



# Perspectives on Gender and Migration



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# Perspectives on Gender and Migration

From the Regional Seminar on Strengthening the  
Capacity of National Machineries for Gender Equality to  
Shape Migration Policies and Protect Migrant Women,  
Bangkok, 22-24 November 2006



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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

# Perspectives on Gender and Migration

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# INTRODUCTION

Migration, especially transnational movement, is becoming an increasingly important component of economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific and globally. The growing magnitude of migration is driven by economic disparities between countries, the effects of globalization and different demographic structures. Several million persons from many countries in the region currently live and work outside their country in an effort to improve their own well-being and that of their families.

The United Nations has taken several steps in the recent past to place international migration firmly on the development agenda, leading to the convening of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development as part of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in September 2006.

It is essential to take into account the gender dimensions of migration and development because most overseas employment opportunities and the social issues arising from migration are gender specific. It is for this reason that ESCAP has incorporated emerging migration issues within its programme on gender and development. This technical report on gender and development has been produced as part of the Project on Beijing+10 Regional Review and Follow-up, supported by the Government of Japan.

The first phase of the project supported documentation for and participation by representatives of least developed countries in the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes, held in Bangkok in September 2004. Under the second phase of the project, ESCAP organized the Regional Seminar on Strengthening the Capacity of National Mechanisms for Gender Equality to Shape Migration Policies and Protect Migrant Women, held in Bangkok from 22 to 24 November 2006.

This report contains the Seminar Outcome adopted at that meeting and discussion papers contributed to the meeting. The topics of the papers cover issues with which national mechanisms for gender equality may wish to become actively involved. The report includes the emerging social issue of migration of female professional workers between countries in the Pacific. It reviews the situation of migrants who are in much more vulnerable situations, particularly migrant domestic workers, female international marriage migrants, internal migrants working in the garment industry and in disguised sex work, and persons who are displaced by large-scale development projects. One chapter reviews the situation of children and other family members who remain at home when a mother or father migrates.

ESCAP will use the Seminar Outcome and papers in this technical report to guide its future

programme planning. It is our sincere wish that representatives of national machineries for gender equality, other government agencies and non-governmental organizations will find the information and recommendations contained in this report to be of value in policy formulation and programme implementation. It is our objective to promote processes to ensure that migration is beneficial for migrants and their families, as well as for the source and host countries.





## SEMINAR OUTCOME

The Regional Seminar on Strengthening the Capacity of National Machineries for Gender Equality to Shape Migration Policies and Protect Migrant Women met in Bangkok, Thailand from 22 to 24 November 2006. Participants in the Regional Seminar included representatives of national machineries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with migration issues, international organizations and university research institutes. Through detailed presentations and discussions on the gender dimensions of migration, the Regional Seminar considered the following issues to be conveyed to the respective national authorities and related parties.

### **National machineries for gender equality**

1. National machineries for gender equality in both source and host countries should aim to take an enhanced role in the formulation and implementation of policies related to internal and international migration. They should encourage gender mainstreaming in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of those policies. National machineries are urged to play a greater, or lead, role in particular migration issues, such as the protection of the rights of female migrants, child migrants and the children of migrants in vulnerable situations.
2. National machineries for gender equality should promote greater public dialogue concerning the gender aspects of migration. The national machineries are urged to incorporate the contributions of non-governmental and other relevant State and civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of migration policies.

### **Policy coherence**

3. In formulating migration-related policies, Governments should strive to achieve policy coherence, in which migration policies are consistent with other social and economic development policies, cooperation between areas of origin and of destination is promoted, and regional development goals are supported.
4. Statistics on internal and international migration, including on voluntary and forced migration, should be strengthened in order to support the formulation of appropriate policies. The improved monitoring and documentation of migration would enhance migration management. Statistics should be gender responsive and disaggregated by sex, age and origin. Where feasible, more research should be conducted on the modes of regular and irregular migration, the operation of recruitment and employment agents, the employment conditions of migrants, and the costs and benefits of migration to the migrants and their families.

5. Governments are encouraged to pursue co-development strategies in which source and destination countries cooperate to promote cross-border communication and investment, the development of human capital, the efficient transfer of remittances and return migration. Migration policies should benefit countries of origin and destination, and, in particular, migrants themselves.

### **Protection of all migrants**

6. Governments, the private sector and civil society are urged to ensure that internationally agreed human rights apply to migrants on a non-discriminatory basis. Similarly, legislation on the protection of workers should apply both to nationals and to migrant workers. National legislation concerning migrants should be aligned with the provisions of core international conventions and instruments that those countries have ratified, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Covenants, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and ILO International Labour Standards presented in the reference page of this Seminar Outcome.
7. Migrant workers, where feasible, should be entitled to change employers without being forced to leave the country.
8. All migrants and accompanying family members should have the right to access health care, including reproductive health care. In that regard, Governments in source and host countries should consider the implementation of health insurance schemes for migrants, and employers should be required to provide a reasonable opportunity for migrant workers to seek health care.
9. International migrant workers should receive pre-departure training on the culture and lifestyle of the destination country, on their rights and obligations, on the responsibilities of placement agencies and employers and on how to access assistance. Governments are encouraged to provide training upon return as well, including livelihood training and financial management.
10. Governments in both source and destination countries should regulate and monitor the functioning of recruitment and placement agencies to ensure that they are in compliance with the laws and regulations applicable to them. Governments of source and destination countries should strengthen their mechanisms to protect migrants while abroad.

11. Governments and the private sector in both source and host countries are urged to develop social protection mechanisms, particularly for migrants that permit them to transfer benefits, including pensions, to their home country.

### **Vulnerable migrants**

12. Governments, in cooperation with other interested agencies, such as NGOs, should consider setting up telephone hotlines, where applicable, and other communication channels at local levels for migrant workers with complaints concerning violations of their rights and contracts.
13. Governments are encouraged to promote the employment and social protection of domestic workers. Migrant domestic workers should receive a standard employment contract covering such matters as working conditions, days off, right to privacy, wages, hours of work, and so forth. Government authorities should monitor the conditions of domestic workers at their workplace, even in the absence of a complaint or prior notification.
14. NGOs are encouraged to provide bilingual education for children of migrants and migrant children in the host country, wherever relevant, when such education is not provided by the Government.
15. Source countries and those receiving significant numbers of female international marriage migrants should review procedures for marriage to foreigners and set up a mechanism to monitor the situation of such migrants in order to protect their human rights and to ensure that they do not become victims of trafficking.

### **Trafficking in persons**

16. Governments, in cooperation with other stakeholders, should strengthen their efforts to counter trafficking in persons, especially women and children. As most instances of trafficking involve exploitation in the place of work, Governments should step up their inspection efforts in local areas and in occupations where trafficking is suspected to occur.
17. Governments are encouraged to continue the effective implementation of global, subregional and bilateral agreements to combat trafficking in persons, particularly (a) the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, (b) the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, and (c) the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the members of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking.

## **Non-voluntary internal migration**

18. Governments, international organizations and NGOs should give greater assistance to persons who have been displaced by conflict and disasters. Such assistance should include ensuring livelihoods, shelter, counselling, rehabilitation and vocational training. Gender concerns should be mainstreamed in such programmes for assistance, recognizing the particular vulnerability of women and children in situations of conflict.
19. When persons are required to relocate because of development projects and environment-related matters, Governments are urged to ensure that their circumstances after relocation are better or at least no worse than prior to their move. Gender concerns should be mainstreamed during pre-displacement planning, physical removal and the transition and integration period. Livelihood programmes for involuntarily displaced persons, such as skills training, income-generating activities, vocational training and small business training, should be gender responsive. Resettlement policies and implementation should ensure that women do not disproportionately lose property and ownership rights and other civil rights.

## **Regional cooperation**

20. International organizations, subregional bodies and national Governments should continue and strengthen existing mechanisms for consultation and cooperation concerning international migration. NGOs, workers' organizations and other civil society organizations are also urged to strengthen regional and transnational cooperation on migration issues.

## References

The following ILO International Labour Standards are referred to in paragraph 6 above:

### *Conventions on fundamental principles and rights at work*

- The Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97)
- The Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- Freedom of Association Convention, 1948 (87)
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- Discrimination in Employment Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (182)

### *Conventions on gender equality*

- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No.156)
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (183)
- Conventions 100 and 111 above

### *Additional relevant convention*

- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (169)

# FEMALE LABOUR MIGRATION IN CAMBODIA

*Chen Chen Lee\**

## **Introduction**

In Cambodia, there is a famous saying that “men are like gold, while women are like white cloths”. This means the only way to preserve the purity and self-worth of a Khmer woman is to keep her inside the house because once a white cloth is soiled, it can never be clean again. Increasingly, Khmer women are breaking the code of conduct of the “good Khmer woman” by venturing outside of their homes in search of paid employment. Hundreds of thousands have migrated to cities, such as Phnom Penh and Siem Reap; many others have travelled to work in other countries, such as Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and even Saudi Arabia. While male migrants generally find themselves working in offshore fishing, construction sites and plantations, Cambodian female migrants work in domestic service, fish processing, shrimp peeling, restaurants, plantations, factories and prostitution. Compared with men, women migrate for a wider range of reasons, beyond that of direct economic need. Women tend to move due to family reasons – 50 per cent compared with 30 per cent for men. Women move because they want to join their husbands who are working in Phnom Penh or in Thailand; women move because they have family or relatives who encourage them to do so; and they move because of landlessness, poverty and a desire to seek a better life. Contrary to common perceptions, a higher percentage of men move as a result of marriage, 25 per cent compared to about 10 per cent for women (NIS 2005). This reflects the need for more studies of migration in the cultural context.

International labour migration is not a new phenomenon in Cambodia, but it is only recently that policymakers and development organizations have begun taking a pronounced and fervent interest in it. A quick assessment reveals that the Cambodian policy and legislation on international migration remains at the infancy stage, despite the establishment of several bilateral labour agreements in the region. The awareness of labour rights and of the consequences of migration is low among Cambodian migrant workers, most of whom had their rights or interests undermined at some stage in the migration process. Migration, regular or irregular, is perceived as a stopgap measure in a country where viable employment opportunities are limited. Cambodian female migrant workers tend to find employment overseas as domestic workers, factory workers, labourers, fish cutters, shrimp peelers, and so on. Compared with men, they are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to gender-based discrimination and their having a lower set of skills and knowledge. In Cambodia, there is a marked gender bias in terms of education – while 4 per cent of males in Phnom Penh

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\* Independent research consultant.

have never attended school, almost 33 per cent of rural females have never attended (NIS 2005). Furthermore, few women are able to access vocational training.

With lower education and literacy, and being less skilled and trained than men, Khmer women face limited options in finding good jobs that are well paid – both abroad and in their country. Within Cambodia, there are few waged employment opportunities for women, except in the garment industry. In 2005, garment manufacturing accounted for 80.4 per cent of Cambodia's total exports, with some 250,000 people directly or indirectly employed in the sector. A total of 85 per cent of garment factory workers are women from rural villages (World Bank 2006). The need for female workers in the garment sector has led to the increasing migration of young women from rural areas to Phnom Penh and other urban areas. The *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004* stated that 18.3 per cent of women in Phnom Penh worked in garment factories (NIS 2005). In addition, the informal labour sector has absorbed some of the female migrants from the rural areas by providing work in street peddling, construction, manual labour, domestic service, garbage collection, and so forth. However, the informal sector is not covered by labour laws and, therefore, it cannot provide any form of social security for the massive numbers of women it is currently supporting.

## I. GENDER DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

### A. Regular migration

Most of the regular labour migration from Cambodia to overseas is facilitated by private recruitment agencies. These agencies play an all-encompassing role in recruiting Cambodians who wish to gain employment overseas, helping them obtain passports, valid visas and work permits, and providing them with pre-departure orientation and training. Recent years have seen an increasing number of Cambodians migrating to such countries as Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia and Thailand to seek paid employment. According to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, a total of 9,154 Cambodians have been registered and sent to work in Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Saudi Arabia. Women make up 58 per cent of this figure. Malaysia is of particular significance as women make up a sizeable portion (73.7 per cent) of the total number of Cambodians sent there (table 1). Most of these women work as domestic workers, but some also work as factory workers, shop assistants, plantation workers and construction workers.

**Table 1. Khmer migrants deployed to Malaysia, 1998-2006**

Year	Total number			Domestic workers <sup>a</sup>	Migrants for HRD factory <sup>b</sup>		
	Total	Male	Female		Total	Male	Female
1998	120	-	120	120	-	-	-
1999	86	-	86	86	-	-	-
2000	502	307	195	82	420	307	113
2001	846	342	504	393	453	342	111
2002	1,049	246	803	437	612	246	366
2003	573	73	500	500	73	73	-
2004	809	105	704	582	227	105	122
2005	1,776	467	1,309	1,008	768	467	301
2006	895	267	687	497	362	172	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,656</b>	<b>1,807</b>	<b>4,908</b>	<b>3,705</b>	<b>2,914</b>	<b>1,712</b>	<b>1,203</b>

Source: The Statistics of Khmer Migrants to Abroad by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

<sup>a</sup>Figures for domestic workers are from the following recruitment agencies: Cambodia Labour Supply Pty., Ltd.; Philimore Cambodia Co., Ltd; MLC Labour Supply Company, Human Resource Development Co., Ltd.; RTH Central International Co., Ltd.; OSM Group Co., Ltd.; and Quata Human Resources Co., Ltd.

<sup>b</sup>HRD refers to the recruitment agency Human Resource Development Co., Ltd.

**Table 2. Khmer migrants deployed to the Republic of Korea, 2003-2006**

Year	Total			Factory <sup>a</sup>			Agriculture <sup>b</sup>			Fishing <sup>b</sup>		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2003	756	638	118	756	638	118	-	-	-	-	-	-
2004	674	516	155	598	443	155	76	76	-	-	-	-
2005	468	432	36	341	305	36	100	100	-	27	27	-
2006	566	508	58	554	496	58	12	12	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,464</b>	<b>2,094</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>2,249</b>	<b>1,882</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: The Statistics of Khmer Migrants to Abroad by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

<sup>a</sup>Figures for this category are from International Manpower Cambodia Co., Ltd.

<sup>b</sup>Figures for agriculture and fishing are from NH Manpower Limited.

**Table 3. Khmer migrants in Saudi Arabia, 2005**

Year	Domestic workers <sup>a</sup>		
	Total	Male	Female
2005	34	-	34

Source: The Statistics of Khmer Migrants to Abroad by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

<sup>a</sup>Figures for domestic workers sent to Saudi Arabia are from Accept Group Co., Ltd.

The main issues and problems that Cambodian female migrants face in Malaysia are (a) the confiscation of travel documents, (b) the withholding of salary or salary reduction, (c) harsh working conditions, (d) a lack of freedom of communications and movement, (e) inability to access bank accounts or keep pocket money for emergency (f) limited or no access to health facilities, and (g) sexual harassment (Human Rights Watch 2005).



The majority of these women migrants have been recruited in their villages by recruitment agencies. Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham are two of the top sending provinces identified. The proximity of these provinces to the capital of Phnom Penh may be one reason why recruitment agencies have targeted them as good source provinces. Generally, the ages of the women range from 17 to over 30. There appears to be a mix of single and married women. Although the official minimum age for application is 18, there were cases of underaged girls who were illegally recruited and sent overseas. Most of the female migrants have little formal education and speak little English. The inability to express themselves in a language understandable to their employers has been a major source of frustration and isolation for some of the women, especially those working as domestic workers.

The average salary of female migrant workers in Malaysia is about US\$120 per month, which is significantly above the national average of US\$30. The contract is usually for two years, extendable for a maximum of one or two additional years. According to Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM) Cambodia, which provides pre-departure training for many Khmer women sent to work in Malaysia, the other common problems that they face are communication problems with their employers, long working hours with little time for rest, an environment of discrimination, no free weekends nor annual leave, and a deep sense of loneliness and homesickness. Most migrants have bank accounts that are managed by their employers. Some of them remit money home with the help of their employers or private agents, but many have reported not being able to access their own bank accounts or not knowing how much money they had in them until the end of their contracts. There have been reports of sexual harassment and abuse, but the author did not come across any in her research.

Amongst the women interviewed, those who had worked as domestic workers tended to be more vulnerable than those employed as factory workers or shop and restaurant assistants. Due to the nature of their jobs, domestic workers tend to work alone, in the private confines of their employers' homes, and are dependent on their employers for shelter, food and human company. Without money of their own or the knowledge of local languages, they have little or no recourse to articulate their needs or ask for help. Oftentimes, their freedom of movement and association are severely curtailed by their employers. The majority of Cambodian female migrants have attended only primary school. Being less educated and informed than men, they may not know when their rights are being violated or where and how to seek assistance if urgently required. At present there is also no reintegration programme – by the recruitment agencies or the Government of Cambodia – for returned female (and male) migrants. For almost all of the women, finding a good job in Cambodia after their return is their biggest source of frustration and problems.

## **B. Irregular migration**

The Cambodia-Thailand border town of Poipet sees hundreds of Cambodians crossing the border daily. Thailand is a top destination for many Cambodian migrants due to its proximity, its similar culture and a shared history. Over the years, a complex network of kinship, labour brokers, human smugglers and intermediaries has flourished to help facilitate cross-border movements. While many have voluntarily migrated to Thailand for work, many have also been trafficked into such exploitative situations as prostitution, organized begging, forced labour, and so forth. A greater proportion of the Cambodians who cross the Poipet border daily come from the nearby villages and provinces than from places farther away. While those living closer to the border usually migrate on their own and tend to work in places near the border, those living farther inland migrate through private recruiters and work in places farther away from the border. According to Cambodian Women for Peace and Development, people in Prey Veng Province have been known to pay as much as US\$90 to private recruiters to be smuggled into Thailand. Since most villagers are poor, they have to sell their land or their cattle or borrow money in order to raise the required recruitment fees. Some of these private recruiters are migrants themselves – their work experience in Thailand has acquired them the role of “employment agent” amongst their friends and neighbours.

It is difficult to obtain reliable data on irregular migration. The National AIDS Authority has postulated that there were some 2,824,925 immigrants (regular and irregular) in Thailand, of which irregular, unskilled migrants from Cambodia constituted a total of 183,541 (6.5 per cent).<sup>1</sup> The main issues and problems that Cambodian migrants face in Thailand are (a) no legalization (fear, lack of freedom), (b) a lack of regular work, (c) violence, (d) dangerous and difficult working conditions, (e) a lack of health care, (f) high cost of living, and (g) no proper safe remittance transfer system.

Due to their illegal status, Cambodian migrants are not accorded the rights and benefits that other migrant workers are able to enjoy under Thai labour laws. The Thai Immigration Act gives Thailand the right to deport or penalize migrant workers who enter without visas or work without work permits. The lack of legalization creates a culture of fear surrounding the migrants, who enjoy a very small degree of freedom due to their fear of being discovered and arrested by the Thai police. Their inability to claim any rights leads to them having to endure harsh working conditions with little or no access to health services. In addition, Cambodian migrants in Thailand face the problem of not having regular work because competition for jobs is stiff. In interviews conducted for this study, some migrants said that they had difficulties saving money because the cost of living in Thailand was high. The remittance system for migrants working in Thailand is a highly privatized and informal one. Migrant workers express their wish to remit through Thai agents who relay the message to

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<sup>1</sup> Presentation by Tep Navuth, Chief of PCS Unit, National AIDS Authority of Cambodia at the First Inter-Ministerial Political Workshop on Migration organized by the International Organization for Migration, 10 March 2006, Phnom Penh.

their Cambodian counterparts, and the Cambodian agent then delivers the money personally to the migrants' families. The rates of commission are between 4 and 10 per cent. One woman who was interviewed cited a rate as high as 30 per cent. Incidences of fraud are common and there is little that the workers can do about it.

At the border town of Poipet, Khmer women migrate regularly to nearby Aranyaprathet Province in Thailand to work as shop assistants, fruit sellers and sweet sellers for mostly Thai employers and a handful of Khmer employers. The Chief of Procheathom village believed that Rongkleu market in Thailand was supporting more than 90 per cent of their villagers. While some commute between their villages and Thailand every day, others migrate every two to three weeks. For those staying in Thailand beyond a day, they can apply for border passes that allow them to stay for a week or more. Overall, migration from Poipet to Thailand is largely circular and non-permanent in nature. Khmer women have told this researcher that they could earn a maximum of 4,000-6,000 baht per month (US\$111-\$167), depending on the amount of work they do.

## II. GENDER DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION

The *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004* indicated that 72 per cent of Cambodia's population has never moved (NIS 2005). About 16 per cent were living in the same village as they had been five years before. This can be compared with Phnom Penh, where more than 73 per cent of the inhabitants are migrants (Kim, no date). According to the *Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey 2004*, rural-to-rural migration constituted the number one movement within the country at 68.9 per cent. Rural-to-urban migration came in second at 13.9 per cent (NIS 2004). The conclusions are similar to the findings from the 1996 demographic survey and the 1998 population census, which showed that most migration in the country had occurred from rural to rural areas (NIS 2000). It is common for people who have little or no land to farm to migrate within the rural areas to find seasonal work in agriculture, rubber or palm tapping, sugar production, forest logging and land clearing. However, such movements are usually short-term and unorganized, hence, data is difficult to obtain (Oxfam GB 2000). Over 86 per cent of rural migrants have remained in rural areas, while only 17.3 per cent of all migrants have migrated from rural to urban areas (Oxfam GB 2000).

At the same time, there is a high level of seasonal migration to Phnom Penh; most of these seasonal migrants work as construction workers, scavengers, moto-taxi drivers, porters, street peddlers, small traders, and so forth. Although there is evidence of women migrating from the villages to work as domestic workers in Phnom Penh, no one knows the extent of this trend. The prevailing perception of abundant job and educational opportunities in Phnom Penh will continue to attract many from the rural areas to migrate to the capital. According to a study conducted by the Royal University of Phnom Penh, most of the migrants in Phnom Penh fall into the age group of 20-29 (54.6 per cent)

and most of them are females (Tuot 2004).

In a study that defines a migrant as someone who has moved from one province to another, it was found that, compared with men, women are more likely to move from rural areas to Phnom Penh than from one rural area to another. Most female migrants are young women aged 16-22 years, unmarried women are less inclined to migrate, and the migration status of women is not strongly influenced by their educational attainment (Tuot 2004). Table 4 shows that there is a high percentage of female migrants in urban Phnom Penh and other urban areas who are engaged in industry and services work.<sup>2</sup> Assuming that the services sector here also includes the informal labour sector, it can be concluded that female migrants are more likely to work in the manufacturing/construction sector and the informal labour sector.

**Table 4. Percentage of female labour force classified as 5-year migrants, by economic sector and place of residence**

<i>Economic sector/ Place of residence</i>	<i>Urban Phnom Penh</i>			<i>Other urban areas</i>			<i>Rural areas</i>		
	<i>Non-migrant</i>	<i>Migrant</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Non-migrant</i>	<i>Migrant</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Non-migrant</i>	<i>Migrant</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agriculture	47.0 2,528	53.0 2,846	100.0 5,374	89.9 62,613	10.1 7,004	100.0 69,617	97.0 1,309,611	3.0 40,818	100.0 1,350,429
Industry	17.9 4,957	82.1 22,771	100.0 27,728	32.1 5,509	67.9 10,701	100.0 15,760	59.6 27,033	40.4 18,319	100.0 45,352
Services	34.3 40,905	65.7 78,523	100.0 119,428	44.6 25,694	55.4 31,931	100.0 57,625	76.6 77,101	23.4 23,498	100.0 100,599

Source: Tuot, 2004.

The garment factories have attracted many young, single Khmer women to migrate to work in the urban areas. However, the hospitality and commercial sex sectors have also provided a source of livelihood for a large proportion of female migrants. It is estimated that over 79 per cent of workers in hotels, restaurants and bars are women, who take on low-paying jobs as clerks, waitresses and beer promoters. There are no reliable figures on the number of sex workers in Cambodia, but one report cited 10,000 who were based in Phnom Penh (Oxfam GB 2000). In addition, many female migrants find employment in the informal labour sector as domestic workers, hairdressers, petrol and cigarette sellers, manicurists, shop assistants, fruit and food sellers, labourers, and so forth. In short, they take work that falls within the domain of “female work” and which requires fewer skills.

<sup>2</sup> Industry refers to manufacturing and construction while services refers widely to retail, hotel/restaurants, business, community and social work, education, domestic work and others.

## A. Garment factory workers

The garment sector is a critical component of the Cambodian economy, representing 80 per cent of the country's total exports and accounting for more than 10 per cent of the GDP in year 2003.<sup>3</sup> The sharp growth in the number of garment factories in Cambodia has had a profound impact on women's lives. It is estimated that some 250,000 workers are employed in the garment sector, with women as the majority. The prospects of having a stable job in which they could earn as much as US\$60-\$70 a month have attracted many young, single women to migrate from their villages to urban areas. Some of them have become the breadwinners of their families; some have returned home with money to rebuild houses and purchase new cattle and livestock. These success stories have led to an increasing number of women living in the villages to look upon migration as an attractive option.

With more and more women becoming garment factory workers, the resistance to Khmer women moving out of their homes is slowly decreasing (Womyn's Agenda for Change 2003). While the percentage of women who migrate from one rural area to another is significantly higher than that of women who migrate from rural to urban areas, the fact is that more Khmer women are migrating than before (NIS 2005). Economic reasons motivated most of the garment factory workers to leave their hometowns. However, social networks also play an important role in their decision-making and the migration process. Compared with women working as beer promoters, garment factory workers are more likely to migrate as a result of the recommendation of family, relatives, friends and/or their presence at the destinations. Many of them rely on their network of family, relatives and friends, and, to a lesser extent, *meekeol*, or broker, to find a job or housing. Such social networks provide much needed emotional and psychological support for the young women, most of whom are travelling and living out of their homes for the first time in their lives (Maltoni, no date).

## B. Beer promotion women

There are estimated to be more than 4,000 beer promotion women in Cambodia. The figure is likely to increase both within Phnom Penh and across the country. According to a survey of 640 beer promoters, the majority were married or had been married – 22 per cent were married, 34 per cent were widowed, divorced or separated, 21 per cent lived with a man, and 23 per cent were single (CARE Cambodia 2005b). Most were 20-29 years of age. Their workplaces varied and included beer gardens, karaoke and other types of bars, nightclubs, restaurants and soup shops. The majority of these women (73 per cent) worked on a commission-only basis. Beer promoters who had a basic salary received US\$50 a month after their probation period. Although it was possible to earn \$100-

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<sup>3</sup> See Asian Development Outlook 2004 on Cambodia by the Asian Development Bank at <http://www.adb.org/documents/books/abc/2004/com.asp>, accessed 22 April 2006.

\$200 a month, this implied they would have to work seven days a week. The primary motivating factor behind their work was to help support their families.

In Cambodia, there is a strong stigmatization of beer promotion as “sex work”. Beer promotion women are commonly perceived as “indirect sex workers” and hence, having “lower morals”, which perpetuates a culture in which they are subject to verbal, physical and sexual harassment. A survey by CARE in 2003 showed that 80 per cent of the 184 women questioned said that they had witnessed other promotion women being physically hurt, and nearly half said they themselves had been physically hurt in their workplace. One in 10 women had experienced a coerced sexual act (touching a man’s penis, rape) more than 10 times (CARE Cambodia 2005b). Such harassment and abuse happens on a frequent basis and occurs beyond the workplace. Outlet owners are reluctant to take responsibility for the safety and welfare of beer promoters as they are not considered staff, merely subcontractors to the beer companies (CARE Cambodia 2005a). Working on a commission-only basis places them in an even more precarious situation in which they need to sell their beer at all costs. Yet such harassment and abuse of human rights contravene international conventions and Cambodian labour laws.

### **III. REVIEW OF THE EXISTING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ON MIGRATION**

#### **A. International and regional levels**

Cambodia has ratified the key United Nations human rights treaties that are relevant to migrants and women – civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; racial discrimination; discrimination against women; and child rights. Although Cambodia is a signatory to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,<sup>4</sup> it has yet to ratify it. Cambodia has also ratified 12 International Labour Organization conventions, 7 of which are fundamental conventions. At the bilateral level, Cambodia has mutual labour cooperation with three countries in the region, namely, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. Even though Cambodia and Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on cooperation in the employment of workers in May 2003, it is only in 2007 that recruitment agencies licensed with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training have started sending Khmer migrants officially to Thailand. The Government of Thailand has agreed to accept and legalize the status of Cambodians who are working in Thailand illegally. An Inter-ministries Working Group for Cooperation has been set up, composed of Cambodian and Thai officials, to issue identification cards to Khmer migrant workers in Thailand, with which they may proceed to apply for a work

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<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990, annex.

permit, which would allow them to stay and work in Thailand. According to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Thai Ministry of Labour has submitted a quota of some 20,000 as the number of Cambodian workers needed in Thailand. Three licensed employment companies are reportedly in the process of recruiting workers to meet this quota.<sup>5</sup>

Cambodia has no MOU with Malaysia; instead, it has an official mutual labour cooperation agreement called Recruitment Procedures for Cambodian Nationals for Employment in Malaysia, which was first created in 1997 and then revised in 1999. More than 6,600 Cambodians have been officially sent to work in Malaysia since 1998.<sup>6</sup> The majority of them are women who work as domestic workers, factory workers and shop assistants. At the beginning of 2001, the Government of Cambodia and the Government of Malaysia started to negotiate an MOU that would place Cambodian migrant workers under the relevant laws and regulations of Malaysia in terms of wages, allowances, benefits and working hours. This MOU would also outline the obligations of employers and labour agencies in both countries. At the time of writing, the two countries were still in discussion about this.<sup>7</sup>

In Cambodia, the rules and regulations governing the sending of Khmer workers for overseas work are contained in one policy document, namely, Sub-decree 57 on Sending Khmer Migrants to Work Abroad. Essentially, the Sub-decree provides recruitment agencies with guidelines on how to recruit and send Cambodians for overseas work. There are currently 34 companies licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. However, in practice, only a handful are in active operation.<sup>8</sup> Under the Sub-decree, recruitment agencies are required to provide migrants with pre-departure training and to ensure there is a labour contract between the workers and the employers, stating clearly the place and type of work, salary and other benefits, working hours, accommodation and food, insurance for each migrant and a return programme. As the only national policy on migration, Sub-decree 57 is a reflection of the current weakness and inefficacy of the labour migration system in Cambodia. First, the Sub-decree is an outdated policy document that does not reflect the migration dynamics and realities of today, having been created more than 10 years ago. The provisions contained in the 22 articles of the Sub-decree are rudimentary and lack clarity in both the processes and the desirable minimum standards. There are only five articles that refer (explicitly or implicitly) to the worker, namely article 9 on the employment contract, article 10 on the rights of annual leave, article 14 on pre-departure training, article 19 on missing workers and article 20 on the violations of provisions. The provisions are so broad and subject to interpretation that they amount to little

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with an official of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Phnom Penh, 25 August 2006.

<sup>6</sup> The actual number of Cambodian workers in Malaysia is likely to be higher, after taking into account those who were smuggled or trafficked into the country. It also includes people who entered Malaysia legally but subsequently became migrants with an irregular status after leaving their original place of employment.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with an official of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Phnom Penh, 25 August 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Only eight companies are actively sending workers to Malaysia and the Republic of Korea. No worker has been sent to Thailand or Japan yet. Based on an interview with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Phnom Penh, 25 August 2006.

protection for the workers. For example, article 10 states that workers were entitled to 1.5 days of leave per working month, which is below the international minimum standard of one rest day per week. Article 5 recommends that every worker be provided with social security contributions, but it is unclear as to what they should be. Under article 20, any person that violated the provisions would be punished, but there is no mention of what the penalty was.

The Government of Cambodia has left the recruitment, management and placement of migrant workers largely to the discretion of private, profit-driven employment agencies registered with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Due to inadequate checks and balances by the authorities, malpractices by the agencies are prevalent, including overcharging workers for food and lodging during their stay in Phnom Penh, not explaining clearly to workers their terms of contract, dismissing their complaints and concerns, and a lack of monitoring the migrants' workplaces. The Sub-decree has no provisions for the monitoring of private recruitment agencies. It can be inferred that these recruitment agencies are largely accountable to no one but themselves. The opportunities for fraud and exploitative practices are therefore aplenty, but the magnitude of them needs to be investigated further.

## **B. National level**

The 1997 Labour Law is the most up-to-date and comprehensive legislation governing the infrastructure, employment and treatment of workers in Cambodia. Under article 3, "workers" refers to persons of both sexes and all nationalities who have signed an employment contract in return for remuneration, under the direction and management of another person. Therefore, with the exception of those working in the informal sector (for example, street traders and domestic workers), all female workers, including beer promoters, garment factory workers and karaoke hostesses, are entitled to their rights and benefits under the Labour Law. The Law recognizes gender-specific concerns and affords quite liberal rights to women in employment (UNIFEM and others 2004). It has strong provisions to protect women against harassment and abuse in their workplaces. For example, under article 177, women and children are protected from working in "dangerous" occupations; special protection is also offered to women who work during pregnancy.

However, the public knowledge and legal enforcement of these laws is low or non-existent (CARE Cambodia 2005). Furthermore, there are no specific provisions within the Cambodian Labour Law pertaining to the social and legal protection of female migrant workers. Informal sector businesses, which support numerous female workers, are not subject to regulation. This implies that women in informal sector occupations will continue to have limited access to life-skills development, credit, markets and market information, and to lack access to assistance when faced with situations of abuse or violation.



## IV. STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL MACHINERIES TO PROTECT FEMALE MIGRANTS

In Cambodia, any policy or legislation related to migration comes under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Specifically, it is the Department of Employment and Manpower that oversees the registration and sending of Cambodian workers for work abroad. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is the overarching national machinery for promoting the role and status of women in Cambodia (Ing 2005). For a long time, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been actively involved in the prevention and eradication of trafficking in Khmer women and children. Female labour migration has recently surfaced as a new policy agenda for the Ministry. In early 2006, it decided to integrate the "promotion and support (of a) gender-responsive migration policy" into its yearly work plan. In October 2006, the Ministry of Women's Affairs collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training to create what would be considered the first Inter-ministerial Taskforce on Migration (IMTM) in Cambodia, an initiative supported by the UNIFEM Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers Project (D'Cunha 2005). The original idea was to create a body that looked specifically at the needs and interests of female migrant workers, but a series of long discussions finally ended with a task force that was broadly mandated to advocate for the protection of migrant workers, with a special focus on female migrant workers. IMTM has the three following objectives:

- Open up dialogue with the relevant government authorities and the relevant civil society organizations in order to organize effective strategies and mechanisms to protect migrant workers, particularly women.
- Exchange information on the scope and nature of the problems of migrants to initiate and strengthen efforts and policies undertaken by national and international stakeholders, and to understand the special protection needs of female migrant workers.
- Coordinate interventions that help ensure safe migration and bring together efforts of effective multinational intervention to support the national response to migrant issues in Cambodia and abroad.

As migration is a cross-cutting issue, delegates from various ministries as well as the Cambodian National Council for Women will be invited to join the task force as permanent members. International non-governmental organizations, embassies, unions and workers may participate in the task force as observers. As IMTM is only in its early inception, no discussion has yet taken place as to what their priority activities will be. There are still some teething problems with coordination that need to be resolved between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. However, once the differences can be put aside, and, if given adequate

resources, capacity and political will, IMTM has the potential to elevate the status of Khmer migrant workers, particularly that of female migrants. Some of the recommendations for IMTM include:

- Publicly acknowledge and educate families, communities and the society on the roles and value of female migrant workers. This would encourage policymakers from the different ministries to be more responsive to the special needs of female migrant workers and incorporate gender dimensions of migration into their policy formulation and development.
- Promote greater public awareness at the village level of the pros and cons of migration, the current existing legislation on migration, and Cambodian labour laws and rights. Information about safe migration should be clear and simple and communicated to people in a way that is easily understood and widely accessible. Women should be made aware of the particular vulnerabilities they might face when they choose to migrate, and what they can do when confronted with trouble. This can be done with the assistance of the Provincial Department of Women's Affairs and the Women and Children Focal Points at the commune level.
- Promote gender disaggregated statistics and gender sensitive research on the number and demographic characteristics of external and internal Khmer female migrants. There is a need for the greater documentation of the volume and modes of regular and irregular migration, the processes and consequences of migration, the relationship between workers and labour agents/recruiters/employers, the abuses and problems that migrants encounter at their workplace, and the costs and benefits of migration for stakeholders in order to identify appropriate solutions and intervention strategies.
- Develop pre-departure training programmes for female migrant workers. Apart from providing such essential information as the language, customs and lifestyle norms in receiving countries, pre-departure training is imperative for educating female migrant workers on their rights, the rights and obligations of employers and recruitment agencies, and the relevant labour laws and immigration policies of receiving countries, as well as how to access services and assistance. This is of particular consequence as many female migrants have received little formal education and are ingenuous before the tricks of dishonest employment agencies. Furthermore, it is important that workers be told of their rights and responsibilities under the employment contracts between the recruitment agency and the worker, and between the incumbent employer and the worker. It is strongly recommended that such legal advice be provided by an independent, external body and not by the recruitment agency.
- Institute clear mechanisms for monitoring the conduct of recruitment agencies and for the enforcement of laws and regulations. There should also be stiffer penalties, such as blacklisting, the revoking of the license, the confiscation of the deposit fund, heavy fines, imprisonment,

and criminal proceedings, for companies found to be either negligent or mistreating their workers, as a precedent to others.

- Lobby for the Cambodian National Council for Women, an inter-ministerial body tasked with monitoring Cambodia's compliance with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to assist in applying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to female migrant workers. While there is no specific article on migration in the Convention, the rights and concerns of female migrant workers can be addressed by drawing on some of the existing provisions, such as article 10 on equal access to education, article 11 on equal rights in employment, article 12 on equal rights to health and health care and General Recommendation No. 19 on gender-based violence. The trafficking of female migrant workers for exploitation violates article 6 on trafficking and General Recommendation No. 19.
- Promote greater inter-ministry cooperation and support, particularly among the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the areas of the protection of migrant workers and the prosecution of those found to be exploiting them. The Government of Cambodia should seek closer economic and diplomatic ties with receiving countries and establish consensus on the protection and safety of migrant workers. At the same time, the Government of Cambodia should take a firm stand against the discrimination and mistreatment of its people and reject labour migration arrangements with countries that do not respect human rights.
- Involve civil society organizations and employers' and workers' associations in developing policy documents, bilateral labour agreements, memoranda of understanding, and so forth, that are related to migration management. Civil society and the private sector could also support the Government in monitoring and regulating recruitment agencies and in addressing exploitative brokerage practices.
- Advocate for the passing of the new law, Suppression of Human Trafficking and Exploitation. The process has been fraught with difficulties over the definition of "trafficking", but the new law is expected to be approved and passed in early 2007.

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# FEMALE MIGRATION IN THAILAND: A STUDY OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

*Sureeporn Punpuing\**

## **Introduction**

From an economic perspective, migration often permits an individual to improve his/her economic status and the society to distribute human resources. Human capital is transferred from areas of surplus labour and low wages to areas where labour is scarce and wages are high (Hugo 1993). This labour migration balances the disequilibrium in demand and supply between different areas. On the other hand, based on Marx's historical materialism theory, labour migration is an exploitation of the rural labour force and leads to unequal development among areas (Eklund 2000).

While migration theories are mostly gender-neutral, they are often not sufficient to explain female labour migration (Chant and Radcliffe 1992; Hugo 1993; Lim 1993; Thadani and Todaro 1984). However, a behavioural and household approach can address issues of female migration. The behavioural approach implies that both women and men are influenced by societal values and cultural norms. The household strategy approach incorporates power relations and decision-making in the family.

Female household members may be restricted from migration because of power hierarchies in the family and sociocultural expectations (Chant and Radcliffe 1992). The family may decide to send a male member to migrate because they are more likely to receive higher wage rates than females, or send a female to migrate because they are likely to remit more than males (Curran and Saguy 2003; Osaki 1999), although there is a fear that female migrants will be exposed to unacceptable attitudes and behaviour (Lim 1993). Research has shown that female migration is complex, and it needs to be analysed from gender and household perspectives.

The increase in female participation in international migration has led to a dramatic increase in interest in female migration. Asian female migrant workers are employed as domestic workers in destinations in the Middle East, North America, Western Europe and wealthier East Asian countries. It was estimated that, in 2003, there were 200,000 migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, China, and 155,000 in Malaysia. Approximately 1 million migrant domestic workers are in Saudi Arabia, with the majority from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In Singapore, there is a domestic worker

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employed in one of every seven households (UNFPA 2006). More published research on women, especially South-East Asian women, in the international labour market has appeared recently.

Based on a gender perspective, Asian women often perceive that only women do domestic work and that it is women's work. Caregiving is a woman's responsibility, and men have no role in domestic work. As migrants, women are expected to send remittances reliably, provide benefits to their family and have their needs subordinated to those of the family. It is socially acceptable to view domestic skills as the only "strength" of women, and women as unessential in other aspects of the family economy.

On the other hand, a lack of job opportunities, poverty, war and conflict, and surplus labour, in combination with labour export policies, the aggressive efforts of employment agencies and the recruitment process in the country of origin may push women to migrate. In the destination country, industrialization and a lack of local labour for domestic work, the high cost of local labour, and an increase in the proportion of married women engaged in the labour market may stimulate demand for domestic workers (CARAM 2003).

This paper focuses on a specific aspect of women's international labour migration experience: migrant domestic workers. It investigates women's migration decision-making within the household/family, female migrant workers' gender roles related to their working conditions and remittances, and labour exploitation and abuse. This paper begins by reviewing first the situation of international migration in Thailand, followed by Thailand's migration policies. The third section investigates domestic workers' working and living conditions and remittances. The last sections discuss policy implications and provide recommendations for improving the protection of migrant domestic workers.

## **I. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THAILAND**

International migration within Asia has increased over the last three decades. This is primarily a result of widening wage differentials and labour demand and supply, and partly due to more political freedom (Archavanitkul and Guest 1999). Countries that are involved in international migration within the Asian region can be divided into three groups: sending, receiving and transit countries. Thailand is categorized as both a sending and receiving country. During the 1970s and 1980s, Thailand was an important exporter of migrant workers to the Middle East, East Asia and Singapore. After the mid-1980s, Thailand became a major receiving country in the region.

Based on existing official information, there were about 2.2 million non-Thai citizens living in Thailand in 2005. These can be divided into four major groups. The first group is the 760,000

foreigners and their dependents living permanently in the country. The Government of Thailand allows certain non-Thai groups who entered Thailand without documents to apply for permanent residence status. These include groups who entered Thailand before the implementation of the first Immigration Act of 1867. Other groups include those who entered the country after the Second World War and asylum seekers who entered Thailand between 1975 and 1992. The majority of these permanent residents are in the process of requesting Thai citizenship. The second group is the 75,000 who entered with official documents and are temporary contract workers, often professionals or employees of international corporations. The third group is the 1.28 million who entered the country illegally but then registered with the Ministry of Interior in 2004, and can now be classified as documented migrants. The majority of these migrants are from Myanmar (Archavanikul and Prasartkul 2005). The last group is the approximately 140,000 displaced persons and asylum seekers. It is important to state again that these numbers do not include undocumented migrants, for which there is no reliable estimate.

During the period of political crisis in Myanmar in the mid-1980s, many people were forced to move. In addition, the political situations in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic were opening up, which provided people with the freedom to move. At the same time, Thailand was in the midst of an economic boom. The high demand for labour was the major pull factor for an influx of migrant workers to Thailand. Irregular migration to Thailand may be caused by (a) restrictive immigration policies, (b) acute poverty and unemployment in the country of origin, (c) political conflict, (d) the practices of private recruitment agencies, (e) high legal migration costs, and (f) criminal gangs and traffickers (Wickramasekera 2002, cited in Hugué and Punpuing 2005).

The largest proportion of undocumented migrant workers in Thailand is from Myanmar. Although the proportion of male migrants is higher than that of females, the proportion of female migrants increased from 29 per cent in 1998 to 45 per cent in 2005. The increasing proportion of female migrants is true for all nationalities. It is interesting to note that, in 2003, the proportion of females among migrants from the Lao People's Democratic Republic was 60 per cent (table 1).



**Table 1. Number and percentage of registered migrant workers by nationality and sex, 1998-2004**

Year	Myanmar		Cambodia		Lao PDR		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1998	53,387 68%	25,670 32%	9,716 92%	877 8%	1,029 82%	232 18%	64,132 71%	26,779 29%
1999	59,968 67%	29,350 33%	8,418 89%	1,074 11%	849 73%	315 27%	69,235 69%	30,739 31%
2000	58,701 65%	32,023 35%	6,898 87%	1,023 13%	749 74%	262 26%	66,348 67%	33,308 33%
2001	257,354 57%	193,981 43%	43,216 75%	14,340 25%	25,771 43%	33,587 57%	326,341 57%	568,249 43%
2002	196,520 56%	152,744 44%	28,363 73%	10,251 27%	17,229 41%	24,967 59%	242,112 56%	187,962 44%
2003	134,812 54%	112,979 46%	13,976 71%	5,699 29%	8,611 40%	12,703 60%	157,399 55%	131,138 45%
2004	497,372 55%	408,509 45%	123,998 68%	57,581 32%	80,981 45%	100,633 55%	702,351 55%	566,723 45%

Source: Archavanitkul, 2005, table 9.4, p. 140.

Undocumented migrants from Myanmar differ from those of other nationalities because of the political and ethnic minority conflicts in Myanmar since independence in the late 1940s, and probably about half of the migration is a result of forced moves (Archavanitkul 2002). In 1962, there was a change to a socialist society, which caused further fighting among various ethnic minority groups along the Thai-Myanmar border. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides 11 temporary shelters for these individuals. Members of the Shan ethnic minority, unlike those of the Karen, Mon, Khaya and others, are not permitted to stay in temporary shelters. Shan are required to find jobs and places to live in Thailand. They are often unable to return to Myanmar because of conflict there (Archavanitkul 2002).

## II. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION POLICY

Thailand has never had a regular migrant worker policy to deal with illegal migrant workers, only illegal-migration management policies that have been implemented on a temporary basis. There are regulations that reserve certain occupations, including those involving unskilled labour, for Thai workers. In the past, there were no regulations that required migrant workers in Thailand to register for a work permit. This changed in 1972, when the Announcement of the National Executive Council No. 322 B.E. 2515 (A.D. 1972) regulated migrant workers who wished to work in Thailand and required that they first obtain a work permit from the Labour Department, Ministry of Labour.

Thailand had no prior experience with large numbers of migrants entering Thailand with an undocumented or illegal status. However, since 1988, when there was a suppression of the pro-democracy uprising in Burma, hundreds of thousands of Burmese fled and illegally entered Thailand. This has forced the Government of Thailand to recognize the existence of these migrant workers. At that time, Thailand was in the initial stage of a bubble economy and there was a high demand for labourers in the construction and fishery industries. Consequently, in the business sector, a coalition of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Thai Industries and the Thai Bankers' Association convinced the Government of Thailand to allow the employment of these undocumented workers.

Owing to this pressure, the Government of Thailand switched to a more flexible policy by turning to Section 17 of the Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (A.D. 1979) and using the exemption policy, allowing illegal immigrants to work temporarily according to conditions predetermined by the Government. Cabinet resolutions were issued to announce the exemption and to establish procedures for the registration of illegal migrant workers. These resolutions have been adopted every one or two years since 1996, and there have been 10 cabinet resolutions directly related to this flexible policy. Undocumented migrants from three neighbouring countries – Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar – have been allowed to register and work. The resolutions are as follows:

- The June 1996 Cabinet Resolution. This resolution permitted the temporary employment of illegal migrant workers from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar for two years in 43 provinces in 8 sectors (agriculture, construction, fisheries, fishery-related activities, porters of goods in harbours, mines/quarries, manufacturing and domestic work) for 36 types of employers. The employers had to guarantee the working status of the migrant workers, and there were 293,654 registered migrant workers in 1996.
- The April 1998 Cabinet Resolution. This resolution permitted the employment of undocumented workers for another year. This time a quota of 158,253 was stipulated, but only 90,911 migrant workers were registered for work permits.
- The August 1999 Cabinet Resolution. This resolution permitted the employment of migrant workers in 18 types of work in 37 provinces, 10 of which were border provinces, 18 of which were provinces with fishery activities, and 9 of which were provinces in the process of expanding manufacturing processes. A total of 99,974 migrant workers were granted work permits.
- The August 2000 Cabinet Resolution. The number of illegal migrant workers had become a real problem. This cabinet resolution kept the provisions of the previous resolution in place in order to maintain the policy that there would be no further increase in the number of

registered migrant workers from 1999. In this year, employers registered 99,656 migrant workers.

- The August 2001 Cabinet Resolution. There was a change of Government and policies in Thailand in 2001. Undocumented migrant workers were allowed to register in every province and in every type of work. It was the first time that migrant workers without employers could register themselves. A total of 568,249 migrant workers registered, higher than in any previous year.
- The August 2002 Cabinet Resolution. Only those migrant workers who registered in 2001 could renew their work permits. Only 430,074 migrant workers renewed their work permits.
- The August 2003 Cabinet Resolution. This resolution was similar to the 2002 resolution. Only those who originally registered in 2001 were eligible to re-register. A total of 288,780 migrant workers renewed their work permits.
- The April 2004 Cabinet Resolution. The Government implemented a two-step registration policy. The first step was to register all undocumented migrants in Thailand with the Ministry of Interior. Then, those migrants who wanted to work had to register with the Ministry of Labour for a work permit. Employers were also registered, along with their demand for labour. There were 248,746 employers registered, with a demand for 1,598,752 migrant workers. A total of 1,284,920 migrants reported themselves with the Ministry of Interior, of which 93,082 were children aged under 15 years, and about 10,000 were elderly and “others”. A total of 847,630 migrant workers registered for work permits.
- The June 2005 Cabinet Resolution. This resolution allowed only those who registered in 2004 to renew their work permits. A total of 705,293 migrant workers asked for the renewals of their work permits.
- The March 2006 Cabinet Resolution. This time the Government allowed renewals, as well as newcomers to register. A total of 460,014 migrant workers registered with the Ministry of Labour in June 2006.

Table 2 summarizes dates, type of industry, place, duration permitted and the number of registered migrant workers. However, it does not include the dependents of the migrant workers. Many migrants migrate with their families. It was only in 2004 that Thailand could estimate the number of undocumented migrants, including their dependents, when the Government required all migrants to report themselves to the Ministry of Interior in order to receive an identity number. There were approximately 1.3 million who registered in 2004 and about 850,000 who registered for work permits.

**Table 2. Number of illegal migrant workers who registered from 1996 to 2006**

Year	No. of permitted industries	No. of permitted provinces	Duration of work permit	Number registered	Country of origin		
					Myanmar	Cambodia	Lao PDR
1996	36	43	2 yrs.	293,654	256,492 88%	25,568 7%	11,594 5%
1998	47	54	1 yr.	90,911	79,057 87%	10,593 12%	1,261 1%
1999	18	37	1 yr.	99,974	89,318 89%	9,492 10%	1,164 1%
2000	18	37	1 yr.	99,656	90,724 91%	7,921 8%	1,011 1%
2001	All	All	6 mo.	568,249	451,335 79%	57,556 10%	59,35 11%
2002	All	All	1 yr.	430,074	349,264 81%	38,614 9%	42,196 10%
2003	All	All	1 yr.	288,780	247,791 86%	19,675 7%	21,314 7%
2004	All	All	1 yr.	847,630	632,454 75%	110,042 13%	105,134 12%
2005	All	All	1 yr.	705,293	539,416 76%	75,804 11%	90,073 13%
2006	All	All	1 yr.	460,014	405,379 88%	24,952 6%	29,638 6%

Source: Archavanitkul, 2005, table 9.3, p. 139.

Note: The data for 1996 are for a 2-year registration; therefore, these include 1997.

The numbers in table 2 reflect the fact that Thai policy has changed from Government to Government depending on the economic situation in Thailand. In 1996, the Government permitted migrant workers in 43 provinces to register and work in 36 types of occupation. In 1999, following the economic crisis of 1997, the limitations on the type of occupation and on areas increased, with migrant workers permitted to register in 37 provinces in 18 types of occupation. During that time, the Government aimed to deport as many migrant workers as possible; there were 298,480 migrant workers deported to their countries of origin in 1998. However, once the Government of Thailand wanted to accelerate economic growth, the policy changed by setting no limitations on the type of occupation or on geographical area. This resulted in the number of registered migrant workers increasing from less than 100,000 during Thailand's economic downturn to more than half a million in 2001.

It is important to point out that government policies concerning migrant workers do not specify measures for labour protection. The policies of the Government of Thailand from 1996 to 2007 have had a special focus on migrant workers from only Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. The registration has aimed only to determine the distribution of migrant workers across the country in terms of geographical area and the employment sector. It has been used for policies to control the source and the number of migrant workers. It was expected that migrant workers would be repatriated once employers did not need them.

Although Thailand has not signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990, there have been positive signs based on the policies of the Government of Thailand to legalize and protect the rights of undocumented migrants in Thailand. The Bangkok Declaration on Irregular Migration was adopted by 19 Governments in Asia and the Pacific in 1999. It reflects at least two approaches that the Government of Thailand would follow in dealing with undocumented migrants. The first is to enhance cooperation with source countries in determining the identity of undocumented/illegal migrants with a view to regularizing their status and accelerating their readmission. The second is to carry out the timely return of those without right to enter and remain in Thailand, which can only be achieved through the goodwill and full cooperation of the countries concerned. The returns should be performed in a safe and humane way (Huguet and Punpuing 2005).

Memoranda of understanding (MOU) that encourage countries of origin to protect migrant workers' rights were signed with three neighbouring countries – Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar – and, with the exception of the MOU with Myanmar, are now in operation. The MOU between Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic was signed in October 2002, the MOU between Thailand and Cambodia was signed in May 2003 and the MOU between Thailand and Myanmar was signed in June 2003. However, the detailed terms and conditions of employment in the MOUs signed with the three countries differ slightly. The MOUs with Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic recognize the "principles enshrined" in the Bangkok Declaration on Irregular Migration, but the one with Myanmar does not, while the MOU signed with the Lao People's Democratic Republic does not state that an employment contract was necessary (Huguet and Punpuing 2005).

In the initial stage of the implementation of the MOUs – in January and February 2005 – there were 1,299 migrants (or 99 per cent of those who applied) who were granted a temporary passport from the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. During the period 7-12 April 2005, there were 74 migrants (or 96 per cent of those who applied) who were granted a certificate of identity by the Government of Cambodia (Thanachaisethavut 2005).

The bilateral MOUs state that the employment of workers requires prior permission of the authorized agencies in both the country of origin and the destination country. Once the applicants are selected for the job openings in one country, both countries would work together to ensure that each worker met at least the requirements for a visa, a work permit, health insurance, savings fund contributions, taxes and/or a job contract.

Undocumented migrants who are proven to be citizens of these countries would receive a certificate of identity, be granted a temporary passport, and be able to work legally in Thailand for a limited period depending on the duration of the work permit and the terms and conditions of employment

specified in the MOUs. The employment of workers would not exceed two years; although, it could be extended for another two years but not exceed a total of four years. A worker who has completed four years of employment in the destination country must return home, but could reapply after three years. These migrant workers would be protected by the Thai Labour Protection Act, 1998. According to the MOUs, the Government of Thailand should set up and administer a savings fund, to which the migrant workers would contribute 15 per cent of their monthly salary. The workers would receive their contribution plus interest upon returning to their permanent residence. In the case of employment termination, the workers would receive all of their contribution (Huguet and Punpuing 2005).

Although there are practical problems in almost all steps of the MOUs, they indicate that Thailand's international migration policy is moving toward the protection of human rights. The undocumented migrants and their families have been recognized as persons who would be protected not only in their right to work but also in their right to secure their financial future.

The Government of Thailand has continuously revised policies and laws in order to address migration issues in such areas as employment, health and basic human rights. It is believed this will gradually improve the situation. However, the greatest challenge in dealing with undocumented migrants in Thailand is the negative societal attitudes toward migrant workers. It is widely believed that migrant workers take Thai workers' jobs; bring such communicable diseases as malaria, tuberculosis or elephantiasis; commit crimes; and are not trustworthy. This results in discrimination against migrant workers in Thai society. The different treatment of migrant workers and foreign tourists in the aftermath of the tsunami in southern Thailand was an explicit example of these different attitudes. However, some Thai authorities, particularly those who are dealing with the employment and health issues of migrants, have good intentions to help migrant workers (Archavanitkul and Kanchanachitra-Saisoonthon 2005).

### III. DOMESTIC WORK<sup>9</sup>

#### A. Definition

Domestic workers in many countries, including Thailand, are not fully recognized as workers. This means that, in Thailand, they are not protected under the Thai Labour Protection Act, 1998. Domestic workers are protected in only the areas of regular payment and regular annual leave, but not for minimum wage and other benefits. Domestic work is often considered to be unproductive work and economically invisible for various reasons. First, it takes place in households, which are seen only as consumption units. This view ignores the role of the family in social production and reproduction. Second, it assumes that domestic work does not create value because the immediate products are directly consumed within the same unit of production, which is a household. Its product is not directly exchanged in the market, so its market value is not recognized. Also, it is not reflected in the national accounts because it is seen as outside the monetary economy. Furthermore, domestic work is recognized as a performance in return for payment in cash and/or in kind (lodging and board). It is perceived as “women’s work” rather than as a shared responsibility with men, family or the State. In sum, a tentative definition of a domestic worker is “a wage-earner working in (a private) household, under whatever method and period of payment, who may be employed by one or by several employers who receive no economic gain from this work” (CARAM 2003).

Moreover, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), in the *Status and Conditions of Employment of Domestic Workers*, revised in August 2002, domestic work is defined as housekeeping, house-cleaning, cooking, child care and personal care, and may include such home-based tasks as driving, gardening or guarding. It was found that, in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot, Thailand, about one third of migrant workers who reported themselves as domestic workers helped in their employer’s business (Punpuing and others 2005). About one fourth of child domestic workers in Viet Nam reported that they had to do some other work apart from regular household chores (ILO 2006). Therefore, these workers should no longer be defined as domestic workers.

Table 3 shows that domestic workers (excluding the “others” category) comprised the second largest proportion of undocumented migrants who registered for work permits in Thailand in

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<sup>9</sup> Data used are mainly from two projects. The first is “Assessing the life experiences of migrant girls and young women from Burma who work as domestic workers in Thailand”. This project was conducted by the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), the Shan Women’s Action Network and the Karen Women’s Organization in 2002/03 in Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai Province and in Mae Sot, Tak Province. The project was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region. The second project is “Vulnerable at work: young migrant workers in Thailand and destination factors resulting in exploitation”, a collaborative research project between IPSR and the International Labour Organization (ILO), through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and the Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children.

2006. This is partly related to the high demand for domestic work and to the ambiguous definition of domestic work. It is likely that migrants for whom a household is their workplace would be classified as domestic workers even though they worked for their employers' businesses. This leaves the domestic workers dependent on employers for working and living conditions, legal status and the protection of basic human rights. Although the Government of Thailand allows employees to change employers, their temporary or short-term contracts mean that, in practice, domestic workers have difficulties changing employers. This can trap them in more abusive situations.

**Table 3. Number of registered migrants in Thailand by type of employment and nationality, 1 June-30 August 2006**

<i>Type of employment</i>	<i>Registered migrants</i>			
	<i>Myanmar</i>	<i>Cambodia</i>	<i>Lao PDR</i>	<i>Total</i>
Domestic work	55,297	2,312	9,254	66,863
Agriculture	83,896	5,232	5,580	94,708
Construction	64,020	4,861	2,542	71,423
Fishery processing	48,393	1,119	259	49,771
Fishing boats	10,592	3,261	661	14,514
Manufacturing and transport sector	11,613	900	473	12,986
Others	131,568	7,267	10,914	149,749
<b>Total</b>	<b>405,379</b>	<b>24,952</b>	<b>29,683</b>	<b>460,014</b>

*Source:* Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour (updated July 2006).

## **B. Reasons for migration**

Table 3 shows that 83 per cent of the migrant domestic workers registered in Thailand in 2006 were from Myanmar, with this proportion remaining the same from the previous registration. While the main reasons for the migration of domestic workers from Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic are related to economic improvement, the reasons for the migration of the domestic workers from Myanmar differ. About half of migrant workers from Myanmar migrated because of political conflict (Archavanitkul 2002). This is supported by a Shan domestic worker, aged 16, who first migrated to Thailand at the age of 10. She stated:

The army expelled us to the Burmese border in order to control us more easily. They feared the villagers would supply the armed group staying in the jungle. We had to move many times, without any money for our land. When the situation was quiet, we secretly returned to our village. When the Burmese military realized this, they came and expelled us again. We had to hide and take turns



guarding the village to warn when the Burmese military was approaching, so we could run away.

Many domestic workers who escaped from their villages travelled alone or with family and/or friends. The journey was not as smooth as expected. About 2 in 5 were threatened, 1 in 3 was yelled at, and 1 in 4 was cheated or had to pay money to authorities. About 58 per cent of the surveyed population reported having to pay arbitrary taxes to the Myanmar authorities. The policies of the Government of Myanmar have put most farmers into debt due to fixed pricing and forced marketing to the regime, which has imposed compulsory cropping. A Shan domestic worker, aged 15, stated: “The Burmese military determined the price of the products we produced. It depended on them how much they would pay. They never paid what the product was worth. So, I came to work in Thailand to send money to my parents.”

In summary, the persecution of ethnic minorities and severe economic hardship are the primary reasons for migration from Myanmar to Thailand. Other push factors include arbitrary taxes, fixed pricing, forced marketing, imposed compulsory crops and forced relocation. Furthermore, family problems resulting from gambling, alcohol and/or drugs, as well as family pressure to marry, were also mentioned as reasons for migrant domestic workers to migrate to Thailand. This in turn, perhaps indirectly, forces women to accept all types of conditions, including poor working and living conditions, at their destination.

### **C. Extent of exploitation and abuse**

Domestic workers often experience more labour exploitation and abuse than other female workers. This is linked to the fact that domestic work takes place in private households. Migrant domestic workers are isolated from other employees, friends or family. Many cannot communicate in the employers’ languages, which leads to low negotiation skills and verbal and physical abuse. The freedom of movement is violated by employers who keep the migrant workers’ original documents. Many cases of migrant domestic workers fleeing and hence becoming undocumented migrants have been observed. However, there are many more abused workers who remain with their employers because of the fear of deportation or the loss of legal status. The greatest fear is that of losing their jobs, which are often the main support for their families at the place of origin.

Extreme cases of exploitation and abuse have resulted in severe injury and even death. In Singapore, about 147 domestic workers died – most by falling out of buildings or committing suicide – during the period 1999-2006. In 2000, about 19,000 domestic workers in Lebanon, Kuwait, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia escaped from their employers (UNFPA 2006).

Migrant workers’ limited choices are often the result of employers arbitrarily setting conditions and terms of employment regarding salaries, meals, accommodations, payment, days off and contact

with the outside world. The fact that employers are able to maintain complete control over the lives of domestic workers is, in part, a result of the lack of labour laws and/or governmental standards for migrant workers in this labour sector. The situation can be worse because the employers often do not inform their domestic workers of such conditions as how the salary would be paid or what deductions would be made.

#### **D. Working and living conditions**

Long and irregular working hours, low pay and irregular payment are indicators of labour exploitation. It is clearly shown in a study conducted in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot by IPSR that almost 98 per cent of domestic workers worked for more than 12 hours a day. This is similar to the average number of working hours of child domestic workers in Viet Nam, which is 12 hours per day (ILO 2006). They were expected to be available to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For instance, a Mon domestic worker, aged 29, stated: “I have no time to rest. I have to look after my employer’s children and take them with me wherever I go. Moreover, I am responsible for an old paralysed woman and cannot abandon her.”

The majority of domestic workers in the study by IPSR received less than half of the Thai minimum wage rate. Some may argue that domestic workers receive accommodation and meals and that it is not possible to calculate the value of employee benefits. However, the same study revealed that the domestic workers received below standard accommodation and meals. About 1 in 5 domestic workers slept on the floor in an open room with no privacy, and 1 in 3 shared rooms with other family members whom they had to care for. Only one third had a private room. The quality and the number of meals provided were determined primarily by the employers, and, in some cases, the domestic workers had to subsidize their meals with their own money. “The employer only gives me rice. I have to buy everything else to eat with it,” said a Shan domestic worker, aged 16.

In addition to receiving sub-minimum wages, about 73 per cent of the study’s respondents received no overtime pay or compensation from their employer regardless of the hours they worked. There were incidents of withholding, or non-payment of, wages. The domestic workers felt threatened when they had to constantly remind and request their salary from employers. In addition, 78.6 per cent reported that their employer did not provide any assistance in covering health-care expenses (Punpuing and others 2005). For example, a Cambodian domestic worker, aged 17, stated that she not only never received payment but was also abused. She stated:

I worked for two years but never received any payment. I had to work all day, go to bed at 2 a.m. and then get up again at 5 a.m. I didn’t have enough sleep. The male employer was evil minded, not only did he not pay me, he also slapped, hit or pinched me. His wife was laughing while her husband slapped me. She never tried to help. Their three children also hurt me, they always lied and made it difficult for me.

In other cases, the employers also did not pay the salaries of their domestic workers. After working as a domestic worker for four years, a 21-year-old Shan domestic worker did not receive any payment, which was supposed to be 24,000 baht (the salary was 500 baht, or US\$13, per month).

Being dependent on the employer, in combination with an illegal status, provides few options for domestic workers. In the following words, a 27-year-old Shan domestic worker expressed her feelings of being vulnerable and violated because of a lack of options to confront her employer's actions:

I asked for my salary over and over again, but my employer never paid me. The employer often reminded me that he could send me back easily by just asking the police to take me to the border. I often thought that I should just let them send me to the police if they weren't going to pay me. But, on the other hand, I didn't have any money and I was afraid I couldn't pay the police for my deportation and would be stuck at the border with no money. Finally, I decided to escape. I had to accept that I would never be paid and would just have to lose the salary the employer owed me.

A range of abuse related to withholding, or non-payment of, wages, long working hours, lack of pay for sick or vacation days, excessive job responsibilities (in addition to household work) and little or no opportunity to contact family or friends were mentioned by domestic workers (CARAM 2003; Punpuing and others 2005; Punpuing, forthcoming; ILO 2006).

## **E. Freedom of movement and communications**

Access to information or knowledge, such as on basic rights, and access to health care are hampered by the limitations on the freedom of movement and on communications. Domestic workers in a household have restricted and isolated lives, and the isolation is often made worse either directly by the employers or indirectly by the lack of free time they have or by their own fears. About 60 per cent of the domestic workers surveyed did not have permission from their employers to leave the house to meet others or to have visitors at the house (Punpuing and others 2005). It is of great concern that about half of the employers felt that they had the right to physically restrain the domestic workers from going out at night, only one quarter felt that migrants should be allowed to leave their workplace freely (outside of work hours), and only one third thought that migrants were entitled to this right under Thai law (Punpuing, forthcoming). Even if employers allowed them to go out, the domestic workers were too busy with their responsibilities, resulting in their not meeting others. An important limit to domestic workers' freedom of movement is the fear of arrest or deportation. A 21-year-old Shan stated: "Because I don't have any identity card, I have to stay secretly."

Moreover, there are significant restrictions imposed on domestic workers' contact with friends and family. Eighty per cent of employers did not allow their workers to use the telephone, and about half of the workers surveyed were not allowed to receive phone calls (Punpuing and others 2005). A

14-year-old Lao who worked in Bangkok said: “The employer did not allow me to receive my mom’s phone calls. Sometimes, he let me say only two to three words to friends [before making me hang up]. He kept my friend’s telephone number. I never called my parents in Lao for about seven to eight months.” However, in 2005, it was found that the majority of migrant workers had their own mobile phones. While this increases migrants’ expenditures, it does allow them to be in contact with others and may help to reduce the problems of exploitation and stress.

## **F. Possession of legal identification**

The major concern of most domestic workers was the possession of legal identification documents. These can partly protect them from harassment and reduce the risk of arrest or detention while they are in Thailand. However, many migrants believed that holding a work permit would assist them in finding a new job more easily, without realizing that they must remain working for the employer who registered them. On the other hand, about half of the domestic workers reported that their employers kept their original cards, and that some employers refused to allow their employees to register or placed excessive restrictions or unfair conditions on obtaining a work permit (Punpuing and others 2005). The majority of employers do not recognize that they have no right to hold onto their employees’ original registration cards in order to prevent them from running away (Punpuing, forthcoming). As a result, domestic workers continue to live in fear of deportation and cannot freely leave their employers.

Generally, domestic workers who did not register for a work permit were in worse condition (concerning working and living conditions and the freedom of movement) than the registered migrant workers. However, half of the domestic workers did not hold their original work permit, and it can be expected that they would be more likely to be harassed by authorities or that they would lack the freedom of movement. This indicates that the principle of registration that aims to protect migrants’ rights in Thailand is distorted, which in turn increases the employer’s controlling power over the migrant employees. An 18-year-old Shan stated: “Although I have my work permit, I still don’t dare to go too far because I only have a copy of the card. So, even though I have a work permit, it makes no difference. It is like spending money without using the work permit.”

## **G. Verbal, physical and sexual abuse**

In addition to the abuse described above, a wide range of verbal, physical and sexual abuse was mentioned by the domestic workers. Verbal abuse was the most common violation experienced by the domestic workers, with about half reporting that they had been yelled at, and one third reported being cursed or threatened. Nearly 1 in 10 domestic workers said that they experienced physical abuse (Punpuing and others 2005).

Furthermore, some domestic workers described incidents of being slapped or severely beaten, which related partly to language barriers. For instance, a Karen domestic worker, aged 15, stated: “Sometimes the employer beats me. She would slap and hit me on the head, yelling at me. I don’t understand her language and I’m afraid if I try to say something she will beat me even more. I fear that she could kill me and no one will know.” However, even without the language barrier, some are abused. A Lao, aged 10, stated: “The employer used to pull my hair sharply when I did not do a good enough job of cleaning. I’m afraid that the employer will send me to work in other places. I have to do a good job and not be lazy in order to avoid punishment.”

There were incidents of sexual harassment, with 14 per cent of domestic workers saying that they were touched when they did not want to be, 6 per cent had sexual advances made toward them and 1.3 per cent were victims of rape (Punpuing and others 2005). The actual incidence of sexual abuse may be higher because respondents are often reluctant to report this form of abuse. The fear of employers has kept these abuses hidden from the outside world. Their position inside private households has also isolated migrant domestic workers from assistance from the human rights community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies.

## IV. REMITTANCES AND SATISFACTION

### A. Remittances

The remittances of female migrants can help families or even entire communities out of poverty. Various studies have found that more than half of female remittances were used for daily consumption, health care and education. Social remittances – skills, ideas, attitudes, knowledge – are another positive aspect of female migration. Migrant women who send money back home transmit a new definition of what it means to be female, and this leads to greater autonomy and status in the household or community. Women living abroad often attain new knowledge or skills and gain new ideas or attitudes, which lead to enhanced family health in their home country (UNFPA 2006). Quite a number of migrant domestic workers in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot stated that, when they go back home, they want to establish a small business based on the new skills learned in Thailand (Punpuing and others 2005).

Remittances are also likely to be used for education, as well as to provide a decent livelihood for the migrant’s family. About 77 per cent of domestic workers from Myanmar reported that they sent part of their earnings back home (Punpuing and others 2005). The majority of them focused on saving money; they expressed a strong feeling of obligation and responsibility toward their parents and siblings. Moreover, a number of domestic workers stated that they hoped to provide a better life and education for their children. A Mon domestic worker, aged 29, stated: “I still have to work for

the future for my daughter. She is my future also. My work will be for her. However, in order to be able to work, I have to send her to stay with somebody else. Later, when I have enough money, I will return to my village and settle down. My future is to develop the life of my daughter.” However, the strong feeling of obligation to their family and hope for saving as much money as possible may, in turn, cause women to fall into severely abusive forms of domestic work.

## **B. Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an indication of the extent of labour exploitation. The level of satisfaction may be negatively linked to exploitation and abuse. Satisfaction may derive from such perceptions as domestic work being their responsibility, or their having obligations to their family. For example, a Shan domestic worker, aged 34, stated: “In the morning, I clean, sweep, wash dishes, cook and cut vegetables. It is like the housework that we do at our house. It is not more than I can handle.”

For many, their job satisfaction was based on whether they were able to obtain the minimum food, shelter and clothing for themselves and their children and/or whether they were able to save enough money to send home. For instance, a 27-year-old Mon said that her employer gave her food to eat and 50 baht per day, which she thought was enough if she did not buy food or the things she wanted. She said that she always thought about her parents in the village, and so she had to be economical and try to save money to send home.

The success of their family at home can lead to job satisfaction. A 20-year-old Pa-O woman in Mae Sot said: “I can send money home every two or three months. It helps my family a lot, and their condition has improved. If they are successful I can say that I am satisfied with my job here.”

## **V. RECRUITERS<sup>10</sup> AND EMPLOYERS**

### **A. Recruitment and recruiters**

Domestic workers usually find employment through a recruiter, either one who brought them from their country of origin or one they met in Thailand. However, they only rarely know about the type of work they would be given, where or with whom they would be working, and the working and living conditions. Instead of using recruiters to find employment, some of the survey respondents went to particular areas where employers were known to come to look for migrant labourers. With this approach, the female migrant workers are more likely to be vulnerable to exploitation and to being trafficked and sold into slavery. It can be even worse when the female migrants do not initially

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<sup>10</sup> Recruiters are defined as those who facilitate domestic workers to find employment with or without a service fee.

realize that they are being trafficked. A Burmese domestic worker, aged 17, said:

I heard that many children were trafficked or sold when they came to Thailand. Many carriers trafficked young girls. If she is beautiful they send her to a brothel. I myself feel like I was trafficked. Some of the carriers are Thais and some are Burmese. The majority of the carriers are not good. They just want to get money from others and they ill treat the workers. When I first arrived, I was sent to a house where I had to work for free.

In addition, large sums of money were required and either paid in advance or incurred as debt to the recruiter, although rarely were the respondents informed in advance of what the total travel costs would be. This in turn led to the unconditional abuse of migrant domestic workers who had to pay the debts to the recruiter. A Karen domestic worker, aged 19, stated: “The first time I went to Bangkok the recruiter told me that I would get 2,500 baht a month, but every month the recruiter forced me to pay him 1,000 baht. Later, he disappeared and I even lost contact with my parents. Most of the recruiters cheat you and take your money in advance.”

On the other hand, the opinions of recruiters are often completely different from those of the migrant workers. The recruiters claim that they often feel responsible for the migrant workers and may make extra efforts to protect migrant workers. Some recruiters help migrants overcome exploitation, find them new jobs, negotiate wages or improve the working and/or living conditions of the migrants. The recruiters also provide other such services to migrant workers as sending remittances home or arranging communication with families. This suggests that some recruiters have on-going relationships with the migrants and, in combination with their role as recruiter, they may be regarded as friends or relatives by the migrants as well as by the employers. A Karen recruiter, aged 34, stated: “When I visit migrants to get money, some employers allow me to go in, some do not. Some [employers] are nice. They invite me in and even serve me a glass of water. But some put on a face like they are not happy to see me. So, I don’t want to go in.” He also stated: “I sometimes remind the employers to pay the workers regularly and ask them to increase the salary of the workers who’ve spent a long time working in the same places” (Pearson and others, forthcoming).

The recruitment process and the roles of the recruiters have both a positive and a negative impact on the domestic workers. The negative impact is that the recruiters sometimes traffic migrant workers into slavery-like conditions and can create large amounts of debt for the workers. This can mean that some domestic workers work for free as a result of their debt bondage to the recruiters. The positive impact is that the recruiters may provide access to private households more easily than others, which would help reduce the exploitation and abuse of the domestic workers.

## **B. Employers' attitudes and preferences**

The fact is that there is a high availability of migrant workers who are willing to work for low wages and under poor conditions. In contrast, Thai workers are unwilling to do this work not only because the work is low-paid, difficult and dangerous, but also because it is largely unprotected by labour laws for domestic work. Employers clearly stated their preferences for cheap, obedient and hard-working migrant workers. This definitely leads to a significant number of migrant domestic workers being employed in Thailand.

Pearson and others (forthcoming) found that employers often believed that migrant workers did not deserve the same rights as Thai workers and they therefore needed to be controlled. They also believed that some ethnic groups were easier to control and more obedient than others. It appears that employers prefer Karen domestic workers to other ethnic groups, in the belief that they are hard working, flexible, honest, clean, and have a similar culture. Lao and Mon domestic workers are considered to be easy to control. This discrimination seems to be a key factor in why some migrants are exploited more than others.

The values and attitudes of employers often play a role in justifying both controlling domestic workers' freedom of movement and limiting communication with others outside the household. A Thai employer stated: "Within the domestic work system, there are no days off for domestic workers. If they want to go out, it is up to the employer to decide. They should not go out every week. It is difficult to control. It is very dangerous, it is our responsible to protect the domestic workers as they come under us; we need to take care of them." Employers may be well meaning and do this in the name of "protecting" domestic workers from dangers outside the household, but such "protection" violates the workers' basic right to the freedom of movement.

In addition, many employers indicated that they treated their domestic workers as family members. Domestic workers also stated that they were often seen as part of the family. This in fact can increase their vulnerability to abuse. Domestic workers may be treated worse since they cannot complain or resist because they feel obligations to the family. Furthermore, it becomes more difficult for outsiders to intervene in "family" matters.

## **C. Summary**

The issue of the labour exploitation of domestic workers, in particular poor working conditions, low pay or no payment, and poor living conditions, is well recognized. There are many organizations working on these issues, but the problems remain. The issues are often highlighted in terms of the domestic workers being isolated in their workplace, which is a private household. The patterns of exploitation described above reinforce the findings of previous research; however, it appears that



the degree of exploitation has increased and has become more complicated for domestic workers.

Employers perpetuate a number of myths to justify the long work hours, the lack of regular days off and the low wages of domestic workers. First, they say, domestic workers are able to relax while employers are not at home. Many studies deflate this myth and raise a number of questions, including (a) How many households allow domestic workers to stay alone in their house? and (b) How many domestic workers can relax when their employer asks them to complete so many tasks in a day? Second, many employers state that domestic workers are able to ask for days off whenever they want. The questions are (a) How many days off can they ask for? (b) Will the number of days off be equivalent to the standard number of annual days off? (c) Who will guarantee that when they come back they can continue working in the same job? and (d) Will they receive paid leave? Third, they say domestic workers receive accommodation and food, which forms a part of their wages. The questions are (a) How many domestic workers receive the minimum standards for accommodation and food? and (b) How can this be measured?

## VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The experiences of domestic workers show that they are still not recognized as productive workers, and that they remain under their employers' control. This leads to a serious lack of protection, vulnerability and exploitation. The lack of protection and the lack of access to appropriate services and information increase domestic workers' vulnerability to exploitation and violence.

Many migrant domestic workers are exploited in terms of working and living conditions. They are blamed, accused, punished and assaulted, as well as suffer verbal, physical and sexual abuse. This systematic abuse is partly related to multiple sources of discrimination based on gender and ethnicity. Social isolation, the absence of access to their own documents, restricted mobility and detention within the household are all signs and outcomes of vulnerability. The lack of free access to legal procedures, regulations and practices further increases risks to their human security and rights.

The legal recognition and protection of domestic workers' rights, including standard payment and employment conditions, privacy, rest and recreation, the freedom of movement, and access to health-care services, communication and information should empower and improve the quality of lives of migrant domestic workers and their families, as well as enhance the quality of life of the societies where they live and work.

In Thailand, according to the Labour Protection Act, 1998, a domestic worker is defined as someone who performs duties in a private household. Domestic workers are entitled only to receive a wage in the currency of the destination countries and to have six days off after working for one

year. Employers are prohibited from sexually harassing female and child employees. There is no minimum wage or minimum age for domestic workers. However, if a domestic worker is responsible for the household chores and works in the employer's business, she or he is no longer a domestic worker and is entitled to all labour rights under Thai labour law (Ministry of Labour 2005a).

Although inspection of households by labour officers is possible, this can be done only upon request. If domestic workers have been abused, a police officer files a charge, as it is a violation of criminal law, and then the labour inspectors work with the related agencies in order to provide shelter, legal advice and contact with the family. However, it has been mentioned that the number of labour inspectors is insufficient (interview with high-ranking authorities, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Ministry of Labour, 2005).

To improve the human rights of the domestic workers, many countries have implemented a range of improved policies. For example, the Hong Kong, China labour law guarantees a minimum wage, maternity leave, regular days off, public holidays and a paid vacation period. Singapore increased the legal age of domestic workers to 23 years, established a compulsory orientation programme for both domestic workers and their employers, provides telephone consultation on domestic workers' rights and the procedure for changing employers, and has developed a system to efficiently regulate recruitment agencies. Jordan implements an obligation contract that ensures that employers must pay for the domestic worker's travel and recruitment costs. Turkey has introduced permits that result in migrant domestic workers' not being tied to a specific employer. In 2003, Bahrain provided telephone hotlines and shelters for abused migrant workers. Italy and Hong Kong, China allow domestic workers to form unions, which help relieve human rights violations (UNFPA 2006). In Canada, the minimum wage rate is \$7.75 per hour, and \$2.55 per meal, with a weekly maximum of \$53.55, is permitted to be deducted for food. The rate for a weekly private room is \$31.70, and none for a non-private room, which may account for a maximum of 20 per cent of the total salary ([http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/factsheets/fs\\_domestics.html](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/factsheets/fs_domestics.html)).

The different stakeholders – government agencies, employers, recruiters, societies and international organizations – should work together to protect the rights of domestic workers in Thailand.

## VII. MECHANISMS TO PROTECT WORKERS' RIGHTS

- Include domestic work as one of the categories of the formal sector so that it can be recognized and fully protected under the Labour Protection Act, 1998 and Labour Relations Act, 1978.
- Establish a standard employment contract that protects migrant domestic workers' rights, including a definition of duties to be considered "domestic work", wage rates, hours of work,

payment conditions and the number of days off according to the Labour Protection Act, 1998. The contract should be written in two languages that both the migrant domestic worker and the employer can understand (for example, Thai and Burmese).

- Set up public awareness campaigns on the laws and regulations concerning domestic workers, including the penalties for employers committing abuse. The campaigns should pay particular attention to issues of gender, race and migration. This includes basic information on working and living conditions, welfare and the rights of both domestic workers and their employers. For example, apart from working and living conditions, domestic workers have the right to keep their identification cards or work permits and to leave the house by themselves when they are not working, and employers cannot limit their contact with other people.
- Publicize accessible complaints mechanisms and hotline services for domestic workers, who experience all sorts of problems, and coordinate with labour inspectors, police and immigration officers.
- Develop step-by-step mechanisms and training for government agencies and NGOs at all levels and ensure that they all have a clear understanding of the issues related to the rights and needs of the domestic workers, and know the appropriate responses to the abuse of domestic workers, such as counselling, shelter and referrals for health care.
- Provide mechanisms for migrants to ask for justice if they are treated badly, cheated, exploited, suffer physical or sexual abuse, or are persecuted by employers, authorities or recruiters. Knowledgeable translators are needed for these mechanisms.
- Implement policies to prevent exorbitant recruitment fees, exploitative systems of debt payments and trafficking.
- Increase the number of labour inspectors and revise their authority to investigate the working conditions in such informal workplaces as households that hire migrant domestic workers. Inspection should be undertaken regularly.
- Develop positive public perceptions of migrant domestic workers in order that the host society appreciates the value of the work of migrant domestic workers. This could be done through mass media, especially Thai soap operas or other television programmes, as well as in schools. This is to counteract the image of domestic workers as women with low education or low social status in Thai society.

- In Thailand, the regularization process does not grant any rights, except for the right to work. Migrants still cannot, for example, travel from the district of their workplace. Although domestic workers are allowed to travel outside their district of residence, they have to travel with their employers. The right to travel freely within the country should be granted to registered migrants.
- There are neither self-help organizations nor informal organizations of migrant domestic workers in Thailand. Although non-Thais are not permitted to form, or be committee members of any labour union, they are allowed to be members of labour unions in Thailand. An informal organization of migrant domestic workers could start at the Thai-English language schools or at Suan Luang Park in Bangkok and would be possible if there were cooperation with NGOs.
- The Ministries of Interior and Labour should guarantee the rapid implementation of the memoranda on employment cooperation that Thailand has signed with Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, especially with regard to workers in informal sectors. This is to ensure an effective long-term mechanism to manage migration to Thailand throughout the year. This would also assist the Governments of the countries of origin to effectively protect their citizens.

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# ISSUES OF FEMALE MIGRANTS AND A GENDERED “LENS” TOWARD DEVELOPMENTAL RESETTLEMENT IN THE THREE GORGES PROJECT, CHINA

*Yan Tan\**

## **Introduction**

### **A. Involuntary migration**

The development of currently developing countries requires advances in technology, the exploitation of natural resources and the establishment of such infrastructure as large dams, reservoirs, urban development and transportation (McCormack 2001). The principal purposes of building dams or reservoirs are to generate electricity; supply water for agriculture, industries and households (Altinbilek 2002); control floods; and improve river navigation (Jackson and Sleigh 2000; Schultz 2002). Involuntary migration caused by such development projects as large dams (higher than 15 metres), reservoirs, urban expansion and transportation resulted in the displacement of at least 80 to 90 million people worldwide from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s (Cernea 1997). Global estimates suggest that dams and reservoirs alone have caused the relocation of between 40 and 80 million people over the last 50 years (WCD 2000). Dam construction in the last 50 years has been concentrated in developing regions: Africa, South America and Asia. Eighty-five per cent of the people displaced by World Bank-financed projects live in the vicinity of East, South, and South-East Asia. China, India, Brazil and Indonesia presently are the top four countries in terms of the number of people displaced by World Bank-financed projects (OED 1998). In China, an estimated 10.2 million rural people were uprooted by the construction of large or medium-sized reservoirs between the 1950s and the late 1980s (Zhang 1988). A revision of this estimate (to take into account the natural growth of the population and the effects of the two new major hydro projects – the Three Gorges Project (TGP) (1.2 million persons) on the Yangtze River and Xiaolangdi (0.18 million persons) on the Yellow River puts the level of displacement since the 1950s at more than 22 million.<sup>11</sup>

Development-induced displacement and resettlement (DIDR) is involuntary and permanent. As opposed to voluntary migration where the young and most adaptable individuals often take the “opportunity” to migrate, DIDR necessitates the removal of individual family units, regardless of age, gender or health (Eidem 1973). This has led to a wide range of economic, social and environmental

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<sup>11</sup> See [http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2006-08/13/content\\_7093257.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2006-08/13/content_7093257.htm).



consequences, including a loss of livelihood and the means of production and the impoverishment of the displaced people (Scudder 1982, 1993; Cernea 1995, 1997; Downing 1996; Mathur and Marsden 1998). It is noted that “the most widespread effect of involuntary displacement is the impoverishment of a considerable number of people... such impoverishment, with its de facto lack of social justice and equity, is manifest in numerous countries throughout the developing world when involuntary resettlement occurs” (Cernea and McDowell 2000: 12). Economic, environmental and social impacts interact in complex and profound ways. Research into resettlement of any type has tended to focus on the direct economic costs and benefits expected from the projects and, to a lesser extent, their environmental ramifications (Tan and others 2005a; Tan and Yao 2006). Consequently, there has been comparatively limited research undertaken on the potentially far-reaching and long-term social impacts of the resettlement process.

Involuntary resettlement consists of two closely related social processes: the displacement of people and the reconstruction of their livelihoods (Cernea 1996a). Reconstruction is concerned with how the displaced people recover their capacity to maintain an adequate livelihood, form a new community or be integrated into existing communities. The involuntary resettlement of such predominantly disadvantaged groups as women and rural peasants, is, and will remain, a contentious issue not only in the countries concerned but also in the wider international community (Croll 1999; Picciotto and others 2001).

Research into involuntary displacement and resettlement has grown rapidly during the last two decades. Researchers from diverse academic disciplines have studied dam-related displacements in Africa (Chambers 1970; Scudder 1973, 1981; Tamakloe 1994), Asia (Tamondong-Helin 1996; Parveen and Faisal 2002), and Central and South America (Wali 1989; Patridge 1993; Mejía 2000). They have generated theoretical frameworks (especially the “four-stage framework” and “impoverishment risks and reconstruction” model) to explain the complex and dynamic processes involved. Scudder’s four-stage framework, initially formulated in the late 1970s and refined in subsequent years, represents one of the earliest attempts in social science to formulate a coherent analytical framework for involuntary resettlement (Scudder 1981, 1991, 1993, 1997; Scudder and Colson 1982). This framework considers how the majority of resettlers can be expected to behave during a successful resettlement process. Scudder defined success as development that was environmentally, economically, institutionally and culturally sustainable into the second generation. Scudder (2005) divided the process of resettlement into four graded stages: (a) planning and recruitment, (b) adjustment and coping, (c) community formulation and economic development, and (d) handing over and incorporation. This framework deals with how resettlers will respond to the actions of project authorities. It emphasizes two different but interrelated factors: stress and process. This framework is very instructive, enabling resettlement institutions to work out objectives and to plan resettlement with a temporal dimension. However, as Scudder (2005) recognized, some concerns have been raised when it is applied to the real-world cases of development. One key concern is the

impact and role of gender in the resettlement process (De Wet 1993).

Subsequently, Cernea's impoverishment risks and reconstruction (IRR) model was published in the 1990s (Cernea, 1990, 1996a, 1996b; Cernea and McDowell, 2000). The IRR model highlights the intrinsic risks (eight major risks) that cause impoverishment through involuntary displacement and suggests various ways in which to counteract, eliminate or mitigate these risks. Over the past decade, development planners, practitioners and academics interested in the transformations resulting from involuntary displacement and resettlement have increasingly applied the IRR model when analysing real-world problems (Sapkota 1999; Parasuraman 1999). For example, in China, the completed Shuikou and Xiaolangdi projects have adopted this model. Impoverishment risks are drawn upon in the World Bank's new operational policy (OP 4.12) on resettlement (World Bank 2001).

Scudder's four-stage framework and Cernea's IRR model have complementary strengths. Although the two models approach the resettlement process from very different perspectives, they clearly suggest that successful resettlement is possible, but only if policymakers and planners adequately involve affected people and provide settlers and host people with significant development opportunities. Very recently they have been combined into a single theory (Scudder 2005). The combination of the two analytical frameworks provides policymakers with a relatively powerful tool for planning and implementing a successful process for development-produced involuntary resettlement. However, the new framework needs to be further extended by incorporating a number of additional factors (or risks) that are increased for displaced persons. These are: the role of gender as a risk factor, resettlement complexity, the political and institutional contexts in which resettlement occurs, the role of political leaders within populations undergoing displacement, and such intangibles as human rights and concepts and/or symbols of cultural importance. Moreover, both frameworks and their combined theory need further development to improve their utility to policymakers and practitioners. That is, to be useful, they must provide policymakers and practitioners with the means of assessing multidimensional risk/stress and the impact of involuntary resettlement on discrete categories of affected people, such as gender and age, and communities at different stages of the resettlement process. The point is, if these additional risk factors are incorporated into the framework (as predicted risk factors), then policymakers and practitioners can take action prior to resettlement to prevent or minimize their negative impact (for example, on gender roles) on relocation outcomes.

## **B. Gender inequality and limited study of female migrants**

Gender is a major organizing variable in describing population flows (Radcliffe 1991). Gender-differentiated population movement significantly influences the structure of a society (Chant and Radcliffe 1992). While there has been considerable research on DIDR, the gender dimension of DIDR is often overlooked (Adams 2000). By and large, research on gender and migration did not appear

in the worldwide literature on migration until the 1990s (Pedraza 1991; Chant and Radcliffe 1992). Before the 1990s, displaced people were conventionally considered as a genderless entity (Mehta and Srinivasan 1999). Consequently, Colson (1999) observed that resettlement and rehabilitation plans tended to be flawed in their understanding of the impact of the process on gender relations. Literature on how involuntary displacement affects the status, roles and development potential of female migrants remains very limited (Parasuraman 1993; Sweetman 1998).

In China, regulations and laws – on land, labour and marriage, for instance – treat the status and roles of women in the family, society, economy and other spheres, as being the same as those of men. Women's decision-making capabilities and influences in the domestic field have improved noticeably since the liberation of the nation (West and others 1999; UNDP 2001), and many aspects of women's social status showed significant improvements during the 1990s (ACWF and CNSB 2001). In this period, women's concerns were integrated into the legislative framework and national socio-economic development plans, such as the Law on Protection of Women's Interest (1992), the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2001–05)<sup>12</sup> and the Outline of Women's Development in China 2001–10. Nevertheless, gender inequality persists and even increased in the 1990s (Li 1995). There are vast discrepancies in the status of women from urban and rural areas and between those voluntarily and involuntarily displaced. Despite the Government's efforts to empower women, the achievement of equality is a distant goal (Hughes and Maurer-Fazio 2002).

With China's move from state socialism to market-oriented socialism, population movements have increased markedly since the 1980s, and studies that examine internal and voluntary migration issues in China have begun to appear (Goldstein, A. and others 1991; Goldstein and Goldstein 1991; Yang 1994, 1996; Goldstein and Goldstein 1996; Yang and Guo 1996, 1999; Roberts 1997). Yet these studies, for the most part, fail to differentiate between men and women or take gender as just one of many independent variables to examine migration differentials. Some researchers have chosen to focus on gender with respect to the roles of women (Wei and Ma 1996), the spatial patterns of migration (He and Pooler 2002; Fan 2005), the consequences of labour market dynamics (Liang and Chen 2004) and social problems in the process of voluntary migration (Fan and Huang 1998). An important finding of studies on gender and migration in China is that female migrants continue to face disadvantages (for example, Fan 2000; Huang 2001) in terms of occupational transition (from farm to non-farm sectors) and in terms of the employment opportunities open to them; for example, the level of opportunity to access any employment opportunities, as well as preferred (more prestigious) types of work in their resettlement destinations. The principal reason for their lesser representation in prestigious occupations is largely due to their low level of education (Liang and Chen 2004), and as such, one strategy for reducing gender inequality in occupational attainment is to promote women's education. However, whilst there is considerable discussion of resettlement

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<sup>12</sup> Xinhua News Agency, accessed on 16 March, 2006, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2006-03/16/content\\_4309517.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2006-03/16/content_4309517.htm).

policy in China (Meikle and Walker 2000; Li and others 2001; Duan and Steil 2003; Heggelund 2004; Webber and McDonald 2004), scant research and little attention has been paid to female migrants who are involuntarily uprooted, especially by DIDR (Tan and others 2005b).

### C. Scope and aim

The construction of the Three Gorges dam and the associated resettlement of displaced persons are among some of the central socio-economic transformations that have profoundly shaped modern life in China. The resettlement issue produced by the monumental TGP has been regarded as a critical challenge for China, involving 17 years of the relocation of over 1.3 million people (projected total by 2009).<sup>13</sup> Although rural migrants account for only 42.1 per cent of the total “directly affected population” (846,028 persons), the problems associated with their resettlement are much greater than those associated with the resettlement of urban residents (CWRC 1993).<sup>14</sup>

Through investigating the largest planned displacement of people resulting from the biggest dam project in world history, this paper aims to fill part of that gap by examining the current situation of female migrants displaced by the TGP resettlement process, rural resettlement in particular. Using both primary and secondary data, this paper examines gender as a risk factor influencing resettlement outcomes and, in particular, focuses on the limited participation of women in decision-making processes and the great likelihood of economic impoverishment upon resettlement, as well as issues relating to their level of social integration into their destination environments. The empirical information used in this paper was drawn from the author’s in-depth interviews with rural women and their husbands from 141 migrant households, from December 2000 to June 2001. These interviews were conducted in the Three Gorges reservoir area and Sichuan Province, the largest among the 11 remote resettlement provinces in terms of the absolute number of migrants received between 2000 and 2004.<sup>15</sup> The Chongqing reservoir section is an area of the TGP with the largest proportion of farmland to be inundated and population to be displaced (figure 1).<sup>16</sup> It makes up some 80 per cent of the flooding losses (mainly farmland, urban sites, industrial enterprises, infrastructure and cultural relics) and migrants to be relocated.

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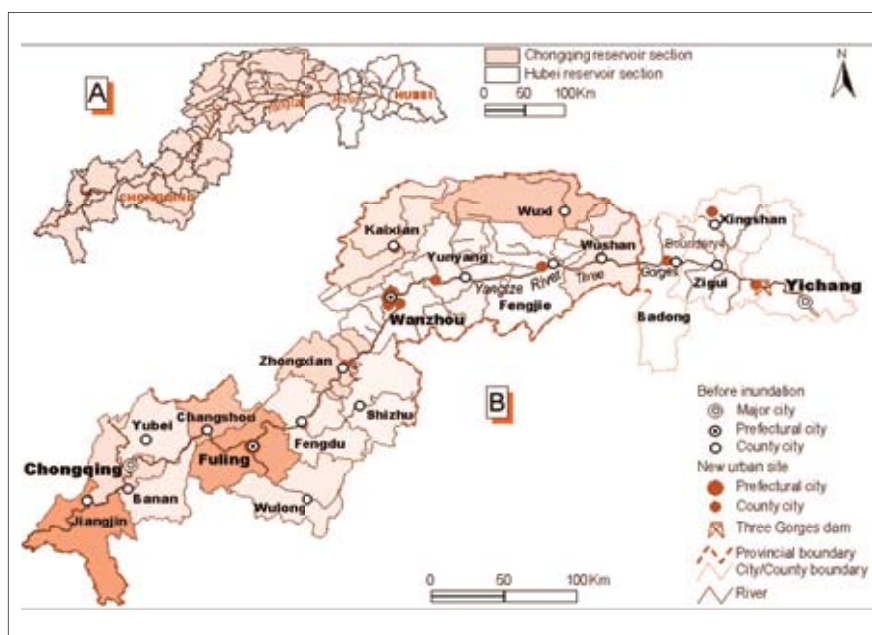
<sup>13</sup> By September 2006, the total number of migrants displaced by the TGP amounted to 1.23 million persons, with 79.7 per cent of them originating from the Chongqing reservoir section (*Shanxia gongcheng bao*, 30 September 2006). This indicates that most of the TGP dislocation has been accomplished, while it is expected that the remaining TGP resettlement work will be completed by 2008.

<sup>14</sup> The “directly affected population” (*zhijie yanmo renklou*) refer to people whose housing will be submerged.

<sup>15</sup> The other 10 provinces are Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Shandong, Fujian and Guangdong.

<sup>16</sup> Due to the vast size and also for ease of project management, the Three Gorges reservoir area is divided into two sections – the Chongqing section and the Hubei section – on the basis of flooding status, the numbers of people to be displaced, and responsibilities and administration of displacement and resettlement.

**Figure 1. The Three Gorges reservoir area**



*Note:* 'A' shows the 2 sections comprising the Three Gorges reservoir area: the Chongqing section and Hubei section. 'B' illustrates the 16 cities and counties in the Chongqing reservoir section, 2 cities and 7 county seats of which will be completely submerged and the others affected by the construction of the Three Gorges dam.

The locations surveyed cover mainly three counties (Kaixian, Yunyang and Fengdu) and one district at the county level (Wanzhou) in the Chongqing reservoir section. They are representatives of different resettlement settings, geographically and economically. Structured interviews were principally conducted among three groups of migrants: (a) migrants relocated by the “near resettlement” approach in the reservoir areas; most of those interviewed in this category were physically displaced between 1997 and 1999; (b) migrants relocated via the “government-organized distant resettlement” (GODR) scheme, and resettled in Sichuan in 2000; they were interviewed within one year of their removal; and (c) rural migrants who were expected to be displaced between 2001 and 2002; they were interviewed six months to one year prior to their physical removal.

The next section briefly discusses the major government policies and adjustments for the TGP resettlement. Section II examines some consequences for female migrants in the resettlement process. The third section looks at China’s new strategies and policy implications for dealing with the impoverishment of migrants at the transition stage. This paper concludes with policy recommendations for improving the existing policies for involuntary resettlement.

## I. RESETTLEMENT POLICIES AND ADJUSTMENTS OF THE THREE GORGES PROJECT

Since 1981, the Government of China has attempted to solve the problems of reservoir settlers.<sup>17</sup> In doing so, China was perhaps the first country to attempt to systematically highlight the problems encountered by reservoir settlers. The government document (1986) No. 56 stated that “reservoir displacement must be transformed from a passive compensation scheme to a creative production programme and shift from compensating livelihoods to assisting production, linking the reconstruction of reservoir areas to the planning of developmental resettlement”. The Regulations on Compensation of Land Requisition and Resettlement Rehabilitation of Large and Medium Sized Water and Hydropower Projects, issued on 1 May 1991, is the earliest regulation referring specifically to reservoir-induced resettlement. Since then, the developmental resettlement policy has been introduced in reservoir areas in response to the problems created by earlier approaches. In the TGP resettlement, the developmental resettlement policy is reinforced in the Changjiang Three Gorges Project Resettlement Regulations, first issued in 1993 and revised in 2001 (SCC 1993, 2001). The developmental resettlement policy associated with the TGP resettlement has a wide context and many implications for the affected people and affected regions. In the Three Gorges Resettlement Regulations 2001, 7 chapters and 64 provisions are included. The general policy, principles, objectives, administrative system, rural resettlement, urban and enterprises’ relocation, reconstruction of infrastructure, restoration of special equipment and administration to the reservoir flooding and resettlement areas, preferential measures, and penalty system relating to the TGP resettlement are specified in greater detail.

The Government of China has committed itself to being fully responsible for the TGP resettlement. It has proposed the general goal of the TGP resettlement to be: “moving out people, keeping a stable society, and helping migrants to become rich gradually”. To achieve this goal, a range of resettlement policies has been put into effect. Taking into consideration the magnitude and complexity of the TGP resettlement, the Government of China has drawn up the fundamental resettlement policies as follows (SCC 1993, 2001):

- The TGP resettlement carries out a developmental resettlement policy. This policy requires that relocation funds be directed to such major development-oriented projects as the cultivation of cash crops, the improvement of farmland and the establishment of industrial enterprises in urban areas, rather than distributed directly to relocated persons as compensation. The

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<sup>17</sup> The Government examined these problems and named them the “seven difficulties” (*qi nan*) and “four inadequacies” (*si cha*) (Jing 2000). The seven difficulties referred to shortages of electricity, drinking water, schools, food, medical services, and means of communication and transportation. The four inadequacies referred to the poor quality of irrigation, housing, flood prevention and reservoir maintenance facilities.

policy supposes that those who are relocated would be assisted in their efforts to improve upon their former production levels, income-earning capacity and living standards — or at least to restore them to levels preceding the project or before the physical removal.

- The developmental resettlement policy is to be managed “under the leadership of the central Government, carried by the relevant provinces and based on the relevant counties”.
- The TGP resettlement adopts the mechanism of a responsibility system of resettlement funding (*yimin jingfei baogan zhi*).<sup>18</sup>
- The Three Gorges reservoir area is entitled in the “Changjiang Three Gorges economic opening zone”, sharing the same preferential policies as in the coastal opening districts. The cities of Yichang, Wanzhou, and Fuling are authorized as the opening cities alongside the Yangtze River and share the same policy privileges as those cities on the coast.
- The State Planning Commission is accountable for working on the general compendium for economic development in the reservoir region to determine the direction of the development.
- The State appeals for corresponding assistance for the TGP (*duikou zhiyuan*) from all the regions and departments of the country, in compliance with the principle of advantageous complementarity, mutual-benefit, long-term cooperation and mutual development.
- The TGP resettlement adopts the principle of compensation for inundation losses at the early stage (that is, before and during physical removal) and aid at the later stages (after removal, or transition period) (*qianqi buchang, houqi fuchi*).

Resettlement agencies and recipient communities have adopted land or agriculture as the basis for resettling rural people. Since the commencement of experimental rural resettlement in 1985, near resettlement has been the dominant approach to resettling rural residents. Through the near resettlement approach, rural migrants are moved uphill to nearby local communities or further away from the 175-metre water level – the ultimate inundation line when the Three Gorges dam is filled by 2009. Land is an essential resource for agricultural production and the basic means upon which most migrants’ livelihoods depend. The main measures of securing land to resettle rural

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<sup>18</sup> The total static investment of the TGP is estimated to be 90 billion *yuan*, or US\$10.84 billion (rate as in 1993), which changes dynamically every year. The State distributed the compensation and funds to Hubei Province and Chongqing Municipality, which then allocated them to each county and city affected by the TGP within the reservoir area. The quota of the compensation and funds allocated at the provincial and county level could never be exceeded. The quota, together with the resettlement task, forms the responsibility system of resettlement funding.

migrants in their communities of origin in the reservoir area include reclaiming uncultivated land on slopes, improving the quality of low-yielding land and adjusting some land from the host people in the resettlement communities. Relocating some of the rural residents to the secondary and tertiary industrial sectors in the reservoir areas was another resettlement scheme. In the Chongqing reservoir section, over 4,000 displaced rural migrants (dominantly males) have been resettled in secondary and tertiary industrial sectors, but 90 per cent of them have had to be resettled again. This plan proved to be overly optimistic because of changed macro- and micro-economic situations (REG 1988; Tan and others 2003).

There have been two major policy adjustments during the history of the TGP resettlement (Zhu 1999). First, commencing in 2000, there has been a shift from a policy of settling rural migrants to uphill sites within the immediate reservoir area to one of encouraging rural migrants to move to more distant resettlement sites. Second, the policy of the relocation of industrial enterprises in the reservoir area has shifted from simply re-establishing them at another site to restructuring, merging and closing down small and non-profitable enterprises. The policy adjustment adopts three combinations of resettlement approaches (TGPCC 2000), that is, between local resettlement and distant resettlement, between centralized resettlement and scattered resettlement, and between the government-organized resettlement and voluntarily self-employed resettlement.

By the end of June 2006, the Government of China had moved some 164,000 rural residents out of their counties of origin in the reservoir area.<sup>19</sup> Through GODR schemes, these rural migrants were resettled (a) in 11 designated provinces or municipalities and economically developed areas on the east coast and in the middle and downstream areas of the Yangtze River basin (which will benefit from flood prevention and electricity generation provided by the project), and (b) in other non-flooded counties in the reservoir area. The relocation of factories and mining industries is coupled with wrenching structural changes to industry and the technical innovation of enterprises to be relocated. Those State-owned or collective-owned enterprises generating serious pollution, without markets for their products and with liabilities outstripping assets, must be bankrupted or shut down. However, whilst the principles of fair, just and well-publicized resettlement are to be followed, some critical issues relating to the status and development of the resettled women are ignored under the current institutional framework and resettlement schemes.

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<sup>19</sup> The majority of the rural residents (some 95,000) resettled in the 11 remote provinces originate from 8 counties in the Chongqing reservoir section. The 8 counties are Yunyang, Kaixian, Fengjie, Wushan, Zhongxian, Wanzhou, Fuling and Fengdu. Taking into account some 25,000 migrants who voluntarily moved out the reservoir area and resettled in 26 provinces nationwide in earlier years (mainly from 1996 to 2000), some 189,000 rural migrants have moved out of their counties of origin in the reservoir area and resettled in distant locations.



## II. CONSEQUENCES FOR FEMALE MIGRANTS IN THE THREE GORGES PROJECT RESETTLEMENT

### A. Limited participation

The extent and degree of participation of the affected groups (migrants and host people) in the resettlement process are generally small and low. The rights of participation and options open to the displaced people remain limited in the course of resettlement despite government emphasis on the importance of participation. The authorities and officials working on resettlement encountered considerable pressure in fulfilling the resettlement tasks, particularly in GODR. Tactics combining hard measures (force) with soft measures (education) had to be adopted. Most migrants consider the resettlement policies of the central Government to be favourable to them, but under some circumstances the implementation of those policies at the local government level has been contentious.

The rhetoric of participation was part of the considerable propaganda that accompanied the implementation of the resettlement policies and resettlement schemes. The participation of both men and women in policy decision-making and various resettlement plans at a higher (than county) level has been negligible, although they are essentially encouraged to participate in local resettlement affairs at the township and village level. The migrants had no say regarding either their displacement through the GODR schemes or their resettlement. Where, when, and why these people must be relocated are questions determined by the project and dictated by the upper echelons of Government.

At the provincial/municipal and county levels, there is little possibility for migrants to take part in the relevant meetings and discussions with respect to their distant resettlement affairs. Occasionally, the national and provincial resettlement authorities organize on-the-spot meetings (*xianchang bangonghui*) to detect, examine and solve problems, and draw lessons and experience from the practical resettlement operations. Few migrants are invited to participate in these official meetings to voice their requests and problems. The survey showed that many migrants knew little about the GODR approach, especially about the recipient locations that they would be moving to and the compensation standard and distribution structure. The survey showed that 62.5 per cent of the 104 surveyed migrants to be moved out of the reservoir area were dissatisfied, or responded as “difficult to say”, with the performance of officials and staff responsible for the GODR resettlement. Over two thirds (72 migrants) of the migrants resettled in Deyang were satisfied with the work of the officials. The main reason for this level of satisfaction can be put down to the great emphasis of the Government on the resettlement trial of GODR, as the trial was to set an example for a substantial resettlement in Sichuan Province from 2001 to 2004.

At the village level, migrants are encouraged to participate in resettlement affairs. In the village of Yongxian, Kaixian, all the villagers to be displaced were invited to participate in the information sessions organized by the Hanfeng Town Resettlement Office (figure 2). The migrants participated in their resettlement affairs in so far as they were lectured on the significance of TGP, the necessity and national policy of the distant resettlement, the compensation standard, and the apparent opportunities of improving the livelihood of migrant families and thus their economic posterity. Information brochures on the scheme, including frequently asked questions of the migrants, and the answers, were delivered to the migrants. The migrants were also allowed to raise questions relating to their displacement. Unfortunately, this kind of mobilization (or access to information) was not always provided by the resettlement institutions in other townships in Kaixian County.

**Figure 2. Training on resettlement policy in the village of Yongxian, Kaixian**



Migrants actively participated in the training organized by the Hanfeng Town Resettlement Office.

A government-organized visit (*kaocha*) is an innovative means to expand the participation of the resettlers. The first procedure of GODR in the county displacing persons (the sending county) is to define and mobilize the eligible migrant families to be moved out. The second step is to organize the representatives to visit the receiving locations in distant provinces. One representative from each migrant family makes up the visiting group. Normally, family members would hold a discussion regarding the conditions of their resettlement location before the representative's visit, so that the visit to the resettlement location, and the signing of the contract on behalf of the family, is not an action of the individual, but rather a family decision. The migrant representatives travel to the receiving areas to investigate the resettlement conditions. Preceding their arrival at the resettlement locations, land plots set aside for rebuilding houses were selected by the receiving communities. While based on bilateral negotiations between the sending and receiving counties, they were settled according to a "top-down" procedure. In addition, migrants are not usually permitted to change the resettlement locations allocated. The migrant representatives are required to sign contracts concerning their family's move and provide information about the resettlement locations to their

family members, as well as encourage other families to move. Given the pressing schedule of displacement, they are requested to sign contracts on building houses in the recipient communities during the visit. Most migrants feel that the visit period (usually only one day) is too short and that it is therefore impossible for them to gather detailed information about the host communities. A women migrant in Qukou town, Kaixian stated: “It is impossible for us to obtain more useful information. We are not permitted to contact or talk to the host people. We want to know how far the market is and what production we can develop after we move there but there is no time and no opportunity. We are required to sign agreements on our families’ resettlement before we go back home.”

More often than not, the participating family member is male; men make up around 85 per cent of the representatives. There are several reasons for this. Women have traditionally played secondary roles in decision-making, especially when it comes to major decisions. They undertake the familial role as caregivers for children and the elderly. Another reason is that men are considered more able than women to suffer the hardship of a long journey to visit their remote resettlement destination. Women tend to have more limited travel experience than men, and lower levels of contact with government departments. Usually, the male is the head of the household, as shown in his family’s household registration status, and is principally accountable for important affairs. Gendered responsibilities at the household level thus imply that women are less likely than men to participate in migration decisions; with impoverished economic circumstances, the position of most resettled females within the family is likely to weaken further. However, there are again variations: where men moved into cities and towns for work, some of the women left behind assumed a greater role in household decision-making on relocation and resettlement matters. Wealthier women – for example, those residing in the peri-urban areas of the county cities – are in a better position than impoverished women to negotiate and make decisions in order to gain advantages for themselves and their families in the process of resettlement. Although women may gain autonomy when the men of the family are absent, they may also be left with greater stress and vulnerability and an increased workload. Some would prefer to wait for their husband’s return to make decisions on resettlement matters.

## **B. Worsening unemployment and constraints on transformation from farm to non-farm sectors**

Community-level longitudinal observations about changes in employment status in industry provide valuable information for examining the impacts of near resettlement on migrants and host people. Such observations have been undertaken by the Chinese Academy of Sciences since 1997. They monitored 31 migrant labourers (of these 15 were female) from 11 migrant households who were resettled in the town of Changling in Wanzhou District in August 1999. They have also monitored 151 host labourers (72 of whom were female) from 68 host households in this community since

1997. The available data from 1997 to 2001 further reveal a growing inequality between female migrant and non-migrant labourers in accessing local employment.<sup>20</sup> Resettlement dramatically impacted on the employment patterns of both groups of female labourers. The number of average workdays per annum shows two trends in employment (table 1). First, although the workdays of women in agricultural activities fluctuated over the years of observation, there were still markedly more workdays for women working in agricultural activities. This indicates that agriculture is the dominant sector in which women are engaged. Second, the number of total annual workdays significantly declined over time, with the decrease in workdays mainly occurring in agriculture. This suggests that, despite a shift in employment from agricultural sectors to non-agricultural ones, there are insufficient non-agricultural employment opportunities to absorb all rural labourers – migrants or hosts. For instance, non-migrant female labourers worked an average of 221 workdays in 1997, but only 191 workdays in 2001. The full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate for this group of female labourers was around 74 per cent, indicating that, in 1997, 1 in 4 female host labourers was redundant.<sup>21</sup> For the years from 1999 to 2001, however, the FTE employment rate for this group declined to around 63 per cent, suggesting that more than one third (37 per cent) of female host labourers were redundant by 2001. It is clear, therefore, that women do not have access to a similar range of job opportunities as men (for example, industry, construction and transportation). In addition, both migrant and non-migrant women generally face greater family-related social and economic constraints than their male counterparts. Moreover, non-agricultural employment in the reservoir area is generally male-dominated.

Compared with the host female labourers, female migrants had more unfavourable employment outcomes, not least because it is more difficult for them to move from farm to non-farm sectors. Female migrants worked significantly more days in cropping and forestry/fruit (mainly citrus planting) sectors than host labourers did. There was a greater surplus of female migrant labourers. For example, the FTE employment rate dropped sharply, from 80 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2001. This suggests that more than half (55 per cent) of female migrant labourers were underemployed in 2001, whereby the number of workdays decreased considerably, by 107. Much of this reduction in workdays was from agricultural activities. In addition, no female migrants were hired by the construction industry, in which only a small number of female hosts worked. Jobs in construction were mainly stimulated by the TGP-related reconstruction of new urban areas and infrastructure (mainly transportation). This work requires physical strength and endurance, and as a consequence tends to be dominated by male workers. Surprisingly, female migrant were forced to quit livestock farming upon resettlement. Local

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<sup>20</sup> Using other data and information derived from the same longitudinal observation, an earlier study by Tan and others (2005) identified gender differences of employment between and within different industry sectors. A striking finding of that study was that, in the process of resettlement, women had less adaptability and opportunities than men in transferring from agricultural to non-agricultural sectors.

<sup>21</sup> Full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate is a ratio of actual average workdays per year relative to 300 workdays (presumably workdays of a whole full-time labourer in the local community, that is, 50 weeks a year and 6 days a week), given the level of agricultural production in this region.

resettlement planning has meant that the houses of migrants were built collectively, that is, migrants were settled into apartments linked to each other. As a result, they have been denied the physical environments required to farm livestock. Moreover, due to the fact that local commercial markets were almost saturated, migrants were often unable to establish either social or customer networks. This made it extremely difficult for them when seeking employment in commerce and services. The numbers of workdays for migrant labourers in these occupations were about half of those of the host labourers.

**Table 1. Changes in the average annual workdays of female labourers working locally: migrants vs. non-migrants, by sector, 1997–2001**

Year	Farming	Forestry	Live-stock	Fishery	Industry	Construction	Transportation	Consumer/Services	Total	FTE employment rate (%)
<i>Non-migrant women</i>										
1997	70.6	8.9	75.9	1.7	2	7.0	0.0	47.8	220.5	73.5
1998	50.0	5.7	80.1	0.0	7.0	19.6	0.0	44.6	207.0	69.0
1999	39.6	5.7	70.9	1.1	0.0	11.7	5.5	52.7	187.0	62.3
2000	42.9	6.9	66.5	4.0	0.0	6.9	5.4	61.1	193.5	64.5
2001	47.3	10.2	68.0	0.0	6.2	1.0	0.0	58.0	190.7	63.6
<i>Migrant women</i>										
1999	86.3	54.7	44.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	28.1	26.9	240.8	80.3
2000	67.4	15.8	0.0	0.0	13.4	0.0	28.1	32.3	157.0	52.3
2001	55.4	19.5	0.0	0.0	17.5	0.0	12.8	28.5	133.7	44.6

*Source:* Compiled from the investigation conducted by the Institute of Mountain Hazards and Development, Chinese Academy of Science, between 1997 and 2001.

There are three major constraints affecting employment opportunities for women (migrants and hosts) that have consequently led to the impoverishment of both groups. The first is the low level of economic development in the region. The second constraint is the dramatic shrinking of farmland for agricultural uses, for both migrant and host households. The reduction in farmland holdings is a serious consequence of resettlement and urbanization in this community. Whilst the arable land per capita of migrant and host households has declined, migrants have more land compared with the host people, being allocated on average 0.04 ha of farmland per capita. This figure, however, is less than the allocation of land promised by the Government (0.1 ha) and less than the average (0.08 ha) they possessed in their town of origin (20 km away from Changling town). The host people were persuaded, sometimes forcibly, to give up a portion of their landholdings to the migrants. Consequently, local farmers had an average of 0.02 ha per capita, just half the size of the migrants' landholdings and one quarter of the national average. In this way, the livelihood of the host population has been negatively affected by this extensive land requisition. Insufficient farmland has not only forced female labourers out of the agricultural sector, but, because of the stagnant development of secondary and tertiary industries, surplus (female and male) labourers have been unable to be taken up by these industries.

The third constraint relates to educational differences between genders and between the two groups of female labourers. Low levels of education have exacerbated the problems of unemployment and underemployment and explain why women, especially migrants, experience more difficulties in the transition from farm to non-farm sectors. In the economically lagging reservoir areas, accessibility to education differs greatly by gender. The percentage of school-age girls withdrawing from studies is high, due to poverty and the need to work on the land. The educational level for females is less than that for males (table 2), while the education level of migrants is higher than that of the host population. Compared with host female labourers, the comparatively higher educational attainment of female migrants did not result in greater employment opportunities. In 2001, the average schooling years for the migrant labourers and host people in the resettlement area were 6.56 years and 6.15 years, respectively. These figures are lower than national levels, which were 6.95 years for women and 8.05 years for men in the fifth population census in China (Population Census Office under State Council and Chinese National Statistical Bureau 2002). Moreover, those labourers who were working outside Wanzhou district had much higher levels of education, with 9.50 and 9.13 years for migrants and host workers, respectively. Still, these figures are lower than the average level (10.1 years) of education for all the aggregated rural migrant labourers in China in the fifth population census in 2000. This partly explains the considerable difficulties in transforming a massive number of rural labourers into non-farm workers inside and outside Wanzhou.

**Table 2. Years in formal education for labourers: host people vs. migrants, by sex and by sector**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Non-agriculture</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>Host people in Changling town</i>				
1997	4.8	7.9	6.5	5.3
1998	4.6	7.5	6.6	5.2
1999	4.7	7.5	6.6	5.4
2000	4.8	7.6	6.6	5.7
2001	4.9	7.5	6.8	5.4
<i>Migrants settled in Changling town</i>				
1999	5.76	8.1	7.13	5.87
2000	5.74	7.75	7.13	5.87
2001	5.68	7.85	7.13	6

*Source:* Calculated from the investigation conducted by the Institute of Mountain Hazards and Development, Chinese Academy of Science, between 1997 and 2001.

The non-agricultural occupations in which both migrant and non-migrant labourers worked, beyond the local community, mainly included commerce/services and construction. These occupations usually have low entrance requirements with respect to education or skills. This implies that the transformation from farm to non-farm industries in the resettlement area is at the early stages. Most women (migrants and non-migrants) are unable to achieve occupational mobility and shift from agriculture to secondary or tertiary industry. Unemployment and underemployment

are serious problems facing the two groups of female labourers. Faced with deepening gender inequalities (among both migrant and host populations), the issue of how to re-establish livelihoods is problematic. It is anticipated that increasing numbers of jobless migrants and non-migrants (females and males) will likely trigger social instability in the reservoir area. How to stimulate the development of the local economy in order to increase employment opportunities and raise the skill levels of the local population, especially of women (migrants and hosts), is a significant challenge for the local government.

### **C. Inadequate planning for livelihood reconstruction**

The reconstruction of livelihoods after resettling in other provinces through government-organized distant resettlement schemes is situated at the early stage of rehabilitation. The early stage refers to the period from the completion of the physical removal to the restoration of the migrants' livelihoods to their pre-removal levels. Female migrants who have been resettled in Deyang in Sichuan Province are most worried about reduced incomes, followed by fewer employment opportunities and their children's education. They hope to earn enough money to pay for their children's schooling and at the same time provide them with a good standard of living and studying environments. They have experienced the process of physical removal and have gradually become familiar with their resettlement communities. The women found that the practices and methods of agricultural production are somewhat different from those they were accustomed to, although the differences between Sichuan and their areas of origin (Kaixian County) are not as significant as those between the reservoir area and the other 10 resettlement provinces. Running businesses or developing secondary or tertiary industries, such as processing industries and transportation and tourism, are either virtually impossible or very difficult due to a loss of social capital and a lack of sufficient money to invest in non-agricultural activities. Therefore, agriculture (cropping, livestock and commercial farming) has become their major paid productive activity and consequently their main source of income.

The experience in livelihood restoration and reconstruction for the migrants resettled in Deyang indicates that the economic activities of resettled women after displacement can fall into two distinctive phases. The first phase is dominated by land-based productive activities, usually comprising of three types. Each migrant is allocated a plot of land, which they can work to achieve basic maintenance. Most female migrants can engage in the first type of production activities – agricultural pursuits, such as cropping, vegetable and fruit cultivation, animal husbandry, aquaculture, or other agricultural production (such as raising pigs or ducks). Although for most migrants these activities were not new ventures, specializing in them requires a great deal of integrated effort, including financial and technical support, marketing expertise and individual initiatives. The second type of economic activity involves non-farm-based activities, including various service-oriented activities. Such activities include setting up small shops in the town or village and providing food and transport services. The

third type of activity involves the export of labour, with migrants working as unskilled labourers in the local labour market or in the coastal regions of east China.

Given limited land resources (on average 0.04 ha per capita) in Sichuan, the measures implemented for land-based rehabilitation provided only an initial basis for subsistence production for most migrants. Land-based reconstruction is insufficient to restore the migrant families' incomes and livelihoods to the level prior to displacement. An increase in income generating opportunities will only come in the second phase, which will focus on non-farm activities. These activities have recently emerged with individual initiatives where the resettlement institutions and local governments provide the necessary technical guidance and financial support.

Unfortunately, livelihood and production rehabilitation planning in the resettlement areas is generally inadequate or absent in at least two aspects. The first relates to any plan that provides agricultural production skills training for the resettlers. There have been huge differences in the production methods, types of farm work and farming seasons between many resettlement locations and the original areas of the resettlers. Such planning should be based on a reasonable exploitation of resources in the resettlement regions, the development of secondary and tertiary industries and the incorporation of advanced technology and investment from other areas. As an effective way of increasing the income of the migrants and providing employment opportunities for the surplus labour, development-related projects of all kinds in the relocation areas should be selected in accordance with natural resource availability, the area's economic environment and the skills of the migrants. To start non-agricultural production after removal is to create conditions for future development in secondary and tertiary industries in some developed regions. The main problem of non-agricultural resettlement is that there exist risks in the market economy, and thus investment may yield low returns. It was not until 2004 that the displaced people in many resettlement areas were provided with technical guidance and training. Migrant households were mostly sparsely distributed; they did not form a centralized community in most resettlement sites. For this reason the local government did not work out specific plans for the migrants' rehabilitation after they moved into the host community. Instead, rehabilitating livelihoods and the productive capacity of migrants is usually incorporated in regional or provincial development plans.

The second inadequacy is the absence of planning related to providing aid to migrants at the later stages after physical displacement. The main reason for the lack of planning is the uncertainty of the source of funding in TGP. Without any national policy related to the years of assistance, standard of assistance, or any programmes for later assistance for the displaced people (distinguishing rural and urban migrants, resettled within and outside the reservoir area) and the resettlement areas, it is impossible for any resettlement area to make any plans concerning such later assistance.



## **D. Social integration of displaced people**

In the TGP resettlement, two major patterns of social integration through the near resettlement and the distant resettlement schemes can be identified, based on the distance of the displacement and resettlement of the rural migrants. Living in the original environment, migrants displaced by near resettlement can still tap into their existing social networks, although they have less incentive to obtain new social capital. Near resettlement has shown that concentrated resettlement is likely to result in acute competition for the best locations and economic resources. Strong competition for such economic resources as land, infrastructure, social services and employment opportunities may result in a deteriorating relationship between the settlers and the host people. Consequently, an economic conflict may turn into a social one.

In comparison, distant resettlement implies the entire loss of original social capital or lateral relationships (social networks). Some migrant families were separated from their relatives and friends because they had to move to different provinces, or different resettlement locations within a province. Through the GODR scheme, people were resettled in distant provinces ranging from 1,000 to 2,800 km away from the reservoir area. They, particularly those resettled in the coastal provinces, experienced changes in production practices, methods and tools, cultural shock or broad psychological pressures in their new social and cultural environment. Although people displaced via distant resettlement are likely to lose their existing social network in their hometown, as the resettlement planners have envisaged, they have the opportunities to escape from their originally closed society, nestled among the mountains and gorges in the reservoir area. They see a fresh world where they would receive new ideas and pick up new skills, make new friends and develop enriched lives. Distant resettlement may benefit migrants by creating new social capital and expanding social networks, but this inevitably comes at a certain price. To promote social integration, migrants need to have the opportunity to exercise greater choice in selecting their relocation destinations. They should be provided livelihood, technical, and social support after their removal. Moreover, the rights of the affected host people should be taken into account in resettlement operations.

The spatial patterns of a combination of “comparatively concentrated resettlement at county and town level” and “spatially resettling migrants to villages and villagers’ groups in a scattered manner” of the distant resettlement affect the social integration of migrants into the local society. Scattered resettlement is assumed to enable the migrants to integrate themselves more easily into the host communities after resettlement. Most female migrants who have been resettled in Deyang still regard themselves and their children as migrants. They also feel that they were placed in an unfavourable position in community affairs because they have essentially become a small minority group, lacking in coordination and support from their own interest groups. On the one hand, migrants, particularly women, are forced to interact with the host people in order to build relationships and get help

from them. On the other hand, they are often unlikely to access policy formulation and resource redistribution in grass-roots organizations.

Female migrants find it very difficult to get non-agricultural jobs or to re-establish their own businesses after displacement, while the majority of men work outside of the home in order to earn a living. Generally, the further the resettlement, the more difficult it is to rebuild social relationships. Those resettled in the coastal provinces are going through an extremely difficult time because they are not only facing intensive competition created by the market economy but are also encountering different languages and cultures. During the transition period, the settlers have many problems learning the local dialect, such as the *Yue* language (spoken in Shanghai and Zhejiang) and *Cantonese* (spoken in Guangdong).

People, especially women, resettled by scattered resettlement are probably more easily and voluntarily integrated into the host communities than those resettled by centralized resettlement. Scattered resettlers have to make efforts to build their new social capital because it is impossible for them to form an internal interest group on which they can depend in their new resettlement environment. In the context of the country's open policy and the establishment of a market economy, most female migrants have become aware of the significance of self-reliance. From the very beginning, some of them have devoted time to establishing new relationships with the authorities and host people. Some categories of resettlers can easily make use of resettlement as an opportunity to reconstruct and enhance their social capital. Young female migrants with relatively good education are more receptive to new ideas, knowledge and skills, which help them re-establish social connections in a new environment, particularly in the context of a fast-paced changing urban environment. The groups of female migrants who have relatives and/or friends in the new environment tend to rebuild their social associations with more ease by taking advantage of their assistance. However, the displaced persons who ran businesses before their removal find it very difficult to resume businesses in the new environment because their client group has disappeared. It is important for the Government and resettlement institutions to take this into account and to provide adequate assistance and training programmes, and so forth. They need to be more careful in setting up selection criteria for suitable migrant families to be relocated and where they relocate, especially taking into account each family's specific skills and needs.

### III. STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH THREE GORGES PROJECT RESETTLEMENT ISSUES

#### A. Establishing aid at the later stages

Faced with various resettlement problems, the Government has taken effective steps to deal with the challenges. The new strategies include mainly aid at the later stages and massive training programmes. The weak basis of industries and a lack of economic development potency, which has been driven by the TGP resettlement, are the essential reasons why the “aid at the later stages” programme is imperative for the resettlement areas, especially the reservoir area. Aiding the TGP displaced people has been undertaken as a long-term political mission at all government levels. The duration of aid is initially phased to last 17 years, from 2004 to 2020.<sup>22,23</sup>

Measures of aid mainly include setting up aid funds, the exemption or reduction of taxes, and preferential policies; arranging industrial projects; organizing partner assistance; nurturing new industries; and providing migrants with skills training (Fu 2005). All the aid measures aim not only to solve the current living and production problems of the majority of the displaced people, but also to develop the economy in the resettlement areas (specifically the reservoir area) in the long run. In Chongqing, for example, the municipal government of Chongqing approved the Outline of the Aid Planning for the TGP Migrants in Chongqing (Government document No. 339 [2004]) in 2004. The Outline sets the objective of aid as: to greatly improve the living, production and employment conditions of all the migrants settled in the jurisdiction of Chongqing municipality. The following three steps have been planned to achieve the goal (Gao 2004):

Step 1: Between 2004 and 2007, the living and production conditions of the migrants will be improved. Problems of drinking water for people and livestock will be basically solved. Basic infrastructure and services, such as access to telephone, electricity, television and medical services, will be provided to migrant households in the resettlement communities. By 2007, the average net income of the rural migrants who have been resettled is expected to reach the average level of the local farmers; and the average expendable income of the urban resettlers is to reach the average level of the whole group of urban residents.

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<sup>22</sup> In response to the TGP resettlement policies and changes, on 6 April 2004, Chongqing initiated the aid programme. Similar aid programmes have also been initiated in Hubei reservoir section and the 11 provinces that have received the TGP migrants.

<sup>23</sup> In June 2006, the Development and Reform Commission of the State Council launched a new policy, under which all rural migrants produced by the medium- or large-scale dam and reservoir projects (some 3,000) since the 1950s in China will be financially assisted by the State for a period of 20 years, commencing from 1 July 2006 for those displaced before 30 June 2006, or from the completion of physical removal for those displaced after 1 July 2006. Each eligible settler (holding agricultural registration status) will receive a 600 *yuan* (US\$1=RMB7.86 *yuan* as in November 2006) subsidy from the country (Government of China document No. 17 [2006], issued on 17 May 2006, available at [http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2006-08/14/content\\_360877.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2006-08/14/content_360877.htm)).

Step 2: Between 2008 and 2012, transportation, the network of electricity and telecommunications in the rural resettlement areas will be basically established. Education, technology and medical systems will be also basically established. Basic infrastructure and public service systems will be well equipped.

Step 3: Between 2013 and 2020, the infrastructure and public service system in the rural resettlement areas will be perfected. By 2020, both the net income of the rural migrants and the expendable income of the urban resettlers will arrive at the average levels of metropolitan Chongqing municipality.

It is increasingly difficult for migrants to be employed in conditions of labour oversupply in rural and urban areas in the resettlement areas, particularly in the reservoir area. A major cause is the closure of a large number of inefficient industrial enterprises, especially small or medium-sized enterprises and collectives in the reservoir area, further weakening the employment-generating capability.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, fostering the development of small or medium-sized enterprises would enlarge the capacity of absorbing labour in the reservoir area.<sup>25</sup> However, small enterprises in general have difficulties accessing finance, credit, technical assistance, market information, training, and so forth. In order to spur the growth of the economy and the generation of employment, the Government needs to undertake proactive strategies to help the development of small or medium-sized enterprises in all sectors, especially service sectors. Managerial, accounting and entrepreneurial skills training – the skills demanded by start-ups – is imperative to enhance the capacity of development of such enterprises.

## **B. Strengthening massive training**

To tackle the current enormous unemployment problem, the local governments in the resettlement communities have launched a migrant labour training plan to help retrain the migrants and enhance their employability. In the first phase, for example, according to the plan in Chongqing, 100,000 migrants will be provided with skills training. Among them, 50,000 are rural migrants, 15,000 are urban resettlers and 35,000 are laid-off workers (Wang 2004). The aim of the skills training initiative is to achieve at least one skilled worker per migrant family (in urban and rural areas), on average, by 2007. For rural migrants, training will focus on the four leading industrial sectors planned for the reservoir area, and on the increasing demand for the export of (migrant) labour. The four leading sectors include citrus plantations, livestock, aquaculture and tourism. The agricultural restructuring

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<sup>24</sup> A total of 1,012 industrial and mining enterprises among the 1,599 enterprises affected by the project in the reservoir area have been identified as being unprofitable and are to be shut down, and of these 1,008 enterprises are in the Chongqing reservoir section (Chongqing municipal government official document No. 193 [1999], 1999). The remaining 587 enterprises are about to be restructured and reorganized into 406 new enterprises (Fang and Chen 2002). According to the lost inventory survey conducted in 1992, these enterprises involved 313,000 workers, or 31.5 per cent of the overall workers (993,000).

<sup>25</sup> A study by Mo (2001) estimated that, on a unit of investment basis, the capacity for small enterprises to absorb labour could be as high as 14 times the capacity of large enterprises in China.

is aimed at the effective use of limited farmland, the utilization of redundant labour and the reduction of the physical labour input of women in traditional grain crop production.

In order to maximize outcomes, training programmes need to be tailored to job opportunities and to the gender, age and background of the migrants to be trained. Female migrants have low levels of education and few marketable skills. Currently, there are no specific skills training courses tailored to the needs of female migrants. The training courses are framed within a conceptual schema that regards both genders as equal. For rural female migrants, greater emphasis needs to be placed on new agricultural techniques, such as fruit-planting, vegetable cultivation and raising livestock skills (for example, goats and pigs), light industry skills (for example, sewing for the clothing and garment industry, construction, and the trades), and the urban informal service sector (for example, restaurants, retailing, housing and delivery services).

Different individual (for example, age, gender, urban/rural migrant, marital status, skills), familial (for example, size, composition, structure) and societal (for example, local village/urban norms, cultural values) factors can influence the participation of women in skills training and the outcomes of female employment. These factors influence whether a woman enjoys the training, what occupation-related training is preferred, in what occupations she might work after the training, and the outcomes of skills training. Gender distributions vary substantially along the occupational spectrum, and between and within industry. Thus, training course design should be gender-differentiated to meet the different needs of the distinct groups of migrants. There is a particular need to design and implement women-specific training schemes and associated services, because mainstream programmes may not be appropriate to the needs of the female migrants. Such a need should be addressed through a concerted, well-coordinated effort across government agencies (such as resettlement departments, Ministries of Labour and Finance, the Development and Reform Commission, the All-China Women's Federation, civil affairs), public/private sectors, and urban/rural areas.

It should be emphasized that the labour market is dynamic. The biggest challenge for rural migrants in securing jobs is the competition from other unemployed urban workers. If migrants hope to find non-agricultural employment, they usually need to learn new skills. At the same time, some enterprises are being established and expanded, others are run down or closed, thus altering the size and skill-set needs of the workforce by recruiting strategic new skills and employing new workers (including migrant workers) with the incremental skills that they find they need. By these means, shortages and surpluses usually sort themselves out over time, via the continuing search of employers and workers for a good match. In this sense, the formal training of migrants has an important, but modest role to play.

There is often a mismatch between the skills that migrants have and the production activity that

they are engaged in. Individual female migrants will have a feel for not only what they like and are good at, but also where the future job opportunities lie. Based on the available information, the State training sector should focus on identifying skills that are in increasing demand and those in declining demand, and where demand for manual labour or intellectual-intensive labour is likely to be large.

To fulfill such a daunting task, the Government needs to have an overall TGP assistance strategy and policy framework for training, which should (a) bring together resettlement departments and other relevant government departments at all levels, public/private sectors, and various employment and training institutions in a concerted and sustained effort, (b) overcome the mismatch between skills supply and demand, and (c) put together funds from different sources for planned training uses. To make the training programmes and the employment of migrants more efficient and productive, the Government should take several measures. These include:

- Establish a labour/employment monitoring system, develop sources of information and quickly pick up emerging trends for responding to skills demand for migrant workers.
- Where more detail is required, retain a nationwide focus and disaggregate by age, sex, occupation and skill level or type.
- Use local information from existing recruitment agencies and similar sources to refine the broad demand for migrant labourers.
- Migrant individuals are encouraged to seek employment by themselves after training, or through their own social networks.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Issues surrounding dam and reservoir building, as well as other large infrastructure development projects, and involuntary human displacement, remain fervently contested in both China and other parts of the world. These issues involve complex interrelationships between economic, environmental, social, technical, political and cultural factors. They are particularly significant in China where development projects have routinely involved significant dislocations of populations. Gender issues in involuntary migration and resettlement have not received enough attention in development planning in China and in many other developing nations. This study has identified some critical issues with respect to rural female migrants in the early stages of the TGP resettlement. Women have limited opportunities to participate in the decision-making process of displacement, while the participation of female migrants is critical at each phase of the resettlement process (pre-displacement, physical removal, transition period). Female migrants, the main labour force engaging in agriculture, are more likely to become impoverished after removal because the majority of female migrants, as well as non-migrant women, are unable to achieve occupational mobility in the process

of resettlement. The principal reasons for this include a lack of employment opportunities, a gender-segregated labour market, low levels of education and social prejudice. For the most part, livelihood and production rehabilitation planning has been generally inadequate or absent. The context and degree of social integration vary by the distance and scale of the resettlement in a community. The people relocated via the government-organized distant resettlement schemes pay higher social costs than those settled by the near resettlement scheme in terms of adapting to their new societies. The pattern of “comparatively concentrated and scattered resettlement” has dual (negative and positive) impacts on the social integration of relocated persons.

The invaluable experience of the TGP resettlement is that the Government of China and the resettlement departments at all levels can make adjustments to policies and plans based on the changing and real situations of resettlement practice. The TGP resettlement policy and approaches still need to be developed through a gendered “lens”. The TGP resettlement may aggravate inequalities and leave women (migrants and non-migrants) with increased vulnerability and impoverishment, even in well-planned and well-implemented resettlement processes. The problem, however, is deeper – it is not merely a question of gender issues in themselves, but of the underlying gender inequality that is pervasive in Chinese society. This needs to be addressed through national strategies to raise women’s status. The problem needs to be specifically addressed through improving the quality of the newly developed land and adjusting the agricultural structure through incorporating eco-agriculture in the reservoir area, by encouraging small or medium-sized enterprises in all sectors, by providing training in practical production techniques and skills in their new environments, and by creating employment opportunities open to women in rural and urban areas. The resettlement policy needs to integrate a gender policy perspective, ensuring that women and men are provided with equal opportunities to develop and utilize their skills and to participate in decisions regarding their displacement and resettlement. In order to combat the unprecedented employment challenge for the displaced people, the Government needs to implement a gender-aware, systemic and sustained strategy, which may consist of the following policy thrusts: (a) encouraging small or medium-sized enterprises and expanding the service sector in the reservoir area, and (b) expediting training for migrants and strengthening the effective employment of migrants after training.

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# THE REALITY OF FEMALE INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE MIGRATION AND CHALLENGES FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

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## I. INCREASE IN THE NUMBERS OF FEMALE MIGRANTS AND INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGES

At the same time that transnational migration has become common worldwide, the number of immigrants to the Republic of Korea has increased greatly. The number of immigrants was approximately 5,180,000 in the year 2005 alone (table 1). This represented a 77.2 per cent increase since 1995, or an average annual rate of increase of 5.7 per cent over the past 10 years. Within this general trend, it is important to note that the change in the number of male migrants differs greatly from that of female migrants. While the number of males migrating to the Republic of Korea since 1995 has increased by 44.3 per cent, the number of female migrants has increased by 150.5 per cent during the same period. Since the mid-1990s, females have accounted for a majority of the increase in the number of migrants entering the country.

Within the trend of the feminization of migration,<sup>26</sup> there is also a specific feature in the trend of female migration to the Republic of Korea. When viewing the type of visa issued according to gender, with the exception of the E-6 visa (arts and entertainment), employment-related visas<sup>27</sup> are issued mostly to males, and recently these numbers have been rapidly increasing, whereas the proportion of work-related visas issued to females is decreasing, showing a great gap in the type of visa issued between the genders (table 2). On the other hand, the E-6 visas (arts and entertainment), with some relations to the sex industry, are issued to females in greater numbers than to males. The F-2 visa (resident visa), which is issued to the spouses of citizens of the Republic of Korea, is issued mostly to

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<sup>26</sup> Owing to the structure of the labour force in countries of origin and destination, women often constitute the majority of migrants and their numbers are generally increasing. This phenomenon is especially remarkable in Asia. According to statistics provided by Zlotnik (2003), the percentage of female migrants in East and South-East Asia in 1960 was 46.1 per cent, and in 1990 it was 48.5 per cent. In 2000, the percentage of female migrants was calculated at 50.1 per cent. Furthermore, according to Yamanaka and Piper (2003), the majority of the migrant workers in Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; Singapore; and Taiwan Province of China are female.

<sup>27</sup> These include the visas C-4 (short-term employment), D-3 (industrial training), E-5 (professional work), E-7 (special work), E-8 (training employment), E-9 (non-professional work) and H-1 (tourism employment).



females.<sup>28</sup> The cause for the sudden rise in the number of female immigrants since the mid-1990s can be found mostly in the increase in the number of F-2 visas issued.

**Table 1. Number of immigrants by sex, Republic of Korea, 1995-2005**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
1995	2,923,642	905,524	2,018,118
1996	2,880,332	900,264	1,980,068
1997	3,088,889	1,035,021	2,053,868
1998	3,506,154	1,331,637	2,174,517
1999	3,920,909	1,508,126	2,412,783
2000	4,370,596	1,705,151	2,665,445
2001	4,275,696	1,666,891	2,608,805
2002	4,392,725	1,690,358	2,702,367
2003	3,849,950	1,446,670	2,403,280
2004	4,929,517	2,033,279	2,896,238
2005	5,179,848	2,268,389	2,911,459
Change since 1995	+77.2%	+150.5%	+44.3%

Source: Korea National Statistical Office (<http://kosis.nso.go.kr>).

Looking at these facts, it is evident that male migration is generally work-related, whereas female migration into the Republic of Korea is related to international marriages or the entertainment industry. However, owing to recent restrictions applied to the entertainment industry in the Republic of Korea, the number of visas in this category has shown a slight decrease, while marriage-related migration is rapidly increasing. Hence, it can be said that immigration to the Republic of Korea is becoming more clearly gendered as “male = migrant workers” and “female = international marriage migrants”.

<sup>28</sup> According to the statistics from 2004, of the migrants entering the Republic of Korea on F-2 (residency) visas, a total of 21,600 stayed more than 90 days, and 88.7 per cent (19,156) of those were female and only 11.3 per cent (2,444) were male. Most of those migrants came to the Republic of Korea with the purpose of marrying a Korean and settling down. In addition, there are some cases in which female migrants have entered the Republic of Korea on a tourist visa or industrial training visa and then married a Korean.

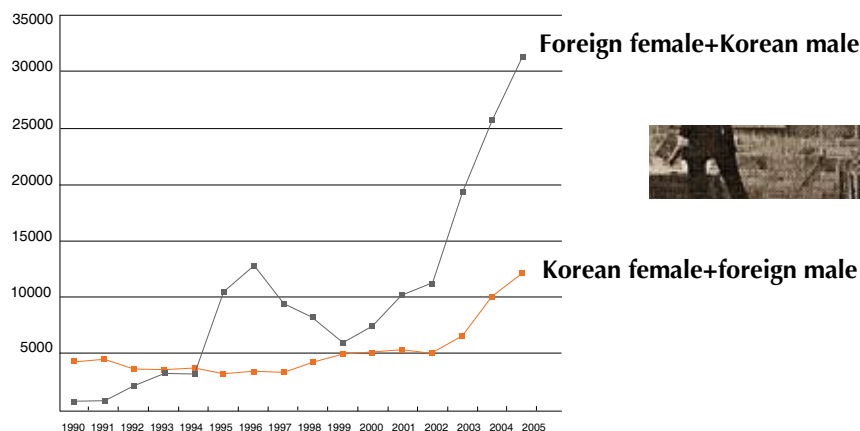
**Table 2. Number of visas issued by type and sex, 1995, 2000 and 2005**

Visa type	Year	Total	Female	Male
Employment related (C-4, D-3, E-5, E-7, E-8, E-9, H-1)	1995	53,115	15,939	37,176
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>30.0</i>	<i>70.0</i>
	2000	61,066	16,951	44,115
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>27.8</i>	<i>72.2</i>
	2005	116,127	19,420	96,707
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>16.7</i>	<i>83.3</i>
Entertainment (E-6)	1995	1,009	345	664
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>34.2</i>	<i>65.8</i>
	2000	7,044	5,578	1,466
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>79.2</i>	<i>20.8</i>
	2005	4,759	3,111	1,648
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>65.4</i>	<i>34.6</i>
Spouse of citizen (F-2)	1995	43,422	17,527	25,895
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>40.4</i>	<i>59.6</i>
	2000	36,156	13,376	22,780
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>37.0</i>	<i>63.0</i>
	2005	88,391	67,441	20,951
		<i>Percentage</i>	<i>76.3</i>	<i>23.7</i>

Source: Korea National Statistical Office (<http://kosis.nso.go.kr>).

The number of formally registered marriages between foreign females and Korean males was only 619 in 1990, but the number has continued to increase, and by 2005 it equalled 31,180 and constituted 9.9 per cent<sup>29</sup> of the total number of marriages registered. This type of marriage has become common in today's Republic of Korea.

**Figure 1. Trend in international marriages, 1991-2005**



Source: Korea National Statistical Office (<http://kosis.nso.go.kr>).

<sup>29</sup> International marriages in the Republic of Korea make up 13.5 per cent of the total number of marriages in the country. This percentage includes both foreign females married to Korean males and foreign males married to Korean females.

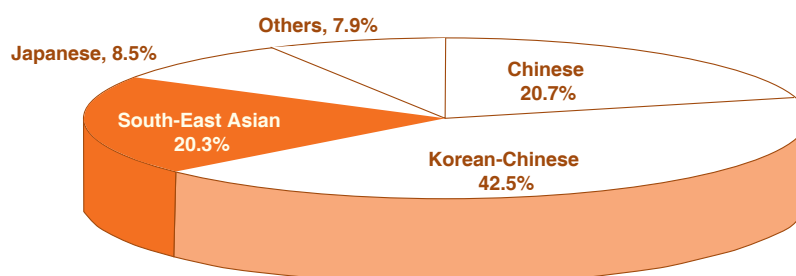
It is worth noting that, although the number of marriages between Korean males and foreign females has generally increased, a sharp rise can be seen from 2000 (figure 1). This sudden increase is attributed to the fact that around this time a new modality for international marriages was developed, and the new countries of origin of the “brides” emerged.

Up to the early 1990s, foreign female spouses of Korean males were mostly from the United States of America or Japan, and, after opening diplomatic relations with China in 1992, there was an evident increase in the number of international marriages between males from the Republic of Korea and ethnic Korean-Chinese females. However, for various reasons, such as the Government’s tight control of the disguised marriage of Korean-Chinese females, the marriages between Korean-Chinese and persons from the Republic of Korea began dwindling in late 1990s. At the same time, there began an increase in the number of marriages between males from the Republic of Korea and females from the Philippines, Thailand and other South-East Asian countries.

From the late 1990s to early 2000, most international marriages of males from the Republic of Korea were with Korean-Chinese females through marriage agencies, so-called “marriage brokers”, and personal contact; those with females from Japan, the Philippines and Thailand were arranged through the Unification Church. The more recent trend, however, is a sharp increase in the number of international marriages between males in the Republic of Korea and Vietnamese females arranged through marriage agencies. Also, recently there has been an increase in the number of female migrants from Mongolia, Central Asia and areas of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

As of April 2006, the total number of female marriage migrants in the Republic of Korea was 55,408,<sup>30</sup> with 42.5 per cent being Korean-Chinese, 20.7 per cent Chinese and 20.3 per cent from the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam and other South-East Asian countries (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Nationality of female international marriage migrants, April 2006**



Source: Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs.

<sup>30</sup> This total is only of those females with F2 visas, and it differs from the results of the provincial research conducted in April 2006 by the Ministry of the Government Administration and Home Affairs on the number of foreign females married to Korean males residing in the Republic of Korea, both legally and illegally.

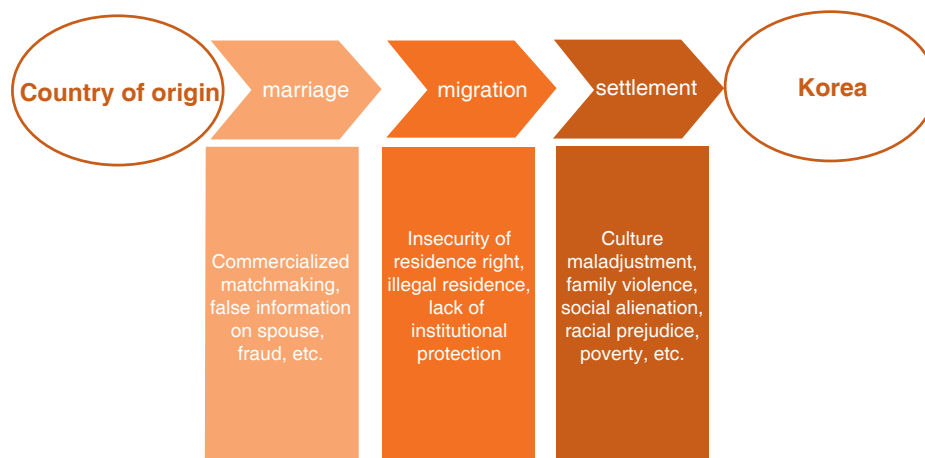
## II. THE PLIGHT OF FEMALE INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE MIGRANTS

### A. Commercialization of international marriage

In general, women migrating through international marriages are known to face various difficulties. This also applies to female migrants in the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, they may face further complications owing to the unique situation of the Republic of Korea.

Today, international marriages are achieved in various forms and it is not easy to generalize the discourse. However, one of the most serious problems is the commercialization of marriages by certain international marriage agencies and religious groups. These marriage arrangements are selected mostly by economically marginalized Korean males who are unable to secure Korean female spouses and, therefore, choose international marriage as a solution. The foreign females entering into such marriages are usually from countries less developed than the Republic of Korea, and this imbalance in economic standards between the countries many times leads to the exploitation of these female migrants because of unequal gender structures, discrimination and the violation of their human rights (figure 3).

**Figure 3. Plight of female migrants during stages of international marriage**



Furthermore, the marriage agencies frequently provide advertisements directed toward female candidates that have some implications of human trafficking, such as “she will never run away” and “deferred payment system”. Also, many agencies deceive the male spouse by describing the female marriage candidates as “loyal to the family and obedient to the husband”, when in fact the female candidates are independent and wish to work rather than stay only in the domestic sphere after marriage. At the same time, to convince the female candidates to marry, the agencies provide false information on the financial status of the male spouse and create fantasies of a bountiful life to hasten the marriage process.

The females seeking to migrate to the Republic of Korea are exposed to the dangers of receiving false information regarding their future spouses, illegal activities, trafficking and other human rights violations imposed by the international marriage agencies. Moreover, even if they safely marry and immigrate, they still face such difficulties as not being acknowledged as citizens and being prevented from receiving welfare benefits. Their limited communication abilities and limited access to information make the situation worse. The risk of facing poverty, as well as distrust and abuse from their Korean spouses and families alike, further complicate their lives. In addition, the female migrants may be exposed to racial prejudices mainly because they are from “underdeveloped countries”.

### **B. False information regarding the husband candidates and the rapid marriage process**

The most frequently noted problem by female international marriage migrants is the fact that in many cases they did not receive accurate information about their spouses. In a survey, 1 out of every 4 or 5 female migrants replied that the information she received regarding the spouse before coming to the Republic of Korea was false. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, 37 per cent of female international marriage migrants reported that they had received false information concerning their spouse’s personality, including his mental health; 28 per cent had received false information about his income; 21 per cent about his property and 20 per cent about his job (Seol and others 2006).

Among international marriages, there are cases in which the female spouse is unaware of the male spouse’s mental health problems before making the final decision to marry, and after she learns the reality and attempts to cancel the marriage, the agency demands a large penalty for breaching the contract, so, as a result, she is forced to go ahead with the marriage. Forced marriages can also come in the form of group weddings through the Unification Church’s “matching” practice, as well as through commercial agencies. In these cases, the woman is not given enough time to decide if there is mutual sympathy and understanding between her and her partner.

### **C. Family abuse**

Most female migrants living in the Republic of Korea have no social support and have limited access to the police and social programmes. In this situation, many are exposed to violence and exploitation, especially to various forms of family abuse. In the survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, 31 per cent of female international marriage migrants reported verbal abuse, 26.5 per cent reported physical abuse, 23.1 per cent reported sexual abuse and 18.4 per cent reported threats (Seol and others 2006).

This prevalence of abuse results from the commercialized process of the marriage, the low awareness of women's human rights, the low social support for females, and limitations in the policy against family violence. The commercialized process of marriage creates the idea that the female is "purchased or bought" by the family and, therefore, is a piece of property rather than a human being. Hence, if she does not obey the family members, she is often exposed to various types of abuse. Also, the family members worry that "because she is bought with money and is living with a much older husband without any affection, she will run away". Therefore, her every action is closely watched, and her outside activities are subject to the suspicion that "she is trying to run away". Consequently, such suspicions may lead to various abuses.

However, even when facing family abuse, most of the marriage migrants have difficulties in securing government support. A migrant may not be aware of the methods of reporting or may have no faith in the police. Even if she has access to the police, she may not report the abuse out of fear that her spouse would cancel her residency status guarantee, which would force her to leave the Republic of Korea.

The survey by the Ministry of Health and Welfare found that between 10 and 13 per cent of the foreign wives had used family violence counselling call centres or facilities, and that 8.0 per cent had reported family violence to the police. The foreign wives who had experienced family violence but who did not report this to the police gave the following reasons for not doing so: wanted to maintain the marriage (20.1 per cent), did not know how to report it (13.7 per cent), did not trust the police (12.7 per cent), concerned about their residency status (10.3 per cent), and afraid of further abuse by the spouse (9.9 per cent) (Seol and others 2006).

#### **D. Insecure nationality**

Most female migrants wish to obtain citizenship in the Republic of Korea to secure residency status, but, as in other parts of the world, many female migrants are not successful in obtaining citizenship through international marriage. According to the current Korean Nationality Act, the international marriage migrant can obtain citizenship after at least two years of residence and only with the consent of the spouse, but even those who satisfy the conditions cannot obtain citizenship in many cases.

First of all, many female migrants do not know the administrative process for obtaining citizenship. This lack of knowledge also applies to the spouses. Moreover, the procedures are complicated and, even if the female migrant is aware of the process, she cannot prepare all the necessary documents without the help of her spouse.

There are cases in which the spouse or his family members are passive and uncooperative in assisting the female migrant to obtain citizenship and, without the help of the spouse in preparing the required

documents and the guarantee of the family members, it is impossible for the female migrant to go through the process alone. Furthermore, once she obtains citizenship in the Republic of Korea, the female migrant must relinquish her native country citizenship, creating the inconvenience of having to obtain a visa to visit her homeland. Hence, some cases exist in which the female migrant herself is passive about or unwilling to obtain citizenship in the Republic of Korea.

Without citizenship, the female migrant must rely on her spouse's personal guarantee, making her residency status insecure. Some cases exist in which, during the time the female migrant is seeking refuge in a women's shelter to avoid abuse by family members, the spouse terminates his personal guarantee, making the female migrant an illegal resident.

### **E. Economic difficulties and unemployment**

Many female migrants choose international marriage to male citizens of the Republic of Korea expecting better economic opportunities and better living standards in a country that is more developed than their home country. However, in contrast, they may face economic difficulties in the Republic Korea and, as a result, feel insecure about their future. The Ministry of Health and Welfare survey found that 52.9 per cent of families with international marriages earned below the minimum wage (Seol and others 2006).

The economic difficulties arise from both the husband's marginalized economic status and the female spouse's difficulties in finding employment. Most female migrants want to work but many are unable to secure employment. Those who do secure jobs are employed in unskilled labour, or are self-employed in small-scale businesses. The work that female migrants do in the Republic of Korea is, in most cases, unrelated to their educational background and/or careers in their home country.

Some female migrants give up seeking employment in order to care for their children and some cannot secure jobs due to their lack of Korean language skills. The lack of language skills for employment is a common issue for all female migrants, including those from South-East Asia and Korean-Chinese alike. In fact, Korean-Chinese migrants are able to communicate in daily activities in Korean, but some language differences present problems in securing jobs. In addition, female migrants who do find jobs encounter difficulties because of the employers' and co-workers' racial prejudices.

### **F. Racial prejudice and the social isolation of female migrants**

Two of the major obstacles faced by female migrants coming to the Republic of Korea to marry and settle down are racial prejudices against them and social exclusion. Owing to frequent television and

newspaper reporting on international marriages, social awareness has increased. However, negative stereotypes about female migrants also prevail. The most common stereotypes are “she married only for money because her country is poor”, “she is only interested in sending money back home”, and “she can abandon the family and run away anytime”.

Such stereotypes exist not only among the general population but also among those closest to the migrant – her family. It has also been pointed out that there exists racial prejudice against the female migrants because “they are from an underdeveloped country” among immigration officers, leading to discrimination in dealing with cases related to female migrants.

Faced with the prevailing prejudices, most female migrants have almost no contact with anyone outside their homes, leading to their social isolation. Even those females who have lived in the Republic of Korea for more than 10 years are often without friends. Owing to communication problems and social discrimination against foreigners, both Koreans and female migrants alike are passive about creating relationships. The female migrants usually have friends from their home country or other foreign countries but they have little contact with Koreans. With no Korean friends except for their family members, the female migrants have no one to go to when in need of important information or help. Thus, they are exposed to social isolation.

### **G. Cultural maladjustment and one-sided demand for cultural assimilation**

Some important obstacles female migrants face in the Republic of Korea are cultural differences in daily lifestyle, language, food, cultural assumptions, gender structure, family relationships, expected roles within the family, interpersonal relationships and others. Cultural and social expectations in the Republic of Korea are alien to the female migrants, and they face various small and large hardships.

Among them, the most immediate difficulty is no doubt the language problem. Although Korean-Chinese female migrants do not have many problems communicating in their daily lives, even they have to overcome differences in the way of speaking, diction, vocabulary and the subtle messages contained in language. The communication problems of female migrants from the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam, and other countries are very serious. Many cultural obstacles can be gradually overcome as the migrants adjust to their new environments but they are never totally free from the limitations in communication, and the frustrations they feel in language communication are immense.

To overcome such problems, female migrants are making active efforts to learn Korean. Also, after media reports of the negative effects of the migrant mothers’ limited language skills on their children surfaced, female migrants and family members were working harder to improve their Korean language skills. However, regardless of how much effort they invest, the female migrants



still face considerable limitations. Their pronunciation is often not precise, and putting the words in their proper order is even more difficult. Furthermore, most female migrants lack both the technical vocabularies and the language skills required in formal contexts.

Such limitations create many problems for female migrants. First, miscommunication leading to misunderstandings and conflicts is common in their family relationships. Besides, owing to the lack of communication skills, the female migrant's interpersonal relationships are not extended outside the family. She faces difficulties in using medical services and accessing various administrative systems. She cannot go anywhere nor do anything without the help of a family member. She becomes linguistically handicapped, and the frustrations are especially intense for those who are highly educated and were socially active in their home country.

Such problems are of course related to the female migrant's lack of communication skills in Korean, but the problems are made worse by the rigidity of many Koreans in reacting to the imperfect Korean language skills. Upon hearing female migrants speaking Korean, most people, including family members, neighbours and store owners, sneer at their efforts or criticize their weak command of the language. Such reactions put great psychological pressures on the female migrants, and they give up trying to communicate with such Koreans.

There are many differences between migrants' native cultures and the culture of the Republic of Korea, including in family relations, gender structure, manners and more. However, the family members, and Koreans in general, have little interest in the female migrant's home country or native culture. They also have negative attitudes regarding the cultural differences and demand full, one-sided assimilation into Korean culture, meanwhile ignoring the cultural background of the migrant.

With their specific historical background, persons from the Republic of Korea have a strong sense of nationalism, emphasize cultural homogeneity and do not easily acknowledge cultural diversity. Persons from the Republic of Korea also tend to have even less interest in the cultures of countries less economically developed than theirs. Therefore, female migrants from such countries find it difficult to maintain their culture, especially when surrounded by only their Korean families. Of the various elements that fall within the domain of culture, the changes that are most strongly demanded concern language, food and manners, as well as others. Their families also try to impose women's traits of "loyal to the family" and "obedient to the husband" as part of Korean gender roles. Thus, they attempt in fact to force the female migrants to accept a Korean patriarchal gender structure that many Korean females are trying to change.

Of these demands, most female migrants are willing to learn the Korean language and about the food and culture. At the same time, they find the male-centered family structure to be problematic

and demand changes. They also demand that their spouses exhibit more interest in their native language and culture. The family members, however, remain unresponsive to this demand. Moreover, policymakers do not have a full understanding of the issues raised by the female migrants.

### **III. CURRENT POLICIES FOR FEMALE INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE MIGRANTS**

Recently, the Government of the Republic of Korea has started to develop policies on female international marriage migrants, and many ministries, with the coordination of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, are pursuing related projects. In fact, policies regarding female migrants were first pursued in 2000 with a focus on the relief and protection of female migrants falling into the sex industry. In addition, since 2005, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has started to carry out various other projects, including setting up a hotline (1366) providing interpretation services for family abuse victims and supporting non-governmental organizations' (NGO) Korean language classes for female migrants. The Ministry has also published a Korean language book for beginners, and a maternal protection guidebook in four languages (English, Chinese, Vietnamese and Russian). The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other government offices also implement Korean language classes and cultural training programmes. In addition, local governments provide programmes on Korean language, food, traditional culture and manners.

Based on these initiatives, in April 2006, the Government of the Republic of Korea announced the Policy Plan to Support Social Integration of Female International Marriage Migrants, their Family and Children, to be implemented by the Ministries of Education and Human Resources Development, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Justice, Government Administration and Home Affairs, Culture and Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry, Information and Communication, Health and Welfare, Labour, Gender Equality and Family, and Planning and Budget, as well as the Civil Services Commission, the Presidential Committee on Social Inclusion, and so forth. This plan is to be used as a guideline for the implementation of policies regarding female international marriage migrants at all levels of government.

The focus of the plan is to find a comprehensive method to protect the human rights of the female migrants and solve their various problems during the marriage and settlement procedures. First, to prevent human rights violations in the international marriage process, legal regulations for international marriage agencies have been established and a license system introduced. To respond to the unstable residency status arising from family conflicts, the residency qualification guarantee system has been reformed to accept confirmation documents of NGOs in the event that the husband cancels his guarantee. To alleviate their economic poverty, revisions of the law on minimum livelihood

protection are planned and employment support programmes are to be developed. In addition, multiculturalism training for policymakers and outreach service personnel will be implemented, along with various events and promotions to enhance the general awareness of cultural diversity. The plan also includes Korean language and culture training programmes to help female migrants settle down as quickly and easily as possible. (More details of the plan are presented in the annex.)

## **IV. CHALLENGES IN THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND THE ASIAN REGION**

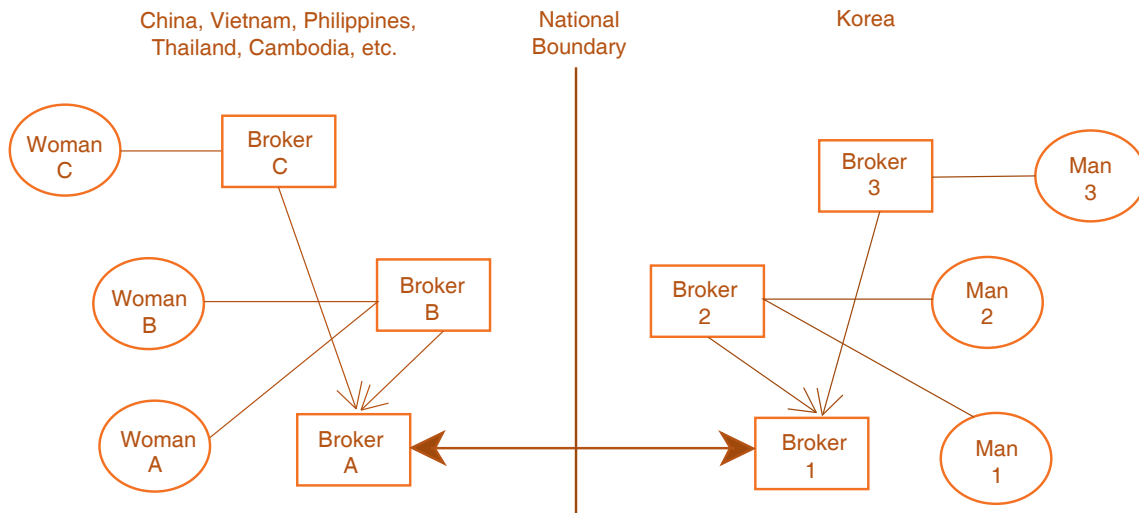
Recently, in the Republic of Korea, the issue of international marriage has been quite often reported through television programmes and newspapers, which enhances social concerns about international marriage and female migrants. In addition, the Government has developed the comprehensive policy to improve conditions for the female international marriage migrant. It is expected that the problems of the right of residence, poor women's livelihood and language skills can be improved in the near future. However, there are other critical issues about which the Government has exhibited only marginal concern and has taken few measures.

### **A. Constructing a regional network on women's migration**

The large number of international marriages is attributed to both pull factors at the destination and push factors in the country of origin. Among the various factors, the lack of economic opportunity is the most important factor, which urges young women to find alternatives in transnational migration and to risk international marriage. To solve this kind of problem, the Republic of Korea is required to respond to the socio-economic problems in their home countries, especially poverty and unequal gender relationships that impose more burdens on women, as well as the problems of international marriage within the Republic of Korea itself.

Moreover, international marriage, with the danger of human rights violations, is based on the middlemen's transnational network, as shown in figure 4. Therefore, it is essential to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as well as national-level policies.

**Figure 4. Transnational network of international marriage brokers**



For this purpose, it would constitute invaluable progress if government agencies and NGOs in the Asian region cooperated to reinforce policies against the illegal activities of international marriage agencies and to develop programmes to enhance the social awareness of women’s human rights, the risk of international marriage and the realities that female migrants face. At the same time, the network could play a leading role in gender sensitive development projects for improvement in the living standards of poor women and the establishment of gender equality.

### **B. Promoting female international marriage migrants’ participation in the policymaking process**

In general, society in the Republic of Korea has a tendency to consider female international marriage migrants as victims of human trafficking and family abuse, or ones to be educated by Koreans, neglecting their capacities as members of society. In fact, only a limited number of Korean people accept female migrants as full members of society.

In the Republic of Korea, female international marriage migrants have faced complicated problems and tried to adjust to Korean ways. On the other hand, they have also raised questions about some aspects of Korean society, such as gender roles, and demanded an alternative way. Their voices, however, have not been heard and transmitted properly to policymakers. Although the Government is attempting to develop relevant policies and programmes, its main approach reflects a “Korean-centric” point of view, such as in language training or cultural assimilation. The Government neglects the other difficulties and ignores the voices of the female migrants.

The Government should recognize the real voices of migrants and extend the policy agenda on the

basis of the expressed needs of the migrants. For this purpose, it is essential that female migrants be visible at the public level, expressing their needs and opinions, raising questions and suggesting alternatives to government policy, as well as for society in the Republic of Korea. Local and national governments are required to eliminate such barriers as language problems and social isolation, which prevent female migrants' socio-political activities, and to develop a system for their participation in the policymaking process.

### **C. Enhancing social awareness about other countries and cultural diversity in the Asian region**

Currently, a number of government-related institutions provide programmes for female international marriage migrants. The major public programmes are designed to facilitate the women's cultural assimilation or "re-culturalization", such as through Korean language classes, Korean cooking classes and educational programmes on traditional culture and manners. Research has shown that 74 per cent of female international marriage migrants have taken Korean language classes, mostly from institutions related to local government; 44.6 per cent have taken Korean cooking classes; 34.7 per cent have taken training on traditional culture, and 24.0 per cent have taken training on Korean manners (Kim 2006).

In comparison, programmes are not developed at all for Koreans living with the female migrants, such as family members, neighbours, co-workers, and others. The prejudice against the migrants is the biggest obstacle that female migrants face in the Republic of Korea. Hence, the Government is required to take more interest in the general understanding of other countries and of the cultural diversity in the Asian region.

The rapid increase in the number of international marriages and the expanded presence of female migrants have raised important challenges for many people in the Republic of Korea who take pride in its "one-nationness" and its cultural unity. The issues of universal human rights and cultural diversity, which previously were not matters of social concern, have now become a main agenda in the Republic of Korea.

For several decades, women in the Republic of Korea have tried to defend women's human rights and eliminate the problem of gender inequality in order to lay a firm foundation for women's policy development. It remains a challenge for women in the country to keep this momentum and to join with the female international marriage migrants. This will depend mainly on women's solidarity across national and ethnic boundaries.

## **Annex**

### **Republic of Korea: Policy Plan to Support the Social Integration of Female International Marriage Migrants, their Family and Children**

#### **Vision**

The social integration of female international marriage migrants and the realization of a multicultural society

#### **Directions**

- Elimination of discrimination
- Establishment of inclusive welfare system

#### **Policy issues**

##### **1. Prevent illegal international marriage practices and protect the parties involved in the marriage**

- Establishment of legal regulations regarding international marriage agencies
  - Introduction of a licensing and reporting system
  - Obligatory confirmation of health, finances, etc., by both parties involved
- Reinforce visa issuing screening process
  - Standardization of visa issuing screening process
  - Implementation of interview system in the visa issuing screening process before marriage
  - Stationing of female human rights officers in embassies of the Republic of Korea in major countries of origin
- Establishment of pre-migration health-care systems
  - Confirmation of both parties' health status during visa issuing screening interviews
  - Establishment of health-care system regarding infectious diseases foreign to the Republic of Korea

##### **2. Support the safe residence of family abuse victims**

- Reform the female migrant residency system
  - Confirmation of the female migrant's stay in a women's shelter prior to deciding her

residency status when the husband cancels his residency guarantee

- Acknowledgement of confirmation documents of NGOs as an alternative guarantee

- Set up a support system for family abuse victims

- Foreign language interpretation services in foreigner-exclusive shelters
- Language training for the staff at shelters for victims of family violence
- Awareness-raising programmes for police officers and public servants

### **3. Assist early settlement in society of the Republic of Korea**

- Improve Korean language and culture training

- Broadcast Korean language training in Filipino and Vietnamese languages
- Local-level Korean language training
- Develop Korean language books and dictionaries in the languages of the countries of origin

- Establish a settlement support system

- Pre-entry stage: basic training on the Republic of Korea
- Early-settlement stage: mutual cultural awareness training for family members, establishment of sisterhood relationships with Korean families
- Settlement stage: creation of a community with those from the same countries of origin, improvement of information access skills through IT training

### **4. Support their children's school life**

- Establish multicultural education system

- Amendment of nationalistic factors in textbooks
- Inclusion of multicultural training in the education system of the Republic of Korea

- Strengthen existing multicultural education in schools

- Korean language lessons
- Multicultural education programmes for teachers
- Multilanguage leaflets on school life
- Support of bilingual learning

- Prevent group ostracism

- Hold school festivals promoting prevention of group ostracism
- Joint programme of students, teachers, foreign parents
- Mentoring programmes involving teachers, classmates and college students

## **5. Strengthen support for stabilization of livelihood**

- Improve minimum living allowance system
  - Apply minimum livelihood protection laws to female migrants
  - Support livelihood, health care, housing, and so forth
- Support low-income women's health-care services
  - Dispatch maternity helpers for low-income female migrants after childbirth
  - Support reproductive health treatment fees
  - Home visit health-care services for low-income female migrants
  - Offer free health examination services
- Support employment
  - Counselling and recommendation services for job seekers
  - Self-support project for the poor
  - Provision of jobs in social service areas
  - Employment as special foreign language teachers in schools

## **6. Improve social awareness of cultural diversity**

- On- and off-line promotions
- Multicultural training for policymakers
- Multicultural training for social welfare outreach personnel
- Support local community multicultural programmes: international marriage migrants' day, multicultural experience programmes, and so forth

## **7. Establish policy implementation system**

- Ministry of Justice: foreigner management and migration policies
- Ministry of Gender Equality and Family: support policies for international marriage families
- Ministry of Health and Welfare: health and welfare services
- Operate family support centres for international marriage migrants at local level



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# GENDER AND MIGRATION IN THE PACIFIC

*Avelina Rokoduru\**

## **Introduction**

The main objectives of this paper concerning gender and migration in the Pacific are to incorporate the available statistics, summarize the existing research and review the policies on the topic. This paper will describe the main types and the magnitude of migration flows, as well as the levels and trends of migration and how they affect men and women. After reviewing migration policies in the Pacific, this paper will recommend ways in which the national machinery for gender equality (NMGE) can be involved in policy formation and implementation in Fiji with regard to the issue of gender and migration. These recommendations can then be adopted as a potential model should other Pacific island countries wish to address their gender and migration needs.

## **I. GENDER AND LABOUR MIGRATION**

### **A. International trends in gender and labour migration**

A 1997 United Nations report raised some major points regarding international migration and gender and further highlighted the possible future of labour migration. The following is a summary of the findings from that report:

- In most countries, migration regulations are not gender-specific, while migration laws and policies tend to assume that female migrants are dependents joining other migrants rather than the initiators of migration themselves.
- The more developed regions attract female and male international migrants in approximately equal numbers, while in the less developed regions, male migrants clearly outnumber female migrants.
- Nearly as many women as men migrate across international borders, and women participate in every type of migration (United Nations 1997: 45-49).

That report noted that the 1990s witnessed a feminization of Asian labour migration, with women

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moving more and more in their own right as autonomous economic migrants, rather than as dependents of male migrants. It suggested that the drive behind Asian female labour migration was the growing demand in a few female-dominated activities, such as domestic service, entertainment and, to a lesser extent, nursing and teaching. Hugo (1998) has highlighted the same trend in the Pacific.

The same United Nations report discussed how women have fared compared with men in relation to international migration and noted that the large majority of migrant women were voluntary migrants; that despite the influence of family and marital status, migrant women were key actors in the migration process and often played a key role in migration decisions; and that migration provided women with an opportunity to engage in waged employment, which increased their ability, via remittances, to improve the welfare of the family remaining in the country of origin (United Nations 1997: 45).

## **B. Trends of international migration in the Pacific**

As the purpose of this paper is to study migration in the Pacific, it begins with a brief overview of the current status of gender and migration in the Pacific. The remainder of the paper narrows its focus to the status of gender and migration in Fiji in the South Pacific.

Appleyard and Stahl (1995) noted that international migration from the Pacific region began only in the 1960s. Cox and Low (1985: 126-127) drew some conclusions from their extensive research on international migration for Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Regarding the trend of South Pacific migration, they noted that the extent of international migration from the South Pacific was considerable and that there were strong pressures to migrate. They noted that there were two main motivations for migration from the South Pacific: (a) kin ties and the desire to join relatives who had already settled overseas, and (b) the growing sense of general dissatisfaction with the home country as the knowledge of other lifestyles had grown. In addition, migration is largely permanent despite the perception of it by many parties in the early stages as temporary or short-term. It is difficult to break roots once these are established elsewhere, and an example they have given is that of overstayers in New Zealand. Further, Cox and Low highlighted that the desired migration pattern for the South Pacific was that of at least the immediate family unit. The tendency has been increasingly toward family migration. As a result, migration has led to the separation of families, where people in home countries looked after the dependents of immigrants. Detailed migration studies using gender lenses can shed more light on these factors of migration and perhaps lessen the problematic social issues of Pacific migration.

The same authors also included a discussion of the consequences of migration trends for the Pacific island countries by looking at the demographic, economic and social impacts of migration. The positive impacts of migration include a related increase in employment opportunities for those

remaining behind and the raising of living standards in that country through remittances, especially in the cases of Tonga and Samoa. Migration reduces population pressures, which is beneficial in some areas, and ties are maintained fairly satisfactorily in most cases, thereby making migration seem largely beneficial. On the other hand, the negative social impacts of migration include a societal awareness that there was a move from communalism toward individual lifestyles, a loss of leadership, a lower tolerance level of certain aspects of life and of different authority patterns emerging. These consequences can be linked directly to gender relations and the gender aspect of migration, therein making this topic a vital one for consideration, study and policy recommendations.

At the family level, Cox and Low (1985: 129) noted that respondents in their research commented that families were being abandoned. They noted that children were being adversely affected by the absence of fathers and by being sent back to the islands for not being able to adjust well, especially in the cases of Samoa and Tonga. In the case of Fiji, Cox and Low noted that the extent of any of the aforementioned results was difficult to calculate.

On the subject of the movement of Pacific peoples, Crocombe (2001: 64-68) related that there were three general patterns of movement within the Pacific islands. The first one was the movement from small islands to the large ones within a country, the second one was from countries with fewer job opportunities to those with more (and this took place within the region), and the third, which Crocombe said was the latest trend, was from the Pacific islands to the Pacific Rim (Crocombe 2001: 66).

## **C. Gender and migration in the Pacific**

### **1. Lack of research**

Generally, the study of migration using a gender perspective in the Pacific is rare. Studies conducted on this topic are quite few and far apart in time, with authors touching very briefly on the subject. The dearth of qualitative and quantitative research on women and/or gender and migration in the Pacific (Connell 1984) or for specific countries, such as Fiji (Chandra 1983: 4; Rokoduru 2004: 225; Chandra and Lewai 2005: 170), has been well noted. Connell (1984: 964) argued that, despite much research on migration in the South Pacific, there was almost no information relating either to the migration of women (either internally or internationally) or to the impact of migration on women (for those who move or stay) or on the societies of emigration – in an area where migration is of major significance for social and economic change. Connell suggested that migration research had been male migrant-centered so that policies have helped them more than women.

Generally, most South Pacific countries lack local research on gender and migration. This was the main sentiment expressed on most subjects concerning women at the 9<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in August 2004. The resultant regional charter – the Revised Pacific Platform

for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-2015 – noted that a recurring recommendation from the studies presented at that conference was the need to conduct more research and to accumulate data that were disaggregated by sex (SPC 2004a). It was accepted that gender studies and gender sensitive indicators were important instruments of change as they increased the awareness of such issues as gender inequalities and provided a basis of proposals for change, as well as information that policy designers required to effect changes (SPC 2004a: 15).

With regard to women and migration, amongst other things, the charter urged Governments of the Pacific islands to control and monitor the activities of private recruitment agencies through relevant ministries, departments and other stakeholder institutions in order to prevent the exploitation and abuses of female migrant workers in the Pacific; to acknowledge that more research was needed in the areas of contracts, the working and living conditions of migrant women workers, and how the women were processed by host Governments; and to conduct further research on remittances, particularly the extent to which remittances improved the lives of women, and an analysis on the ways in which male labour migration impacted on women and families (SPC 2004a: 35). Walsh's (1981) suggestion is very relevant for current research on gender and migration in the Pacific – the answers to questions that may be raised will not be provided by national figures that represent “average” situations. The questions can only be answered through “detailed comparative studies at household, village and locality levels, and those are likely to differ from island to island and change over time in response to changing circumstances” (Walsh 1981: 6).

The implementation of these “recommended actions”<sup>31</sup> by Pacific Governments, to date, is yet to materialize. There are many reasons for this lag, and the two most likely ones include a lack of investment in women's machineries and a lack of human and financial resources for ministries of women, both of which constrain research, advocacy and policy design on gender equality in migration in the Pacific islands (Huffer 2004: 156-157).

## **2. Reasons for migration of women in the Pacific**

While many women migrate either with or to join their husbands, they are increasingly travelling as individuals for reasons of their own. The main reasons for South Pacific women's migration are economic or a result of marriages or natural hazards (Connell 1994: 965-966). Whereas the migration of men would mean the acquisition of status and prestige, women are not expected to migrate and are occasionally prevented from migrating. The impact of migration on Pacific women's lives is complex and variable. Connell argued that, on the one hand, women may gain independence, autonomy, competence in new skills and status, whether they were migrants or remained in the villages as

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<sup>31</sup> Cook Islands and New Caledonia expressed reservations about these actions, with Cook Islands reserving comments until a country study was undertaken on women migrants (SPC 2004a: 35).

household heads when male relatives left. On the other hand, they may lose independence and status (if they were “passive” migrants to towns or through overdependence on remittances), suffer poorer health and welfare (when the maintenance of necessary rural economic activities proved excessively demanding or urban incomes were poor) and become subjugated to men (Connell 1994: 975).

Connell (1994) conducted the only study that looked specifically at women and migration in the Pacific. He pointed out that female domestic workers from the Cook Islands and Tokelau were probably the first female labour migrants to go to New Zealand. His study of female migrants from Siwai in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea in the 1970s showed that those female migrants were employed as nurses, teachers and clerks. Consequently, and increasingly, both men and women chose to migrate to escape traditional customs and constraints, such as arranged marriages or limited economic and social status. In Kiribati, Connell noted the possibility of migration to evade the familial and church pressures that customarily enforced stable marriages.

From that work, he concluded that the absence of information on issues relating to the migration of women virtually ensured that women were excluded from policy discussions and decisions relating to the provision of appropriate social services or employment opportunities in the areas of origin or destination that might influence the rate, duration and content of the migration flow in accordance with national policy. Connell also concluded that, over time, women’s search for employment locally and overseas would increase as they became more aware of the social and economic opportunities. As social constraints to women’s employment and mobility declined, local employment opportunities may also decline, forcing women to look overseas. Thus, it was important to ensure that jobs and welfare opportunities for women were available at the right place at the right time. Connell recognized that, based on what little evidence was available, women’s migration has tended to contribute to their marginalization, peripheralization and dependency, and that the burdens from those changes tended to be experienced by women rather than by men (Connell 1994: 978).

Muliaina, in his study of remittances sent from New Zealand, noted that women were predominant amongst those chosen by relatives in Samoa or New Zealand to migrate. Muliaina explained this selection as an acknowledgement that women were “more reliable in repatriating large portions of their earnings compared with untitled<sup>32</sup> men” (Muliaina 1998: 88).

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<sup>32</sup> Titled men in Samoa are those males (and sometimes females) who hold traditional social titles or *Matai*, a general term for Samoan chiefs (Tuimaleali’ifano, 1990: xvi).

## II. GENDER, WOMEN AND MIGRATION IN FIJI

### A. Gender profile of Fiji's migrants

According to Mohanty (2001: 60), the migratory process in Fiji was dominated by female migrants during the period 1987-1996. Females constituted more than 52 per cent of the total Indo-Fijian<sup>33</sup> emigrants even though there were more male skilled professionals (64 per cent) than female (36 per cent) for the same period. This view has been supported by Chandra (2003), who noted that more women than men were migrating from Fiji. Chandra also noted that immigration data in Australia showed that Indo-Fijian women represented about 52-57 per cent of all Indo-Fijian migrants for the decade 1990-2001. In the same report, Chandra noted that the women of Fiji, regardless of ethnicity, outnumbered male migrants, and this is supported by statistics provided by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2003) and presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Fiji labour migrants by sex, all occupational categories, 1990-2002**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage female</i>
1990	2,585	2,742	5,327	51.5
1991	2,453	2,738	5,191	52.8
1992	2,132	2,300	4,432	51.9
1993	1,843	2,132	3,975	53.6
1994	1,959	2,041	4,000	51.0
1995	2,234	2,514	4,748	52.9
1996	2,279	2,567	4,846	53.0
1997	2,117	2,206	4,323	51.0
1998	2,318	2,317	4,635	50.0
1999	2,270	2,392	4,662	51.3
2000	2,498	2,538	5,036	50.4
2001	3,009	3,052	6,061	50.4
2002	2,577	2,675	5,252	51.0
Total	60,548	64,428	124,976	51.6

*Source:* Fiji Bureau of Statistics, unpublished statistics, various reports, 2003.

What is evident from a further breakdown of these statistics is that the majority of the female labour migrants of Fiji belong either in the third occupational category, “clerical supervisors and related workers”, or in the eighth category, “workers not classified”. For the third category, women represented 40 per cent of all professionals, 61 per cent of all clerical and related workers, and 20

<sup>33</sup> “Indo-Fijian” is used to refer to Fiji Islanders of ethnic Indian origin; “Fijian” is used to refer to ethnic Fijians; “Fiji Islander” or “of Fiji” is used to refer to all persons with the Republic of the Fiji Islands nationality.

per cent of administrative, managerial and related occupations. Within this period, nearly 50 per cent of all emigrant teachers and one third of all emigrant accountants were women (Chandra 2003: 10). As for the eighth category, a further breakdown of this classification showed that women who were housewives or did domestic duties and female children under the age of 18 years formed 90 per cent of the unclassified “other” group (Chandra 2003: 12). Women who were neither legally married nor living in a de facto union did travel alone (Rokoduru 2002 and Chandra 2003: 12) to seek employment and visit friends and relatives, as well as to escape familial and communal pressures, especially amongst indigenous Fijians. Furthermore, three times more women than men travelled to overseas destinations for retirement purposes, especially in Indo-Fijian families whose children abroad had encouraged parents to join them (Chandra 2003).

Chandra (2003: 23) concluded that, with regard to gender and migration in Fiji, young women (15-30 years of age) migrated more than men within the same age group. While family emigration was crucial, widowed, divorced and single women were also travelling for employment, family reunion, vacation and marriage. Marriage was an important strategy used by unskilled Indo-Fijian women to emigrate. The migration of skilled women doctors, nurses, teachers and clerical workers had serious implications for development. Furthermore, the rapid attrition of the occupational (local) stock of women was difficult to replenish over time, and it was a major challenge for the State to review its international migration policies and the implications of migration for the national economy (Chandra 2003: 24).

Walsh (2006: 57) linked the increase in the number of female migrants from 1995 to 2002 (especially for those aged 15-24 years) to young women emigrating as students or for employment, adding that the nurses of Fiji were in high demand in other countries. Walsh also noted that the increase in male migrants aged 55 years and more indicated family reunion upon or after retirement and that the high numbers and balanced sex ratios of younger and older emigrants were probably linked to family emigration or family reunion.

Pangerl (2002) suggested that the reasons for the migration of Indo-Fijians could also be analysed along gender lines. He noted that, in his study, Indo-Fijian males were more likely to migrate due to economic insecurity, with the main reason being to improve their family’s lifestyle. On the other hand, apart from economic insecurity, Indo-Fijian female migrants (wives and daughters) also listed personal and physical insecurity as a cause for migration. Their male counterparts also expressed worry about the women on this point (Pangerl 2002: 31). Pangerl concluded, therefore, that using a gender approach to analyse the causes of migration could also reveal different priorities for the migrant’s choice to migrate elsewhere. Many females have migrated as non-occupational migrants, particularly through marriage, and were likely to have settled in destination countries under the family reunion category (Gani 2000: 101).



Pangerl discussed decision-making processes for Indo-Fijian migrants prior to migration and noted that, while gender relations within that community were traditionally male dominated, “there is a huge potential for conflict within the decision-making process” (Pangerl 2002: 28). Furthermore, those conflicts were most likely to develop between married couples when the wives were “employed and financially independent. Therefore, their skills were superior to those of their husbands” (Pangerl 2002: 29). Otherwise, the decision-making process fell largely upon the male as he was traditionally dominant as well as in an economically dominant position.

## **B. Skilled labour migration of women of Fiji to Kiribati and the Marshall Islands**

This section describes research that was conducted in 2002 on the skilled labour migrants of Fiji moving to the two South Pacific Republics of Kiribati and the Marshall Islands (Rokoduru 2002). The lack of data in Fiji on gender equality in decision-making for migrants has been noted by Chandra (2003: 19), who commented that gender equality in all facets of society should be strived for, including equality in decision-making.

There were 49 labour migrants of Fiji who were interviewed in Kiribati and the Marshall Islands. Of these, about 37 per cent were males and 63 per cent were females. There were 33 women in the Marshall Islands and 3 in Kiribati who were studied for this research. By ethnic division, almost 92 per cent of the women were ethnic Fijians, one was Indo-Fijian and two were Rotumans and Rabians.<sup>34</sup> The migrants of Fiji in this study had lived from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 37 years in their Pacific island destinations. The ages of the migrants ranged from 22 to 65 years, with 22 per cent of the migrants in their twenties, 32 per cent in their thirties, 28 per cent in their forties and about 18 per cent in their fifties and sixties. The average age of the migrants was 26 years. Therefore, the majority of the migrants were well within the active working-age group of 20 to 50 years.

The migrants worked in various occupational categories ranging from civil servants in Kiribati to government physicians in the Marshall Islands (table 2). Other types of occupation taken up by migrants of Fiji included bartender, dental therapist, dentist, domestic worker, hotel worker, kindergarten teacher, lawyer, physician and shipping officer.

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<sup>34</sup> Fiji-born Gilbertese workers who have lived in Rabi since the resettlement of their community to Fiji after the Second World War.

**Table 2. Occupational categories of Fiji migrants by sex and host country, 2002**

Occupational category	Marshall Islands Percentage (n=49)		Kiribati Percentage (n=49)		Total Percentage
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Hotel workers	2	4	0	0	6
Mechanics	2	0	4	0	6
Nurses	2	31	0	2	35
Kindergarten teachers	0	2	0	0	2
Primary School teachers	6	8	0	0	14
Secondary School teachers	12	12	2	0	27
Lawyers	2	0	0	0	2
Dentists and dental therapists	0	2	0	2	4
Civil Servants	0	0	0	2	2
Others	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>49</b>

Source: Fieldwork data from Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, June-August 2002.

The majority (72 per cent) of the Fiji female migrants in this study made the decision to migrate jointly with their spouses (table 3). This was because the majority of the women in the study were married at the time of the study. A joint decision implies close consultation and the consideration of risks, costs and benefits for the family as well as the corresponding allocation of resources in the migration process. Despite this movement being a very important and life-influencing decision, about 31 per cent of the migrants (mostly nurses) solely decided to travel for employment. This was partly due to existing spousal differences and tensions at home in Fiji.

**Table 3. Decision for labour migration from Fiji, by sex and host country, 2002**

Who decided on labour migration	Kiribati Percentage n = 6		Marshall Islands Percentage n = 43	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Migrant alone	17	17	14	16
Migrant's spouse alone	0	0	0	0
Migrant and spouse jointly	0	49	21	40
Others	17	0	2	7
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>34 (2)</b>	<b>66 (4)</b>	<b>37 (16)</b>	<b>63 (27)</b>

Source: Fieldwork data from Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, June-August 2002.

The labour contract, a formal agreement between employer and employee covering critical labour conditions and living conditions, becomes the main focus and provides the very framework upon which everything else that concerns that relationship evolves.

Teachers and nurses of Fiji were hired as expatriates. Employment contracts for the nurses and teachers in Kiribati and the Marshall Islands were generally for two- to three-year terms and were renewable annually after the successful completion of the first term, or contracts were reviewed annually and as seen fit by both the employer and the migrant of Fiji. In the Marshall Islands, a salary is paid fortnightly in 26 wage periods per year for which 10 months are for teaching work. The remaining two months are allocated for national holidays, including a spring and semester break. Benefits for teachers include a share (10 per cent)<sup>35</sup> of their gross earnings being deposited into a superannuation scheme. They are also eligible for medical care at 7 per cent of their gross earnings – the sum divided equally between the employer and the migrant teacher. The same contract dictated the salaries of the female migrants of Fiji and local teachers.

The currency of the Marshall Islands is the US dollar and is generally twice as strong as the Fiji dollar. This currency differential was an added bonus for the female migrants of Fiji working in the Marshall Islands. For instance, registered nurses in Fiji generally start at the salary level of a staff nurse of F\$10,920 (grade NU 06), which gradually increases to F\$15,409 by the time they have worked at least 12 years in the service, and at least 87 per cent of Fiji's nurses fall into this salary category (table 4) (FNA 2002: 62). In this study, 90 per cent of the nurses who moved to Kiribati and the Marshall Islands were qualified staff nurses from Fiji. Upon arrival in the Marshall Islands, the salary scale of the Fiji nurses began at US\$18,000, an equivalent of about F\$40,000 (table 5). This represented a huge increase for the nurses – while still working as staff nurses. This meant that staff nurses working in the Marshall Islands were receiving the equivalent of what the principal of the Fiji Nursing School was receiving, or more. The salary differentials in this case were too overwhelming to resist.

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<sup>35</sup> Five per cent is contributed by the employer and 5 per cent is from the migrant's salary.

**Table 4. Nurses' salary levels in Fiji and the Marshall Islands by position, 2002**

<i>Fiji nursing positions and percentage of nurses in workforce in Fiji</i>	<i>Fiji salary range F\$ (Approximate)</i>	<i>Marshall Islands salary range US\$ –(F\$ equivalent)</i>
Principal, Fiji School of Nursing–	0.01%	32,802 - 42,424
Snr. Matron and Vice-Principal (FSN) –	0.02%	24,939 - 32,266
Senior Nursing Tutors –	1.0%	19,166 - 24,813
Snr. Sisters and Nursing Practitioners –	8.9%	16,260 - 19,639
Sisters –	3.0%	13,920 - 16,917
Staff Nurses –	87.0%	10,920 - 15,409 US\$18,000 - \$25,000 (F\$40,659 - \$56,471)

Source: Fiji Nursing Association, 2002, p. 62. Last column added by researcher with conversion based on May 2002 exchange rates from Westpac Banking Corporation, Suva, Fiji.

A staff nurse in Fiji receives an average monthly income of F\$312.20, compared with US\$660 in the Marshall Islands, which is the equivalent of some F\$1,490 per month. The salaries of the nurses of both Fiji and the Marshall Islands were paid fortnightly and the difference in amounts was rather substantial.

**Table 5. Salaries of respondent skilled medical migrants of Fiji, Ebeye Health Clinic, Marshall Islands, 2002**

<i>Position at Ebeye Health Clinic</i>	<i>Monthly net (US\$)</i>	<i>Equivalent (F\$)</i>
Staff nurse	660	1,490
Staff nurse	684	1,545
Staff nurse	800	1,807
Staff nurse	1,067	2,410
Staff nurse	1,200	2,710
Staff nurse	1,170	2,642
Dental officer	4,000	9,035
Staff physician*	6,044	13,652

Source: Fieldwork data, July-August 2002.

\* Male naturalized citizen of Fiji added here for comparison purpose only.

In the context of skilled migration, labour remittances did not play a major part in Fiji's economy until the temporary migration of soldiers of Fiji for peacekeeping duties in the Middle East from the mid-1970s to the present; however, the levels of remittances since the 1980s have gradually increased and must not be attributed to the soldiers' remittances alone (table 6). Remittances from labour migrants dramatically increased from the year 2000 onwards, largely owing to an increase in the number of males migrating to the Middle East as security personnel for private American

companies in Iraq and other countries of the Middle East. The remittances have also increased owing to increasing numbers of women who have migrated to the United States of America to work as caregivers. The migrant nurses in this study have also contributed to this dramatic increase in remittances, as discussed below.

**Table 6. Remittances received, Fiji, 1985-2002**

<i>Year - F\$ million</i>	<i>Year - F\$ million</i>	<i>Year - F\$ million</i>
1985 – 21.0	1991 – 47.9	1997 – 79.8
1986 – 25.2	1992 – 52.7	1998 – 90.1
1987 – 22.2	1993 – 62.3	1999 – 86.6
1988 – 30.1	1994 – 55.9	2000 – 124.3
1989 – 42.2	1995 – 50.9	2001 – 224.4
1990 – 36.9	1996 – 62.0	2002 – 232.4
		2003 – 243.4

*Source:* Reserve Bank of Fiji, various reports, June 2004, cited in Rokoduru (2004: 10).

The nurses sent money, clothing and other gift items to Fiji. In monetary terms, the nurses who responded to this survey remitted between US\$266 and \$890 to Fiji in a fortnight from the local Western Union office located on the island. This would be an equivalent of F\$600 to \$2,010 per fortnight (table 7). All the nurses of Fiji working in Ebeye sent money through the local Western Union office on the island as there were no sister banking institutions they could use to remit money to Fiji.

**Table 7. Cash remittances sent by the nurses of Fiji, Ebeye Health Clinic, 2002**

<i>Approximate US\$</i>	<i>Fiji equivalent F\$</i>	<i>Number of nurses</i>
266	600	2
267	603	1
356	804	3
444	1,002	1
890	2,010	1
<b>Total = 3,201</b>	<b>Total = 6,624</b>	<b>Total = 8</b>

*Source:* Fieldwork data, July-August 2002.

These remittances were sent to parents and/or spouses in order to pay for general family subsistence and the welfare of their children; pay telephone, water, electricity and gas bills; pay home, car and other property loans; pay school and medical fees; and meet other traditional obligations in Fiji. In exchange, they asked for such foodstuffs as peas, spices, curry powder, Fiji-made noodles, canned tuna and meat to be sent to them. They also asked for Fiji-made beauty oils, baby products, crochet

threads and needles, and CDs and DVDs of Fijian music and dubbed shows from international rugby matches to be sent over. Nationals of Fiji travelling to the Marshall Islands or even to Ebeye on business usually took these items across.

Apart from the acknowledged consumption uses of remittances sent to Fiji, a darker side of this mainly beneficial aspect of labour migration is gradually being witnessed. The regular remittance of large sums of money into the country has induced some receivers of remittances in Fiji to resign from their formal jobs or to drop out of school, as they have learned to enjoy the money transmitted from their close relative abroad.<sup>36</sup> This implies a total dependence on remittance, and provides evidence that there is a lack of vision or planning on the part of receivers toward the fulfilment of the initial objectives of migration. These actions convey the impression that family and friends in Fiji have no vision beyond making a person migrate for employment while they reap the benefits at home. This has serious implications for such female labour migrants as nurses, teachers and especially domestic workers and caregivers who have travelled alone to destination countries for employment. There is no intention for the migrant to return in a short span of time when the objectives of migration are fulfilled. Instead, the attitude of spending suggests a growing tendency to depend on remittances, as has also been noted for Tonga and Samoa.

Another labour migration issue that needs to be scrutinized within a gender framework concerns the various recruitment systems and methods currently employed in Fiji to hire local skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour for overseas employment. For Fiji's United Nations peacekeepers, any deployment exercise must be processed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, that Ministry leads and controls the training, deployment and replenishment of labour with regards to United Nations peacekeeping duties. There is joint collaboration between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour, Immigration, Health and other ministries. The only drawback of this organization is the lack of government representation in the field to look after the interests of the soldiers, as there is no clear line of communication for grievances faced by the soldiers in the field on United Nations mission duties. There is also the organized recruitment of male migrants of Fiji to work as security personnel, drivers and others in the Middle East and of British Army soldiers, sports personnel, seafarers, and female nurses in Dubai (table 8).

Organized recruitment in this case refers to instances where the recruiter has properly registered his company or agency and has shown a copy of the contract to the relevant officials of the Labour Department, Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations of Fiji. The Department has particular standards for each component of the contract, such as minimum hourly rates, leave, allowances, medical benefits and superannuation schemes, which are scrutinized in the contract. Only if recruiters adequately meet all these conditions in the contract will they be allowed to advertise

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<sup>36</sup> Personal communication from Ms. M. Dutta, General Manager, Western Union Fiji, November 2006.

and create awareness of their recruitment of potential labour migrants in Fiji. In this process, the migrants sign the contract in Fiji, and officials from the Labour Department witness the event.

On the other hand, there is no such organized labour recruitment for most of Fiji's female migrants (table 8), many of whom are working as nurses in Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the United Arab Emirates, Australia and New Zealand; as domestic workers in some Pacific island countries (Cook Islands and Samoa); and caregivers in the United States. The majority of them have been privately recruited by friends, work colleagues and relatives who were working as private hiring agents with overseas partners (Rokoduru 2006: 6). Sadly, the case for Fiji's female labour migrants who are privately recruited is not as clear-cut as for those who have been recruited in an organized manner, and this is the group that is most vulnerable to abuses, exploitation and violations, as they are not protected by the Fiji Labour Act of 1970.

**Table 8. Summary of recruitment methods in Fiji by occupational category and sex, 2006**

<i>Occupational category</i>	<i>Male/ Female</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Overseas recruitment agency</i>	<i>Local partner or agent</i>	<i>Recruitment by former work colleagues</i>	<i>Recruit- ment by friends or relatives</i>	<i>Organized recruitment</i>	<i>Private recruitment</i>
Security officers	M	Iraq, Kuwait	X	X			X	
Military peace-keepers	M	Sinai	X (UN)	X (Gov't)			X	
British Army soldiers	M & F	Great Britain	X (British Military)	X (British Embassy)			X	X
Nurses	F	Dubai	X (in New Zealand)	X	X		X	
	F	Australia	X		X	X		X
	F	Marshall Islands, Palau			X	X		X
Teachers	M & F	Japan			X	X		X
	M & F	Australia, New Zealand	X	X				X
	M & F	Marshall Islands			X	X		X
	M & F	Kiribati			X	X		X
Caregivers	F	U.S.A.			X	X		X
Domestic workers	F	Samoa			X	X		X
	F	Cook Islands			X	X		X
Sports personnel	M	Overseas (general)	X					X
Seafarers	M	Republic of Korea	X	X			X	
	M	Japan	X	X			X	

*Source:* A. Rokoduru, "Recruiting agents for international labour force: issues and developments in Fiji", working paper presented at the Regional Conference on Institutions, Globalisation and their Impacts on Labour Markets in Pacific Island Countries, 17-19 October 2006, University of the South Pacific, p. 3.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many recommendations that can be made to the various individuals, academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, and Government of Fiji ministries, departments and desks to address the needs and shortcomings concerning the topic of gender and migration in Fiji, and these could be used as a model for other Pacific island countries. They include changing the general approach to gender and migration from the one that is currently prevalent in government institutions, addressing the need for more information and research data, forging political and trade agreements with receiving countries, addressing remittances and training institutions for migrants, regulating hiring agents and creating female migrants of Fiji networks.

#### A. Revised Pacific Platform for Action, Gender and Migration

Migration, whether international or internal, forced or voluntary, temporary or long-term, becomes a truly cross-cutting issue when considering the list of the four strategic themes that make up the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PPA). Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, women's legal and human rights, women's access to services, and the economic empowerment of women are the four themes (SPC 2004a: 10). Furthermore, the list of critical emerging issues for Pacific women arising out of the 2004 conference contained another eight issues, namely, poverty eradication, globalization and trade liberalization, HIV/AIDS, labour migration, peace and security, tradition and religion, media and information, and making the Millennium Development Goals more applicable to the Pacific (SPC 2004a: 12).

In the context of this paper, each of those themes and emerging critical issues for Pacific women can be directly or indirectly linked to the international labour migration of women in the Pacific. This is because each of those themes and issues will have some origins, impacts, influences, benefits and answers in international migration. For instance, one can look at poverty eradication and link it to the international labour migration of Pacific women through remittances; or globalization and trade liberalization and link those to international labour migration through migrant contracts and rights, or at HIV/AIDS and peace and security and relate those to the international labour migration of Pacific women through the training and the rights of migrants. While the previous approach to the study of international labour migration from Fiji has largely been one of "brain drain", the new approach currently being considered is that of the "migration-development nexus". This is due to the latest developments concerning increased labour mobility to the Middle East, which has drastically increased remittance levels and foreign exchange earnings for the country. Thus, to treat the international labour migration of Pacific women as a cross-cutting issue in relation to the other themes and issues in the revised PPA and to link them in particular ways requires a total paradigm shift from "brain drain" to "migration is development", or the "migration-development



nexus". Should this be possible, the whole approach to the themes and issues raised in the PPA shows itself in a different light because each of those themes and issues will be studied and policies drawn and implemented with an integrated approach. Thus, the international labour migration of women will not be studied and the relevant policies will be implemented in isolation; instead, the issue to be researched and the policies to be designed and implemented might also be related to and address other themes and issues within the PPA.

This new approach definitely needs to be considered, given the tiny budgets and funding issues and problems that are regularly experienced by the Governments of the Pacific island countries (and especially the ministries of women). Therefore, the recommendation here is for NMGEs within the ministries of women to change its approach when considering labour migration, women and gender. It must not approach women's labour migration and gender in isolation but consider other related themes and issues from its PPA together with women's labour migration as a more meaningful and holistic approach to the topic of gender and migration in Fiji.

## **B. Paucity of research data**

The general paucity of research data requires that more research address the Platform's theme on mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, women's access to services and even the economic participation of women. Therefore, given the lack of relevant disaggregated statistical data and research information on the topic, and of relevant policies and programmes of actions regarding Fiji's female labour migration and gender, meaningful studies resulting in effective policies and programmes need to consider some of the following areas or research: hiring methods, remittances, contractual conditions, employment packages, human and migrant rights issues, protection and security packages for migrants, HIV/AIDS, and the safe repatriation of migrants and their accumulated earnings and possessions. Most importantly, those studies need to be conducted along sex-disaggregated lines. Chandra (2003: 130) argued that the capacity of the local research community needed to be enhanced in data collection, recording, storage, utilization and dissemination. Furthermore, relevant information technology needs to be used to enable this process.

More collaborative research, data collection and analyses amongst the relevant national and regional institutions in this field are needed, the results of which could be stored in a databank. These databases would be useful tools for the planning, management and administration of such migration issues as identifying niche labour markets for migrants of Fiji, hiring regulations, and working and living conditions, as well as the documentation of migrants. These databases would facilitate the designing of effective policies and programmes of action for Fiji's migrants, Government and other stakeholders in the migration process. The NMGE could address these issues by facilitating the collection of data and their analyses along disaggregated lines from academics, regional institutions,

various relevant government ministries, divisions, departments and desks, and NGOs, after which the relevant policy papers and possibly bills could be drawn up. It would be beneficial for the NMGE to consider the advice of Chandra (1983: 9-10) that research should involve as many local and female personnel as possible because it would reduce costs. The effort should consider sources that are readily available and must focus on collecting primary data. This research effort should also be complemented by and feed into a concerted effort to increase the general consciousness of the problems, needs and aspirations of women as the heightened level of awareness, together with increased and better quality data, would spawn further research that would form the basis of policies beneficial to women in general.

### **C. Bilateral and multilateral labour agreements**

With regard to the PPA, this recommendation ties in with the critical emerging issue of globalization and trade liberalization, which is influencing and determining the labour markets for Fiji's female labour migrants today. The Government, by acknowledging labour migration from Fiji as a sustainable form of socio-economic development, must forge distinct labour migration partnerships or agreements that are bilateral, multilateral and/or regional in nature with the receiving countries to ensure that Fiji's unskilled and skilled female migrants' rights, employment packages and living conditions are as promised and protected during their time away until their safe return to Fiji. To ensure a continuous inflow of remittances, the Government must first protect and ensure the security of its female migrant workers. On the other hand, bilateral trade agreements between countries can facilitate common banking or remittance systems where each migrant is encouraged to use a recognized local facility or the local banking system to repatriate funds to her own country and at the same time prevent money laundering. The NMGE, through the Ministry of Women, must call for and support efforts for the Government to forge bilateral or multilateral trade agreements with receiving countries in the interests of female migrant workers.

### **D. Remittances**

Remittances from migrant workers can be linked directly to the PPA issue of poverty eradication and the themes of the economic empowerment of women and women's access to services. In most migration studies, it has been seen that remittances are used mainly to pay for consumer goods and that they have a very positive socio-economic ripple effect that can be harnessed to facilitate more development and to reduce poverty and socio-economic inequality. Through its Ministries of Finance, Labour, Rural Development, Immigration, Trade and Investment, Foreign Affairs, and Women, and in collaboration with the reserve bank and other local banks, other commercial institutions, trade unions and NGOs, the Government of Fiji could design and implement effective policies and systems to maximize remittance opportunities and benefits for Fiji by simplifying local banking and remittance procedures, regulating and reducing the costs for the use of those services,

providing incentives for female migrants to remit money, implementing policies for remitting the accumulated assets of migrants to Fiji, and offering long- and short-term options on remittance investments to migrants and their communities. The NMGE can facilitate the awareness of and advocacy on investment opportunities for female migrant workers.

### **E. Training institutions for migrants**

Providing training institutions for intending female labour migrants addresses other related critical issues, such as HIV/AIDS and facilitating the economic empowerment and advancement of women. Thus, the Government of Fiji, through its Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Women and in collaboration with NGOs, trade unions and other interested stakeholders, can identify niche labour markets and establish training institutions for intending migrants in preparation for those markets using consultations and appropriate models from such countries as Indonesia and the Philippines in the process. The curriculum for these institutions could include the expectations of foreign employers, the culture and geography of the destination countries, the awareness of human and migrant rights, personal presentation and hygiene, the banking and remittance procedures of both Fiji and the receiving countries, foreign currencies and differentials, opening and maintaining foreign bank accounts and services and using other relevant commercial services away from home, insurance schemes, health issues awareness, emergency contacts, and others. Such training or preparatory institutions would also facilitate the proper documentation of Fiji's labour migrants by facilitating and/or processing passport and visa applications and employment papers, as well as information on transport to the destination countries. This would reduce the likelihood of female migrants experiencing abuses and violations from unscrupulous hiring agents and foreign employers, and of trafficking and forced prostitution by others who may wish to make quick and illicit gains from the hiring process, or other migration processes, involving migrants.

### **F. Regulating recruitment agents**

Addressing the work of recruitment agents would be directly linked to the critical emerging issues of peace and security, globalization and trade liberalization, as well as the economic empowerment of women, of the PPA. The Government of Fiji, through its Ministries of Labour, Customs and Immigration, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Commerce, and Finance (reserve bank), the Bureau of Statistics, Health, and other relevant ministries and departments, could ensure the maximum protection of the migrants of Fiji from unscrupulous recruitment or hiring agents. The Government should design laws and policies that govern and regulate the work and conduct of public and private hiring agents, such as the formal registration of recruitment agencies and issuance of licenses to them; the regular review of such hiring agent activities as contracting and sub-contracting of female migrants, and of policy frameworks and laws; the regular submission of data from recruitment agencies on the numbers, occupational categories and other relevant details of migrants processed

by them to a databank based within the relevant government ministries and institutions. The Ministry of Women, through its NMGE, could show strong support for such moves to address this need of female labour migrants and appoint a representative to work in collaboration with others in this monitoring effort.

### **G. Migrant women of Fiji networks**

There needs to be more empirical and social research conducted on issues related to Fiji's female migrants. Efforts must be made to form national and regional networks between countries for trade unions and/or similar occupational associations where common migration issues regarding female workers – hiring, work conditions, contract packages, safety standards and social security, benefits, citizenship, rights, and the return of migrants – can be actively discussed and resolved. Deliberations could include forging pacts or agreements at the regional level or between similar occupational organizations, focusing on all aspects to provide the safety and security of the region's female migrant workers. An example that can be used as an illustration is that provided by the Commonwealth Nurses Federation, of which the Fiji Nursing Association is a member, along with the associations of 22 other countries. The countries, represented by their ministers of health, signed the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers. This code of practice, which adopts standards for the recruitment of health personnel to be observed by the 22 countries, serves to safeguard the interests of the migrant health workers, hiring agencies, and involved Governments. The formation of female migrant networks within and outside Fiji addresses the PPA theme of promoting the advancement of women, as well as their economic empowerment and access to services. It also addresses the critical need for peace and security, especially of the female labour migrants as called for in the PPA and in this study.

Finally, on a note of caution, most of the recommendations above are geared toward Fiji becoming a country of origin of skilled and unskilled migrants. As the migration-development nexus approach is becoming more acceptable and seemingly beneficial for Fiji, it seems critical now more than ever that the NMGE take action to influence and dictate the terms for migration and gender policies and programmes of action so that they ultimately benefit the female labour migrants and all those who are dependent on their labour. While the PPA is well meaning and forward looking, the general answer to tackling women's themes and issues as raised in the PPA can be realized most effectively if those themes and issues are addressed in relation to each other. Perhaps then one might see women's labour migration from Fiji as a lucrative alternative form of sustainable development that ultimately promotes socio-economic strategies for national development and growth.

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# THE COSTS OF (IM)MOBILITY: CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND AND CHILDREN WHO MIGRATE WITH A PARENT

*Brenda S.A. Yeoh\* and Theodora Lam\*\**

## I. THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

### A. Current state of knowledge

*Mexican Migrants Leave Kids, Problems Back Home*

(National Public Radio, 9 May 2006)

*Children Left Behind Face Tough Road*

(China People's Daily, 2 June 2004)

*Migrant Workers' Children Left Behind, Left Out*

(Inter Press Service News Agency, 2003)

The plight of children left behind by one or both of their migrating parents in developing countries has attracted growing attention in recent years, surfacing as news headlines in different countries. The heightening awareness is timely in this globalized era, when increasingly uneven development and porous borders are encouraging more people – particularly labour migrants from rural regions and/or developing countries – to cross borders in search of better job opportunities. Many of these labour migrants – both men and women – have left their children behind with extended family members or friends in the home countries in their quest to improve the livelihood circumstances for themselves and their families through migration. While improved economic circumstances after migration have been noted in a range of studies, the psychological, social and emotional costs of their departure – especially for those left behind – have been often omitted from the migration balance sheet.

As Sassen (2006) reminded us, “most of the people touched by globalization [and the resulting migratory flows] are quite immobile”. The “immobile people” she referred to include those who “lack the means or permissions to travel”, for instance, the “members of non-elite, transnational migrant families and communities”. While numerous migration studies (for example, Boyle and Halfacree 1999; Watkins, Leinbach and Falconer 1993; Willis and Yeoh 2000; Yeoh, Huang and Lam 2005) have already recognized that migration is not merely the business of the individual but also

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involves and affects the migrants' families, fewer studies – as noted by Toyota, Yeoh and Nguyen (forthcoming) – have progressed to examining in detail the circumstances of those left behind and how their lives have been reshaped in a complex manner by the departure of key household members. In this context, this paper seeks to focus on the impact of migration on one distinctly immobile, yet vulnerable group, namely, the children who are being left behind by one or both of their migrating parents. This paper delves into existing studies detailing the stories and experiences of children left behind and subsequently examines them vis-à-vis those concerning children who have migrated with a parent. Finally, some existing policies pertaining to those left behind are reviewed, and gaps or deficiencies highlighted with the view of stimulating policy discussion and formulation that will lead to improving the overall well-being of those left behind.

Before answering the question of *what* we know about children left behind, it is imperative to first define *who* a child is. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>37</sup> a child is defined as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2006). However, the age limit varies according to country and policy: it may be as low as 14 years of age in some instances or as high as 21 years of age in others. It should also be noted that, in some of the existing studies drawn upon in this paper, the ages of the children discussed in the study are not specified, making it all the more difficult to insist on precision. With this in mind, this paper will assume the broad definition of including anyone under 21 as a child, although it has to be borne in mind that children's ages are likely to be of significance in any discussion of the impact of migration and policy issues.

Difficulty in determining the age range to be used in defining childhood constitutes one of the reasons why it is so problematic to estimate the numbers of children affected by the outmigration of one or both of their parents (Whitehead and Hashim, 2005). Furthermore, working with national migration statistics is inherently complicated as different countries employ different criteria and calculation methods. The variety of migration channels, ranging from the legal to the illegal, and the internal to the international, further obscures the figures. In cases where data relating to the number of children left behind are not readily available, the best-case scenario is to derive an estimate from the number of labour migrants from the country. For instance, Whitehead and Hashim (2005: 11) found that 25 per cent of all households in South Africa had members who were migrant workers, and the percentage increased to over 40 per cent for households in rural areas; case studies in certain rural areas in Bangladesh<sup>38</sup> indicated a range of 18 to 40 per cent of rural households having

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<sup>37</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No.27531.

<sup>38</sup> In another study by Kuhn (2006), using data from the 1996 Matlab Health and Socioeconomic Survey, which surveyed some 210,000 people in 141 villages, it was discovered that an overwhelming 91 per cent of the 5,930 children aged between 5 and 14 years have one migrant parent (mainly fathers) who is away. Another 2 per cent of the sample has neither parent living in the household. While total international emigration figures are not available, there are an estimated 1.1 million Bangladeshis living overseas (Siddiqui 2003).

at least one migrant member working elsewhere; between 50 to 60 per cent of people living in rural Tanzanian households had at least one family member away; while the figure is around 80 per cent for rural Mali. In Thailand, Bryant (2005) estimated that about half a million children aged 0 to 14 years were left behind by their international migrant parents – mostly fathers.

According to Chinese newspaper accounts (Li 2003, cited in Xiang, forthcoming), “a ‘conservative’ estimate of at least 10 million children [in China] are either looked after by their mothers alone or by grandparents as a result of their parents’ migration”. With around 106 million rural-to-urban migrants in China, this figure is likely to grow.<sup>39</sup> The situation seems to be more acute in such provinces as Henan, Anhui, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi, where large numbers of the rural population migrate to cities for work (*China People’s Daily* 2004). In Anhui alone, local officials estimated that 125 to 250 children per 1,000 migrants were being left behind. As Xiang (forthcoming) postulated, if this were a valid figure that could be applied to other provinces, there could be as many as 13 to 26 million children left behind in rural China.

Elsewhere in Asia, the Philippines stands out as the major supplier of labour migrants to over 100 countries. In 2004, some 10 per cent of the country’s 85 million people, or around 8.1 million Filipinos, were working and/or residing overseas (Asis 2006a). While reliable data on the number of children left behind are not available from the Government, Parrenas (2005a) – after compiling estimates from a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – placed the figure of children living apart from one or both parents at approximately 9 million, or 27 per cent of the total youth<sup>40</sup> population. Meanwhile, another non-governmental advocacy group for children of migrant labourers, Kakammpi (cited in Bryant 2005, and Parrenas 2005a), gave a more conservative estimate of 5,847,000 Filipino children aged 0 to 17 being left behind. In narrowing down to a specific age group, a study conducted by the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People – Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines/Apostleship of the Sea – Manila, the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration in 2003, estimated (based on statistics and assumptions) that, out of a total of 3,463,540 Filipino families with at least one child in the 10-to-12-year age group, there were around 2.7 per cent or 91,790 of deployed migrant workers with at least one child in that age range left behind (SMC 2004). Finally, what is distinctive about this country is that the majority of the children have been left behind by their *mothers*, given that female migrants outnumber their male counterparts in the Philippines (table 1). Many of these migrating Filipinas work in such feminized sectors as domestic work, care work and entertainment around the world.

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<sup>39</sup> According to Jie Gao (personal communication, 2006) from the National Working Committee on Women and Children under the State Council, the number for rural-to-urban migration in China has risen to 150 million in 2005.

<sup>40</sup> The age range is not specified.

The increasing feminization of labour migration is a troubling trend also observable in such other Asian countries as Sri Lanka and Indonesia<sup>41</sup> (table 1). Sri Lanka is facing a similarly severe “deficit” in mothers as some 600,000 women (around 60 to 80 per cent of the total legal migrant population) leave the country for work each year. Based on the latest available statistics, out of 858,000 migrants in 2000, 590,420 were women. Within this group, 75 per cent were married and 90 per cent of these married women have children (Save the Children 2006). According to a study conducted by Save the Children (2006), this meant that approximately one million Sri Lankan children were being left behind by their mothers. These numbers would be expected to be larger if those being left behind by their fathers were also included.

**Table 1. Selected country profiles**

Country	Total population (millions) mid-2006	Percentage of population 0-14 years	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	Documented overseas workers (d)	
	(a)	(b)	(c)	Annual deployment	Percentage female
Indonesia	245.5	28.8	34.4	474,310 (2005)	69
Philippines	89.5	35.0	22.8	1,063,000 (2004)	69 <sup>a</sup>
Sri Lanka	20.2	24.1	14.0	858,000 (2000)	69
Thailand	64.6	22.0	19.5	158,000 <sup>b</sup> (2002)	15
Viet Nam	84.4	27.0	25.1	118,756 (2000)	20

Sources: Columns (a), (b) and (c): CIA 2006.

Column (d): Indonesia – Departemen Tenaga Kerja and Transmigrasi (Department of Labour and Transmigration) 2005; Philippines – Philippines National Statistics Office 2005; Sri Lanka – Save the Children 2006; Thailand – Ministry of Labour 2002; Viet Nam – Anh, Tacoli and Thanh 2003.

<sup>a</sup> Percentage applies to land-based workers only.

<sup>b</sup> Number of documented Thai workers abroad.

While these figures offer a glimpse into the immensity of the situation in selected countries, they are by no means complete or conclusive. As mentioned earlier, no authoritative figure of the number of children left behind is available, and much depends on inferences and estimates drawn from existing data on labour migration and other household data. Overall, these statistics suggest that tens of millions of children around the world are being left behind by their migrant parents, mostly lower-skilled workers from developing countries. Thus far, little is known about the duration

<sup>41</sup> Bryant (2005) made an educated guess that around 1 million children have been left behind in Indonesia. This figure includes both regular and irregular migrants.

children are separated from one or both parents. Information about the children left behind by more elite migrants is also scarce; though probably statistically insignificant, this group could serve as an interesting comparison. Therefore, more specific data segmenting the number of children left behind by country, by age group, by gender of the migrating parent, by one or both parents, by duration, and so forth, are crucial as baseline information. More systematic data collection is necessary to allow for comparative work between countries where children left behind number in the millions, as in China and the Philippines, and those where they account for only a few thousand, as in the case of Mongolia,<sup>42</sup> Fiji or other Pacific island countries.

## **B. Impact of migration on children left behind**

Existing studies suggest that the circumstances surrounding each cohort of children left behind are highly variable. Some children are left behind by their fathers, others by their mothers and some by both of their parents. In turn, depending on the migrant's profile, children left behind may be cared for by varying groups of people: mothers, fathers, grandparents, other extended family members and even non-relatives. These are all important variables that can affect the impact of migration on the children. By incorporating some aspects of these variables into a table, Whitehead and Hashim (2005) outlined the types of issues that have dominated the literature when one or both parents migrate for work. Table 2 is a further attempt to expand their work and include other issues and countries that may be relevant so as to guide future studies and generate other suggestions for further investigations. To provide insight into the impact of migration on children left behind, the rest of this section reviews specific studies conducted on children left behind in such selected countries as China, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as other studies on the effects of migration as experienced by the migrants' households in general.

### **1. Forms of communication**

Interestingly, some of these studies reported regular and, in some cases, increased communication between the migrant and those left behind. Communication can take place in the form of telephone calls, letter writing, text messages (short message service, or SMS) and/or gift exchanges. In the 2003 Children and Families Survey conducted in the Philippines<sup>43</sup> – hereafter referred to as the 2003 Philippines Study (Asis 2006b; SMC 2004) – children with migrant parents had higher ownership of landline telephones and mobile phones compared with children from non-migrant families. The

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<sup>42</sup> In a household survey by Batbaatar and others (2005) involving 964 migrant and non-migrant families in 8 sites in Mongolia, 4.7 per cent of the children were left behind in rural areas by one or both parents. Further qualitative research with 335 children and 209 parents suggests that more children may be affected.

<sup>43</sup> The study involved 1,443 children aged between 10 and 12 years of migrant and non-migrant parents. The children came from seven provinces/areas in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao: the National Capital Region, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Cebu, Negros Occidental and Davao del Sur (SMC 2004).

increase in the ownership of telecommunication tools is both a product as well as a facilitator of migration. With the increased household income from migration, migrants' families are able to purchase tools to facilitate communication with the absent parent(s) and also allow for parenting to continue across borders. Parrenas' (2002) study on young adults in the Philippines showed that communication with migrant parents also helped to lessen the negative impact of migration and made it easier for children to come to terms with their parents' absence.

According to Jolly, Bell and Narayanaswamy (2003), mothers are generally the ones who tend to put more effort into sustaining relationships with the children they have left behind, compared with fathers. However, in Dreby's (2006) study on the experiences of Mexican transnational fathers and mothers residing in New Jersey, she found that parents, regardless of gender, behaved in surprisingly similar ways when internationally separated from their children. Dreby observed that migrating fathers and mothers called their children who were left behind with the same regularity (once a week) and had similar types of conversation topics (school, siblings and what their children want from America).

## **2. Level of remittances**

Almost all the studies reviewed reported high levels of remittances sent back by the migrants, thus increasing significantly the household income as well as the quality of life for the families left behind (for example, Afsar 2003; Asis 2006b; Dreby 2006; Huang and Pieke 2003; Koc and Onan 2004; Kuhn 2006; Whitehead and Hashim 2005). However, differences between the remitting behaviours of fathers vis-à-vis mothers have been observed. Typically, migrant mothers tend to be more concerned with their children's well-being and remit more money home (UNFPA 2006; Whitehead and Hashim 2005).<sup>44</sup> This is also reflected in another study by Anh and others (2003), in which Vietnamese female migrants are the ones remitting more money to their families left behind. Migrants' remittances have a major impact on the lives of those left behind; for instance, the money remitted can be used to ensure food security, repay debts, cover schooling costs and medical bills, and basically improve the well-being of those left behind.

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<sup>44</sup> Most of the money is spent on their children's education.

**Table 2. Categories of children left behind by migrating parents**

<i>Children</i>	<i>Regional areas</i>	<i>Main research themes relevant to children</i>
When fathers migrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Africa</li> <li>● East Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China</li> <li>● Mongolia</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Ex-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States</li> <li>● Latin America</li> <li>● South Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bangladesh</li> <li>● India</li> <li>● Nepal</li> <li>● Pakistan</li> <li>● Sri Lanka</li> </ul> </li> <li>● South-East Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cambodia</li> <li>● Indonesia</li> <li>● Myanmar</li> <li>● Thailand</li> <li>● Viet Nam</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Female-headed households and poverty</li> <li>● Effects on children's (boys' versus girls') education</li> <li>● Effects on children's (boys' versus girls') health and/or well-being</li> <li>● Household vulnerability</li> <li>● Remittances role in livelihoods; access to services</li> </ul>
When mothers migrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● East Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China</li> <li>● Mongolia</li> </ul> </li> <li>● South Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bangladesh</li> <li>● India</li> <li>● Sri Lanka</li> </ul> </li> <li>● South-East Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cambodia</li> <li>● Indonesia</li> <li>● Malaysia</li> <li>● Myanmar</li> <li>● Philippines</li> <li>● Thailand</li> <li>● Viet Nam</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Psychosocial effects on children (boys versus girls)</li> <li>● Education of children (boys versus girls)</li> <li>● Health and well-being of children (boys versus girls)</li> <li>● Abuse of children (boys versus girls)</li> <li>● Effects on domestic gender division of labour/family break-up</li> <li>● Reorganization of family roles</li> </ul>
When both parents migrate and children are cared for by grandparents, other relatives or non-family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● East Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China</li> <li>● Mongolia</li> </ul> </li> <li>● South Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bangladesh</li> <li>● India</li> <li>● Pakistan</li> <li>● Sri Lanka</li> </ul> </li> <li>● South-East Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cambodia</li> <li>● Indonesia</li> <li>● Malaysia</li> <li>● Myanmar</li> <li>● Philippines</li> <li>● Thailand</li> <li>● Viet Nam</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Latin America</li> <li>● Southern Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children's (boys' versus girls') mental health</li> <li>● Effects on children's (boys' versus girls') health and well-being</li> <li>● Effects on children's (boys' versus girls') education</li> <li>● Burden on grandparents</li> <li>● Reorganization of family roles</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Whitehead and Hashim (2005: 7).

### 3. Health and well-being

The 2003 Philippines Study revealed that the overall well-being of children of migrants was generally better than that of the children of non-migrants. In cases where young adults in the Philippines experienced emotional hardships due to their parents' migration, they were able to come to terms with the separation with the support of extended families and communities, among other reasons (Parrenas 2002). In the 2003 Philippines Study, children with migrant parents perceived themselves as average or not poor, and came from families with higher home ownership. In terms of their physical health, they were also taller, heavier and fell ill less frequently when compared with children of non-migrants. According to Asis (2006b), the finding on physical health in the 2003 Philippines Study in general "does not replicate the poor showing of children of migrant mothers" in Battistella and Conaco's 1996 study.<sup>45</sup>

Fewer incidences of abuse were also reported among migrants' children in the 2003 Philippines Study, but it must be noted that experiences of abuse seemed to be divided by gender rather than the migration status of their parent(s), as more boys than girls said they suffered abuse. In terms of happiness, Filipino children from migrant families were a little less happy than children of non-migrants, but they were also allegedly less anxious and lonely. This contradicted Battistella and Conaco's (1998) finding that showed that children of migrant parents actually experienced higher anxiety and loneliness. Asis (2006b) echoed Parrenas' (2002) sentiment that the increase in regular and frequent communication probably accounted for the lower levels of anxiety and loneliness in the 2003 group. When probed on the actual emotions, however, more migrants' children expressed feelings of anger, confusion and worries in comparison with non-migrants' children. The problem appeared to worsen for children with both parents away as well as children with migrant mothers who were reportedly unhappier than children of migrant fathers.

In summary, the 2003 Philippines Study showed that "contrary to popular perception (as well as contrary to the study of Battistella and Conaco 1998) the children of migrants fared just as well, if not better, than the children of non-migrants in non-material realms" (Asis 2006b: 51), in addition to having an edge over children of non-migrants in terms of physical health. What appears consistent in the various studies, however, is that children left behind by mothers tend to fare less well compared with other groups of children with migrating parents. Those with migrant mothers tended to have more difficulties academically and performed more poorly in terms of their physical and emotional health (Asis 2006b; Battistella and Conaco 1998).

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<sup>45</sup> In that study, 709 children aged between 10 and 12 years in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Rizal and Quezon were surveyed. The groups of children compared included children of non-migrants, children of migrant fathers, children of migrant mothers and children with both parents away.

Caregivers in a study on children in Sri Lanka left behind by their mothers<sup>46</sup> (Save the Children 2006) – referred to henceforth as the Sri Lanka Study – reported certain negative behaviours, though not in the majority, in the children after their mothers leave. Some of these behaviours included loss of appetite, weight loss for children under 5 years of age, and temper tantrums among those of all ages, especially adolescents. Children between 6 and 17 years old also felt lonely and/or sad. In this study, incidences of abuse were not high and there were no observably higher levels of violence from fathers in the absence of mothers.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the lack of physical punishment had a positive impact on the children. In other cases, children with older caregivers had more emotional needs and were unable to communicate with their older carers. Unfortunately, the situation was worse for children with mental and physical disabilities. Their already marginalized position in society could degenerate further in the absence of a parent. Children with disabilities were often neglected, had low hygiene levels, and many of them were not in school. They may eventually have to be institutionalized due to neglect.

Negative consequences on the health of children left behind have also been reported in China. In one incident highlighted by Xiang (forthcoming), the sale of “fake milk formula” by unscrupulous companies left many infants in the care of poorly educated grandparents by their migrant parents with serious malnutrition or “big-head disease”. Some 171 infants in Fuyang Municipality of Anhui Province were affected, among whom 13 died. Cases of the rape and abuse of children left behind have also been reported (*China People’s Daily* 2004; Xiang, forthcoming). In another study involving 250 junior high school students in Jichun County, Hubei, who had experiences of being left behind for at least half a year, over half of them had difficulties adjusting – “16.6 per cent felt abandoned, 12.3 per cent had problems expressing difficulties or obtaining help, and 6.5 per cent felt ‘anguished’ about being left behind” (Liang 2004: 26, cited in Xiang, forthcoming). Huang (2004, cited in Xiang, forthcoming) also reported that children left behind were marginally less healthy than other children.

Grim images of the lives of children left behind continue with Rogaly and others (2001, 2002), who further reported that the absence of men in the family added to the material and psychological insecurity of those left behind in India. The general health of members in households left behind

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<sup>46</sup> The Sri Lanka Study used a random sample of 1,200 households with mothers who had migrated overseas for work for at least the previous six months at the time of the study. The two study areas were districts with the highest numbers of female migration, Colombo (Colombo and Hanwella DS divisions) and Kurunegala (Kurunegala and Ridigama DS divisions). A sample survey involving 200 children from each district (400 in total) representing the three main age groups (below 5 years, 6-14 years and 15-17 years), was also included. Another 200 families from the Colombo district where mothers were working in Sri Lanka (100) and mothers who were not working (100) were added to the study. Both groups of women had the same socio-economic status as that of migrant mothers (Save the Children 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, the same study acknowledged that child abuse in Sri Lanka was an increasingly serious problem, and children with migrant mothers were seen as more vulnerable to abuse. There were also reported cases of abuse from the sample households. Examples include abuse of a female child by a close relative (uncle) as well as two cases where female children were in imminent danger of being raped or sexually abused by a father or other relatives (Save the Children 2006).



also suffers (Rafique and Rogaly 2003). These findings clearly contrast with those from the 2003 Philippines Study, in which children of migrants appeared to enjoy improved material circumstances and were able to adjust to their situation of being left behind.

#### 4. Education

The education of children left behind is also affected by the migration of one or both parents, though the evidence is often mixed. According to media reports, parental absence in Mexico is an important reason why children left behind do poorly in schools. A headmistress interviewed claimed that as many as 10 out of 73 children in a class were left behind and that these children often dropped out of school or turned to crime in their parent's absence (National Public Radio, 9 May 2006). In India, the migration of males is reported to lower girls' chances of acquiring an education as they have to take on more domestic responsibilities. At the same time, Indians who migrate to urban areas have a heightened awareness of the value of education, which translates into greater attention to ensuring that their children received a better education (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003).

Studies of the impact of migration on the education of children left behind in Bangladesh have also shown mixed results. Several of these studies showed that a large proportion of the migrants' remittances was used for children's education (Afsar 2003; Kuhn 2006) – a finding that was replicated in other country studies, such as Jampaklay's (2006) on children left behind in Thailand and Hugo's (2002) study on the impact of migration on Indonesian families. Rahman and others (1996, cited in Afsar 2003) also discovered that school enrolment rates were higher among migrants' families in rural areas. The study by Kuhn (2006) further showed that the emigration of fathers and male siblings often resulted in improvements in the education of children left behind in some rural areas in Bangladesh.<sup>48</sup> He concluded that the outmigration of fathers and brothers in these rural areas had substantial and predominately positive impacts on the pace of schooling of children, both boys and girls, left behind in Matlab. However, the migration of sisters had no effect on their siblings' education, while cases of migrant mothers were still too rare to warrant further study. While a parent's migration sometimes provides Bangladeshi children with better educational prospects, Siddiqui (2003) argued that the absence of mothers causes children's education to suffer.

The 2003 Philippines Study showed that migrants' children were enrolled mainly in private schools and that they were generally happy at school. At least during the elementary years, children of migrants were found to perform better at school and received higher grades and more school awards compared with the children of non-migrants. In contrast, Battistella and Conaco (1998) reported

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<sup>48</sup> The study integrated data from the Matlab Health and Socio-Economic survey with those from the Matlab Health and Demographic Surveillance System and covered the Matlab *Thana* (sub-district) of Bangladesh.

that Filipino children of migrants fared worse academically in relation to non-migrants' children. Both studies had similar findings relating to children with migrant mothers – those with absent mothers had a tendency to lag behind children of the other groups. The migration of mothers thus presents a “catch 22” situation where, although migrant mothers remit more money to invest in their children's education, their children often end up not performing as well owing to their absence. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the educational performance of children left behind by mothers is lower than for those with mothers working in Sri Lanka and non-working mothers. According to Gamburd (2005), the children of migrant mothers tended to drop out of school to look for work or help with household chores. In another study, children with migrant mothers had poorer attendance and performance at school (Save the Children 2006). The study stated that children left behind in rural areas did better in school but emotionally they felt more lonely and sad owing to the departure of one or both parents.

Jampaklay (2006) also reported that the absence of parents had negative impacts on the school enrolment of children left behind in Thailand.<sup>49</sup> She further elaborated that while the long-term absence of fathers did not have any impact on children's education chances, the reverse was true of mothers as their long-term absence apparently lowered the educational chances of children left behind. Nonetheless, the short-term absence of fathers also appeared to reduce the children's chances of school enrolment. Jampaklay (2006: 108) explained that the adverse effects of the mothers' absence on children left behind were probably due to “the situation of living in the extended household that jeopardizes the educational chances of children”. Lastly, she argued that while migrants' remittances raised the prospects of children left behind staying in school, they also lured some children into dropping out and migrating.

In China, numerous studies reviewed by Xiang (forthcoming) also presented a rather depressing picture of the state of the education of children left behind. For instance, a 2003 study conducted by Zhao on 1,184 children left behind in Da County found that only 12 per cent of these children did better than average, 41 per cent performed in the medium to low range and nearly half of them, 47 per cent, performed poorly in their studies. In another study by the Women's Federation of Meishan City, Sichuan Province, 12,000 students from 21 rural schools were surveyed in 2004. Within the sample, 51.2 per cent were children left behind. The study indicated that children left behind had “high drop-out rates, poor academic performance, and problems in socialization and psychological development”. However, Xiang (forthcoming) noted that the study drew on poorly defined concepts and unclear descriptions. In his review of other studies, Xiang noted that studies on children from non-migrant families produced similar results and that parental migration did

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<sup>49</sup> Jampaklay's (2006) analysis draws upon the 2000-2003 data set of a longitudinal study (Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System) in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand. She used a four category dependent variable (enrolled and not moved; enrolled and moved; not enrolled and not moved; not enrolled and moved) describing the children's enrolment and migration status in 2003 while the key independent variables were father's and mother's living status during 2000-2002.

not appear to be an independent factor contributing to the withdrawal of children left behind from school. The similarities were attributed to the rural environment that the children were in; that is, rural parents, whether at home or away, generally did not invest attention and resources in their children's education. Basically, education in rural areas is especially vulnerable to the negative consequences of migration, such as the brain-drain of teachers and the reduction of funding.

The sad state of rural schools was also highlighted in a study on Mongolia (Batbaatar and others 2005), in which it was argued that the education of children left behind in rural areas in Mongolia was first and foremost affected by the outmigration of the community in general rather than the migration of the children's parents alone. Migration has led to falling enrolment in some rural schools, which in turn produced declining resource allocation and services, as well as created the threat of schools closing down. Rural schools in areas with high emigration are often sorely lacking in resources. The poor state of school buildings, the lack of electricity and textbooks in schools, and the shortages of teachers, as well as the "lower" quality of the remaining teachers who have to teach multiple subjects, are all factors that are directly or indirectly caused by high outmigration rates, consequently affecting the education of the children left behind in these communities.

### **5. Social behaviour, relationships and the socialization of children**

The migration of one or both parents may affect their children's social behaviour in different ways. Battistella and Conaco (1998) learned that Filipino children with absent mothers showed poorer social adjustment and suffered from impeded social and psychological development. The 2003 Philippines Study, in contrast, showed that the children in the survey had generally adjusted well socially, had strong social support and got along well with other family members. This result was nevertheless not very different from that of non-migrants. The Sri Lanka Study also reported that children left behind had positive relationships with their caregivers and that minority ethnic groups had stronger extended family ties when mothers migrated. Nonetheless, this study also reaffirmed Jampaklay's (2006) findings in Thailand that a mother's love was often irreplaceable, even by the best caregivers, as more negative effects on the children left behind by mothers could be observed.

Xiang's (forthcoming) review of studies on children left behind in China showed children developing behaviours at two extremes under the care of their grandparents. Children left behind were either withdrawn or excessively aggressive as their grandparents either spoiled or neglected them. Children left behind in Mexico were also reportedly lacking in confidence without their parents and were less respectful of grandparents, uncles or teachers (National Public Radio, 9 May 2006).

Finally, the 2003 Philippines Study found that the migration of parents did not matter in the socialization of children or in the transmission and formation of important values and spirituality. Even when their parents were not around, children left behind continued to be assigned common

chores by caregivers as part of their responsibility training. However, children of non-migrant families on average had to do more chores than the children of migrant families. The same type of values and spiritual information was also being transmitted to children, whether from parents or from caregivers. In terms of future career choices, the children of both genders, regardless of their parents' migration status, had similar aspirations.

## **6. Reorganization of gender and familial roles**

The migration of either or both parents often results in the reorganization of roles within the family. Such changes may ultimately have an effect on children left behind as well. The long-term absences of males as a result of internal or international migration have often accorded wives with more autonomy and greater decision-making power over land issues, children's education and household finances (Jolly and others 2003; Voigt-Graf, forthcoming). Women are likely to continue holding on to their increased power even after their husbands' return. In various parts of the Punjab, the increased purchasing power of daughters in such families has reportedly led to inflated dowries, withdrawal from agriculture and increasing seclusion (Donnan and Werbner 1991, cited in Jolly and others 2003).

On the flip side, the assumption of heavier responsibilities, coupled with several other reasons, such as uncooperative relatives, a lack of support and the husband's extra-marital affairs, has brought about higher levels of stress and vulnerability among women left behind. Roy and Nangia (2005) discovered that wives left behind in Bihar, India were likely to suffer greater stress, both physically and mentally. The women also exhibited symptoms of reproductive morbidity, such as a burning sensation or pain when urinating, abnormal vaginal discharges and other menstrual problems. Wives left behind in India were also likely to experience loneliness and isolation (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003). Such negative emotions among mothers may be inadvertently transferred to their children.

When women migrate, men left behind often have to take on more caregiving roles. This was evident in studies in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Afsar 2005; Chantavich 2001; Hugo 2005; Save the Children 2006), but the change, especially in the case of the Philippines, did not always continue after the women's return. In Bangladesh, husbands who take on household chores in the absence of their migrant wives often do so with the help of older children (Afsar 2005). In Sri Lanka, the assumption of caregiving roles among fathers left behind has led researchers to observe a greater amount of flexibility in fathering and that "ingrained notions of gendered responsibilities in the household may be seeing certain kinds of transformations in the context of the migration of females within families" (Save the Children 2006: 7). Changes in fathering roles may be able to counteract the negative impact of the mother's absence on children left behind. Most of the children left behind also view the change in their father's roles positively. On the negative side, more fathers

left behind appear to be experiencing greater stress, with more of them exhibiting drinking and drug-taking habits. This may eventually increase risks among the children, have an adverse effect on children's emotions, and affect their performance in school examinations (Gamburd 2005; Save the Children 2006).

It should be noted that migrant parents do not forsake but instead adapt their parenting roles after migration. Migrant Filipinas continue to bear most of the responsibility for childcare even after leaving the Philippines (Asis 2006b; Parrenas 2002; 2005a; 2005b). This is true among other migrant communities where the role of caregiving continues to fall on women's shoulders even after migration (for example, Dreby 2006; Spitzer and others 2003). Migrant Filipina mothers continue to maintain close contact with their children and to play the role of providing funds and arranging for others to raise their children. In fact, Parrenas (2005b) argued that gender norms, "both their reifications and transgressions", persist in transnational Filipino households. In her study, the maintenance of traditional gender ideologies actually intensified despite women's wage work overseas and occasionally even generated conflicts within many Filipino migrant families. Filipino fathers did not easily change the way they viewed their place in the family. This has led to confusion among children left behind, resentful of fathers who further widen the distance by shunning nurturing roles and generally failing to "reconstitute fathering in ways that balance and reciprocate the efforts of mothers to perform transnational mothering" (Parrenas 2005b: 140).

In Dreby's (2006) study, although migrant Mexican fathers and mothers communicated with their children left behind in similar ways, gender expectations in parenting remained unchanged even in a transnational context. The relationships between migrant Mexican mothers and their children left behind were dependent on their ability to "demonstrate emotional intimacy from a distance" (Dreby 2006: 56). In contrast, migrant fathers' relationships with their children left behind were correlated with their capability in providing economically for the family when away. As successful economic migrants, fathers, regardless of marital status, were able to maintain stable and regular relationships with their children in Mexico. However, the author acknowledged that more studies on the children's perspective were needed to assess the quality of parent-child relationships.

The migration of both parents generates other sets of problems. When children are left under the care of elderly grandparents, the increased burden on grandparents may lead to health problems and stress among the aged and require a reversal of caregiving roles among the young and old. Intergenerational gaps between grandparents and children left behind may also prove detrimental to the development of the young.

The configuration of families may be affected when one or both parents migrate. The separation of spouses as a result of labour migration may result in a more permanent separation owing to marital instability and family break-up (Afsar 2005; Hugo 2002; 2005). Migrant parents may form

new families and have new children when away (Dreby 2006; Lauser forthcoming; Yea forthcoming). Children left behind may in turn experience feelings of jealousy and abandonment, while parents who have formed new families overseas may find it difficult to negotiate the conflicting demands of both families (Dreby 2006; Yea, forthcoming). Eventually, old family relations may be compromised as a result of new liaisons.

## II. WHEN CHILDREN MIGRATE WITH A PARENT

Not all children are left behind – others either migrate independently or with their families. This paper will focus on only those who migrate with *a* parent. Recent research shows that there are increasing numbers of children<sup>50</sup> being brought overseas, usually by one parent, specifically for their education. The first significant trend that generated much interest among migration scholars was the formation of “astronaut families”, a term used to describe families dispersed across borders in two or more countries (Skeldon 1994; 1997). More specifically, it refers to a situation where a parent, usually the mother (caregiver), remains with the children in the host country where there are better educational opportunities, while the other parent, the astronaut (breadwinner), returns to the home country to work. While the family may have migrated together initially, difficulties in finding a job in the host country and parental preference for children to receive a better education overseas result in the splitting of families across oceans – fathers in the home country while mothers and children (satellites) are “left behind” in the destination country. This is often a deliberate transnational family strategy pursued for the family good and consciously employed to maximize household resources to reap maximum benefits for the family.

In her study of the migration of persons from Hong Kong, China, to Canada, Waters (2002; 2005; 2006) found that migrant households in her sample used the astronaut strategy to help their children accumulate social and cultural capital. Mothers stayed on in Canada to care for their children and monitor their learning while fathers returned to Hong Kong, China, to work.<sup>51</sup> Parents invested in this transnational family strategy to provide their children with a direct ticket to university and to circumvent the possible failure of their children in securing a university place in the extremely competitive environment of Hong Kong, China.

A situation similar to that of the Hong Kong, China, astronaut family has recently emerged in the Republic of Korea, where *girezogi* or “wild goose” fathers stay on in the Republic of Korea to

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<sup>50</sup> The ages of the children in this cohort vary from primary school to university level.

<sup>51</sup> In the first wave of the early astronaut families, the migrants were mostly persons from Hong Kong, China, who mainly migrated as a family to escape the political uncertainty at home around the time of the “return” of Hong Kong to China’s rule in 1997. Subsequent difficulties in finding a suitable job in their host country, as well as the eventual stable political situation at home enticed fathers to return for economic reasons.

work while mothers migrate with their children overseas – mostly to English-speaking, developed countries (Cho 2005). The purpose of their migration is for their children’s education, and mothers often privilege motherhood over wifedom by choosing to migrate with their children, leaving their husbands behind (Huang and Yeoh 2005). In the case of the Hong Kong, China, astronauts, many mothers do leave their children (parachute kids) to rejoin their husbands – some leaving as soon as within a few months. However, what is distinct in the case of the Republic of Korea is that the parents – often educated and largely from the professional and managerial class – usually plan this strategy from the very beginning, knowing that mothers would leave with their children. Thus far, existing studies on *gireogi* do not reflect the same desire to return among the migrant mothers. Instead, the tendency is to continue their stay overseas and prolong the separation.

A similar migration phenomenon observed in Singapore is that of the Chinese study mothers or *pei du ma ma* as they are known in Mandarin (Huang and Yeoh 2005). Here, middle-income women from developing countries – in this case China – leave their spouses behind and migrate with their children to Singapore, also for the sake of their children’s education. Again, the decision to migrate is a planned and orchestrated strategy aimed predominantly at investing in the future of their children.

Transnational household strategies entail significant social and emotional consequences for both those staying in the home country and those who are migrants in the host country. In the early phases of migration, the experiences of satellite wives in the host countries were predominantly highly negative, as they experienced difficulties coping in an English-speaking environment and felt extremely lonely with the loss of existing support and social networks (Waters 2002). Their emotional and mental stress could be eventually transferred onto their children as many parents have to rely on their children for help in navigating such relatively simple day-to-day activities as grocery shopping and banking (Bartley and Spoonley, forthcoming). While family structures and children experience added stress as a result of such role reversals, children’s extra responsibilities and “elevated” positions may impart important life skills to them. With time, migrant mothers eventually acquire new language skills and social networks, and may experience a sense of liberalization from traditional patriarchal constraints to some extent (Waters 2002; Huang and Yeoh 2005).

In terms of marital relations between couples separated by distance, consequences are varied. While some couples experience conflict and emotional distance, divorce, and extra marital affairs, others actually develop stronger emotional ties during their separation (Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002). In the Korean study, mothers stated that their children were more precious than their husbands and they were willing to sacrifice conjugal relationships for their children’s futures (Cho 2005). Nonetheless, achieving a sense of security for the sake of their children came at the cost of an increase in emotional insecurity within couples. For many Chinese mothers who have accompanied their children to Singapore, life after migration was not as rosy as they imagined. Subjected to

negative prejudices in the host society, the lives of study mothers remained very fluid, “characterized by repeated housing moves, transient jobs, unexpected expenses, constant worry about finances and the challenge to maintain a relationship with their spouses, parents and in-laws in China” (Huang and Yeoh 2005: 395). Their children were also not spared the negative perceptions of their mothers and were also constantly worried about whether they could continue to stay in Singapore for their studies in view of all of the uncertainties in their circumstances. Overall, the effects of migration on the children are notably mixed. While, as noted earlier, children acquire important social and cultural capital, develop important life skills and gain more independence, they may also stray off designated paths in their new, more liberal environments and appear more rebellious in their parents’ eyes. Besides the potential strain on family relationships, children may also face considerable difficulties in identity negotiations as they continue to live overseas.

Many of the families in the studies above belong to a higher social and economic class, thus having the means to go overseas. At the other end of the spectrum, there are cases in which some labour migrants have little choice but to bring their children to harsh and unhygienic worksites with them. In India, migrant workers do not have easy access to various health and family care programmes and are also faced with a lack of crèche services at their destinations. Female workers also have to resume work immediately after childbirth owing to a lack of maternity benefits (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003). These children are exposed to various health hazards and are deprived of education as a result of their transient status in the destination areas (Rogaly and others 2001; 2002).

### III. EXISTING POLICIES

In considering policy interventions relating to children left behind, it must be first stressed that the impact of migration on children is a highly variable and complex relationship. Children migrating or left behind can be and are affected by not only the migration process itself but also the circumstances and policies relating to broader processes, including development, urbanization and education at different levels.<sup>52</sup>

Policies relating specifically to children left behind are unfortunately few and far between. The Sri Lanka Study, for example, confirmed that there were hardly any policies tailored especially for children left behind (Save the Children 2006). Nearly all the respondents (97.3 per cent) in the study stated that they had not received any assistance from any agency. Many reasoned that

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<sup>52</sup> Containing case studies relating to migration from countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, papers presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, Dhaka, Bangladesh in June 2003 attempted to provide an overview and a discussion of relevant policies whilst offering recommendations for change and improvement ([http://www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/migration/dhaka\\_conf.html](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/migration/dhaka_conf.html), accessed 15 November 2006).



this was because of their “socially marginalized positions, ... weakness of government agencies and the poor outreach of social welfare agencies, particularly to highly disadvantaged, remote areas such as those in the sample, from where the highest frequencies of migration occur” (Save the Children 2006: 10). In the same study, only 7.3 per cent of respondents said that they knew of any organizations in the village – mainly community level NGOs – that could help them take care of children. Despite the general dearth in government bodies engaging in proactive programmes and research on social problems and issues in Sri Lanka,<sup>53</sup> initiatives were taken by the North-Western province Department of Probation and Childcare “where the commissioner has established village-level committees to address needs arising from migration and attempted to bring in all stakeholders to expand this experience in the province” (Save the Children 2006: 10). In other parts of the country, such regional NGOs as Women’s Development Foundation of Kurunegala help to tackle problems resulting from the migration of mothers and also to strengthen the role played by fathers in child rearing. Community organizations, such as temple or mosque societies, funeral aid societies, and family and social mobilization programmes, have also been contributing toward strengthening family and community ties by offering help at a localized level.

In the Philippines, while the country has been praised for its programmes for migrant workers, the 2003 Study also revealed that more needs to be done for migrants’ families. In the meantime, existing groups helping migrant families include the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the service arm of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines; the Apostleship of the Sea, a special apostolate of the Catholic Church for seafarers; and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the main government agency tasked to promote the welfare of migrant workers and their families (SMC 2004). The variety of services offered by these groups include educational programmes, school-based programmes, gatherings, counselling sessions, welfare benefits and services, as well as insurance and health-care services. While the presence of these services is encouraging, there are millions of migrants’ families needing help from limited staff (sometimes inadequately trained for specific problems) and resources of existing institutions. The current programmes also need to be reviewed and fine-tuned to better serve the families with insights gained from “on-the ground” realities (SMC 2004: 58).

The education budget of Mongolia is insufficient to support the provision of good-quality education throughout the country in the first place (Batbaatar and others 2005). Besides inadequate teacher training, the grade-focused incentive plan for teachers also means that teachers tend to concentrate on getting good grades from better performing students and neglect poor and/or migrant children. Existing assistance to the education sector from external sources is also limited to schools in the city

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<sup>53</sup> The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment organizes training programmes for those women who have registered with them and are migrating to work as domestic workers for the first time. The Bureau also has welfare officers who visit schools to identify and find solutions for problems faced by the children of migrant mothers.

and does not reach schools in rural areas.

The studies in Mongolia, China and other countries reviewed in this paper hint that the greater root of the problem may actually lie with poverty and development issues in the respective countries. As Xiang (forthcoming) argued, the problem does not merely lie with individuals being left behind but the fact that the entire population left behind has as a whole been left behind both economically and socially. He emphasized that many of those left behind were stuck in vicious poverty cycles. Therefore, there is a need to address both the institutional causes of the problem as well as specific issues faced by the individual migrant household.

#### **IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY IMPROVEMENT**

The impact of migration on children left behind is observably mixed, with some countries having a better than expected outcome while the situation in other countries looks bleak. An important task that needs to precede policy formulation is to conduct more detailed systematic studies on the various “high-risk” cities and countries so as to gain a better understanding of the situation in order to decide on what really needs to be done. Such statistics are necessary if we are to grasp more accurately the magnitude of the problem and help project the amount of resources required to make a difference.

The real reason migrants move provides another useful indication of what policymakers should address. While many migrant parents move due to poverty, there are others who move because of existing cracks in their families or marriages in the first place. Hence, migration may be an excuse or escape from undesirable existing situations. In the Philippines, the rule against divorce means that some females choose to migrate in order to escape unhappy marriages (Constable 2003). Understanding the root of the problem triggering migratory moves is thus important as a basis for future policies. It should also be noted that, while most studies focus on children left behind from poorer families, children left behind by transnational elite families should not be ignored, as they provide an interesting comparative foil. The migration trigger here tends to relate to improving human capital as opposed to livelihood issues.

It is also important for policymakers to (re)address policy issues at the different levels: individual, household, community, region and country. For children left behind, there need to be different policies catering to the needs of the different age groups of children, from infants to teens and young adults. Policies should also take into account the gender of the migrating parent: studies have shown that children left behind by their mothers tend to suffer more emotionally, physically and in terms of education. Therefore, appropriate attention should be paid to these areas to help bridge the gap resulting from the mothers’ absence. For example, Parrenas (2002; 2005a; 2005b)

has shown that an increase in communication between migrant mothers and their children left behind can help lessen the negative impacts of migration. The Government may look into providing better and cheaper infrastructure for telecommunications in the community to help facilitate this. Parents left behind, including fathers, can also be further empowered in their new roles through counselling sessions and support groups. Cases of abuse, no matter how limited, should also not be ignored, and policies on children's rights should be examined and reworked to better protect the vulnerable child in the absence of his or her parent(s).

Policymakers should avoid the pitfall of focusing solely on children left behind and neglecting the other members left behind, such as caregivers, extended family members, teachers and community leaders. They too have to carry the burden of caring for the children and should be adequately equipped with the proper resources to do so. Different types of training could be provided and the awareness of issues heightened through the media, focus group discussions and other support groups at the community level. Schools are also good venues for the exchange of information and the implementation of support programmes.

Overall, government bodies need to take a closer look at poverty and underdevelopment issues through the lenses of the children left behind and the community at large. There should be more inter-departmental collaboration to address varied issues. While no one policy fits all and policies should be culture-specific, good practices from some countries can serve as a reference point for other countries. Different government agencies should also collaborate and share their good practices with each other. Recommendations on policy changes gleaned from existing studies on specific countries can also spark ideas for policy changes in other countries; see table 3 for some suggestions. There should also be intergovernmental collaboration to help migrant workers. For instance, employers in receiving countries should be educated to become more sensitive to their workers' needs to communicate with their families at home. Migrant workers, especially domestic workers, should also not be discriminated against or pressured into hiding the fact that they have left their children at home. Issues involved in reintegrating migrants into their families after their return is another area needing attention.

**Table 3. Suggestions for policies from existing studies**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Study</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
Philippines	2003 Children and Families Study (SMC 2004: 58-61)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review and fine-tune existing programmes.</li> <li>- A regular assessment of existing programmes is necessary to review objectives and approaches, and to develop plans of action (including the identification of critical resources) to carry out these programmes. Most of the programmes or projects targeting families are economic assistance programmes. Very few are specifically targeted at young children; or if children are the focus, these are special programmes that are offered on a short-term basis (e.g., drama or art workshops). Focus group discussions with community development workers and NGO/Church personnel revealed useful insights into “on-the-ground” realities that would be helpful in reviewing existing programmes. They mentioned, for example, the need for training (particularly in counselling and approaches in community organizing), financial resources to carry out the programmes, and awareness about good practices and strategies based on the experiences of other organizations and institutions.</li> <li>- The mass media can be harnessed to provide education and information to overseas Filipino workers’ (OFWs) families (e.g., parenting tips, child rearing, the role of fathers, changing gender roles), particularly in reaching such inaccessible groups as husbands.</li> <li>- The school has an important role to play in delivering programmes to OFW families. It is a “natural” venue in reaching out to children, parents and caregivers. The school could be a venue for offering programmes on parenting/caregiving, gender sensitivity, constructive coping mechanisms, and programmes for children. As noted by the study, young children approached teachers, classmates and friends when they encountered some problems. The familiarity of the teachers, particularly the homeroom advisers, with the children’s background was apparent during the field work for the study. The role of teachers as part of the support system of OFW children could be enhanced through programmes to increase their awareness and understanding of migration issues.</li> <li>- One of the findings of the study points to the popularity of marketable jobs abroad in shaping the children’s career and life aspirations. The school can offer programmes and activities – or incorporate topics in the curriculum – to guide children in making plans regarding work and life. Curricular offerings can also include more inputs that would promote nationalism on one hand, and an appreciation for multiculturalism and other values that promote interdependence on the other.</li> <li>- The involvement of the local government in the promotion of the welfare of OFW families was a suggestion that came out of the focus group discussions with community development workers and Church/NGO personnel working with OFW families. They pointed out that there were millions of OFW families that the staff and resources of their institutions (OWWA, the Church and NGOs) could not adequately handle. Local government units could be encouraged to establish migration desks to coordinate activities pertaining to the migrants.</li> <li>- To promote greater awareness of migration issues, particularly the social impacts, the involvement of the Department of Education, the Department of the Interior and local governments could be harnessed in the celebration of migration-related events, such as International Migrants Day (December 18), Migrants Day (June 7), and National Migrants Sunday (first Sunday of Lent).</li> </ul>

- The importance of communication between family members cannot be overemphasized. Training migrants and their families on the use of the Internet and e-mail (as an alternative to cell phones), as well as exploring possibilities for employers/workplaces to provide more communication facilities (e.g., shipping lines) could also be explored.

Sri Lanka	Save the Children (Save the Children 2006: 10-11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish more programmes for women before they migrate to let them know the necessary childcare support that needs to be in place</li> <li>• ensure childcare plans are in place when women migrate</li> <li>• conduct periodic follow-up by officers</li> <li>• encourage registration with SLBFE</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Establish programmes to support primary caregivers to address the emotional, intellectual and other needs of children left under their care, as well as to ensure the caregiver's well-being.</li> <li>- Government bodies should help in the management of remittances.</li> <li>- Develop an action plan to increase effective coordination between relevant national- and provincial-level agencies.</li> <li>- Develop constitutional provisions leading to legislative reforms on children's rights.</li> <li>- The Ministry of Education should take the lead in ensuring schools, principals and teachers set, observe and monitor standards of educational performance and behaviour issues.</li> <li>- Document good policies and replicate them throughout the country.</li> </ul>
Mongolia	Children on the Move (Batbaatar and others 2005: 60-62)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review budget allocation methods for education and monitor resource flows for education.</li> <li>- Reconsider the models of rural education.</li> <li>- Fully implement programmes to enable the poorest and most marginalized to receive an education.</li> <li>- Look at the non-formal education needs of children.</li> </ul>
China	The Left Behind in Rural China (Xiang, forthcoming)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address the problem of rural communities being left behind.</li> <li>- Accord equal rights for migrants and allow them to settle in host cities.</li> <li>- Community-based markets for services driven by migrant remittances and the demands of those left behind could be further developed.</li> <li>- Leave children with other community members, especially school teachers on a commercial basis. For example, teachers "raising piggies" in the Wenzhou area of south-eastern China.</li> <li>- Enrich social capital among the left behind, forming support groups or mutual-aid groups.</li> <li>- Reformulate the state finance system to ensure remittance returns to home communities instead of the urban sectors.</li> <li>- Create a rural-friendly institutional setting that is attentive to the needs of the poorest communities.</li> </ul>

China <sup>a</sup>	China Migration Country Study (Huang and Pieke 2003: i)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The experiences in some areas of origin and destination could be built upon to assist in designing an integrated development strategy that would include the creation of a viable and prosperous countryside as one of its key objectives. Migration could play an important role in achieving this objective.</li> <li>- The strong links between migrants and their home communities created by the household registration and land tenure systems, along with the active involvement of Governments of sending areas in the affairs of migrant communities, have many positive sides to them that should be preserved.</li> <li>- Migrants could continue to have a stake in the development of their area of origin, even if they settled elsewhere more permanently, by allowing them to retain certain rural residency and land rights on top of similar rights they may enjoy in the area of destination.</li> </ul>
India <sup>a</sup>	An Overview of Migration in India, its Impacts and Key Issues (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003: ii)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A key focus of policy intervention should be to improve synergy between migration and development.</li> <li>- Internal migration is a consequence of unequal regional development. In the case of international migration, the impact on pro-poor growth should be maximized through appropriate institutional and policy measures.</li> <li>- Four major categories of interventions could be envisaged, which would differ for internal and external migration. These categories relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addressing underdevelopment and improving the synergy between migration and development</li> <li>• improving labour market outcomes</li> <li>• ensuring basic entitlements to migrant workers</li> <li>• improving the social and political environment for migration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Sources: Adapted from the studies cited in the table.

<sup>a</sup> For other more detailed policy recommendations for China and India, and for such other countries as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, refer to [www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/migration/dhaka\\_conf.html](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/migration/dhaka_conf.html), accessed 15 November 2006.

## V. CONCLUSION

It must be stressed that, while the various studies reviewed in this paper reveal mixed and occasionally conflicting results, the situation is not as bleak as many predicted it to be. However, this does not mean that Governments can be complacent and leave individual households to work out their own problems. Providing guidance to facilitate the careful management of remittances, ensuring the quality of care in the choice of caregivers and encouraging constant communication between parents and children left behind form the basis of helping migrant parents compensate for the damaging aspects of the impact of migration on children left behind. Stopping migrant outflows from rural or poorer places will not solve any problems, as numerous studies comparing migrant to non-migrant families have shown that migrants' families often fare better after migration. Finally, the 2003 Philippines Study reaffirms that a stable and resilient family is important in withstanding the separation brought about by migration. Strengthening family ties even before migration becomes a reality is hence another important area of work.

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