

ABSTRACT

Migration in times of Crisis: The Gendered Perspective

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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.
