

## Regional Integration and Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion: A Review

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### 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.

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