



**REASONS FOR AND EFFECTS OF MIGRATING
TO THAILAND ON CAMBODIAN YOUNG PEOPLE**

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1. Executive Summary

This research paper explores what drives Cambodian young people to migrate to Thailand. Exploring what effect this migration has on an individual migrant's well-being, safety and prospects, as well as what impact the migration has on Cambodian society. It also tries to gain an understanding as to why so many Cambodians choose to migrate illegally, subsequently assessing what the additional risks are if one migrates illegally and what can be done to minimise these risks. The purpose of this paper is twofold; firstly, to help see in which ways Kone Kmeng's programs could be altered in order to tailor to the needs of at risk migrants. Secondly to make recommendations to other stakeholders suggesting possible approaches to minimise risk and improve the wellbeing of the migrants.

This research was done using 49 structured interviews which took place in Poipet, Cambodia and Pattaya in Thailand. Prior to undertaking the research, we studied the concept of migration worldwide but also specifically from Cambodia to Thailand to understand the main theoretical frameworks associated with migration and what drives certain groups within society to migrate. We then used this information and collated it with the data we collected to find specific trends and characteristics of Cambodian's migration to Thailand, so that we can utilise it to create policy aimed at minimising the risk to the migrants involved. We used two interview sites because we wanted our dataset to be as representative as possible and we felt that interviewing respondents either side of the border would help to achieve that. We decided this because individuals may perceive migration differently when in Thailand compared to having recently left or preparing to go back. After collecting the data, it was then analysed using SPSS statistical analysis program. We made use of wider reading on the topic and combined this with

trends discovered within our own data to create a discussion around the topic of Cambodians migrating to Thailand.

We found that the vast majority of our respondents migrated to work in Thailand because they felt as though the job opportunities and potential earnings in Cambodia were not sufficient. Additionally, a considerable number of our respondents had dropped out of school specifically to migrate to Thailand and support their families financially. Our respondents faced a number of problems when in Thailand; problems which our evidence strongly suggests are compounded by their illegal migrant status. The administrative costs and time consuming process which is required to obtain a passport and legal working papers means that many migrants go to work in Thailand illegally. Due to this many employers of Cambodian workers mistreat their staff because the migrants do not feel able to go to the police if they are mistreated, because it is likely they will subsequently be deported. Another major problem caused by the undocumented nature of their work is that it means there is little scope for career progression. Of all 49 respondents, none claimed to be in managerial or supervisory role despite many having worked in Thailand for upwards of 5 years. One key finding concerns migrants' misconceptions of how migration will be prior to their first migration. Many respondents informed us that they were not aware of the many problems which they would face when they migrated, and wished that they had had this information before they had started to migrate.

In light of our finding on migrants' lack of information prior to migrating, our discussion and recommendations centre on what services tailored for migrants should consist of and how they will be made accessible to the most vulnerable migrants. In the long-term, any policies implemented in Cambodia which are aimed at job creation, economic growth and poverty reduction will increase the options of these migrants inside Cambodia and hence their autonomy. However,

it is important that those who do not have that option and are forced to migrate can do so in the safest possible way. So, our recommendations therefore focus on anticipatory measures, accepting some level of migration as inevitable and thus anticipating and trying to mitigate risk. Recommendations are made both for how Kone Kmeng should adapt our own policies to support vulnerable migrants, also how other stakeholders could use their programs and policies to care for this at risk but frequently neglected group within Cambodian society.

2. Introduction

The large-scale culture of migration of Cambodians to Thailand can be said to have started in earnest in the late 1960's with the Cambodian civil war, culminating in the Khmer Rouge ruling Cambodia. According to World Bank (2016) figures, in 1968 Cambodian GDP per capita was just 10% behind Thailand's figure. While this difference is not insignificant, it is unlikely that this would have provoked the mass economic migration that currently exists; GDP per capita in Cambodia today is just 20% of Thailand's. While of course this wealth is not shared equally amongst all Thai's it still means that similar labour intensive low skilled jobs would earn considerable more in Thailand than in Cambodia. This contrast in earning potential means that for Cambodian's the economic incentives to migrate are immense. This has given to rise to a culture of migration in communities throughout Cambodia. The high volume of Cambodians who migrate to Thailand has created a network of individuals and businesses operating in Thailand who make a living exploiting the most vulnerable of these migrants. Despite the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) act which was passed in 2003 (Liptapanlop 2003), which was supposed to protect the rights of non-Thai workers in Thailand, exploitation remains an issue. Our research leads us to believe that for many Cambodians who migrate, there remain many risks and problems involved, particularly when they migrate illegally (Seng 2015). The problems with migration once inside Thailand are said to include, being arrested, not being paid in full, being beaten and being overworked to the point of causing health problems (Sophal and Savannarith 1999), (York 2013).

Nowhere is the culture of migration more entrenched than in the provinces which border Thailand, with figures stating that in some bordering provinces close to 15% of the total labour force migrates to Thailand (Sopha and Savannarith 1999). Furthermore, Analysing Development Issues Centre (ADIC) (2003) who study the prevalence of migration in individual villages in Battambang province say that in some villages as many as 78% of households had a family member with some migration experience. The clear correlation between school dropout rates and proximity to Thailand, further supports the notion that living in a community with high levels of migration can change the attitude and application of students in said communities. USAID (2011) an American organisation working to combat poverty commissioned a study into drop out trends in Cambodia and found the three provinces with the highest dropout rates to be Banteay Meanchey, Battambang and Oddar Meanchey. These three provinces all directly border Thailand and USAID (2011) suggests the lure of better wages is partly responsible for these comparably high dropout rates. There appears to be a correlation between a household's proximity to Thailand and an increased rate of school dropouts. The concern is that if there are many people in the community who migrate this could affect the aspirations of children in school and hence their attitude. Especially when young people see their peer's dropout to migrate, this can create a culture of short-termism (Sum et al 2009). A culture of short termism, when it manifests as dropping out of school has profound negative impacts on individual migrants. With future income projections being lower and disproportionate rates of unemployment compared to those who complete high school (Sum et al 2009). As well as these impacts on individuals, the problems high dropout rates cause on Cambodian society more broadly are considerable. Education is vital for the economic development of Cambodia, a healthy economy, would in turn solve problems for potential migrants through giving them increased opportunities.

This study was undertaken in an effort to gain a better understanding of the impacts on young Cambodians of migrating to Thailand, primarily for work. We wanted to investigate this topic so that we could understand firstly whether alternatives to migrating would be welcome amongst Cambodians who intend to migrate. Furthermore, we wanted to inform our policies at Kone Kmeng and to be better equipped, particularly in our engagement with young people considering the option of migrating. Crucial to informing our own policies is to understand whether the migration is more influenced by pull or push migration factors. This is because whether the key factor is a push or a pull factor dictates from which angle the issue is best addressed. For example, if the critical factor is a push factor like lack of job opportunities in Cambodia then that would suggest the intention of a policy should be to create alternatives to migrating. Although, should pull factors be more important then perhaps policy should be commissioned with the intention to make sure that when people do migrate they know how to do so safely and legally. Another reason that we undertook this research relates to how extensive this phenomenon is. As previously mentioned, ADI (2003) and Sophal and Savannariths (1999) studies paint a picture of how prominent a part of community life migration is in some communities in Cambodia. This phenomenon of migration is extensive which makes it so important to educate these young people about the realities of migrating to Thailand. If future migrants were more enlightened they could be safer by being better prepared. It is hypothesised that, just ensuring the availability of information concerning importance of working papers and process of obtaining them, for example, could have major positive impacts on individual migrant's welfare and safety.

Many problems prevalent amongst Cambodians in Thailand can become almost irresolvable when they are working illegally, chiefly because they may feel unable to inform the relevant authorities of their mistreatment (Walsh 2011). While it is known that migrants, both legal and illegal experience mistreatment from their

Thai employers, illegal immigrants are disproportionately likely to experience a variety of problems (Walsh 2011). We completed the research because we wanted to understand more accurately the key differences between migrant's expectations of migrating and the reality. Better understanding the dangers involved would mean we are able to inform ourselves and our work at Kone Kmeng about how to adapt our programs, to educate potential migrants about these dangers and steps to take to minimise risk. What is more we believe that working towards finding a solution to this problem would be beneficial both to Thai and Cambodian governments as well as to individuals who take part in this migration. It is apparent that not just in this context but throughout societies worldwide when a non-native group work illegally in a country it can cause the native group to develop feelings of nativism. Nativism is when the local people begin to feel as though they are more entitled than foreign people (Ostler 2010). These feelings often exist more strongly when there is a body of illegal workers because there is a perception that they lower the wages of local people by undercutting local workers. Helping to ensure that more Cambodians get the proper working papers would begin to discredit the perception that Cambodian migrants are undercutting local workers and reduce the tension caused by this perception.

This research will be used to help create possible frameworks for approaches to engaging with migrants to improve their wellbeing. Central to this study is to try to get an idea of what proportion of Cambodian migrants migrate despite having a variety of viable options within Cambodia. Understanding this will mean that we are able to propose from which angle this problem should be approached. This would help us to understand what would be the most effective way to support migrants, both from Kone Kmeng's perspective but also for other stakeholders such as government authorities and NGO's. Should it become evident that primarily it is pull factors that are responsible for this migration then suggestions will be made for how the whole migration experience can be made safer.

Alternatively, if the origin of this migration appears to be more as a result of push factors, suggestions for creating more options for Cambodian's pushed into migrating will be explored. Another important potential impact can be derived from understanding the difference between the realities of migrating and the perceptions of potential migrants. Being able to share information with young people regarding the realities of migrating could have a transformative effect on their actions. Once this information is widely available there could be, in time, impactful changes in the attitude of potential migrants. From their attitude and application in the classroom to their propensity to make sure that if they do migrate they get the correct working papers and take all possible measures to ensure their safety. Another potential impact of migrants having an accurate view of the different problems involved with migration is a change in the view of how important it is get working papers (York 2013). An increased proportion of migrants having correct legal papers would mean it would be easier for authorities to regulate migrant's behaviour and result in less power for those networks which exploit vulnerable migrants without legal papers.

3. Methodology & Limitations

a. Methodology

In order to be eligible to participate in this study respondents needed to be between 14 and 29 years of age, be Cambodians nationals and regularly migrate between Cambodia and Thailand. We aimed to gather data from equal numbers of males and females; in the end we interviewed 25 females and 24 males. We decided that this would be the best course of action because our study is concerning the implication broadly of migration not the effects on a particular gender so an even a split as possible suited our objectives

All information in this study was gathered through one-on-one structured interviews with 49 respondents. The research instrument comprised 18 questions in addition to a demographics section. The 18 questions included enquiring into when and why respondents initially started migrating, to what they feel like they would have benefitted from knowing prior to their first experience of migrating. We devised the questionnaire through a combination of knowledge gained through our work with Kone Kmeng as well as from similar studies that have been conducted on migration. Data was gathered in 2 locations the first being Poipet in Banteay Meanchey a town on the Cambodian side of the border between Cambodia and Thailand. The second location we did our interviews in was in Pattaya, Thailand. In Poipet we accessed our respondents via a contact we have with Samaritans purse who have a program operating out of Poipet, they assisted us in accessing respondents; all interviews were conducted by Kone Kmeng staff. In Pattaya, we accessed our respondents via an associate of a Kone Kmeng employee who knows a community of Khmer workers in Pattaya. Just over 75% of interviews were conducted in Poipet, Cambodia with the remaining interviews

in Pattaya, Thailand. We undertook our interviews between the 4th and the 8th of October 2016. Our rationale behind choosing two separate locations for conducting our interviews was multifaceted. Firstly, we thought it interesting to judge how recipients in differing current circumstances perceived their experiences of migration despite having similar overall lifestyle patterns. Also, we hoped to develop a better understanding of differences in perception about reasons for and impacts of migration when recipients had just been deported at the centre in Poipet, compared to when they are in Thailand and working. The interviews conducted in Poipet were conducted in a deportation centre where Cambodian workers who were caught working illegally in Thailand are sent by the Thai authorities. In Pattaya our interviews were conducted in an area where there was a community of Khmer residents who had migrated to Thailand for work. Our questionnaires were all conducted in Khmer and the answers translated back to English subsequently. This was done so that respondents felt comfortable and able to answer the questions with depth should they feel inclined. The questions varied from multiple choice questions, to asking for respondent's thoughts on an aspect of their migration. All the data was analysed using SPSS statistical analysis program, version 21. Qualitative responses were analysed and grouped into categories to be inputted into the SPSS software. Additionally, we also investigated themes from the qualitative responses that were not easy to quantify, these themes shall be explored in the discussion section.

b. Limitations

There some important limitations to our research that it is important to be aware of. Firstly, it is important to know that our respondents are not a perfectly representative sample of Cambodians who migrate to Thailand. Due to the nature of the location of our interviews particularly those in Poipet which were conducted at the deportation centre where Cambodians are sent by the Thai authorities if they

are caught working illegally in Thailand. This means that all our respondents who were interviewed in Poipet had been working illegally so that will have affected their experience of migrating. Also in Pattaya we used elements of the snowball sampling with our interviews in Pattaya as the first interview was with an associate of a Kone-Kmeng colleague and we then interviewed her Khmer associates and friends in Pattaya who made up the rest of our respondents.

4. Results

a. Demographics

This section will outline key findings gained from analysing the data used for the research. Firstly, these are some general findings concerning overall demographics of our respondents. There were 24 male and 25 female respondents from a wide variety of provinces. There were respondents from 9 provinces with the most common being Banteay Meanchey with 37% of respondents. Interestingly respondents interviewed in Poipet were more widely spread through the provinces of Cambodia with the highest proportion being 27% from Banteay Meanchey and Battambang. Conversely, 67% of our respondents who were interviewed in Pattaya were from Banteay Meanchey, this could be due to the community of workers all knowing each other from Cambodia and hence working and living together in Pattaya. Our respondents ranged from age 17-29 of whom only one respondent was not relied upon by a dependent for financial support, with 65% percent of respondents professing to have 4 or more dependents. More than half of respondents did not reach secondary school, with only 14% achieving high school level education and zero university educated respondents (Table 1). The respondents had a variety of occupations although construction workers were by far the most common with over half of respondents, there were also several farm workers, factory workers and street sellers. Interestingly, over 54% of respondents said their stay in Thailand averaged over a year, suggesting that for most migrants it is essentially a permanent arrangement. Fewer than 25% of respondent's average stay in Thailand was less than 6 months.

Table 1			
What is your highest educational level?	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No access to school	8	16.3	16.3
Primary school	18	36.7	53.1
Secondary school	16	32.7	85.7
High school	7	14.3	100
Total	49	100	

b. Gender Differences

Alongside general trends which emerged from all respondents there were some key differences reported between the genders; almost all of which found women to have a more difficult experience of migration than men. Perhaps most striking is the marked difference between perceptions of safety when in Thailand. More than half of male respondents reported feeling safe in Thailand compared to less than 30% of females (Table 2). As well as this, when asked about what problems respondents experienced during migration a higher number of men reported not having any problems, conversely, more women reported not being paid fairly and having to do excess work. Women also found it more difficult to find work once in Thailand, with 29% of women finding work every time they migrate to Thailand compared to 58% of male respondents. However, perhaps most importantly, going forward, is that despite a variety of reasons reported for dropping out of school including academic reasons and peer pressure, by far the most prominent reasons for girls and boys having to leave school was family poverty (Table 3). This suggests that though gender is an important variable when considering a variety of issues concerning migration, there are fundamental

shared issues that affect both boys and girls. This leads us on to what were the key reasons behind our respondent’s decisions to migrate to Thailand.

Table 2						
Do you feel safe when you are in Thailand?		Yes	%	No	%	
Gender	Male	13	54%	11	46%	24
	Female	6	29%	15	71%	21
Total		19	42%	26	58%	45

Table 3					
Why did you stop studying?		Family poverty	Academic reasons	Peer pressure	
Gender	Male	17	6	1	24
	Female	23	2	0	25
Total		40	8	1	49

c. Motivations for Migrations

Central to shaping recommendations in light of this research is to understand what the most common motivations which drive people to migrate are. Crucially, whether the main motivations are push or pull factors. Respondents were asked ‘if you had equal opportunities in Cambodia would you migrate?’ An overwhelming 88% of all respondents indicated that they would choose to stay in Cambodia (Table 4). The indication is that while of course every migration situation has push and pull factors present, in this scenario push factors are

evidently the stronger force. Having established that push factors are dominant, in order to tailor recommendations, it is important to know why migrants would rather stay in Cambodia. When asked, more than 50% of respondents said they would like to be in Cambodia to feel free, with a third of respondents stating safety as a reason. Further evidence as to the credibility of the hypothesis that push factors are stronger is to analyse reasons why respondents decided to stop studying. The results showed 82% stopped because of family poverty. Hence it appears that for many of our respondents the decision to go to Thailand was not a first choice. This perhaps suggests that long term policies which target this vulnerable group should focus on creating alternatives within Cambodia to migration.

Table 4						
If you had equal opportunities in Cambodia would you migrate?						
		Stay	%	Migrate	%	Total
Gender	Male	20	83%	4	17%	24
	Female	22	92%	2	8%	24
Total		42	88%	6	13%	48

d. Educational Impacts

Many of our respondents have had many issues throughout their schooling, only 14% completing high school. The key to solving the issue around school dropout rates is to understand what the main reasons are which cause young people to drop out of school. Out of our 49 participants a massive 48 or 98% said that education was important to them, 73% of respondents, when asked why this is so acknowledged that staying in school would increase their job opportunities later in life (Table 5). It is evident however through our analysis that for the vast

majority of respondent's material deprivation forced them to stop school and have to financially support themselves and their families. Dropping out of school not only impacts young people in the short term but also enters them into a cycle whereby it is difficult to move from unskilled work areas.

Table 5		
Why is education important to you?	Frequency	Percent
Chance of a brighter future	19	42.2%
More job opportunities	33	73.3%
Less likely to be exploited	17	37.8%
Important life skills are learnt in school	11	24.4%
Means you do not have to migrate to Thailand to work	5	11.1%
Total	45	

e. Illegal Migration

Over the course of reviewing relevant literature and subsequently undertaking our own research it became obvious that in terms of the overall migration of Cambodian's into Thailand, illegal migration has been and remains a major issue. 100% of respondents claimed that the single biggest change which would make them feel safer when in Thailand would be to have correct working papers. Also 43% said that they have had problems with not being paid fairly by

their employers. This is a problem massively exacerbated when victims do not have working papers (Table 6). The prevalence of illegal migration has severe consequences on the fate of these migrants for numerous reasons. Firstly, it means that they have very little protection from the law, giving their employers the power to act unlawfully, dishonestly and inhumanely at times. Secondly, it further sours relations between the indigenous Thai population and the incoming Cambodians. Some respondents stating, they would rather stay in Cambodia because they feel Thai people do not respect them. There already exists some level of antipathy between the Thai people and the Khmer people, Kasetsiri (2003) saying relations between the groups are often characterized by “ignorance, misunderstanding and prejudice”. It is hypothesised this perceived lack of respect is aggravated by Thai people’s perception of Cambodian illegal immigrants taking their jobs. Lastly it diminishes the power of the Cambodian and Thai authorities respectively to uphold their workers’ rights because they are undocumented, unregistered and hence invisible.

Table 6						
What problems do you face in Thailand?						
	Not paid fairly	Arrested by police	Victim of abuse	No problems	Excessive work	Total Respondents
Frequency	21	25	4	10	2	49
Percentage	42.9%	51.0%	8.2%	20.4%	4.1%	

f. Lack of information

Through our analysis, it became evident that the reasons for these three previously mentioned aspects of our research are complex. There is however one seemingly inescapable correlation which exists in each aspect of migration and is central to the continuation of problems associated with migration of Cambodians to Thailand. These aspects being, why people choose to migrate, why children drop out of school and the prevalence of illegal migration via a lack of working papers. This correlation which became clear throughout different questions we posed in our interviews was that there is an inaccurate perception of what it is really like to migrate to Thailand. When asked what a respondent's advice would be to someone who is planning to stop school to migrate, multiple responses were given and the results paint a clear picture. 73% of respondents answered 'do not stop school' and 69% said they would 'educate them on negatives of working in Thailand' showing that, had respondents had accurate information their actions could have been influenced (Table 7). Also, when they were explicitly asked what problems they were faced with when migrating, 43% said they do not get paid fairly and 51% saying they have been arrested by the police. Furthering the complexity of the issue however, is that, despite this clear lack of knowledge prior to migration there still exists the entrenched problem of family poverty which forces children to stop school and start to migrate, regardless of inaccurate information. Over 50% of respondents when asked what would stop students dropping out school cited the alleviation of poverty. Other frequent answers included education on dangers of migration, which shows awareness from migrants over the extent to which the problem of lack of accessible information for migrants is.

Table 7		
What advice would you give to a young person?	Frequency	Percent
Do not stop school	35	72.9%
Explain negatives of working in Thailand	33	68.8%
Go to Thailand to earn more money	5	10.4%
Negative for Cambodia if you migrate?	2	4.2%
Explain impact of dropping out	7	14.6%
Don't know	2	4.2%
Total	48	

5. Discussion

Undoubtedly problems such as family poverty and a lack of job opportunities in Cambodia which motivate Cambodians to migrate to Thailand mean that the large-scale culture of migration of Cambodian to Thailand will be an ongoing phenomenon. There are varied and complex reasons for this migration but it comes down to the considerable gulf in job opportunities and salary which exists between the two countries. This section combines pre-existing knowledge on the topic and the results from our own study to give a framework for how we can use these results to inform ourselves in our practices at Kone Kmeng. As well as this, how our findings could be used to give recommendations to other stakeholders to help deal with a problem which puts strain on both Thai and Cambodian government services.

As described in the results it is evident that the primary factors underlying the migration are indeed push factors. Many respondents' answers indicated their perception of the overall experience of migrating to Thailand as not being a choice as much as a last resort. With almost 90% of respondents saying that if there were the same opportunities in Cambodia they would stay in Cambodia citing reasons such as not feeling like they are safe or have freedom when they are in Thailand. This indicates that in theory the overall framework of policies which are commissioned to support migrants should concentrate on making sure that people only migrate to Thailand as a personal decision, not solely because they do not see an alternative. Evidently though the problems associated with migrating to Thailand are going to be a continuing issue and no policy will eradicate all problems immediately. Additionally, as described in the results section there are a range of issues associated with the migration. Some problems are direct consequences of migrating, as our respondents testified, including, not being paid

fairly, being victims of abuse and having excess work to such an extent that it is detrimental to their health. Other problems are less tangible such as the impact that the culture of migration has on school children, impact on future prospects of individual migrants and the impact this large-scale culture of migration has on the economy and society of Cambodia. One problem which transcends this distinction between direct consequences and the less tangible problems is that of the prevalence of illegal migration. Migrating illegally has direct consequences in the form of higher likelihood of not being paid and being subjected to physical abuse. But the high rates of illegal migration could be described as being a result of the less tangible attitudinal problems which are present.

Through analysing our data, it has also become apparent that as previously suggested there are numerous problem areas which could be targeted through policy making. What is more there are numerous strategic bases from which to develop the policies. The two main approaches when attempting to shape policy to counteract problems caused by migration could be classified as preventative measures and anticipatory measures. Preventative measures focus on stopping vulnerable Cambodian's from engaging in migration in the first place, in essence preventing them putting themselves in a risky situation. These measures would include policies designed to create educational, vocational and job opportunities within Cambodia, alongside more general poverty targeting policies which lessen the need for children to have to support their families financially. Most of these preventative measures are long term ongoing policies, improving average wages and economic opportunities are targets of every government and are the long-term answer to a huge variety of global, international and local problems.

Anticipatory measures in this case have a more specific purpose and can have a more profound influence in the short term. Anticipatory measures apply a more pragmatic approach, by accepting this migration as inevitable and trying to

anticipate and mitigate risks as effectively as possible. These policies would include perhaps; supplementary classes, information packs or workshops attempting to fill the gaps in migrants and potential migrant's knowledge. Another potential anticipatory measure which could be provided by an NGO or as a government scheme would be to create some kind of accessible job centre for Cambodians intending to migrate. As discussed Kone Kmeng and other stakeholders already employ a variety of poverty targeting measures, which in the context of the migration problem would be considered preventative policies. Therefore, recommendations in this paper for creating or adapting policy, will focus on anticipatory measures to minimise risks involved with those migrating. There are many ways to provoke community level social change which would improve any problems associated with migration. Some solutions would require major financial inputs and perhaps as long as several decades to solve. However, it is our conviction that there are a number of problems which can be resolved with relatively simple adjustments to policy and procedures. Resolving these problems could potentially benefit thousands of vulnerable Cambodians and be a force for good in society.

This report finds that, especially in the short term the most significant way to support migrants is to increase provision and accessibility of services sharing information on how to migrate safely. The following section outlines key problem areas for migrants, giving recommendations for what information should be included in regards to each problem area and what would be the best way to transmit this information. Those targeted by aforementioned services would include current migrants, ex-migrants who are considering migrating once more and those societal groups our results have shown to be likely to migrate in the future.

When exploring possible solutions to the problems associated with migration this paper will give recommendations both in regards to how we will adapt our own policies at Kone Kmeng and also potential adaptations of approaches for other stakeholders. From a Kone Kmeng perspective, many of our programs already aim to alleviate poverty, poverty acts as a push factor and our research showed is the basis of much of the Cambodian migration to Thailand. In relation to Kone Kmeng's engagement with young people there are numerous things we have learnt during the course of this research which can be included in our engagements to enrich participant's learning. Due to the nature of our existing programs, alterations would concentrate on informing existing beneficiaries of our findings in a practical way. With particular focus on those still in school to give them access to all the crucial information which would improve their safety should they decide to migrate.

6. Recommendations

This section will be split into numerous subsections, firstly; recommendations will be made about how to change migrants and potential migrants' attitudes and perception towards migration. This will concentrate on how the extensiveness of the culture of migration has led to some Cambodians being resigned to becoming a migrant and also resigned that the migration is inevitably going to be a venture fraught with risk. We will recommend ways to begin to provoke social change via altering people's attitudes. Helping them to believe that migration can be a choice not a pre-determined fact that they will migrate. Secondly, recommendations will be made for pragmatic ways for migrants and potential migrants to make sure that if they do undertake the migration it can be done safely. For both of those sections the issues shall be described, followed by an interpretation of what information and support is needed to change this and finally a way to convey that information and support shall be suggested. Following those, recommendations for programs other NGO's could commission to support those who have decided to migrate, in the form of a type of job centre for Cambodians. Finally, recommendations for areas for further research will be outlined.

a. Attitudinal Transformation

In regards to the deep set attitudinal mindsets which exists in many communities where the migration phenomenon is extensive, the principal problem is gaining access to relevant people in these communities. The problems include resignation from a young age that one's future includes dropping out of school and starting to migrate to Thailand to support the family, known as

fatalism. This fatalistic attitude has a profound negative effect on individuals and impacts entire communities (Raj 2002). It can manifest itself in a poor attitude to education regardless of an individual's academic potential or understanding of the value of education. It also can be evident when an individual is preparing to migrate but neglects to take measures which would increase their safety and overall well-being.

The main information which would begin to alter aforementioned mindsets would include a combination of explaining long term impacts of stopping school and migrating to Thailand but also informing potential migrants about the conditions they will be working and living under when they are in Thailand. It is telling that 73% of respondents said that their advice to a young person thinking of migrating would be to not stop school. Also in regards to occupation it seems as though job prospects for Cambodians in Thailand are very limited. Of all those who said that they worked in construction none of them claimed to be in management or supervisory roles despite 67% having worked in Thailand for more than 5 years. This shows that prospects of career advancement are extremely limited and it is likely if you begin to migrate to Thailand you will get trapped in a labour intensive low salary job. This information would be shared not as a scare tactic but just to be certain that potential migrants understand the situations they are likely to find themselves in. This could be shared through workshops organised by Kone Kmeng or as formal education via government authorities, this is explored more in the following paragraph. It is hoped that this information having widespread accessibility and hence being widely known would begin to motivate students more to find a way to remain in education. Other key information included would be to inform potential migrants of the likelihood of facing certain problems, especially when they migrate illegally. From the perspective of government authorities, perhaps included in the curriculum of the personal and social education department could be information about what it is like to migrate, what

problems you may face, and the implication on your future if you do migrate. If this information was shared in the classroom in a formal manner it could enlighten many people considering migrating as to what to expect should they migrate and how to be safe.

Due to the fact that many members of this demographic work in Thailand illegally, dropped out of school at a young age or work as a subsistence farmer in their village they are frequently unregistered by government and municipal authorities. Therefore, information and services provided in an informal nature would be most effective. One recommended method of getting this information to the intended recipients would be to have open workshops delivered by current and ex migrants who can tell students and young people exactly what they wish they had been told. From a Kone Kmeng perspective we have 5 different programs which aim to respond to children at risk in communities in a variety of ways. We would use two specific aspects of these programs to try to make sure that this information is received by those susceptible to these risks. Firstly, we hold workshops with church pastors and community leaders about key issues facing communities in Cambodia and how to respond to these issues. The church and community leaders then impart this information to their community members and as respected members of the community the messages are received well. Also, we hold supplementary classes for students who are struggling in school to help them remain in the education system. In both cases, with workshops with community leaders and church pastors and in our supplementary classes we would include a specific program about the prevalence of fatalistic attitudes concerning migration. Facilitators of Kone Kmeng's programs will be informed of key indicators to look out for which indicates a child may be likely to migrate. They can then use the information they have learnt in the facilitator's workshops to do what they can to help the student find alternatives within Cambodia, including referring at risk children for Kone Kmengs poverty targeting programs. If no alternative can be

found they can enrol the child in a workshop so they know which measures to take to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

b. Pragmatic Changes

As well as trying to combat problems caused by the attitudes made prevalent by large scale migration there are also many physical problems which trouble many Cambodian migrants in Thailand. These problems as described by the respondents include physical abuse, being overworked, not being paid fairly and being arrested by the police, sometimes legitimately, sometimes not so. It is possible for migrants to experience these problems regardless whether they legally migrate or not. However, every one of our respondents acknowledged that the main thing which would increase their safety when in Thailand would be having correct working papers. An increased number of migrants with passports and correct working papers would mean a large network of illegal practices and treatment would be regulated and promptly clamped down upon.

As this is the case it is clear that a greater number of migrants with correct working papers would improve safety massively. There are two areas of information that should be made easily accessible to migrants. Firstly, how to get correct working papers but perhaps more importantly than knowing how to get the papers is that migrants understand the importance of having them, and the implications to their safety and well-being should they neglect to attain the papers. To attain the papers firstly they must get a passport, which must be obtained from the Ministry of Statistics and Passports in Phnom Penh and the service costs \$135 which is a considerable sum. In addition to the charge there is processing time is 45 to 55 days so two trips to Phnom Penh are required. As well as this \$135 cost to attain a passport there is also a fee to get a work permit. To work in Thailand, you must apply for a work permit prior to leaving but a successful application is dependent

upon having a certain job to go into on arrival. There is also a broker fee which must be paid to get a work permit which has a \$49 limit. Considering the average monthly salary of a Cambodian working in Thailand is a little over \$200 (Tolson 2014) the combined fees of passport and working permits is more than one month's salary, and these fees must be paid upfront. Due to the nature of the migration, it seems very likely that most migrants will not have this kind of money available to attain passport and papers. This makes the work permit application process impossible and means migrants are forced to migrate illegally and are thus made more vulnerable to hostile employers who may abuse their workers' rights. Given these difficulties with obtaining a passport and coupled with the evidence we have seen regarding the common reasons people decide to migrate it seems unlikely that potential migrants are able to financially cover the cost of the application process.

Kone Kmeng will attempt to engage both with existing migrants and to be migrants explaining the importance of getting correct working papers and showing them the procedure to do so. A major difficulty of the illegal migration problem is that it is difficult to even access the people who migrate illegally because they are undocumented. This makes the initial stage of engaging with these migrants extremely challenging because it is hard to establish a point of contact. Kone Kmeng intends to try to engage with these migrants through our links with community leaders and our supplementary classes throughout many communities in several provinces across Cambodia. We work with community leaders, church pastors and respected members of community and through them this message can transcend. We would use facilitators' workshops and children at risk workshops to transfer the information, firstly of how important it is to attain correct working papers, and also the process involved in attaining them. In terms of Cambodian and Thai government authorities the resolution or even minimisation of risks to migrants associated in this migration is hugely beneficial

to both governments. Especially concerning illegal migration, Thai authorities would benefit from additional taxation while also meaning that whenever a migrant worker feels he or she has been unjustly treated their problems could be dealt with in an overt legitimate manner. Long term effects of reduced illegal migration would also include reduced feelings of nativism and resentment from Thai people towards Cambodians. Of course, any nativist feeling would not go away immediately but if Thai people felt as though Cambodians were working amongst them legitimately then over time it is likely these feelings would be reduced (Ostler 2010). Of course, this feeling would remain with those illegal employers who have less illegal labour to choose from but those legitimate Thai employers and workers would gradually see an improvement in their perception of the Khmer people. For Cambodian authorities, a reduction in problems facing migrants both physical and mental could provoke profound change in the lives of some Cambodian people and hence Cambodian society. Benefits could include increased school participation levels and result in a stronger more Cambodian society. Pragmatically speaking for Cambodian and Thai authorities, a reduction in red tape and the simplification of the passport, visa and working paper application process would be hugely beneficial. For Cambodian authorities, it would mean less processing of those deported for working illegally. For Thai authorities, it would mean less punitive measures and resources spent clamping down and deporting those working illegally in the country.

c. **NGO's**

As discussed, many preventative measures which target vulnerable migrants from Kone Kmeng, other NGO's and government services aim to prevent migrants putting themselves at risk by combating poverty and creating jobs. However, migration remains inevitable and many migrants are still putting

themselves at risk through illegal migration. The vast numbers of migrants travelling without working papers can be put down to a few things, a lack awareness over the application process and or the increased risk should they migrate illegally. But the main reason may be that migrants must have already secured their job in Thailand in order to receive the papers. This is rarely the case and as such, getting the correct papers becomes impossible for these migrants, many of which are among the most vulnerable of all the migrating Cambodians. Therefore, as raised in the discussion section another scheme which could be provided by an NGO or indeed a government program would be to commission a job centre which connected Cambodians intending to migrate with ethical employers in Thailand. This would function with multiple purposes; firstly it would mean there is a database of employers based in Thailand who are known to treat their workers fairly, perhaps even providing safe accommodation. They would also be accountable because they would operate through this job centre, meaning if a migrant is mistreated there is a process which they can go through to get justice and compensation. Crucially, this job centre in collaboration with the Thai employers would assist the migrants in the process of attaining a passport and working papers. This would mean any problems faced by migrants which are a result of them not being able to inform government authorities to support them would be negated. Lastly, a job centre would mean that Cambodian migrants may gain some autonomy and a sense of control over their lives. Even if they are migrating to Thailand as a last resort, if they were to go through a job centre they would have some element of choice over what their occupation in Thailand would be and the potential for career advancement.

d. Further Research

There was a consistent pattern throughout our own research and in our prior reading which alluded to a large number of businesses which take advantage of migrant workers in numerous ways. Our respondents cited problems including not being paid fairly, being overworked and being physically abused while at work, 58% of respondents saying they do not feel safe in Thailand. There have also been cases of forced drug abuse leading to addiction and even slavery of Cambodian migrants (Derks 2010). A strong recommendation for further research would be to look into characteristics and key distinctive features of these organisations which mistreat their illegal workers. This would be challenging because such organisations are inevitably going to try and avoid any exposure due to the nature of their activities. An approach could be to conduct focus groups and afterwards interviews with illegal migrants at the deportation centre in Poipet. Trying to discover why they decided to travel illegally, what problems they faced and what their suggestions for ensuring finding an employer that will treat them well. This research could also help to create an effective framework for conveying this information so that migrants are able to spot key indicators when searching for employment which may be indicative of an organisation committing malpractice. A final suggestion for further research would be to ask a variety of returned migrants both those who worked legally and those who worked illegally whether they felt that there was enough employers in Thailand who were looking for legal labourers. Or if they felt that that vast majority of the available work was from illegal companies only looking to employ illegal labour and even if they had a passport and papers they were still likely to end up being employed in the illegal labour market.

7. Conclusion

This paper explored the reasons for and effect of migration to Thailand on Cambodian young people, as it is an extensive phenomenon with the migration undertaken by thousands of Cambodians every year, so of course there is no single reason for or effect of the migration. However, there were some clear trends which emerged; the vast majority of our respondents did not migrate to Thailand out of choice but rather due to a serious lack of economic opportunities within Cambodia. Furthermore, we discovered that the cost and process of obtaining a passport and work permit massively increases the number of Cambodians who migrate illegally. This causes a raft of problems for Cambodian and Thai government authorities as well as endangering the individual migrants. Due to the nature of the main factor which drive people to migrate, namely, inadequate domestic economic opportunities, people will continue to migrate, and sometimes illegally even if they do not understand the risks involved. This is why the strategic base of recommendations had two main approaches, one being to continue to improve the domestic situation so people are not forced to put themselves in danger. These recommendations concentrate on job creation and poverty targeting policies, these recommendations are broad however and are policies that government and other stakeholders already implement. That is why most recommendations focused on ways that Kone Kmeng and other stakeholders could increase provision and accessibility of services sharing information on how to migrate safely. However, the challenge comes in how these services should be formatted and what they should include as well as how to make these services available to the most vulnerable of the migrants.

The potential impact of the attitudinal changes these services could provoke would be profound, especially if policies were able to access those still in school but considering dropping out to migrate to Thailand. If these young people were aware of the reality of migrating it could motivate them to do whatever possible to remain in school and improve their future outlook. This could have a transformative effect on their futures and on communities in border provinces where huge numbers of the young workforce leave to work in Thailand. Recommendations are also made for ways to target vulnerable migrants to make sure that they have access to the knowledge which would mean that if they are to migrate they do so in the safest way they can. These recommendations concentrate on illegal migration, if the process of obtaining a work permit was simplified both by Thai and Cambodian authorities and migrants understood the impact on their wellbeing of obtaining a permit the changes could be life-changing for individual migrants. If as recommended a form of job centre was created which enabled migrants to be ensured if legal and safe work whilst in Thailand the impacts could be huge. Long term it would starve malicious organisation who intend to treat Cambodian workers inhumanely of their workforce. In terms of further research this paper would strongly suggest that one way in which migrants could be far safer was if they were able to easily recognise organisations with malicious intent. If services existed that enlightened migrants as to what key characteristic and features of organisations which mistreated their workers were, they would then be more recognisable and avoidable which would be invaluable to migrants.

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