

Bridging the Gap: Internal Migration in Asia

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Introduction

Asia is a region of considerable diversity among countries. This diversity is seen in levels of economic growth, political structures, cultural heritage and demographic parameters. Levels and patterns of internal migration also vary among countries of Asia, in part as a consequence of the variation in the economic and cultural structures noted above. Given this diversity it is impossible to do justice to the full range of issues related to internal migration in Asia. Therefore, in this paper I focus in-depth on what I consider to be the most important aspects of the process of internal migration in Asia.

The paper commences with a general overview of internal migration trends and patterns in Asia. This is followed by a discussion of urbanization trends. In the third section of the paper the role of internal migration in income transfers, particularly between rural and urban areas, is considered, while the final section of the paper focuses on gender aspects of migration. Much of the literature and data on which this paper is based is drawn from Southeast Asia, in particular Thailand. This is because of my greater familiarity with research on internal migration in these countries compared to other sub-regions of Asia. Where applicable comparisons are made with other Asian countries and other regions of the world.

The title of the paper – Bridging the Gap – refers to what I argue in the paper is the positive role of internal migration in reducing disparities between areas of unequal development and between men and women. In a context where economic development is focused on rural areas, or in ‘special economic zones’, migration is one of the few mechanisms available for persons to access employment that provides a reasonable wage. In turn, the remittances from migration help sustain origin households and provide them with limited investment capital. Remittances also appear to reduce income inequality with communities. Migration also opens up new opportunities for women, providing them with access to employment outside the home and allowing them some independence.

Patterns of Internal Migration in Asia

As a broad generalization it can be stated that the level of internal migration in countries in the Asia region is increasing, increasingly comprises movement from rural to urban places, involves a high proportion of temporary migrants, and includes a significant and growing proportion of females. Each of these characteristics is a direct outcome of models of development that have been followed by many of the countries in the region.

Rural to rural migration still dominates migration flows in most Asian countries because of the high proportion of the population living in rural areas. In Thailand, as in other countries in the region, the share of this form of migration has been decreasing, while the share of rural to urban migration has been increasing (Pejaranonda, Santipaporn and Guest, 1995). Data from the last three Thai censuses currently available (see Table 1), show that the proportion of migration that was rural-rural declined from 62.6 percent in 1965-1970 to 52.0 in 1985-1990, with the largest increase occurring for rural to urban migration.

Table 1

Percentage Distribution of Migration Streams of Recent Migrants in Thailand: 1965-1970, 1975-1980, 1985-1990

Migration Streams of Population Aged 5 and Over	Year		
	1965-1970	1975-1980	1985-1990
Non- Migrants	88.4	92.4	92.0
Migrants	11.6	7.6	8.0
Urban-Urban	8.9	17.2	13.5
Rural-Urban	10.5	14.3	18.4
Unknown-Urban	3.6	3.3	4.1
Rural-Rural	62.6	52.0	40.9
Urban-Rural	5.4	9.4	12.6
Unknown-Rural	9.0	3.8	10.5

Source: National Statistics Office (1992)

Note: Recent migrants are defined as those persons who had lived in their current village or municipality of residence less than 5 years

Internal migration is an activity undertaken primarily by young adults. In Thailand, as elsewhere, migrants are overwhelmingly concentrated at the young adult ages. The concentration is greater for females than for males and is most evident in rural to urban migration streams. The age distribution of migrants and non-migrants obtained from a 1992 national migration survey showed that 58 percent of male migrants were aged 15-29, while 61 percent of female migrants were in this age group. The highest migration rates for males are generally found for ages 20-24 and 25-29 and for females, the peak migration rates are for ages 15-19 and 20-24. The concentration of migrants into young adult ages has been increasing over time (Pejaranonda, Santipaprn and Guest, 1995).

Because of the high levels of migration among the young, the demographic situation of countries in the region has a large effect on the level of migration. For the Southeast Asian region, between 1970 and 2000 the population in the young adult years of 15-24 grew from around 18 percent of the population to approximately 21 percent. This has been, and will continue to be a major factor in increased level of migration, especially rural to urban movement. The result is that urban areas are become increasingly 'young' in their demographic profiles. In East Asia the situation is different. Most East Asian countries started their demographic transitions before Southeast Asia countries, and now the number of young adults is decreasing in many countries. This will contribute to stabilization, or perhaps even a reduction over the long-term in levels of internal migration in those countries (Skeldon, 1991). However, South Asian countries, which in many cases have only recently began their fertility transitions will be faced with the largest demographic pressure on migration over the next decade.

One factor that sets the Southeast and East Asian countries apart from most other countries in the world, with the exception of those in Latin America, is the high levels of female migration, especially in rural to urban migration (Singlemann, 1993). There is evidence from several countries in the region that indicate that the level of female migration increased over recent decades (Hugo, 1993). Moreover, in rural-urban migration streams the majority of female migrants are young and unmarried. This results in urban populations that include large numbers of young unmarried

females, usually living away from their families. The concentration of young adult females in urban areas is particularly pronounced in the 'mega cities' of East and Southeast Asia (Guest, 1994).

In Thailand, males comprise the majority of migrants. However, females dominate migration to urban areas, particularly Bangkok. For all migrants the sex ratio for migrants identified in the 1990 census was 123, while for rural to urban migrants it was 90. At ages 15-19 the sex ratio for rural-urban migrants was 69 and at 20-24 it was 84 (Pejaranonda, Santipaporn and Guest, 1995). This reflects the demand for young female labor in urban areas, particularly in the service sector, where the sex ratio of rural migrants to Bangkok in the period 1985-1990 was only 19.

Increases in female migration in parts of the Asian region have been associated with expanded employment opportunities in industrial and service sector occupations (Lim, 1993). The consequences of this migration are difficult to evaluate. On the one hand, the movement has allowed households a greater flexibility in the way in which they allocate their resources. Women are also provided with access to jobs and a certain amount of freedom that they otherwise might not have enjoyed. On the other hand, the jobs generally made available, especially in service occupations, require little skill, have restricted opportunities for mobility and often have dangerous consequences for the health of migrants (Lim, 1993).

A major factor in the rise in female migration has been the transformation of the labor force structure of East and Southeast Asian countries that has resulted from government policies that have promoted export-led development (ESCAP, 2002). These policies have centered on the establishment of free-trade zones, encouragement of foreign investment, investment in human resource development and considerable efforts devoted to maintaining a labor environment free of industrial activity. As noted by Jones (1993), many of these economic policies are conducive to high levels of female labor force participation. In several Southeast Asian countries, over 80 per cent of the labor force of firms established in free-trade zones are female.

Another feature of internal migration movements in the region is the large proportion of temporary moves. In Thailand, temporary moves, which include both seasonal movement and other forms of short-term moves (see table 2), have been estimated to account for one-third of all migration with durations of one month or more (Chamratrithirong et al. 1995). These movements are also common in China, with temporary migrants, often referred to as the ‘floating population’, outnumbering registered migrants by approximately 4 to 1 (Chan, 1996), Indonesia (Hugo, 1991), and Viet Nam (see review in Guest, 1998a; Djamba, Goldstein and Gldstein, 1999). They are particularly prevalent in movement to large cities. All studies reviewed indicate that in Asia, temporary migrants compared to more permanent migrants are more likely to be older, male, have lower levels of education, married (but who leave their families behind in the area of origin), living in poor conditions and remitting more of their income. The main purpose of migration is to earn cash in order to support their rural-based households.

Table 2
Percentage Distribution of Migration in previous 24 Months by Migration Type by Sex

	Type of Migration			Total	N
	Single	Multiple	Seasonal		
Male	60.1	22.8	17.0	100.0	2,460
Female	68.7	14.1	17.2	100.0	2,100
Total	64.1	18.8	17.1	100.0	4,561

Source: Guest and others (1994)

The importance of rural origins to Asian migrants can be seen from the effects of the financial crisis that struck some parts of Southeast and East Asia in 1997. It was the urban areas that suffered most from the crisis and there is evidence from Thailand and Indonesia that the crisis did result in a migration turnaround, with many migrants returning to their rural origins and being absorbed, at least temporarily, back into the rural economy (Jones, Hull and Alburg, 2000). However, as Jones, Hull and Alburg (2000) note, in Thailand many of the return migrants were expected back in Bangkok during the 1999 dry season as a result of drought in rural areas and the

need for cash income for rural households. The social networks that have formed to sustain rural-urban migration over the last three decades are built on economic need and that need did not disappear with the economic crisis, rather it intensified.

Urbanization

Urbanization involves a shift in the distribution of the population from rural to urban. The process of urbanization is a dominant feature of the demographic transition of most countries. From slightly over 10 per cent of the world population living in urban places at the beginning of the twentieth century there was an increase to almost 30 per cent urban in 1950, to 47.7 percent in 2001 and a projected 60.2 percent in 2030 (United Nations, 1980, 1995, 2002).

Levels of urbanization in Asia are well below the world average, with only 38 percent of the regions population classified as urban in 2001. This was approximately the same level as Africa and well below the 76 percent estimated for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Asian region remains an exception to Latin America and Africa in the developing world in that only in Asia has there been consistent increases in levels of urbanization over the period from the 1960s through the 1990s.

Gilbert (1993) states that in developing countries in Latin America and in some countries in Africa, rates of growth in urbanization have slackened during the 1980s and only appear to be on the increase in Asia. He argues that part of the reason for the slowing in urbanization in areas outside Asia has been a slowdown in employment opportunities in cities. Jones (2002) argues that in Asia urban-based economic growth over the last three decades has fuelled the increases in urbanization in the region.

Jones (2002) also points to the very marked differences in urbanization patterns among sub-regions, and among countries within sub-regions, in Asia. Urbanization has been most rapid in East and South-East Asia, mainly as a result of the very rapid economic growth that many of

the countries in these sub-regions have experienced. In South Asia the rates of urban growth during the last four decades have been generally low.

However, it is projected that during the next two decades rates of urban growth in South and South-West Asia will exceed those observed in other regions (ESCAP, 2000). In part this is due to the differences in progression in the demographic transition noted above. In South and South-West Asia, urban populations are still growing rapidly through natural increase. Another reason is that the initial rates of urbanization in South and South-West Asia are generally low and therefore the potential for increases are greater than for other sub-regions.

The rapidity of urban growth in the Asian region is reflected in the increasing number of mega-cities --- cities over 10 million in population -- and the increasing concentration of the urban population in mega-cities (Guest, 1994). Asia currently has 11 of the 19 mega cities in the world and approximately 12 percent of the urban population of the Asian region is living in mega cities (ESCAP, 2000).

The extent to which rural migration has contributed to the growth of the urban population is a difficult but important question to answer. Recent analyses by the United Nations (2001) indicate that in the decade of the 1980s, migration contributed to slightly over one-half of urban growth in Asian countries. The large contribution of migration to urban growth in East and Southeast Asia during the 1970s and 1980s can be attributed to the economic dynamism of the region, most of it centered on the regions cities, that has increased the attractiveness of city life to rural dwellers (Rondinelli, 1991). The contribution of migration/reclassification to urban growth is generally lower in South and West Asian countries compared to Southeast and East Asian countries, although trends for individual countries vary considerably.

On a regional basis, over the last three decades migration has contributed more to urban growth for Asia than for either Latin American or African countries. The main factor has been increasing rates of rural out-migration for Asian countries compared to steadily declining rural

out-migration rates in Africa and an increase in out-migration rates for Latin American countries in the 1960s and 1970s before decreases in the 1980s.

Rural-urban differentials in poverty stimulate migration. For all countries in the region levels of absolute poverty are estimated to be much higher in rural areas than they are in urban areas. The differences can be very large, for example, in Thailand and Malaysia the percent in absolute poverty is between 2.5 and 3 times higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. In the region the expanding urban economies played a major role in the 1980s and early 1990s in absorbing labor from rural areas (see Jones, 1997). Moreover, changes in the technological structure of agriculture have, and will continue to result in a reduction in the demand for agricultural labor.

A further factor increasing rural-urban migration has been expansion of educational opportunities in rural areas. Migration rates generally increase with levels of education. The increased levels of education of the rural population typically have occurred without expansion of non-agricultural employment opportunities. This has led to increased movement of the young from rural areas in search of urban employment. The concentration of migrants, especially rural-urban migrants, at young adult ages is a universal feature of migration in Asia.

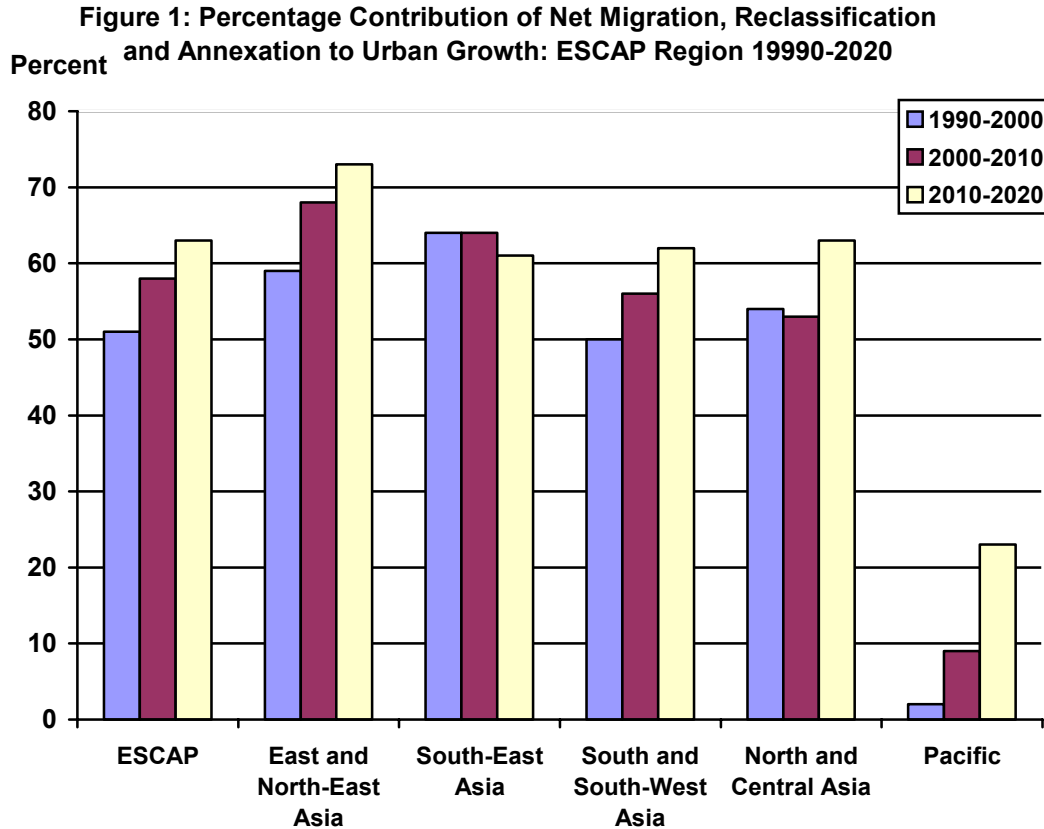
The United Nations (2001) estimates showed that during the period 1960-1990 the variability in levels of urban growth among regions of the developing world grew. In Latin America, the only developing region that is highly urbanized, urban growth has slowed considerably. The contribution to urban growth of migration and reclassification declined from 40 per cent in the 1960s to 34 percent in the 1980s. In Africa, the results suggest that natural increase was responsible for 75 per cent of urban growth in the 1980s. Asia is the only developing regions where the share of urban growth attributed to migration/reclassification increased over the decades 1960-1990.

The high growth rates of urban populations in many Asian countries can in part be linked to the ways in which the components of urban growth, natural increase and migration, affect the

structure of urban populations. Net urban in-migration is concentrated at young adult ages. In large part because of urban in-migration, urban areas have much younger populations than do rural areas. This contributes to relatively high rates of natural increase for urban areas as the young age structure of urban populations places downward pressure on the crude death rate and upward pressure on the crude birth rate. Furthermore, migrants through their fertility contribute to urban growth long after they have moved.

The United Nations estimates (United Nations, 2001) show that rural out-migration is not on the decline. Although there has been a slowdown in urban growth in some of the developing world, particularly Latin America, for many countries this does not appear to have been a result of reduced migration. Rather the situation is more a result of rapidly declining rates of urban natural increase and high rates of urbanization. For all countries combined, there have been increases in rural out-migration. In Asia, large rural populations have been supplying increasing proportions of their population to relatively small urban populations. This contributed to increased rural out-migration rates and to increased urban in-migration rates. The relatively small decreases in rates of urban growth in Asian countries were a result of reductions in urban rates of natural increase.

Projections of the expected contribution of a combination of net migration, reclassification and annexation on the rate of urban growth from 1990-2020 have been undertaken for the Asian region using UN population projections (ESCAP, 2000). These results, shown in figure 1, suggest that the role of migration in urban growth will increase over the first decade of the 21st century, with almost two-thirds of urban growth in the period 2010-2020 attributable to net migration, reclassification and annexation, compared to only 51 percent in 1990-2000. In all sub-regions, except for the highly urbanized sub-region of the Pacific, net migration is projected to account for over 60 percent of urban growth.



But even in Asia, rates of urban growth appear to be on the decline. In Asia, especially in East and Southeast Asia, there has been a slowdown in the rates of growth of the largest cities. However, these trends may be more apparent than real, with the expansion of the influence of large cities into their peripheries accompanied by a change in migration patterns where areas adjacent to large cities increasingly become the main destination of migrants (Jones, 2002). In some countries, such as Thailand, these peripheral areas have not been reclassified as urban thus resulting in a decrease in the contribution of migration/reclassification to urban growth (Pejaranonda, Santipaporn and Guest, 1995). Furthermore, the whole issue of the emergence of extended metropolitan regions and the role they play in the urban hierarchy needs to be further explored (see Gilbert, 1993; Drakakis-Smith, 1995 and Jones, 2002). Jones (2002) argues that the population of extended metropolitan regions, much of which is not classified as urban, constitute 20 percent of all Asians and that there exists an urgent need to both develop systems

for measurement of this form of urban sprawl, as well as to understand the demographic dynamics underlying this emerging feature of urban life.

Bridging the gap

It appears very clear from the available research in Asia that the vast majority of migrants benefit economically from their moves. Most studies of internal migration show that migrants have higher levels of labor force participation than non-migrants, usually have a job arranged before they move or, if not, spend little time looking for a job, and earn much more than they would be able to earn undertaking equivalent work in their origin areas (Chamrathirong et al, 1995, Guest, 1998, 1998a). However, migrants also generally earn less than non-migrants with equivalent qualifications in their place of destination. Even though migrants do make more than they would if they had not moved, they still make up large segments of the urban poor. Jones (1997: 247) argues that much of the poverty can be traced to “the institutionalized denial of access to the financial resources and productive assets required to enterprises of the poor beyond the day-to-day basics”. This is clearly seen for many migrants in the cities in Viet Nam who, because they do not have residential permits, are denied access to credit (Guest, 1998a).

Although many factors are involved in the relationship between migration and economic development, in recent decades the level of net rural-urban migration in developing countries has been found to be positively correlated to GNP growth and to indicators of social and health well-being (Chen and Zlotnik, 1994). Skeldon (1997) also argues that rural-urban migration is particularly beneficial as a means of alleviating poverty in rural areas. He notes that remittances from temporary migrants provide rural families with cash incomes that can be used to sustain their rural way of life. Guest (1998) uses data from two linked surveys of migration in Thailand to show that remittances provide an important supplement to household income. The uses of remittances have important multiplier effects on the economy, with many of the major items of expenditure, for example construction materials and labor being obtained locally. Guest (1998) also found that remittances had helped reduce the levels of intra-rural household income inequality.

The extent of migrant remittances, and the uses to which they are put, provide a major area of debate. Oberai, Prasad and Sardana (1989), argue that remittances obtained through migration raise the incomes of poorer households in three areas of India. They provide a very positive view of the effects of remittance. Other researchers argue that while remittances might benefit households with migrants, at the aggregate level the effect is a worsening of the distribution of income in rural areas origin, with migration is more likely to occur from the better-off households, who have the ability to finance migration, and these households disproportionately receive the benefits of increased income deriving from remittances. Stark (1991), however, argues that the effects of remittances on income distribution, depends on the stage of development of migration streams. As migration becomes more common the costs of migration are decreased and most households can finance migration of one or members. The relative contribution to household income of migrants from poorer households is likely to be greater than that from richer households, thus possibly acting to reduce income inequality.

Guest (1998) analyzed changes in household income in the period 1992-1994 and the proportion of 1994 household income provided by remittances. His findings suggest that in the rural Northeast of Thailand remittances contribute towards significantly improving household income (see Table 3). In both surveys the household members responding to the questionnaire were asked to report all sources of income, including that earned from selling crops or household resources, during the previous 12 months. They were then asked to estimate the total household net income from these combined sources. Most respondents, especially those living in rural areas, were very definite about the amounts household members had earned.

Data displayed in Table 3 compares average monthly income obtained in 1992 with that obtained in 1994. Overall, average monthly household income increased by 24 percent. That of households that had no members migrate during the period increased by 26.6 percent, while the largest increase (39.9 percent) was observed for households that contained migrants who had returned by the time of the 1994 survey. The lowest increases were for households with only out migrants, or a combination of out and return migrants.

Remittances made up almost a quarter of all household income, ranging from eight percent of the monthly household income of on-migrant households to over 40 percent for those households that contained both return and out-migrants. There was an average of three migrants in this form of household, compared to only 1.7 in households with only out migrants and 1.4 migrants from households only with return migrants. The remittances received by non-migrant households came from previous members of the household who had moved out more than two years prior to 1992 and hence were not classified as migrants in the analysis.

Table 3

Mean Household Monthly Household Income (Baht) 1992 and 1994, and Percent of 1994 Mean Income Derived from Remittances: by Household Migration Status

	Household Migration Status				Total
	No migrants	Out-migrants only	Return migrants only	Out and return migrants	
Income:					
1992	3001	3119	2181	2704	2811
1994	3799	3601	3051	3143	3482
Percentage increase	26.6	15.5	39.9	16.2	23.9
Remittances as a percent of 1994 household income	7.6	30.0	23.0	43.0	23.0
Mean number of migrants per household	0.0	1.7	1.4	3.0	1.2
Number of Households	172	138	107	74	491

Source: Guest (1998)

The households most likely to contain migrants were those that had the lowest household incomes in 1992. The exception was for households with only out-migrants that, on average, had the highest income in 1992. But as was observed for the first survey, temporary migrants (many of whom are return migrants) are more likely to remit than are more permanent migrants. The result is that differences between households in average household income across groups defined by migration status declined between 1992 and 1994.

Skeldon (2002) notes that in the literature the relationship between poverty and migration is typically either as poverty as a cause of migration or migration as a cause of poverty. He argues that there is little evidence of either of these relationships. Instead he argues for a third perspective: poverty alleviated by migration. He states that the weight of evidence from studies across Asia suggest that “mobility enhances economic growth and improves the lot of most, but not all, of the population (Skeldon, 2002: 79). He notes that the poverty reduction effect operates at both the individual level and at the household and societal levels.

The effect of remittances in reducing income inequality in rural Northeast Thailand was also examined by Guest (1998), and the results are shown in Table 4 where the income distribution of households with and without remittances is displayed. The Gini coefficient for household income without remittances is 0.55, this is reduced by almost 10 percent to 0.50 when remittances are included in household income. The flow of migrants from the Northeast of Thailand, many of who are seasonal migrants, is well established. Good transportation links and well-established social networks, result in migration being a low cost activity. Hence poorer households can engage in migration, and obtain a large proportion of their cash income from this source.

Table 4
Effects of Remittances on Distribution of Household Incomes in Rural Northeast Thailand
(n=495)

Baht per month	Income excluding remittances			Income including remittances		
	Mean	Percent of total	Cumulative percent	Mean	Percent of total	Cumulative percent
0-249	87.5	0.3	0.3	143.1	0.1	0.1
250-499	360.2	1.2	1.5	380.1	0.7	0.8
500-999	680.7	3.9	5.3	732.6	2.7	3.4
1000-1499	1201.7	6.1	11.5	1220.9	4.0	7.5
1500-1999	1682.7	5.0	16.5	1695.7	5.6	12.9
2000-2999	2425.0	10.8	27.2	2400.3	10.5	23.5
3000-3999	3288.2	10.8	38.0	3146.9	11.4	34.9
4000-5999	4806.7	19.2	57.2	4843.6	19.5	54.4
6000-8999	7011.6	13.8	71.0	7276.9	14.0	68.5
9000 +	13318.2	29.0	100.0	14568.8	31.5	100.0
Total	2790.3	100.0		3481.8	100.0	
Gini coefficient	0.546			0.500		

Source: Guest (1998)

An argument that occurs frequently in the literature is that as so little of remittance money is spent on direct productive investment, and indeed since much of the money is spent on consumer durables or housing, there is little indirect (and no direct effect) of remittances on economic development. However, the time frame used in analysis is important. The multiplier effects of remittances are often not identified because they take time to develop. The returns to investment in areas of human capital, such as health and education, also take time before they contribute to

economic well-being. Analyses of this sort require the use of historical techniques because of the lengthy period over which the processes operate.

In Thailand, the analysis by Guest (1998) shows that remittances are employed for a wide range of purposes. Almost all households receiving remittances used part of them for buying food. For almost half of households with no migrants and 41 percent of other households, food was the main item for which remittances were spent. Remittances were also used in the majority of households to buy clothes and household goods, although these were the main items of expenditure for very few households. Because of the lower levels of remittances received by households with no migrants, compared to households with migrants, for most items fewer of these households reported use of remittances. In contrast, those households with a combination of out and return migrants reported the highest levels of use of remittances on almost all items.

Households with no recent migrants were more likely to spend more of their remittances on medical expenses or education, compared to households with migrants. As noted earlier, households with no recent migrants are relatively well off and hence may be able to afford longer-term investments in human capital than can other, poorer, households. Households with migrants were more likely than households with non-migrants to state that building or improving a house was the main use of remittances.

A higher proportion of households with migrants, especially return migrants, compared to households with no migrants cited the main items of remittance expenditure as being for investment related, such as buying fertilizer. In fact, almost 60 percent of migrant households used part of their remittances for the purchase of fertilizer, and for 9 percent of migrant households this was the main use of remittances.

Debt repayment was also an important use of remittances for return migrants. Although survey information is not available about the type of debt repayment for which remittances were employed, results from in-depth interviews conducted in conjunction with the survey suggest that repayment of money borrowed to buy fertilizer and other agricultural inputs was a relatively

common use of remittances. However, it should also be noted that household consumer goods are increasingly being sold on hire purchase agreement in rural areas. The Singer company is especially active in this area focusing on selling household electrical goods on hire purchase to rural households.

An interesting result is that although few households used remittances to pay wages, for almost 7 percent of households with only out-migrants, payment of wages was the most important use of remittances. This suggests that for some households, hired labor may be used to substitute for household labor that has migrated. And hence hiring labor can be considered a form of productive remittances of investment. In contrast to households with only out migrants, only 1 percent of households with only return migrants reported payment of wages as their main use of remittances. For these households, it appears that the returning migrants are adequate for labor requirements.

In summary, remittances are used for a wide variety of purposes among rural Northeastern Thai households. While many of the uses are associated with daily living expenses, especially the purchase of food, remittances are also used by most households to buy fertilizer and for other aspects of production.

Gender and migration

Migration research has traditionally ignored gender issues. Either female migration has been excluded completely from consideration or it has been labeled "associational migration", with the implicit assumption that through such a labeling exercise female migration has been explained. This approach has been justified by researchers due to the predominance in many areas of the world of marriage or family-related factors as the major determinants of female migration.

However, the incidence, determinants and correlates of female migration vary widely among countries and among migration streams within countries (Hugo, 1993). In some countries, most notably in Latin America and several Southeast Asian countries, females dominate in

migration streams. Even in situations where overall there are more male than female migrants, females may dominate some migration streams. For example, in most Southeast Asian countries, rural to urban migration streams are female dominated, many of the female migrants being unmarried and moving in search of employment.

Central to all decisions concerning whether migration is the most appropriate response to a given set of economic opportunities are norms relating to the conditions under which moves can be made. For women normative influences on migration can be of great importance. The set of roles undertaken by women is usually more complex than that of men because of their combination of reproductive and productive roles. Where female migration is relatively common, migration is a means of providing women with the ability to combine their productive and reproductive roles, with reproduction very much related to sustaining the household of origin.

While Thai women are often argued to have high levels of status based on their employment and education relative to men, they also seem that they have much greater expectations placed upon them in terms of care and support of their parents and siblings. For example, a number of researchers describe the deeply-rooted cultural expectation that Thai daughters capable of earning a living provide some support to their parents (Pramualratana, 1990; Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1992). This expectation, when it occurs in conjunction with an economic structure in which wage-earning employment is increasingly concentrated in urban areas, is an important factor in high levels of female migration in Thailand. Parents may encourage the migration of their daughter in the expectation that daughters will be more likely than sons to remit money after migration.

Osaki (1999) found that in Thailand, women were more likely than males to remit money or goods to their households of origin. Furthermore, she found that female migrants, compared to male migrants, remitted a large proportion of their incomes to their origin households, even though they earned less than male migrants on average. The propensity to remit was also positively related to their motivation to be a migrant worker. Young, single migrants to urban areas remit more to their origin households than do other migrants. Clausen (2002) notes that the opportunity

to send money back to rural households is a major factor motivating young rural women to move to Bangkok, and the remittances are also a means for young migrants to retain their rural links. Curran (1994) also notes that factory managers take advantage of networks both for recruitment and training of female workers. A similar observation was made in the Indonesian context by Wolf (1994).

The importance of remittances to the economy of households that are increasingly affected by commercialization is an important motivation for migration. At the same time, rapid economic changes may create a situation where traditional roles for women no longer fit her current life. The necessity and/or desire for young women to leave home to obtain work elsewhere means that they may spend their adolescent years living far from their family. While young men in Thailand had always been permitted and even encouraged to have a social life outside of the family, girls were socialized to remain close to home and to fulfill many family obligations. When these obligations shift to providing economic support to rural parents who desperately need outside income and/or to providing educational funds for younger siblings, young women may migrate alone to work without the protection and support of their parents. Obligations to the parental household may also delay marriage among migrants who remit a large part of their earnings.

The relationship between women's roles and migration interacts with the economic forces that structure the geographical distribution of employment opportunities. The path of economic development pursued by Thailand over the last four decades has been internationally oriented and urban-focused. Economic policies have aimed at transforming an economy that recently dependent almost completely on agriculture to an economy that had a high proportion of its national product derived from the export of industrial goods and provision of services. This strategy was made possible through extracting surplus from the agricultural sector, subsidizing urban dwellers in order to keep wages low, encouraging foreign investment and promoting tourism. On one level these policies have proved very successful. The Thai economy has expanded at one of the fastest sustained rates of any country over the last decade, the incidence of poverty has decreased and levels of human resources have greatly expanded (Krongkaew, 1993).

Changes in the rural economy have affected the rural female labor force more than males. Increasing productivity in agriculture in Thailand has been associated with decreasing opportunities for wage employment in agriculture for women and increasing opportunities for men. However, urban opportunities for women have expanded at the same time that rural opportunities have declined. This has mainly been the result of government policies that have promoted export-led development.

Given the concern about the potential for exploitation of female migrants, it is also important to note that although many women are placed in vulnerable positions because of their migration, they and their families typically benefit economically from migration. Skeldon (1998), in a review of the literature on migration and women in the ESCAP region, argues women are generally empowered by migration and that instead of trying to restrict their movement, more attention should be placed on eliminating those factors that contribute to their vulnerability.

Over time social networks have also developed to reduce the risk, both economic and personal, associated with migration. Clausen (2002), in an analysis of the effects of globalization on female migration to Bangkok, illustrates how social networks that channel young rural women into factory work in Bangkok and surrounding provinces are created and maintained. These networks provide migrants with information about employment opportunities and a safety net when required.

Conclusion

Internal migration is on the increase throughout the Asian region. This is a result of demographic trends and development patterns. Women are becoming increasingly involved in the movements and temporary migration continues to be an important component of migration flows. Economic motivations for migration dominate decision-making and despite ongoing policy debate about the need to regulate migration, migration policy have been ineffective in reducing or even channeling migration flows. People throughout Asia continue to make the choice to move.

Ideally the choice to move or not to move should be made in a context where there are choices. However, the macro-context of development acts to limit and channel choices. In a context where the spatial distribution of employment opportunities and available labor are not congruent, there may be little choice but to migrate. In many countries of Asia, employment opportunities have become increasingly focused in urban areas and their hinterlands. These are the areas that are attracting migrants, especially young, female migrants. Migration to these areas provides a means through which migrants can achieve some form of economic and social mobility, while at the same time providing their origin households with additional income.

While migration provides economic benefits at the individual, household and societal level, there exists a large scope for exploitation of migrants, particularly migrant women and children. These groups are often not adequately protected by existing legal frameworks, may live in poor conditions and may have their health endangered because of the work they do and/or the conditions under which they live. There are increasing calls for international actions to safeguard migrant rights, while at the same time allowing migrants the opportunities to pursue economic and personal advancement.

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