

Mekong Institute

RESEARCH WORKING PAPER SERIES 2010



Labor Migration in East—West Economic Corridor: A Case Study of Vietnam

Nguyen Thi My Van



**Labor Migration in East West Economic Corridor:
A Case Study of Vietnam**

Nguyen Thi My Van

October 2010

Nguyen Thi My Van is a Lecturer at Hue University of Sciences, Vietnam

The Mekong Institute Working Paper Series cover the outputs of research projects supported by the Mekong Institute. The papers published under this series are part of a capacity-building program to enhance the research skills of young researchers in the GMS countries.

The finding, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this report are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Mekong Institute or its donors/sponsors. Mekong Institute does not guarantee the accuracy of the data include in this publication and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use.

For more information, please contact the Information and Knowledge Management Program of Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen, Thailand.

Telephone: +66 43 202411-2

Fax: +66 43 343131

E-mail: library@mekonginstitute.org

Technical Editor: Dr. Christopher Gan, Associate Professor, Lincoln University, New Zealand

Language Editor: Peter Miller, Program Development Advisor, Mekong Institute, Thailand

Managing Editor: Maria Theresa S. Medialdia, Program Manager, Mekong Institute, Thailand

Cover Design & Page Layout: Li Xin, Program Officer, Mekong Institute, Thailand

Labor Migration in East West Economic Corridor:

A Case Study of Vietnam

Comments on this paper should be sent to the author

Nguyen Thi My Van: Faculty of Sociology Hue University of Sciences, 77 Nguyen Hue Street Hue, Thua Thien Hue, Vietnam, Tel. + 84-54-3833790, Mobile. +84-903-549549, Email: gmyvan@gmail.com, or ngmyvan@yahoo.com

Or

Information and Knowledge Management Program, Mekong Institute

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND OF PROJECT	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Problems	2
1.3 Research Objectives	3
1.4 Scope of Research	3
1.5 Description of Study Sites	3
1.6 Map Showing Study Sites	4
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	7
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	8
4.1 Characteristics of Migrant Workers to EWEC Countries	8
4.1.1 Types of migration	8
4.1.2 Reasons for labor migration	9
4.1.3 Age of the migrant workers	10
4.1.4 Educational level	10
4.1.5 Economic situation of migrant workers	10
4.1.6 Types of occupation of migrant workers	11
4.1.7 Destinations	12
4.2 Economic Potentials of Labor Migration in EWEC countries	13
4.2.1 Transportation and official document at the border gates	14
4.2.2 Higher income at the destination	15
4.2.3 Livelihood improvement through remittance from migration.	16
4.2.4 Social network - a strong assistance for the poor migrants	17
4.3 Social Challenges of Labor Migration in EWEC countries	20
4.3.1 Access to social welfare at the destination	20
4.3.2 Limitations in professional skills	22
4.3.3 Illegal workers at the destination	23
4.3.4 Being abused and exploited	24
5. POLICY IMPLICATION	25

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	27
REFERENCES	28
APPENDIX	29

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. Types of Occupation of Migrant Workers	11
Figure 2. Reasons for Choosing the Destination	13
Figure 3. Gender Differences in Income in Thu Thien Hue, 2009	15
Figure 4. Links between Migration and Improved livelihood	18
Figure 5. People/Organizations Support for Migrant Worker at the Destination	19
Table 1. Profile of Respondents in Thua Thien Hue, 2009	9
Table 2. Destination in EWEC Countries, 2009	12
Table 3. Potential Economic Benefit of Labor Migration to Lao PDR	14
Table 4. Social Challenges of Labor Migration	22

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EWEC	East-West Economic Corridor
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
NAV	Nordic Assistance to Vietnam
ODA	Official Development Assistance
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, we would like to thank Prof. Dr. Christopher Gan from Lincoln University, New Zealand for his comments and invaluable guidance for our research. We are also indebted to Dr. Suchat Katima, Director of Mekong Institute, Dr. Nitaya, Ms. Maria Theresa S. Medialdia, Research Manager of Mekong Institute for their structure suggestions on our research. This research could not have been possible without financial support from the NZAID and Mekong Institute. We would like to express our grateful thanks to the leaders and all staff of Hue University of Sciences who gave us the opportunity to do the research. We are grateful to the leaders and people of two communes of Thuy Luong and Loc Bon, Thua Thien Hue province for their warm support during our fieldwork.

ABSTRACT

Labor migration is considered to be one way to reach the goal of poverty reduction and economic development by the Vietnamese Government. The Government has been trying to expand its overseas labor market. However, Vietnamese migration to the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion has receives less attention from policymakers. Many Vietnamese migrants cross the border with countries in the region illegally for working purposes. This spontaneous migration process has implications for the socio-economic development of the origin as well as the destination country.

This research was conducted in two poor communes in Thua Thien Hue province, Vietnam where the number of migrants travelling to Lao PDR for work is the highest in the country. Focusing on spontaneous migration to countries along the East West Economic Corridor (EWEC), the field survey was administered to 250 migrants and state officials. The study results show the economic potential and social challenges of spontaneous migration from Vietnam to other countries in the EWEC. Easy transportation to EWEC countries, fast and cheap official document processing at the border and the availability of jobs at the destination are identified as the potentials of labor migration. The study also explores the role of social networks in supporting this process. It considers the social links with the origin and destination country and between the migrants and those who stay behind. Social networks are seen as providing protection and security for migrants at their destination. However, migrant workers have to face numerous challenges during their migration, including difficulties in accessing social welfare in their destination country, being abused, exploited and becoming illegal workers due to the lack of legal documents. The research finds that spontaneous migration to EWEC countries is a survival strategy for the poor in Thua Thien Hue province. Therefore the study suggests that in developing a national poverty reduction strategy policy makers and development aid agencies should pay more attention to the spontaneous migration of the poor.

Keywords: Economic potentials, Social challenges, Livelihoods, Social network

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is composed of the six countries in Southeast Asia that traverse the Mekong River: Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam and the Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China (Migration in GMS, 2008). Over the last half century there has been rapid transformation in these countries and international population mobility has increased greatly. Human mobility has been a cause and a consequence of extraordinary changes in the social, economic and political life in the region. According to the UN (2001) it is estimated that there are between 5-7 million migrants from South and East Asia living in countries other than their own, whether elsewhere in the region or beyond, e.g. in the Middle-East and Europe. The majority are laborers with temporary irregular status, engaged in the 3D jobs - "dirty, dangerous and difficult". The vulnerability of migrants is influenced by their immigration status, the nature of their work, gender and culture, and policy and law enforcement weaknesses. The revolution in global transport and communications and the proliferation of radio, television and other mass media are some of the factors that contribute to the rising international movement of workers between these countries (Hugo, 2004). According to data from the Vietnamese General Statistic Office (2008), the migration of Vietnamese people to other GMS countries has increased across all areas of the country in recent years. The Vietnamese Government realizes that migration is part of the solution to unemployment in rural areas, contributing to income generation for the country and a way of acquiring the new skills needed for the industrialization process. In the Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2006-2010, the government targeted a reduction in poverty from 24 per cent in 2004 to 10-11 per cent in 2010 (UNDP, 2009). The Government sees labor migration as one way to reach the goal of poverty reduction and economic development.

In regards to the socio-economic development of Vietnam, the Government has noted that a key solution to the problem of excess labor is to expand labor export markets and create opportunities for laborers to participate in such labor markets. The target is to export 100,000 migrant workers annually by 2010. Therefore the Government has been trying to expand overseas labor markets. However, the policy concentrates on the promotion of labor exportation of nationals to countries outside the GMS while most of the flows of Vietnamese citizens to GMS countries is spontaneous. Many migrants have crossed the borders of Laos and Cambodia unlawfully to work as construction workers, wood craftsmen, mechanic, taxi drivers or sex workers (Migration in GMS, 2008)

In 2006, the Vietnam workforce totaled 45.2 million persons. Growth of the Vietnamese economy has created additional employment opportunities for many of its citizens. During 2006, there were approximately 1.5 million new jobs created. In the same year approximately 60,000 Vietnamese citizens sought employment overseas. The total number of Vietnamese citizens working overseas increased to 300,000 from 2001 to 2005. In 2008 more than 500,000 Vietnamese migrant workers were living and working overseas, in over 40 countries and territories. These workers provide important support for their family members who have remained in Vietnam and they help contribute to the development of the country (Migration in GMS, 2008)

An UNFPA report on migration (2007) shows that over 80 per cent of Vietnamese migrant workers state that their incomes after migration were higher or much higher than before they migrated, but that their rights are not protected. More than 70% of migrant workers do not receive any social welfare provision from the Government. Most of them have to work without labor contracts and social and accident insurance (Anh, 2006)

1. 2 Research Problems

The East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) is meant to facilitate cross-border trade between Vietnam, Lao PDR, Thailand and Myanmar. The EWEC also aims to integrate and expand the GMS labor market. With access to regional labor markets, workers with few skills or low-paid employment prospects in the sending countries (Vietnam, Lao PDR and Myanmar) may find productive employment outside their national boundaries. Some of these workers may return home years later with money and skills to set up new businesses and help transform their economies and societies. The EWEC infrastructure development and the related growth of the transportation sector also directly create job opportunities, including bus and truck drivers and migrant construction workers.

The spread of transportation and communication infrastructures has reduced distances and facilitates interaction between sending and receiving countries, lowered the costs of migrating, and enabled stronger transnational networks to support the migration process. Although countries along the EWEC are aware of economic benefit and the importance of labor migration for regional development they still insist on their own policies and institutions governing development and labor migration (Migration in GMS, 2008).

Migration is often considered a cross-cutting issue which affects many aspects of human existence - family and home life, work, economic resources and social engagement. The process of labor migration in the EWEC is no exception. In reality, the number of people crossing borders and working as migrant workers in the countries of the EWEC is much higher than the figure in formal reports.

Most of them migrate spontaneously through unsafe channels and have to face unintended challenges. The majority of migrant workers in these countries is un-skilled and has low levels of education, thus they lack awareness in the legalities and this is a big obstacle for them. They easily fall into “illegal worker” category in the receiving country, which heightens the risk of arresting, deportation and exploitation (Migration in GMS, 2008).

The research investigates the economic potential and social challenges of labor migration in the GMS.

1. 3 Research Objectives

General Objective:

The general objective of the study is to explore the impact of labor migration on socio-economic development in the EWEC communities.

Specific Objectives:

The research aims to achieve following specific objectives:

To assess the circumstances of labor migration at the study sites.

To analyze the potentials as well as the challenges of labor migration in the socio-economic development of EWEC communities.

To provide suggestions and recommendations for facilitating transboundary migration in the EWEC.

1. 4 Scope of Research

The EWEC is one of five economic corridors in the GMS. The EWEC is 1,450km long and runs through 13 provinces in 4 countries: Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar (<http://www.vietnamnet.vn>). Labor migration is not a recent phenomenon in these countries. However, since the development of the EWEC, transborder migration has increased and created complexities in many areas, including culture, ethnicity, religion, politics, economics and social cohesion. Given the limit amount of time and available resources, this research focuses only on the economic potential and social challenges of labor migration from Vietnam to the countries along the EWEC, without studying labor migration to countries outside the EWEC or other aspects of the migration phenomenon.

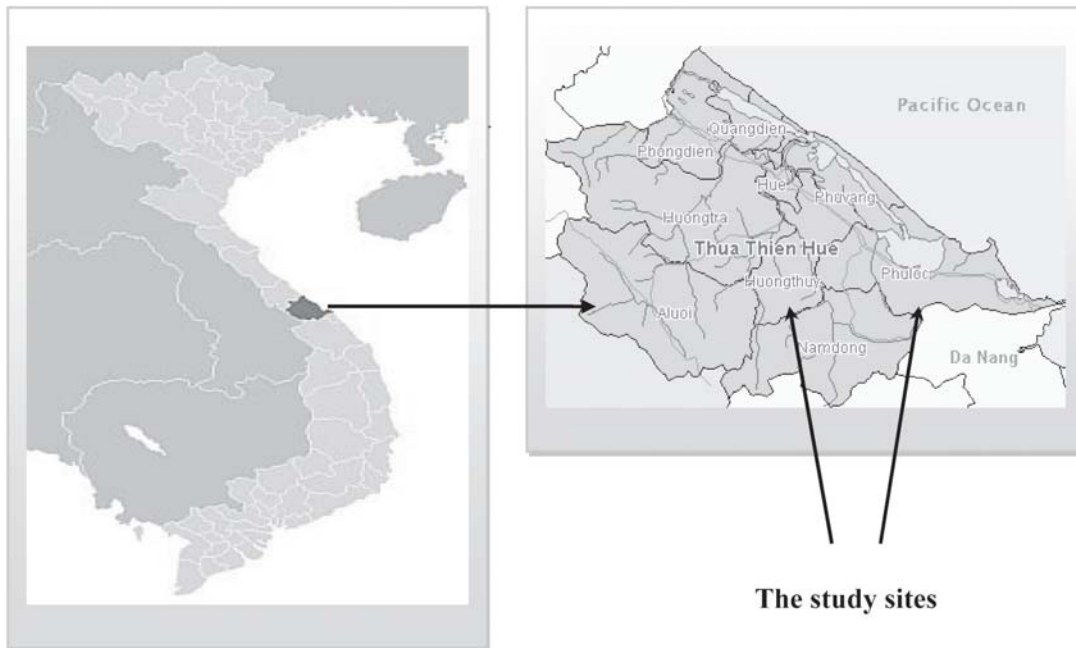
1. 5 Description of Study Sites

Thua Thien Hue, one of the central provinces of Vietnam, was selected as the study site for this research because it is located on the EWEC and is identified as the area within Vietnam which has the highest percentage of migrants moving to neighboring countries. There is an open border policy

along the provincial border with Lao PDR and this has contributed to the high percentage of migrant workers from Thua Thien Hue moving to Laos and others areas within the EWEC.

The province is adjoined by Quang Tri province in the north, Da Nang and Quang Nam provinces in the south, Lao PDR in the west and the China Sea in the east. It covers a land area of 5,053.99 km². According to the national population survey in 2009, the population of the province is 1,087,579 people, with 63.9 per cent living in rural areas. The population density of the province is 215 people/km². Thua Thien Hue province has 8 districts and 154 communes, wards and towns. The income per capital of the population is 705,8USD in 2008 (Thua Thien Hue Province's Report , 2009)

1. 6 Map Showing Study Sites



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Migration is part of globalization and has helped to shape the inter-dependence of nations. Globalization and the flow of information have brought increasing economic integration and changed the way people think about their political, cultural and economic circumstances (Ananta & Arifin, 2004). The study of population mobility is not a new phenomenon for countries in the GMS. However, the nature and size of the flow of migrants today is very different from the past. Previously, large-scale population movements in the region occurred primarily as part of the expansion of frontiers; with resettlement of populations defeated in wars being an important part of this process. Before national boundaries were settled ethnic minority groups living in (current) border areas moved freely within the region. These past migration systems were embedded in a political and socio-economic context that structured the composition of migrant flows and determined migrants' identities, living conditions and opportunities. Similarly, today the emerging political, economic and demographic issues are changing intraregional migration, fostering a sharp increase in population mobility and shifting migration flows from politically to economically motivated movements (Ananta & Arifin, 2004)

According to Aris and Evi (2004), in an integrated world economy trade, flow of capital, flow of labor, flow of materials and technology are interrelated. Therefore studies of international migration should be seen in the context of an integrated world economy. When discussing the relationship between international labor mobility and economic development, there are two opposing views. The first views immigration as a positive contributor to the economic development of the receiving country. The second views international labor mobility as having a negative economic impact.

Social networking is also an issue in migration studies. Having a social network of friends and relations is commonly cited as a key reason, aside from the purely economic opportunities, for choosing the destination country (Allen, 2003). Remittance plays an important role in the development of the home country, especially in poor countries. However, there is a lot of debate about this issue. Massey et al (1998) reveals that over-reliance on remittances for development may harm the economy itself. International migration may also harm sending countries because migration is a self selecting process, and only the "relative better part" of society will migrate. Therefore sending countries may suffer loss of important human capital and this will retard national economic development, especially if the loss of human capital cannot be compensated for by the gains from remittances (Hermele, 1997 cited in Massey et al, 1998).

Sukamdi (2004) focuses on the role of remittances in the Indonesian economy in the context of international resource flows and argues that remittances are an important part of international migration for the development of the sending countries. However, according to the author, in order to maximize the benefit of remittances, the role of government is very important. The government should intervene to simplify procedures and give favorable conditions in order to reduce the transmittal cost and eliminate other unnecessary costs for migrants.

Allen (2003) states that the total sum of international remittances sent back to developing countries are greater than the flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA). However, according to Allen, remittances may not always be used positively. A study of Sri Lankan migrant housemaids shows how, in some instances, the money they returned to their husbands was spent on alcohol or gambling (Gamburd, 2000 cited in Allen, 2003).

Adger et al (2002) argues that migration affects the income, wealth, knowledge base and labor supply of both the sending and receiving countries. Migration also affects the use of natural resources, availability of technology, and the characteristics of resource extraction. The effects of migration on economies and societies are complex. On one hand, remittance can increase or maintain social stability and economic well-being. On the other hand, many economies have been depicted as using remittance income in unproductive ways, particularly through changes in consumption patterns (Gamburd, 2000 cited in Allen, 2003)

There have been a number of studies on labor migration in Vietnam such as by Le Bach Duong and team (2005) of Ha Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2000) and of Dang Nguyen Anh (2003 and 2006). Most of these studies discuss migration types, advantages and disadvantages of migrations and its effects on migrant communities both at home and in their new location. A recent study by NAV (2006) of “The lives of Vietnamese women in Lao” shows that women from Thua Thien Hue province working in karaoke shops, bars, beauty salons and cafes in Laos make up the largest number women working in these occupations. The study also identifies high risks of HIV/AIDS transmission, social evils and human trafficking that these migrant workers face.

In general, migration is a complex and diverse process and literature on migration is vast and diffuse. There are lots of opposing perceptions and different opinions about it. Migration in Vietnam is also generating difficult debates. The issue needs to be studied and analyzed in a specific local context. As a result, this research has been conducted in a province of central Vietnam where migration to EWEC is defined as a survival strategy for the poor. The research focuses on the economic opportunities and social challenges of spontaneous migration in order to help migrants, their families and communities, as well as local authorities, better understand the complexities of this issue.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objectives, the study analyzed and synthesized information from different sources. Field surveys were conducted in July 2009 in two communes from two different districts of Thua Thien Hue province. The Thuy Luong commune of Huong Thuy district and the Loc Bon commune of Phu Loc district are the poorest communes. Agricultural production is the major source of income for the people in both communes. According to the reports of local authorities, these two communes have the highest rate of farmer migration to EWEC countries. For this reason they were selected for the survey study.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the survey data. The survey tools included a structure questionnaire, in depth interview and focus group discussions. A set of questions was used to survey farmers migrating to GMS countries for work. The total sample size was 220, with 120 male and 100 female migrant workers surveyed. The respondents were all 18 years of age and above, and the destination of their labor migration was an EWEC country.

- The questionnaire covered the following issues:
- Identification of the Migrant workers
- The economic opportunities of migration
- The social challenges of migration
- Demographics

In-depth interview: In order to have a clear understanding of migration processes, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with migrant workers (4 samples/commune), family members of migrants (1 sample/commune) and representatives of local authorities (2 samples/ commune). The in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires. The questions sort to identify the reasons why they choose a particular place and not another for their destination; the type of job they had; and the reasons why they chose that job, as well as information on the impact of their migration on their families and communities. Information was written down and recorded by voice recorder.

Focus group discussions: discussions were organized with migrant workers and Government officials from villages, communes and other organizations in the targeted areas. Each discussion group consisted of 6-8 members. The discussion focused on their understanding, expectations, the difficulties and advantages of migration; the impact of migration on local communities and the support offered to migrants by local authorities.

The 220 questionnaires were coded and processed by SPSS software. Information from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was documented, coded and processed systematically. Beside primary source information, the research also collected information from secondary sources by reviewing various documents related to labor migration, state legal documents and reports from government agencies relevant to the research topic.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Characteristics of Migrant workers in EWEC countries

4.1.1 Types of migration

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), labor migration is a movement of persons from their home State to another State for the purpose of employment. People move for different reasons. They can either choose to move “voluntary migration” or be forced to move “involuntary migration” (<http://www.iom.int>).

According to the survey data, of the 220 migrant workers interviewed, 218 (99.1 percent) migrated spontaneously to EWEC countries. Migration under state programs accounted for a very small percentage of migrants - only two people (0.9 percent) migrated under state programs. Most migrant workers who selected the country in EWEC for their destination were seasonal migrants. They only left their homeland in search of jobs, but did not want to live permanently at their destination. However, the time of their departure and return depended on their occupation.

For people who migrate to Laos for logging or wood cutting, they often leave their homeland for about 6 to 8 months every year and come back home during the rainy season in Laos. Women follow the loggers and worked as cooks. They depart and return home at the same time as the logger. When the rainy season comes or the harvesting ends, they return home to take care of their children and work as manual labourers in their homeland and wait for the next season to commence.

People, who migrate to Laos, work as vendors, nail decorators, hair dressers or to do other menial jobs. They tend to migrate for longer periods. They normally work away from home for at least a year, returning home only during the Lunar New Year. However, most migrant workers state that they return home to their families when needed.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents in Thua Thien Hue, 2009

Variable	Percent (%)
Gender (Male)	54.5
Age group (36-55)	58.6
Marital status	74.5
Education (Illiteracy, Primary and secondary)	93.2
Number of children (over 3)	54.1
Economic status (poor and middle)	91.8
Income (Below \$200/month)	88.5
Type of migration (spontaneous migration)	99.1
Destination for migration (selecting Lao PDR)	99.1

Source: Field Survey in Thua Thien Hue, 2009.

4.1.2 Reasons for labor migration

There were many reasons for people to leave their homes and migrate. There are different reasons for migration between regions, communities and households. At the study site, the survey results show that not having a stable job in their home country was the main reason for labor migration. The poor are often limited in the choices they have about livelihood strategies. In their homeland, they are farmers depending on farming. When their crops fail they become poorer. The result of the group discussions suggests that if they rely solely on agriculture it is not enough to sustain a living. They are face food insecurity, thus migration to work away from home is the best way to overcome these problems. A village head stated during the interview that:

“This is agricultural commune, 99% of population involved in agriculture, their education level is low. The natural condition is not convenient for farming. Cultivation land is not enough for all the population. Migration to look for jobs to earn money is the option of almost people here”.(Indepth interviews at the study sites, August 10, 2009)

Having no money for children’s education is one of the key reasons that local people decide to migrate. Most of the parents expect their children to have a better life in the future and this depend

on them obtaining education. However, annually school fees and other educational expenses are too expensive for the poor. They accept the hardship of living and working outside their homeland and hope that the investment in their children's education will help them to get out of poverty.

Interview of a widow at the study site: "My family only has 2 people, me and my son. At present he studies at the seven grade of local school. I am illiterate because previously my parents are poor. I do not want my son like me when he grow up therefore I try my best to earn money for his schooling. However at my homeland I have no stable job I did all as long as getting money but still have not enough for his education. Finally I decide to migrate to Lao PDR as the cook for logging group". (In-depth interview at study site, August 8, 2009)

4.1.3 Age of the migrant workers

Most of the migrant workers at the study site are between 36-55 years old (See table 1), in the age group between 26-45 years (57.3%). Some of the respondents are over working age, but still decide to go to Laos to work because they have no children and do not receive any subsidies from Government. In their home country they have no stable job and therefore migration to Laos is an opportunity for their survival.

4.1.4 Educational level

The education level of respondents at the study site is rather low, mainly primary school (52.7%) followed by secondary school (25.5%). No one among the interviewees completed high school and/or a university degree. 15% of the respondents are illiterate. Illiteracy and low educational levels are the main reasons for an increase in unemployment in the area and this has lead to labour migration (see Table 1).

4.1.5 Economic situation of migrant workers

The survey shows that 36 percent of the respondents are poor, and 56 percent of them are from middle income families (see Table 1). Only 8 percent of the interviewees belong to the higher income group, but these people migrated as employers not laborers. Normally, the high income group has trucks and hires the farmers living in their community as their employees for logging purposes.

The poor are very flexible in constructing livelihood strategies for their survival. However, their livelihood resources are very limited. Access to cultivated land is narrowing due to the encroachment of industrialization processes. Access to formal credit sources is not easy as they have no assets to mortgage. With low education and poor professional skills, looking for suitable jobs is not easy at their locality. Therefore outmigration for manual work is their only survival option.

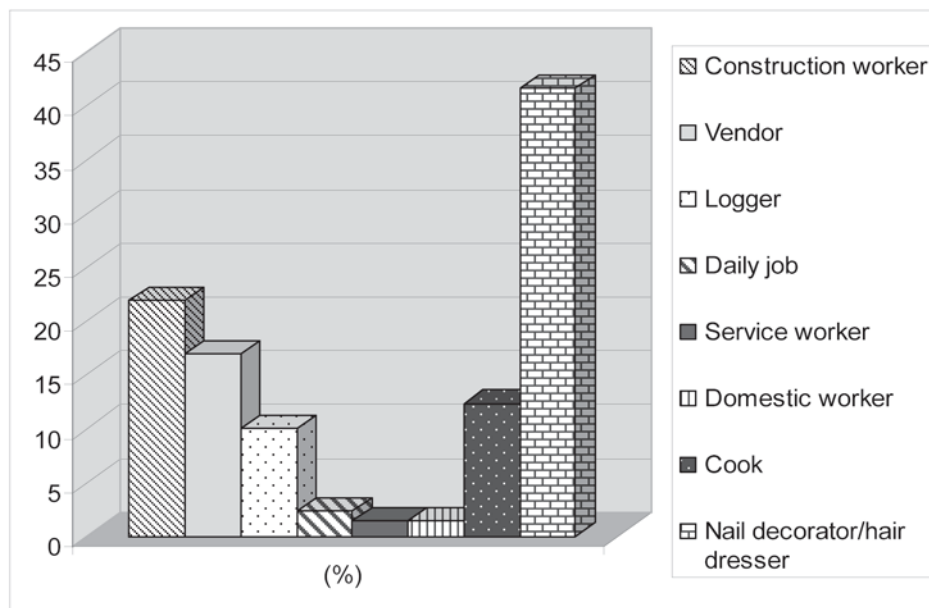
According to one women who worked as a cook for the loggers in the forest “...We are not young any more. We have low education and have no professional skills. We have no choice but to move to Lao to work as cook in the forest. We go when there are needs to earn money for raising our children”. (Indepth interview at the study site, August 9, 2009)

However, local leaders see this in a different way. In interviews with local authorities, they reported that local people, especially the young, are lazy and only dream of a luxury life in urban communities. Thus labor migration is seen as a movement issue in these localities; meanwhile many factories in the province cannot recruit enough employees for their activities.

4.1.6 Types of occupation of migrant workers

All migrant workers interviewed in study have worked as manual labourers. The jobs that migrants often do at the destination are low skill, physically demanding, jobs. There are very few people working for domestic and foreign companies. Men normally go to the forest to cut trees, work as masonry helpers and small vendors. Women go along with the trucks to the forest to work as cooks, or they work as nail decorators, hair dressers, tailors, maids or small vendors.

Figure 1 Types of Occupation of Migrant Workers



Source: Field Survey in Thua Thien Hue. 2009.

Males dominate in construction work and logging. Women rarely participate in these jobs because they require high physical capacity. Women are involved in these jobs when they accompany their husbands who are the business owners. Some widows who face difficulties in their lives choose these jobs because they offer stable income in order to support their children. Young women do not want this type of work because it requires hard work in hazardous conditions and life is boring in the forest. On the contrary, most young women migrated to Lao to work as nail decorators or hairdressers. Reasons for choosing these jobs are that they do not need to invest much money or acquire high skills. “All of my capital are just a bicycle and a tool box which just cost around hundreds thousands VND. Cost of a nail decoration is 7,000 - 8,000 VND, I can not do the hair cut and hair washing since I do not have tools for these. Nail decoration is a simple job and that does not require highly skills. I can do it well after few weeks of training. Many women migrants select this job since it does not require much investment” (indepth interview at study sites, August 7, 2009)

4.1.7 Destinations

Lao PDR is cited as the ideal destination of migrant workers along the EWEC. Among the 220 people interviewed, 217 have worked in Laos (99.1%) and only 2 people chose Cambodia as their destination (see table 2) compared to Thailand where arriving migrants are from Lao, Myanmar and Cambodia. The farmers in the study site mainly choose Lao PDR as the destination in their labor migration process.

Lao PDR is a country with low population density and a diverse culture. Its people are also very friendly, hospitable and its economy has a lot of potential for development. Therefore Lao PDR is an attractive place for migrant workers in the region.

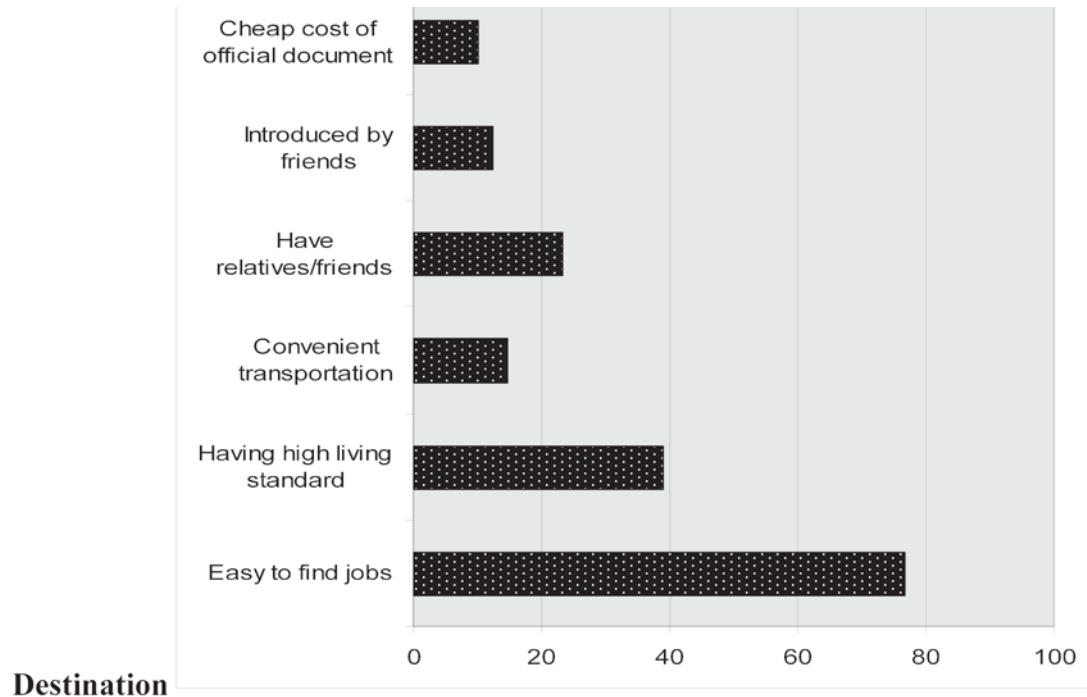
Table 2 Destination in EWEC Countries, 2009

Country	Worked	Not yet	Percentage (%)
Thailand	1	218	0.5
Lao PDR	217	2	99.1
Cambodia	2	217	0.9
Myanmar	0	219	0
China	0	219	0

Source: Field Survey in Thua Thien Hue, 2009.

The respondents reported that the cost of living in Thailand is much higher in comparison to Laos and Vietnam and it's not easy to find jobs in Thailand (see figure 2). On the contrary, it is easier to find jobs in Laos, and this is the first priority in selecting a destination.

Figure 2 Reasons for Choosing the Destination



Source: Field Survey in Thua Thien Hue, 2009.

4.2. Economic Potentials of Labor Migration in EWEC countries

Vietnam shares a 2,060 km border with Laos, so it is very convenient for trading and economic cooperation to occur between the two countries. In addition, Lao and Vietnamese cultures have a great deal in common. The phenomenon of labor migration from Vietnam to Laos is not new; it has been going on for a long time. However, in the past, it was mainly driven by political imperatives. Currently, labor migration is a response to economic factors. It is estimated that there are about 50 thousand Vietnamese migrant workers in Laos and they can be divided into three types (i) Vietnamese become Laotian, having Lao nationality (a very small percentage), (ii) those recognized as Vietkieu, having been permitted to stay and work for a long time in Lao and (iii) seasonal migrants moving to Lao for work (Thieu, 2008). This study focuses only on Vietnamese migrants who move to Laos for seasonal work. The first two groups are recognized by the Laotian Government for having worked a long time in Laos. The third group is only allowed to stay in Laos for 30 days and they cannot get a work card provided by the Laotian Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

4.2.1 Transportation and official documents at cross border gates

Since the EWEC has been developed, transportation among EWEC countries has become easier. Therefore the labor migration among these countries has increased significantly. Every day, a lot of vehicles cross the border between Vietnam and Lao PDR, so travelling between these two countries has become much easier. The survey shows that 98.2 percent of the respondents used a bus as their means of transport during their migration. The reasons for choosing this type of transport are that it is cheap and affordable. According to the survey data, 94.5 percent of migrant workers living in Hue chose the Lao Bao - Savannakhet border gates to enter Lao PDR. Most of them report that the time taken to process documentation at the border gate was fast (86.2 percent of respondents) and that it is cheap and affordable (see table 3).

Table 3 Potential Economic Benefit of Labor Migration to Lao PDR

Variable	Percentage (%)
Transportation (Bus)	98.2
Border gate (Lao Bao- Savanakhet)	94.5
Duration process of official document (Fast)	86.2
Income at the destination (higher than home country)	60.9
Household economic status is improved after migration (strongly agree and agree)	86.8
Job is easy to find in Lao PDR	62.2
Remittance to home	69.3
Channel for sending remittance (Relatives and friends)	98.1
Purposes of remittance usage (Supporting for children education and buying food)	50

Source: Field Survey in Thua Thien Hue, 2009.

4.2.2 Higher income at the destination

The farmers in rural areas of Thua Thien Hue have to leave their homeland to find jobs with the expectation of getting a higher income. More than 60 percent of the respondents stated that their income in Laos is higher when compared to their income at home.

However, the field survey shows that the income of migrant workers in the study site is rather low, mainly less than 100 USD, and those earning more than 200 USD accounted for a small percentage (12%). There is also a difference in income between male and female migrant workers (See Figure 3). Women are involved in jobs with low incomes such as selling bread, ice-cream, silk tofu or working as small vendors selling scrap materials or nail decorators. Their incomes are very low (around 15 to 20 USD per month) and are unstable. According to the field survey, with incomes of less than 100 USD per month, the rate of female migrant workers is higher than male. On the contrary, male migrants worker are mainly engaged in the logging and construction sectors. Their wages are around 400 to 500 USD. Women working in these sections also get higher incomes than those in other jobs, but their wages are also dependent on the viability of the business. The incomes of laborers are cut when a business owner face financial difficulties.

Figure 3. Gender and Income Differences of Migrant Workers in Thua Thien Hue, 2009

Variable	Percentage (%)
Challenges at the destination (being arrested by local police due to not having enough supporting documentation)	41.1
Supports when facing difficulties at destination (Relatives and friends)	50.7
When being abused and exploited (Suffer in silence)	34.6
Treatment of local community at the destination (Friendly)	79.4
Type of insurances at the destination (None)	98.6

4.2.3 Livelihood improvement through remittance from migration

Migration helps workers to get a job and improve the living standards of their families through the remittance they send home. According to the field survey, 69.3 percent of the respondents report that they have sent remittances to their family and 30.7 percent reported that they have not. However, the reason for not sending remittances is that they asked their employers to advance their salary before migrating. For poor households this means they give the salary advanced to them to their family for household expenditure and they do not receive their wages on a monthly basis while working abroad. They themselves do not bring big amount of money with them since all the expenses like food, housing, etc. in Laos are covered by the employers. When the season ends, the employers will deduct the advancement and pay the balance to the worker. This means most of the migrant workers can save money to take home.

For migrants who remit their wages to their homeland, social networks play an important role in money transfer. No one at the study site remit their wages through formal channels such as banks or post offices. The survey data showed that 99 percent of migrant workers send their remittance through a relative, friend or the employer when these people have an opportunity to return home. Remittances through these informal channels have not been documented in reports of local government. Therefore, the contribution of remittances to GDP from labor migration is not calculated. In reality, the remittances from labor migration make an important contribution to the improvement of the living standard and the economic development of local communities.

The survey results show that supporting children's education is the major use made of the remittances by migrants. Earning enough money for their children's education is the biggest desire of most farmers. However, it is not easy for the poor to meet this expectation. Therefore, many people select labor migration as the best solution for their children's education. Local people realize that a low education level can lead to poverty. As a result, they accept a hard life outside their country in order to provide a better future for their children. As discussed above, having no money for children's education is the key reasons for migration. Therefore when they have money, support for children's education is their first priority. Here we see that labor migration does not directly improve the education of the migrants themselves, but it makes a major contribution to the human capital development of their children. And this impacts greatly on the development of the community. However, the migrants' absence can adversely affect the education of the children, because many children drop out of school due to their parent's migration.

In addition, most of the migrant workers are poor farmers who do not have enough money for their daily food and often live in temporary housing. Lack of food is one of daily worries of the poor, therefore remittances from labor migrations are used to buy food which will help them overcome malnutrition amongst their children and food insecurity for their family, especially in between seasons.

4.2.4 Social network - a strong assistance for the poor migrants

As discussed above, unemployment, poverty and high vulnerability are factors that push people out in search of a new livelihood. However, the question that arises is why do they not migrate to other GMS countries, but instead select Lao PDR as their destination? Local authorities state that migration to Lao PDR become the preferred movement of local people. At some villages, more than 90 per cent of their households have members who have migrated to Laos. Thank to the migration of people to Laos for work, the living conditions of local people have improved. Local people also report that they survive thank to migration to Lao PRD. If there was no migration to Laos they do not know how they could earn enough money for their family living needs.

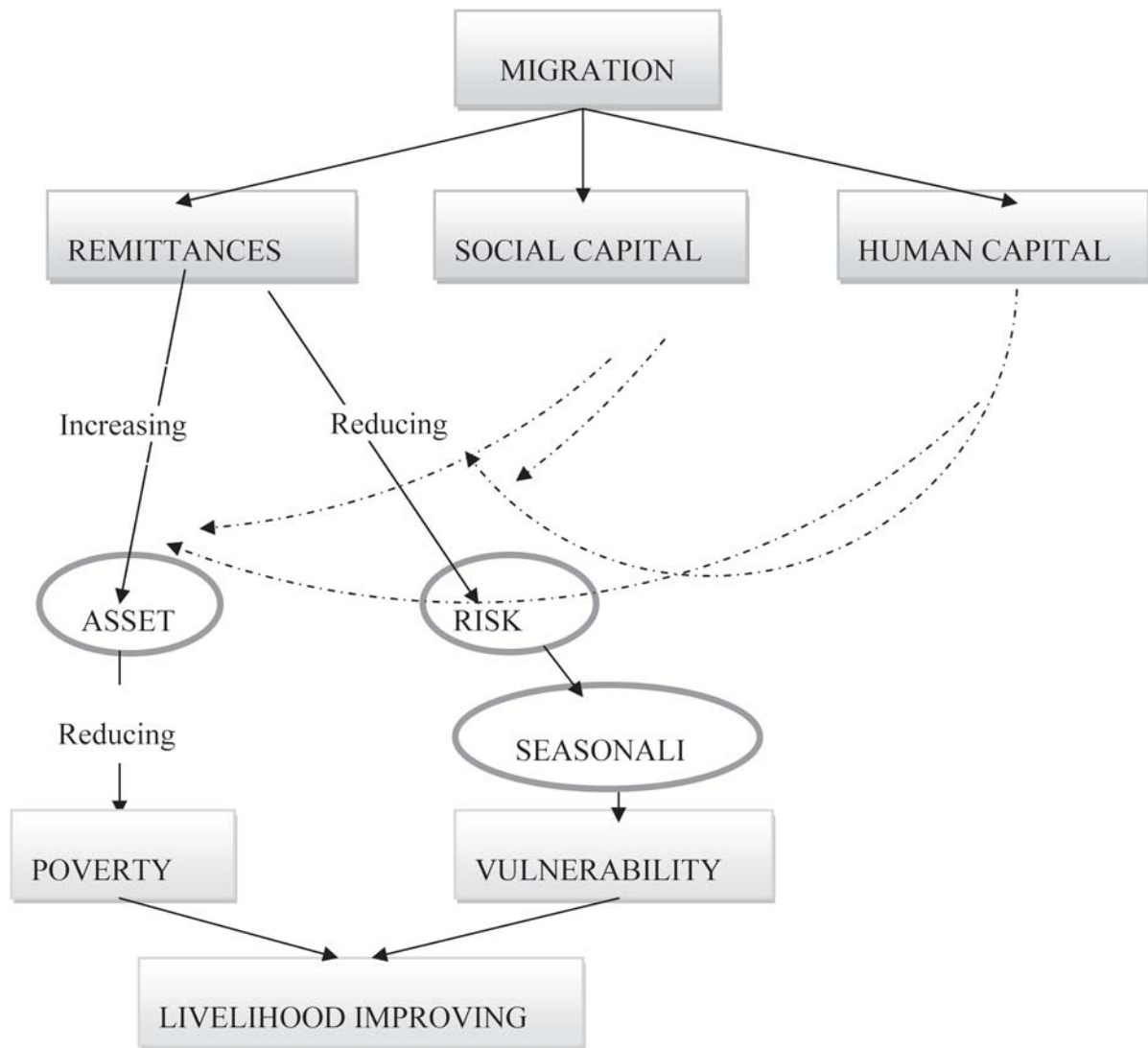
Having relatives and friends at the destination is an important factor in selecting a destination for migration. According to survey data, 35.6 percent of the migrants reported that the reason they selected their destination was because they have relatives and neighbors there or were introduced by a friend. Neighbors who have migrated and earn money are a factor for others to migrate. Normally, these people return home for visits+ during Lunar New Year and introduce others to the benefits of migration.

Reality shows that a job at the destination is not only decided by the capacity of the worker, but also by social relations. Through social relations, a worker can look for a job suitable to their situation. In addition, this social network helps them to integrate and adapt to their new living environment.

Many previous studies have concluded that human trafficking is one of the challenges migrants face when they spontaneously migrate overseas for employment. However, in this survey, the issue of human trafficking rated very low. Most of the respondents understated this issue and did not worry about it; explaining that their network of family and friends help them to overcome any fears. The social network provides them not only with information related to work, salary and accommodation, but also moral support in order to cope with risks and challenges at the destination. When facing difficulties at the destination, relatives and friends are the first people to provide them with help. When the migrant has found stable accommodation and a job at the destination they become a bridge or provide moral support for latter arrivals. “...*Vietnamese community in Lao PDR always helps each other in daily life. The new comers will be helped by most of members in the migrant worker*

community. When anyone faces difficulties such as accidents or risks, all the Vietnamese migrant workers take care and encourage them. In case they need to go home, community of migrant workers collect money to support them” (Indepth interview at study site, August 8, 2009)

Figure 4 Links between Migration and an Improved Livelihood

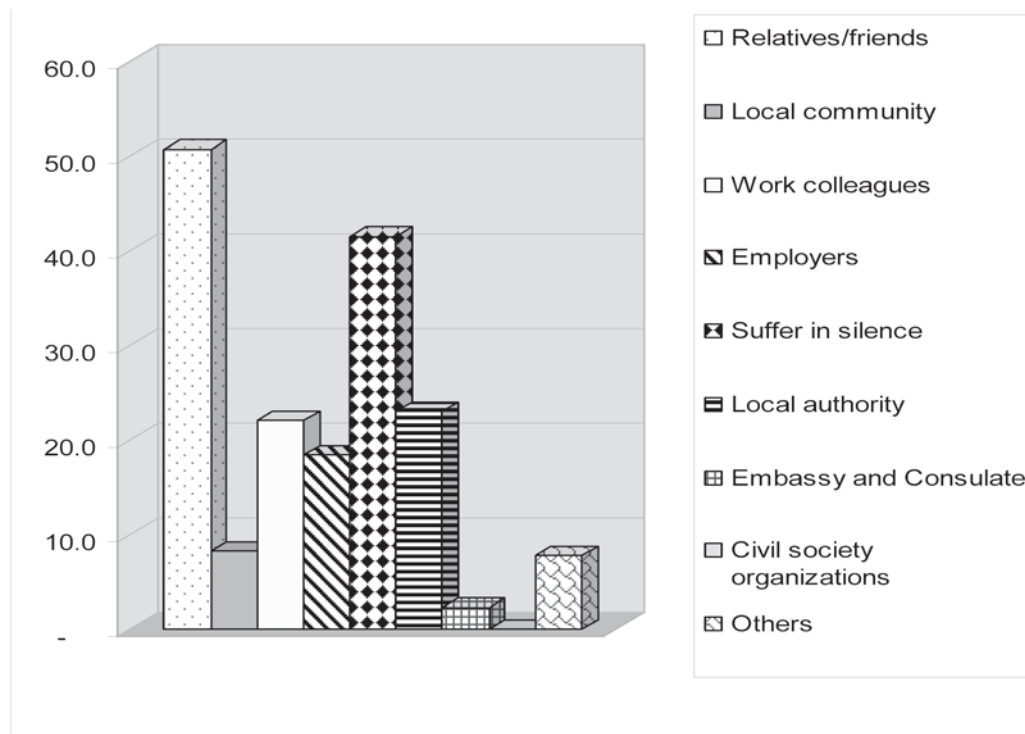


Source: Adapted by Frank Ellis, 2003

Social networks also play an important role in transferring money to the family. The survey data shows that 99 percent of migrant workers sent their remittances through a relative, friend or their employer when these people returned home. The reason migrants choose this way of sending money is that they feel it's safer and faster. In addition, these people are considered to be a bridge to their families, helping them to get information about their families. And by sending home this way they can also send messages and their love to their families.

As a result, the network of friends and relatives is seen as the bridge between the migrant and their family, between the family and the migrant, between the migrant and current and former migrant workers and a rationale for why they moved and stay away. The network creates a strong social solidarity among members of the community and fosters further migration movements at the locality. With social networks playing such an important role in the migration process, the local authority and policy makers should pay more attention to the role of social networks and the use that can be made of them as a means of communication and a bridge in labor migration management.

Figure 5 People/Organizations Supporting Migrant Worker at the Destination



Source: Field Survey in Thua Thien Hue, 2009.

4.3 Social Challenges of Labor Migration in EWEC countries

4.3.1 Access to social welfare at the destination

Migrant workers contribute a lot to the development of their country as well as their destination community. They face many difficulties which are solved by themselves and/or their relatives. Help for migrant workers from their embassies, consulates or civil society organization in their destination country is very limited. According to the survey results, migrant workers do not understand the responsibilities or functions of these organizations. When a migrant faces a difficulty in the destination country they often solve it by suffering in silence or asking for help from their relatives, friends or employer.

Access to social welfare is very limited. When they fall sick they often seek help from relatives, friends, work colleagues or treat themselves by buying medicine from a drug store (47.7%). Although at Lao hospitals, there is not much difference between the treatment offered to local people and migrant workers. Expenses for treatment are a major concern for most migrant workers. The survey data showed that 98.6 percent of migrant workers have no insurance. When they fall sick they have to pay expenses themselves. This is a big challenge that migrant workers have to face.

When ask about diseases they suffer, most migrant workers say that malaria is the most common with 51.8%. The rate of malaria infection for male migrant workers is higher than for females. This can be put down to the fact that male migrant workers work mainly in the forests where living and working conditions are not particularly difficult, therefore they always face the risk of malaria. Whenever they get malaria, they treat themselves with medicines they take with them and rarely see a doctor. Work accidents are always a threat to their lives. With limit choices in their homeland they have to accept these jobs in order to get money to feed their families. *“...There are a lot of worries while migration to Lao but being the head of family, I feel quite shameful if I let my wife and children stand with the foodless and homeless plight. Because of the survival of my family I am compulsory to migrate. The job of assistant driver in a crane-truck is really a high-risk and hard work. If accident happened, I would be dead for sure...”*

“We scare of accident. Since we have to work day and night, we always make use of time for sleeping even in the truck. Some dozed in truck were pushed to ground by tree branches and died. We also face with other injuries caused by trees. We put ourselves at risks to get 50 USD per month for feeding wives and children. In case of died, owners give some money for funeral. (In-depth interview at the study site, August 7, 2009)

There is also a high rate of HIV/AIDS (26.8%) among the diseases that migrant workers suffer. This disease not only affects the health and finances of the migrant worker and their family, but also the economy of their origin community.

An official of a local medical station said “...Tere are many people in our commune travel for working away from home, around 60% to 70% of its population. Most of them migrate to Lao. Considerably, the returned migrants often bring many germs back with them. We must deal with these consequences. According to our statistics, approximately 25% of returned migrants encountered with serious diseases i.e. malaria, petechial fever” Formerly, men usually got some skin complaints or gonorrhoea, as for women, they normally got gynaecological inflammation and contraceptive diseases. The main cause for this problem due to the awareness of migrants, they seemed to be reckless of their health. If possible, they buy medicine for self-treatment without any advices of doctors. Likewise, depending on their concrete conditions, they trended to go to medical station or hospital when they got grave syndromes. In some case, they even do not bring any medicine or condom for protecting “themselves”.

“...A lot of social evils have occurred at locality. The most dangerous is HIV/SIDA. In our small commune, there are 20 victims of this disease in which ten were died. Most of victims are the migrant workers to Lao PDR. When they infected disease, they could not work and live at the destination and have to return home for treatment. They become the burden for their family. Some of them transmit their disease to their spouse. This problem is difficult to solve and become a burden for our community (In-depth interview with local leader at study site, August 10, 2009).

Access to education services in Laos is difficult for migrant workers’ children. Lao Government policy regulates that only children of Viet kieu can attend public schools in Lao. Even in the schools built and managed by the Viet kieu, children of migrant workers who do not have enough supporting documentation cannot access the schools. Thus most migrant workers do not bring their children with them. Leaving their children at home without the care of parents is also a big challenge for the families of migrant workers and their community. “...In many families where parents migrated to Lao for working, left their children to their relatives or grandparents for caring. These relatives are also very busy with their work and their family. Grandparents are old and cannot control the children as carefully as their parent. As a results, a lot of children drop out of school and imitate the adults bad behavior such as smoking, gambling, drinking, etc” (In-depth interview with local leaders at the study site, August 10, 2009).

Table 4 Social Challenges of Labor Migration

Variable	Percentage (%)
Challenges at the destination (being arrested by local police due to not having enough supporting documentation)	41.1
Supports when facing difficulties at destination (Relatives and friends)	50.7
When being abused and exploited (Suffer in silence)	34.6
Treatment of local community at the destination (Friendly)	79.4
Type of insurances at the destination (None)	98.6
Treatment when getting sick at the destination (self treatment and seek help from drug store)	47.7
Kind of diseases that migrant workers often infected with (Malaria)	51.8
Providing accommodation at destination (Themselves and relatives/friends)	77.3
Attending vocational training before departure (No)	85.8
Reasons for not attending vocational training (Unnecessary)	79.9

4.3.2 Limitations in professional skills

Not attending vocational training before migration is seen as one of the difficulties for migrants at the destination. According to the survey data, nearly 86 percent of interviewees do not attend any vocational training before departure. However, migrants feel that attending vocational training is unnecessary (79.9%) because with their current skill they can find a job at the destination. They are confident with the skills they have learnt. But a low education level and poor professional skills are the key reasons that migrant workers have to accept low paid jobs with high risk. Risks at the destination arise from a lack of information and their expectation. However, some are aware of the risks at destinations, but they still migrate because of the economic pressure to make money at any cost for living and raising their children. *“Migration means to sell our lives for feeding wives and children. If it is lucky, we can return home with family, if not, just buried our bodies, that is all. Many*

male migrants had died and countless of injured ones as lost of legs or arms while working in Lao. Everybody knows this, but we have no choice" (In-depth interview at the study site, August 9, 2009).

In addition, working without a labor contract and a lacking of knowledge about labour laws means migrants are exploited and abused by their employers. Only 14% of migrant workers have signed a labor contract. However, when a contract is signed it is only concerned with the type of work to be performed and the salary to be paid while being silent on others terms and conditions of their employment. About 58% of migrant workers negotiate an oral agreement with their employer. The rest do not know what a labor contract is or, if they know, they do not ask their employer to make a contract because they are afraid the employer will not hire them.

4.3.3 Illegal workers at the destination

As analyzed above, most of the farmers who choose Laos for their destination have low education, having mainly completed primary or secondary school or are illiterate. With their limit education, their understanding of the law and policy is also limited. In addition, most of them migrate spontaneously without any guidance or advice from local authorities on the laws and policies that apply. They sometimes have the wrong understanding about the difference between a valid passport and an entry visa in their passport.

According to one migrant worker at the study site "*...Our passport is valid for 5 years but I do not understand why they only permitted me to stay in Lao only 30 days. In addition they require us to apply for the working card. Fee for the working card is high and if we apply it we have no savings to send home. Therefore we often ignore to pay in some months. Most of Vietnamese migrant workers in Lao have no working cards*" (In-depth interview at the study site, August 9, 2009).

Almost all migrants who go abroad hold a passport. A visa is no longer required for enter to ASEAN countries for up to 30 days. It means that at the border gate they are legal since they have a passport. According to Lao law, immigrants from other countries with an ordinary passport are allowed to stay in Laos for 30 days, but they cannot get a working card. Vietnamese labors with an ordinary passport migrate to Lao for working, within one month they have to return Vietnam to repeat the procedure. However, in reality most migrant workers do not comply with the regulations and laws in the destination country. Sixty seven percent of the interviewees agreed that migrant workers in Laos violate the laws most of the time. The reason most migrant workers are illegal at the destination is partly due to migrants themselves, but mostly it is the result of loose management by local authorities at the destination. Some migrant workers report that they know they are in the country illegally, but they take the risk to save as much money as possible. However, for people who work in the logging

sector state that their employers prepare the papers for them and they do not know anything about their legal obligations. The employer meets the cost of filing the paper work and then deducts it from their wages. The employer also keeps their passport and returns it when they return home. Sometimes the employer wants to save them the cost of legal documents and will not submit them. Many report that although their documents have expired, they can still find jobs in Laos and do not come to the attention of police because of their good cooperation with local authorities. This means that local authorities have created conditions whereby migrant workers can live and work illegally. In addition, a police station should be a place where a migrant worker can gain assistance, but in reality it is a place that “illegal migrants” are scared of. *“I have been living in fear in Lao for 7 years without any papers. In the day time when I go to market I have to do it quickly because I scare of arrested by policemen. I often hide and run away if I saw policemen. Only the first time due to lack of experiences I was caught by policemen and got fined of 150 USD and from that time I always hide and live in fear. I also do not sleep overnight in construction site because I afraid of policemen will come and check papers. They normally do this patrol in the night time so I have to bring my kid with me to go to a Laotian’s house for sleeping”* (Indeepth interviews at the study sites, August 8, 2009).

“We have worked in Lao without working card therefore we have to avoid the inspection of policemen. When the policemen come we flee to the forest. Sometimes we have to live in the forest 2 or 3 days and wait until the inspection is over.” (Indeepth interviews at the study sites, August 8, 2009).

4.3.4 Being abused and exploited

Although most migrant workers state that they selected Lao PDR for their destination because it is easy to find a job and there is low trafficking. However, in reality, sexual abuse and trafficking are still a threat to migrant workers at the destination. Female migrant workers are the most vulnerable to human trafficking, rape and sexual harassment. Those who work as shop helpers, waitresses in restaurants and bars or those who are working in the entertainment sector always face the threat of sexual harassment from customers.

“...I worked in the restaurant, where I have to meet with different kinds of people. Our duty is to serve the customer and keep them to continue to come to restaurant. When they get drunk they always behave badly but we still have to please with that. The owner was unhappy whenever we vexed customers. I have to accept but sometime fell uneasy but reaction with customers is not allowed”. (Indeepth interviews at the study sites, August 9, 2009).

On the other hand, female migrant workers who work as cooks for logging groups are often raped by their work colleagues, particularly by the drivers. Normally, in a logging group, there are 5-6 members, but the cook is the only female. They live in isolation in the forest. In this group, the role of the driver is very important. The owner of the trucks delegates his powers to the drivers in order to control the group. As a result, all members of the group have to follow his instructions. If anyone criticizes the driver it will be difficult for them to continue in their job. Almost all migrant workers report that 60 - 70% of the cooks are raped by the drivers since they play a powerful role. Some male migrant workers state that they have witnessed a driver raping a cook, but they did nothing. This explains why 34.6 percent of respondents elect to remain silent when suffering abuse and exploitation. To ensure the survival of themselves and their families they suffer in silence. In these cases, the fate of female migrant workers is very disturbing. What should they do when they are powerless in society? It is the role of government and other societal organizations and agencies to protect the legal rights of migrants.

5. POLICY IMPLICATION

The study results reveal that poverty and not having a stable job in their home country are the key reasons for labor migration to EWEC countries, especially to Lao. According to the study of Vu Thi Van Anh (2007), *“Among one million of Laotian, there are 500 thousands of Vietnamese. This is not a small rate between the indigenous people and migrant workers. This situation has created a lot of influences to the community of destination country as well as the Vietnamese community”* (Anh, 2007 cited in Thieu, 2008:388). With an increasing number of Vietnamese workers migrating to Laos, the governments of these two countries have to implement policies to support migrant workers. In reality, labor migration not only contributed to the economic development of the origin country, but also to the socio-economic development of the destination country.

Nearly 90 percent of the respondents reported that if they had a stable job and land to cultivate in their homeland they would not migrate to another country. Therefore State policy for the development of rural areas needs to pay more attention to creating stable jobs for local people.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is widely recognized that labor migration actively contributes to the progress of society. Findings from the research suggest that migration provides a solution to unemployment and food insecurity for the communities at the origin. Remittances from migration help the families of migrant workers and local community at the origin to get out of poverty and enjoy improved livelihoods.

Through direct interviews with migrant workers at the study sites, the study identifies the economic potential of labor migration to EWEC countries. Easy to find a job, higher incomes and low trafficking in the EWEC are pulling mostly Vietnamese migrant workers to these countries. The ready availability of transportation, the easy process and low cost of official documentation making is increasing labor migration to these countries. Social networks play a key role in the labor migration process. Having a network of friends and relatives who are migrant workers encourages and facilitates migration. The network created a strong social bond among members in the community and sets up a migration movement at the locality. The social network help the migrant worker find out about jobs and accommodation, and helps them to quickly integrate and adapt to the new environment. It also assists them to cope with risks and challenges in their daily life at the destination.

Although the Vietnamese Government recognizes that migration is a driving force behind the socio-economic development of the country, policies to assist migration and to provide social welfare for migrant workers are still very limited. The data survey suggests that the status and rights of migrants are not being protected. At the destination, migrant workers are marginalized and isolated from developments in the community. The study identifies a number of social challenges that migrant face, including access to social welfare at the destination and vocational training at the origin. A lack of concern by embassy staff and social organizations at the destination; the limited understanding of policies, laws and regulations regulating migration by migrant workers; and the possibility of abuse and exploitation are a major concern.

From the findings of the study, some recommendations are as follows:

Vocational trainings should be conducted for farmers, especially the younger generation. Most of the people living in rural areas are farmers. Their livelihoods are in agricultural production. In addition, natural conditions in Thua Thien Hue are not favorable for farming. Local people always live under the threat of poverty and food insecurity. Under these conditions, migration is seen as the only option for the poor. Having no professional skills and low education levels, migrants accept the 3D jobs - the dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs. Access to vocational trainings and the opportunity to look for better jobs will make things easier for migrants and reduce the risks and challenges of migration.

There is a need for policies and protections for migrant workers because most of them are poor and disadvantaged members of society. Their contribution to society is greatly underestimated and they do not have access to the protections offered by society. Therefore, action should be taken to ensure that they benefit from national poverty reduction and development programs and enjoy a sustainable livelihood.

The social networks of friends and family play a critical role in the migration process. At the destination as well as in the origin, migrant workers rely so much on these networks for their survival. As a result, local authorities and policy makers should pay more attention to the role of these networks and make better use of them as a means of communication and as a bridge in labor migration management.

The views of migrants should be heard by local authority and policy makers. They confront hardships and vulnerabilities from the migration process. As outsiders it is not possible to fully understand the expectations and the risks of migration. The survey confirms that local leaders blame migrants more than listen to their voice. As a result, the rights of the migrant workers and their contribution to society have been forgotten in the national and local debate and development of migration strategies.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study shows that poverty is seen as the push factors for migration. However, the relationship between poverty and migration is very complex. Poverty may push local people into migration, but migration can also lead to poverty and leave them marginalized. The study did not address this relationship in details. There is a need to have a closer look at this. In addition, migration not only brings opportunities and challenges for the migrants and communities they leave, but the destination country also gets benefits and faces difficulties from this process. The study conducted surveys at the communities of the origin only. As a result, it did not analyze the opportunities and challenges for the communities that they move into.

Another limitation of the study is that the poor often diversify their livelihoods in different ways. Migration is one of their livelihood strategies. Some select international migration, others move within their own country. The influences of international and internal migration for communities can be quite different. This study looked only at migration to EWEC countries. A comparative study of these different types of migration could assist the development of policies which promote safe migration.

REFERENCES

- Adger, N. et al.(2002). Migration, Remittances, Livelihood Trajectories, and Social Resilience. Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences 2002 Ambio Vol. 31 No. 4. Retrieved May 25, 2008, from <http://www.ambio.kva.se>
- Allen, J. (2003). Voices of Migrants in Asia: A panorama of perspectives. The paper is presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia. Bangladesh: Dhaka
- Ananta, A.& Arifin, E. (2004). *International Migration in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Publications.
- Anh, Dang Nguyen (2003). Migration in Vietnam: A Review of information on current trends and patterns, and their policy implication. The paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policies Choices in Asia. Bangladesh: Dhaka.
- Anh, Dang Nguyen.(2006). Migration policy in socio-economy development of mountainous provinces. Ha Noi: World Publisher
- Ha Thi Phuong Tien & Ha Quang Ngoc. (2000). *Mobility of female migrant workers: Rural to Urban*. Ha Noi: Women Publisher.
- Haan, A. (2000). Migrants, livelihoods, and rights: The relevance of migration in development policies. Social Development Working Paper No.4. Social Development Department. London: DFID
- Hugo, G. (2004). International Migration in Southeast Asia since World War II. In A., Arifin, E. (Eds.). *International Migration in Southeast Asia* (pp. 28-70). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Publications.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Migration Agency. Retrived July 8, 2009, from <http://www.iom.int/jahia>.
- Le Bach Duong, Dang Nguyen Anh, Khuat Thu Hong, Le Hoai Trung & Robert Leroy Bach. (2005). *Social Protection for the Most Needy in Vietnam*. Hanoi:World Publisher.
- Massey, D., et al. (1998). World in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millenium. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

- Migration in the Greater Mekong SubRegion. (2008). In-depth Study: Arrest, Detention and Deportation (Third Edition). Kowloon: Mekong Migration Network and Asian Migrant Centre.
- Nguyen Duy Thieu. (2008). Migration and Lifestyle Change: A Case study of Vietnamese Community in Lao PDR. Hanoi: World Publisher
- Nordic Assistance to Vietnam. (2006). Accident of life: A study on Vietnamese women in Lao. Hue City. Vietnam
- Sukamdi, Elan, S. & Haris, A. (2004). Impact of Remittances on the Indonesian economy. In A., Arifin, E. (Eds.). *International Migration in Southeast Asia* (pp. 137-155). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Publications.
- Thua Thien Hue Province's Reports of 2008, 2009
- UNDP (2009). Human Development Report. Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and Development. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved December 23, 2009, from <http://hdr.undp.org>
- UNFPA (June, 2007). Internal Migration in Vietnam: The Current Situation. Hanoi. Retrieved August 20, 2009, from <http://vietnam.unfpa.org>
- VietnamNet (2009). EWEC: A Corridor of Cooperation and Friendship. Retrieved July 6, 2009, from <http://www.vietnamnet.vn>

APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire on Labor Migration

This survey assesses the economic potentials and social challenges of labor migration in three countries along the East West Economic Corridor. There are four sections to this survey. Please complete the entire survey and answer all of the questions as best as you can. Only summary measures and conclusions from this survey will be reported. Your participation is voluntary and all of your answers will be kept confidential.

Section 1. Identification of Migrant Workers

1. Have you ever worked as migrant worker abroad?

Yes (please go to Q2)

No (please go to Xx)

2. Which country you have work in the last 5 years? (You can select more than one)

Country How many times did you work in these countries?

1. Thailand _____

2. Lao _____

3. Cambodia _____

4. Myanmar _____

5. China _____

3. What are the reasons you choose to migrate to these countries in Q2?

(You can tick more than one)

Easy to find jobs

Having high living standard

Convenient transportation

Have relatives/friends

Introduced by friends

Other(s) please specify _____

4. What is the problem(s) you face when migrating to these countries in Q2?

(You can tick more than one)

Lack of information from the migrating countries

High cost

Complicated procedures

Having no relationship

Requiring high job skills

Other(s) please specify _____

5. What are your reasons to migrate?

Has no stable job in home country

Having no money for children's education

Lack of/having no cultivated land

In debts

Unhappy family

Having no property such as house, land, etc.

Other(s) please specify _____

Section 2 Migration Economic Opportunities

6. Below is a series of statements that pertain to your overall experiences as a migrant worker. Please indicate your satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "Strongly Disagree" and 5							
1.	Transportation is easy to access in to travel	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	Legal document is easy to obtain to migrate	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3.	All of my health care needs can be met by the	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4.	Job is easy to find in others countries in EWEC	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5.	Salary working abroad is higher than salary in	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6.	Living condition is better abroad (EWEC)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

7. How do you migrate to another country?

By airplane

By train

By bus

By motorbike

By boat

By foot

8. I choose this type of transportation (in Q7) because it is:

Fast

Affordable

Cheap

Safe

Only type of transport available

Other(s) please specify _____

9. Which border gate do you pass through? (You can tick more than one)

Lao Bao - Savanakhet

Savanakhet - Mukdahan

Vientiane - Nong Khai

Other(s) please specify _____

10. What is the duration process of official document at the border gate to cross border?

Fast

Normal

Slow

11. What is the cost of official document process at border?

Expensive

Affordable

Cheap

12. What kind of document(s) do you prepare for working abroad? (You can tick more than one)

Passport

Border pass

Visa

Travel insurance

ID card

Approval official letter from local authority

Other(s) please specify _____

13. What legal documents do you need to work abroad? (You can tick more than one)

Work permit

Non-immigration visa

Work contract

Passport

Border pass

ID card

None

Other(s) please specify _____

14. Who help you process the legal document registration to the destination country?

Myself

Family/friends

Employer

Broker/Agent

Other(s) please specify _____

15. Why don't you assess the legal document registration to the destination country yourself?

Complicated

Costly

Do not under the local language

Do not have enough supporting documents

Not aware that I have to register with the local authority

Other(s) please specify _____

16. Below is a series of statements that pertain to your overall understanding of your work contract. Please indicate your understanding on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "Strongly							
1	I understand my work duration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2	I know what my salary is	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3	I understand my working condition	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4	I understand the type of work I do	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

17. What do you do when your work contract expire?

Extend

Continue working without signing new one

Find another job

Return home

Other(s) please specify _____

18. What type of occupation you worked abroad (EWEC)? (You can tick more than one)

Construction worker

Agriculture worker

Vendor

Logger

Daily job

Service worker (restaurant, hotel, bar, karaoke, massage, etc.)

Domestic worker (maid, cleaner)

Factory worker (rice mill, garment, ice, paper, etc)

Fishery worker

Other(s) please specify _____

19. What kind of employer do you work for?

Private

Self-owner

Government

Other(s) please specify _____

20. Why do you choose these jobs? (You can tick more than one)

Have job experience

No work experience needed

Higher salary

Have on job introductory training

Do not need to invest any money

Other(s) please specify _____

21. The salary at the destination country is:

Higher than home country

Just enough

Unstable

Lower than home country

22. Do you remit money back home?

1. Yes

2. No

23. If yes, what channel do you use for sending remittance?

Bank service

Post office

Relatives and friends

Middle-man

Myself

Other(s) please specify _____

24. How did your family spend your remittance?

Purchase assets (TV, motorbike, etc.)

Upgrade house

Children education

Spend on the farm

Debt payment

Other(s) please specify _____

Section 3 Social Challenges in Migration

25 Below is a series of statements about social challenges a migrant worker faced during migration. Please indicate your perception on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “Strongly							
1.	Relationship with people have experience working abroad influence my migration decision	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	I experience difficulties to access public goods at the destination communities (health care,	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3.	Foreign migrant workers are discriminated by local communities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4.	Foreign migrant rights are not recognized	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5.	Foreign migrant workers are easy to become victims of abuse (from traffickers, brokers and	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6.	Information of migration and wok training are provided by my work employer before departure	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

26. What information sources influence your decision to work abroad? (You can tick more than one)

From relatives

From friends

From neighbors

Recruitment agencies

Government program

Mass media

Broker

Other(s) please specify _____

27. I chose this country as my work destination because:

Have relatives, friends, neighbor working there

Job opportunities

Introduced by recruitment agencies

Can earn money easily

Can improve my work skills

Can improve my knowledge

No one knows me

High living standard

Other(s) please specify _____

28. Who decide your migration?

My parent

My spouse

Myself

My siblings

My children

My relatives/friends

Other(s) please specify _____

29. What support do you receive at your work destination? (You can tick more than one)

Relatives

Friends and neighbors

Recruitment agencies

Broker

Local authority

Embassy and consulate

Civil society organizations

Other(s) please specify _____

30. What challenges do you face when working abroad? (You can tick more than one)

Cannot follow working procedures, instructions, etc.

Home sick

Difficult to adapt to new environment

High living expenses

Exploited by employers

Abuses by brokers and policeman

Risk of unemployment

Human trafficking

Discriminated by the community

Difference of language and culture

Other(s) please specify _____

31. When you face difficulty at your work destination, who do you turn to for help?

Relatives

Friends and neighbors

Recruitment agencies

Broker

Local authority

Embassy and consulate

Civil society organizations

Work colleagues

Other(s) please specify _____

32. When being abused and exploited, what do you do?

Resign from job and return home

Suffer in silence

Make negotiation

Report to local authority, police, etc.

Move to another place and another job

Seeking help from others (friends, work colleagues, etc.)

Have not been abused

Other(s) please specify _____

33. How do local communities at your work destination treat you?

Unfriendly

Poorly

Friendly

Other(s) please specify _____

34. What do you do when you get sick at your work destination?

Do nothing

Seek help from relatives, friends, working colleagues

Seek help from drug store

See the doctor at public healthcare facilities

See doctor at private healthcare facilities

Other(s) please specify _____

35. What type of insurance do you have at your work destination?

Health insurance

Travel insurance

Accident insurance

Social security

Provident fund

None

Other(s) please specify _____

36. What kind of training is provided by your employer?

Local language and culture

Skill related to job

On job training

None

Other(s) please specify _____

37. Do you bring your children to your work destination?

1. Yes 2. No

38. If yes, can they enroll in public school?

1. Yes 2. No

39. What are difficulties you face in accessing public goods?

Communication problem

No accessibility as a foreigner

Do not have enough supporting document

Do not have enough money

Far from work resident area

No transportation

Discriminated

Other(s) please specify _____

40. What types of information do you have before working abroad? (Multiple choice)

Language and culture

Type of jobs available

Work regulations and condition

Salary

Work location

Required official documents

Social regulation

Other(s) please specify _____

41. Did you attend any vocational training before departure?

1. Yes (go to Q. 42) 2. No (go to Q. 44)

42. If yes, what is the reason you attend vocational training?

To improve work skills

To get higher salary

To find jobs

Cheap fee

Easy to access

Other(s) please specify _____

43. Who pays for the vocational training?

Recruitment agency

National program

Employer

Myself

Other(s) please specify _____

44. If no, what is the reason for not attending vocational training?

Costly

No information

Difficult to access

Unnecessary

Other(s) please specify _____

45. When you are working abroad, who provide you accommodation?

Employer

Friends or relatives

Myself

Other(s) please specify _____

46. How do you rate your living condition at work destination?

Better than home country

Similar to home country

Worst than home country

Don't know

Other(s) please specify _____

47. Which kind of diseases are migrant workers often infected with?

(You can tick more than one)

Skin disease

HIV/AIDS and STDs

Mental diseases

Tuberculosis

Occupational diseases

Malnutrition

Other(s) please specify _____

48. How many hours do you work per day?

4 hrs

8 hrs

12 hrs

More than 12 hrs

49. If you are working more than 8 hrs per day, what type payment do you receive?

Overtime

Compensation

No extra payment

Other(s) please specify _____

50. What are reasons why you return to your country? (You can tick more than one)

Being exploited, abused, threaten

Salary decrease/cut

Often sick and tired

Homesick

Language and culture barrier

Escaped from human trafficking agent

Other(s) please specify _____

51. Do you intend to re-migrate to other countries in EWEC?

1. Yes 2. No 3. No plans in the immediate future

52. What improvement (or preparation) will you do when you migrate next?

(You can tick more than one)

Preparing better work skills

Borrow money

Learn foreign language and culture

Find more information about the job and country

Other(s) please specify _____

53. What are the challenges does your family face when you are working abroad?

Lack of help at home

Taking care children and elders

Spouse relation

Lack of help on the farm and thus crop productivity decreases

Other(s) please specify _____

Section 4 Demographic

54. Where are you from? _____ (province, district, commune)

55. What is your gender?

1. Male 2. Female

56. What is your age group?

18-25 years old

26-35 years old

36-45 years old

46-60 years old

Over 60 years old

57. What is your marital status?

Single/Never Married

Married

Divorced/Separated

Widowed

58. Which is the highest level of education you have completed?

Illiterate

Primary school

Secondary school

High school

College/bachelor

Post graduate

Other(s) please specify _____

59. What is your personal monthly income working abroad?

Less than USD50

USD51-USD100

USD101-USD200

More than USD200

60. How do you assess of your family economic status in comparison to other families?

1. Poor
2. Middle
3. About the same
4. Better off
5. Rich

61. How long have you been working abroad?

One month

3 months

6 months

1 year

2-3 years

More than 3 years

Thank you for your cooperation!

About Mekong Institute

Mekong Institute (MI) has been serving the human resource development (HRD) needs of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) since 1996. The New Zealand Government conceived Mekong Institute as a development assistance project for the countries of the GMS, intended to evolve into a regionally governed, autonomous institution. The institute is situated on the campus of Khon Kaen University in Northeastern Thailand, heart of the GMS with its mission “to contribute through human resource development and capacity building to the acceleration of sustainable economic and social development and poverty alleviation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and promote regional cooperation and integration” (MI Charter 2003).

In 2003, the six GMS governments signed a charter founding Mekong Institute as ‘a non-profit, autonomous, international organization, working in close collaboration with other GMS institutions’. In July 2007, the Thai Government approved MI Headquarters Agreement in Thailand and recognized the institute as an “intergovernmental organization of the six GMS countries”. MI is governed by the MI Council which is comprised of senior government representatives from the GMS countries. MI has its residential training center in Thailand and its Coordinating Agencies in all six GMS countries.

Today, Mekong Institute holds the distinction as the ONLY GMS-based learning institute founded by the six GMS Governments, offering standard and on-demand human resource development programs with focus on regional integration and cooperation issues.





Mekong Institute

RESEARCH WORKING PAPER SERIES 2010

