Proceedings

International Workshop on Gender, Migrant Workers and Citizenship in Greater Mekong Sub-region: Economic and Political Perspectives for a World in Crisis

Organized by

AIT
Asian Institute of Technology

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

IDRC
CRDI

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JAPAN FOUNDATION

Canada
Acknowledgement

The organizers would like to thank IDRC, Canada and Japan Foundation for funding this important conference. We would also like to thank IDRC for its overall support for the research project “Gender, cross-border migrant workers and citizenship: A case study of the Burmese-Thai border”, of which, this workshop is part of.

We would also like to thank the speakers and other participants of the workshop for their active participation and cooperation to make this workshop fruitful with a pleasant and warm atmosphere.

Our appreciation also goes to people who have helped organize the workshop: Lada Phadungkiati, who did the overall logistical management, Aileen Guirnela and Kanokporn Jaroenrith for their role in logistical arrangement as well as finalizing the workshop outputs, and Nir Dahal, Bishnu Maya Dhungana and Faisal Mamicpic Alih for note taking.

August 2009

Dr. Kyoko Kusakabe, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
Prof. Ruth Pearson, University of Leeds, UK
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Summary of the Workshop

This workshop, organized by Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand and University of Leeds, UK, supported by International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada and the Japan Foundation, was a concluding workshop for the IDRC supported research project “Gender, cross-border migrant workers and citizenship: A case study of the Burmese-Thai border” led by Dr. Kyoko Kusakabe of AIT and Professor Ruth Pearson on the University of Leeds. The study focused on migrant women workers from Burma who are employed in Thailand’s manufacturing sector, in terms of their working condition and rights, as well as understanding the underlying drivers in both Thailand and Burma which have lead to the establishment of new industries and new workers in the border areas of these two countries. This has involved analyzing the policies of the Thai government related to industrial decentralization, as well as those concerning citizenship and registration of foreign workers, particularly from a gender perspective. The workshop was an opportunity to present and the findings of the project in relation to these issues, all of which must be understood in the context of local and national policies and also the regional and global economy.

The starting point for this analysis is the history and nature of industrial, export and labour policy in the region. This has been shaped by a series of national and international agreements concerning regional economic integration and free trade agreements such as GMS, ASEAN, APEC, NAFTA – which have encouraged a particular pattern of industrialization that depends on cross-border migrant workers. This has taken place alongside a parallel raft of measures that control and regulate migrant mobility and employment which has had contradictory effects on the rights and citizenship of the workforce involved. The experience of these migrant workers in terms of how their rights and entitlements as workers and as citizens is mediated in both the countries of destination as well as of origin, is directly shaped by prevailing gender relations and norms as well as state regulation and practices of these different places. The workshop invited scholars working on gender analysis of labour migration issues in Thailand as well as from other parts of Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Labour migration is a global phenomenon, and many researchers are working on the issue in different contexts which can all contribute to our understanding of these processes. This workshop was unique in the sense that it focused on the linkage of gender, labour migration, regional economic integration as well as the gendered concept of social reproduction. Through linking gender and labour migration to the macro-economic policy, as well as the ways in which state policies both support and impede the daily and generational reproduction of labour involved in transnational migration, the workshop helped to enhance our understanding on the nature of the contemporary global economy and how it is bound up with the issues of citizenship, inter-state cooperation and competition, and particularly the ways in which capital and the destination state seek to benefit from access to “cheap” migrant labour, whilst avoiding the cost of the social reproduction of migrant workers and their labour power.

The current global economic crisis has further strengthened the relevance of this analysis. The crisis has lead to drastic decrease of employment opportunities and income of migrant workers, and it would seem, in Thailand as elsewhere, women migrant factory workers are especially vulnerable to losing jobs. But for these workers, losing their jobs also means losing whatever precarious entitlement they might have to reside and work in the countries of destination, as well as to secure the education and futures of their children. But many are not able (or willing) to return back to their countries of origin, because of political persecution, economic marginalisation or complex family networks, making them exposed to complex political and security implications of the crisis on top of the economic impacts. Women migrants are particularly affected since the
IDRC-supported *Women’s Rights and Citizenship Program* (and other) research indicates that they bear heavier burden and pressure to remit to their (natal) families back home as well as to support their (new) families in their places of destination. Squeezed between a rock and a hard place, they have little negotiating power, and no protection or support from either their countries of origin or of current residence, and so have little option but to further lowering their living standards by accepting even lower work remuneration and working conditions.

The workshop was organized into six sessions: The introductory session on “Setting the Context” included presentations by Dr. Melissa Wright of Pennsylvania State University and Ms. Jackie Pollock, Coordinator of MAP Foundation for the Health and Knowledge of Ethnic Labour, which introduced the concept of “disposable women” and discussed how these are echoed across region. Dr. Wright’s presentation “Exposing the dangerous logic of human disposability: Reflections from the Mexico-US border” discussed the irony of “worthless” people creating “valuable” things, which she linked to the escalating violence against women workers in Mexico, arguing that the devaluation of women lead to stigmatizing women in “public” places, and leading to impunity of violence against women. Ms. Pollock’s presentation “Migration in times of crisis: the gendered perspective” presented an overview of issues facing Burmese migrant workers in Thailand, and pointed out that economic crisis was used as an excuse by the employers to reduce overtime and pay for workers.

Session 1 “Regional Economic Integration and the Role of Women Migrant Workers” comprised of presentations from Dr. Patcharawalai Wongboonsin of Chulalongkorn University, Ms. Sanda Thant of Mekong Institute, Dr. Rosalia Sciortino of Mahidol University, Mr. Dennis Arnold of University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Dr. Amy Sim of University of Hong Kong. This session discussed how macro-economic policies and global industrial competition create migrant workers as cheap labour reserves. Dr. Patcharawalai’s paper on “Female migrant workers, crisis and future prospect perspective” introduced the impact of crisis on women migrant workers and the response by ASEAN community. Ms. Thant’s presentation on “Capacity Building on Labour Migration Management in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: Experiences from a Gender Perspective” described the experience of the Mekong Institute, a regional training institute, in working with government officers in charge of labour migration in GMS countries. Dr. Rosalia Sciortino’s talk about “Regional integration and migration in GMS” argued for a regional approach to labor migration and labor market integration. The present economic integration is deterred by nationalism, which creates room for exploitation of migrant labor. The paper by Dennis. Arnold’s, based on sustained research in the region, was entitled “Global garments, migrant labour and bordering the Greater Mekong Subregion”. He described the global value chain of garment industry and how the employment practices of Thai-Burmese border town of Mae Sot, where almost all of the workers are Burmese migrants. He emphasized how the “presence, not the absence of the state” is shaping employment practices of migrant workers. Lastly, Dr. Amy Sim’s paper on “Cheap labor reserves and the growth of cities: Undocumented migrant workers in Macau” discussed the plight of Indonesian migrant workers in Macau, which has become a “dumping ground” of workers from Hong Kong. Migrant workers who lost their jobs in Hong Kong, like Burmese workers in Thailand, rather than return to their countries of origin, come to Macau to wait for new jobs in Hong Kong, and live in very precarious conditions with no legal status and no economic support.

In Session 2 on “State, Family and Women Migrant Workers” papers were presented by Dr. Susan Giblin of Univeristy of Leeds, Dr. Suchada Thaweesit of Mahidol University, and Dr. Sirinan Kittisuksathit of Mahidol University, who discussed how the families back home and in the place of destination is affected by the state policies on migration. Dr. Giblin’s presentation entitled “History, stereotypes and national building in Indonesia and Thailand” showed how the
ethnic Chinese in Indonesia were excluded from nationalism discourse, but at the same time rooted themselves in the local community, while Thai state developed a political discourse to include Northeast part of the country as Thailand. Dr. Suchada Thaweesit’s paper: “Family, gender identity and citizenship: Cross border marriage within the Mekong Frontiers” discussed how cross-border families on the Thai-Lao frontier juggle with their legal status and that of their spouses, and how this issue shaped gender relations in the family. Dr. Sirinan Kittisuksathit’s “Remittance-sending behavior among migrants from Myanmar, the Lao PDR and Cambodia” presented a study on remittances of migrant workers in Thailand, and showed that although women remit smaller amount per time, as a whole, women remit more than men.

Session 3 “Social reproduction and women migrant workers” were presented by Prof. Shirlena Huang of National University of Singapore, Dr. Chiho Ogaya of Yokohama National University, Dr. Kyoko Kusakabe of Asian Institute of Technology, and Dr. Amara Soonthorndhada of Mahidol University, who discussed the role of women migrants in care work, as well as the ways in which they organize their own childcare, and their vulnerability in terms of health care and childbirth. Prof. Huang’s paper on “Constructing the female migrant ‘other’ in (re)production space: Care workers in Singapore” explored how elderly care work in Singapore is carried out by women migrant workers, in the context of state policies which construct hierarchies among workers and different groups of women. Dr. Ogaya’s presentation covered a study “Regional economic integration and the politics of care: JPEPA (Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement) and migrant caregivers” analysed how inter-state agreement has been designed in a way which ensures that migrant care workers only had temporary status in Japan. This was followed by a paper by Dr. Kusakabe and Prof. Pearson entitled “‘Who pays for the kids?’: Childcare arrangements of cross-border workers in Thai Burmese border towns” which showed how migrant workers utilize different strategies to deal with childcare using different resources available in different locations on the Thai-Burma border. Dr. Soonthorndhada’s paper: “Poverty trap, migration and unsafe destination” discussed young women’s vulnerability to human trafficking and HIV/AIDS through interviews with Lao and Burmese migrants.

The concluding presentation was given by Prof. Ruth Pearson who highlighted the main issues raised by the papers in the workshop, particularly the context of the current economic crisis. This was followed by a joint presentation by Prof. Pearson and Dr Kusakabe who set out the main features of the economic and political context of the crisis and the region, linking these to particular case studies presented by the participants in the workshop.

The session on the third day was an open discussion with all the participants on issues arising from the workshop, which included:

(i) Registration of migrant workers: How the system of registration of illegal and "irregular" migrants are used as a way to regulate the exclusion of migrant workers by granting a legal right to stay, but excluding them from any citizen, economic rights or social protection;

(ii) Although it has been widely assumed that the mobility of labour can threaten globalisation by preventing capital from moving to cheap labour production platforms, the case of Burmese workers in Thailand's factories indicates that there are other ways in which cheap labour can be constructed;

(iii) The ways in which the regulation of migrant workers creates a framework whereby the migration of unregulated workers is facilitated, creating an underclass which is invisible and unrecognised by state authorities, who therefore face no pressure to ensure that their working conditions, pay and protection meets even minimum standards.
(iv) The need to map out who benefits from the system that creates "irregular" migrant workers
(v) How the discourse of "criminalising migrants" or representing them as undesirable people who pollute the health and security of the country also contributes to the lack of pressure on the receiving state to protect the migrant workforce.
(vi) The ways in which the neglect of migrant workers reflects more general policy concerning workers rights and entitlements in terms of the rights of Thai workers to organise in trade unions, to enjoy free collective bargaining and to have access to adequate and appropriate labour regulation and social protection regimes.
(vii) The importance of gender disaggregated data and analysis particularly with reference to citizenship issues. By analysing the situation of Burmese migrant workers through the lens of social reproduction, the discussion goes beyond the usual concerns of workers pay, conditions, organisation and security, to deal with long term issues concerning citizenship and residency rights, and access of migrant workers and their children to health services, education and other opportunities within both the countries of origin and destination.

The conference concluded by committing participants to continue with policy relevant research, and the production of papers and other publications which will further public debate and just policy developments in this area.

(By... Kyoko Kusakabe and Ruth Pearson)
### AGENDA

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<th>DAY 1</th>
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<td>9:00 - 9:30</td>
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| | Prof. Sudip Kumar Rakshit  
Vice President for Research (AIT)  
Ms. Navsharan Singh  
Senior Programme Specialist, The International Development Research Centre (IDRC)  
Mr. Katsumi Kakazu  
Director General, The Japan Foundation |
| 10:00-10:30 | Introduction to the workshop  
Introduction of participants |
| | Kyoko Kusakabe |
| 10:30-11:00 | Photo session and coffee break |
| 11:00-12:30 | Setting the Context:  
**Exposing the Dangerous Logic of Human Disposability: Reflections from the Mexico-US border**  
**Migration in times of Crisis: The Gendered Perspective** |
| | Chair: Ruth Pearson  
Melissa Wright  
Jackie Pollock |
| 12:30-13:30 | Lunch |
| 13:30 - 14:50 | Session 1: Regional Economic Integration and the Role of Women Migrant Workers  
**Female Migrant Workers, Crisis and Future Prospect Perspectives**  
**Managing Labour Migration Initiatives in the GMS** |
| | Chair: Kyoko Kusakabe  
Patcharawalai Wongboonsin  
Sanda Thant |
| 14:50 - 15:20 | Break |
| 15:20-17:20 | Session 1 (cont’d)  
**Regional Integration and Migration in GMS**  
**Global Garments, Migrant Labour and Bordering in the Greater Mekong Sub-region**  
**Cheap Labour Reserves & the Growth of Cities: Undocumented Migrant Workers in Macau** |
| | Chair: Shirlena Huang  
Rosalia Sciortino  
Dennis Arnold  
Amy Sim |
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<td>• Family, Gender, Identity and Citizenship: Cross-border Marriage within the Mekong frontiers</td>
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<td>• Remittance-sending Behaviour among Migrants from Myanmar, the Lao PDR and Cambodia</td>
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<td>Chair: Philippe Doneys</td>
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<td>Susan Giblin</td>
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<td>11:00-11:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>Session 3: Social Reproduction and Women Migrant Workers</td>
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<td>• Constructing the Female Migrant ‘Other’ in (Re)Productive Space: Care Workers in Singapore</td>
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Setting the Context
1. Disposable Labor and Femicide: Making the Connections

By ... Melissa W. Wright, The Pennsylvania State University, USA

Abstract

Every day, around the world, women who work in the third world factories of global firms face the idea that they are disposable. This idea proliferates in the form of a story, which is widely told, that explains how women from third world countries represent a homogenous worker whose productive value inevitably depletes over time until she is worth no more than the value of her own replacement. Those telling the story draw from numerous beliefs in order to frame this narrative. They draw from sexist ideas of women’s inferiority as workers, as citizens and as contributing members of society. They draw from xenophobic portrayals of migrant workers as unworthy of social investment and from racist, among other, ideologies that explain how some people are simply worth less than others.

In my work in factories and in their surrounding cities in northern Mexico, in southern China, and in the southwestern United States, I have followed this narrative as it has traveled across continents within global firms that seek to employ, primarily, migrant women from the working poor. How these firms create production systems that count on the disposability of these workers as a hard fact of life is one of the questions I explore. Another is how workers have resisted this narrative and its material consequences for them, for their families and their communities. In this talk, I will focus on the second of these concerns as I examine how a social movement in northern Mexico, along its border with the United States, has galvanized working, migrant women to confront this logic of disposability and its violent consequences in their communities. These activists call this violence, “femicide,” and expose how the killing of women with impunity in northern Mexico is directly linked to the widespread belief that poor, migrant and working women are inherently disposable, both within and outside of the workplace.
Exposing the dangerous logic of human disposability: Reflections from the Mexico-US border

Melissa W. Wright

North America Relief Map.

The Mexico-US Border
2. Migration in Times of Crisis: The Gendered Perspective

By ... Jackie Pollock, MAP Foundation and Reiko Harima, Mekong Migration Network

Abstract

Both men and women of working age, children and older people have been migrating from Burma to Thailand as individuals, in family groups, as communities, and in some cases as villages for the past twenty years. Their country of origin, Burma is in a perpetual state of crisis created by a military dictatorship which does not even recognize the mass migration of the people to neighbouring states, nor provide any support migrants need. At various points along the two decades, Thailand, the country of destination has also been in a state of economic, health or political crises.

This paper looks at how migrant men and women from Burma manage in the face of these crises. Drawing on migrant experiences during previous periods of crises, for example the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis, the AIDS epidemic etc, the paper attempts to explore how in such times gendered differences in the processes available to men and women in finding and retaining work are changed, and whether or how men and women’s experience and response to the various work and gendered hazards are affected by the crisis. It also looks at the differences for new arrivals and for those migrants who arrived a long time ago but who are still considered temporary migrants.

The paper is informed by the daily lives of migrant workers who have developed the interventions of a local Thai NGO, MAP Foundation for the past 13 years and who have struggled to maintain their dignity and to improve the living and working conditions for all migrants in Thailand. It also draws on information shared by the members of the Mekong Migration Network.
The people of Burma live in a chronic state of crisis. In the last twenty years, there have numerous times when another layer of critical crisis in Burma;
- The forced relocations in Shan state 1996
- Closure of schools and universities 1996
- Depayin Massacre 2003
- Famine in Chin state 2008
- Fuel hike, Saffron Revolution 2007
- Cyclone Nargis 2008

SEND SOME MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY TO OTHER COUNTRIES
NOT ENOUGH KNOWN ABOUT HOW THE DECISIONS ARE MADE
BUT FOR WOMEN UNDER 25 ONLY CHOICE IS TO THAILAND
POOREST ALSO WILL ONLY HAVE CHOICE TO GO TO THAILAND

Before
- Extortion by officials
- Harassment, including sexual harassment
- Arrest, detention, deportation
- Health and safety: malaria, hidden travel, land mines

After
- Extortion by officials
- Harassment, including sexual harassment
- Arrest, detention, deportation
- Health and safety: malaria, hidden travel, land mines

ON MIGRATION SAFETY

WORK CHOICES
- DEPENDS WHERE MIGRANTS ENTER THAILAND
- CONTACTS/SOCIAL NETWORKS
- BROKERS
- TIME OF YEAR
- SINGLE OR FAMILIES
- HAS THIS CHANGED WITH THE ECONOMIC CRISIS?
- MYTH OR REAL: LESS JOBS? MORE TRAFFICKERS?

SUB SUB CONTRACTORS
MIGRANTS
- Garment factories
- Domestic workers
- Sales, restaurants
- Entertainment workers

- Fishermen
- Mining
- Mahouts

MOSTLY FEMALE
MOSTLY MALE

FEMALE AND MALE
- Fisheries related and seafood processing
- Construction
- Agricultural
- Horticultural
- Poultry, pig, cattle farming
- Furniture factories
- Parque flooring
- Handicrafts

IMPACT ON MIGRANT WOMEN WORKERS
- In factories, overtime being cut. Cutting wages to less than survival level
- For rubber plantations, wages have been reduced by more than half, plus with the rain, no work
- Construction workers not getting paid at all in some cases
- Domestic workers

LIVING CONDITIONS IN A FACTORY

CLOSURES AND OPENINGS
- Factories in areas like Mae Sot are opened and closed all the time for many reasons
- The employer loses the contract, the employer wants to get rid of a group of workers, the employer is avoiding paying compensation in a labour case etc
**FACTORY CLOSED DUE TO....**
- So when factories close at the moment, and the employer posts a notice to say that the factory is closed due to the "global economic crisis"; how are workers to know what is true?
- And if it is true, should workers have a different attitude?
- Factories closing but new ones opening

**WORKERS RESPONSE**
- "We are publicly asked not to gather up workers for strikes and demonstrations. But if employers did abide by the law and, in the event of a factory closedown, paid out legal compensation to workers, nobody would want to go on strike or demonstrate." Chea Mony, president of the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC)

**IMPACTS ON WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS**
- When national migrant women being laid off, they are receiving some level of benefits, depending on the countries’ laws and on the individual employers.
- This may include severance pay, unemployment benefits, social security coverage
- When cross border migrant women are being laid off, they are receiving less than nothing.

**THE RISKS**
- Having to accept even worse working conditions
- Being unable to pursue justice in cases of exploitation
- Having the rights and space created over last decade eroded
- Being blamed for the economic downfall and unemployment, facing increased xenophobia

**ACCOMMODATION IN AN ESTABLISHED AGRICULTURAL SITE**
- But no migrant site is so established that it cannot be raided and demolished. A similar site in this part of Phnom Penh was demolished this week. Once the migrants are evicted, they migrate to any long run site they can find.

**THE RISKS**
- Getting out of Thailand: travel is illegal so risk extortion, sexual harassment etc
- If moving to another country, may have to travel illegally and therefore risk the dangers of undocumented, unfacilitated travel
- Mass arrests and deportations involve risks of injuries caused by panic during raids, dangerous travel conditions (overcrowded, old vehicles), sexual harassment, and difficulty re-entering home country.
- To avoid mass arrests, migrants forced to live outside in fields etc without adequate protection
Cross border migrants but not cross border benefits or cross border responsibility

Although the need for the benefits is obviously the same, cross border migrants are not receiving any, they are not included in the social protection packages of the country of origin or the country of destination.

What logic rules that migrants would be able to withstand the economic crisis better than everyone else?

Fisherfolk communities: women report increased domestic violence, women blamed for decrease in family income

Choices around education/work of children incl gender choices

Remittances home reduced, “quality of life” at home reduced, (tensions?)...what happens then at home?

Less opportunity to survive at home cos of agriregime-business bought up land

Cambodian women in Phnom Penh are talking going “to work the rice field” but not many families have rice fields big enough to sustain the whole family

Migrants from Burma have little to go back to. Although Burma may be less hit by the global economic crisis due to its isolation, it is already hit by an on-going national economic crisis.

Many families in Burma have also lost their land to state run agri-business.
But without any package to assist migrants through this crisis, and with increased xenophobia, many migrants are already choosing not to stay. Migrants work long hours in poor conditions in order to support their families. If they cannot support their families any longer though, they do not stay.

Migrant factory workers may not make a fortune, but they are definitely part of the economy. Only need to look at the businesses translating their adverts into Burmese on the Thai-Burma border. Around factory areas, the local economy also booms. If the factories close down, the rest of the economy suffers too.

• Immediate response: no renewal of registration, all jobs must first be offered to Thais, replay of 1997
• Thai workers already work in the “minimum zone” Make a reasonable decision not to risk more (health, lives) for unliveable wage
• Min of Labour proposed migrants can pay into social security system
• Alien Employment Act system of rewards for informers of migrants
• Systems for migrants to work together for social harmony/law and order in communities

Thailand will need migrants for the recovery
Government announced new registration
Arrests, deportation continue
Political instability, migrants keep police/army etc happy, protection fees @minimum 300 baht a month, minimum 2m migrants = 600,000,000 baht a month!!!
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Include migrants workers in all benefit packages for workers. Reduce discriminatory practices which provide benefits and compensation for some workers but not for others.
- Make an assessment of the needs of and for women workers short, mid and long term, through consultative process develop policies to respond to the needs.
- Ensure that workers have a living wage and decent working and living conditions

- Ensure that access to justice and legal mechanisms are not suspended during the crisis
- Desist policies of mass arrest and deportations but provide safe means to return home for voluntary repatriation
- Where possible coordinate between country of origin and destination to ensure that workers are not left desperate
- Where not possible, the country of destination may have to take responsibility for people who have worked and contributed to their economy

THANK YOU!
Session 1

Regional Economic Integration and the Role of Women Migrant Workers
1.1 Female Migrant Workers, Crisis and Future Prospect Perspectives

By ... Patcharawalai Wongboonsin, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Abstract

The paper highlights three points of concerns and an approach for cooperation within the region during and after the crisis. It firstly maintains that the global financial crisis is gendered. Secondly, an experience of female migrant workers in other parts of the world is touched together with that in Southeast Asia. It identifies that female migrant workers have been affected in multiple ways by the crisis. Thirdly, the paper maintains that clandestine migration, trafficking, degrees of HIV vulnerabilities, and stigmas among female migrant workers are expected to aggravate and disperse. Finally, the paper advocates a gender-focused remedial measure and proactive cooperation among ASEAN member countries while moving forward to an ASEAN Community by 2015.

Presentation

Outline

- Impact of Economic Crisis on Migration in Southeast Asia
- Impact on Migrant Women
- Implication for ASEAN Community: Policy Response
  - Policy Recommendations for Further Improvement
Impact of Economic Crisis on Migration in Southeast Asia

Impact on Migrant Women

Registered Female Migrant Workers in Thailand as of 2008


Registered Female Migrant Workers in Thailand as of 2008


Impact of Financial and Economic Crisis on Migration in Southeast Asia

Debt Incurred to Family Back Home, by Sector of Employment

Source: Patchaneruks et al., 2009.

Registered Female Migrant Workers in Thailand as of 2008


Impact of Economic Crisis on Migration in Southeast Asia

Transnational Flows of ASEAN People


Registered Female Migrant Workers in Thailand as of 2008

Implication for ASEAN Community: Policy Response

- Promising signs of improvement in migration management within the region
  - ASEAN is in its efforts to build a caring, sharing community
    - Recognition of the role of the civil society in the building of an ASEAN Community
  - ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
  - ASEAN Committee to Implement the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACI)

Promising Signs (Cont.)

- Drafting Committee of the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers
  - An Instrument on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers for ASEAN
- Task Force on ASEAN Migrant Workers
- Migrant Technical Assistance Group (MTAG)
- Forum on Migrant Workers
- COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding addressing trafficking from a comprehensive perspective

Policy Recommendations for Further Improvement

- Gender-focused remedial measures and proactive cooperation among ASEAN member countries
  - Promotion of access to
    - Health care,
    - Education
    - Skill-development training

Policy Recommendations for Further Improvement (Cont.)

- By the time when the crisis is over,
  - An appropriate deployment system should be encouraged in countries of origin, in cooperation with prospective host countries.
    - Departure regulation
    - Skill development
    - Pre-departure training programs
    - System to accommodate their return and reintegration to the society and the economy.
1.2 Managing Labour Migration Initiatives in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
By ... Sanda Thant, Mekong Institute, Thailand

Abstract

Population mobility has been occurring in the Greater Mekong Sub-region for centuries and intraregional flows of migration is projected to continue to grow with increased connectivity, economic inequality, demographic differences, and globalized capitalist economic system. While linkage between migration and development is widely recognized, social costs are also substantial. The stakeholders have been introducing initiatives like bilateral agreements and MOUs to reduce the cost of migration and to increase its benefits. The paper describes experiences, commissioned by regional training institute, from policy dialogues and capacity building programs as an approach to managing labour migration in the sub-region.

Presentation

Presentation Outline

- Rational of the initiatives
- Policy dialogue on transborder migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
- Transborder Migration Policy Implementation and Monitoring: its Effectiveness and Current Policy Gaps in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
- Expert meeting on labour migration management in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
- Regional training program on labour migration management in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
- Conclusion
Rational of the initiatives

- Intra-regional trend of migration
- Migration = Development = Poverty reduction
- Initiatives for better labour migration management and its implementation
- Promoting social development through policy consultation forums

Sub-regional initiatives

- Mekong Institute: An Inter-governmental org
- Expert meeting on labour migration management (2008)
- Regional training program on labour migration management (2008)

Transborder Migration in the GMS

- Relevance and impact on all six countries
- The objectives: (i) promote better understanding among policy makers and raise awareness on the need to implement regional and bilateral policies; and (ii) propose solution and follow up actions
- Participated governments representatives, experts, and civil society groups

Transborder Migration in the GMS

- Policy recommendation:
  - family concerns should be given strong attention, whereas sending and receiving countries should find ways to assist family in any kind of crisis situation regardless of their status
  - regular migration should be promoted and endorsed through different means of support; access to more accurate and simplified information.
  - the role of migration in development should be clearly identified and promote development and employment in sending countries.

Transborder Migration Policy Implementation & Monitoring

- The objectives:
  - discuss latest migration policy and analysis the gaps
  - analyze the impact of current migration policies on migrants’ lives and welfare
  - discuss the social issues of migration
  - discuss the strategies/mechanisms to ensure the welfare of migrants (both regular and irregular)

Transborder Migration Policy Implementation & Monitoring

- The delegates from GMS governments, international organizations, NGOs, and migrant associations
- Reviewed the issues and recommendations from the first policy dialogue
- Shared information regarding issues faced by migrants and relevant policies in the GMS
- Identified the policy gaps, the roles of civil society in the welfares of migrants, the roles of government institution in migration policies implementation
From A Gender Perspective

- Discussed migration health concerns and impacts on women and children
- Incorporating gender into research papers presented during the session
- Discussed over a number of migration problems
- Missing link on how migration and related policies at national level can be strengthened to ensure the advancement of women from the productive arena
- how the sub-regional agreements and MOUs can help to exercise their rights.

From A Gender Perspective

- The outputs and lessons learned from the two policy dialogues suggested that not only there has been little update or change on migration policies in the GMS since the first policy dialogue, a gender perspective on the unique situation of women migrants is not regarded highly.

From A Gender Perspective

- The dialogue has achieved in the collection and exchange of ideas, views and experiences and broadening of mutual understanding
- Integrate gender in all concerns and at all level: public; academics, civil society, and private sectors

Expert Meeting

- managing labour migration in the GMS requires good cooperation from all concerned parties in both the sending and receiving countries of the GMS
- recommendations from the Mekong Institute Stakeholder Consultative Meeting in 2007
- MI-MMN collaboration
- Attended high level government officials, experts, representatives of civil society groups, and academics
- The representatives from Ministry of Women Affair, women rights organization, and gender concerned academia personnel

Regional Training Program

- Three-week training jointly conducted by MI-MMN
- Middle level government officials
- Ministries of Labour
- Ministries of Interior
- Ministries of Social Welfare
- Ministries of Foreign Affairs
- The objectives:
  - Understand of issues related to labour migration;
  - Familiarize with labour migration management approaches;
  - Exchange knowledge and experience on migration and the current status of labour migration management in the GMS;
  - Promote communication, cooperation and trust among officials working on migration issues across GMS.

Regional Training Program

- Curriculum includes
  - different migration patterns,
  - current responses globally and regionally,
  - labour and social issues and the components and approaches of labour migration management
  - A gender analysis throughout all modules and explore the intersections between gender, ethnicity, class and age
From A Gender Perspective

- Observed that their country presentations lacked sex aggregated data,
- Strong resistance in acknowledging undocumented migrant workers
- No recognition for domestic workers and sex workers (mainly women) and seafarer (mainly men)
- Concern of gender or women were taken as marginal issues in the discussions among the mix-country groups

From A Gender Perspective

- Individual country works on formulating an administrative framework, gender consideration in the administrative framework was relatively insignificant
- Identify the factors influencing migration policies as part of the group exercise; issues of gender were tremendously ignored.
- Oversight on gender was also apparent in discussion on the protection and promotion of rights of migrant workers and families

From A Gender Perspective

- To a certain extent, awareness and recognition of different degree of vulnerability being encountered by women and men exist among the officials, however, there is a lack of understanding on the factors of migration from a gender perspective.

Conclusion

- Increased recognition of the need and benefit to manage labour migration
- Greater involvement of public, private, and civil society help to create an enabling environment in managing labour migration
- Initiatives are taken to set up a comprehensive mechanism of migration management that would eventually contribute to poverty alleviation of the sub-region

Conclusion

- Capacity building programs need to be more gender-sensitive to raise the awareness among policy-makers
- Develop a guideline on gender-sensitive labour migration policies and disseminate through a series of policy forums
- Sub-regional policy researches would help to develop such policy guideline
- Targeting both senior government officials and capacity building needs of middle-level officials

Conclusion

- Involvement of gender advocates should be encouraged and partnership with organizations striving for women migrants rights would need to be strengthened.
1.3 Regional Integration and Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: A Review

By ... Rosalia Sciortino, Therese Caouette and Philip Guest, Mahidol University

Abstract

This paper examines labour migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), an emerging economic area comprising Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and two provinces of southern China —Yunnan and Guangxi. Intra-regional migration flows and the main characteristics of migrants are briefly described and the push and pull factors shaping them are analyzed. It will be argued that migration dynamics are intrinsically linked to regionalization efforts initiated in the mid-1990s to foster economic growth in the sub-region. Labour movements, consisting mainly of undocumented and low-skilled migrants, are affected by the rapid expansion of infrastructure and the intensifying of financial, trade, and information flows in the GMS, in combination with the widening socio-economic disparities and uneven spread of opportunities resulting from the industrial and urban bias in national and sub-regional development. In conclusion, the authors speculate on possible future trends taking into account that structural disparities in sub-regional development are difficult to address in the short run and that as GMS countries become more integrated and industrialized, internal and intraregional migration flows will be expanded and becoming more interlinked.
1.4 Global Garments, Migrant Labour and Bordering the Greater Mekong Sub-region

By ... Dennis Arnold, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Geography, University of North Carolina

Abstract

This paper focuses on the recent emergence of regional production networks and border industrial zones, the labour migrations they are generating, and their consequences for Burmese migrant workers in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. In this region the textile and garment industry is employing increasing numbers of workers in border areas on flexible and highly informal work ‘contracts’. I focus on three scales of analysis through a case study from the Thailand-Burma border to understand these emergent labour formations and the gendered patterns of employment that dominate this industry. (i) Changing geographies of the global garment industry; (ii) initiatives led by the Asia Development Bank, and accompanying sub-regional political groupings which aim to facilitate capital flows and trade by reducing transaction time and cost; and (iii) a case study of labour recruitment and employment practices in one border town, Mae Sot, Thailand.

Presentation overview

• Geographic transitions of the garment industry in Asia/GMS/Thailand
• Combine global value chain and politics of scale to understand sourcing, citizenship and labor dynamics
• Case study of employment practices in one border town, Mae Sot, Thailand.
Global shifts in T&G sourcing (US imports)

Global garments

- Scope for sourcing now much broader, and competition for contracts has increased
- Needs of retailers for volume, quality, flexibility, and timing have become more, not less complex
- Global supply and value chains have become simultaneously more footloose and flexible for some companies, while for others concentration, strategic partnerships, and intermediate network organizers have become more important.

Scales of Development

- New territories to be open up to the regional/global economy
- ‘Connectivity’ of the sub-region privileges the proliferation of exchange relations as opposed to the formation of productive links conducive to global competitiveness (build it and they will come)
- ‘It looks like a neoliberal formation as it opens the regional space econ and reduces barriers, but, the ways in which the sub-region is ‘activated’ depends much on states (reg’l – nat’l – local scale)
- ‘Capitalist labor is becoming the common substance to peoples’ livelihoods, but this does not create a material basis for unified or united responses from workers (Chang 2009)
Border economies/SEZs

• 21 SEZs approved in Cambodia since Dec. 2005, only 1 in Phnom Penh
• 4 border SEZs approved in Thailand in 2005, still no approval from council of state
• 1 border SEZ in Lao
• “within 5 years T&G industry will be priced out of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City”—Ms. Hong Ha from VN Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Borders in the GMS

• Instead of a withering or withdrawal of direct involvement of the state in the ‘borderless world’, the border is increasingly becoming the site in which these new articulations of investment and spatial administration are emerging
• In the GMS, border zones once seen as territorial boundaries for state power and sites of inter-state conflict are now rapidly being re-articulated as functional regions requiring their own structures and practices of governance

‘neoliberal zones’?

• ‘Growth Triangle’ & ‘graduated sovereignty’ (Ong 2000)= creation of markets occurring in settings where the state is sometimes very strong while in other areas it is nearly absent, creating spatial variability that is useful in maintaining flexibility for capital
• In Mae Sot border economy it is the presence, not the absence of the state that is a key to accumulation strategies

Border economies: Mae Sot

• Mae Sot-Myawaddy a primary GMS ‘growth node’
• Roughly 150,000 Burmese migrant workers in 5 border districts; 40-40-20 in industry, agriculture and services
• Investors attracted by:
  • abundance of migrant labor (paid below minimums),
  • tax incentives (BOI Zone 3),
  • quality infrastructure btw Mae Sot-BKK,
  • loose to no enforcement of labor and other regulations and
  • regime of ‘partial border citizenship’ that maintains flexible, informal workforce

‘Advantages’ of Mae Sot

• Wage matters, but also more competitive location than Bangladesh, Cambodia etc, according to World Bank’s ‘Ease of Doing Business’
  • Thailand Rated #15 in indicators including: dealing with licenses, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and closing a business
• Availability of domestic textile materials

Flexible contracting in GVC

• Low value added segments of global garment industry, low profit margins, high uncertainty
• tendency to attract nomadic buyers (squeezing of labor rather than invest in upgrading)
• Flexible contracting in global and regional supply chains
• Majority of production for export, unit prices declining
• Most are sub-sub contractors
• 50-50 Thai and FIE, many subsidiary of Central Thailand factories.
Spatial logic of Mae Sot

- The Mae Sot social economy combines an extreme form of authoritarian control of labor at the factory level and at the border with everyday uncertainty for workers in the town itself
  - Citizenship regime of body via un/registered
  - Border districts police and border army regulate mobility
  - Factory raids and registration system trigger greater control at workplace

Mae Sot LPD and FTI (2003)

Race and citizenship

- Racialization of Burmese and historiography help justify denigration of migrant rights
- Contradiction of ‘history’ and demands of employers/global economy
- This presents unprecedented challenges to how organizing landscapes are conceptualized
- Creates both challenges and opportunities for migrants

Challenges

- Both workers and employers subject to raids and potentially extortion by police
- Much production is ‘hidden’ from CSR conscious buyers
- In past LPD considered ineffective, currently 2 labor inspectors for 5 border districts
- No registered trade unions

Opportunities

- Mae Sot different from Mahachai etc due to presence of many Burmese activists
- Increasing interaction with Thai NGOs and trade unions
- Limitations: moving beyond sympathy to empowerment
- Re-conceptualizing labor from direct production at factory-level to labor in the ‘social factory’

Conclusion

- Macro-perspective the GMS is re-territorializing to meet demands of global econ
- State not withering away, rather is re-configured
- Locally specific formations engage global economies, but not a simple local-global tension
- Mutable and multiple processes and outcomes at play
1.5 Cheap Labour Reserves & the Growth of Cities: Undocumented Migrant Workers in Macau

By ... Amy Sim and Vivienne Wee, University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper presents new research findings on undocumented Indonesian migrant workers in Macau, about whom no previous study exists. Critical analysis explicates the dovetailing arrangements between public and private sector interests that are systemically creating undocumented labour migration flows and shows how these arrangements are structurally inherent in the mutual competitiveness of globalising nodes of wealth creation. Undocumented migration cheapens production costs and results in a flexible black market of vulnerable, right-less and exploited workers. Contrary to illusions of an urbanizing Asia with expanding spaces for civil liberties, the development of globally competitive mega-cities, built and supported by low-skilled migrant workers, rests on a global underclass of transient workers, who bear the human costs of transience and labour flexibility, enabling mega-cities to externalise such costs and enhancing their global competitiveness.

In this paper we analyse the vulnerabilities of undocumented Indonesian workers in the context of Macau’s rapid economic development as an aspiring mega-city. The Macau government’s laissez-faire tolerance of such workers is grounded in the need for a particular type of human labour, that is abundant, cheap, marginal and disposable, fuelling rapid growth. Furthermore, the outflow of Indonesian migrant workers to Macau is linked to Hong Kong’s exclusionary Immigration policies, which aim at extricating surplus migrant labour. Meanwhile, the Indonesian government refuses responsibility for its migrant workers in Macau on the grounds that Macau is not recognised as an official destination, thereby denying its own role as a structural producer of such labour. The paper shows how public and private interests motivate increasing numbers of migrants to become undocumented overstayers in Macau, as they try to avoid oppressive practices in labour migration from Indonesia and the exclusionary policies of Hong Kong.
Undocumented Indonesian Migrants in East Asia

- Role of the state: contested
  - Theorists: Sassen - the penetration of capitalist agendas uproots people from their traditional sources of livelihoods and the uncertainties of global developments sets up core countries as magnets of "surplus labor". Rosewarne - the existence of undocumented workers is a deliberate state creation to deliver cheap labor, free to be economically abused by the private sector, and gives the state flexibility to manipulate the labor market.
  - Choo - testifies to the pro-business emphasis in Macau to ensure flexible and cheap labor sources. State's construction of cheap labor is based on its ability to control entry into the territory - to confine migrant labor through labor market segmentation - to manipulate the labor market through policies, laws and state practices.
- Labor export networks from Indonesia: characterized by high incidence of overstaying in East Asia
  - Indonesia's One-Door Exit Policy
  - Public service & private agendas for profit
  - Macau as last stop: irregular employment, hawking, CSW
  - Support systems in Macau: NGOs, shelters, Macanese authorities, partners

Findings

- 65 respondents went to Macau from HK, 1 went directly from Indonesia (sent by agency)
- All had gone to Macau by ferry to find work
- Most had come to an end in their contract in HK or had been prematurely terminated
- The cost had completed their legal claims against employers or agencies and had to leave HK immediately
- Average length of stay was 10.6 months
- 43 of 66 respondents wanted to go back to Indonesia but could not afford the air ticket
- 59 were between 21-29 years
- 38 were women, 8 married, 4 widowed, 3 divorced
- 58 from Java (31, 19, 6), 4 from Sumatra, 3 from Sulawesi and 1 from Nusa Tenggara Barat
- 29 went to Macau to look for a job
- 50 were in the first year of being undocumented, 13 in the second and 1 in the third
- Reason for staying on in Macau: no money to go back
- 31 instructed by their agencies to go to Macau, pay own ferry fare
- "Every time I had an interview with a possible employer, I was always considered unsuitable..."
  - "I overstayed because I saw many Indonesians' jobs are terminated after they finish paying the agency fees."
  - "I was always considered unsuitable by the employer until my visa expired."

Counter-Geographies

- "Indonesian government's reluctance to intervene for stranded nationals"
- "Japanese lack of recognition of Macau as destination"
- "No Consulate"
- "Irregular migration of undocumented Indonesian overstayers exemplifies one such counter-geography of globalization because:"
  - "part of shadow economy"
  - "Product of the institutional infrastructure of the formal economy"
  - "Emancipates policies to produce flexibilized labor without political cost for Macau"
  - "Indonesian government's reluctance to intervene for stranded nationals"
- "Downsizing of interests of various actors: from village to cities, at all destinations"
Session 2

State, Family and Women Migrant Workers
2.1 History, Stereotypes and Nation Building in Indonesia and Thailand

By ... Susan Giblin, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Leeds, UK

I will start my paper by exploring a topic which has been a preoccupation of mine for a number of years – the struggles of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia to be accepted as genuine Indonesians. There are many resonances which could be found between the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and the Burmese in Thailand. I have chosen to discuss a few of them. Firstly, there is a long history of engagement by Chinese ‘sojourners’ in economic activity in Indonesia/East Indies (and most other parts of Southeast Asia) as there is a long history of Burmese migration to Thailand/Siam. In Thailand today there are many restrictions on Burmese migrants. Of interest to me here are restrictions in the area of work. Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia also faced these kinds of experiences up until very recently. I will discuss some of the restrictions both groups have faced and ways they have attempted to overcome them.

Another point of exploration is that Chinese coolie migration of the late nineteenth century was considered temporary both by the Chinese themselves and by the state. This is also the case for many Burmese migrants in Thailand today. Large numbers of coolies did return to China but some also stayed in Indonesia. Today most Chinese Indonesians have citizenship. I suggest that exploring how this came about, although it happened at a different time and in different local and global circumstances, is useful.

Despite most Chinese Indonesians having citizenship today there are still strong negative stereotypes against them. These stereotypes constitute another commonality between these groups. Ethnic stereotyping is not unique to Southeast Asia of course. All over the world damaging stereotypes are directed against migrants. The affects of these stereotypes are hard to quantify. Stereotypes are often held by people unconsciously: They can also be poisonous and debilitating. I will discuss how these stereotypes are maintained and whether we can start overcoming them.

Finally, the particular history of the migrations and the stereotyping of the migrants have been used to strengthen the national discourses of both Thailand and Indonesia. Again, this is not unique to Southeast Asia. Rather, it is often part of a nation-building project. In recent years the Indonesian state has been making efforts to include the ethnic Chinese within national discourses from which they have been excluded. Focusing on this may be useful when thinking about Burmese and other ethnic and religious minorities living in Thailand today.
2.2 Family, Gender, Identity and Citizenship: Cross-border Marriage within the Mekong Frontiers

By ... Suchada Thaweesit, Mahidol University, Thailand

Abstract

The chief purpose of this paper is to explore the social consequences of the rise of the modern nation states as well as the opened economic policy after the cold war period, for the people living in the frontiers of the Mekong River. How did the incorporation of the frontier zones into the nation state interfere with the everyday reality in which many people lived? Did the incorporation prevent large numbers of young men and young women, living in border villages, from seeking potential husbands and wives in the neighbouring villages across the river? Did the Mekong River as a national border cut off the people from cross-border livelihoods in which the people have been familiar with for a long time? What was in general the impact of boundaries on cross-border mobility and migration? The paper focuses especially on cross-border marriage in the Thai-Lao borderlands. It examines how did the demarcation of the border, cold war as well as the end of cold war affect border crossings in the frontiers of Mekong River, hence affecting the pattern of cross-border marriage, family structure, kinship, gender relations, cultural identities and citizenship as well as other aspects of social life of people who crossed the border.

Presentation

Objective of the Study

- to map out magnitude and characteristics of cross-border families observed within Thai-Lao frontier
- to understand the situation of cross-border families in the frontier zone
- to explore challenges faced by the cross-border families and the strategies which people have adopted to deal with constraints and challenges
- to study the dynamics of gender relations and gender role dynamics within cross-border families
- to look at how dual locality, transnational economy and immigration policies affect identity formations of foreign spouses and their offspring
Methodology

- Field sites
  - 5 border villages stretching along the Mekong River in Ubon Ratchathani
- Ethnographic fieldwork
  - observations and collecting Thai-Lao couples’ narratives about people’s migration memories, marriages and day-to-day experiences in the border villages
  - Informal interviews with children of cross-border households, relatives, friends and neighbors
  - In-depth interviews were conducted with 47 cross-border families
- Household survey = 516 samples

Context

- Borders between Thailand and Lao PDR have long been permeable due to the historical, ethnic and cultural ties among local residents in two sides of the borders, the so-called Isan people or Lao Isan on Thailand’s side and Lao people in Lao PDR

The Magnitude of Cross-border Families

- one percent samples of Thailand’s 2000 census reveals
  - The highest percentage of foreign women who married to Thai men was immigrant women from Myanmar (42%)
  - Women from Lao PDR consisted of 23% of Thai men’s wives
  - women from western countries comprised only 2% of Thai men’s marriage partners
The Magnitude of Cross-border Families

- the 516 household surveys
  - Lao women comprised 56% of cross-border households
  - Lao men made up 44% of cross-border households.

Patterns

- two different patterns of cross-border families in the Thai-Lao frontier zone
  - 74% percent of the households are characterized as mixed Thai-Lao families
  - 23% are categorized as none mixed families. They are Lao-Lao families which relocated to live in Thailand’s border villages.

Patterns

- Mixed Thai-Lao cross-border families
  - Emerged before and after 1975
  - political conflict in Laos during 1970s forced more Lao men than women to leave Laos to Thailand’s border villages and many of them married to local women
  - a majority of Lao refugees who formed the mixed nationality families with Thai citizens between 1975 and 1977 were men
  - Lao women predominantly comprise the newer Thai-Lao cross-border couples in the border villages.
  - more Lao women than Lao men who married to Thai villagers
  - Thai men who take Lao wife comprise farmers, laborers, truck drivers, police officers, traders, community headmen

Patterns

- None mixed marriage families/Lao-Lao families
  - Families of Lao refugees who fled to Thailand during the civil war in 1970s, households’ members are mainly stateless-nationalityless
  - Families of migrant workers relocated to border villages in 1990s-present to find jobs hence having better living conditions

The Challenges of Cross-border Families

- multiple localities: live in Thailand and maintain connection with families and relatives in Lao PDR through
  - exchange regular visits, practiced mostly by recent cross-border families rather than by the 1970s families
  - sending remittances back to families but not regular remittances
  - return seasonally to help in rice growing and harvesting
  - engage in border trading i.e. buying and selling produces and products from Lao villagers and bring them back to sell in local market in Thailand
  - manage cross-border sex trade by become karaoke bar’s owner’s or agents who recruit sex workers from Lao PDR to work in karaoke bars
The Challenges of Cross-border Families

- **the problematic identity**
  - Children of mixed Thai-Lao couples do not like to be identified as the Lao but the Thai.
  - They felt intimidated if they were scolded “ai Lao” or “e Lao”, because for them, being Lao means backwardness, illegal migrants, aliens, and are always looked down by others.

- **Issues of Nationality and Citizenship**
  - Many intermarriage families were unable to register their children as Thai citizens because they don’t know about the laws.
  - Local authorities refused to register mixed-blood children because of lacking knowledge about updated Thai citizenship laws.
  - Many Isan people who took Lao wife/husband did not dare to register their children because they are afraid that their Lao spouse would be arrested by the polices as they are often illegal migrants.

- **Issues of Nationality and Citizenship**
  - The status of most of the in-marrying partners from Lao PDR in the border districts of Ubon Ratchathani is illegal migrants.
  - A number of them are Lao asylum seekers who left Laos since 1970s and they become stateless and nationalityless people in the border districts. They could not go back to Lao PDR in order to obtain the Lao nationality.
  - Even though they would be able to go back to Lao PDR, it does not guarantee that they would get back their civil and household registration because Lao refugees of the 1970s were not documented in the household legislation.
  - Lao PDR carried out its first population census over the country in 1985.

- **Issues of Nationality and Citizenship**
  - Many Lao spouses who are asylum seekers stated that they did not have any relatives left in Laos and that this village was the only home they have now, and that they wanted to die where their families live.
  - 98% of Thai-Lao spouses did not register their marriages while only 2% were registered.
  - Around 70% of Thai-Lao spouses wanted to register their marriage, but to go through the process is costly and time consuming for them.
  - Lao husbands and Lao wives who think that their marriage should be registered told that they want to registered their marriage because they want to live in Thailand legally.
  - They hope that registered marriage finally will help them to get the Thai nationality that will allow them to enjoy rights and social security as equal as the Thai villagers.

- **Issues of Nationality and Citizenship**
  - The Lao government does not consider Lao asylum seekers who left Lao before 1985 its citizens unless they would be able to prove that they are.
  - Even most of the recent Lao spouses lost their civil and household registration because they left Laos without asking permission from the Lao local authorities and the local authorities erased the name of those who do not present in the villages for many years from the household registration record.

- **Issues of Nationality and Citizenship**
  - Most of Lao migrants who married the Thais associated their identity strongly to their Thai children and Thai husband/wife.
  - Desires for Thai nationality usually were expressed through the descriptions of obligations to his/her families in Thailand.
  - They mentioned that they need to live in Thailand to take care of their families, to bring up their children etc.
  - Many of Lao spouses who are asylum seekers stated that they did not have any relatives left in Laos and that this village was the only home they have now, and that they wanted to die where their families live.
The Challenges of Cross-border Families

- Gender relations
  - The presence of prostitution in the border districts of Ubon Ratchathani shapes cross-border families in many ways.
  - Open-ended prostitution is observed between Thai men and transnational service women from Lao PDR.
  - Many Isan men felt fond of their ‘particular’ Lao girl whom they regularly visited in karaoke bars and subsequently took the girls as their mistress or a second wife.
  - Thai men may assume that a mistress relationship implies that they have sole sexual access to their ‘wives’, while many Lao women continue to supplement their incomes through paid casual sex with other men.
  - For some Lao women these extramarital relationships may act as a safety net in case their primary relationship is dissolved.
  - For many Lao women being a mistress of Thai men can mean protection – avoiding harassment from the border police.

- Reversal gender roles
  - Cross-border families as a transnational space provide new possibilities for both women and men to learn new gender roles and gender relations.
  - In many families where husbands are illegal migrants or are people having no legal status (nationalityless-stateless), Thai wives often play prominent roles in public domain such as dealing with community and are at front in official matters such as to request village funds, to go to local government offices, attending official meetings and trainings.
  - Lao husbands obtain a certain authority in a domestic realm such as taking care children, making a decision affecting the household’s economy, generating income, tending animals.

 Strategies to deal with nationalityless/statelessness

- Their children used school certificate to travel to seek job outside the village which mostly locate outside the region.
- Parents posted newborn child to Thai relatives of friends.
- Some families paid money to buy Thai nationality.
- Many cooperate well with the community leaders and Isan villagers to ensure their security and social safety net.
- Some Lao husbands/wives become healers or religious ritual experts in the village.
2.3 Remittance-Sending Behaviour among Migrants from Myanmar, the Lao PDR and Cambodia

By ... Sirinan Kittisuksathit, Mahidol University, Thailand

Abstract

This study explores remittance-sending behaviour among migrants from Myanmar, the Lao PDR, and Cambodia. Findings are expected to be baseline data to further develop policy recommendations and action plans to enhance the development impact of remittances. The study included 356 migrants, aged 16-34, and included both males and females in the manufacturing, construction, domestic, and fishing sectors.

Migrants each sent home, on average, about 25,000 baht in total during the two years before the survey. Women sent more money than men. Migrant women sent home 2,000 baht or less each time in a larger proportion than men. The most frequent used method for remitting money was through an informal agent and banks. Male and female migrants differ in their preferences for bank remittance and bringing money home themselves. Male migrants prefer to remit via a bank more than do females, and more females than males prefer to carry home money themselves. More women than men intended to send money home and women intended their remittances to be used for educational, health, housing, and daily expenses more than did men. More male than female migrants had pooled money. On each occasion, males also donated a higher amount, though less frequently than female migrants. Male migrants have individual savings in a higher proportion and in higher amounts than do females. The lower savings among females may be explained by the fact that female migrants remitted more money than did males. Findings also show a higher proportion of females had bank accounts when compared to men.
Remittance-sending behaviour among migrants from Myanmar, the Lao PDR and Cambodia

Sirinan Kittisuksathit
Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON GENDER, MIGRANT WORKERS AND CITIZENSHIP IN GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION
Economic and Political Perspective for a World in Crisis
Asian Institute of Technology Conference Center 1-3 June 2009

Introduction

- Remittances are generally viewed as having positive net effects on the economic and social development of migrant-sending countries.
- Migrant workers’ remittances have the potential to boost economic development in poor migrant-sending communities, the potential impacts depend on many factors, particularly on migrants’ access to affordable and safe money transfer channels.
- Reliable and transparent remittance transactions increase the confidence of remitters in the success of the transaction and thus the likelihood that remitters will use official channels to send their earnings (Addy et al., 2003).

Objective

- Understand remittances flow from Thailand to migrants’ countries in order to develop policy recommendations and action plans to enhance the developmental impact of remittances.

Methodology

Study Population

- Be from the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Cambodia
- Be age 15 or older
- Have been working in Thailand continuously for at least 2 years
- Have family members left behind in their home country
- Have previously remitted money to their home family in the previous 2 years

Profiles of Interviewed Migrants

Number of migrants aimed to be interviewed and actually interviewed in each province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Migrants’ nationality</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Number aimed to interview</th>
<th>Number actually interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok/vicinity</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Domestic/factory/construction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Domestic/factory/construction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>Factory/construction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khonkaen</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Agriculture/factory/construction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samut Sakhon</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Fishing/factory/construction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trat</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>Fishing/agriculture/construction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of migrants aimed to be interviewed and actually interviewed in each province

Profiles of Interviewed Migrants
Migrants’ intention for money to be used

What remittance was really used

Most-frequent used method in sending remittance

Reason for using the most-frequent used method

% Migrants who do not know other method

Most-frequent used method and preferred method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most-frequent used method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Preferred method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal agent</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>Informal agent</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>356</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>356</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reason for preferred method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Informal agent</th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Own carried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenient and fast</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to speak with family</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know no other method</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheap</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to visit family</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No better method</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>103</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Migrants paying expense in using most-frequent used method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of sending fee</th>
<th>Percentage charged</th>
<th>Amount of expense (median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage charged</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed amount per transaction</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>40 baht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling cost per minute</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10 baht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling cost each time</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>300 baht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay for sending 100,000 Kyat</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>2,750 baht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>253</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Migrants by type of sending fee and amount of sending fee

% Migrants whose family paid receiving fee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of sending fee</th>
<th>Percentage charged</th>
<th>Amount of expense (median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage charged</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed amount per transaction</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling cost per minute</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling cost each time</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay for sending 100,000 Kyat</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total expense (sending and receiving fee)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most-frequent used method</th>
<th>N (tot N=329)</th>
<th>% Have expense</th>
<th>Total expense (median)</th>
<th>Total paid for sending 100,000 kyat (median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal agent</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other methods</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For sending 5000 baht

How migrants’ family received money

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Migrants ever encountered problems in sending remittance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The most-frequent used method</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal agent</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own carried</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access to Bank Service

% Migrants having bank account in Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Migrants want to have bank account in Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for not having bank account

- Employer did not allow
- Not convenient/no chance
- Not necessary
- No money to save
- No rights/no documents needed
- No knowledge about it
Recommendations to the Thai government and government of countries of origin

- Raise awareness and provide information to migrants about remittance transfer options
- Do not undermine the informal channel for sending remittance
- Upgrade the informal agents’ services in terms of sending and receiving fee, safety, timeliness, proof documents for sending, convenience for family to receive money, etc.
- Gradually transform the mature informal remittance sending agency into the regulated system.
- Increase our understandings about informal agents in terms of their characteristics, service, network, process of sending remittances, etc.

Recommendations to the Thai government and development agencies: Reduce constraints in access bank services in Thailand

- Explore opportunities for partnerships between banks and other financial intermediaries in the remittance market to facilitate remittance transfer for migrants
- Accept ID card issued to registered migrants by Ministry of Interior to open Bank Account
- Explore ways and means to enable irregular migrants to be able to open bank account, possibly using their own national ID
- Coordinate with employers to arrange in opening bank account for their migrant employees
- Provide information to migrants on arrival to destination country on available banking services
- Reduce the transaction costs of remittances both at the sending and receiving ends
- Exempt remittances from taxation

Recommendations to the government of countries of origin

- Improve and widening financial infrastructure with involvement of micro-finance institutions in the rural areas
- Pursuing policies to enhance remittance flows and maximize development impacts at the local community through enterprise promotion and employment generation program
- Provide financial and technical supports to self-help organizations that migrants have established with the aim of promoting development or establishing development projects in sending countries

Thank you
Session 3

Social Reproduction and Women Migrant Workers
3.1 Constructing the Female Migrant ‘Other’ in (Re)Productive Space: Care Workers in Singapore

By ... Shirlena Huang, National University of Singapore

Abstract

A sizeable component of current transnational labour migrations of women from less well-off countries to richer economies is in care services, both as domestic workers and as healthcare workers. Like many developed countries with a high level of female force participation alongside an ageing population, Singapore is alleviating its care crisis by looking to foreign domestic workers and healthcare workers to shore up its homes and nursing homes respectively. This paper first examines state policy that differentially regulates the entry of these two groups of female migrant workers into Singapore. It then goes on to argue that Singapore’s solution to its care predicament -- employing foreign domestic workers in the reproductive space of the home and foreign healthcare workers in the productive space of the nursing home -- is one that is predicated on nationalistic and gendered stereotypes, and that the process of defining the ‘Other’ is structurally determined and ideologically inflected within relations of domination and subordination.

Presentation
Table 1: Major Source and Destination Countries of Migrating Nurses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Countries</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Countries</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table based on Kline, 2003: 108.
Note: Countries denoted in blue indicate movements among more developed countries.

Introduction 2

- Literature on skilled and unskilled migrant labour largely separate and theoretically isolated (Kofman & Raghuram, 2005)
- FDWs & HCWs: care workers at different points of the skills spectrum but integrally linked
- Will look at both in relation to Singapore’s eldercare crisis
  - FDWs – reproductive sphere (~170-180k FDWs)
  - HCWs – productive sphere (~ 3,500 nurses but PR status and downgrading hides the real no. of migrant HCWs)

2. Women Migrating for Eldercare

- Care deficit → global dd for care workers
  - Increased FLFPR → reduced time for non-market care work
  - Lucrative options and opportunities in new professions open to women → fewer going into care work
  - Rapidly ageing populations in developed world → need for eldercare workers
- Love & care as portable skills → need filled by migrant women (through active recruitment, esp. to fill nursing ranks)
  - Devaluation of care work
  - Downward occupational mobility
  - Discrimination & exploitation

3. The Singapore Context

- Ageing and eldercare options
- State policies on migrant workers
- Analyses draw upon long-running research on FDWs (with Brenda Yeoh) and on-going research on HCWs (with Brenda Yeoh and Mika Toyota)

The Singapore Context: Ageing and Eldercare Options 1

- Singapore has one of fastest ageing populations in Asia
  - Currently: 9% >65 yrs old
  - By 2030: ~20% >65 y.o.
- Rising life expectancy
The Singapore Context: Ageing and Eldercare Options 2

- State’s stand on eldercare:
  - acute care and funding frameworks → state
  - all other aspects (including long term care) → community, family and elderly individual
  - Institutional care should be “the last resort”; family is the “primary caregiving unit” → burden on women

- Reality: burden devolved to migrant women
  - FDWs as the default option within the private sphere of the home
  - nursing homes for prolonged (2-5 yrs) nursing & residential care as institutional option → large dependence on migrant HCWs (up to 85-90% of staff)

The Singapore Context: State Policies on Migrant Workers 1

- FDWs – managed for transience
  - Integral to the Singapore “solution” to the “crisis” of the reproductive sphere
  - Singapore as an “illiberal” regime
    - Work permit system (2-year renewable contracts) → easy repatriation
    - Monthly levies (equivalent to or > FDW’s monthly wage) → dampen demand
    - Security bond of $5,000 employers impose draconian surveillance and control measures
    - No dependents allowed
    - Prohibited from marrying Singapore citizens and PRs
    - Prohibited from becoming pregnant → otherwise repatriated
  - Employment contracts and conditions → left to market forces

The Singapore Context: State Policies on Migrant Workers 3

- Migrant HCWs → managed for ‘upgrading’ and citizenship potential
  - Emphasis is to ensure “a strong pipeline of healthcare workers” to meet demands for eldercare (+ Singapore’s “medical hub” aspirations)
  - Govt-to-Govt agreements/MOU
  - Regulation via professional nursing body (SNB) & Ministry of Manpower (MOM)
    - SNB regulates professional standards by controlling the registration and enrolment of nurses & midwives
    - MOM regulates via work permit scheme & ‘S’-pass

The Singapore Context: State Policies on Migrant Workers 4

- Migrant HCWs
  - Flexibility of policies adjusted to enable hiring of migrant HCW as eldercare option in nursing homes, e.g.
    - Creation of ‘S’ pass
    - Can employ up to 85% foreign workers (45% limit in other sectors)
    - HCWs can be recruited from a wider range of countries
    - Work permit renewals allowed up to 18 years
  - As with FDWs, employment contracts and conditions left to market forces
    - Job hopping
    - Live-in expectations (with curfew)
Either they are scared of burglars or employing a maid. Some similar working conditions but different valorization is most clearly reflected in (lack of) opportunities for citizenship. Markers of difference embedded in state institutions and discourses are often “transformed into hierarchies” and get built into institutional structures, legitimizing inequalities among different groups of women (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004: 33).

Markers of difference embedded in state institutions and discourses are often “transformed into hierarchies” and get built into institutional structures, legitimizing inequalities among different groups of women (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004: 33).

Increasingly, care work is associated with an international labour force that is gendered and racialised (or “feminized and colorized”). Nationalised and racialised stereotypes occur when state policies on (im)migration and citizenship reflect and reinforce existing practices of cultural imperialism that favour certain groups over others, commonly based on signifiers such as culture and biology—mind/body dichotomy.

Table 3: Nationalised Stereotypes of Filipina, Indonesian and Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Singapore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Positive Stereotypes</th>
<th>Negative Stereotypes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filipina</td>
<td>Most naturally hardworking, quick ability to learn, competent, meticulous and personable</td>
<td>Bold and streetwise (hosanna is precarious, dishonest and more assertive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesians</td>
<td>Docs, compliant, simple and family-friendly, good command of English, honest and hygienic</td>
<td>Slow learners, forgetful, poor command of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankans</td>
<td>Responsible, helpful, caring, patient, but shy, knows English, honest, neat, streetwise</td>
<td>Carless, kind, too “barba”, too slow, backwoods, poor hygiene, very poor command of English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abdul Rahman et al., 2005: 241.

Stereotyping FDWs 1

- Genderised mode of labour substitution
  - Singapore employers assign to their FDWs “especially those later in the life cycle, a natural ability in the reproductive realm and expect of them a greater competence in reproductive roles”
  - Eldercare by FDWs
    - Mainly physical care
    - Often a communication/language barrier between FDWs and their elderly charge
    - “There is no communication between the maid and the older person... Poor grandma or grandpa [is just] lying there, whole day, whole night, nobody to talk to. The maid will come and feed you or do whatever, give you the medicine; whether she gives you right or wrong also nobody to check or supervise” (Local nurse)
  - Usually only minimal training given and “maid agency”

Stereotyping FDWs 2

- Nationalised stereotypes conflated with race and culture—indicator of employer’s status

  - Sorry to say, you pay peanuts, you get monkeys. The more you pay, you get the better quality. The difference is that, okay, why people go for Filipinos, why people go for Indonesian [or Sri Lankan]... Most of them take Filipino maid because they speak English. Alright, mentality better. Cleaner... Sri Lankan, okay, smelly. Honest, okay? And sorry to say, no matter how, we are still human beings. There are still some racial problems. Black, you see? You take one [who is] black, it means you are low class. Most employers still the same what... Your sister takes one Sri Lankan, you take one Filipino. This one huh, steady [meaning ‘on the right track’], you know. He’s taking a Filipino. That one [has] no class, takes a Sri Lankan (Employment agent).
Gender:
- **Gendered nature of nursing taken as normal**
  - “in general, females make better nurses. [While] there is also talk about male nurses making fantastic care staff... it’s unlike doctors yah? Nursing is still a female domain”*

- **Attributes deemed to be embodied in women and men that suggest a heart/body or emotional/physical dichotomy**
  - “No male chooses to be a geriatric nurse. The males tend to choose emergency, critical care, and operating theatre”
  - “that is when we literally need ‘man’ power”
  - “...females can attend to the male residents, but if you have a male care staff, he cannot attend to the females”

*Stereotyping Migrant HCWs 1

Nationality:
- **Nationality: measured against Singaporeans and one another. Expected to provide more than just physical care, e.g.**
  - Filipinos: good social and interpersonal skills, strong communication abilities and good for clinical work as they are quick learners BUT “smart alecks” who think of themselves “better than the other nurses” because “they think [of] themselves as more educated, more refined”
  - Myanmarese: slow in work pace, poor in ability to pick up English BUT loyal, hardworking, obedient, gentle and polite. Able to show care and compassion to the patients:
    - “when you talk about more compassionate, the Myanmar [workers] have an edge over the Filipinos... they will say, ‘this one is my grandmother, grandfather’”

*Stereotyping Migrant HCWs 2

Prejudices and discrimination prevail (by skin colour, accents):
- **Some families complained, “Why is your place all full of Indians?” ... It is good when they see Chinese [HCWs], they think ‘Aright, there is a balance’... [But our patients] don’t like Indians. Very sad to say. They say they can’t understand, and it’s true. Now we will speak more frankly, the Indian accent is very hard to understand. And sometimes, we have doctors complaining... [The Indian nurses] understand English, they are very good in English, but it is their accent. The Filipinos are very easy to understand, and the Myanmar, they speak slowly”.

*Stereotyping Migrant HCWs 3

5. Conclusions 1
- Care workers at all points along the skills ladder are subject to a process of social construction that often essentialises them along gendered and nationalized lines, but also intersected along other dimensions, some more immediately obvious than others
- Stereotypes are quite consistent whether care work is done in productive or reproductive spaces
- FDWs mainly for physical care; HCWs in nursing homes also valorized explicitly for emotional care
- Stereotyping of the Other usually occurs along two broad dimensions (Lee & Fiske, 2006):
  - competence/intelligence/task vs warmth/social/morality

Conclusions 2
- Demand for women migrant care workers expected to grow as societies age But they are subject to
  - (im)migration controls preventing or restricting migrant settlement by the very countries that require their labour
  - discriminatory essentialising in host societies.

- Need for better understandings of how state policies as well as social processes operate to differentially structure the transnational migration of different groups of skilled and unskilled female labour for care work

Conclusions 3
- Avenues for further research could encompass at least three areas:
  - interrogate the notions of “care” and “care work” extend their understandings beyond the typical definitions that rely upon gendered conceptions and associations to nurturing
  - understand the experiences of women migrant care workers produce research and knowledge that will enable host societies and institutions to move “toward practices that are more respectful, ethical, sympathetic, and useful”
  - more needs to be done to help developed nations confront – and answer – the question of the debt that is owed and should be paid to the nations whose workers migrate to provide care to their wealthier neighbours
3.2 Regional Economic Integration and the Politics of Care: JPEPA (Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement) and Migrant Caregivers

By ... Chiho Ogaya, Yokohama National University, Japan

Abstract

Since the beginning of the 21st century, regional economic integration, led by the principal of the free trade, has been actively developed in the Asian region. In case of Japan, bilateral economic partnership agreement (EPA) with the countries in South East Asia is strategically important. In this context, mobility of the people, or, the “movement of natural person,” has been highly paid attention in Japan, particularly for its first official opening the gate for migrant caregivers and nurses, under the EPA with Indonesia and the Philippines, which are significant migrant sending countries in the region. In this paper, it would be discussed the way migrant care workers has been positioned in the EPA debate as well as the politics of “care” for both migrant sending and receiving society.
Regional Economic Integration and the Politics of Care: JPEPA (Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement) and Migrant Caregivers

Chiho OGAYA
Faculty of Education and Human Sciences, Yokohama National University, Japan

1. Introduction: Progress and Framework of JPEPA and the Politics of “Care”

- Progress:
  2002 Feb.
  PM Koizumi proposed Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive economic Partnership FTA framework
  Aug.
  Informal Preparatory Meeting (Tokyo)
  Oct.-Nov. First formal meetings (Manila and Tokyo)

- 2003 Dec.
  Joint Announcement of the Japanese Prime Minister and the Philippine President
- 2004 Dec.
  Joint press statement on agreements in principle on major elements of the Agreement

- 2006 Sep.
  JPEPA was formally signed
- 2006 Dec.
  JPEPA was ratified by Japanese Diet
- 2008 Oct.
  JPEPA was finally ratified by the Philippine Senate
- 2008 Dec.
  JPEPA formally enacted
- 2009 May
  1st batch of the “candidates” arrived Japan

Items under JPEPA framework

- Trade in Goods
- Customs Procedures
- Trade in Services
- Investment
- Movement of Natural Persons: nurses and careworkers
- Cooperation
- Intellectual Property
- Financial Services
- Energy
- Broadcasting
Scheme for careworkers and nurses from the Philippines under the Agreements

- The Japanese side will allow entry of Filipino candidates for qualified nurses and certified careworkers that satisfy certain requirements and will allow them to work, after completing training of Japanese language and others, as preparation for obtaining national licenses, on the assumption that the Philippine side will provide a similar framework to meet the Japanese interest.
- Duration of stay: up to 3 years for nurses, 4 years for certified careworkers

Flow chart: Basic framework for hosting scheme for Filipino nurses and certified careworkers

Type 1
- **Entry into Japan and Stay**
  - Duration of stay: up to nurses 3 years, certified careworkers 4 years
- **Japanese Language and Nursing and Caregiving Training in Japan**
  - Collaborating Organizations: AOTS (Japanese Language, Nursing and Caregiving Training) and Japan Foundation (Japanese language)
  - Period: 6 months


- "Furthermore, since labor shortage is feared to happen due to future population decrease with a medium to a long term perspective, some opinionated that acceptance of foreign workers should be studied now in the fields, including nursing of aged people, which needs shall grow in an aging society."

- Numbers: 1000 people for 2 years
  - Reality: Indonesia: 208 (nurse 104, caregiver 104)
  - Philippines: 280 (nurse 92, caregiver 188)
- After taking the national license examinations (of Japan; in Japanese), successful candidates are allowed to work as qualified nurses and certified careworkers.
Basic Plan for Immigration Control 
(3rd Edition: 2005)

- Accepting foreign workers in fields that are not valued as professional or technical at present will also be given consideration in light of the decrease in the productive population, while also taking into account the need to maintain Japan's economic vitality and national living standards, the public consciousness and the existing conditions of the nation's economy and society. In this respect, consideration should be given not only to new industrial fields, Japanese language aptitude and other conditions for accepting foreign workers, but also to the positive and negative impacts on Japan's industry and public welfare which stretch over a wide range of factors covering domestic security, the domestic labor market, industrial development and restructuring and social costs.

(Cont.)
- As for nursing-care workers who will be in growing demand due to the ageing of the population, consideration will be given to whether and how to accept foreign workers in the field while paying careful attention to the acceptance of such foreign nationals under economic partnership agreements with foreign countries and taking into account nursing-care jobs being created for Japanese workers.

3. Philippine government’s attitude toward sending health care workers: discourse of “skilled migrants” and “care”
- Government response
  TESDA’s caregivers scheme
  POEA’s advisory
- Private sector
  booming of caregivers training centers

Nexus of “protection” and “skill” : discourse of “care”
- “We want to deploy Caregivers, not Domestic Workers” (TESDA officers, caregiver training schools and universities)
- Skills upgrading by the government:
  - Training Regulations for caregivers in 2003 by TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority)
- Perception that “Caregivers are more professional than domestic workers” - both government and potential workers themselves
Strategic meaning of the term of “care” for sending country

- “not unskilled”
  = “no need to be protected by the government”
  = meet the global demand
- In reality, the border of “caregiver” and “domestic worker” is sometimes unclear
- Constructed discourse of “Filipino is good for care” under the caregiver deployment policy

Caregiver course in PWU (Philippine Women’s University)

OJT of caregiver students in the Phils. (Hospicio de San Jose)

Responses: Japan side: Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren)’s report

“Recommendations on Accepting Non-Japanese Workers” (2004 April)

(5) Accept Non-Japanese Workers in Sectors Expected to Face Future Labor Shortages

In response to strong demands from Thailand and the Philippines that their citizens be accepted as employees in Japan in nursing, healthcare, and other sectors, efforts to establish a system that will guarantee the well-organized acceptance of non-Japanese workers are an urgent priority. It is particularly important that acceptance under this system: (1) be based on a clear understanding of the types of occupation and skills, the length of time and number of workers needed; and (2) include a structure for sending/accepting non-Japanese workers from/to public institutions governed by bilateral agreements.

Careworkers association: “against: conditions of Japanese careworkers will be worsen”

Nurses association: “the all conditions should be the same as Japanese nurse; e.g. national license, Japanese language and working condition”
Philippine side: Anti-JPEPA coalition and Nurses’ Association

- Coalition of NGOs and civil groups
  "Junk-JPEPA” lobby
  - delay of the ratification at Phils.side

- Response from Philippine Nurse Association
  "Filipino health care workers are not commodity”

PNA’s position

- Against to be under the observation of Japanese nurses
- There are demand from the other countries which offer much better condition
- Pride as professional nurse

--- How about caregivers, as newly created job category for overseas migration?

Creation of “caregiver” for the purpose of migration

- Certification of “Caregivers “ is only for working abroad; or, caring for the elderly from the developed countries in the Philippine
- OJT for becoming caregivers at the elderly care facilities in the Phils.
  - who are cared by them ?  --- Elder women(some of them used to be domestic workers inside the Philippines)

“lola” and caregivers in the Phils.
(She is applying for overseas work)

5. Conclusion: politics of “care” under JPEPA

<for the Phils.Gov.>

- Reach out to global new market
  + Upgrading the “skill of care” to the global market, as well as to potential workers

<for the Japan Gov.>

- pursing the free trade agreement
  + Strategy for hyper-aging
  + adjusting the Immigration Control Policy with the “mid-level skill” of caregivers

Implication for workers themselves

: How they interpret the “care” work

"the easiest way to Canada”
(by a Filipino domestic worker in Taipei who moved to Canada to work as caregiver)

"decent work, if compared with entertainer” ( former Filipino entertainer who married to Japanese and currently works as Home Helper in Japan )
3.3 “Who pays for the kids?”: Childcare Arrangements of Cross-Border Workers in Thai-Burmese Border Towns

By ... Kyoko Kusakabe, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand  
Ruth Pearson, University of Leeds, UK

Abstract

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

- Discouraged from getting pregnant by employers and the state
- Childcare arrangements complex:
  - Send children back to village of origin
  - Keep children at the place of destination (because no one in village of origin)
  - Child care taker come to place of destination

Different analytical approaches to trans-border childcare

- Arranging childcare
  - Shift in “residential nodes” (Bjeren 1997)
  - Border as a counter-hegemonic force (Staudt 1998)
  - Creation of transborder connection and collection/distribution of resources (Walker 1999; Sturgeon 2004)

→ How migrant workers use border to juggle their childcare
→ Process that sustain and forge social relations between migrants and their kins back home.

Mae Sot - the place

- Border town (opposite to Myawaddy)
- Around 210 establishments in Mae Sot. Around 124,000 registered workers; possibly another 1-200,000 unregistered;
  - over 13% of total number of registered Burmese workers in Thailand
- Factory moved in especially after 1997 financial crisis
- Border industrialization policy
Mae Sot - migrant workers

- **Working conditions**
  - Low wage (90 baht/ day, piece rate)
  - Frequent police raids and checkpoints
- **Accommodation** (depends on kind of factory)
  - Living inside factory
  - Outside factory migrant communities
- **Healthcare**
  - District hospital
  - Mae Tao Clinic

Mae Sot - Childcare

- Migrant schools in Mae Sot
- Informal arrangements with other Burmese neighbors
- Families coming to Mae Sot
  - For child care
  - For vacation
- Remittances
  - Borrow money to remit

Complex decisions about care of different generations

“I kept my baby near me in the cradle while I was working. I can give breast feeding to her while I was working”

“I have not gone back since I arrived here because my parents and relatives come regularly to me and I don’t need to go back to meet them.”

“I will not go to Bangkok because it is very far from my home town. I need to go back sometimes to take care of my mother.”

Prapadaeng - the place

- Industrial area near Bangkok.
- Many factories for export
- Stronger labor union than other places
- Small workshops (subcontract from larger factories)
- Now has a few Burmese shops in the locality to serve migrants

Prapadaeng - migrant workers

- Only workers with registration cards can work in larger factories
- Larger factories pay same wages as to Thai workers, while small workshops pay lower.
- Unstable jobs and police raids – current economic crisis
- Little linkages with labor unions
- Access to health services
  - Hospital
Prapadaeng - child care

- Stricter regulation against pregnancy
- More difficult to find babysitters
- No childcare center where migrant workers can entrust children
- No migrant schools
- Less support from other migrants compared to other area
- Choice is whether not to have children, send only the child back, or go back and deliver (coming back can be difficult)

Dilemmas of migrant motherhood

- “I need to go back and send the baby but whenever I think about going back, I feel upset because the trip I came was very terrible. I walked three days and on the car was full of people. I don’t want to go this trip...”

Three Pagoda Pass - the place

- Tourist area + furniture manufacturing and import into Thailand
- Border closure
- Only two large factories, others are small workshops.
- Factories started to come in 2002-2003.

Three Pagoda Pass - migrant workers

- Around 25,000 Burmese migrant workers in Sangklaburi district.
  - Registration as ‘hill tribe people’.
  - No arrest in Three Pagoda Pass (free zone)
  - 80% are commuting daily from Burmese side.
  - Lower than minimum wage.
  - Health service
    - Primary health post (Thai government)
    - Hospitals and clinic in Burmese side
    - Hospitals in Mon area

Three Pagoda Pass - childcare

- Temple with a boarding school in Burmese side
- Childcare centers in Burmese side
- Bringing families to Burmese side
- Taking children to workplace
Flexible borders, flexible childcare on Burmese side of the border

“There are many neighbors who are free and could look after the baby for a while in a day time”

Conclusion

• Centerland (Samut prakan)
  ◦ government policy on inclusion and exclusion evident. → difficult for MW to mobilize resources
• Border (Mae Sot)
  ◦ surveillance remain strong → utilize Thai resources as well as mobilize Burmese resources
• Border(Three Pagoda Pass)
  ◦ surveillance weak → not much resources from Thai side → Burmese government and community subsidizing Thai industries

Conclusion

• Building up residential node and mobilization of resources
• Border and surveillance by the state and available resources in both sides of border enable women migrant workers to mobilize resources differently and create different childcare arrangements.
• Who bears the cost of social (generational) reproduction is determined by border and state surveillance.
3.4 Poverty Trap, Migration and Unsafe Destination  
By ... Amara Soonthorndhada, Mahidol University, Thailand

Abstract

Background
It would be unrealistic to discuss the rapid growth of labour migration especially in the Southeast Asia sub-region, without mentioning the important migration stream of women especially young female migrants moving out from their homeland to work in the neighbouring countries. This paper describes the connection between regional socio-economic factors, gender relations on the vulnerability of women and girls to human trafficking for the explicit purpose of sexual exploitation, their related HIV/AIDS risks, and the impact of gender relations on female victims’ access to HIV prevention, care and treatment, and other services. The findings are based on qualitative data of 24 cases of migrant workers from Lao PDR and Myanmar.

Results
The results revealed that the majority of cases became involved in sex sector at the age range of 15-19 and the main reason of entering Thailand was that they were lied to about what they would be doing. Most women found employment through agents who are their neighbours and friends who have been working in Thailand and temporarily return to their home countries. Due to poverty, limited employment opportunity in their hometown, low education, there is no doubt that they are exploited and at risk of HIV infection when lured into commercial sex business due to practicing unprotected sex.

Conclusions
This study recommended that to safeguard young women from being exploited, a multi-national coordination to mobilise public concerns and law enforcement should be a priority. While planning for HIV/AIDS reduction among the mobile populations especially young women who are the trafficking victims and increase the access of HIV prevention commodities among the irregular migrant workers both registered and unregistered is a necessity.
Presentation

Poverty Trap, Migration and Unsafe Destination

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Presented at the International Workshop on Gender, Migrant Workers and Citizenship in Greater Mekong Subregion: Economic and Political Perspectives for a World in Crisis
Organised by Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), University of Leeds, UK
Bangkok, Thailand
1-3 June 2009

Background
- Victims of sexual exploitation operating in the irregular economy are at higher risk of HIV infection than the general population
- Low awareness of HIV status
- Stigma and discrimination associated with local perceptions of foreigners working in the sex industry, gender relations are thought to be preventing such prevention, care and treatment.

OBJECTIVES
Describing the nature and extent of gender relations in:
- Women’s vulnerability to human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation
- HIV infection risks among women and appropriate HIV prevention, care and treatment

Study sites
- Four provinces nearby Bangkok were purposely selected; Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkram, Nonthaburi and Nakornpathom
- The sites include various types of commercial business areas where men and women from Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, China (Yunan Province) have migrated in search of work.
- The entertainment sector which overlaps with the sex industry (karaoke bars, massage parlors, tea shops, beer bars) were selected for in-depth interviews

Prima Facie Trafficking Indicators
- Abducted
- Threatened with violence
- Beaten
- Tricked
- Lied
- Told family would be in danger
- Debt bondage

Methodology
- In-depth Interview of female 24 prima facie cases:
  - Lao PDR---- 9
  - Myanmar---- 15

Qualitative information in the areas of: self-esteem, future plans, gender relations, safe sexual practices, drug use, and knowledge of HIV/AIDS.
Recruitment

Who are involved and how:
[middlemen, pioneers living in the same community, self-decided]

Cost
- direct and indirect payments paid to all people involved for allowing the illegal workers to cross the borders and to come back again safely. One return trip could cost THB. 6,000 - 20,000 (US$ 176-588)

“A woman from Monyong in Shan State working at a traditional massage parlour”

Recruitment

“It is quite easy to go with them (the recruiters) if you have money for the traveling costs. I borrowed some money from my relative for 6,000 baht to cover the cost. I already returned him the money. I paid them (the recruiters) less than the other. Those who are younger than 25 have to pay more. I don’t know why, maybe they have to pay for the police.”

(A traditional massage parlour worker from Myanmar)
“Those who are under 25 years old have to pay more to the agents. It could be as high as 12,000-20,000 Baht for entering Thailand for work. They (recruiters) told us that they had to pay them (the police) at the border checkpoints and there were many of them here and there. It was a hard and long journey, no stop until we crossed the border.”

(A hotel worker from Myanmar)

“We can’t find job to earn our living. Most women married when they were young. There was not much to do, and we had to find someone to look after us. That’s why we couldn’t get along well with them (husbands). Most men did not want to work. We (women) have to work for our family. Men in my village are too lazy and do not take care of their family. They drink, smoke and take drugs. My husband also took drugs and did not work. I left him to look for job in Thailand. I wanted to earn more and to take care of my son and my mother.”

(A young married woman working in the traditional massage parlour from Myanmar)

Gender Relations

Push factors, which are related to country of origin circumstances,
- poverty,
- unemployment,
- familial, social and political conflict
- all forms of violence.

Those conditions from a gender relations’ perspective may result in human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Reasons to enter Thailand

- Lack of job
- Low education and less skill
- Early marriage and difficulties in family life
- Poverty/Family responsibilities

(A hotel sex worker from Myanmar)

“Reason to enter Thailand

“I know very well that my neighbours who just returned from Thailand brought a lot of things for their family. They have money, wearing gold necklace, they even buy a motorcycle for their brothers. They earned a lot, I am sure. I want to go to work in Thailand. Life here is so boring, no job, and no money. There must be a lot of jobs there (Thailand). Here we have no electricity, just for 2-3 hours a day and after that no more. We want to work because we have to earn a living. Working in the farm is not enough. I grew vegetable and sold it in the market and I did not earn much, just a small money to by clothes to cover my body.”

(A hotel sex worker from Myanmar)

Social norms and practices that encourage young women to be tricked into human trafficking and sex sector.

Findings from case studies indicates that it is a common practice among young women of Tai Yai ethnicity to get them prepared for being involved in sex work before coming to Thailand by having first sex with rich clients especially the Haw, the Chinese origin. Their virginity could cost the clients 20,000 Baht with the consent from their parents. However, this practice definitely cannot be generalised as societal approval without taking other factors into a consideration to reflect why human trafficking and sex industry is hard to combat.
“I think it is acceptable and young women accept it. If they intend to work in Thailand. They won’t mind to lose their virginity to a man who wants it. You will lose it anyway when you have to be involved in this kind of work (sex work). It is a lot of money. You spend your whole life to work for that amount of money. My parents did not say anything to me. I think they took this as my personal matter. I want to ask you too how you would make your decision if you were me, no education, and no job. If we had a better choice we would not go for it (sex work). What I earned here for a month would take me for 10 years to get it. It is much different. I have to choose and I consider it as a work. I can earn more and at the same time I have to know how to manage my earnings because I can’t work like this forever.”

(A hotel sex worker from Myanmar)

“Working Environment

- Relationship with the recruiters
- Relationship with the clients
- Relationship with the workmates

“They (the guards) are quite good, not so strict and sometime so helpful when the clients are wild or get drunk. We do not have any conflict as long as we did not break the rule especially using the mobile phone while working. The clients will not like us talking on phone because they want us to give them good service.”

(A hotel sex worker from Lao)

Earnings

For direct sex service the charge is around THB. 1,300-1,700 (US$ 38-50) for two hours while the cost for traditional massage is about THB. 200 (US$ 9). Workers will be paid about one half of the service charge and the payment will be given to them every 10 days.

HIV Vulnerability from a gender perspective

- Knowledge and perception about HIV
- Gender relations with the clients/partner

“We have no idea and are not sure why we have to have blood test. We must go for it otherwise we won’t get job. Yes, we have blood test once a year. I never asked them (government health workers) about the result. Some of my friends went to a private clinic for a blood test.”

(A traditional massage worker from Myanmar)

“My current partner is my regular client. I am not so sure whether he is free from HIV. He might have other partners. To be save I think it would be better to have a blood test.”

(A hotel sex worker from Myanmar)
Concluding Points

Young women’s vulnerability to human trafficking and HIV/AIDS under:

- Poverty & Economic Attraction
- Agents and Recruitment
- Gender Relations associated with migration and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability

HIV/AIDS Vulnerability

- Thailand has taken important steps towards addressing both trafficking in persons and HIV infection, but the ability of Thailand’s current program to reach women and girls trafficked into the country’s sex industry remains weak.

HIV/AIDS Vulnerability

- A lack of integration between trafficking and HIV/AIDS legislation and programming means that services in these two areas are institutionally divided, a situation that precludes effective service provision to the highly vulnerable group of trafficked women and girls working in Thailand’s sex industry.

HIV/AIDS Vulnerability

- Lack of access to the Thai health care system for irregular migrants, and new sanctions that enforce the criminalisation of sex work and thereby set barriers to service provision for sex workers in general and trafficking victims in particular.

Recommendations

- Promoting and exchanging information and communication among young women about work at the destination
- Mobilising public concern to safeguard young women from being trafficked
- Law enforcement to be undertaken for all forms of trafficking for sexual exploitation
- Increase the access of HIV prevention commodities among the irregular migrant workers both registered and unregistered
- Strengthening multi-national coordination and planning for HIV/AIDS reduction among the mobile populations especially young women who are the trafficking victims

Acknowledgement

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Gender, Citizenship and Strategies: Current Crisis and Future Prospects for Migrant Workers on the Thai-Burmese Border

By ... Ruth Pearson, University of Leeds, UK
Kyoko Kusakabe, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand

Abstract

The utilization of cheap migrant labour from Burma and elsewhere has been a growing element in Thailand’s industrialization policy over the last two decades. But in the current situation, with the government facing instability on both the economic and the political front, it is important to think about the future. In economic terms the signs of disruption are already apparent. As the fall out from the global financial crisis hits demand for Thailand’s cheap labour exports, economic activity is being negatively affected as factories have started to reduce the number of days they operate, eliminate over time, or close down completely. In border areas jobs are particularly vulnerable; here investment is often precarious, factories are generally small scale, there is little scrutiny from the media, and there are no effective trade unions. The Thai state is putting overt pressure on migrant workers to return their home countries.

However, as our research indicates, this is not a simple, viable or desirable solution. The women workers we have talked to in the course of our research have invested their labour, love and ingenuity into building a future for themselves and their families on the Thai side of the border. Without employment prospects in Burma, without savings, to cushion any transition, and faced with pressure to maintain the flow of remittances against the post-cyclone appreciation of the Burmese kyat against the Thai baht, migrant workers are falling back on desperate strategies – relying on still-employed friends for support, eating wild fruits and vegetables or re-shuffling the distribution of their families on both sides of the border; But returning home is not an option-given the hostile nature of the Burmese state as well as the long term family and personal investment in migration.

How will the Thai state respond to this situation? Will forcible deportation meet the approval of civil society, of the enterprise owners who have profited from the employment of cheap migrations? From the ASEAN powers who are raising their visibility in the region and beyond. What kind of position does Thailand seek in the next decades within the GMS and how important is access to Burmese resources, markets and political support? What will be the effect of
accelerating the adoption of the MOU on migrants to Thailand? How are issues of nationality and citizenship to be resolved for the large numbers of migrant workers and their families already in Thailand? How is the political debates over the governance and government deal with issues of Thainess, exclusion and inclusion. Future research agendas, as well as organization and demands by civil society in the region needs to focus not just on the economic drivers and impact of the crisis, but also on the exploration of the political and gendered reality of the situation, which raises questions about nationality, citizenship and the ways in which labour is reproduced as well as appropriated within the Thai economy.

Presentation

Economic context of the crisis

- Thai economy in recession; growth rate - 7.1% first quarter 2009;
- Fall in exports - 16.4%; expected to get worse over the whole of 2009
- Problematic given export earnings account for over 70% of Thailand’s GNP; principle export destination 11.4% (USA); 11.1% Japan; 9.3% China;
- Fall in industrial production
- Fall in VAT receipts 17% (proxy consumption)

Political context of the crisis

- Thai coalition government struggling to maintain stability and restore confidence of external actors (tourism down; investment down, Moody’s credit rating down);
- Political pressure from both opposition UDD and PAD;
- Ethnic conflict in South;
- Lack of confidence in political institutions
- Crisis in ASEAN re Burma

Implications for demand, supply and regulation of irregular migrants in the Thai economy

- Although pressure to “reserve jobs for Thai citizens” (unemployment rising from 1.4% in mid 2008 to 4.4% q1 2008 to 4.4% end of April – and rising);
- But clear that Thai workers won’t do DDD jobs; registration exercise delayed to give Thais the opportunity to take low paying jobs
- Also that Thai workers compensation and social security safety net higher than sub living wages received by Burmese factory workers
Crisis affects Thai workers - with cushion

- According to the World Bank a Thai factory worker with less than 4 months contract will receive
  - 6000 baht severance pay
  - 3000 baht unemployment benefit for 6 months
  - compared to previous earnings of 12,000 Baht with overtime plus health and other benefits;

- Further assistance for unemployed Thais being announced

Crisis affects Burmese migrant factory workers - no cushion

- Migrant workers in Mae Sot’s factories:
  - Earnings 2007/8 – 3-4000 Baht a month;
  - Now (May 2009) 1-2000 Baht a month because of lay offs, and short time;
  - no benefits apart from “accommodation” and some rice (from employers who want to keep retrenched workers - for the upturn)

New Initiatives re registration
Problems for workers

- Only for one year- pre-registration till July/new registration
- Excludes family members (technically prohibits pregnancy)
- Various disincentives to workers
- threaten the introduction of the MOU after that – with all its attendant risks;
- Tie workers to single employer- worse now the recession is threatening work, payment and accommodation
- If registered at least can claim benefits-though seldom honoured;

New Initiative re Registration problems for officials

- Don’t have the capacity to register large numbers before the cut off date
- Need to get documentation and payment from employers before registration can be processed
- Location and difficulties re proposed MOU procedure

New registration initiatives: problems for employers

- Expensive – why pay for a year’s registration when might not keep worker on for 12 months; prefer to register for only 3 months;
- Adds to cost of employing migrant workers
- Reduces flexibility;
- Makes employers visible to the authorities
- Many (river-side factories) employers (in Mae Sot) are saying they prefer unregistered migration
- As a policy – registration Cui Bono?

Gendered responses

- Migrant workers losing their jobs;
- On low/no pay (if paid piece work)
- Losing their income and accommodation
- BUT
  Although reports of mass deportations, and some “voluntary” return, most – women and men are insisting on staying in or returning to Thailand.
But gendered differences

- Protest of workers - mass protest and occupation of factories
- Women represented in the leadership (token leaders) – as tradition in Burma
- Men militant – but women often have to go and seek work for even lower money in even worse conditions - because of commitments to remit to natal families and to maintain families in Thailand
  - Nb: other research which indicates that women remit more and for longer than men – real policy issues
- some young women have been summarily returned by their families who fear contagion as political activists

Gendered responsibilities: workers

- Remittances to Burma – for parents, for siblings (education) and for children
- To organise and pay for child care in Thailand
- To invest in and access education for children
- To safeguard actual and future nationality of themselves and their children

Gendered responsibilities: retrenched workers

- Men – militant; visible; involved in organisations and protest
- Women – many also politicised –but concerned not just with immediate issues of levels of pay and “dignity” (ie protesting exploitation and claiming rights);
- More determined not just to stay but to maintain income because of their gendered responsibilities

Gendered responses - State

- Registration exercise – ignores the fact that most workers in some sectors are women and are of reproductive age; successive registration exercises have become more restrictive re. mobility, family unification, access to pre and peri natal care, access to health services for family members;
- Women particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment by authorities- Thai, military, immigration, police/prison – and labour officials, as well as factory managers and supervisors;
- Women factory workers, particularly those on the borders are absent from the statistics, and from the reach of the law; real question of how to make proposed new initiatives – at the level of the national state or regionally - via ASEAN – make a difference on the ground

Terms of the debate

- Also other anti “polluting” rhetoric is implicitly gendered:
  - higher level of HIV prevalence amongst migrants – whether or not true adds to notion of women being polluted, particularly when attached to discussion about migrant sex workers;
  - Migrants as costing state money in terms of health care, cost of childbirth and educating “aliens”; but not only do migrant workers bear the cost of the reproduction of their own labour power and their children making very small calls on Thai resources, but since the majority are unregistered- they get neither compensation nor social security payments when they are laid off.
  - Fear of crime and political subversion= male workers

Conclusion: Disposable workers, indispensible women

- Back to Wright’s discussion of disposability
- Unlike Mexico where women’s labour is being displaced by technology and male work –
- In Thailand in the low end garment sector in locations on the Burmese border depend even more on women’s “cheap” labour
- But migrant women constructed as “inferior bearers of labour” rather than “bearers of inferior labour”
- Policy has to confront women migrant workers not just as suppliers of daily labour on the shop floor, but as re-producers of labour on a daily and generational basis
List of IDRC Migration Workshop Participants, 1-3 June 2009, AIT Conference Center, Room B108

*International Workshop on Gender, Migrant Workers and Citizenship in Greater Mekong Subregion: Economic and Political Perspectives for a World in Crisis*

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