border in order to gather their belongings, collect unpaid earnings or return to work through brokers who emerge once the authorities have left.



Photo 5:
Migrants from Myanmar being Deported En Masse from Thailand.

II. Statelessness and Trafficking Compound Irregularity

The irregularity of migrants in the GMS is compounded not only by the lack of identity and travel documents for a large portion of official citizens, but also by statelessness and trafficking. The great diversity of migrants without defined citizenship often passes unobserved since existing data on irregular GMS migrants are fragmented and are not disaggregated according to ethnicity (only nationality). Still, Foundation grantees have consistently highlighted the large numbers of ethnic minority people among irregular migrants in the GMS. These persons often do not have citizenship in their countries of origin. Given that ethnic minority populations live predominantly along border areas, and that, as previously mentioned, they often live in disadvantaged conditions, it is not surprising that they make up a large proportion of the irregular migrant population, with migrants to Thailand from a multitude of ethnic groups in Myanmar representing the greatest numbers. The worrisome issue is that they are often not recognized as citizens by their country of origin and are therefore precluded from acquiring identity and travel documents necessary for migrating in a regular status.

In Thailand some of these people have, in fact, rarely if ever moved. They have been living in the border area for generations, but they are still not considered citizens. The Thai Ministry of Interior in 2000 reported that only half of an estimated one million persons from minority populations born in the country had obtained Thai citizenship. Interestingly, a factor holding back efforts to grant citizenship to those who were born in the country is the government's difficulty in differentiating between old and new arrivals, between "citizens" and "irregular migrants" from the same ethnic community. In Myanmar, the 40-year conflict between the military regime and ethnic minority populations not only has led to the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of members of ethnic minorities and to their flight abroad, but has also impeded efforts for these groups to obtain citizenship documentation.

With the exception of the over 135,000 ethnic minority refugees sheltered indefinitely in camps on the Thai side of the Myanmar border, all others are considered “irregular” with no particular allegiance to any nation, except for their ethnic community. Whether these people are “asylum seekers” or “economic migrants” is a point of contention, with the reality for the majority of them probably being somewhere in the middle, since it is a mix of political and economic reasons that has pushed them into irregularity abroad and is preventing them from going back. As in the situation with Myanmar, it is also not always clear whether political or economic reasons have compelled the recent movements of Hmong from Laos to Thailand, but, again, both the Thai and the Lao governments are hesitant to consider them refugees. In Cambodia, migrants from Vietnamese upland minorities are when possible ignored due to sensitivities with both the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments, with neither eager to claim them as their citizens.

Not only are ethnic minorities particularly vulnerable to statelessness, but children of migrants also suffer the same vulnerability. Irrespective of ethnic background, they are stateless because of their lack of documentation at birth in the destination country, or because they migrated prior to the age of eligibility for identity cards or passports.¹⁵ Research and grantee reports note that a growing number of children born to migrants outside their country of origin do not have any documentation or identification. Over 93,000 children under the age of 15 from neighboring countries were recorded in Thailand in 2004.¹⁶ Many of them are unable to negotiate identity or citizenship of any country since even their parents’ country does not recognize them. This lack of identity and citizenship entitlements has serious implications limiting future education and work opportunities for these children in destination as well as sending countries and exposes them to exploitation.

Another extremely exploited group of migrants are those that have been trafficked. Trafficking may occur at various points of the migration process, at recruitment, on transit and on arrival, by means of threat or violence, but more generally by fraud and deception. This takes many forms. As the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the GMS, a partner in a number of Foundation’s activities in the region, notes:

In the GMS, children are trafficked from Cambodia to beg or sell flowers on the streets of Thailand. Adults and young people in search of better opportunities come to Thailand from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia and find themselves in factories, brothels, houses or fishing boats, in debt bondage or physically unable to escape. Single Vietnamese women go to China in search of marriage, to find themselves sold as domestic slaves. Newly married Vietnamese women go to Taiwan to find their husband is actually a pimp. Chinese boys, and increasingly those on the other side

15 S. Chantavanich, et al. (2006). *Report to World Bank on Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Chulalongkorn University.

16 J.W. Huguet & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

of the Vietnamese and Myanmar borders, are stolen to be sold to those looking to adopt a son.¹⁷

How many persons are trafficked annually in the GMS is not known, with estimates ranging from 200,000 to 450,000 for women and children, and no information on the number of men. Preliminary research corroborates, however, that Thailand has become a major hub for trafficking from neighboring countries to Thailand and abroad, and that ethnic minority people form a large proportion of those trafficked. Trafficking networks span the entire region, linking organized crime structures to individuals, including victims' relatives and friends, who often act out of poverty and despair. Interventions to target these source communities have focused on enhancing their understanding of trafficking and establishing protection mechanisms, often failing to address economic and gender disparities conducive to exploitation, and leading to the displacement of trafficking to other localities, rather than to an overall reduction. Controversial rescue efforts by international organizations in Cambodia, and to a lesser extent Thailand, have also had negative results, with the victims being repatriated against their will rather than assisted. As UNIAP, IOM and other Foundation partners argue, it is time for GMS countries to recognize that trafficking requires a comprehensive long-term strategy. Besides focusing on the structural vulnerability of the victims and their communities, such a strategy must include efforts to reduce demand through labor law enforcement and must ensure mechanisms for safe migration through regularization of migration flows.

III. Regularizing Migration

The increasing concern by academic and civil society groups with the many problems related to irregular migration, especially in its most extreme forms, is leading to a call for governments to revisit their attitudes and approaches. Thailand is often pointed out as an emblematic case of the ambiguous stand taken by receiving countries. Confronted with increasing numbers of migrants and persistent demand for unskilled cross-border labor from almost all economic sectors, Thailand has decided to register selected categories of unskilled irregular migrants for limited periods of time, but without attempting to legalize their status. Registration only allows employers to hire foreign workers, by requesting the granting of a work permit to irregular workers in their employment. Attaining a work permit does not change migrants' illegal status, however. According to the Thai Immigration Law they remain "illegal migrants" having entered without travel documents or having overstayed. In this vague situation, "registered" migrants have somewhat better protection under the labor law than "unregistered" migrants and can earn relatively higher salaries, but their status is far from being equivalent to that of legal residents in terms of access to education and other legal and social services, with the possible exception of health services. The short-term validity of the permit, in comparison to the average length of their stay (the majority of migrants in Thailand stay more than three years and about 30 percent over five years with no intention to return), also implies that migrants go in and out of "registered" status in the course of their stay.

17 UNIAP Website: http://www.no-trafficking.org/content/About_Human_Trafficking/about_human.htm accessed on September, 6, 2006.

From 1992, the Thai government has undertaken seven migrant labor registration schemes, the first of which was only for employers in ten provinces near the Myanmar border and then, following growing demand, gradually expanded to all provinces of the country. The most recent scheme, as defined in 2003, permits employment of irregular workers between 15 and 60 years of age (but not their families), and only from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. Registration is allowed only for periods of three months to one year for selected sectors with a limit on the numbers in each sector and the possibility of only a single renewal. Benefits offered consist of a registration card, control of wages, health insurance with premiums paid by the migrant, and proper repatriation measures if necessary.

The success of these schemes has been mixed, covering only a portion of the actual flow of migrants in the country, since not all employers register their workers, and since the schemes exclude most workers in the large informal sector, especially those who are self-employed, casual workers, new arrivals without a job, family members, and migrants outside the age limits. The schemes have also been challenged for being overly complicated, expensive, with too many unclear rules, and poor coordination of the government institutions involved. Mostly due to varying degree of effectiveness in the schemes' implementation, the numbers of registered workers have fluctuated dramatically over the years, in spite of the constant increase in government estimates of the migrant population. In 2005, the Thai government renewed permits for 705,293 of those registered in 2004, a significant decrease over the previous year, though the demand from Thai employers for migrant labor increased to over 1.8 million, up from 1.4 million in 2004. In other words, the 2005 registration effort met only 37 percent of employers' demands, highlighting the reality that most migrant labor remains irregular. MMN, working with various migrant communities in Thailand, estimated the ratio of registered to unregistered migrants to be between 1:2 and 1:3.

The extent of employers refusing to register their migrant labor force is unknown, but monitoring shows that it is not uncommon. It is often not in the employer's interest to facilitate migrants' access to benefits and protection under national labor laws, particularly because the surplus of irregular labor means that others are always available to replace current workers. Despite a provision that allows small enterprises not to pay minimum wage if they have less than ten migrant workers, there are still employers who are inclined not to comply with the registration in order to maintain their cheap and (and disenfranchised) work force to, in their view, remain competitive in regional and global markets. Long used to relying on informal channels for outsourcing or subcontracting labor, some employers tend to deny responsibility for labor conditions or abuses. The limited sanctions and their infrequent application for employers who do not register their workers also contribute to keeping in place "unregistered" migration.

One aspect of the schemes, which is hotly debated, is the control given to the employer in the registering of the workers. By tying the migrants' work permit to one specific employer, registration of the migrant labor force has at times resulted in increased vulnerability as the migrants fear leaving their abusive employers and losing their work permit, having to re-register with a new employer. Employers who register their workers and advance migrants their registration fees typically

also keep the migrants' work permits to prevent them from leaving, thus reducing the mobility of the workers.

Migrants, on the other hand, are not always well informed or willing to undergo the registration process, considering the very limited time period offered and the high costs involved (around \$100, which is equivalent to one month's salary). Other obstacles are the compulsory health examination to determine their acceptance in the scheme (scanning for eight diseases and for pregnancy), and the registration constraints on changing employment and moving residence. Many also feel that the minimal social protection offered is not worth the registration costs. The main barrier is that migrants are often not permitted to leave their job, are constrained in their choice of work place, and there are no provisions for paid sick leave. In addition, their health insurance is not portable, being only valid in the district of registration. If registered migrants move to other districts, as they often do, they lose the coverage even if they have already paid for it. Many also have difficulty accessing services because of language barriers, fear of harassment or discrimination, and prohibitive costs for services or transportation.

The many challenges in implementing the schemes pale in significance when compared with the challenge of eventually returning migrants to their home countries after their work permits expire. Somewhat unrealistically, considering that historically most migrants stay in Thailand for a long period of time, it is assumed that migrants will return home voluntarily. If not, they will have to be repatriated. To provide incentives to migrants to go back, the MOUs signed with Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar offer the possibility to returnee migrants to enroll as contract workers. The new elaborate recruitment structure is, however, not necessarily suitable for current migrants. Part of the process includes verifying nationality and providing travel documents to those in irregular status before they can enroll in the program. This process, undertaken by origin governments, has proceeded at an extremely slow pace, with the Myanmar government in particular not willing, or able, to verify nationality for all the reasons explained above. The quota under discussion—a total of 200,000 workers for the three countries of Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar—is however much smaller than the number of migrants already in the country; thus, the lack of assurance of enrollment discourages migrants already in Thailand from returning. No wonder the sending governments are having difficulties in filling the quota. After more than two years from the signing of the agreements, Laos has identified 38,000 workers, Cambodia 7,000, and Myanmar has not yet been able to start despite the fact that it has the largest numbers of migrants in Thailand.

The MOUs aim to enhance cooperation in curbing irregular migration in exchange for legal migration opportunities. Workers admitted are expected to receive equal treatment in wages and other benefits as registered migrants. However, the MOUs do not provide enforcement or redress mechanisms. Costs are also much higher than the registration process. The employers have to pay Baht 10,000–50,000 (\$250–1,250) for each worker—a figure that has raised concerns that it may lead employers to attempt obtaining the amount from workers themselves, further reducing the choice of migrant workers to change employment. The withholding of 15 percent of wages by the Thai government, in order to ensure that the migrants return at the end

of their contract, is also problematic as it would reduce the already minimal incomes of the migrants during their stay, without assurance of getting it back at a later stage, for sure if they decide to overstay, but also because the system may be corrupt and inefficient. No provisions are made for family reunion, pregnancy, marriage and other personal matters, and there is no possibility of extension beyond a two-year renewal upon return to the country of origin at the end of the first term.

Nonetheless, compared to other bilateral agreements in Asia, the MOUs in the GMS seem in principle somewhat more responsive to the needs of the sending countries and potential migrants, and for the sub-region they can be viewed as an important first step in recognizing the migrant situation and trying to regularize migrant flows. If more substantial progress is to be made in the years ahead, it will be crucial for GMS countries to collaborate in monitoring the MOUs' implementation and making necessary improvements to them. In addition, they will need to develop complementary mechanisms for the many workers currently in an irregular status. It is improbable that the MOUs will resolve the situation, especially if the irregular intra-regional migration flows continue to grow as expected. The establishment of a comprehensive migration management system covering the many dimensions of migration ought to be put high on the regional integration agenda to finally transform cross-border labor flows in the GMS from irregular to regular and provide migrants the legal protection they deserve.

4

Unskilled Migrant Labor Feeds Industrialization

I. Supply and Demand of Unskilled Labor

Cross-border migration flows in the GMS are not only unregulated, but they also consist mainly of unskilled workers. With the exception of a limited number of regularly employed expatriates from East Asian and Western countries who fill higher-skilled and professional positions, migrants in the sub-region are to a great extent irregular and unskilled, with the intertwining of these two features reinforcing each other and placing migrants in particularly vulnerable conditions at the bottom of the labor market and of society. To illustrate this process, in this and the next chapter we concentrate largely on the situation in Thailand, in part because this country is the main destination of intra-regional migration, but also because of the greater relative availability of research data. To some degree, however, the issues discussed are applicable to other GMS countries.

Thailand is the largest importer of unskilled labor in the sub-region. If the data on registered migrants are any indication, the large majority of GMS migrants, and thus also of the overall migrant population in the country, can be classified as “unskilled” or “lower skilled” workers according to commonly used educational criteria. According to Thailand’s 2004 registration scheme, 74.1 percent of the applicants had less than eight years formal education.¹⁸ The 2000 Thai National Census reported illiteracy rates to be around 30 percent for Cambodian, 40 percent for Lao, and 76 percent for Burmese migrants, with approximately 30 percent, 33 percent and 80 percent respectively never having attended school (see table 2).¹⁹ The striking number of migrants from Myanmar who are illiterate and poorly schooled—partly due to the higher percentage of ethnic minorities among migrants from Myanmar when compared with Lao and Cambodian migrants—has far-reaching implications for the overall educational level of the migrant population, since migrants from Myanmar constitute the largest share of cross-border workers. The levels of literacy and educational attainment are not only lower in comparison to those of the Thai population, but also in comparison

18 J.W. Huguet & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

19 A. Chamrathirong. (2006). “Profile of Labor Migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos: Analysis of the Population and Housing Census of Thailand 2000.” Unpublished paper presented at the World Bank Workshop, Bangkok, March 24, 2006.

to those of the population in the respective countries of origin. For example, among persons aged 15–59 in Myanmar in 2001 only 20 percent of males and 30 percent of females were illiterate, while, as reported above, the illiteracy ratio among the much younger population of migrants from Myanmar to Thailand is three times higher.

Table 3:
Educational
Levels of
Migrants in
Thailand
(Thai Census
2000)

Male 15-59 years	Nationality of Migrants		
	Cambodia	Laos	Burma/Myanmar
Never Attended School	30.7%	33.9%	81.0%
Attended Primary School	46.4%	44.3%	11.7%
Attended Higher Education	22.9%	21.8%	7.3%

Low levels of education of the migrant population are not compensated by other forms of formal training or extensive work experience. Although systematic research on migrants' previous job experience is almost non-existent, from scattered data and anecdotal observations it can be said that a majority were engaged in subsistence agricultural activities before leaving their home country, with the remaining having worked for a few years in the informal sector as vendors, or having performed low-skilled work in the manufacturing industry or in construction. For women, their only previous experience often is in farm and household work, except for those who have moved first to the cities to work in the manufacturing sector or in the service industry.

The lack of formal training and relevant work experience is partly due to the young age of the migrant population, a reflection of the demographic divide among GMS countries as described in Chapter 2 and also a result of the greater propensity in all populations of young people to migrate. A disproportionate number of youth and children are migrants in the sub-region, with the average age at which they cross borders decreasing in recent years. In Thailand, the 2004 registration data indicate that 56 percent of the applicants were between 15 and 25 years old, with another seven percent under the age of 15. Of those aged less than 15, 20 percent were 12–14 years old and the remaining 80 percent under the age of 12.

This young migrant work force caters to the growing demand for unskilled labor to support industrialization, substituting for local labor. In Thailand, as in other newly industrialized countries, relatively high incomes in the expanding manufacturing, commercial and service sectors render jobs that are lower-paying, lower-status and that involve harder physical work less attractive to an increasingly more educated and smaller Thai population with broader work opportunities at its disposal. Even for unskilled Thai workers, such jobs prove to be unattractive and they try to avoid them, if necessary by migrating outside the sub-region where at least, for the same kind of job, they can earn more and gain a relatively higher status on return. At the same time, harsh competition in the regional and global market inspires labor-intensive industries to economize by suppressing wages for lower-level jobs for which there is abundant labor supply, thus making those jobs even less interesting to the Thai population. The wages, however, are still relatively high compared to those in the countries where the cross-border migrants originate, especially considering the

limited employability of the migrant population, motivating them to accept any kind of job in the hope of eventually improving their livelihoods. As a result, intra-regional migrants come to fill the shortage of cheap labor in Thailand as well as other more industrialized countries in the sub-region, their lower skill levels and more modest financial expectations being a match to the so-called “3Ds” jobs—Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult (some also say Disdained)—that are on offer.

II. Working at the Bottom of the Pyramid

Many of the realities faced by migrants are closely linked to the labor sectors in which they are employed and the lower positions in which they are placed. Among the migrants registered in Thailand in 2004, as shown in figure 8, the majority were concentrated in agriculture, both animal husbandry and land cultivation (21.8 percent), domestic service (15.5 percent), fish processing and fisheries (15.9 percent), and construction (14.7 percent). The large category of “others,” accounting for almost 30 percent of the migrants, is difficult to interpret as it refers to a myriad of jobs, but research indicates that the textile and garment factories and the entertainment industry (including also direct and indirect sex work) have significant proportions of migrants. The many “unregistered” migrants without work permits, and the substantial number of cross-border migrants who daily commute across the border are not included in these statistics, but research indicates that many concentrate in the above-mentioned sectors, with the remaining working as street vendors and in other kinds of self-employment in the large informal sector. A UNICEF-funded study found in 2003 that 600–1,100 children from Cambodia crossed into Thailand each day at three different entry points to come to work in agriculture, market stalls and in informal services such as guarding vehicles or engaging in the sex trade in cross-border town, returning home for rest.²⁰

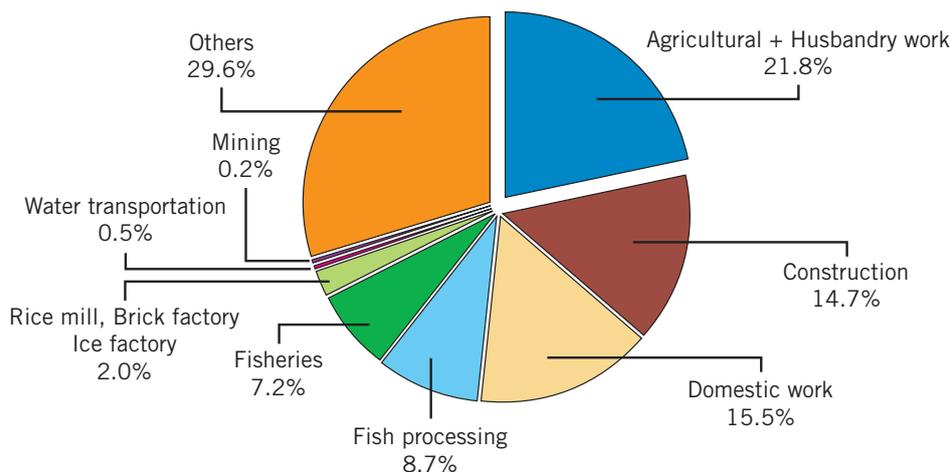


Figure 8:
2004
Distribution
of Registered
Migrants
per Sector
in Thailand
(Ministry of
Labor)

20 K. Angsuthanasombat, et al. (2003). *Rapid Assessment on Child Labour Employment in the Border Area between Thailand and Cambodia*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies and United Nations Children’s Fund.

The registration data also contain some indicative information about the concentration of migrants of different nationalities in different sectors. Migrants from Myanmar are primarily concentrated in agriculture, and to a lesser extent domestic work and construction; migrants from Laos are concentrated in domestic work and to a lesser extent agriculture; and migrants from Cambodia are concentrated in the construction and fisheries sectors and to a lesser extent in agriculture (see table 3). These occupational differences are probably related to length of stay, social networks and perception on the parts of the employers of the capabilities of workers from a certain nationality. Language could also be a factor in explaining the growing concentration of Lao workers (predominantly women, but also men) in domestic service. Lao migrants speak a language similar to Thai and therefore can more easily communicate with their employers, while other migrants speak languages very different from Thai making them less employable for jobs in which communication skills are more important. Migrants who stay longer and gradually learn Thai have more choices in seeking employers and can move up the occupational ladder in safer and less onerous positions, but still within the constraints of unskilled labor.

The gender of the migrants is also related to different occupational patterns. Although the statistics are not disaggregated by sex, research indicates that migrant women are concentrated in seafood processing, domestic services, and to a lesser extent, manufacturing. Females are also sought for other types of service-oriented work such as shop-keeping, care-giving, and entertainment work.

Table 4:
2004
Registered
Migrants by
Nationality
and Economic
Sector in
Thailand
(Ministry of
Labor)

Sector	Employer	Burmese	Laos	Cambodia	Total
Agriculture	44,811	143,793	16,795	18,816	179,404
Domestic work	88,059	88,319	31,449	8,746	128,514
Construction	10,387	81,554	8,442	24,463	114,459
Fisheries	6,518	33,178	2,634	22,874	58,686
Fish processing	2,548	62,923	1,013	4,666	68,602
Others	43,228	183,155	37,711	22,508	243,374
Rice mill	778	6,471	266	186	6,923
Mining	846	5,963	433	373	7,615
Ice making	572	3,642	485	387	4,514
Transportation	57	1,108	124	1,770	3,002
Total	197,804	610,106	99,352	104,789	815,093

In whatever sector they work, migrant workers are placed in lower positions in comparison to Thai workers. A multi-layered hierarchy of labor has evolved in which migrants work as general laborers and Thai workers act as their supervisors or foremen. Migrant workers are also assigned to the more difficult and less well-paid jobs. Among the migrants themselves, those who are registered have relatively better positions than those that are unregistered. The same hierarchy is reflected in salaries. Unregistered workers receive almost 50 percent lower than migrants who have registered and obtained work permits (see table 4).²¹ In turn, those with work permits consistently report making less than Thai workers, who typically receive at

21 S. Chantavanich, et al. (2006). *Report to the World Bank on Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Chulalongkorn University.

least the minimum wage of 133–165 Baht per day (\$3.60–4.30), despite the fact that, according to the law, employers with more than 10 employees should not differentiate between registered migrants and Thai laborers. Migrants are also at a disadvantage with regards to benefits: they typically do not receive paid sick days, coverage of health care costs or compensation for work place injuries. Withholding or non-payment of wages of migrants is commonly reported in all labor sectors.

Sector	Registered migrant Baht	Unregistered migrant Baht
Agriculture	3,000–4,000	1,500–3,000
Domestic work	2,000–4,000	1,000–3,000
Construction	4,500–6,000	3,000–3,300
Fisheries	3,000–4,500	2,400–4,000
Fish processing	3,000	500–2,400
General labor	3,000	600–3,000
Factory	3,000–5,000	1,000–3,000
Entertainment	–	3,000–10,000

Table 5:
Salary of
Migrants in
Thailand
According to
Occupation
and
Registration
Status²⁰

The wage structure is further defined by sector and by gender. In general, migrants in agriculture and domestic service earn the lowest wages, as these occupations are not currently covered by regulated labor standards, including the minimum wage and other benefits. When females are found to be employed alongside males (such as in agriculture, construction or factory work), they consistently report receiving less pay than males. In addition, many women are only hired on a casual basis or for piecework, as needed.

These structural dynamics play out differently in different economic sectors depending on the specific characteristics of each sector. To provide a glimpse of the variety of work conditions migrants experience in Thailand, the six sectors identified above for the significant presence of migrant labor, namely agriculture, domestic work, construction, fishing industry, textile and garment industry, and entertainment industry, will be briefly described below.

Agriculture

The dominant occupation in Thailand has been and still is farming, with export-driven agriculture representing the third main income earner for the country. However, since the early 1990s—with a brief interruption during the financial crisis in 1997—there has been a decrease in the numbers of Thai workers employed in this sector. The percentage of Thai workers in the agricultural sector has declined from 72.5 percent in 1980 to 46 percent in 2000 and 42.6 percent in 2005 with many leaving the agricultural sector for higher-wage sectors in urban areas or abroad. As a parallel trend, the number of migrants has rapidly increased. In 1996, 78,800 migrants registered in the agricultural sector, while in 2004 the number reached 180,000, an increase of more than 100 percent. These figures are again only indicative of a much larger phenomenon, with actual numbers of migrants working in agriculture being

22 Ibid.

considerably higher: many employers do not register their seasonal and temporary workers because of cost and time constraints, and large farms register only a portion of their migrant workers to avoid registration costs and as a way to show their adherence to the law in case there are inspections.²³

Thais typically work on their own farms, while migrants work as employees for landowners. Migrants also concentrate in certain types of farming and livestock raising considered particularly unattractive, such as pig-raising. Larger farms are the most likely to hire migrants on a more permanent basis, particularly those with year-round (rubber) and permanent crops (fruit), and to a lesser extent farms with livestock or rice production.²⁴ Those working on smaller farms tend to be hired on a temporary basis and usually face poorer working conditions. The daily wage for farm workers is approximately 60–80 baht (\$1.40–2.10) per day, and accommodation is often provided. Migrants usually live on the farms with other migrants far from other migrant communities, thus becoming dependent on their employer for basic commodities and access to social and medical services. Due to this isolation, together with poor pay and strenuous labor demands, many migrants see jobs in agriculture as their first step in the migration process, with expectations of obtaining higher-paying jobs further into the interior of the country at a later time.²⁵

Domestic Work

Industrialization and changing gender roles in Thailand, as in many other countries in the world, have led to more women being employed in full-time jobs outside their home, and a related demand for domestic workers, especially in cities. While initially internal migrants met this demand, their eventual preference for better opportunities opening up in the manufacturing and service industries created a shortage of labor in this sector and thus a niche for intra-regional migrants. In Thailand, there are estimates that 40 percent of all housemaids are migrant workers, with Thai housemaids numbering around 250,000 in 2001. Migrant domestic workers are predominantly female, with a small proportion of males employed as security guards, drivers and cooks.

Since domestic work does not fall under Thai labor law, it is generally characterized by limited social protection, long hours, restrictive live-in conditions and low wages. These features are especially problematic for migrant workers, whose irregular status exacerbates their vulnerability. An in-depth study of Burmese domestic workers conducted by Mahidol University in 2004 with Foundation support found that over one-half received below the minimum wage even though they had valid work permits. Eighty percent reported working more than 12 hours a day and 73 percent worked overtime without pay or compensation.

23 J.W. Huguet & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

24 J. Bryant. (2005). "Migrant Labour in Thai Agriculture: Evidence from 2003 Agricultural Census." Unpublished paper presented at the World Bank Workshop, Bangkok, March 24, 2006.

25 A. Beesey. (2004). *Thailand: Improving the Management of Foreign Workers*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute for Population and Social Research and Thailand Development Research Institute Foundation.

The majority of migrant domestic workers are expected to care for children, the elderly or the sick, often on a 24-hour call basis. According to the Mahidol study, nearly one-third of the migrant domestic workers worked extra hours in their employer's business, or were expected to perform tasks outside of the household according to the employers' demands.

Domestic workers typically receive room and board, though only 30 percent of those interviewed had their own private rooms. Living in closed-in environments, with few if no days off or vacation, often makes migrant domestic workers dependent on their employers for such basic needs as making a phone call or accessing health, education and information services. The isolated conditions further expose migrant domestic workers to abuses, with verbal, physical and sexual violence occurring all too frequently.

Fisheries and Fish Processing

Up until 1989, the workforce in marine fisheries in Thailand was composed of internal Thai migrants from the poorest Northeast region. During the 1990s Thais started to leave this sector because better opportunities were opening up due to an economic boom. The Typhoon Gay disaster in which more than 500 boats were sunk and at least 540 fishermen killed was another contributing factor, as was the spread of AIDS and its disproportionate impact on the people of the Northeast. Today, beyond the Thais working in specialized positions, the majority of the workers are from Myanmar and Cambodia and to a much lesser extent from Laos. A first recognition of the dramatic shift from internal to intra-regional migrant labor came in 1997 when the registration allowed a ratio of one Thai to nine foreign migrant workers in marine fisheries.



Photo 6:
Cambodian
Fishermen in
Thailand

In the fishing industry, male and female jobs are distinctly separated. Male migrants are employed in marine fisheries. They serve as crews in three sizes of boats: small boats commonly owned by the captain that go out daily or spend three to five days at sea; medium-sized boats with a crew of 12 to 50 men that fish in foreign waters for long periods and dock for periods of 15 to 20 days; and large vessels with cold storage units that go out at sea for two to five years with limited opportunities for the crew to go ashore (“mother ships” come to take the catch to port as needed). Work entails heavy and continuous work with little rest. More often than not, migrant crew members are remunerated based on a percentage of the boat’s catch after expenses and according to their individual productivity as assessed by the Thai captain or foreman. Average wages for fishermen are about 3,000 baht (\$80) a month.

Migrant women are employed in the seafood processing industry, mostly in processing plants concentrated in the provinces of Samut Sakorn and Samut Prakarn or at ports. While Thai workers act as clerks or foremen, migrants do the most hard and tedious work, such as peeling shrimp and drying squid. Factories have dormitories for workers to stay in, or are located in isolated areas with migrants residing in special quarters close-by, thus curbing migrants’ freedom of movement and subjecting them to strict control by employers and foremen. Migrants work on a temporary, as-needed basis, dependent on the volume of the catch. This volume-based system is open to manipulation by the employer and is subject to frequent fluctuations of the market. Permanent jobs provide salaries ranging from 50–200 baht (\$1.30–5.25) per day, and are the most highly coveted.²⁶ Most women working in seafood processing are between the ages of 15 and 25. Children can also be found helping out in peeling of shrimp, drying of small squid, or in performing other tasks.

Construction Industry

Economic growth in Thailand has led to a boom in the construction industry and a huge demand for construction workers that is primarily met through the hiring of unskilled migrants. During the economic downturn of 1997 most migrants remained, and their number started to grow again with the recent recovery of the sector. Most of the migrants employed in construction are hired by labor sub-contractors who in turn are under contract to developers or lead contractors. These arrangements often make it difficult to know who is accountable for labor standards, salary decisions or workplace injuries or abuses.

Migrant construction workers typically work at least a 54-hour week, with only one day off or sometimes only two days off a month. Employers pay different amounts at the same worksite according to the sex, ethnicity, age and registered status of the worker. In Thailand, as is common in many other countries in Southeast Asia, women are also employed in construction. They earn consistently less than their male counterparts, however, even when undertaking work identical to men: according to a recent consultancy report for the World Bank, registered male migrants received daily wages of 150–200 baht (\$3.90–5.25) and registered female migrants 110–150 baht (\$2.90–3.90).²⁷ When children are employed, they earn less than adults.

26 S. Chantavanich, et al. (2006). *Report to World Bank on Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Chulalongkorn University.

27 Ibid.

Garment and Textile Factories

By the mid-1990s (and escalating with the 1997 economic crisis), Thai garment and textile manufacturing plants began to relocate to outlying regions of the country where they could access cheaper local and migrant labor in order to remain competitive in export markets. Many factories have been permanently relocated to border areas where there is a steady and cheap influx of irregular migrants, with workers either commuting daily over the border or residing in the factory compound. For Thais, unless born there, these localities are not attractive as they have poor infrastructure and services.

Factory size often determines the extent of oversight and inspection as well as the accountability of employers. Smaller factories tend to maintain lower labor standards. These poor standards typically equate to little or no ventilation, poor lighting, dusty and polluted environments and generally dismal conditions.²⁸ Workers in smaller factories are often paid on a piece-work basis. Those working for larger factories are more likely to be salaried, though wages remain very low, ranging from 40–80 baht per day (\$1.05–2.10). The low daily pay leaves migrant workers eager to work extra hours, which are paid at 5–10 baht (\$0.13–0.26) per hour. The vast majority of factory workers are young migrant females who are seen as more compliant and less likely to protest against poor conditions or long hours.²⁹ Factories are often self-enclosed compounds with crowded dormitories, limiting the movements of migrant workers and exposing them to unsanitary conditions.

Entertainment Industry

Over the last decades, increases in disposable income, mobility and tourism in Thailand has grown sharply, leading to an expansion of the entertainment industry and it has become an important source of income for the country. In a related parallel trend, a growing number of unskilled migrants have found work in this highly diversified industry with a wide-range of low-skilled jobs—such as massage and waitressing, as well as direct and indirect sex work—on offer.

Prostitution is the aspect of the entertainment industry that has received the most attention in relation to migration and trafficking. Although formally illegal in Thailand, prostitution occurs in many forms and places, catering to a large domestic as well as international demand. Traditionally dominated by women and girls from the poorer North and Northeast regions, the sex industry now also increasingly employs migrants as sex workers from Burma and to a lesser extent from Laos, Cambodia and China, some of whom have been trafficked or lured with false promises. Migrant sex workers are often found in cross-border areas and in localities with high migrant concentrations providing services to male migrant workers who wish to interact with fellow nationals, but the majority cater to the Thai population.

28 Ibid.

29 A. Beesey. (2004). *Thailand: Improving the Management of Foreign Workers*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute for Population and Social Research and Thailand Development Research Institute Foundation.

Similarly to the other described sectors, in prostitution, too, migrants work at the lower end of the industry in more difficult conditions. Migrant sex workers are street-based or located in cheaper brothels, receiving lower pay than local sex workers and often have to deal with more abusive clients. While the earnings are still relatively higher than in other occupations, so are the risks. Migrant sex workers are extremely vulnerable to stigmatization, extortion, debt-bondage, and abuse. Engaging in illegal activities also puts them at greater risk of extortion, arrest, detention and deportation.

III. Assessing Economic Benefits and Costs of Migrant Labor at Destination

By filling unwanted jobs, accepting lower payments, and working in disadvantaged conditions, intra-regional migrants contribute significantly to the economy of more advantaged countries in the GMS. They do so in multiple ways: they support the expanding secondary and tertiary sectors when the supply of internal migrant labor is no longer sufficient; they maintain the necessary level of employment in sectors and jobs no longer attractive to the local population; and they compensate for a diminishing work force in agricultural areas affected by internal out-migration. With their low-wage labor they further enhance the competitiveness of industrializing countries in regional and global markets by helping produce or process goods for export as well as subsidizing domestic consumption by providing goods and services at cheap prices.

In the process, emerging economies have become more dependent on migrant workers. For Thailand, about 10 percent of the labor force of 34 million in 2000 were cross-border migrants. This estimate is conservative since it does not include unregistered workers. In specific sectors, the proportion of the labor force who are migrants is much higher. It is known for example, that in long-haul fishing migrant workers outnumber Thai workers, although the actual ratio of migrants to non-migrants for this sector is not known, nor are there reliable figures for the other sectors in which large numbers of migrants are employed.

This dependence in Thailand on migrant labor will probably not be reduced any time soon in view of the declining labor force participation by the younger generation of Thais because of declining population growth rates and increasing levels of education. In addition, investment in labor-saving technology as a means to reduce demand on unskilled labor does not appeal to most employers in the sectors where migrants work. In construction, Thailand already has a relatively high level of labor-saving technology, and the need remains for skills that cannot be performed by machines, such as welding and laying cement. For smaller companies, the costs of introducing labor-saving technologies are considered prohibitive. Similarly, in the textile and garment industry, the investment of introducing new technology and the related need to employ more skilled, and thus more expensive Thai workers, is viewed by employers as not economically viable. For the agricultural sector, employers are more willing to consider this option, but only as a longer-term strategy when the supply of cheaper labor is close to exhaustion, which at the

moment is far from being the case. In the face of a lack of strong incentives by the government, it can be expected that employers will delay as much as possible substituting machines for imported labor.³⁰

The realization of the inevitability of the Thai economy's dependence on migrant labor and the general agreement about the positive contribution of migrants to export-driven growth does not necessarily include consensus on how its impacts are distributed. How the overall benefits of migration to the country accrue to specific groups is still open for debate. Lack of information makes it extremely difficult to assess how migrant labor impacts on wages and incomes of different groups in society. The only estimates available derive from two studies. The first, undertaken in 1995 by the Thai Development Research Institute (TDRI), concluded that a migrant population of around 700,000 registered workers contributed 0.5 percent of GDP, but suppressed wages of the lesser educated population by 3.5 percent. The second (undated) report, by the National Economic and Social Development Board taking TDRI data into consideration, argued that the real income of the poorest 60 percent of the population was depressed by 0.4 percent, while the real income of the richest 40 percent increased by 0.3 percent.

These studies, although widely quoted, are outdated and not well substantiated, and leave much to be explained. The argument that shortages of labor could be reduced by employing unemployed Thais and that the abundant supply of unskilled migrant labor suppresses wages in those sectors where large numbers of migrants are employed can certainly be made, at least for certain sectors. Still, the question remains whether, if wages were higher, Thais would be willing to return to work in sectors they are now shunning and do the "3Ds" jobs currently being done by migrants. Some of the available jobs, such as in maritime fisheries and agriculture, have such poor work conditions and benefits that even migrants leave them as soon as they have slightly better opportunities. An additional question is whether higher wages would result in mobile industries, such as the textile industry, relocating to countries with lower wage structures or to newly emerging export processing zones in border areas where Thais are not so willing to live.

Other economic impacts of migrant labor to the destination country commonly referred to in migration literature have not been studied. On the benefits side, we do not know whether migration to Thailand and other GMS countries leads to lower costs of immigrant-produced goods; additional GDP from immigrant consumption; or to business growth through immigrant entrepreneurship. Nor are we in a position to appreciate possible economic costs such as legal and administrative costs for managing migration flows and social expenditures, beyond speculating that those cannot be too high considering that so little effort has been made to date to regulate migration and that irregular migrants have very limited access to services.

30 Ibid.

Even less is known on the social impacts of migration, both negative and positive. The public discourse emphasizes negative social impacts in terms of spreading disease and crime, but data to substantiate these claims are often lacking. At the same time, little is reported about the positive social impacts of migration, such as the broadening of local perspectives and the potential bridge function of migrants in creating economic and cultural ties among countries. As the following chapter will show, this biased view of migration in the absence of more substantial and balanced evidence also affects political and public willingness to integrate migrants into society.

5

Living Abroad in Vulnerable Conditions

I. In Dire Need of Legal Protection

The growing volume of irregular and unskilled labor migrants in the GMS has significant social implications. Not only, as seen in the previous chapter, has it contributed to a segmentation of the labor market, but it has also created an unprotected and often discriminated-against underclass in destination countries, which are willing to utilize the labor of migrants but are not prepared to provide them with legal and social protection.

In Thailand, as elsewhere in the GMS, the law does not protect irregular migrants and only partially applies to registered migrants, leaving them unable to seek legal assistance or appeal to the law to right the abuses and exploitation they encounter. Irregular migrants have few if any channels to seek redress when they suffer abuse, and do not dare to protest against not being paid or not being paid in full, or not receiving wages on time, or for physical and sexual abuse. Even when “registered,” migrants are prevented from accessing the legal system by language and cultural differences, limited knowledge of national laws, and high costs. The lack of mechanisms to inform migrants of their rights is an additional barrier. In the absence of a clear migration policy in receiving countries, migrants cannot confidently approach the judicial system for protection or prosecution against violations. When they do encounter representatives of the law, it is often in the negative sense of having to confront extortion, arrest or deportation, and sometimes gross physical and sexual abuse.

Migrants are highly vulnerable to corrupt practices by front-line agencies and personnel. Migrants’ irregularity is interconnected and depends upon an informal, and unlawful, “protection” system in which corruption is embedded at all levels. It is well known that immigration and other government officials take bribes from employers to overlook non-compliance with labor regulations and standards, while also extorting money from migrants in exchange for allowing them illegal entrance and continued residence in the country. Through illicit payments migrants can avoid arrest, detention and deportation and gain access to services they need. It is not uncommon for migrants to be charged higher prices for services they cannot otherwise access, such as having to pay the employer extra money to buy food or clothes since they are not allowed to leave the workplace. They are also often charged for services they are actually entitled to, such as being charged school fees for their

children in spite of the compulsory free education requirement for all children in Thailand, including children of migrants, or having to pay more than 30 baht for health visits even when they are registered and covered by insurance (see also below).

Migrants' marginal legal status not only fuels corrupt practices and arrangements, but also deprives them of many of their labor and civic rights. In the most extreme form of trafficking and bonded labor, migrants are de-humanized, and all too often abuses compromise their fundamental right to life. In a case reported on while this report was being finalized, migrants from Myanmar on a Thai fishing vessel were left adrift in Indonesian waters with 36 starving to death and 22 hospitalized in serious condition (see box 1). In general, for those living in factories or in isolated locations, movement is restricted and privacy almost non-existent. In Thailand, registered migrants are not allowed to reunite with their family or change employers. Their freedom of movement is also curtailed since they are not allowed to travel outside their work localities and doing so can lead to payment of bribes or, in the worst cases, deportation. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, work conditions rarely meet minimum standards of employment and compensation, and migrants have no rights to organize, or to take vacations, rest or sick leave.

Box 1. The Plight of Migrant Workers in Thailand

The Lawyers Council of Thailand is pushing for legal action against the six owners of trawlers for the deaths of fishermen working on their boats. A total of 119 fishermen left the provincial fishing pier in Samut Sakhon three years ago to fish in Indonesian waters. The fishermen were instructed to anchor and stop fishing two and a half years into the operation due to the expiration of the permit. While waiting for the permit, a total of 37 fishermen died and their bodies were dumped in the sea. The fishermen who returned to shore said they had been left aboard the trawlers for five months without sufficient food and medicine before being instructed to return home. The Labor Rights Promotion Network alerted the Lawyers Council following complaints from survivors who returned home sick and unpaid after three years of work at sea. Some of the workers were paid partial amounts via their relatives while they were at sea. In addition to the 37 deaths, 22 workers (nine Thais and 13 Burmese) were admitted to a Samut Sakhon hospital with beriberi, a nervous system ailment often occurring among fishermen due to deficiency of vitamin B1 or thiamine. Further investigations will be carried out to determine whether the deceased workers were murdered or not.

Source: Summarized from the [Bangkok Post](#), Monday, August 28, 2006

Restrictions also apply to migrants' private life. Registered women migrants are discriminated against for being pregnant. The government policy to test migrant women for pregnancy and deport them if they are pregnant clearly violates Article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to which the Thai government subscribes. Marriage and giving birth also become problematic events for migrants since they are not officially recognized by the Thai government. Children whose parents are irregular migrants are not entitled to birth and identification documents, thus compromising their future both in the country from which their parents' originated and in the country in which they were born. Migrants' rights to health and education are further challenged by their poor working and living conditions and the unwillingness or incapacity of destination countries to provide them with social protection.

II. Struggling to Provide Social Protection to Migrants

The health of migrants is a cause of great concern in GMS countries. In Thailand, migrant communities are often isolated and unsanitary, leaving workers exposed to mosquitoes, industrial waste, trash and open sewers. Many migrants reside near marshy environments, especially in border areas, where mosquitoes breed. Housing conditions are poor, with migrants and their families typically living in overcrowded, poorly ventilated rooms or in shacks, with limited access to clean water and little protection from the elements. Employer-provided housing is similarly inadequate, with close and crowded quarters facilitating the spread of contagious diseases. Since migration is considered temporary, employers tend to avoid the expenses associated with providing decent living conditions.

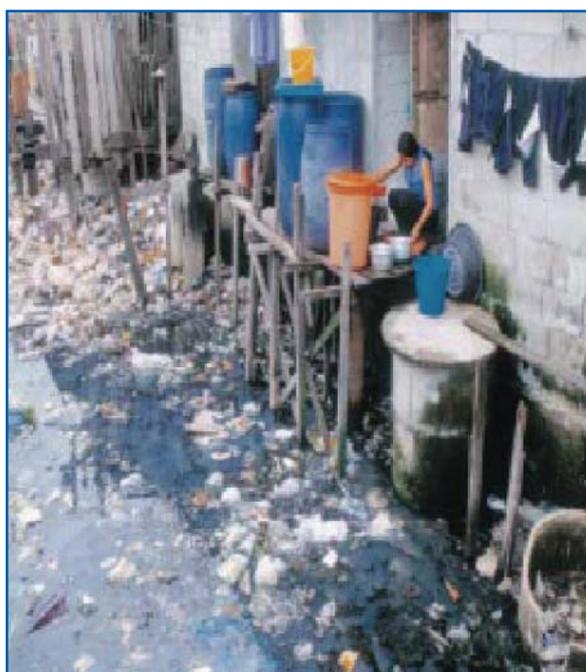


Photo 7:
Migrants'
Living Quarters
in Mahachai,
Thailand

These inadequate sanitary and living environments directly relate to the high incidence of infectious and parasitic diseases among migrants, as also shown by the caseload data from the largest clinic serving migrants on the Thai-Myanmar border (see table 4). In Thailand, malaria is the main cause of death among migrants, with a growing number of other mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever and lymphatic filariasis (commonly known as elephantiasis). Cholera and especially tuberculosis are prevalent and on the rise among migrant workers, thus forming a renewed threat to the Thai population. According to the 2004 registration data tuberculosis was the disease with the highest prevalence among tested migrants, with 5,300 out of the 9,500 sick applicants found infected. Other significant health hazards include diseases related to malnutrition such as beriberi; skin and eye infections; sexual and reproductive health problems, and occupational and traffic accidents.

Table 6:
Caseload at
the Mae Tao
Clinic in 2004

Acute Respiratory Infection	8,358
Malaria	2,995
Skin infection	1,547
Peptic ulcer	1,374
Worm infestation	1,353
Acute diarrhea	1,119
Urinary Tract Infection	698
Eye infections	628
Beriberi	436
CVS	192
Dysentery	121
Dengue fever	18
Measles	11
Scrub typhus	5
Typhoid (suspected)	3
Meningitis	2
Other	13,784
Total	32,644

After malaria, accidents are the second main cause of death among migrants. This is largely due to the many occupational risks migrant encounters in their 3Ds jobs, including exposure to chemicals, heavy equipment and machinery. No safety equipment—gloves for cloth cutters, nose covers for knitting workers, covers for steam iron operators, and respiration protection for pesticide farm workers—are issued to migrant workers, thus putting their health and safety at great risk. Little information is available on the exact types and extent of workplace injuries and deaths, but initial research supported by the Foundation indicates that accident prevalence is high, especially in construction, the fishing industry and domestic work, with little or no benefits offered by employers for health care, disability or death.

Reproductive and sexual health risks are somewhat better documented, especially as they relate to abortion and HIV/AIDS. The Thai Public Health Ministry has recorded a rate of complications for abortion 2.4 times higher among migrant workers than that of the local Thai population. Fear of unemployment and pressure by employers move women migrants to terminate their pregnancies. The government policy to deport migrant women who are pregnant when applying for registration as a way of preventing the birth of migrant children in Thailand is another contributing factor. Since abortion is formally illegal under Thai law, except where pregnancy threatens a mother's life, and since migrant women do not have access to the relatively safe abortion clinics provided by Thai NGOs with the implicit assent of the government, they are compelled to seek out untrained abortionists and lay midwives. It is to be expected that the high occurrence of unsafe abortions affects maternal mortality and morbidity of migrant women, but no details are available. The general assumption is that maternal and infant mortality and morbidity ratios are much higher for migrants than for the Thai population, with figures probably close to the

dramatic MMR and IMR ratios of migrants' home countries (refer to chapter 2, table 1), because a majority of mothers do not receive pre-natal or post-natal care and give birth in poor hygienic and sanitary conditions with no trained attendance. Only in an emergency will female migrants attempt to access formal health services, but this often occurs too late.³¹

Governments, local NGOs and international agencies, including the Foundation, have been particularly preoccupied with the spread of the AIDS epidemic across borders. Contrary to popular perception, there is growing evidence that rather than bringing the disease to the destination country, migrants become vulnerable to contracting HIV during transit and on arrival, eventually carrying it back to their home communities on return. Thailand as the country worst hit by the epidemic in the GMS, with an estimated adult HIV prevalence of 1.4 percent by the end of 2005, is a likely source of infection for migrants from countries with a lower prevalence rate. Some of the early HIV cases detected in Laos were migrant workers returning from Thailand. In Cambodia, a growing number of infections has been reported among returning male migrant workers, especially among those working in the fishing industry. Migrants living abroad are in situations conducive to high risk: they have limited knowledge of HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it, are far from the social control usually exercised by their communities, face greater opportunities for casual and commercial sex, and are unaccustomed to using condoms. Not only they, but their partners, too, are clearly at risk. Raks Thai Foundation, in a detailed study on AIDS and migrants in the fishing industry undertaken with Foundation support, reports that in Mahachai, of the 72 percent of married migrant fishermen who never used a condom with their spouse, 24 percent stated having unprotected extra-marital sex. Migrant sex workers are particularly exposed to HIV/AIDS because they work at the lower-end of the prostitution industry, where negotiating condom use is more difficult and the government's "100 percent condom program" rarely applies. Concerns are now growing that at a time when Thailand has successfully reduced transmission of HIV among Thai citizens, the prevalence of AIDS in migrant populations residing in the country will rise if left unchecked. A recent UNDP study points out that in Samut Sakhon, one of the provinces with the highest concentration of migrants, there was a 4.3 percent HIV prevalence rate among pregnant migrant workers tested, as opposed to 2.0 percent among Thai pregnant women.³²

Growing awareness of the vulnerable health condition of migrant workers, coupled with concerns that migrant settlements are becoming public health hot-spots for the transmission of communicable diseases have led the Thai government to consider providing services to the burgeoning migrant population, even if they are irregular. This response is also based on the realization that most migrants will not be returning to their countries as rapidly as initially expected, since a majority have been in Thailand for three or more years, and 29 percent for over five years.³³ Fearing that too direct

31 C. Maung & S. Belton. (2005). *Working Our Way Back Home: Fertility and Pregnancy Loss on the Thai-Burma Border*. Mae Sot Thailand: Mae Tao Clinic.

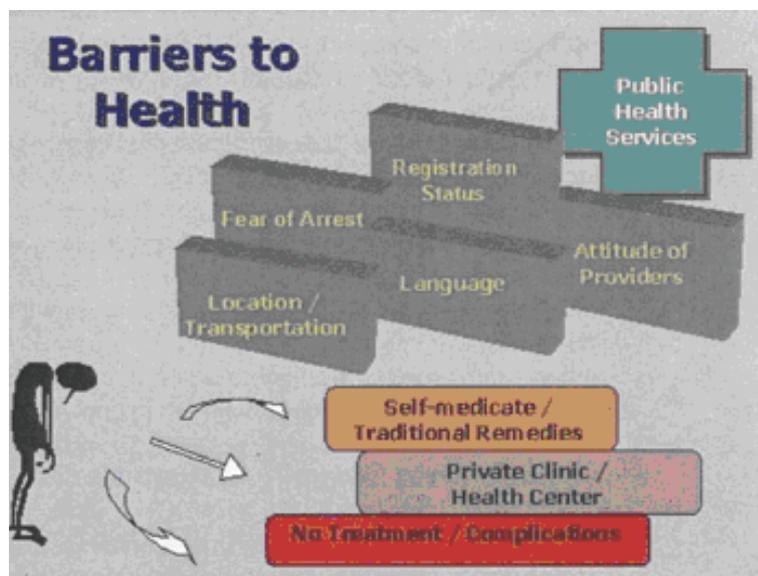
32 United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2004). *Thailand's Response to HIV/AIDS: Progress and Challenges*. Bangkok: UNDP

33 J.W. Huguet & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

action would be construed as undermining legal migration channels and rewarding irregular movements, the government has enlisted NGOs to initiate programs in several provinces with a high concentration of migrants to provide family planning services and promote disease prevention and environmental sanitation (see further discussion in chapter 7). For registered migrants in Thailand, as explained in chapter 3, the 2004 registration drive granted them for the first time the right to primary and reproductive health care and communicable disease control services, and allowed them to enroll for a fee in the general health insurance system that guarantees services at 30 baht (\$0.80) per visit.

This initial step in providing migrant workers with some degree of social protection has been helpful in increasing their use of health services. Still, it has limitations in that it does not allow non-working family members to be enrolled. Moreover, all migrants, registered or not, continue to face other barriers, such as language, insecurity about their legal status, ignorance of available services, inability to take days off, and experience of or fears of discrimination by health care providers. Costs are major deterrents for migrants to use health services, even for those who are registered: these include costs for health services and medication, transportation and travel escorts for security and translation purposes, and costs associated with lost days of work. Since migrants typically have little or no accumulated savings, a family member's health care needs often result in relentless poverty or a high burden of debt, compelling migrants to look for cheaper options or no treatment at all.

Figure 9:
Barriers to
Health and
Health-Seeking
Behavior
among
Migrants



Given the many obstacles, migrants resort to a “hierarchy of preference” in addressing their health needs, as shown in a diagram from the Raks Thai Foundation’s study (figure 9). For minor ailments migrants may let illnesses take their course and initiate action only if their conditions worsen or they experience complications. Traditional remedies familiar to the migrants may be applied or treatment sought with traditional healers who share the same etiological model and speak the same language as the patients. Depending on the nature of the symptoms, migrants may also try self-medicating with modern drugs purchased without prescription from a drug store or local shop, or obtained from their employers or from other migrants. When

symptoms reach a point of serious concern, migrants will likely approach a private, often informal, health provider who typically lacks adequate training or equipment. If symptoms do not abate and the condition worsens (often to the point of becoming life-threatening), migrants will then seek out strategies and funds to overcome the barriers to public health services.

For the most part, migrants will only go to the hospital on an emergency basis for a severe condition left untreated or an injury. Public hospitals are required to admit anyone in need of medical attention. However, migrants are not always aware of this, and fears of arrest or having to pay “invisible” fees prevent them from using the services. This is also the case for health services to which irregular migrants, irrespective of their registration status, are fully entitled, such as vaccination of children. Statistics show that in spite of availability of free services, access and use remain low. In the border province of Tak, the number of children vaccinated was about one-third of the number of registered migrant children, probably because of lack of information, and fear of arrest, extortion or hidden fees.

Migrants’ access to health services is also affected by restrictive factors on the provider’s side. Health administrators at lower echelons are often not aware of the policies formulated at the national level. They are not sure whether they are supposed to treat migrants and how to charge the costs incurred. For registered migrants, the insurance fee paid at registration is actually adequate to cover eventual expenses as most registered migrants are young and in relative good health, having passed examination for the nine most prevalent diseases. It is estimated that migrants paid 490 million baht (\$12.9 million) to health care providers for health check-ups required for registration, and over one billion baht (\$28 million) to the Thai Ministry of Public Health for one year of health insurance, quite a substantial amount.³⁴

Yet the administration of these insurance funds is not always transparent and hospitals and other health facilities encounter difficulties in asking for reimbursement from the Provincial Public Health Office, preferring to charge migrants whenever possible for all costs, even if it is against the 30-baht policy. Public facilities already in dire financial condition may try to treat and discharge migrant patients as quickly as possible to cut costs, so that quality of care is often not up to required standards. Health workers may be unable to communicate with the migrants due to language and cultural differences, and may hold negative attitudes toward them, neglecting to provide quality service as a result. Migrant health professionals and volunteers could facilitate access acting as a bridge between the health system and migrants, as demonstrated by a number of NGOs and CBOs that have successfully experimented with bi- and multi-lingual staff and volunteers, but to date there is no official system to legally employ them in health facilities.

The challenge of overcoming structural barriers in the provision of social protection to migrants is not unique to the health system, but also extends to the educational system. The Thai government policy of providing free education through secondary level to every child in Thailand has gradually been applied to non-Thais. In 1992 a

34 Ibid.

policy was launched to include stateless, ethnic minority children living in Thailand in the education system. This was followed in July 2004 by a cabinet resolution proposed by the Ministry of Education that expanded the scope of the efforts with the objective of providing:

the opportunity for undocumented and non-Thai persons to enter into the education system, including groups who had previously been excluded from some levels of education. In order to make the education system more widely available, there will no longer be restrictions on levels of education or on travel to educational institutes. Educational institutes will now accept, register and give certificates to all undocumented and non-Thai persons at all levels.³⁵

Undocumented migrant children are thereby recognized as disadvantaged and allowed access to basic education. While it is too early to evaluate the impact of the most recent policy changes, available data suggest that it will not be easy to expand the reach of the educational system. Most migrant children are not enrolled in school and work in informal jobs to contribute to the well-being of their families. As can be seen in table 7, the number of migrant children from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar attending school in Thailand is very low compared to the number of registered migrant children, with those provinces with much longer histories of migration (such as Kanchanaburi and Mae Hong Son) faring relatively better than those with more recent migration flows. At the national level, in 2004 it was estimated that migrant children attending school constituted about 14 percent of the children of registered migrants. If the estimated number of unregistered migrants is added, the percentage of children of migrants attending school as a proportion of the overall number of children of migrants in Thailand would be much lower.

Table 7:
Number of Registered Migrant Children and Number of Migrant Children Attending Schools per Location in Thailand³⁶

Area	Number of migrant children attending Thai school (2003)	Number of migrant children registered (2004)
Bangkok	44	689
Chiang Mai	2,849	11,721
Chiang Rai	123	3,948
Chumphon	438	1,790
Prachuap Khiri Khan	420	1,774
Kanchanaburi	2,002	5,241
Mae Hong Son	1,416	1,584
Ratchaburi	232	1,288
Ranong	19	8,227
Samut Sakhon	60	2,896
Tak	1,651	10,017

³⁵ Unofficial translation.

³⁶ S. Chantavanich, et al. (2006). *Report to World Bank on Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Chulalongkorn University.

This low level of attendance at public schools results from a number of factors that prevent migrant parents from enrolling their children. Migrant families usually cannot afford official and unofficial costs related to schooling given their low wages and insecure legal status; neither can they afford to relinquish their child's potential workplace earnings. Language also constitutes a barrier to learning as does discrimination. Migrant parents are also afraid that by enrolling their children they may be identified and arrested or deported. In addition, many local schools are unaware of current policies and refuse to accept migrant children, with migrants too anxious about their tenuous legal position to dare to assert their rights with local officials. Schools also have limited capacity to work with non-Thai speakers, or with older children who have never been to school, and limited resources to address these problems. For these many reasons, if migrants decide to send their children to school, they prefer to have them attend informal classes organized by NGOs and other humanitarian organizations usually offered in the evening or on weekends. Such programs are more flexible for the varying age and education levels of the children, while accommodating most migrants' working schedules, but only provide migrant children with basic skills of reading and writing in their own language and do not grant formal diplomas.



Photo 8:
Informal
Classes for
Migrant
Children in
Mae Sot, on
the Thai-
Myanmar
Border

For education, as for health, the important policy reforms required to expand migrants' access to essential services have yet to be effectively implemented, with systems struggling to find appropriate ways to provide social protection to the diverse groups living together in an increasingly multi-cultural society.

III. "Us" and "Them"

The population of the GMS has always been characterized by a high degree of diversity with many ethnic groups living in the sub-region. Current migration flows, however, are adding a new layer of pluralism, leading to unprecedented constellations of trans-cultural interactions and arrangements. Intra-regional migrants are an extremely mixed group composed of different nationalities and minorities.

As seen in previous chapters, migrants in Thailand have Myanmar (Burmese), Lao, Cambodian and to a lesser extent Vietnamese and Chinese nationalities, and a significant proportion consist of diverse ethnic groups including Hmong, Mon, Karen, Shan just to name a few, each with its own distinctive culture. In Thailand, these migrant populations have to learn to live with each other and with the majority Thai population. In the process, many tensions emerge between migrants and the receiving population, and among migrant communities.

In Thailand, as in other GMS countries, public perception towards unskilled and irregular migrants from within the sub-region is generally negative, and there is little tolerance of cultural difference. Lack of interaction, communication and understanding among migrants, and between them and the local population, has led to prejudice, discrimination, criminalization and stigmatization. Migrants are scapegoated for all kinds of social problems from drug trafficking to deforestation. In Thailand they are often accused of spreading disease and of perpetrating crime, though neither claim can be substantiated. As described in the previous section, the risk of contracting diseases is actually highest after migrants arrive in the country of destination. Whether migrants are the source of disease is debatable for AIDS, and for malaria and TB the poor sanitary conditions in which migrants live is certainly a contributing factor. The reported incidence of crime is actually negligible considering the large size and predominantly young migrant population, and there is well-founded speculation that the rate of crimes perpetrated by Thais against migrant workers is probably much higher than the reverse, being mostly unreported.

Still, prejudices remain deeply ingrained in the public mind, often reinforced by governments' insensitive comments and actions as well as xenophobic media coverage. This became very clear in the days following the tsunami in January 2005, when migrants from Myanmar were accused by the police of looting from ravaged beach resorts and the media spread the allegation without checking on its accuracy. Of the 70,000 migrants registered in the two badly affected Thai provinces of Phuket and Phang Nga, at least 2,000 were deported, although none had actually been charged or put on trial for theft. Fearing arrest and forced deportation, many migrants hid in the jungle and did not dare to go back to their homes or to the authorities to check the damage or to identify their families and relatives who died in the tsunami.

The prejudicial labeling of migrants as thieves is part of a broader societal perception of them as a disturbance to national defense and a threat to local job security. The dominant public discourse does not recognize migrants' contribution to the Thai economy nor their role in filling labor shortages in key industries. While they mainly work in "3Ds" jobs no longer attractive to the general population, migrants are commonly blamed for "stealing" the jobs of Thai workers and driving up the unemployment rate. Thai co-workers in particular, see migrants as a threat to their jobs, and criticize migrants' over-eagerness to please employers, accepting wages and conditions below labor standards without protest. Not unexpectedly, employers prefer unskilled migrant workers to Thais for these very same characteristics. Employers claim that Thai workers are "lazy and demanding," thus justifying substituting them with "more diligent and obedient" migrant workers willing to work long hours and undertake hard work without complaints and at a lower pay.

Appreciated by employers for their productivity and cost-cutting potential, migrants remain isolated outside of the workplace, having very few social contacts except with other migrants from the same ethnic and national group. When not living in dormitories, migrants mostly live in settlements—of which those located near the borders are very numerous—that are structured according to ethnicity, either with friends from their origin community or with their families who come with them to Thailand or who later followed. In these settlements migrants only interact with migrants from other ethnic groups and with the Thai population when necessary to procure goods and services, such as house rental, provision of water and electricity to dwellings, selling of food and other goods, and provision of transportation. More extensive interaction with the surrounding society is often not an option because of social and cultural constraints, especially limited language skills, migrants' lack of free time due to long working hours and not having days off, and their trying to keep a low profile in view of their illegal status. Migrants' inability to communicate in Thai further increases tensions and misunderstandings, reinforcing negative social stereotypes and discriminatory practices by the Thai majority.

Greater inclusion of migrants into the host society is not only crucial to reduce social tensions, but it is also key to migrants' economic prosperity and better quality of life. A Mahidol University study has demonstrated this by looking at the correlation of poverty and migrants' ability to integrate into the host community. As can be seen from the table below, in Kanchanaburi province, along the Thai-Myanmar border, migrants that score higher on the lack of inclusion scale, being non-Thai, born outside Thailand and living in large, non-Thai migrant concentrations, have the highest odds ratio of being among the poorest 40 percent when compared to other categories of Thai and non-Thai migrants.

Migrant status, and type of village	Odds ratio
Thai, in Thai village	–
Thai, in non-Thai village	1.5
Non-Thai, born in Thailand, in Thai village	1.4
Non-Thai, born in Thailand, in non-Thai village	4.6
Non-Thai, born outside Thailand, in Thai village	12.4
Non-Thai, born outside Thailand, in non-Thai village	51.0

Table 8:
Poverty
Odds Ratio
per Migrant
Status and
Composition of
Village³⁷

How to foster inclusion of migrants into society in order to improve their livelihoods and social protection will continue to be an intractable question as long as migration flows are predominantly irregular. Existing nationalist ideologies also give little space for diversity. In Thailand, “being Thai” is defined as including someone who is Buddhist, speaks Thai, and honors the King. This definition already renders problematic integration of Muslim and ethnic minorities already present in the Kingdom, let alone newly in-migrating foreigners. Nonetheless, it can be expected that growing immigration and dependency of the Thai labor market on migrants will eventually lead to some demand for a multi-cultural environment and more inclusive social planning. Questions around dual language education and the need for cultural

mediators and language interpreters in health, legal and educational settings are just a few examples of emerging trans-cultural issues that need to be addressed. Even if residency or citizenship for migrants is currently not on the public agenda in Thailand, or in other GMS countries, a lot can still be done to promote greater social acceptance of migrants and ensure their more positive interaction with the surrounding society. A better quality of life in destination countries will in turn allow migrants to prepare for a better future for them and their families in their country of origin.

6

Impacts of Migration in Countries of Origin

I. Survival or Development?

The impact of migration is felt not only in destination countries, but also in the countries from which migrants emigrate and to which they will eventually return. It is well accepted that migration can have negative impacts on sending countries in terms of depopulation, disrupted families, and loss of human capital. More recently, however, the emphasis has shifted towards the positive impacts that migration may have on economic growth and development in countries of origin through, among other processes, financial remittances, return of entrepreneurial migrants, investments in business, introduction of new technologies, and know-how transfers. Despite reservations about migration as a panacea for a country's economic failures, policy makers and international donors are increasingly interested in identifying those conditions that would maximize the contribution of migration to development while limiting its negative consequences, thus creating a virtuous, rather than vicious, migration circle.

To generate evidence about the potentially beneficial contribution of migration to development is not an easy task, however. Complex micro- and macro-level calculations are needed to assess not only the balance of costs and benefits for the migrants and their families, but also how overall costs and benefits aggregate for source communities and countries. As Kathleen Newland of the Migration Policy Institute, writes:

Understanding the causal relationship between rich country immigration policy and poor country development is a frustrating pursuit, hamstrung by the absence of data, frequently inaccurate data, and a lack of comparable data....The question is whether the benefits to individuals (and, commonly, their relatives left behind) aggregate to a general benefit to the home country. Much of the research that supports beliefs about the overall costs and benefits of migration is based on "micro" studies and cannot conclusively demonstrate the validity of "macro" conclusions.³⁶

38 K. Newland (2003). *Migration as a Factor in Development and Poverty Reduction*. Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute. Website: www.migrationpolicy.org accessed on August 28, 2006.

This point applies particularly well to the GMS case, as the information needed in understanding the causal relationship between migration and development for the sub-region is extremely scant and fragmentary, and only derived from a limited number of “micro” studies. Taking into account the serious limitations in the evidence base, this chapter does not aim to arrive at conclusive findings on migration and development in the GMS, but rather to point out a number of emerging, and at times conflicting, trends that will deserve more attention in the future. As macro-economic information is sorely lacking, the focus will be mostly on the socio-economic costs and benefits of migration for individual migrants, their families and their communities.

It is safe to say that intra-regional migration enhances individual migrants’ economic position by allowing them to earn more than what they could expect to earn at home. Although the wages received by migrants from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar in Thailand are below or barely meet the minimum standards, they are considerably higher than in their home countries due to the wide socio-economic gaps in the GMS extensively described in chapter 2. Still, whether this financial improvement outweighs the hardship migrants encounter in their destinations and whether migrants are able to meet all their migration goals are both questions open for discussion. GMS migrants go abroad not only to earn money for themselves and their families, but also to explore a bigger world, learn new skills, and break away from constraining family or social dynamics. Young migrants, the majority of the migrant population in the GMS, are especially attracted by the opportunity to travel, meet new people and experience life in urban or more developed environments. The broadcasting in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar of Thai films, television shows, advertisements and popular songs that portray Thailand as affluent, easy and “trendy” encourages a life-style that many young people in the sub-region aspire to. Yet, as seen in previous chapters, the reality migrants encounter on arrival is rarely as envisioned before departing.

In spite of hardship and possible disappointment, data show that a majority of GMS migrants choose to remain in their new destination and many among them support their households from a distance with what little they can earn. An informal system has developed that facilitates transfers of funds from irregular migrants, unable to access official banking venues, to their home countries. A variety of channels are employed according to location and employment sector. For example, a majority of migrants from Cambodia working in the fishing industry in Thailand rely on a phone system to transfer money via a middleman who authorizes a contact in Cambodia to pay the remittances to the migrant’s family less a 30 percent fee.³⁹ Many Burmese domestic workers in Thailand prefer to use underground brokers to send their remittances home at a fee of around 20 percent, probably because of the more limited telecommunications system in Myanmar. Other migrants, wary of the high fees and potential risk of unscrupulous middlemen, use relatives and friends to hand-carry the money, or they themselves bring the savings home when possible. Especially for those working close to their home country, such as Lao migrants living in the Thai provinces that border Laos, the preference is to have a relative cross the border with a day pass and hand him/her the money to take home without having to fear harassment by immigration officers or other problems.

39 B. Maltoni (2006). “Transborder Migration from Cambodia to Thailand and Impact of Remittances on Local Communities in Prey Veng Province”. Paper presented at the World Bank Workshop on March 24, 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Since most remittances from GMS migrants are channeled outside the formal banking system little documentation is available on the extent of remittances or their economic impact on migrants' country of origin. A recent study by the ILO is the only one so far that has attempted to calculate the volume of remittances being sent by migrants working in Thailand to neighboring countries. According to the study, conservative assumptions based on the number of registered workers from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar and a projected average amount of 500 baht (\$13) per month being sent per migrant yield an approximate minimum estimate of 590 million baht (\$14.8 million) per month or 7.08 billion baht (\$177 million) per year. If one were to take into account unregistered migrant workers in Thailand and a somewhat higher, and probably more realistic, average of 750 baht (\$19) per migrant per month, total remittances would yield an estimated 1 billion baht (\$26 million) per month, or 12.6 billion baht per year (\$315 million). Given the composition of the migrant work force, it is further assumed that 75 percent of these total remittances from Thailand would be sent to Myanmar, and the remaining amount shared between Laos and Cambodia.⁴⁰

As knowledge about migration in the GMS accumulates, these initial assumptions will need to be checked and substantiated with more factual information. For now, the few micro-studies that have devoted some attention to remittances provide insufficient clues to either accept or reject the projected estimates. What the studies do show is that the sending of remittances varies greatly among groups depending on many factors, including time of stay in destination country, sectors in which the migrants work, wage level, lifestyle in destination country, gender and marital status of the migrant, and whether the migrants migrated on their own or with their families.

The wide range of situations is illustrated by three recent studies generally referred to in relation to remittances. The first, supported by the Foundation, found that 76 percent of domestic workers from Myanmar in Thailand, mostly single females and with restricted social interaction, sent remittances home to their family each year. The second study among a sample of 276 Lao migrants in five provinces in Thailand found that slightly more than half of the respondents, with an average length of stay of 6.5 years and multiple re-emigration experiences, remitted part of their earnings to their families in Laos. Remittances were usually sent irregularly, but on average 2–3 times a year. The majority reported sending approximately 10,000 baht (\$250) per year, with female migrants who work mostly as domestic workers remitting more than men, most of whom were employed in agriculture. More precisely, women sent on average about 11,500 baht (\$301) home annually whereas men sent about 9,800 baht (\$257). Possible explanations for this sex differential may be the more stable incomes in domestic work when compared with agriculture, or differences in life-styles between migrant men and women allowing migrant women to save more. Or, it may be that migrant women feel more responsibility towards their family because of greater societal expectations on females to remit.⁴¹ Finally, the third study

40 J.W. Huguet & S. Punpuing. (2005). *International Migration in Thailand*. Bangkok: International Organization for Migration.

41 M. Thongyou & D. Ayuwat. (2005) *Social Network of Laotian Migrant Workers in Thailand*. SEARC Working Paper Series No. 80. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.

was commissioned by the World Bank in 2006 in Prey Veng, Cambodia, the location of the PROMDAN program and one of the poorest Cambodian provinces with 56 percent of the population living under the poverty line, and 6.5 percent having migrated to Thailand to work. The study showed that less than one-third of migrant households received remittances—varying from less than \$50 to about \$500 over the entire course of the migration period—from mostly male migrants working in the fishing industry in Thailand. The high cost of living in Thailand and repayment of debt to the middlemen who arranged for the migrants' passage and employment drained migrants' resources. Opportunities for social life also had an impact on the below-average rate of migrants sending remittances, as male migrants tended to spend a part of their salary on entertainment or for establishing a second family. It was not unusual that wives of male migrants did not know the amount of their husbands' salary or even where they were working.⁴²

These and other micro-level studies also provide some insights into the use of remittances by migrants' families. In Laos, remittances were meant to improve the living conditions of migrants' households, with money used to repair homes, to purchase new household, transportation or farm equipments, or to supplement the family's resources for daily consumption and education. The purchase of televisions and other electric appliances enhances the social status of migrant families, providing visual demonstration of the benefits of migration and prompting other community members to follow, thus leading to chain migration.

In Prey Veng, Cambodia, migrants' family members used remittances accumulated over time to satisfy basic needs (especially covering health expenses and paying for food) and to repay debts, rather than to invest in education or other economic assets (see figure 10). Medical care in particular seems to be closely associated with both decisions to migrate and the use of remittances. Illness in the family often has a devastating financial impact on poor rural households, compelling them to sell their primary asset, land, in order to borrow the money to pay for medical treatment. This starts a downward spiral in which households need to repay the debts at very high interest rates, with migration abroad becoming a household's strategy to this end. The study concludes that remittances are used as alternative sources of income once traditional sources, such as agriculture, fail to sustain the household economy.

42 B. Maltoni, (2006). "Transborder Migration from Cambodia to Thailand and Impact of Remittances on Local Communities in Prey Veng Province." Paper presented at the World Bank Workshop on March 24, 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand.

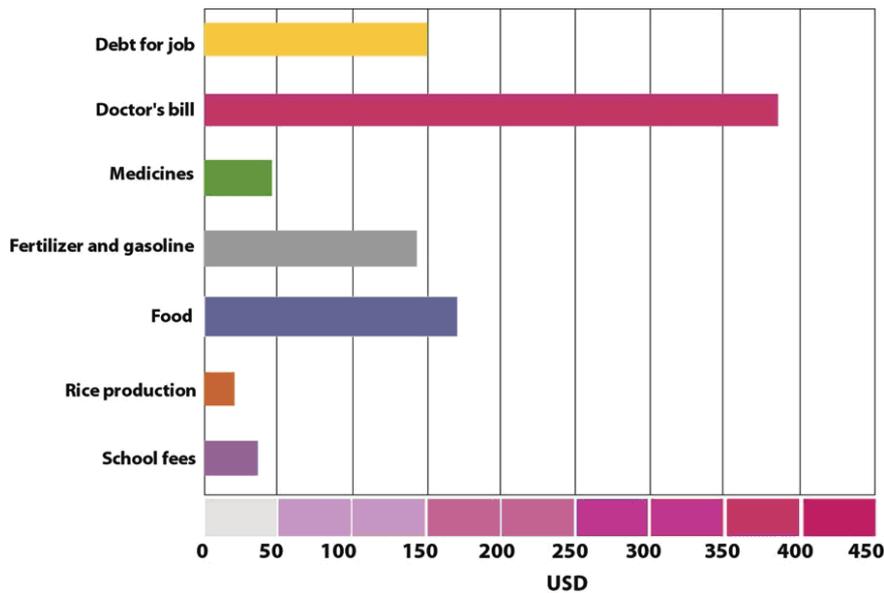


Figure 10:
Distribution of
Remittances
for Type of
Expense

Grantee reports also note the preoccupation of migrants with helping their households meet basic food and health needs, make home improvements, and repay debts. These urgent needs seem to take precedence over longer-term aspirations to contribute to the education of younger family members, or to accumulate capital for investment in small business ventures upon return. Like other sending countries where the local economy is very weak and migration is still in the first stages and mostly composed of unskilled and irregular workers, in GMS source countries remittances are mostly employed as a household survival strategy rather than for productive investments.

This does not imply that migrants do not intend to use remittances for more productive purposes if and when savings eventually start to accumulate. In Laos, Cambodia, and, to a lesser extent, Myanmar, there are a few examples of longer-term migrants who have used remittances to build new houses, and purchase land and transportation assets. What proportion of migrants fall into this category and what are the factors that have led to their economic success and have encouraged them to contribute to the economic growth of their households is not clear. Nor is it understood how many migrants and what level of income are necessary to lift the overall economic status of a community. Whether more and more migrants will be successful and choose to contribute to the economies back home is also difficult to predict as it depends on a variety of factors in both receiving and sending countries. For example, long-term migration seems necessary to accumulate sufficient wealth, but may also eventually result in a tapering off of remittances, especially if family members follow the migrants abroad, as seems to be the emerging trend in Thailand.

Policy interventions at both ends of the migration stream will be crucial in affecting what role migration can play in developing the poorer GMS countries. If migration is not only to lessen the severity of poverty as now is the case, but also to lift migrants' households out of poverty, a two-fold transnational approach may be necessary: On the one hand, destination countries could deal with the irregularity of the migrant population to allow more secure jobs for migrants and thus more regular financial

gains and flows; on the other hand, sending countries could develop provisions to promote investment of remittances, while also addressing the serious impacts of migration on the families and communities left behind.

II. Life for Those Left Behind

In the GMS, life for those remaining at home involves a great deal of concern, uncertainty and stress when a family member migrates. Problems can range from loss of able-bodied workers to help at home to health hazards (see box 2). Lack of communication between migrants and their families, beyond the sending of remittances, is a significant problem. In the 2005 study of Lao migrants, 20 percent of families with migrant children in Thailand had not heard from their children and did not know where they were, which left them feeling anxious and helpless in the task of locating them. Commonly, families are not well informed and have misconceptions about the migrant's work environment, which only augments their worry about their relatives abroad.⁴³ Migrants' inability to communicate with family back home leads to misunderstandings about the experiences and needs of those migrating and those left behind. Lack of telephone or postal services, illiteracy or limited knowledge of these communication systems create barriers, as do employers' control of communication channels. Among migrant domestic workers, only 60 percent were allowed by their employers to send or receive mail, 50 percent to receive a phone call (at times), and 21 percent to make a phone call. For migrants working

Box 2. Reported Problems Associated with Migration (PROMDAN Mid-term evaluation 2001)

Communities in Prey Veng, Cambodia, have identified many of the social problems they currently face as being related to migration in some way. Some of the problems described by villagers include:

- A high migration rate equates a loss of able-bodied workers at home to help with farming and other subsistence or domestic activities (although many men return home for the rice planting season);
- Debt incurred by paying an agent is often borne by the wife or the family who remain in the community, and continually burdens their financial resources;
- Men leave for four months up to seven years, rarely remaining in contact and sending little or no money home;
- Those men who do return often have only been able to save a small amount of money;
- The burden of having had to endure hardships, exhausting manual labor, exploitation and/or abuse takes an emotional and physical toll on the men when they have returned;
- Some men become sick in Thailand without being able to access treatment, including those who were incarcerated, and return physically weakened;
- Those who return to Cambodia and suspect they may have AIDS may not return to their home village out of shame;
- Many men have returned not knowing they have HIV/AIDS and have infected others in their community, leading to high rates of HIV/AIDS in those communities.

43 K. Phouxay (2005). "Consequences of Migration for Lao Migrant Workers in Thailand and their Left Behind Families in Laos." Paper presented at the conference on Transborder Issues in the Greater Mekong Sub-region on 30 June – 2 July 2005 in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand.

on fishing boats out at sea (often for months at a time), there were no opportunities to keep in touch with family and friends back home. A number of migrants also did not want to communicate with family members because of the shameful experience of not being able to remit money home.

Families not only worry about the migrants, but also have to cope with providing care to their dependents. In countries of origin, many children of migrants are living in an extended family. In the absence of one or both parents, grandparents play key roles in raising children and overseeing domestic life at home. If the entire nuclear family has migrated they may send their children born in Thailand to their home country and entrust them to the grandparents so that they can receive an education in their own language. But, to access school and other services is not always easy, since as mentioned in previous chapters, children born abroad do not receive birth certificates and when they do, it does not guarantee citizenship for the child upon return home. For those that go to school, they may face difficulty for a variety of reasons, including lack of parental encouragement and support, difficulty in managing travel to school, inability to regularly pay school expenses if remittances do not arrive in time, or their having to skip classes to provide labor to the extended family in the absence of their parents. It is also becoming more common that migrant parents have children aged ten years and older join them to work in Thailand and contribute financially to the household, thus obliging them to leave school at an early age. Some migrants' children may also not adapt well to the separation from their parents and to their being raised by extended family members.⁴⁴

Besides children, spouses too, are affected by migration. The departure of a spouse, usually the husband, but increasingly also wives, implies greater responsibilities for the spouse left behind, with an increase in work burden both in the household and in subsistence activities. Spouses are forced to take on employment in addition to household maintenance and child-rearing while their partners are away in order to meet the economic demands of the family. Adapting to altered roles and status can put heavy strains on marital relationships. Husbands left behind report feeling ashamed to do household work and inadequate for not having been able to sustain their families without sending their wife abroad. Being uncertain of the whereabouts of the migrant spouse and if and when remittances will be sent presents constant stress and difficulties for those at home. Periodic visits of the migrants to their families are rare, even for long-staying migrants, because of the migrants' irregular status and, for those far from the border, the relatively high transportation costs. Lao migrants seem to be able to come back home more regularly, but it is not uncommon for migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia not to see their spouses and children for very long periods of time. In the PROMDAN project, of the 812 men identified who had migrated to Thailand from Cambodia for more than 2 years, only 101 had made return visits home at some point. There also have been reports of broken homes when migrants took up relations with Thais or other migrants in Thailand and abandoned their spouses and children to start new lives.

44 C. Wille and B. Passl, eds. (2001) *Female Labour Migration in South-East Asia: Change and Continuity*. Bangkok: Asian Research Centre for Migration.

To avoid long separations and family disruptions, while also possibly increasing family incomes by additional employment abroad, more and more migrants are considering having their spouse and children join them, although their irregular status and insecure work conditions do not always allow them to do so. While information varies by ethnic group and employment sector, there are indications that the longer the migrants stay abroad and realize that returning is not a feasible option for the present time, the more they will try to settle and bring their families over to reunite in the destination country. This emerging trend of reunification will not only challenge existing restrictions in GMS destination countries strongly resistant to accepting migrant's families, but may also deeply affect the population structure of sending communities and households leaving grandparents and children to form the nucleus of new social arrangements in a countryside depleted of resources and workers.

III. Return and Reintegration

For the minority of migrants who are able or forced to return home, the process is a challenging one. The journey itself is not without risks. Most returning GMS migrants do so on their own accord, but still have to confront the implications of their being irregular. Migrants without legal documentation are often stopped by authorities and face harassment, arrest, and detention if they do not pay requested fees or fines, which are often arbitrarily decided by officials on both sides of the border. Depending on their distance from their home country, they may decide to use a costly middle-man to facilitate safe passage back home without having to cross checkpoints.

As discussed in chapter 3, legislation in Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and China makes it illegal to leave one's country without notifying the authorities, and irregular migrants who left their country undocumented face fines and other punishment. For example, in Laos returning migrants are subject to fines when they arrive in their village, with amounts varying per location. In Nong Beuk Tai village, returnees are fined 200,000 kip (\$20) if they have stayed in Thailand illegally up to six months, and 100,000 kip (= \$10) if under three months. In Don Khouang village, returnees are fined 20,000 kip (\$2) for the first occurrence, 50,000 kip (\$5) for the second, 100,000 kip (\$10) for the third, and 450,000 kip (\$45) for the fourth. Such measures fail to achieve the set aim of discouraging informal border crossings, with undocumented migration remaining rampant, while putting an extra burden on returnees, and sometimes delaying the decision to return.

Once home, the returnees are often confronted with a wide range of short- and long-term issues which they and their receiving families and communities are unprepared to handle, or even to recognize. Most migrants do not psychologically prepare themselves for their return, while home countries have no or few reintegration programs. The immediate reception that greets returnees varies, being determined by whether or not they return with savings and have met family and community expectations during their stay abroad by sending remittances and communicating regularly. Economically "successful" migrants, still a relative minority, receive a warm welcome and may become role models for the communities, but not much understanding is there for migrants who have not been able to save, or who return indebted after years abroad. Forced socially to internalize their failure to succeed

abroad, such returnees often blame themselves and struggle with issues of self worth.

Community expectations and demands towards returnees are many and may put a heavy psychological and financial burden on them. They are expected to have generated income for themselves and their families, without much appreciation for the hard work they had to endure. Because of their putative “wealth,” migrants are expected to contribute to social activities and show generosity towards their neighbors and fellow villagers. If they are unable or unwilling to comply with this economic role, they will be accused of having lost appreciation of cultural norms and of their being part of a broader social community.

It is also assumed that migrants have acquired new skills while abroad and will use them for the benefit of the community—e.g., to repair neighbors’ homes and community facilities, or provide mechanical assistance with equipment and motorbikes. In fact, since most migrants work in low-skilled 3-D jobs, few migrants return home with new skills. Even when new skills have been acquired, their applicability back home is limited, and migrants in search of a better job at home may soon become frustrated and decide to re-emigrate or have to re-adapt to the same kinds of jobs they held before leaving. A 2001 study of female returnees in Southeast Asia found that the majority went back to similar occupations held before departure, largely in agricultural or domestic work due to the lack of alternatives for unskilled labor in rural areas.⁴⁵

Prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes are also often directed at returnees. It is assumed that returnees will have picked up negative influences from receiving countries. Migrant youth may show behavior and dress not socially acceptable in more conservative rural societies and find it difficult to be accepted with their new life-styles. Besides “inappropriate” dress and language, returnees may also be accused of drug abuse and spreading contagious diseases because of their “modernized” life abroad. Such negative influences are condemned much more severely in the case of returning females.⁴⁶ Numerous reports note the discrimination encountered by returning young female migrants based on prejudices that perceive them as sexually promiscuous or on presumptions that they have been directly or indirectly involved in sex work. Consequently, most young female returnees do not share their experiences, which thereby contributes to a lack of understanding about the realities involved in cross-border migration. Those who have indeed engaged in sex work often feel shame and guilt, especially if they have contracted STIs or HIV/AIDS.

The degree of mental stress for migrants and their families is much higher for those who have been abused or return home with serious health problems. An emotional and physical toll is found among returnees that have worked in 3D jobs that are exhausting, exploitative or abusive, with no services available to provide

45 Ibid.

46 K. Phouxay (2005). “Consequences of Migration for Lao Migrant Workers in Thailand and their Left Behind Families in Laos”. Paper presented at the conference on Transborder Issues in the Greater Mekong Sub-region on 30 June – 2 July 2005 in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand.

counseling and other needed support. A growing rate of HIV infection is also being observed among migrant returnees in Laos and Cambodia. If diagnosed with AIDS, returnees have to endure shame, the fear of stigma on their family, or the likelihood of being disowned by their family and the community. This can lead to the disintegration of the family.

In view of the many difficulties in readjusting to life back home and the continued lack of opportunities in rural areas, it is not surprising that the return home may turn out to be temporary only. Despite their full awareness of the realities that await them in the destination country and the many risks they will encounter, returnees may eventually decide to re-migrate. Even some of those that consider their migration experience a failure are willing to consider migrating again, after finding the situation at home stagnating. They may wager that at least abroad they will have a chance, no matter how small, to improve their lot. A very small-scale survey of Cambodian returnees from Thailand done by one of our partners illustrates this point showing the high rate of intended re-migration (see table 7)

Table 9:
Rate of
Intended
Re-migration
among
Cambodian
Returnees

No. of Returnees	Migration seen as:			Likelihood of re-migration:		
	Success	Fair	Failure	Ready	Soon	Will not migrate again
44	19	9	16	23	12	9

The persistent issues of income disparity and unemployment that led to migration in the first place still remain, and are often exacerbated by returnees' psycho-emotional struggles and unresolved health problems, conducing to migrating again. Whether the circles of repetitive migration can eventually be transformed from "vicious" to "virtuous" is an open-ended question for the GMS, but one that certainly deserves the urgent attention of policy makers and practitioners if migrant households are to finally escape poverty and significantly improve their economic and social well-being.

7

Addressing Intra-Regional Migration

I. Current Responses to Migration

The growing importance of intra-regional migration and the seriousness of the vulnerabilities associated with it have prompted academics, civil society groups and governments to action. International agencies, too, are now more engaged with programs to better understand and address migration. When the Foundation started its programming in 2001, there was very limited appreciation of the significance of migration as an emerging regional trend and little knowledge and institutional capacity to deal with its impacts. Today, partly as a result of our efforts, a growing number of social institutions and actors have begun to recognize and respond to the realities facing migrants in the sub-region, and it is to be expected that more will become involved in the future.

Increased awareness and engagement are in part a result of a process of knowledge-building and dissemination to which many of our grantees have contributed. Over the past five years their research shifted focus to broader migration patterns unfolding across borders throughout the GMS, going beyond the more usual topics of rural-to-urban migration, mobility and HIV-AIDS, trafficking, and refugees or displaced persons. Two leading research institutes in Bangkok—the Asia Migration Research Center at Chulalongkorn University and the Institute of Population Research Studies at Mahidol University, both Foundation grantees—are becoming full-fledged resource centers for the GMS. They have expanded the scope of their studies, made an effort to systematically collate existing information and to work on gradually filling the gaps, and, through training and collaboration, built the capacity of other institutes in the sub-region to analyze migration trends.

Multi-partner projects that involve networks of diverse academic institutions, government agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations, of which MMN is a prime example, have contributed to investigating the wide range of issues surrounding migration from a regional, rather than a country-based, perspective. Collaborative projects have demonstrated successful approaches to research in remote border areas, research on hidden migrant labor sectors, and research on emerging mobility trends in the GMS. These have brought to the fore a more comprehensive analysis of migration as a transnational trend than would have been possible if institutions had worked in isolation. As regionalization intensifies

in the GMS, such research provides a broader picture of socio-economic dynamics impacting on migration and of the vulnerabilities migrants and their communities face in the sub-region.

Research results have been discussed and interpreted at workshops, seminars and conferences that brought together a wide range of people from government and civil society sectors at the local, national, bi-lateral, and sub-regional levels, thus raising awareness of migration and effects deriving from it. These forums offered venues for learning from different perspectives, for creating networking opportunities, for expanding understanding of migration systems, and for articulating strategies for change.

Efforts have also been made to publish and disseminate research findings in local national languages as well as in English. Access to accurate information produced by local experts with Foundation support has been instrumental in expanding the migration-related dialogue to many sectors of government and the public. Moving beyond mere description of migrant realities and migration flows, publications have started to present policy and intervention strategies for ensuring migrants' protection and inclusion of their perspectives and aspirations.

Public awareness of what migrants face in their lives and of other migration issues is beginning to slowly improve. Creative use of media and artistic expression has been instrumental in reaching a wider public. Training of photo, print and visual media journalists has led to more responsible and focused reporting on migration in Thailand and other GMS countries, with the Foundation-funded "Imaging Our Mekong" Media Fellowship Program the most significant example in this area. Traditional and modern theatre, dance and music performances, in a variety of venues from villages to public halls to shopping malls, are increasing public understanding in culturally appropriate and politically sensitive ways. In destination countries the goal is to reduce some of the tensions among local and migrant populations, while in sending countries the focus is on the impacts of migration on those left behind and the danger of trafficking. A salutary example of the effectiveness of public art interventions is the Labor sans Frontiers program of the Empower Foundation. They have worked with migrant women from Myanmar in Thailand, most unregistered and irregular, who created hundreds of papier maché

Photo 9 & 10:
Labor Sans
Frontiers



dolls to represent themselves and narrate their experiences and needs. The dolls have traveled in a special truck throughout Thailand and across borders to stimulate discussion with the general public on the pros and cons of migration.

Dissemination efforts are meant to create a more enabling environment for balanced public discussions and policy debates on migration. Advocacy by a growing number of NGOs and CBOs—albeit still relatively small when compared to those in other Asian countries—is proving crucial in placing migration on the policy agenda of governments hitherto hesitant to address this politically sensitive topic. The most vibrant NGOs and civil society movements are in Thailand, which among GMS countries has the least centralized political system and affords relatively the greatest space for democratic debate. A few years ago, civil society groups, especially faith-based ones, were mainly focusing on refugees, but today a nascent movement is devoting attention to labor migration and migrants' rights. Gradually, alliances are being formed that link up migrant communities with those working on specific aspects of migration (such as HIV/AIDS or education), and other key social actors. These emerging networks within countries (see box 3) and across borders have been instrumental not only in bringing to the table divergent perspectives and attitudes, but also in providing opportunities to exchange experiences, maximize resources and coordinate interventions and policy recommendations.

Box 3. Current Migration Networks in Thailand

The Action Network for Migrants (ANM) is a network comprising non-governmental organizations in Thailand that work with Cambodian migrants. ANM serves as a watchdog and advocacy organization to improve the rights, working conditions, and health of documented and undocumented migrants.

Border Esaan Action Network (BEAN) is a network of non-governmental organizations that work on issues of community development, migration, and public health in the Northeast of Thailand, also known as Esaan. BEAN seeks to improve communication and collaboration between non-governmental and governmental organizations in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand through regular meetings and technical trainings.

Border to Seashore (B to S) is a network between non-governmental organizations that work in areas along the Burmese border with those that work with Burmese migrants in seashore areas. B to S allows for actionable information to be shared as migrant laborers travel and work at the seashore and when they return to the border. B to S also organizes study tours and disseminates informational materials in local languages to minimize the risks associated with migration.

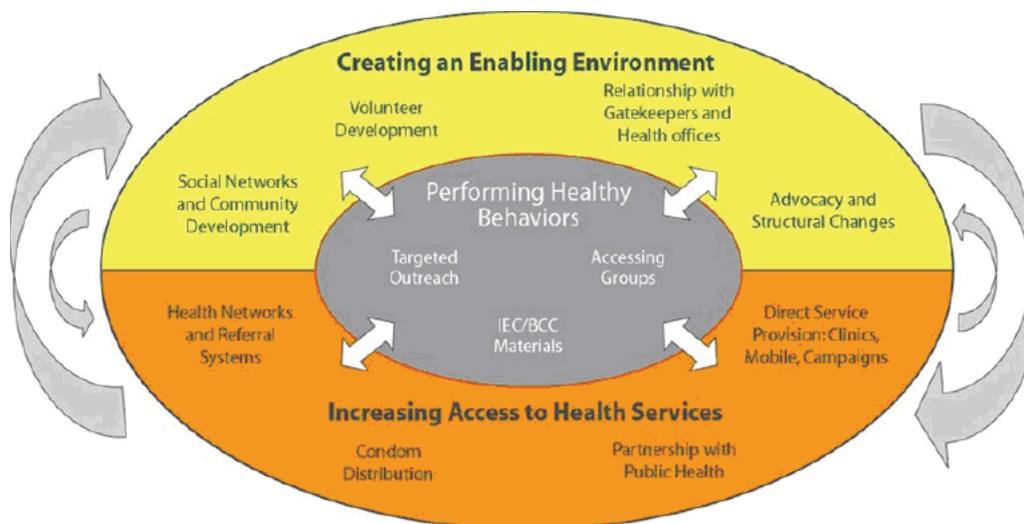
The Prevention of HIV/AIDS Among Migrant Workers in Thailand (PHAMIT) is a collaborative project of eight non-governmental organizations working in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health and local health providers. PHAMIT works in over twenty provinces throughout Thailand to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS and improve the quality of life among migrant workers, their families and sex workers.

NGOs are also on the front-line in providing services to migrants and their families in both destination and sending countries. International organizations, such as Save the Children, CARE, Oxfam and World Vision, work side-by-side with local NGOs in filling

a gap left by governments still struggling to respond to the socio-cultural implications of migration. In particular, as discussed in chapter 5, interventions have focused on providing health services, especially HIV/AIDS prevention and care, and education for migrants' children. Some NGOs are also active in providing social and legal counseling services, emergency shelters, language lessons, and assistance for jailed migrants. In the process, organizations are learning about the relative advantages or shortcomings of various approaches and looking for more effective interventions that take into account the specific characteristics of migrant groups, including their high levels of mobility and their cultural differences.

Projects that provide health and education services to migrants and their families are gradually moving beyond promotion of individual behavioral change and targeted outreach to begin addressing the structural vulnerability of migrant populations in order to affect lasting changes to the broader policy environment. A number of more holistic intervention models are being piloted—as in the framework used by one of our partners, the Raks Thai Foundation (see figure 11)—that: (a) apply a multi-pronged approach to reach migrant communities; (b) engage those controlling their environments; and (c) facilitate their access to services through collaboration with district administrative bodies and provincial health offices. Gradually, organizations are recognizing that integration of health programs with social and economic development initiatives allows multiple opportunities for improving migrant health and well-being.

Figure 11:
Raks Thai
Foundation
Intervention
Framework



Cross-border linkages across intervention sites are also being established to address migrant's needs at both ends of the migration stream allowing for more comprehensive approaches, sharing of multilingual resource materials and training opportunities, and more multi-sectoral discussions of policy and its implementation. Exchange visits across borders have exposed government officials and other stakeholders to migrant realities. By witnessing effective interventions they have gained insight into new ways of collaborating in the development of transnational responses. Cross-border links among government health systems have been forged to limit transmission of communicable diseases, which is often exacerbated through population mobility. The most exemplary program in this area is the PROMDAN program, supported by the Foundation, PATH and other international organizations. PROMDAN is developing

an innovative model of cross-border collaboration among sending and destination communities that focuses broadly on quality of life throughout the migration cycle. For the first time in the region, models of cross-border referral mechanisms to ensure collaborative case management of chronic infectious diseases such as TB and HIV, which require on-going adherence to drug regimes, are being piloted. PROMDAN has also initiated income-generating activities in sending communities to try to convert remittances into productive assets, and is providing income management training to migrants and their families for more strategic use of savings (see figure 12).



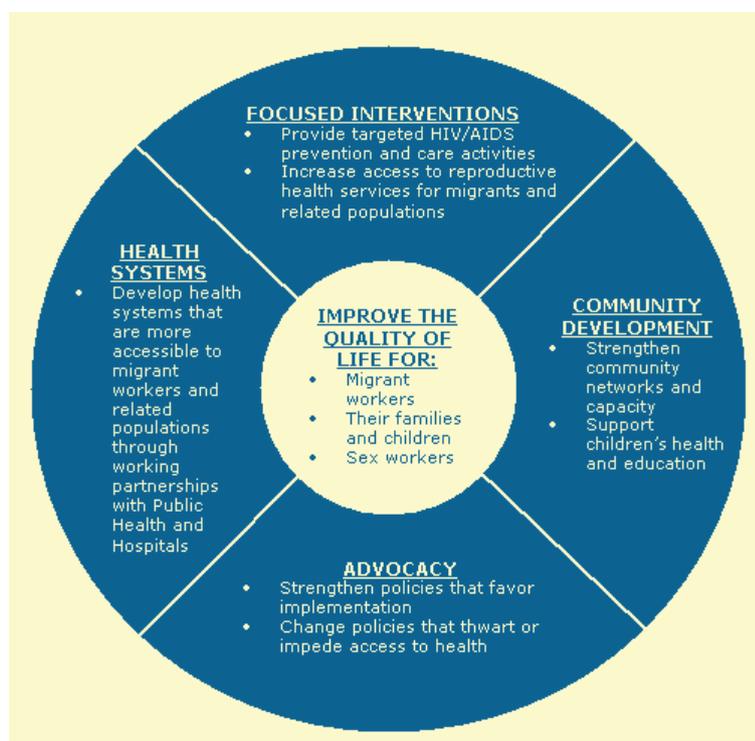
Figure 12:
PROMDAN's
Intervention
Framework

Intervention models in border areas are also being proposed that address the situation of stateless and ethnic minority populations who face multiple vulnerabilities and often are, or become, migrants. In sending countries, efforts to diversify upland agriculture and increase access to markets have the potential to improve the livelihoods of ethnic minority communities and make migration a choice rather than a desperate necessity. In receiving countries, community health promotion initiatives have demonstrated that prevention efforts can halve rates of respiratory infections, reduce diarrheal diseases, and promote the use of bed nets to prevent malaria. It is not uncommon for Thailand to serve as a source of health care for people living across the borders. Health centers have been employed as information resource centers, training health volunteers among patients who return home to villages that have limited access to information and services.⁴⁷ Integrated interventions seem particularly promising in these settings, as they address multiple concerns.

⁴⁷ Effective community strategies have been developed by Pattanarak Foundation in Kanchanaburi and Ubon Ratchathani provinces. These are being evaluated through a grant to Mahidol University's Institute for Population and Social Research.

Some of these localized responses are now being scaled up. For example, Rockefeller's support to Raks Thai in 2001 was a catalyst for the establishment of PHAMIT (Prevention of HIV/AIDS among Migrants in Thailand), a US\$14.5 million dollar program supported by the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria. The program undertaken by an alliance of non-governmental (both international and national) organizations in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and local health providers has expanded the reach of experimental models to more than 22 provinces with migrant populations. The goal of PHAMIT is to reduce the number of new HIV infections among migrant workers in Thailand and thus contribute to the reduction of HIV/AIDS in the country as well as in the migrants' sending countries.. This is done not only through targeted prevention efforts, but also through the development of health and social support systems and the advocacy of policies that will enable migrant workers and related populations to improve their quality of life (see figure 13).

Figure 13:
PHAMIT
Strategy



NGOs are increasingly working in cooperation with municipal and provincial government units. Where national government policies are still lacking or inadequate, these lower government levels are filling in with new solutions to cope with the irregular migrant population in their constituencies—exemplifying another trend, decentralization of government. In Thailand, some villages are issuing “delivery documents” to substitute for the lack of birth certificates for migrant children; others are creatively using local budgets to cover migrants' education and health costs, and to improve hygiene and sanitation standards in migrant settlements. In sending countries, local government units are starting to look at ways to provide pre-departure training to better prepare prospective migrants and to capitalize on their emigrants for improving village infrastructures.

These responses are occurring at a time when governments in the GMS are just beginning to devote attention to migrant populations' problems and taking the first

steps towards formulating social protection policies. As mentioned in chapter 1, the Thai Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with many Foundation partners is developing a migrant health policy and establishing a migrant health coordinating unit within the Medical Services Division. In education, the policy of including migrant children in the free basic education system, as described in chapter 5, is expected to yield positive results in the long term. In sending countries, governments and local organizations are beginning to think of how to improve skills of migrants and better prepare them for departure, and how to foster productive use of remittances for migrants' households and communities. As mentioned above, bilateral agreements have been signed between Thailand and Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar to regularize migration. Thailand has expressed its willingness to establish Export Processing Zones in areas across its borders to employ their neighbors' workers in their own country. The Thai and other GMS governments are also becoming more aware of the need to entertain regular dialogues to discuss coordinated migration policies and interventions, although action has yet to follow.

UN and UN-related organizations, such as IOM, ILO, UNAIP, UNESCO, UNIFEM and UNDP, are increasingly concerned with labor migration and are assisting government partners in thinking through migration policy reforms. The focus is still mainly on security issues related to trafficking, and repatriation of irregular migrants, however. With Foundation support, IOM provides assistance to the Thai government to improve the situation in immigrant detention centers. Since the tsunami, because of the serious abuses and losses suffered by Burmese migrant workers, many agencies have become more willing to discuss with the governments of Myanmar and Thailand the rights and needs of migrants and assist them in finding suitable solutions despite the current restrictive policy environments.

Concern about the transmission of communicable diseases has led USAID, DFID, the European Commission and other international donors to support surveillance and health promotion in border areas in Thailand. The focus is mainly on malaria, TB and AIDS, but a more recent concern is avian flu, as many migrants in the agricultural sector are working on poultry farms. At the regional level, an inter-agency working group has been established under the aegis of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) to better coordinate labor migration activities of UN agencies. Two regional donor forums, of which the Foundation is a member, have also been launched, the first on AIDS and migration, and the second, more recent, on trafficking. Both are coordinated by the regional office of UNDP in Bangkok with UNAIDS and UNAIP respectively taking the lead role for each forum. In an important new development, the Asia Development Bank and the World Bank office in Thailand have decided to initiate regional research projects to map migration flows and their social and economic implications. All these ongoing research efforts clearly build on the earlier work supported by the Foundation in terms of both knowledge and institutional networks.

These multi-level and multi-sectoral efforts are critical milestones on the path to better managing migration flows in the GMS and providing migrants with greater protection and choices. Still, the response is in its early stages and much more will need to be done to address the magnitude and complexity of cross-border labor mobility as described in this report.

II. Gaps and Challenges

The broad range of migration issues GMS countries are facing requires multiple interventions to produce a more equitable distribution of the benefits and the costs resulting from migration. If intra-regional migration is to become safer and contribute to development in both sending and receiving countries, many gaps will have to be filled and challenges overcome. To list them all here is an impossible task. Nor could we hope to propose complete recommendations to these complex problems. To conclude this report we opt instead to identify key areas needing attention that the Foundation may want to consider in its strategic planning process, leaving discussion of concrete programming opportunities for a later stage once these concerns are prioritized. Taking into account the current discussion in the Working Group on Migration, issues will be presented according to four interlinked areas of possible interest, which though rooted in the context of the GMS, also have global relevance: (1) knowledge building; (2) setting a more-balanced public agenda; (3) promoting good governance of migration; and (4) enhancing social protection and integration of migrants.

Building the Evidence Base for Informed Debates, Policies and Interventions

New approaches to migration policy and interventions require accurate information. As noted over and over again in this report, while there is now more research attention to migration, there remain serious knowledge gaps and inadequacies. The volume and scope of migration in the GMS may be growing, but statistical and other quantitative data that would allow monitoring and assessment of this trend is minimal, and for some countries almost non-existent. For Thailand all the data are from a registration scheme covering only part of the migrant population, and for the other countries no national census data exist covering cross-border migrants. As a result, we still have no accurate numbers for how many people move, how many stay in their new destination country, how many return, and how many re-migrate. We have no data on previous job experiences of migrants, nor on the number of their dependents. Almost no valid data are available on the incidence of diseases among migrant populations, or epidemiological data comparable with that for the majority population, and we have little information on the educational level of migrants and their children.

Migration flows are very diverse, but interlinked, with rural-urban, in-country migration becoming intertwined with cross-border migration. A more nuanced understanding of “migration systems” and the multiple nodes of migration that link internal, regional and international migration flows would be useful. This would require investigating the structural linkages between source, transit and destination communities where migrant opportunities are constructed, and analyzing how in-migration and out-migration are related—a timely topic, since all GMS countries are becoming, in different degrees, sending, transit and receiving countries at the same time.

To help migrants live safe and productive lives in their host communities, research is needed that exposes the conditions that lead to vulnerability and exploitation and that explores issues of stigma and discrimination. In-depth and reliable information would help to identify the context and realities of the diverse migrant communities,

especially the growing migrant communities in Laos, Cambodia, China and Vietnam. Little is known of the informal sector, very large in GMS countries, and the work of migrants therein. Despite the rising number of female migrants, little disaggregated data or nuanced analysis of their gender-specific vulnerabilities, concerns or survival strategies have been generated. In addition, little is known about the just emerging second-generation migrants, or the number of migrant children and the work they do in the informal sector. Research has only begun to explore these new areas, and more is needed to understand the specifics and differentials. Although there are some similarities across migrant groups, borders, and labor sectors, as this report shows, it cannot be assumed that migrant groups are homogenous or remain constant. There should be recognition of the differences in migration experiences across gender, occupational, ethno-linguistic and other lines in formulating policies and interventions.

There is much discussion nowadays on the potential migration holds for contributing to development. But there needs to be a systematic and extensive effort to collect data that would help us understand the costs and benefits of migration in sending and destination countries. More research could help determine the cost of the social impacts of migration to the migrants and to their societies. The extent, use and means by which migrants save and remit their earnings need to be further investigated if remittances are to be maximized in helping migrants to achieve their migration goals and eventual reintegration. In addition, little attention has been given to understanding the social and economic dynamics of migrants upon their return and resettlement in their home countries. Other developing Southeast Asian countries have found that migrants returning home with savings are vulnerable to poor investments and informal money saving schemes, since they have limited knowledge of finance, business management and marketing.⁴⁸ With better knowledge, strategies could be devised to address these shortcomings and render remittances productive for migrants' households and communities.

Furthermore, in most GMS countries, with the possible exception of Thailand, there is no or only poor capacity to study and analyze migration trends and impacts, with the result that important perspectives are simply lost. There is a need for independent think-thanks, on the model of the Migration Policy Institute in the United States, the Migration Policy Group in Europe, or the Scalabrini Center in the Philippines, that could analyze migration trends at the national and regional level and feed this information to governments, media and other interested parties in a systematic and regular manner. Even in Thailand the two leading institutes mentioned above still depend on external sources to carry out their research and their future as resource centers is still not sustainable. There is also a great need to strengthen the capacity of relevant government offices within each country to monitor migration trends and to establish mechanisms to share such data, not only to improve national responses but also to enhance regional ones.

Building the capacity to fill the knowledge gaps is not only relevant for GMS countries and the sub-region as a whole, but it is also crucial for the global community. Most international migration takes place among countries in the southern hemisphere,

48 CARAM (2002). *The Forgotten Spaces: Reintegration*. New Delhi: CARAM Asia Bhd.

but goes largely unreported. There is growing realization of the importance of Asia in global migration flows, since it is the continent with the highest numbers of intra-regional migrants. Migration in the GMS, however, tends to be overlooked resulting in biased assumptions and insufficient attention at the global level.

Reframing the Migration Discourse in Terms of Regional Integration and Development

An enhanced evidence-base will be essential to help define the public and policy discourse in the years ahead. In GMS countries, this discourse has mostly viewed migration in terms of security and trafficking concerns. In particular the overemphasis on the trafficking paradigm and its narrow focus has undermined the ability to more broadly and deeply understand the realities of migration as a labor issue. To effectively address migration, there needs first to be a recognition that migration in the GMS is mostly voluntary and resulting from regional integration processes.

A new discourse on migration would start from the acknowledgment that migration is related to market integration and liberalization and that unskilled and low-skilled workers are necessary for growing economies in the sub-region. As chapter 2 shows, the ongoing regionalization process is not only characterized by circulation of goods, services, and investments, but also by increased mobility of labor to fulfill the growing demand of export-oriented sectors. Still, while trade and capital flows are increasingly liberalized and integrated, labor flows are not. If it is accepted that a more integrated economy will inevitably imply greater integration of the labor market than is now the case, the key question for GMS policy makers will not so much be how to tighten the borders to prevent trafficking, but rather to what degree labor market liberalization should be facilitated in order to sustain regional integration. This taking into account how to deal with eventual tensions and xenophobic reactions by part of the public.

Any discussion of migration as instrumental to a regional economy will need, however, to consider the human and social dimensions of migration. If countries, in collaboration with the private sector, are to act more intentionally in exporting and importing labor, new frameworks need to be developed that balance discussion on the pros and cons of migration for nation states and the private sector with the rights of migrant workers to avoid their becoming “commodified” in the process. This is to ensure that migration takes place in conditions of dignity, and that its potential to restore or enhance the economic well-being of migrant households and to promote overall economic development is maximized.

This new discourse in more human and developmental terms could be helped by current efforts of the Asia Development Bank and the World Bank, the major donors to GMS countries, to promote facilitation and regulation of migration in the sub-region by employing not only social, but also economic arguments to advocate protection of migrant labor. In a recent planning meeting, to which the Foundation was invited, it was argued that if social issues are raised on a strong economic basis—e.g., that enabling legal migration and protecting the workforce will result in a more efficient workforce and increased tax revenues for receiving countries, and that emigrants can help develop the economies of the countries allowing them to work abroad—GMS

governments may be more willing to tackle managing migration for both national development and regional integration.

Linking the discussion of migrants' contributions to host countries to that of migrants' contributions to home countries would also be useful in assessing whether the two are balanced or whether they actually create sharper inequities across countries. To avoid having the weaker economies and most vulnerable groups excluded from migration's potential benefits and end up paying most of the social costs, as now seems to be the case in the sub-region, the two discourses of the benefits and costs in home and sending economies need to be combined into a single paradigm; this would aim to capitalize on the contribution of migration to development while keeping to a minimum the very vulnerabilities and inequities that lead to migration in the first place.

An eventual new framework that places migration in the context of regional development ought to continue to give attention to alternative development strategies to promote poverty reduction and more equitable economic growth. GMS governments and the donors supporting them are realizing that disparities across countries are widening and that migration happens out of a lack of opportunities in communities and countries left behind in the regionalization process. How to spread development opportunities to these weaker, sending economies, and whether, stronger, receiving economies should contribute more to that effort, are questions GMS countries are starting to face. If consensus is reached, there will need to be new thinking about cooperative investment models for disadvantaged areas.

For migration to be integrated into the regional development agenda, a long-term process has to be set in motion, which at a minimum consists of new thinking, analysis, dialogue, awareness-raising and capacity-building, before leading to policy reform and real interventions. This process will need to include proactive planning by GMS governments to govern migration in the context of national and regional development strategies, transforming it from irregular to regular.

Governing Migration

Growing pressure to regulate and better manage migration has not yet resulted in a comprehensive sub-regional framework to govern migration. Recent bilateral MOUs that address migration issues are a first step, but as discussed in chapter 3, there are many difficulties in implementing them and no monitoring mechanisms to ensure that they are complied with. If migration in the GMS is not to remain irregular and exploitative, it will be vital in the years ahead to establish and expand regular channels of migration, to monitor the recruiting agencies and employers involved in the process, and to include provisions for social protection of migrants. Some of the processes could also be simplified to ensure smoother functioning and reduce costs. A number of international conventions and agreements, such as the Non-Binding Multilateral Framework on Labor Migration prepared by ILO, could be used to improve the management of migration and the protection of migrants.

The major regularization issue will, however, relate to the migrants already in the country of destination, as it becomes clearer that migration in the GMS is not of

a temporary nature. Thus, what happens in Thailand will be instructive to other countries in the region. Registration efforts there clearly show that a large number of migrants are not included in the process, but still find work and contribute to the economy by working in 3Ds jobs. Registration has not in itself reduced the number of migrants without work permits, as many more continue to arrive and are welcomed by employers in labor-intensive sectors. Since they are too numerous to be sent back en masse, how can opportunities for regularization be opened for them that go beyond the current registration process? How can a balance be struck between the high probability of more future arrivals and the absorptive capacity limits of the country? To answer such questions requires: study by government officials and policy makers of existing policies in other countries in Asia and other places in the world with more established migration flows; establishment of mechanisms to consider the different options that include all the major stakeholders, including civil society groups; and the assistance of technical experts in the formulation of possible policies. In this regards, some policy makers are starting to be interested in learning more about the free labor market system of the European Community and whether its cooperative governance model could be fruitful for the GMS countries to consider.

Leaving aside questions of future regularization, a pressing actual concern is the protection of GMS citizens who are now living and working in neighboring countries, whether irregular—as the majority are—or not. Unlike in the Philippines, no national or regional body exists in the GMS to deal with this issue. Receiving and sending countries could learn from the Philippines's example: working to curb abuses in recruitment; collectively agreeing on a minimum set of standards; monitoring employers and their practices; and posting labor attachès at embassies abroad to help both regular and irregular migrants. Receiving countries might consider working with sending countries to protect the latter's nationals and ensure them a modicum of social services and protection, since the effects may be to lower the negative externalities associated with a poorly integrated workforce, and may redound to the receiving country's economic benefit in the long run. Difficult discussions on how governments should proceed in managing migration and ensuring the rights of migrants at national, bi-lateral and sub-regional levels will need to take place, and these must confront the divergent expectations of the various stakeholders. It may prove challenging for centralized socialist and former socialist polities in the GMS to include civil society and migrant groups in the consultation process and give them the place and space that they need to advocate for migrants' rights and goals. Finding the balance between security and economic concerns, on the one hand, and social and human concerns, on the other, will require participation in these delicate negotiations by all, though. As the UN Global Commission on International Migration notes, agreements exclusively between states have too often led to disregard of migrants' needs and given way to exploitative recruitment and labor practices.⁴⁹

For bilateral and regional consultations on these many sensitive issues to occur, strategic venues will have to be created where governments can exchange views and plan joint action in a non-threatening environment. Still, as mentioned in chapter 3, no mechanisms have so far been established specifically to achieve sub-regional

49 Global Commission on International Migration (2005). *Migration in an Interconnected world: New Directions for Action*. New York: GCIM.

governance of migration. One way out is to institutionalize the process using already existing regional bodies so that migration becomes part of other governance concerns. ASEAN and UNESCAP are probably the place to start, since they are entrusted with political and regional integration in Southeast Asia and Asia respectively, and all GMS countries are members. The GMS itself does not have such a governance body and functions through more or less ad-hoc consultations. Inter-governmental meetings within the GMS could be another venue as long as migration is not discussed by itself, but linked with development, trade and regional integration more broadly to allow for a more comprehensive approach. For balanced policies to be formulated, it may be preferable to have multi-lateral rather than bilateral forums that also include more neutral countries in the region. And it will be important to strive for multi-stakeholders' forums that include, for instance, employers and civil society groups. Following the model of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) discussed in chapter 3, an inter-ministerial initiative could be launched to facilitate dialogue on key migration issues, identify common interests and concerns, contribute to the articulation of national and regional policies, and permit the sharing of intelligence.

Critical issues to be discussed at these future governance venues could include pre-departure training; standardization of diplomas; recruitment; entry requirements; migrant welfare; consular protection; portability of benefits; concentration and exploitation of remittances; productive return and creation of economic circuits; and assisted repatriation for vulnerable categories and migrants with irregular status. Family reunification issues and the status of stateless migrant children and children born from migrant parents in destination countries require urgent attention on the regional governance agenda in view of their profound human and social implications.

Breaking the Cycle of Vulnerability

A central contention of this report is that migration in GMS countries still consists of vicious rather than virtuous cycles, and there is a need to transform migration flows so that they create economic benefits while minimizing social costs. Policies and interventions need to be directed at strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities in countries of origin, and at reducing migrants' vulnerability in places of destination.

In sending countries, migration should not be the only option for people and communities to escape social pressure, violence or poverty where they live. And migration should not be allowed to threaten already weak economies and social structures. Thus, vigorous and sustained efforts still need to focus on improving political and economic environments to provide long-term, viable alternatives to migration, as well as devise measures to cope with eventual negative socio-economic impacts of migration such as shortage of labor in rural areas and disruption of family structures. When addressing migration from poor, mostly rural communities to cities and to other countries, a developmentalist paradigm shift may be necessary: That is, a shift from an older approach that tries to prevent migration from happening at all, to approaches that aim to broaden socio-economic opportunities for rural poor in situ, so that if people migrate it will be out of choice and not because it is their only means for survival. If development efforts succeed, people who still decide to leave would

be better prepared and less vulnerable to exploitation in the receiving locations and would have more means, knowledge and skills. In the GMS, where the most poor and prone to migration are upland ethnic minority communities, success at diversifying agricultural production and at opening up access to markets for upland farmers is crucial to preventing unprotected and unsafe migration of poorly prepared migrants. New developmental models linking weaker and stronger economies in the sub-region are necessary to redress economic inequities and lift underprivileged groups out of poverty.

In addition to the promotion of policies that improve sending communities' livelihoods and employment opportunities, actions and policies could aim at turning migration itself into a source of development and economic growth. Two initial steps towards achieving this objective would be to motivate migrants to make more productive use of remittances and to help them to reintegrate in their home communities upon return. Micro-credit schemes or training in entrepreneurial skills will be useful strategies to try out on a larger scale.

Sending countries could also be helped by changes in destination countries. Saving schemes and referral systems to assist migrants to find better jobs could help migrants increase their savings and thus their remittances. Regularization of the migrant work force and enforcement of existing labor laws to increase migrants' wage standards would be more structural interventions. Such measures are also often proposed to help reduce competition between migrants and the national labor force. They may not sit well with the current dependency of key industrial sectors on cheap labor, however. How to make working conditions less exploitative, while not undermining migrants' livelihoods options, or at least creating other options for them, is an issue that countries in the sub-region will at some point have to face.

Coordinated multi-sectoral approaches that target safety, health, housing and educational needs of migrants and their families may reduce, in the short term, at least, migrants' vulnerability in their new locations. In view of the growing number of female migrants and their even more vulnerable position, specific strategies are required that address their gender-specific vulnerabilities, concerns and needs. In health more attention should be devoted to occupational health and safety, while continuing to pay attention to the transmission of communicable diseases. In education, with the growing up of migrant children, new demands for secondary education may arise while the need remains to continue improving access to basic education. GMS countries should make an effort to develop mechanisms to protect migrants from abuse, whatever their legal status, including deterrent prosecution of the perpetrators.

NGOs have been taking up much of this work on their own, but the time has come for more coordination with other stakeholders to scale up successful interventions and foster a more enabling policy environment. While national governments will probably play only a limited role in providing services until migration flows are more regularized, the willingness of local governments at provincial or district level to cope with the migrant population is promising. Perhaps ways could be found to provide incentives to them to become even more entrepreneurial and innovative in their solutions. If local governments innovate, their experiences and approaches can

be shared and could be replicated in other localities, or provide central governments with feasible action models. This could encourage, in turn, perhaps in combination with changes in regional governance of migration, central governments to act and invest more in social protection of migrants. Socially concerned employers could also play a more active role by collaborating with NGOs and local governments in providing social protection to migrants, improving their housing facilities and providing health and education services.

For all this to happen, it will be crucial to foster a better public perception of migrants' contribution to the national economy and how that contribution indirectly also benefits all citizens through taxes, consumption and other mechanisms. Mass media, such as television and social marketing campaigns, and art groups could play a very important role in promoting a more positive image of migration and migrants.

* * * *

The many challenges posed by migration are not easy to address, but only by doing so will GMS countries start to ensure social protection for their most vulnerable citizens and promote more equitable development amidst increasing regional integration. Concerted and coordinated efforts by a large spectrum of governmental and non-governmental organizations, international and local agencies will be needed. The Foundation has played a key role in advancing knowledge and building the necessary human resources to better understand and address migration in the GMS. It is thus strategically placed to further galvanize the growing movement concerned with migration. It is hoped that the analysis provided in this report, will enable the Foundation to make strategic decisions on where, how and in partnership with whom to work towards "capitalizing" on migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and globally.

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Appendix A

List of Grants Related to Migration

Grant No	Grantee Name	Amount	Start-End Date	Purpose	Benefiting Countries
2001 SE 004	Asian Migrant Centre (Hong Kong, China)	\$ 62,040	9/1/2001 – 12/15/2002	in support of exploratory efforts to map and analyze migration issues in the greater Mekong region	Greater Mekong Sub-region
2003 SE 001	Asian Migrant Centre (Hong Kong, China)	\$ 297,103	4/1/2003 – 9/30/2006	to continue support for the monitoring and analysis of migration issues, needs, responses and strategies in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, and to strengthen the newly established Mekong Migration Network	Greater Mekong Sub-region
2006 SE 011	Asian Migrant Centre (Hong Kong, China)	\$ 425,000	9/1/2006 – 8/21/2009	to conclude support to the Mekong Migrant Network for the monitoring and analysis of migration issues, needs, responses, and strategies in the Greater Mekong Sub-region	Greater Mekong Sub-region
2002 SE 001	Cambodia Development Resource Institute (Cambodia)	\$ 90,000	4/1/2002 – 3/31/2003	toward the costs of a comparative research project on off-farm and non-farm employment creation in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam
2001 SE 016	Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)	\$ 13,000	11/1/2001 – 1/31/2002	for use by its Asian Research Center for Migration to support the participation of five senior and middle-level managers from Mekong countries involved in policymaking and assistance programs for forced migrants in its Southeast Asia Regional School in Forced Migration	Greater Mekong Sub-region

Grant No	Grantee Name	Amount	Start-End Date	Purpose	Benefiting Countries
2002 SE 009	Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)	\$ 84,455	8/1/2002 - 7/31/2005	for use by its Institute of Asian Studies to support a collaborative research project with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Hanoi, on the migratory movements of Vietnamese citizens to Thailand and back during the past sixty years	Thailand and Vietnam
2005 SE 037	Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)	\$ 64,090	9/1/2005 - 2/28/2007	for use by its Asian Research Center for Migration to study the social protection needs of Burmese, Cambodian and Laotian migrant workers in Thailand and develop interventions to improve their working conditions	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand
2005 SE 005	Institute for Social Development Studies (Vietnam)	\$ 99,720	7/1/2005 - 6/30/2007	in support of a project to enhance knowledge and public awareness of the social protection needs of migrant workers in and from Vietnam through studies, publications, workshops and educational campaigns	Vietnam
2002 SE 002	Mahidol University (Thailand)	\$ 33,013	5/1/2002 - 5/31/2004	for use by its Institute of Population and Social Research for a participatory research project on the life experiences of migrant girls and young women from Myanmar employed as factory workers or domestic helpers in Thailand	Myanmar and Thailand
2005 SE 020	Vietnamese Academy for Social Sciences (Vietnam)	\$ 96,660	8/1/2005 - 7/31/2007	for use by its Institute for Southeast Asian Studies to examine social, cultural and economic change among ethnic Vietnamese migrant communities (Viet Kieu) in Lao PDR, in collaboration with the Lao Institute of Cultural Research	Vietnam and Lao PDR
2001 HE 096	AIDS Network Development Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 203,290	11/1/2001 - 2/28/2004	to develop, analyze, and document appropriate interventions for addressing HIV/AIDS vulnerability among minority, ethnic population in six provinces in the upper north of Thailand	Thailand
2003 SE 030	AIDS Network Development Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 212,836	12/1/2003 - 12/30/2005	for use by its Khon Kaen branch to develop and test HIV prevention intervention models for migrants from Lao PDR living in border provinces	Lao PDR and Thailand

Grant No	Grantee Name	Amount	Start-End Date	Purpose	Benefiting Countries
2004 SE 013	AIDS Network Development Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 300,000	6/1/2004 - 8/31/2006	to further refine and document comprehensive socio-medical approaches to HIV/AIDS vulnerability among ethnic, minority populations in northern Thailand	Thailand
2002 HE 112	Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (Cambodia)	\$ 99,940	1/1/2003 - 2/29/2004	toward the costs of the second phase of an experimental program to strengthen inter-country health care and social support systems, especially for the prevention of HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections, for Cambodians migrating to Thailand to find work	Cambodia and Thailand
2004 SE 010	Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (Cambodia)	\$ 300,000	5/1/2004 - 4/30/2007	for the continuation of an experimental program to strengthen inter-country health care and social support systems for Cambodian workers migrating to Thailand	Cambodia and Thailand
2001 HE 126	Gadjah Mada University (Indonesia)	\$ 99,730	11/1/2001 - 2/28/2005	for use by its Population Studies Center for comparative research and workshops, and the publication of a monograph, on sexuality issues in Southeast Asia	Southeast Asia
2003 SE 027	International Organization for Migration (for use by the Regional Mission in Bangkok)	\$ 55,000	10/1/2003 - 12/31/2004	for use by its Regional Mission, Bangkok, Thailand, to strengthen disease control measures and increase access to HIV/AIDS prevention and TB control among detained migrants in the Thai Immigration Detention Center	Thailand
2004 SE 042	International Organization for Migration (for use by the Regional Mission in Bangkok)	\$ 176,150	10/1/2004 - 9/30/2006	in support of a project to institutionalize disease control measures in Thai immigration detention centers, thereby increasing access to HIV/AIDS prevention and TB control among detained migrants	Thailand
2004 SE 037	Khon Kaen University (Thailand)	\$ 87,400	10/1/2004 - 9/30/2006	toward the costs of a research project on the links between quality of life and health outcomes of migrants from Lao PDR working in two provinces of northeast Thailand	Lao PDR and Thailand

Grant No	Grantee Name	Amount	Start-End Date	Purpose	Benefiting Countries
2005 SE 012	Mahidol University (Thailand)	\$ 156,856	5/1/2005 - 4/30/2008	for longitudinal analysis of demographic, social and health trends and the impact of comprehensive health and social interventions on ethnic and marginalized communities in western Thailand	Thailand
2003 SE 007	Pattanak Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 99,700	5/1/2003 - 10/31/2005	to develop experimental models to improve the health of marginalized cross-border ethnic communities in Kanchanaburi, Thailand	Thailand
2004 SE 004	Pattanak Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 81,600	5/1/2004 - 4/30/2006	to develop experimental models to improve the health of marginalized cross-border communities in Kongchiam, Thailand, and KongXedone, Lao PDR	Lao PDR and Thailand
2005 SE 015	Pattanak Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 190,000	5/1/2005 - 4/30/2008	for continued support for a project to develop experimental models to improve the health and livelihoods of marginalized cross-border ethnic communities in Kanchanaburi, Thailand	Thailand
2001 HE 036	Raks Thai Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 71,000	11/1/2001 - 6/30/2003	to assess existing models of HIV prevention among seafarer populations in Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia	Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand
2003 SE 029	Raks Thai Foundation (Thailand)	\$ 249,710	10/1/2003 - 9/30/2005	to strengthen capacity in HIV/AIDS, sexual health and gender advocacy and programming among organizations working with migrants in the Greater Mekong Sub-region	Greater Mekong Sub-region
2001 HE 090	United Nations Development Programme (Thailand)	\$ 27,500	9/1/2001 - 1/31/2002	for use by its South-East Asia HIV and Development	Southeast Asia
2001 HE 091	Population and Community Development Association (Thailand)	\$ 76,920	9/1/2001 - 8/31/2003	for research to identify community-development approaches to improving the health of marginalized ethnic communities in Kanchanaburi, Thailand and Nghe An, Vietnam	Thailand and Vietnam
	Total	\$ 3,398,583			

Appendix B

Grant-Related Resources Used in Report

AIDS Network Development Foundation (AIDSNET)

2004 “Strengthening Capacity of Lao Migrant Workers at the Thai-Lao Border to Prevent HIV/AIDS Infection” Narrative Report.

2004 “Strengthening Community Responses on HIV/AIDS in Ethnic Minority Groups in Northern Thailand.” Narrative Report.

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2005 *Asian Migrant Yearbook 2004*. Hong Kong: Asian Migrant Centre.

Asian Migrant Centre & Mekong Migration Network

2002 *Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: An Annotated Bibliography*. Hong Kong: Clear-Cut Publishing and Printing Company.

2002 *Migration in Needs, Issues and Responses in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: A Resource Book*. Hong Kong: Clear-Cut Publishing and Printing Company.

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Cambodian Women for Peace and Development

2005 “Progress Report: May 2004 – June 2005.” Unpublished Paper.

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2003 *Living on the Edges: Cross-border Mobility and Sexual Exploitation in the Greater Southeast Asia Sub-region*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Center for Population and Policy Studies of Gadjah Mada University. Available in Indonesian.

Development Analysis Network¹

2003 *Off-farm and Non-farm Employment in Southeast Asian Transitional Economies and Thailand*. Phnom Penh: Development Analysis Network, Cambodia Development Resource Institute. Available in Khmer.

2005 *The Cross-Border Economies of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam*. Phnom Penh: Development Analysis Network, Cambodia Development Resource Institute. Available in Khmer.

Hanoi Medical University

2005 "Mobility and Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS along Major Roadways in the GMS: From Research to Action." Unpublished Paper.

Institute for Health Sciences, Kunming Medical College

2002 *Cross-border Sexuality in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region: Executive Summary*. Kunming: Institute for Health Sciences, Kunming Medical College.

Institute for Cultural Research of Laos and Macquarie University

2004 *Watermelons, Bars and Trucks: Dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR*. Vientiane: Institute for Cultural Research of Laos and Macquarie University. Available in Lao.

Inter Press Service Asia-Pacific

2003 *Invisible Borders: Reportage from Our Mekong*. Bangkok: IPS Asia-Pacific Centre Foundation.

2004 *Exploring Borders: Reportage from Our Mekong*. Bangkok: IPS Asia-Pacific Centre Foundation.

2005 *Bustling Borders: Reportage from Our Mekong*. Bangkok: IPS Asia-Pacific Centre Foundation.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

2005 "Towards Sustainable Life Skills for TB and HIV/AIDS: Prevention Program Among Migrant Detainees at the Immigration Detention Center." Unpublished Report.

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1 The Development Analysis Network includes the Cambodia Development Resource Institute, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, Central Institute for Economic Management (Vietnam), Institute of Economics (Vietnam), National Economic Research Institute (Lao PDR), National Statistical Center (Lao PDR) and the Thailand Development Research Institute.

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2003 *Social Challenges for the Mekong Region*. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

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2006 *Accession of Cambodia and Lao PDR into ASEAN and WTO*. Phnom Penh: Economic Institute of Cambodia.

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2006 "Regional Policy Formation Meeting on Transborder Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Executive Summary." Unpublished Paper.

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2006 "China Cross-border Migration Study." Unpublished Paper.

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2004 "Toward a Higher Quality of Life for Migrant Populations: Strengthening Linkages Between Source and Destination Communities." Unpublished Paper presented at workshop entitled Inter-relations Between Development, Spatial Mobility and HIV/AIDS: Contribution on Policies and Programmes against HIV/AIDS. Paris, September 1-3, 2004.

2005 "Prey Veng Rapid Assessment Report to Cambodian Women for Peace and Development Association" Unpublished Report.

Pattanak Foundation

2003 *Voices from the Border*. Bangkok: Pattanak Foundation. Available in Thai.

2004 "Project Progress Report: Community-Based Health Interventions Across the Lao PDR/Thailand Border." Unpublished Report.

2005 "Project Progress Report: Integrated Health Interventions for People Living on the Thai-Myanmar Border." Unpublished Report.

2005 *Voices from the Border 2*. Bangkok: Pattanak Foundation. Available in Thai.

Population and Development International

- 2003 "Project Progress Report May - December 2002: Exploring and investigating appropriate health intervention strategies among migrant and remote ethnic minorities in the lower Mekong Region." Narrative Report.
- 2003 *Voices of the People in Two Communes: Chau Thuan and Chau Hoi Village*. Hanoi: Population and Development International. Available in Vietnamese.

Raks Thai Foundation

- 2003 *Regional Workshop on HIV/AIDS Programming for Seafarers and Related Populations*. Bangkok: Raks Thai Foundation.
- 2003 *Tangled Nets: The Vulnerability of Migrant Fishermen and Related Populations in Thailand*. Bangkok: Raks Thai Foundation.
- 2004 "Progress Report: Strengthening the capacity of HIV/AIDS, sexual health and gender advocacy and programming of network on migrant populations (Strengthening Networks on Migrant Populations - SNM)." 1st Year Narrative Report.
- 2004 *Untangling Vulnerability: A Study on HIV/AIDS Prevention Programming for Migrant Fishermen and Related Populations in Thailand*. Bangkok: Raks Thai Foundation. Available in Thai
- 2004 *Reproductive Health of Burmese Migrant Youth in Thailand: Findings, Experiences and Lessons Learned*. Bangkok: Raks Thai Foundation.
- 2005 "Progress Report: Strengthening the capacity of HIV/AIDS, sexual health and gender advocacy and programming of network on migrant populations (Strengthening Networks on Migrant Populations - SNM)." 2nd Year Narrative Report.

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- 2003 "Progress Report: Learning Across Boundaries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region." Presentation to the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees on October 2003.
- 2006 "Upland Communities in Transition: A Shared Initiative of the Food Security and the Southeast Asia Regional Program. Report of 2001-2005 Program Activities. Unpublished Report.
- 2006 "Thoughts on Migration." Unpublished Paper.

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2004 "Mobility, Migration and Trafficking: Concepts, 'Grey Areas' and Discourses." Presentation at the 9th Regional Conference on Migration. Seoul, September 13-19, 2004.

