



Reasons for and effect of migrating to Thailand on Cambodian young people

Isaac Sampson & Sokleap Tray

December 2016

Introduction

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Origins of the phenomenon
- ▶ Common problems facing Cambodian migrants include not being paid, being beaten, being arrested and being seriously overworked (Sophal and Savannarith 1999)
- ▶ Geographical disparity
- ▶ In some villages in border provinces 78% of households have a family member with migration experience (ADIC 2003)
- ▶ School drop-out rates - provinces with highest rates are Battambang, Banteay Meanchey & Oddar Meanchey (USAID 2011)
- ▶ Possibly been a factor which creates culture of short termism (Sum et al 2009)

Purpose of research

- ▶ Understand if push or pull factors drive the migration - understanding this can help to shape the approach of any policies aimed to support migrants
- ▶ To understand the gaps in potential migrants knowledge so that any policies are better informed.
- ▶ Understand what makes so many people migrate illegally. Problems associated with migration can become irresolvable when they are working illegally (Walsh 2011)
- ▶ Create a theoretical framework for the adaptation of Kone Kmeng policies
- ▶ Make recommendations for other stakeholders in the welfare of Cambodian migrants

Potential impacts

- ▶ Impacts of workshops for Kone Kmeng program facilitators
- ▶ Impacts of workshops for migrants
- ▶ Higher prevalence of correct working papers leading to cutting down on power of illegal networks
- ▶ Potential widespread impacts because of the extensiveness of the phenomenon - young workforce of Cambodian remaining within Cambodia
- ▶ Understand what areas could be researched further to increase value of programs provided for migrants

Methodology

- ▶ Structured interviews
- ▶ All conducted in Khmer and then translated
- ▶ 49 recipients - 24 Male 25 Female
- ▶ Target age range 14-29
- ▶ Interviews in Poipet and Pattaya
- ▶ Analysed using SPSS statistical analysis program

Results

Demographics

- 24 males 25 females
- 9 provinces - Banteay Meanchey most common with 37% of respondents
- Respondents in Poipet more widely spread out than in Pattaya
- Age range - 17-29
- Only 14% reached High school
- Variety of occupations - construction worker most common
- Extremely limited ceiling - Despite 67% of construction workers working in Thailand for 5 or more years none claimed to be in management or supervisory roles
- More than 50% average stay in Thailand greater than 1 year

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	

Results

Gender differences

- Women's migration experience overall worse than men's
- Over 50% claim to feel unsafe in Thailand
- Higher proportion of men claimed to have 'no problems'
- Only 29% of women said they could find work every time compared to 58% of men
- Most prominent reason for both genders to drop out of school is family poverty.

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

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

Results

Motivations for migration

- Are push or pull factors more prominent in the migration of Cambodians to Thailand?
- 88% of respondents said given the choice they would remain in Cambodia rather than migrate
- 50% said they do not feel free when they are in Thailand
- 82% of respondents stopped studying because of family poverty
- Results suggest push factors are stronger

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

Results

Educational impacts

- 14% of respondents completed high school
- 98% of respondents claim education is important to them
- 73% say this is because staying in school increases job opportunities later in life
- 82% of respondents stopped school due to family poverty

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	

Results

Illegal migration

- Every respondent said the single biggest change which would make their migration safer would be having correct working papers
- 43% of respondents have had issues with not being paid fairly - problem compounded by lack of working papers
- Can cause exacerbation of nativist sentiment from Thai people to Cambodians
- Dimishes power of Cambodian and Thai authorities

Table

What problems do you face in Thailand?

	Not payed 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%	

Results

Lack of information

- Throughout analysis one trend became clear in why people migrate, why children drop out of school & prevalence of illegal migration
- That is an inaccurate perception of how it is to migrate
- When asked what advice the respondents would give to a child considering stopping school 73% said remain in school and 69% said educate children on negatives of working in Thailand.
- Problem is entrenched due to material deprivation

Table

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	

Discussion

Strategical approaches

- ▶ Due to the strongest driving force being of migration being a push force policies should aim to create opportunities within Cambodia
- ▶ Policies aimed at migrants can be classified into two groups:
- ▶ Preventative: Economic growth policies, poverty targeting measures, creating educational, vocational, job opportunities.
- ▶ Anticipatory: assume migration to be inevitable and apply a pragmatic approach. Including workshops, information packs and supplementary classes.
- ▶ This paper concentrates on anticipatory measures because preventative policies are more broad poverty targeting measures which already exist.

Discussion

Problem groups

- ▶ There are two broad groups which problems associated with migration can be classified into:
- ▶ Attitudinal - culture of migration, fatalistic attitudes, academic apathy
- ▶ Pragmatic - not being paid fairly, excess work, victim of abuse, arrested by police
- ▶ High rates of illegal migration and the problem with a lack of information are in some ways anomalies because they can be described as a pragmatic problems which are brought about in part due to attitudinal issues.

Recommendations

Attitudinal transformation

- ▶ The problem is that the prevalence of migration can negatively affect educational application, create fatalistic attitudes.
- ▶ Key information - Explaining impacts of dropping out of school, explain problems faced by Cambodians in Thailand, impacts of migrating illegally
- ▶ How to supply information to target groups:
- ▶ Kone Kmeng: Workshops for facilitators of existing programs explaining indicators someone may migrate. Workshops for at-risk demographics.
- ▶ Additional information in national curriculum about dangers of migration

Recommendations

Pragmatic changes

- ▶ The problems aiming to be addressed include; physical abuse, unfair payment, being overworked and being arrested by the police, not having a job prior to arriving in Thailand so unable to attain papers
- ▶ All these problems reduced if they migrate legally
- ▶ Key information about migrating legally - Implications of illegal migration to individuals safety and the process of getting working papers
- ▶ Kone Kmeng to utilise existing programs to share the information with those vulnerable groups via workshops and supplementary classes
- ▶ Cambodian government is recommended to simplify the process and the cost of attaining working papers. This could result in long term benefits to the Cambodian government.

Recommendations

Kone Kmeng workshop content

- ▶ Advice from former migrants
- ▶ Long term impacts of remaining in education
- ▶ Explaining likely problems if one is to migrate illegally
- ▶ How to get a work permit
- ▶ If you decide to migrate how to do so safely
- ▶ Advice for those thinking of migrating

Recommendations

Other Stakeholders

- ▶ Commission a job centre for migrants
- ▶ Accepts that migration is inevitable and tries to set up links with ethical Thai employers
- ▶ Deals with key problem associated with illegal migration that migrants normally do not have work organised prior to going to Thailand so can not get a work permit even if they attempt to.
- ▶ Connects employers to Cambodian migrant, through the employer they can organise work permit
- ▶ Also means they are going into a job on arrival with a employers with known record.
- ▶ Give migrants greater autonomy

Recommendations

Further research

- ▶ We recommend a study into the characteristics and key features of malicious Thai organisations who exploit migrants
- ▶ Could do be done through focus groups and interviews with migrants at the Poipet deportation centre
- ▶ Create an effective framework to share information about what to look out for and how to avoid such employers for those considering migrating
- ▶ Would cut off supply to these organisations and help Thai and Cambodian authorities to clamp down on these employers and those trafficking workers to them.

Conclusion

- ▶ Key trends
- ▶ Process to obtain working permits is problematic
- ▶ As push factors were stronger drivers of migration we had two strategical approaches. Most recommendations focused on improving provision and accessibility of services.
- ▶ Difficulties targeting the most at risk migrants because they are ‘invisible workers’

Reference list

- ▶ ADIC. (2003). Labour Migration to Thailand and the Thai-Cambodian Border Recent Trends in Four Villages of Battambang Province. *ADIC*. P1-40
- ▶ Sophal, C Savannarith, S. (1999). Cambodian Labour Migration to Thailand: A Preliminary Assessment. *Cambodia Development Resource Institute*.
- ▶ Sum A Et al. (2009). *The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School*. Available:
http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf. Last accessed 7th Nov 2016.
- ▶ USAID. (2011). *School Dropout Prevention Program: Dropout Trend Analysis*. Available:
http://schooldropoutprevention.com/wpcontent/files/reports/Trend_Analysis_Cambodia_English.pdf . Last accessed 4th Nov 2016.
- ▶ Walsh, J. (2011). *Cambodian Migrants in Thailand: Working Conditions and Issues*
Available:<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.848.7730&rep=rep1&type=pdf>. Last accessed 2nd Nov 2016.