

TRANSNATIONAL SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT:  
LIVES OF THAI BERRY PICKERS RETURNEES FROM SWEDEN

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Previous research has acknowledged that labour migration have had huge benefits for both receiving and sending countries of migrant workers. Thai migrants seasonally traveling to Sweden to pick wild berries have been an ongoing trend since the past two decades. Simultaneously there has been a drastic decline of Swedish labour in the wild berry picking industry. Since the year 2000 there has been an increasing number of Thai berry pickers; in particular rural people from the North-east parts of Thailand. It has been recognized that migration and development are interdependent processes which profoundly influences one another, where migration policies nowadays are developed to take on a development approach.

This qualitative research examines the relationship between transnational seasonal labour migration of berry picking in Sweden and the development of the Thai farmer's living standards in terms of social and economic conditions, and employment. This research contribute with knowledge about Thai migrant berry pickers and fill the existing gap of research made on Thai migrant berry pickers in relation to international labour migration and development. The study seeks to make recommendations on how the seasonal migration of berry picking should be managed and facilitated by the Thai and Swedish Authorities to have a positive outcome. This study is focused on Thai migrant berry pickers from the province of Phetchabun in the sub district of Bueng Krachap and is based on migrant berry pickers who have travelled to Sweden annually. The study presents a unique community of Thai migrant berry pickers who have managed to obtain an income to their distinct measured up to almost 12 million baht per berry season. Interviews with five governmental officials and two organizational representatives and focus group interviews with sixteen migrant berry pickers were the primary source of the data collection. The findings from interviews concluded that the seasonal migration of berry picking have contributed with positive to the Thai migrants living standards in terms of becoming a valuable source of employment and income, acting as an economic security in terms of bad harvest and environmental destruction and nurturing social relationships between migrant berry pickers and their family members.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

DOE: Department of Employment

G2G: Government to Government

IOM: International Organization for Migration

ILO: International Labour Migration

MOL: Ministry of Labour

NAT: Network Against Exploitation and Trafficking of Migrant Workers

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

TLC: Thai Labour Campaign

TOEA: The Office of Overseas Employment Administration

SBIF: The Swedish Forest Berry Association

SEK: Swedish Crowns

SINK: Special Income Tax for Non-residents

UN: United Nations

UNESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

USD: United States dollar

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past few decades the number of international migrants in the world has increased rapidly, measuring up to the highest ever recorded figure of an estimated of 214 million international migrants in 2010. This figure represents an increase of almost double the number of international migrants in 1980. The rise of migration involves diversity of groups and growing portions, notably less permanent and settlement migration has been replaced by temporary and circular migration caused by changes in labour market, demographics and environmental factors (IOM, 2010). Europe hosts the highest number of international migrants of working ages 20 to 64 which is measured up to 50.5 million or nearly a third of all international migrants of working age (UNESA, 2010).

Labour migration has been acknowledged to have huge benefits for both receiving and sending countries of migrant workers (Mashayekhi, 2009). Nowadays, migration policies are developed to take on a developmental approach as it has been recognized that migration and development are interdependent processes which profoundly influence one another (IOM, 2011). The reasons for labour migration cannot easily be generalized and can become a complex issue. The traditional explanation of migration as a movement from poorer to richer countries has nowadays become far too simplistic as both economic and non-economic factors, that is social networks of family and friends, exploration, in search of adventure and opportunity, etc has shown to have had an influence on the decision to migrate. The most obvious reason of higher wages in receiving countries acting like a pull factor still remains. High levels of unemployment and poverty in source countries, acting as a push factor has also become an important reason to emigrate (WickramaSEKera, 2002).

According to Michael Kearney (1986), migrants are predominantly workers who move from areas of origin to where they can find a higher return for their labour, which shows that spatial differentials in employment opportunities represent greater

or lower levels of economic development. In this context migration therefore becomes inseparably associated with development and issues of underdevelopment.

Looking at labour mobility, one of the most primary challenges is how to match the supply and demand for labour at both regional and global levels. The combined effects of aspects such as structural unemployment, agricultural intensification, and industrial restructuring, are factors that might supposedly result in the growing labour surplus in many developing countries and the rising demands for greater access to labour markets in the developed countries. Legal opportunities for migrant labour are likely to be selective with a primary focus on highly-skilled migrants<sup>1</sup> due to the short supply of labour in destination countries, although low-skilled migrants are still highly required as well (IOM, 2008). The distinction of highly-skilled and low-skilled migrants in labour migration is vastly relevant because the two groups interact differently within the labour markets (WickramaSEKera, 2002). Dual or segmented labour market theory emphasizes on the fact that international migration is caused by structural demand in advanced economies both for low and high skilled labour to carry out production. Segmented labour market theory states that there is a division in primary and secondary markets and that economic polarization consistently increases between highly paid and poorly paid workers (Haas, 2007). Several authors (Piore, 1979, Massey et al. 1993, Gordon, 1995, Castles and Miller, 2009) have argued that segmented market theory has characteristics used as a foundation for understanding the labour migration flows.

There are also other ways of distinguishing different groups of migrant workers taking motives and categories of migration; for example, gender and age, sector of occupation, distance and time period into account. The most commonly used distinction is based on the participated duration of stay, reflecting on the regulations and controls on who enters a country and how long they stay. With respect to this, migrant workers fall into two broad categories, of permanent and temporary migrants.

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<sup>1</sup> This term is commonly used for distinction of labour qualifications between migrants who are professionals, technicians, attain high education etc... in high wage occupations and low-skilled migrants who do not attain any special skill or training, belonging to low-wage occupations.

Permanent migrants refer to admission of workers staying for an indefinite period of time where the time limit is imposed by destination country, whereas temporary migrants refers to admissions of workers for a specified time period, for seasonal or project-tied jobs, that are sometimes referred to as “guest workers” (ILO, 2010). Seasonal labour migration is the most common form of temporary labour migration where seasonal workers are commonly stated to be migrant workers whose work is dependent on seasonal condition only performed during a specific period of the year<sup>2</sup>.

The wild berry industry in Sweden has become increasingly reliant on seasonal migrant workers during the summer months of June, July and August. The Swedish Forest Berry Association (SBIF) states that approximately 80 percent of the labour force in the berry picking industry consists of seasonal migrant workers coming from Thailand, Vietnam, China and from other Eastern European countries such as Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania (SBIF, 2011). The Swedish wild berry industry therefore contributes to the global movement of labour migration, where the Thai migrant berry pickers are stated to be the largest group of seasonal workers in Sweden (Wingborg, 2011).

### **1.1 The Wild Berry Industry**

Wild berries picked in Sweden mostly are of three kinds- Bilberries (Blueberries), Lingon berries (Cowberries) and Cloud berries (Bakeapple). Among these, the most common are Bilberries and Lingon berries. Wild berries are considered to be a rich and valuable natural resource which has not yet been used in a satisfactory level nor exploited properly. An estimate of 90-95 percent of the whole wild berry crop yield is left unpicked in the Nordic forests every autumn. The annual wild berry crop currently picked for private and commercial consumption is measure up to only 5-10 % of the yield, which approximates a billion kilograms. This is due to the fact that a lot of the plants grow in distant areas with hard to climb terrains where the attempts to intensify the berry picking is not a plausible idea. It has been

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<sup>2</sup> International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Article 2.2(b).

speculated that if berry picking was organized in a more efficient manner, along with everyman's rights law which is effective in the areas; an estimate increase to about 20 percent of the whole crop yield could be utilized. The increment to 20 percent utilization would then account to about 100-150 million kg in the wild berry industry (Paassilta et al, 2009).

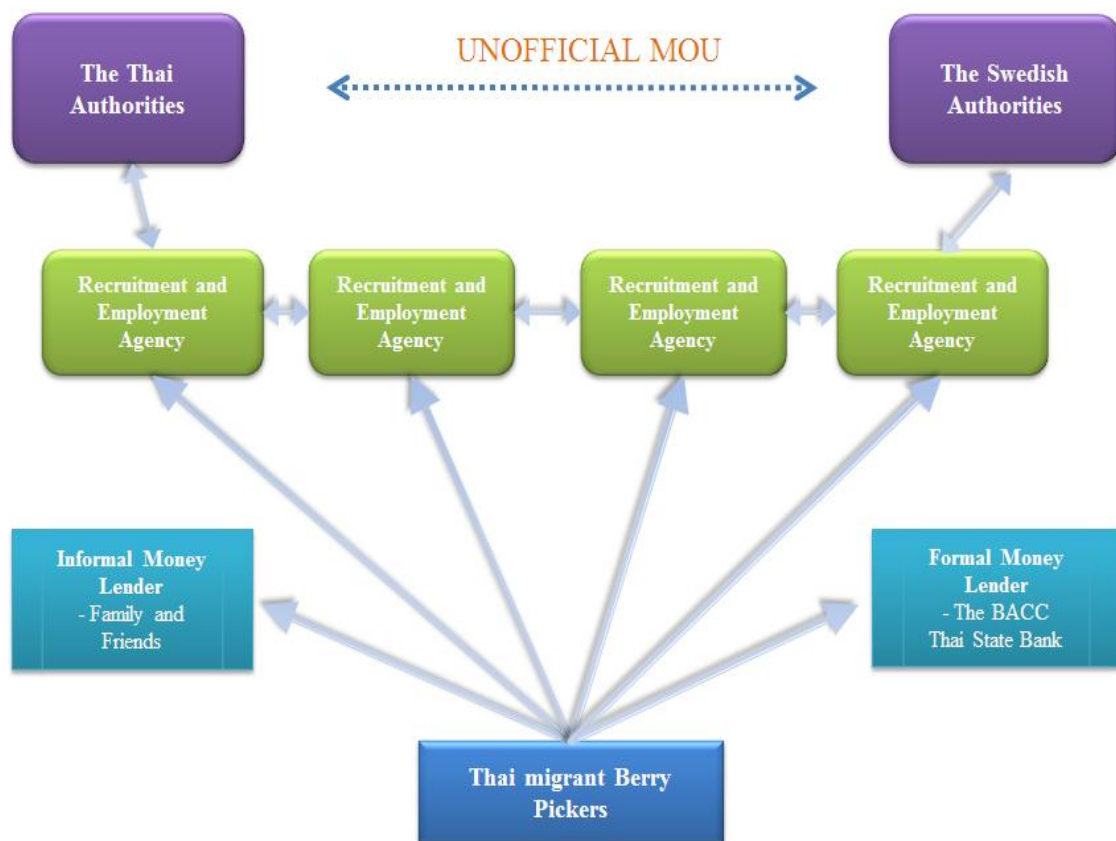
Hundreds of entrepreneurs and companies are active in the wild berry industry and a large number of them are small-scale initiatives with one to five staff members. A lot of different companies are present that utilize the wild berry crops in diverse ways such as those that processes berries into traditional berry products, like jams and juices. Other berry companies clean and freezes berries both for the national as well as the international market. Several companies and entrepreneurs purchase wild berries straight from private pickers and then sell them to larger companies or to local and national market places. In Sweden a common organization was founded in year 2000, the Swedish Forest Berry Association, containing approximately 50 member companies (Paassilta et al, 2009).

Sweden and Finland are the largest bilberry exporters among the Nordic countries and in 2007 Sweden exported about 8000 tons of bilberries. The 2005 crops seem to have taken the record with 9500 tons; however in comparison to 1996 the total exports were measured to 6000 tons, showing that the industry has been increased and expanding. Sweden is however not only an exporter but also an importer of wild berries, in particular of bilberries (Paassilta et al, 2009).

The wild berry industry is considered as a big industry in Sweden and it is also a sensitive one as berry crops and its yield is highly dependent on the local climatic conditions. Hot and dry weather as well as wet and cold climate can damage the crops and result in a bad berry season (Paassilta et al, 2009). In terms of the berry picking industry, it is important to acknowledge that the berry pickers are an important part (stakeholder) of the berry cluster. Figure 1, illustrates the migration process of the migrant berry pickers where some of the Thai migrant berry pickers have to borrow money from informal lenders (family, friends et al) and The Bank for

Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BACC) to afford the recruitment fees and migration to another country.

**Figure 1.1 The employment process of Thai migrant berry pickers**



## 1.2 Background: Thai Migrant Berry Pickers in Sweden

Since the 1970s, Thailand has been sending their workers abroad. Overseas employment for Thai farmers has proved to have had a positive effect on the development of the migrant workers' families, farms and villages (Sussangkarn, 1995; cited in Ananta and Arifi, 2004). Thai migrant berry pickers have been an ongoing trend for the past two decades and there has been a drastic decline of Swedish labour in the wild berry picking industry (Wingborg, 2011). The severe drop in the native Swedish people picking wild berries is stated to be due to social and cultural reasons, whereas several authorities argue that there has been a change in lifestyle to an extent



that the traditional recreational activities like walking in the forest, picking berries and mushrooms have declined rapidly.

Jensen (1995) states, the earlier generations were taught to appreciate certain activities that has been replaced by the generations with a different and diverse attitude towards nature. Looking at this matter in terms of berry picking, the activity might not have been seen as recreation but an important factor to support the household economy which has now been substituted by sustainable markets. He also highlights the increasing urbanization which has negatively influenced the participation in traditional harvesting and recreational activities (Jensen, 1995). Berry picking and selling berries to private and local companies have previously been a seasonal part time job “summer job” to earn income during the summer (Hornsten, 2000).

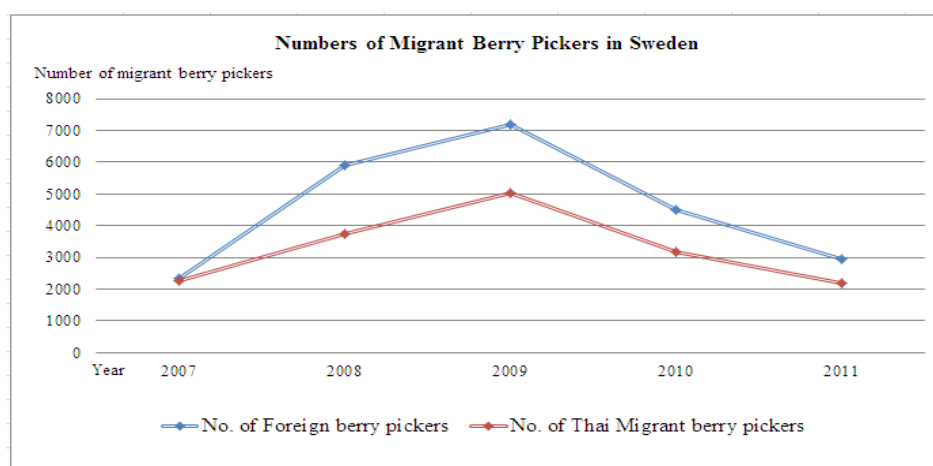
Wingborg (2011) argues that successively it has become less profitable for Swedish manpower to work as berry pickers as the wages in the berry industry is lower than the average wages in similar jobs in the Swedish agricultural sector. Additionally it is possible for individuals to pick and sell berries for 12,500 SEK<sup>3</sup> without having to pay income tax, indicating that it will be more profitable to sell berries on their own rather than getting hired at a berry picking company and pay subsequent taxes. Wingborg also identifies the two systems which the migrant labour force is divided in. The first system refers to berry pickers who travel to Sweden on a tourist visa, which are allowed to pick and sell berries for less than 12,500 SEK on a tax-free basis. The second system is through recruitment companies and agencies, where workers have to pay 25% Special Income Tax for Non-residents (SINK), earn a minimum salary of minimum wage of 16,372 SEK if hired by a Swedish firm and 17,730 SEK if hired by a foreign recruitment company. Workers in the second system also have to attain a working permit issued by the Swedish migration board. Working permits was given as a part of the Swedish Governments labour migration policy changes in 2007 that was aimed to officially regulate the labour migration flow of foreign berry pickers from countries outside of Nordic countries and non-European

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<sup>3</sup> 1USD = 6.5 SEK, (XE, 2011-09-10)

Union (EU) member countries, by introducing working permits and resident permits (Government office of Sweden, 2008). From the year 2000 there has been an increasing number of Thai berry pickers; in particular from the rural sector; farmers from the northeastern parts of Thailand. The table below provides an overview of the labour migration flow of these Thai migrant berry pickers with granted working permits in Sweden during the period of 2007- 2011.

**Table 1.1 Numbers of foreign and Thai migrant berry pickers attaining working permits in Sweden from year 2007-2011**



Source: Swedish Migration Board  
2011

The decrease in the number of berry pickers during the year 2010-2011 can be reflected on the changes on labour migration policies made by the Swedish Government to regulate the labour migration flow by putting requirements on the foreign recruitment companies to have an affiliated company (branch) registered in Sweden and follow the collective wage agreement set at a minimum wage of 17730 SEK.

The large number of Thai migrant berry pickers in Sweden has resulted in Thailand being the largest country that sends migrant workers to Sweden, not taking in European Union member countries into account. To be more precise, Thailand sends more migrant workers to Sweden than the United States, India, China, or any

other country outside of the European union (Pettersson, Thord & Arvidsson, Monika, 2011, cited in Wingborg, 2011).

### **1.2.1 The Migration Policies of Berry Picking**

Swedish authorities have, in the past decade, tried to formalize the migration channels of foreign migrant berry pickers. New regulations of income taxation was introduced on berry pickers because foreign berry pickers were invited to pick berries in an organized form for a company and was considered to be doing work for the berry buyer and by the law were supposed to pay tax in Sweden along with the berry buyers, who were made to pay employment tax too (Skatteverket, 2011) in 2003. The year 2007 saw the Swedish Government deciding to change the labour migration policies in their attempt to officially regulate the labour migration flow of foreign berry pickers from countries outside of the Nordic countries and non-European Union (EU) member countries, by introducing working permits and resident permits. The working and residence permits have to be formally approved before a person can enter Sweden. The law does not apply to other Nordic citizens or to citizens of the EU. The new legislation came into power on 15th December 2008 (Government office of Sweden, 2008). To get a working permit that has been approved by the migration board, the Swedish Forest Berries Association would have to approve the invitation and the number of workers the companies' wishes to hire as foreign labour. The requirements for foreign berry pickers proved to be deficient which led into further investigation in the berry picking industry (Swedish Migration Board, 2011).

April 2011 saw the Swedish Government introducing additional regulations on the previous requirements of 2008, stating that the collective wage agreement is set on a minimum wage of 16372 SEK if hired by a Swedish firm and 17730 SEK if hired by a foreign recruitment company. The new legislation also included that the foreign recruitment companies has to have an affiliated company (branch) registered in Sweden that is then the berry picker's employer. The collective wage agreement should also include other conditions of employment in terms of insurance, working

hours, and holiday compensation. Additional to this, recruitment companies must also be able to show that they are capable of paying the workers their dues, and they are also obliged to provide information about the required work, general knowledge about the Everyman's right and traffic regulations (Swedish Migration Board, 2011).

According to the Asian Research Center for Migration, foreign job recruitment business started in Thailand in late 1960s. At that time the recruitment was facilitated by the employers who sent representatives to Thailand to find workers; however in some cases workers contacted the employers on their own. In 1968 the Recruitment and Jobseekers Protection Act was endorsed and it provided opportunities for employment agencies to be set up under the licensing from the MOL to formally recruit workers for international jobs. Between the years 1985 to 2010, 218- 250 employment agencies had been licensed under MOL where an estimate of 65 percent was stated to be located in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA), 18 percent in the Northeast and the rest in the central part of the country (Theeravit, 2011). The recruitment of Thai workers for international employment today is managed through five channels, which are as follows: 1) undertaking application on the workers' own cognizance, 2) accepting jobs arranged by the TOEA, 3) being recruited by foreign employer and escorted to the job site by them, 4) recruitment facilitated by private employment agencies 5) being accepted into a foreign job training program (Supang et al 2001 cited in Theeravit, 2011). In 2004, 1527 Thai migrant berry pickers earned an estimate of 85 million THB harvesting berries for sale to the Swedish Forest Berries Association. The Thai Government then in 2005 issued special directives for procedures of processing Thai migrant workers for employment as wild berry pickers in Sweden. By facilitating the Thai workers seeking employment as berry picking the Thai Government gained access to get some statistics and had better control over the labour migration process. In the year 2009, 5911 Thai migrant berry pickers went to Sweden largely through recruitment efforts of unlicensed private employment recruiters that were allowed due to the fact that it was temporary, and seasonal migration of berry picking was seen as voluntary and in such that the workers were "self-employed". However the MOL decided that such recruiters should proceed under the third channel of foreign employment that is arranged and escorted by the

employer. Concerning the labour export policy, Thailand have in the past promoted it, that is after the Asian financial crisis, Thailand in 1998 set a goal of sending 210,000 Thai migrant workers abroad, hoping to ease the unemployment rate at home and gaining approximate 100,000 million in remittances. However, nowadays Thailand has actually made more of an interventionist policy of labour export, by promoting trained migrant workers with more active role of the state in terms of marketing, and job training through bilateral labour service agreement with receiving countries.

### **1.2.2 Previous Studies on Thai migrant Berry Pickers**

Although Thai seasonal labour migration to Sweden has been taking place for more than a decade, yet only little research has been done in this topic. However, two reports by Ms. Junya Yimprasert in 2010, under the Thai Labour Campaign (TLC), Network Against Exploitation and Trafficking of Migrant Workers (NAT), were conducted to investigate the labour trafficking incidences of Thai migrant berry pickers in Sweden and Finland. The first report the *“Blueberry Fiasco’ in Sweden”* consisted of a field survey conducted in 9 provinces in Thailand: Phetchabun, Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani , Nakorn Phanom, Ubon Ratchatani, Sisaket, Ruriram, Nakhon Ratchasima, visiting 20 villages, meeting with Thai migrant berry pickers, and studying their situation, in particular those who had been exposed to labour exploitation, and those who had increased their debts by going to Sweden in the previous berry season of 2009 (Yimprasert, 2010a). The second report, *“The on-going struggle of Thai berry pickers in Sweden”*, survey the Thai migrant berry picker in Åsele municipality in Sweden, studying the recruitment process, employment contracts, working conditions, the expenses of the labour migration process, and expenses during the migrant workers period in Sweden, and the migrant workers’ income and debts. These studies found that most Thai migrant berry pickers are poor farmers living on the countryside and that some migrant berry pickers falls prey to illegal and uncertified middlemen, agents, and recruitment companies who exploit these Thai farmer’s labour (Yimprasert, 2010b).

More recently, the nonprofit organization Swedwatch, who takes on the matters of Swedish business relation in low-wage countries, released an inspection report "*Mors Lilla Olle, Så exploateras asiatiska bärplockare i de svenska skogarna*" on the Asian migrant berry pickers with an emphasis on the Thai migrants. The objectives of this report were to investigate how the Asian migrant workers are exploited under the current legislation and migration policies, along with what should be done to remedy the labour exploitation. The study consisted of empirical material in forms of interviews with foreign berry pickers, companies in the wild berry industry, and authorities involved in this matter in several locations all around Sweden. Also, after reviewing previous documentations on labour migration policies and labour laws in Sweden, what can be noted from these reports is that foreign labour in the berry picking industry play a very important role and contributes to the wild berry industry beneficially.

This paper chooses to investigate how the lives of the Thai migrant berry pickers have been affected from this labour migration, to act as support to whether this labour migration should be facilitated and improved. Much of the previous surveys have been focusing on the labour migration process of the Thai migrant berry pickers, labour exploitation and labour trafficking, emphasizing on unsuccessful cases while the successful cases have been left un- or understudied. This paper therefore takes on the approach of studying successful cases of Thai migrant berry pickers through a purposive sampling method and analyzes the seasonal labour migration of berry picking in relation to development by focusing on employment and economic and social aspects which affect the migrant berry pickers' living standards. A case study in a small district, Bueng Krachap in Phetchapun province, was analyzed, where 170 Thai farmers had traveled to Sweden annually for the past decade (Singsathorn, 2011). This particular district was chosen due to the high number of Thai migrant berry pickers who travelled annually to Sweden, and also due to the fact that the first migrant berry pickers from the district travelled to Sweden more than ten years ago. The methods used to collect data were primary through interviews and observations, including both informal and unstructured interviews. The aim of the study is to

contribute some knowledge on the Thai farmers who seasonally pick berries in Sweden and how this transnational seasonal labour migration has affected their socio-economic development. This study will contribute with valuable information about the Thai migrant berry picker's and how the seasonal labour migration has affected their lives, reflecting on the relationship between seasonal labour migration and development.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The research objectives for this study are:

- 1) To investigate the causes for the seasonal labour migration of berry picking in Sweden.
- 2) To analyze how the transnational seasonal labour migration have affected the development of farmer's economic and social conditions and employment.
- 3) To make recommendations on how to improve the facilitation and management of the transnational seasonal labour migration of berry picking by the Thai and Swedish authorities.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

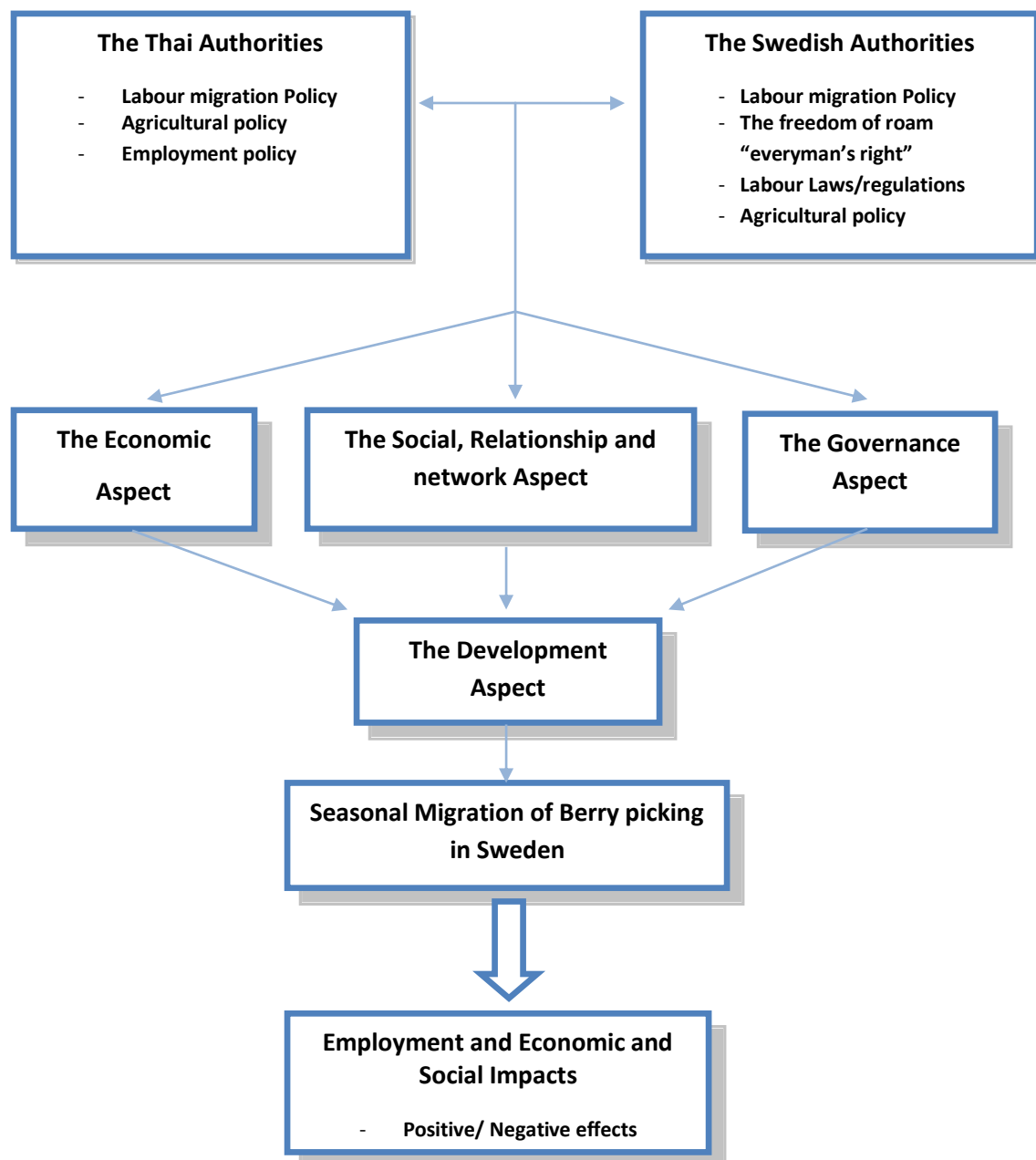
The research questions for this research are as follows:

- 1) What causes the seasonal labour migration of berry picking in Sweden?
- 2) How has the seasonal migration of berry picking in Sweden affected the development of Thai migrant berry pickers' economic and social conditions and employment?
- 3) How can the transnational seasonal labour migration of berry picking be improved in terms of facilitation and management by the Thai and Swedish authorities?

## 1.5 Conceptual Framework

The choice to migrate or not, is in principal the decision of the berry picker. The conceptual framework of this thesis is constructed by different aspects of the seasonal labour migration that could affect the farmer's living standards that is the economic aspect, the social, relationship and network aspect, and finally, the governance aspect.

**Figure 1.2 The conceptual framework**





### **1.5.1 The Economic Aspect**

The economic aspects attempts to evaluate whether the farmers are better off or worse off economically, and also it identifies the profits and losses made from the berry picking. The economic factor will examine the profit on the income earned and the recruitment fees paid by the farmers to the agents and to the recruitment companies. This aspect will then consider the payment of modality and the investment (money paid to make the trip) made by the farmers. After that, it will look into the way the farmers' loans and debts are structured and also make an attempt to understand the farmers' perception on risk that is facing a bad berry season and not being able to pick enough berries to cover the cost of the labour migration process, and how that influences their decision to travel.

### **1.5.2 The Social, Relationship and Network Aspect**

The social, relationship and network aspect examines the social factors that influence the decision to migrate; the opportunity for tourism and travel, working conditions, and the work load. All the aspects will be examined and the relationship between the migrant berry pickers, the recruitment agencies, berry companies and the Thai and Swedish Authorities would be looked into. As mentioned previously, berry picking is not only arranged through one channel but rather built up on a network where farmers share information with each other and that in turn influences the decision for migrating or not. Through social networks, farmers also attain bargaining power in such a way that they can understand that they are being taken advantage of or not by the berry companies. To provide information, the governments and media also play an important role. Solidarity and guarantee of no negative effects on migrant pickers is important in the berry picking industry in such that social capital and good relationships between farmers and recruitment companies the berry companies and the state will be beneficial to all parties.

### **1.5.3 The Governance Aspect**

The governance aspect examines whether the existing labour migration policies are comprehensive and efficient enough and the nature of the agreement between the farmers and recruitment companies. The governance aspect consists of transparency of the employment contracts, as it is important for the farmers to have enough information about their employment and working conditions. So there are several considerations, like whether sufficient information is provided by the company to the migrant berry picker (for example market price of berries, terms of sick leave, et cetera). The governance aspect will also examine whether the migrant berry pickers attain bargaining power in such that the farmers need not only to know that they will gain financially from the contract but also that they are not further taken advantage off on the further profit of by the recruitment and berry companies. So, this particular aspect looks into the farmer's access to labour associations, migrant workers unions and such, which could help and put forward the migrant berry pickers' interests.

### **1.5.4 The Development Aspect**

The development aspect will examine all issues of migrant berry pickers and provide a holistic perspective of the seasonal migration in order to determine the outcome of the labour migration for berry picking. The development aspect seeks to identify how the berry picking industry can be beneficial to small-scale farmers. The importance of looking into the governance of the migration process which deals with issues of recruitment and participation, transparency and accountability and effectiveness and efficiency is there to put forward recommendations on how the seasonal migration of berry picking can be improved. The Development aspect also tries to consider the impacts of berry picking and how the risks can be shared between the different stakeholder's farmers, agents, the recruitment companies and the berry companies and the Thai and Swedish Authorities. Risks like the Thai migrant berry pickers might face a bad berry season, get subjected to high recruitment fees of recruitment companies and agents, or subjected to high charges for accommodation

and living expenses in Sweden. This will also try to forecast what the berry picking industry might be like in the future, whether the labour migration will become institutionalized or whether it will remain as current. In section 1.1 the wild berry industry is stated to have large potentials to expand where it might lead to a hike in the demand for migrant berry pickers.

### **1.5.5 Employment, Economic and Social Impacts**

The farmers' living standards can be divided into several different aspects such as social development, employment and empowerment, economic security, and other such different aspects. However, I have only chosen to investigate three impacts, which are the economic development, the social development, and employment. Impacts like these were chosen because the seasonal migration of berry picking seems to be heavily driven by the economy and society. Employment also plays a major role as farmers are underemployed in the season between planting and harvesting which can also be reflected on inefficient allocation of resources that is labour, as the farmers are structurally unemployed and not efficiently engaged in full-time work. The domestic rice farming does not seem to be providing enough so that the farmers can improve their living standards. The rice farming can therefore be looked upon as insufficient employment to improve farmers' living standards.

### **1.6 Limitations**

The study focuses on the impact on the Thai migrant farmers' living standards from seasonal labour migration of berry picking in Sweden. This research does not assess the labour migration process, the existing labour migration policies and access to employment of Thai farmers. My study is not a representation of the whole population of Thai migrant berry pickers, rather of a particular community which has been participating in the berry picking in Sweden annually in recent years. Time limitation also restricted me from collecting data, as many of the migrant berry pickers were ready to leave for Sweden with the rapid arrival of the season of berry

picking, which was closing in at the end of June beginning of July. The subject matter also provides an insight into very sensitive topics of the farmers' livelihoods, that is, their debts and incomes, exploitation of their labour, opportunity to seasonally migrate, relationship and networks to middle men who charge under the table recruitment fees.

### **1.7 Research Methodology**

Case studies are among the oldest research methods in recorded history that today accounts for large proportions of books and articles in psychology, anthropology, sociology, history, political science, education, economics, management, biology, and medical science. Much knowledge that we know about the empirical world today have been produced through case study research. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett (2005, cited in Flyvbjerg, 2011) states that in the recent years roughly half of all articles in the top political science journals have used case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The definition of "case study" is somewhat abundant as there is no single definition to what a case study consist of or exclude. The Merriam-Webster's dictionary (2009) provides a straightforward definition of case study as an intensive analysis of an individual community or a person stressing developmental factors in relation to the environment. This said, a case study approach was chosen for this research.

### **1.8 Site Selection and Research Design**

All data was collected in Thailand, the main research site was a small district of Bueng Krachap located in the district (amphoe) of Wichianburi in Phetchabun province. From the sub district of Bueng Krachap, hundreds of small scale farmers have traveled to Sweden repeatedly to pick berries, season after season. Interviews with governmental officials and organizational representatives were conducted in Bangkok at the headquarters locations and in Chaiyapum province during a pre-

departure workshop for Thai migrant berry pickers who were set off to migrate to Finland and Sweden for the berry season, 2011. Most of the primary data used for the thesis were collected during the field research in Phetchabun, which took place from June to July 2011.

My intention with the research is not to develop an in-depth description of the migrant berry pickers but rather to investigate the relationship of the seasonal labour migration and the development of the migrant berry pickers. For this research a pure qualitative analysis method was chosen since I was interested in how the seasonal labour migration of berry picking has contributed to the Thai farmer's economic and social development and employment. Through a qualitative approach I investigated what the seasonal labour migration had contributed with, in terms of improving or deteriorating the economic and social conditions of the migrant berry pickers. In addition, I also wish to deepen the understanding of the farmer's structural unemployment and difficulties relating to their agricultural work that could influence the decision to migrate and be the causes for the seasonal labour migration.

### **1.9 Data Collection Methods**

A multi-method design was used for this study to answer my research question and those were as follow:

- Institutional interviews with governmental officials and organisational representatives.
- Semi-structured individual interviews with migrant berry pickers
- Focus group interview with migrant berry pickers
- Observations

The major source of data collection in my study was the in-depth focus groups and informal conversation and observations of the migrant berry pickers. During the field work, only certain interviews was recorded because the migrant workers felt uncomfortable and intimidated in having a recorded interview. All the discussions with the governmental officials and organisational staff were recorded. During the

unrecorded interviews only key points were written down, in order to not distract the correspondents from speaking by writing down what they were saying. After each session I developed the key points further and emphasized on main aspects of the entire interview as well as the observations of the participant's behavior, body language and such. Each focus group interview lasted approximately 1-3 hours entirely dependent on the participant's wishes. No translator was needed as all respondents felt comfortable talking in Thai with me, and Swedish in case of the Migration Officer of the Swedish Embassy.

The data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that there were no new data emerging from the data collection tools (personal interviews, focus group interviews and observations) and from the analysis. After having collected sufficient amount of information I then divided my findings into categories according to the research objectives and then analysed that data. The synthesis of the data consisted of the aspects of the conceptual framework, previous studies and related theories that has been reviewed in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 General Migration Theories**

Labour migration generally refers to people crossing borders for purpose of employment in a foreign country. It is important to acknowledge that there is no universally accepted definition of labour migration. The “labour migrant” term can be strictly used only to cover the movement with purpose of employment (IOM, 2011). An important notation is that migration cannot solely be understood through economic analysis. Social networks and social factors also play a big part in migration. Labour migration can sometimes be used to describe someone who migrates in order to pursue “seasonal work“. Seasonal migration is very common in agricultural cycles where human labour moves with the harvest.

The Neoclassical theory of migration views migrants as individuals who make rational choices based on cost benefit analysis to maximize their utility. Therefore people are expected to move to areas where they can be most productive and earn the highest wages. However the ability obviously depends on specific skills that a person possesses and the exact structures of labour markets. Neoclassical migration theory states that people tend to move from low income areas towards high income areas, or, the direction of migration is due to fluctuation in the business cycle. To frame it in other words, labour migrants tend to move from developing to developed countries or less developed countries to more developed countries. In general these kinds of theories are often referred to as pull and push models where pull factors are “attractive conditions” making people wanting to move there (e.g. demand for labour available land, good economic opportunities and political freedoms). Push factors are considered as unattractive ones which people wish to move away from (e.g. demographic growth, low living standard, lack of economic opportunities and political repression).

A lot of criticism is there towards the neoclassical theory, as the theory assumes that the potential migrants have perfect information about wage levels and employment opportunities in destination countries. Migrants are most often faced with contradictory information and are subjective to a wide range of constraints (Sassen, 1988, Boyd, 1989, Portes and Rumbaut, 2006 cited in Massey 1993). Pull and push models also receive a lot of criticism as push and pull factors are simplistic and cannot explain why certain groups prefer one country rather than another with the same characteristics. Historians, social scientists and geographers among others state that migrant behavior is strongly influenced by historical experiences as well as by family and community dynamics (Portes and Borocz, 1989). Compared to the neoclassical economic theory, the new economics of labour migration approach argues that migration decisions are not isolated and made by only the individual. New economics of labour migration states that family, households and even the communities matter and the unit of analysis. The new economics of migration therefore focus on the social group rather than on the individual. Neoclassical theory also sometimes support the idea of “freedom of migration” and “open borders” as in the long run wage levels will equalize globally. However, wage levels may fall and be even lower than in the country of origin and cause social turmoil in more developed country (Haas, 2007).

Dual or segmented labour market theory stresses that international migration is caused by structural demand in advanced economies both for low and high skilled labour to carry out production. Segmented labour market theory states that there is a division in primary and secondary markets and that economic polarization increases between highly paid and poorly paid workers. The segmented labour market also helps to explain the important roles of the government, employers and the continued migration even though wage differentials are decreasing. The segmented labour market theory focuses on the demand side, stating that a strong demand for low skilled labour is easy to exploit and is likely to undermine border restriction policies creating a black market for migrant labour and opportunity for people smugglers and recruitment agents. The governments can only encounter undocumented migration



through labour market changes and by removing incentives for employing workers (Haas, 2007).

Migration networks theory has its roots in sociology and anthropology stating that informal networks such as personal relationships, family and household patterns friendship, community ties and mutual help in economic and social matters are vital resources (a social capital) for individuals and groups and should therefore be taken into account. Similarly to new economics of labour migration, network migration theory state that migration decisions are usually made not by the individual but by families. Families might decide to send one or more members of the family to work in another region or another country in order to maximize income as well as survival chances. Most cases see migration decisions generally made by the elder males and the younger family members who are expected to obey and respect their decisions. Most economic migrants are young and economically active people who are often “target earners” who want to save up enough to improve conditions at home by buying land, housing, set up business or pay for education with the income earned from overseas employment (Massey et al 1993).

The networks theories are based on common origins where families and friends help to provide shelter, work assistance in coping with procedures and support in personal difficulties. Since these social networks make migration more manageable and safer for the migrants, they also have the tendency to return and result in an on-going migration pattern, which can be called seasonal migration. So the first migration movement created a self-sustaining social process referred to as cumulative causation of migration. Cumulative causation of migration states that each act of migration contributes to the likelihood of an additional movement due to the social capital, which refers to relationships, knowledge and skills that advance one’s potentials to migrate. Initially small social networks of migration can therefore become larger mass movements of itself in terms of chain migration. Migration creates social capital among people who migrate and thereby raises the odds of them migrating again. Networks facilitation of families and friends makes the migration more difficult to control by governments. These networks are forms of social capital

that people create to gain access to employment abroad (Massey et al 1993). Noting that social capital is a third crucial migration resource that enables and inspires people to migrate after material and human capital (education, skills, knowledge) (Haas, 2007).

Institutional theory states that if international migration flows occur on a large scale, it induces profit and non-profit organizations, which can be legal or illegal. The organizations provide services such as labour contracts, documents, dwellings, legal advice or transportation for migrants. Larger international migration flows thus become institutionalized. Generally institutional theory of migration refers to the role of private institutions and voluntary institutions which steps in to assist the migration process as they become another source of social capital to the migrants while they get established (Haas, 2007).

Migration system theory refers to international migration as a product of interacting nation-states and congruent socio-cultural, geopolitical, and economic factors and policies where these interdependencies give rise to a sizeable and sustainable bilateral migration flows. The founder of migration system theory Mabogunje (1970) defined migration system as a set of places that is linked by flow and counter flow of people, goods, services, and information, which tend to facilitate further exchange, including migration, between the places (Haas, 2008). The world-system theory of migration state that it is a natural outcome of disruptions and dislocation of resources such as land, raw materials and labour and that migration is unavoidable with the process of capitalist development. The world-system theory, according to Sassen (1988) argues that international migration is an outcome of global capitalism and that the contemporary patterns of international migration tend to be from the a periphery (poor nations) to the core (rich nations) because factors associated with industrial development in the First World generated structural economic problems acting as push factors in the Third World (Haas, 2007).

## 2.2 Migration and Development

Hein de Haas (2007) states that migration and development is anything but a new topic, pointing out that development has always been part of the debate in migration-related research. Skeldon (2008) states that it has only been the last ten to fifteen years that migration has been seen as a phenomenon that can be influenced or be controlled to promote development, whereas Stephen Castles (2008) defines the relationship between migration and development as “The two are parts of the same process and therefore constantly interactive”. Skeldon (2008) points out the difficulties in conceptualizing both the concept of migration and development. So the debates on migration generally excludes the majority of those who move internally within countries as the most focus nowadays has been on those who move internationally in particularly, those who move from the developing to the developed world.

The word “development” has been actively discussed in academia on how development should be defined as well as what development is. The concept of development is said to have first appeared in the postwar reconstruction after 1945 in Europe and then applied in a top-down way to the post-colonial Third World. The most common term of measuring development is growth in GDP (absolute or per capita). An international consensus of development can also be defined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) where poverty is seen as the fundamental measure of development. However, in terms of migration and development, economic growth is still considered to be central to any meaningful cause in debate about development. Again, in terms of international migration and development studies, the terms of economic growth is highly questionable as the many migrant workers who provide capital for economic growth are being exploited of their labour and receiving low returns on their labour have been discussed as failure to achieve development. The key point that Skeldon (2008) stresses on is that development needs to be divided into specific components before any role of migration in the process can be meaningfully assessed.

Hein de Haas (2007) argue that there is a need to study migration impacts in a wider societal context to see how migration (1) is a part of the process of a broader transformation process embodied in the term of development, but (2) also such that migration attain its internal, self-sustaining and undermining dynamics and (3) impacts on the transformation processes. Among the difficulties is to generalize about the causes and consequences of migration due to diverse and complex phenomenon as well as it is difficult to separate migration from other social-economic and political processes as migration can be looked upon on both a macro- and micro- level.

So, in terms of labour migration Haas (2007) argue that reasons and results of migration are strongly interrelated and part of the same processes of socio-economic transformation in sending and receiving the society's problems. For example, labour migration can be due to unemployment at origin or due to labour demand at destination causing incentives to migrate. According to Haas (2007) the fundamental understanding of migration and development interactions can only be possible from analyzing empirical data and theoretical literature.

### **2.3 Migration and Development Theories**

During the 1950s and 1960s, development economist referred to labour migration as integral part of modernization, by looking at both the effects on migration on development and development on migration. Mostly through unemployment (labour surpluses) in certain areas and the inflow of capital through productivity and remittance in terms of improved incomes (Massey, et al. 1998 cited in Castel, 2008). According to Haas neoclassical migration theory is firmly rooted in the development theory of modernization based on teleological views interpreting development as a being linear and a universal process consisting of successive stages (cf. Rostow 1960 cited in Haas, 2007). Modernization theory is the term used for the transition from the traditional society of the past towards a modern society, presenting an idea that modern production method, or advanced technology for industry, would lead countries to strengthen their economies and lead them to development. So, in relation to migration it was argued that a country had to become a modern

(industrialized) society to experience migration from rural to urban areas (Bradshaw, 1987). Todaro and Harris (1970) developed a two-sector model developed to explain rural to urban migration flows in developing countries despite rising unemployment levels in urban centers. Today the “Harris-Todaro model” still remains as a basis of neo-classical migration theory. Bauer and Zimmermann (1998:97, cited in Haas) redefined the model including other factors such as expected income gains that could be achieved through migration income, probability of finding employment and cost and risks associated migration.

The network theory of migration focuses on the vital role of personal relations between migrants and non-migrants, and the way this social capital facilitates, perpetuates and transforms migration processes. The theory of migration is closely associated with the migration system concept where the fundamental assumption is that migration alters the social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions at both the sending and receiving countries; in other words the entire developmental space within which migration processes operate. The system theory in comparison to the network theory argue that migration not only affects and is affected by the direct social environment of migrants but also by the restructures in the entire societal or “developmental” context of the concrete spaces in which migration takes place, both at the receiving and sending societies. The migration systems theory draws a two-way dynamic link between migration and development which becomes more relevant for elaborating theoretical frameworks that put migration into the broader perspective of development. Migration system theories adds to the network theories that migration flows counter flows of goods, remittances, ideas, and information that tend to be geographically structured (patterned) and take the shape of spatially clustered flows. These elements in migration flows can typically not be explained by factors such as unemployment as well as income and other opportunity differentials which can be encountered in particular regions, villages, or ethnic (sub) groups that tend to specialize in migration to particular areas, cities, or even city quarters, either within the same country or abroad.

Considering the terms of network and system theory, stating the fact that initial circumstances at both the receiving and sending end are modified by the migration process, causes and consequences of migration should not be studied separately, but as a part of the same process and system. As Massey (1990, cited in Haas, 2007) pointed out, migration induces changes in social and economic structures that make additional migration more likely. Migration therefore simultaneously reshapes the socio-economic “development context” at both the origin and destination which in turn are likely to influence subsequent migration patterns e.g. remittances alter social as well as economic context in areas of origin. In order to attain a holistic context of development from effects of migration it is important to include non-immigrants in any migration impact analysis, as migration tends to affect sending societies as a whole and not just those who migrate.

The school of dependency views migration as detrimental to underdeveloped countries and also to various causes of underdevelopment rather than the path to development. Andre Gunder Frank (1966a; 1969 cited in Haas, 2007) one of the founders of the dependency theory hypothesized that migration and global capitalism contributed to the “development of underdevelopment”. According to the dependency theory, migration ruins stable peasant societies, undermines their economies and uproots their populations.

Thus, using the world-system theory of migration, countries can be classified according to their degree of dependency, and distinguished between the capitalist “core” nations, followed by the “semi-peripheral” and the “peripheral”, stating that migration drain on them and that labour follows where capital goes rather than the other way around suggested by the neo-classical theory. One can see increasing acknowledgement that a capital cannot be blamed for problems of underdevelopment but that specific developmental effects of incorporation of a country, region into the global capitalist system seems to depend much more on the conditions of how the incorporation is related to wider institutional structures, internal socio-political cohesion and economic strength. So, that way the incorporation into global capitalism can have both positive and negative effects in different areas of development and on different societies and groups of people. Labour migration can on the other hand not

be automatically interpreted as a desperate flight from misery as we cannot rule out the possibility that migration facilitates development through reverse flows of capital (remittances), knowledge, ideas, attitudes, and people in terms of return migration (Haas, 2007).

During the 1960s a radically different interpretation of migration was provided by the historic structural theorists who have their intellectual roots in Marxist political economy and in world-systems theory (Castles & Miller 2003:25 cited in Haas, 2007). Comparing the modernization theory of gradually progressing towards economic development, underdeveloped countries are trapped by their disadvantaged position within the global geopolitical structure the historical structural theorists claim, that people have unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to reinforce these inequalities as economic and political power is unequally distributed among developed and underdeveloped countries.

More recently over the past four decades the impacts of migration on development in immigrant sending countries and communities has been on the top of the agenda where two radically approaches are discussed “migration optimists” by balanced growth and “migration pessimists” The debate on migration and development explains why the relationship is somewhat under-theorized and largely disconnected from more general debates. On one hand, the optimist views of migration is stated to be inspired by the neoclassical theory and modernisation theory, and looks at the matter in terms of brain gain, more equality, remittance investment, development functionalists and less development. On the other hand, the pessimistic view is inspired by the structuralist neo-Marxist, disintegration, brain drain, more inequality, cconsumption, dependency and more migration.

The migration optimists are mostly inspired by neoclassical migration and developmentalist modernization theories, which are all affiliated to the functionalist paradigm in social theory. Both neo-classical and developmentalist believe that migration has generally had a positive impact on the development process in sending societies where in particular return migrants are seen as active agents of economic

growth. The migration pessimist's appeals the structural social theory, which encompasses neo-Marxist, dependency, world-systems, and, at least to a certain extent, cumulative causation theory. The structuralist approach in general addresses migration as a negative phenomenon contributing to the further underdevelopment of sending societies. Lipton (1980 cited in Haas, 2007) argue in contrast to popular perception that it tends not to be the poorest or most miserable who leave because a certain amount of wealth is required to cover cost and risks involved in migrating. However, in practice it is seldom that the poorest migrate and there is a misconception stating that the poor villagers are most likely to migrate and it has also been argued that most migrants tend to be already employed, more entrepreneurial, open-minded, and relatively better educated people (Zachariah et al 2001, cited in Haas, 2007). Since those who migrate are better off in the socio-economic sector within communities will increase as remittances and other benefits of migration would go disproportionately to the better-off (Lipton, 1980 cited in Haas, 2007)., therefore, it is argued that migration will not contribute to the alleviation of the poverty of those who are left behind and are worst-off (Haas, 2007).



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### 3.1 Phetchabun Province

Phetchabun province is located in the lower north of Thailand between the central and northeast part of the country with certain specific physical characteristics like a horseshoe shaped mountain range and deep forest in the northern part paralleled in both sides of east and west and wetlands, with plains in the middle part of the province. The soil fertility conditions of the land have facilitated agricultural cultivation and history has seen the promotion of human settlement in this area, making Phetchabun a province which has always been an agriculturally productive sector.

**Figure 3.1 Geographical location of Phetchabun Province** (map retrieved from [maps.google.co.th](https://maps.google.co.th))



Phetchabun province is administratively divided into eleven sub districts (Amphoe), Wichian Buri being one of these, and subdivided district into 117 communes (Tambon) Bueng Krachap being one of these, where the field study of this research took place (Tourism Investment Promotion Division, 2011).

The region has an area of about 12,668 kilometer squares. Attaining a population of 976,875 million in 2007 with a population density is 77inh/km<sup>2</sup>. The GDP of the province is measured up to THB 62.92 billion (approx. 2.1 billion USD). The average annual income per capita in Phetchabun is 12,914 THB (approx.431 USD), with the legal minimum wage at 135 THB (approx. 4.5 USD) per day. The table below shows the occupational distribution in the province, noting that the largest occupational groups are farmers and fishermen (National Statistics of Thailand, 2008).

**Table 3.1 Occupational distributions in Phetchabun province for period 2004-2008.**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
High Government Officer / Manager	44,993	44,913	38,494	30,541	6,710
Technician	15,657	22,055	20,775	21,718	26,566
Specialized Technician	9,130	7,229	9,747	8,361	16,109
Clerk	8,585	7,939	14,968	11,773	14,622
Service Officer / Shop and Restaurant Staff	50,828	56,011	60,286	89,943	96,930
Farmer / Fisher	271,542	246,639	268,329	295,997	260,265
Craftsman	40,903	55,076	36,631	44,985	45,129
Factory / Assembly Worker	12,592	23,534	20,762	19,430	24,357
General Staffs in Marketing and Services	49,705	97,593	111,241	87,566	87,637
<b>Total</b>	<b>503,935</b>	<b>560,989</b>	<b>581,233</b>	<b>610,314</b>	<b>578,32</b>

Source: National Statistics of Thailand,  
2008

### 3.2 The Sample

The field research was conducted in the sub-district Tambun Bueng Krachap in Phetchabun where 16 migrant berry pickers were interviewed. The governmental and organizational interviews were conducted in Bangkok and Chaiyapum during a pre-departure training workshop for Thai migrant berry pickers.

The key informants were as follows:

- Mr. Conny Larsson, Migration Officer, The Swedish Embassy, Bangkok.
- Mrs. Kusumal Rachawong, National Project Coordinator, International Labour Organization (ILO), Bangkok
- Mr. Boonsong Chaletorn, Thai Women Network, Professor in Economics, Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok
- Ms. Jearkul Prasert, Chief of Job-Seeker Development - Ministry of Labour (MOL), Chaiyapum
- Ms. Jatuporn Wongkeaw, Chief of Training Section - MOL, Chaiyapum
- Mr. Nitichai Wisuthipan, Labour Specialist - MOL, Chaiyapum
- Ms. Sikharin Singsathorn, Local staff Employment office Phetchabun - MOL, Chaiyapum

Apart from staff and members of governmental institutions and organizations, 16 migrant workers and one wife of migrant worker representing 13 families were interviewed in focus groups. Certain restrictions were placed on who qualified as respondents, these were according to:

- Thai male and female citizen
- Ages 20-64 (classified as working age population)
- Farmers occupation
- Residing in the case study area

Interviews conducted in Phetchabun Province consisted of 16 migrant workers where five were women and eleven male workers, ages 37- 58 years old and family members as well as assistant to village head.

**Figure 3. 2 Migrant workers at the pre-departure work shop**



### **3.3 Entering and Access to the Field**

I started my field research through a snowball technique which I then later on transformed into a purposive sampling method. The first step into the field was made by collecting information from Swedish newspapers relating to problems and issues of Thai migrant berry pickers. From the articles I gathered key points and ideas to develop my research. Theories and concept related to the topic was reviewed prior to the actual conducted field research to create better understanding.

I first contacted the Swedish Embassy by email and conducted my first interview with the migration officer. The Swedish Embassy plays a central part in the migration process as they receive the potential migrant workers visa applications along with working permits. Thereafter I contacted Mr. Boonsong Chaletorn a professor in economics at Ramkhamhaeng University, who previously lived in Sweden for several years and is actively engaged in working to improve the migration channels and employment conditions of the Thai migrant berry pickers. Next I got in touch with the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific which currently was launching a project, focusing on return and reintegration of Thai labour migrant returning home from the EU and neighboring countries. The people there provided me with the opportunity to observe one of the pre-departure training workshops prior to the berry season of 2011, which hundreds of Thai migrant berry pickers attended. Through the Training workshop I gained opportunity to conduct a minor pilot study of my intended research where one-on-one interviews as well as focus groups of 4-6 workers was conducted of both workers who had previously travelled to Sweden and Finland and also new comers who were set off for seasonal berry pick in Finland and Sweden for the first time.

In Petchabun, I met up with a staff member of the employment office in Petchabun who help me to gain access to a minor community of Thai farmers which annually migrated to Sweden for seasonal work of berry picking, that ultimately became my sample. Focus group interviews were conducted with migrant berry pickers and representatives from families where one or more family members had previously and repeatedly traveled to Sweden for seasonal work.

### **3.4 Organizational Interviews/ Semi-Structured Interviews**

I conducted one-on-one interviews with key informants from governmental institutions and organizations to obtain social knowledge as these individuals work are closely related and involved in the seasonal migration process of Thai farmers migrating to Sweden seasonally. Through my study I also attained much information about their institutional and organizational role in relation to berry picker migrants.

Along my field work members of staff was willing to support and serve as gatekeeper and helped me to collect the data on the Thai migrant berry pickers, like the staff at the employment office in Petchabun provided me with background information and access to the site of my case study.

### **3.5 Focus group interview**

During my pilot study I noticed that many of the migrant berry pickers felt intimidated and uncomfortable to answer questions in one-on-one interviews. Given that, I predicted that they might prefer and be more open as a part of a group taking support from and be familiar with similar people around them joining in the conversation. Therefore I decided to conduct focus groups asking questions and having them taking turns answering one at a time as focus groups may make the participants more comfortable rather than in an individual interview. Focus groups are advantageous in such that the interaction among interviewers and respondents generate more discussion will most likely provide the best information (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990)

### **3.6 Observations**

Somewhere in the middle of my research I had the opportunity to participate in a support program for pre-departure training hosted by the DOE-ILO and the TOEA where I had the opportunity to talk to migrant workers from different provinces and conduct interviews with governmental officials. Although intensive qualitative interviews accounts as a primary source of data, other methods such as observation and participation of activities also contributes with knowledgeable information. Due to this observation I could draw similarities and differences between workers from different provinces and gain a deeper understanding to the importance of the seasonal labour migration. Also I was rewarded with a glimpse of the process by which the district administration offices carry out these types of activities. Also, it allowed me to observe groups of migrants and how the workers communicate and

intervene with each other and I had a chance to talk to some family members and relatives of migrants who were not participating in the actual training but accompanied them to the workshop. The participatory methods have contributed to adjust my interviews and has made it more conversational, structured and controlled.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE THAI MIGRANT BERRY PICKERS: POLICY AND REALITY**

In this section, I will be presenting the findings from the in-depth interview I had with the five governmental officials and the three organizational representatives. I will also present the results from the focus group interviews of migrant workers which represent nine significant and different cases found in the sample. The migrant berry pickers' real names are not used in this paper for the sake of anonymity.

#### **4.1 The Policy Perspectives**

The interviews conducted with the government officials and the organizational representatives were enlightening, because they all acknowledged the benefits of the labour migration for the Thai farmers/migrant workers. The people agreed that there are mutual gains in the seasonal labour migration of berry picking; however there are unsuccessful cases where farmers pay high recruitment fees and get subjected to labour exploitation. All the governmental officials were supportive in improving and formalizing the labour migration channels of berry picking, but also acknowledged that these procedures usually take long time and require a lot of resources. The officials all noted that unsuccessful cases are easier to encounter rather than successful ones which most often receive a lot of attention among the migrant workers themselves in the form of rumors. Most governmental and organizational work of the informants was related to prevent or deal with unsuccessful cases rather than supervising and facilitating the migration process of berry picking.

The Swedish Embassy takes up an essential role in migration to Sweden as it is part of the administrative process of receiving working permits and visa applications. During the interview with the migration officer Mr. Conny Larsson, he stated that Thai labour migrants who travelled to Sweden are considered as a valuable source of labour because of their endurance and efficiency. The migration officer also emphasized on the good relation between the two countries, as many Thais have



previously migrated and settled in Sweden establishing a large community of Thai international migrants<sup>4</sup>, as well as Thailand is considered one of the top tourist destinations for Swedish citizens. He also expressed the difficulties in identifying Thai migrant berry pickers who travel by self-arrangements with stated purpose to visit family and friends rather than to go pick berries, in comparison to those who are migrating and employed by recruitment companies. *“The embassy has no knowledge on how to separate the Thai nationals who choose to pick berries as well as visit their families and relatives in Sweden. It is also very hard to reject those who arrange their labour migration process with help of their families in Sweden as their stated purpose is to visit their families”* (Mr. Conny Larsson). Whether the labour migration policies of berry pickers should be improved by both countries or not; he answered that formalized channels would be beneficial for both parties and that improvement in the current labour migration policies of berry pickers would establish a more efficient administrative process and make the authorities work more straightforward.

At some stage in the interview with the representative of Thai Women Network and activist on supporting the causes of Thai migrant berry pickers, Mr. Boonsong Chaletorn raised strong criticism towards both countries in such that the Thai authorities are acting passively to facilitate the labour migration of berry pickers to Scandinavian countries as well as the Swedish labour migration policies does not take the interest of the migrant berry pickers into account by pointing out that they are those who initially provide the labour force for the wild berry industry in Sweden. The activist stressed the value of the Thai migrant workers in the wild berry industry. He acknowledged the benefits from the seasonal labour migration, stating berry picking as a good source of income for Thai farmers who are not sufficiently supported by the Thai government in terms of agricultural policies that is prices on agricultural products, government support and subsidies to agricultural work. *“The Thai government does not give any attention to the seasonal migration of berry picking in Sweden and Finland as the number of workers is still at a very low number in comparison to Thai migrant workers migrating to Taiwan, Singapore or any other*

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<sup>4</sup> The general definition by IOM of international migrants is those who cross international borders in order to settle in another country (IOM, 2004).

*South-east Asian country which are in tens of thousands” (Mr. Boonsong Chaletorn)*

The activist pointed out that in the past there had been many unsuccessful cases where migrant workers had returned home in loss and debt rather than in profit of the seasonal migration and that improved labour migration policies and government cooperation would eliminate unsuccessful cases. He argued that for a Government to Government (G2G) employment policy, which refers to a monitored and facilitated recruitment process by both governments where the supply is aimed to meet the demand for labour in the industry. Mr. Boongsong also pointed out that a G2G employment policy would help in eliminating the high commission fees in the recruitment process. Also being active in this issue in Sweden, he mentioned that minor businesses such as renting out cabins and motor vehicles has emerged as Thai natives in Sweden has discovered possibilities to earn money on the migrant berry pickers by supplying them with accommodation and equipment needed for the seasonal work. *“Thai nationals in Sweden have made a money business of renting out transportation vehicles and summer cabins to the Thai migrant berry pickers who seasonally come to Sweden during the summer, which for the rest of the year are just put aside in wait for the berry pickers to return next season” (Mr. Boonsong Chaletorn)*

The national project coordinator at the ILO Mrs. Kusumal Rachawong, currently working on the “Going back-Moving on” project sponsored by the EU commission aimed to reintegrate migrant worker returnees who previously had been exposed to labour exploitation and labour trafficking. The “Going back-Moving on” project in the cooperation of the DOE held pre-departure training workshop for Thai migrant berry pickers who had taken the decision to migrate to Sweden and Finland for the berry season of 2011. During the interview with Mrs. Kusumal Rachawong, she expressed the concern of those berry pickers who had fallen into the categories of unsuccessful cases where the farmers had returned home empty handed or in debt. Also her recommendations were to formalize the migration process by a G2G employment policy as she acknowledges the benefits for all stakeholders, the berry companies and the migrant workers. She also presented the concern of labour

exploitation and that Thailand currently classified as a Tier 2 Watch List in the TIP report 2010 where Thai workers were specifically mentioned to have been subjective to condition of forced labour in Sweden. She acknowledged that all cases are not unsuccessful cases, although her work was mostly involved with helping those who had faced difficulties. She pointed out that the successful cases can be luring to potential migrant berry pickers as the rumors of earning large sums of money could potentially have an effect on likely berry pickers into trusting middle men and recruitment companies who charge high recruitment fees for facilitating the labour migration process. She also stated that the larger berry companies are the ones who are making the most out of the industry and that those companies sell their berries to other pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies, who make even bigger profit out of the actual work that the migrant berry pickers supply. *“Those who are making money out of the berry industry are the big berry companies who produce and sell the berries to pharmaceutical and cosmetic products while the Thai migrant workers are working under harsh conditions and low wages”* (Mrs. Kusumal Rachawong). She argued for more fairness within the industry where berry picking companies must take on their social responsibility and put more interest in the berry pickers who are the actual suppliers.

The Chief of job-seeker development, working under the Thai ministry of Labour, Ms. Jearkul Prasert, expressed her concern in terms of information and preparation towards the labour migration process, stressing that the migrant workers who travel for the first time and are not accompanied by previous years berry pickers might not attain comprehensive knowledge of international traveling and the hard work of berry picking. Raising questions such as: *“How can you go if you don’t know where you are going? How are you going to talk to the employers of the berry picking companies if you cannot speak their language?”* (Ms. Jearkul Prasert), she emphasized on spreading knowledge about the overseas employment of berry picking and presented the different channels of traveling overseas for employment and explained how the recruitment procedures are done. She also talked about the fact that berry picking labour migration could be an all-beneficial source of employment for Thai farmers who choose to migrate on temporary and seasonal terms.

The Chief of training section, Ms. Jatuporn Wongkeaw, working under the Thai ministry of Labour urged to spread more knowledge about the berry picking labour migration so that it could also continue to spread through informal channels, that is, through word to word from existing migrant workers to potential migrant workers. *“We have to give them knowledge about the berry picking migration process. They have known the options and procedures of the labour migration process and not pay large sums of money to middle men and recruitment agencies”* (Ms. Jatuporn Wongkeaw). She put forward the importance of social networks of migrant workers, and that all workers individually have to be responsible to get the information by themselves and not rely on others who are traveling along with them. She affirmed that there are many workers who wish to migrate as berry pickers as there is still good money to be earned for a short period of work and it also contributes positively to the households of the workers.

The Labour Specialist, Mr. Nitichai Wisuthipan, working in the department of law under the Thai Ministry of Labour talked mostly about the legal issues in relation to overseas employment. He readily acknowledged the potential benefits from the migration of berry picking. *“Many migrant workers fall into traps of corrupt middle men and recruitment agencies. The Thai authorities can only do their best in fighting exploitation and labour trafficking on the domestic side while Swedish authorities will have to do their part in their country”* (Mr. Nitichai Wisuthipan). He said that more improved and formalized channels of employment policy of berry picking in Scandinavian countries would contribute to help eliminate the middle men and hold up the legal system.

Ms. Sikharin Singsathorn, from the Local staff Employment Office, Phetchabun, had recently started to conduct surveys on the migrant berry pickers coming from the sub-district Bueng Krachap. She stated that the farmers who previously migrated to Sweden as berry pickers had just become visible by coming out and sharing their experience from the seasonal labour migration of berry picking. *“The farmers have just started to share their experience of the seasonal labour*

*migration, no one have previously paid any attention to the sub district of Bueng Krachap*“(Ms. Sikharin Singsathorn). She stated that from this single village over 170 people had migrated as seasonal berry pickers to Sweden and Finland both through self-arrangements of visiting relatives and through recruitment companies. She affirmed what had previously been mentioned by the locals that the village of the farmers would be calm and quite during this period as many farmers would be in Sweden picking berries. According to her survey the farmers earned an average of 60,000 THB per year on their farming making the seasonal migration an attractive source of income as some migrant workers had managed to earn as much as 250,000-300,000 THB during one berry season. She pointed out that according to her survey on average the migrant workers earned an estimate of 70,000 THB per berry season which is still higher than the average income attained from farming per year. She also acknowledge that in the village there are less successful cases where workers had earned relatively a small amount from berry picking between 20,000-70,000 THB. Some of these workers had also managed to return in loss after subtracting their initial investment that is cost of plane tickets, travels, recruitment and visa fees and other details. She stated that the unsuccessful cases still continued the season after to migrate as they accept that others had manage to pick and earn more than they previously had and that those workers migrated in hopes to earn back their previous losses and take on the risks again, as the opportunity to earn money still remains. *“When I first started to survey the community of Bueng Krachap I could not believe that the community could earn almost 10 million a year from travelling to Sweden to pick berries”*( Ms. Sikharin Singsathorn). According to one of her surveys she stressed that the sub district of Bueng Krachap had an income from berry picking measured up to almost 10 million THB, where she pointed out that this community earned almost 10 million THB without any governmental investments and interventions. She explained that the purposes of her surveys were to file a proposal to the Thai government to act in favor of labour migration of Thai farmers as migrant berry pickers.

**Figure 4. 1 Governmental officials and organizational representatives at the pre-departure workshop.**



#### 4.2 The Thai Migrant Berry Pickers

All the migrant berry pickers were small scale farmers whose occupational background mostly had been consistent with agricultural work. Many of the informants had spent most parts of their lives living out on the countryside following their parent's way of life. The farmer's agricultural crops consisted of rice, sugarcanes, potatoes, corn and subsistent farming vegetable. Many of the farmers rent land for farming, while some own lands or rent additional to cultivate on. The farmers also explained that before leaving for the seasonal work in Sweden they would plant their crops which at the time of their return would be ready for harvest. During their time away the farmers would ask a relative, family member or friend to look after their fields and in some cases hire someone for a few thousands Thai Baht to maintain their fields during their absence.

Almost all of the informants had personal debts either related to their farming activities or general expenses of their households. Many had both formal and informal debts that are loans issued by banks and money borrowed from friends and relatives.

Most of the debts were loans taken for farming purposes of buying seeds, pesticides, agricultural equipment and such other. However, some farmers also had personal loans taken for household expenditures such as house repair costs, payments for vehicles, tuition fees for their children. Concrete figures on loans and debts of the migrant berry pickers were difficult to attain as personal income and expenditure is a sensitive topic where figures attained from the interviews were only estimates, and with high likelihood of being under or overestimated. This was also explained by Ms. Sikharin Singsathorn local staff at the employment office Phetchabun who spent months on collecting reliable figures to calculate average incomes, household expenditures etc... for the region of Phetchabun.

The district of Tambun Bueng Krachap in Phetchabun has often faced flooding and draughts during the summer and rainy season. A lot of farmers had previously had setbacks like bad harvest and demolished fields due to these consequential environmental impacts. With the governmental compensation just measuring up to half of the amount of their initial investment, many farmers were faced with taking on additional loans during these rough times. Quite a few of the farmers used the additional income from the seasonal migration of berry picking for the similar purposes of investing in their agricultural work that is buying seeds, pesticides, new equipment, paying back debts as well as general households expenditure, like tuition fees for their children's education and sending money to other family members and elders in need.

#### **4.3 The Stories of the Migrant Berry Pickers**

Nine outstanding cases were found, in the sample one of them was Mâe Má-lí and Pôr Sùk, 57 and 58 years old respectively and had previously travelled to Sweden to pick berries for eight seasons during the past decade and earned up to 300,000 THB together during one season. *"We have travelled to Sweden together for many years, earning between 200,000 THB some years and some years about 300,000 THB. We use the money for our household expenses and our children"* (Mâe Má-lí). The income made from berry picking has been most valuable to their household. Between

the two, they have three children together who in the past ten years have had the opportunity to go to universities and graduated with bachelor degrees. Mãe Má-lí explained that the money earned every berry picking season was considered for expenses that they could not cover by their base income made from agriculture. Pôr Sùk expressed that although berry picking required traveling and a lot of hard work it also provided the couple with a change of environment and work. *“When we go we also get the chance to leave our everyday environment...”* (Pôr Sùk). If the couple were not to migrate to Sweden for work they would simply stay and look after their farms. Although they are in their late 50s, the couple seemed very grateful for the employment opportunity and found the labour migration process an enjoyable experience. Mãe Má-lí and Pôr Sùk represent a strong case in the labour migration process of berry picking showing that there is no age limit set on who can qualify as a migrant berry picker and also that their ability of picking berries is of the extraordinary as well as they are ranked among the highest earners in the sample.

Another outstanding case was found in the interview with NÁa Daeng who had travelled to Sweden for ten berry seasons in the past fifteen years, as she has family and relatives who are settled in Sweden. Rather than asking and receiving any support from her relatives and family in Sweden, NÁa Daeng in her 56 years of age takes on the employment of picking berries as a great opportunity to earn money. *“Although I know they have money I do not want to ask in times when I do not have any, picking berries in Sweden also gives us time to spend together and we help each other when we go picking berries”* (NÁa Daeng). NÁa Daeng had earned between 100,000-200,000 THB per berry season and sees it as not only going for work but also visits her family and friends although the money is the main pull factor. She also explained that although her family and relative could financially help out they could not possibly give her an amount close to what she could earn from one season of berry picking. NÁa Daeng’s case mirrors a worker’s willingness and ability to strive for employment opportunity such as seasonal labour migration leading to being independent from financial assistance or remittances of family abroad.



Bpâa Sommai, 49 years of age previously migrated to Sweden four times in the past decade and spent large amounts earned from the berry picking on paying back personal debts taken for her agricultural work after their farms got exposed to flooding and draughts that deteriorated the agricultural crops leaving her livelihood dependent on low governmental subsidy and taking additional loans. *“The money earned from the berry picking I used to pay back my debts...I went berry picking so I could have extra money and afford to pay back my loans... as the interests are very high. Households expenses can be cut down on by living off our own grown vegetables and rice but the money to use to pay back the loans is difficult to earn”* (Bpâa Sommai). From the four season of berry picking she has managed to pay off debts and formal loans of an estimated to 300,000 THB which would have taken her an extensive long time to pay off with her regular income from farming. She also stated that general expenses of the household could be cut back, however in terms of paying off loans, additional income to their agricultural work would be their only way to pay back and avoid interests.

Pôr Gàì, 50 years of age, like many other migrant berry pickers explained that in order to afford to travel to Sweden for seasonal employment of berry picking he has to borrow money for the initial investment of paying the recruitment companies fees, the airline tickets, the visa and working permit fees which was stated to vary year by year as well as depending on recruitment company measured up to an estimation between 65,000-75,000 THB. He stressed that the initial investment for traveling to Sweden are high amounts for a small scale farmer and that he would be willing to take the risk of borrowing money from banks, family members and friends, although the seasonal profit would be only 20,000-30,000 THB according to him would still be worth the while. *“The expenses to go for berry picking are high and hard for us to gather as we have to borrow most of the times. Although we would only earn 30,000-20,000 THB it would be better than staying at our farms waiting for the harvest or find minor hiring day by day jobs”* (Pôr Gàì). He also confirmed that if he would have the 65,000-75,000 THB disposable and did not need to borrow any money for the expenses of the seasonal migration he would still choose to migrate rather than staying at his farms with this money. Pôr Gàì’s case represents one of

many who explained that the recruitment fees are high and difficult to attain before the actual migration process, implying that if they cannot afford to migrate they lose that potential income that they could have earned and used for personal and household consumption.

Mâe Bunmee is another interesting case of 49 years of age with a long occupational background in agricultural farming. She had previously travelled to Sweden six times for berry picking. She mentioned that part of the income earned from the berry picking apart from her own household consumption, house reparations and investment on her farms, she additionally sends money to her children who live in urban center. *“Parts of the money I get from picking berries I send to my children, my two daughters who live in Bangkok. Living expenses are higher in the cities here on the country side goods are cheaper”* (Mâe Bunmee). She expressed that living expenses in the urban centers are higher than out on the country side and that her children often ask her for financial support and although there are times when they do not ask, she feels that she wants to support them as she knows that their salaries are barely covering their costs. She explained that the newer generations has the opportunity to move into the cities while those in her generation never had that as an option and stayed at the countryside and became farmers. She also affirmed that she wished for her children to find new opportunities in the cities and make a better living in the city centers rather than having to live the small scale farmer life. Mâe Bunmee reflects on a case where family ties and social status are taken under consideration as the decision for her to migrate or not is also affected by her children’s living standards.

Lung Pét, a 38 year old farmer, is another example of where family ties and the well-being of the household are playing a major role in the decision to migrate. Lung Pét had travelled to Sweden for four seasons the past decade earning between 120,000-300,000 THB per berry season. He spent the money from picking berries to repair his house, buying a tractor and other agricultural equipment and paid back parts of previous debts measured up to 200,000 THB. *“I married off my son with part of the*

*money earned last season*” - Lung Pét said with a smile in such way that he finally could afford his son’s wedding.

Lung Kĩng is in his late 30s, and had travelled to Sweden for four seasons and earned between 70,000 – 250,000 THB a season. He was stated as one of the highest earners in this community. Lung Kĩng mentioned that he had several farming fields both of his own and rented land which he farmed on. He stated that although the money earned from berry picking was high amounts he still struggled due to his own damaged crops and fields during flooding and draughts previous years. *“The drought destroyed my corn crops and the year after the flooding damaged my rice fields although all my seasons of berry picking season have been a profitable earning 180,000 THB the first year, 70,000 the second year 200,000 THB the third year and 250,000 THB the fourth year I still remain in debt to the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BACC) of 900,000 THB”* (Lung Kĩng). For him the money from berry picking has helped support his family and in minimizing the exposure of investment losses from damaged crops and deteriorated fields. For him the seasonal migration has been a security in case of an environmental destruction and bad harvest, which has been a case every year he migrated. Lung Kĩng’s case represents one of the many farmers who got exposed to draughts and flooding that deteriorates farming fields and also often put many farmers in debts. He also explained that the government subsidies for bad harvest and damaged crops do not even cover half their initial investment; however, it acts as an income.

Aa Oud had travelled to Sweden to pick berries for four seasons; the first year through making self-arrangements visiting family and friends living in Sweden and in his second season he travelled through a recruitment company. Traveling with self-arrangements he earned the following: his first season 150,000 THB, third season 130,000 THB, while traveling with a recruitment company he earned 70,000 THB in the second season and 100,000 THB the fourth season. Aa Oud pointed out that it is more beneficial for the Thai migrant berry pickers to travel through self-arrangement and accompanied by families and friends as costs can be minimized by their own choice of spending. On the other hand, traveling through a recruitment company has

got a lot of added expenses as the recruitment company charges fixed amounts for recruitment fees, accommodation, daily meals, traveling expenses and other costs, which can be reduced if not avoided if the berry picking process is accompanied by family and friends, which makes the cost of the seasonal labour migration cheaper and therefore more beneficial for the worker. *“Those who travel to their relatives in Sweden have it better than those living with the recruitment companies, they have more freedom and they can take their own decision on when and where to go a look for berries in the woods”*(Aa Oud). He also pointed out that migrant berry pickers who are accompanied by family and friends in Sweden have better accommodations and working conditions as they get more freedom being self-employed. He stressed that families and friends of berry pickers also provides them with security and function as a safety net in preventing exploitation. He stated that family and friends in Sweden have a positive effect on the amount of work conducted by providing support and good intentions of wanting the migrant berry picker to return home with a large profit. Aa Oud’s interview provided useful information in such that it reflects on the differences of the working conditions and working environment of self-arrangement migrant berry pickers and migrant berry pickers who travel through recruitment companies.

Naa Núi, a 49 years old migrant berry picker previously migrated to Sweden for six berry seasons. She explained that the transnational migration of wild berry picking is the only available option for short term labour migration. Many farmers who migrated to other countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and such has to sign long term contracts of 12-24 months whereas the berry picking in Sweden only lasts for 2-3 months. She also pointed out that there are no specific requirements for berry picking employment and no specialized training is needed, nor any age limit is set on who can become a migrant berry picker. *“I am an old lady I cannot go and seek employment in other countries as Taiwan or Israel; they will not employ me and let me go there. There are no temporary jobs around here; the chicken farms rather hire Burmese migrant workers because they will be employed full time and keep the job longer... for me I have my fields to work on”* (Naa Núi). She stressed that berry picking employment is easier to attain than other overseas jobs, like for example, jobs

seekers in South Korea have an age limit of 24 years of age, has to attend mandatory language training and testing, and their minimum employment period is two years. She explained that the short term migration of berry picking allows the farmers to persist and pursue their farming activities and keep their initial occupation as a farmer. Naa Nóni's case sheds the light of limited opportunities that these farmers face in terms of international labour migration.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF SEASONAL MIGRATION OF BERRY PICKING**

To discuss the findings presented in the previous section, my three research questions will be presented once again to remind that the purpose of the study was not to generalize from the findings, as this study was conducted based on a qualitative study of a small number of interviews and participants. I also intend to compare my findings from my interviews with the results of other previous studies to expand the validity of the findings as well as discuss the findings in relation to migration and development theories. My objectives are to answer my initial research questions:

- What are the causes for the seasonal labour migration of berry picking in Sweden?
- How has the seasonal migration of berry picking in Sweden affected the development of Thai migrant berry pickers' economic and social conditions, and employment?
- How can the transnational seasonal labour migration of berry picking be improved in terms of facilitation and management by the Thai and Swedish authorities?

#### **5.1 Causes for the Seasonal Labour Migration of Berry Picking**

The findings from the interviews with the migrant berry pickers showed that there are different causes for seasonal labour migration of berry picking. My analysis of the qualitative data led me to sort out the specific factors such as structural unemployment, berry picking as an opportunity to employment, personal debts and investments on their livelihoods that is purchasing agricultural equipment, high additional income and providing for the household and family members.

Many of the migrant berry pickers confirmed that they would leave between the planting and harvesting periods of the farming cycle and during this period they

would wait around and find casual day-to-day jobs within their district. The labour migration of berry picking is therefore a typical case of seasonal labour migration as it is both dependent on the berry season, summer months of June-August as well as the farmers farming cycle which provides the possibility to seasonally migrate. Due to the fact that the farmers are structurally unemployed during the berry season also act as a push factor for the Thai farmers to migrate as berry pickers. None of the migrant berry pickers mentioned any incentives to migrate into the urban areas during this period such as to cities nearby or towards Bangkok. All informants confirmed that they would stay at their homes if not migrating for employment abroad.

Many of the farmers also became migrant berry pickers and continued to migrate during the berry picking season to get the opportunities they find abroad as they are free to decide when and with which company they want to sign up with. In choosing a different occupation in another country than Sweden they can face the possibility of denied employment and declined visa as well as work permits, which can be confirmed by Naa Núi's case where she carefully explained that a woman of her age have a hard time to find employment, especially overseas. Due to the confirmed fact that the Thai migrant berry pickers have repeatedly participated in the seasonal migration we see a link of chain migration or cumulative causation of migration which states that each act of migration contributes to the likelihood of an additional process of labour migration due to social capital where small social networks of migration become larger and into mass movements. Massey et al (1993) states that the migration decisions are generally taken by elders and younger family members who are classified as target earners and who want to earn money to improve their living conditions at home. In terms of the seasonal migration of berry picking the elders seem to be the target earners as well as those who take the decision to migrate as the migrant berry pickers in sample was in an age group of late 30 years of age to almost 60 years old.

Many of the farmers also were into debts due to their investments made on their agricultural work money that was spent on seeds, pesticides, trucks and other equipment. Depending on season and due to the environmental causes of flooding and droughts parts of their investments have been washed away and put them in a debt as

they not earning enough to pay back the banks and informal lenders after the harvest. Several of the migrant berry pickers stated their debts as an important reason for why wanting to migrate for berry picking in Sweden. Lung King exemplifies well in this scenario as he emphasized that the income earned from the berry picking had helped supported his family in face of environmental destruction and bad harvest. In relation to push and pull models, the environmental causes of flooding and droughts can be explained to act as push factors as environmental destruction negatively affects their casual income made from farming and thereby affects the incentive to earn extra income by berry picking. Another noted push factor is also the Thai agricultural policy, in such that subsidies given out to farmers in face of bad harvest are low and does not cover their initial investments.

The possibility of earning a lot of money also acts a pull factor for the seasonal migration of berry picking. The farmers has the opportunity to earn as much as 200,000-300,000 THB while their average annual income from agricultural work was estimated to 60, 000 THB per year (Sikharin, 2011), representing an income of five years' work which could be made during a period of 2 months. Bpâa Sommai's case shows up as a good example to the wage differentials in terms of ability of earning large sums of money as she explained that her debts are difficult to pay back although cut downs on her living expenses at home could be saved back on, the opportunity to earn larger sums to pay back loans are difficult. Due to the possibility of higher earnings the seasonal migration of berry picking for Thai farmers therefore represents an exceptional good case in the neoclassical theory of migration as the Thai farmers migrate from a low income area to a higher income area and also represent a movement from a developing country (Thailand) to a developed country (Sweden). An important acknowledgement is also that the seasonal migration of berry picking is a rural to rural type of labour migration that is from the country side of Thailand to the forests of Sweden, whereas most labour migration patterns tend to take place on a rural to urban migration.

The decision to migrate never came across as the individual choice but rather as a decision based on the well-being of their families and households. Mãe Má-lí and



Pôr Sùk, Lung Pét and Mãe Bunmee represent very good examples in the community of taking the labour migration decision based on the household's condition, whether it was for social or economic causes and wanting to provide better living conditions for their children. However, it might also be an exceptional case of Asian cultural traditions in such that family ties are considered important and of high value. Núa Daeng can also be reflected in this as she mentions her family and relatives in Sweden which also make her travels to Sweden not only a labour migration process but the opportunity to visit and spend time with her family there along with the lucrative offer of making money. Both new economics of migration and network theory of migration state that decisions are not made based on a single individual unit of analysis but rather on households, families and friendships as well as on community ties, which is very much the case of the Thai migrant berry pickers from the sub district of Bueng Krachap as many of the informants explain that they migrate to provide for their families rather than to provide for themselves, indicating that the decision to migrate is based on the household and family's well-being. The sub district of Bueng Krachap also seem to have a special community tie as the farmers know each other and have personal relationships. Bueng Krachap is stated to have sent as many as 170 Thai farmers as migrant berry pickers as once, where many of those annually have travelled to Sweden the past decade this indicate a community tie in relation to seasonal migration of berry picking. Migration relationships have appeared as information and knowledge have been shared in the community through their experiences although all farmers do not travel together through recruitment companies or together by self-arrangement and visit their families and relatives in Sweden.

## **5.2 Employment, Economic and Social Impacts of Seasonal Migration of Berry Picking**

Concerning the results of the second research question, how the seasonal migration of berry picking in Sweden has affected the development of Thai migrant berry pickers' economic and social conditions and employment, I found that there have been positive outcomes from the seasonal labour migration on the migrant

workers economic and social conditions. The economic and social aspects are highly correlated and interacting with one another. In terms of economic development the migrant berry picker's economic conditions appeared to have improved as additional income have been earned through berry picking and used for household consumption, payments of debts and investments on farming activities that contribute to improved working conditions and added an extra source of money to their ordinary income made from farming. The seasonal migration have also made it possible for the migrant berry pickers to make improvement on their living conditions in terms of housing reparation, renovations and improvements of purchasing new goods used by the household. The income earned from berry picking have also act "a safety net" (economic security) in terms of bad harvest and environmental destruction.

In terms of social development the migrant berry picker's social conditions tend to have improved as the seasonal labour migration have helped them to provide for their family members, that is, paying children's tuition fees, taking care of the elders, supporting their children to pay for their wedding and other such expenses, not to mention strengthening family ties and establishing good relationships within the family. The positive effects could also be found among the migrant berry pickers who traveled through self-arrangements and given the opportunity to see their family and friends. In terms of social development the seasonal migration have also provided the migrant berry pickers with the opportunity to travel and come out of their ordinary environments. This was stated by Pôr Sùk, who confirmed that the transitional seasonal labour migration was perceived as enjoyable. Where they through the migration process have the chance to experience new things and come in contact with other people. One interesting case from the sample is Mâe Bunmee who stressed that she wanted something different for her daughters rather than becoming farmers such as their parents. This was one of the reasons why she would send money to her children in Bangkok, wanting to provide them with the opportunity to choose a different way of life which her own generation never had the chance to choose.

In term of employment the segmented market theory can be used to explain the labour migration pattern of Thai migrant berry pickers due that there is a great

division in the wild berry industry where Swedish nationals seem to have shifted from berry picking (low-skilled) into other professions (highly-skilled); which increased the demand for foreign labour in the industry in other words the seasonal migration of berry picking is labour demand driven. The market segmentation is also present due to wage differentials as the migrant berry pickers' wages are among the lowest in the agricultural sector creating primary and secondary labour market within the sector.

The seasonal labour migration have had a positive effect in terms of employment for the migrant berry pickers as many have stated to have difficulties in finding jobs in between the planting and harvesting seasons. Thai migrant berry pickers tend to be men and women in the late 30s years of age to late 50s years of age having difficulties finding temporary jobs which would fit into their farming cycle, not only domestic job but also overseas employment. The job attainable to them would be casual jobs hired on a daily basis and not anything for a longer period of 1-2 months. None of the key informants mentioned about seasonally migrate into the city centers during this time explaining that they have difficulties in finding employment. Due to environmental causes of draughts and flooding the farmers farming activities tend to be an inefficient source of income for the farmers to provide for their families, as many of the farmer's debts are related to their farming activities. Indicating that loss on investment in their farming activities put them in debt, which on the other hand affects their living standards and development. The seasonal migration of berry picking therefore opens a window to development in terms of providing the farmers with an opportunity of employment and an opportunity to earn additional income.

### **5.3 The Development and Policy Perspective**

Migration and development relationships are hard to determine, this is also true in this case. The overall outcome from this sample have proved to be beneficial in terms of improving economic and social conditions as well as providing employment. The only possible negative effect seem to be that the farmers have to migrate such a long distance in order to find employment during their planing and harvest season however many of the migrant berry pickers also stated that the labour migration is an enjoyable

process where they have the opportunity to leave their ordinary environments. The negative effects of the seasonal migration of berry picking can therefore be found in previous reports by Wingborg, 2011 and Yimprasert, 2010 that examines the unsuccessful cases of Thai migrant berry pickers. The negative and positive sides of berry picking can be linked to the debate of optimistic and pessimistic views of migration and development discussed in chapter 2, section 2.2 stating that positive views are highly inspired by neoclassical theory, modernisation theory, brain gain, more equality, remittance investment, development functionalists and less development. The pessimistic view on migration and development is radically the opposite and inspired by structuralist neo-Marxist, disintegration, brain drain, more inequality, consumption, dependency and more migration. This said, the research views migration and development from an optimistic approach stating that migration has generally had a positive impact on the development process in Bueng Krachap where the Thai farmers, migrant berry pickers are the active agents of economic and social development. It is acknowledged that also in this case, it is not the poorest in the community that migrates. Relating to neoclassical theory and modernisation the farmers in Bueng Krachap see the seasonal migration of berry picking as trendy as it also has become almost a casualty to seasonally migrate as berry pickers. This was explained by farmers and family members left behind, that the district tends to be quite during the berry season as many leave for berry picking migration.

The recruitment process of Thai migrant berry pickers tends to be of their own choice in such that they empower themselves. They seem to organize among themselves in the community and thereafter choose a recruitment company or whether traveling along with friends with relatives in Sweden such as traveling companion. None of the cases in the sample stated to have their families providing them with documents for the migration process and then not meeting up with them in Sweden. The seasonal migration of berry picking seems to be an efficient type of employment as it fits into the farmers' farming cycle and also due to the no restriction set on who can qualify as a berry picker. It also seems effective as none of the respondents had been subjective to losses caused by the migration process, stating that most of their debts are farming related rather than relating to the seasonal migration process. In

comparison to previous surveys (Wingborg, 2011 and Yimprasert, 2010) the debts of the Thai migrant berry pickers had been related to costs of migration and not to their farming activities. In relation to the previous surveys there seems to be no difference between new migrating berry pickers and those who have migrated repeatedly. In the sample none of the migrant berry pickers had experienced any type of labour trafficking or labour exploitation in comparison to the migrant berry pickers in previous surveys. There are however similar findings in such that berry picking require long working hours, good physical condition and a lot of hard work.

The interviews with the governmental officials and the organizational representatives was aimed to provide a more holistic picture of the Thai migrant berry pickers and also help to examine the third research question how the transnational seasonal labour migration of berry picking can be improved in terms of facilitation and management by the Thai and Swedish authorities. One of the most important finding here was the interview conducted with Ms. Sikharin stating that this district received an annual income estimated to more than 11 million THB from berry picking. This income came without any particular investments being made from the Thai authorities. That shows the farmers in Bueng Krachap district are willing to and capable of empowering themselves by finding overseas employment which benefit their families and households.

There were cases found in the sample where the Thai migrant berry pickers had traveled through mixed channels, such as in some seasons through recruitment companies and some seasons through self arrangements. Most of the migrant berry pickers agree that it is cheaper to travel through self arrangements, like visiting family and friends who provide accomodation. Those who travel through recruitment companies are subjected to fixed cost and expenses for transportation, accomodation and food rations. Therefore it is important that the recruitment companies should provide cheaper and better options for the migrant berry pickers.

When examining of how risks related to the migration process could be shared among the different stakeholders it is important to acknowledge that the recruitment

companies and berry companies has to provide the migrant berry pickers with a minimum wage that covers the cost of migration in order to make the migration process profitable. In my analysis a minimum wage of 16,372 SEK<sup>5</sup> (approx. 75 000 THB) and 17,730 SEK (approx.81, 000 THB) cover the lowest recruitment fee of approximate 75, 000 THB stated by the migrant workers in the focus group interviews indicates that if the migrant workers pay more than 75, 000 THB respectively 81, 000 bath if hired by a non-Swedish firm then the minimum wages will not cover the cost of migration.

According to section 1.1, the wild berry industry is stated to have large potentials to expand which might lead to an increase in demand for migrant berry pickers. The migrant berry picker is declared an important stakeholder in the wild berry industry and they have a large contribution to the wild berry industry and to pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies as the berries picked are used for pharmaceutical production for treatments of eye care and muscular degeneration, urinary tract infection, treatment of brain function, memory and Alzheimer's disease, cancer, heart disease along with other health products for treatments of constipation and digestion, anti-ageing products and cosmetics (Mukherjee, 2011). The seasonal migration of berry picking is not just important for the farmers themselves but also for the industry and consumers. The Swedish and Thai authorities should have this in mind in terms of the Thai migrant berry pickers.

All the governmental officials and organizational representatives acknowledged that there are mutual gains in the labour migration of berry picking however also that there are unsuccessful cases which should be emphasized on to eliminate. All respondents affirmed that transparency, fair employment contracts and facilitated and regulated migration flows is the key for encouraged seasonal migration of berry picking. Whether the suggested policy such as a G2G employment policy would be a sustainable solution to eliminate unsuccessful cases or not, is beyond the scope of this paper as this thesis seeks to investigate how the lives of the Thai migrant berry pickers have been affected from this labour migration and not evaluate any particular

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<sup>5</sup>1 SEK = 4.57 THB (XE, 2011-09-20)

employment policy. What can be noted from the findings can be put forward in terms of recommendations on how the labour migration process can be successfully be carried out.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 General Conclusion

The transnational seasonal migration of berry picking is a relatively new type of labor migration for small scale Thai farmers to gain additional income between their planting and harvesting season. This type of seasonal labour migration can also be explained and related to a handful of migration and development theories and concepts. In particular the “optimists” approach on migration and development is suitable to explain the transnational seasonal migration of Thai migrant berry pickers as the seasonal migration of berry picking tend to be highly economically and socially driven. This can be linked to neoclassical economic theory of migration and network theory of migration due to that the migrant berry pickers from Bueng Krachap migrate with incentives to earn higher income and have personal relationship to one another related to the migration process. In relation to previous studies of migration, Lipton (1980, cited in Haas, 2007) states that most often it is not the poorest in a community who migrate rather those who can afford the cost of migration. This is also true for the case of the Thai migrant berry pickers. On a macro-level the seasonal migration of berry picking can be explained by the segmented labour market theory stating that the labour migration flow is caused by a demand for labour in the receiving country.

Several causes for the seasonal migration was identified i.e. structural unemployment, berry picking as an opportunity to employment, personal debts and investments on their livelihoods such as purchasing agricultural equipment, high additional income and providing for the household and family members. Some of these causes act as both push and pull factors which can inspired by the push and pull models of migration.

The transnational seasonal migration of Thai migrant workers employed as berry pickers in Sweden has contributed positively to the farmer’s economic and social conditions of the villagers in Tambun Bueng Krachap district in Phetchabun



province. The seasonal migration of berry picking has contributed both economically and socially to the migrant berry pickers. These farmers have earned through the seasonal migration valuable income which has been spent on various possessions. Much of the earnings from the seasonal migration have gone directly to the households for housing renovations, additional commodities for the households, paying for children's educational tuition fee, health care, and money sent to other family members (children and elders) and to pay back personal debts. With the earnings many farmers have also invested in new agricultural equipment and also bought and rented additional property and land for farming, which in turn has contributed their livelihoods of the agricultural work.

The seasonal migration processes have also affected social relationships and family ties in such that some migrant berry pickers have migrated to visit their relatives in Sweden, others have had an incentive for migration to provide for their family members as well as relationships have been established through the annual migration process, where these social relations have created productive benefits i.e. social capital.

In relation to employment the seasonal labour migration of berry picking seem to be the only temporary labour migration attainable for these farmers due to the farming cycle and as there are no existing restriction on who can qualify as a berry picker. The seasonal migration also provides an opportunity to travel and change of environments.

The improved economic and social conditions of the households have also contributed to the community development in ways such as making the villagers in Tambun Bueng Krachap less economically vulnerable to flooding and droughts affecting their agricultural livelihood in comparison to other communities who do not attain additional income. As several positive outcomes of the migration process have been noted, the seasonal labour migration should be encouraged and facilitated by the sending and receiving authorities. Noting that the seasonal migration is not only beneficial to the worker but to the wild berry industry, wholesale businesses,

pharmaceutical, health food and cosmetic producers. The migration flow of seasonal migrant berry pickers will also have an important role if the wild berry industry in Sweden expands as the demand for berry pickers will increase, leading to greater incentives for the Swedish authorities to regulate and facilitate the migration flows. Thai farmers might be preferred and inquired by berry companies as they are acknowledged as good berry pickers. Since there is still large potential to earn money in the berry picking industry, the Thai migrant berry pickers will continue to migrate to Sweden. As the Swedish wild berry industry expands, more Thai farmers might seek employment as berry pickers.

## **6.2 Policy Recommendations for the Swedish Authorities**

It has been acknowledged that the Swedish authorities have in the past decade gone through several policy changes both in terms of labour migration policy, employment policy and taxation. As unsuccessful cases of migrant berry pickers have been exploited in both sending and receiving societies, it is important that both countries are doing their duties and have an open dialog on how to help eliminate and deal with those migrant workers who have fallen into unsuccessful labour migration of berry picking. In particular I would like to highlight the fact that the wages in the berry picking industry are still lower than in other equivalent jobs in the Swedish agricultural sector (Wingborg, 2011). The minimum wages of 16,372 SEK to 17730 SEK are set at limits barely covering the recruitment fees that the migrant berry pickers have to pay to afford the migration process. Either an increased minimum wages or a cut down on visa fees and working permit reductions should be put in place to make the recruitment costs lower.

It is also stated that the berry picking industry is not efficiently organized (Paassilta et al, 2009); therefore unclear information, inadequate knowledge about current vacancies and no systematic tracking process seem to be in place. There also seem to be a lack of assessment in terms of evaluation of every berry season in relation to migrant berry pickers. There should also be an identification of the actual demand and need for migrant berry pickers.

Concerning the new Swedish legislation of foreign recruitment agencies having to have an affiliate in Sweden seem to be the reason for the declined number of Thai migrant berry pickers as the Thai recruitment agencies does not attain the resources to expand overseas. This should therefore be looked into and further addressed. A summary of the recommendations are listed below:

- Negotiations on lowering visa and working permit fees
- Increased minimum wages of berry picking
- Assistance for foreign recruitment companies to open affiliates in Sweden

### **6.3 Policy Recommendations for the Thai Authorities**

The Thai authorities have also taken incentives to improve and facilitate the seasonal migration of berry picking. Since 2005, the Government issued special directives for procedures of processing Thai migrant workers for employment as wild berry pickers in Sweden. The Thai authorities should act in preventative measures to eliminate informal and illegal recruitment agents as well as high commission and recruitment fees. Fixed brokerage fees are therefore recommended to be put into place. Introducing local and community empowerment along with stricter and clearer policy on labour contracts, managed by state organs would help eliminate risks of labour trafficking and exploitation. From the findings of the interviews the Thai governmental officials also emphasized on knowledge/capacity building of providing basic support i.e. language, cultural awareness and contract translation. Pre-departure training workshop should be organized in such a way that first timers can receive knowledge from experienced migrant berry pickers. An encouraged labour export policy might be a good option to put in place for the Thai migrant berry pickers. A summary of recommendations for the Thai authorities are listed below:

- Lowered and fixed brokerage fees
- Local and community empowerment
- Improved policy on labour contracts

- Increased capacity and knowledge building
- Encouraged labour export policy

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Future Studies**

Transnational seasonal labour migration of Thai migrant berry pickers still remains an understudied subject. As stated previously, this thesis only represents one particular community of Thai migrant berry pickers while there are other communities which still remain un-surveyed. This study focuses on the sending society rather than the impacts on the receiving society, with this said there are still possibilities for studies on the receiving societies. Further studies should examine and evaluate migration and development policies more closely by looking into a G2G employment policy or perspectives of a bilateral agreement. Related aspects are also possible to examine, such as the berry companies' selection of migrant berry pickers or studies of the family and relative networks in Sweden.

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## **APPENDIX**



## **APPENDIX**

### **List of Key informants**

#### **The Governmental officials and Organizational representatives**

Mr. Conny Larsson, the Migration Officer, The Swedish Embassy, April 17, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Mrs. Kusumal Rachawong, the National Project Coordinator, International Labour  
Organization, July 17, 2011, Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Mr. Boonsong Chaletorn, Representative of Thai Women Network, Professor in  
Economics, Ramkhamhaeng University, April 25, 2011, Interviewer: J.K.  
Kallstrom

Ms. Jearkul-prasert, Chief of Job-Seeker Development the Thai Ministry of Labour,  
July 26, 2011, Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Ms. Jatuporn Wongkeaw, Chief of Training Section the Thai Ministry of Labour, July  
26, 2011, Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Mr. Nitichai Wisuthipan, Labour Specialist the Thai Ministry of Labour July 26, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Ms. Sikharin Singsathorn, Local staff Employment office Phetchabun, July 29, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

#### **The Thai migrant Berry pickers**

Mae Mali, 58 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Pa Suk, 57 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Aunt Daeng, 56 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Aunt Sommai 49 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Pa Kai, 50 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Mae Boonmee, 49 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Uncle Phet 37 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Uncle Oud 51 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

Aunt Noi 49 years old, occupation: farmer, Phetchapun July 30, 2011,  
Interviewer: J.K. Kallstrom

## # Appendix D: Interview guide (Governmental Officials and Organizational Representatives)

### 1. General Questions

- How long have you been working for this department/ organization?
- How long have you been involved in this matter?
- Could you tell me a little bit about your work and what could be related to Thai migrant berry picker?
- What is your role in this issue?
- Do you think your role is important in comparison to other stakeholders?

### 2. Information about the migrant workers

- Have the issues related to the berry pickers been the same from one year to another?
- What do you think about what have been said in the media? Do you think what media has discussed is true? If not then how are they different?
- What are the international organizations involved in this issue? Any particular such as ILO? TLC? NAT?
- Do you think that the information transferred from the Swedish authorities is received well by the Thai authorities, the public and other international organizations?

### 3. Questions concerning the application

- Should there be an age limit and specific requires for the applicants? Previously there have been people in the 60 years of age traveling to Sweden for berry picking.
- What is your opinion about a 60 year old man or woman, staying at a camp, walking long distances tens of kilometers in the woods to pick berries?

- Will the working and living condition be improved for the workers due to sharpen restrictions and laws? (As some argue that they are poorly prepared, put in crowded accommodations, receiving innutritious food etc...)
- There are some berry pickers who went to Sweden before recruitment companies were common is that possible now after the restriction are put into place? What are your thoughts around this?
- There is no official MOU between the Swedish parliament and the Thai Government is that right?
- Do you think an official MOU should be established? The MOL have agreements on migrant labour with other governments of Israel, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan.
- As restrictions get stricter and narrower due to law changes are less people going to apply and migrate for the overseas employment?
- Some argue, such as the SIFB that too many pickers had gone and therefore wages could not be paid nor berries be picked. Would less berry pickers then be a solution to the problem you think?
- Would an alternative solution be that the migrant workers union, the state or the whole sale companies to subsidies the travel expenses for farmers be a solution?
- What do you think about the figures TLC released in their report stating that workers of 2009 berry season returned with a total debt of 13,500,000 Euro 600,000,000 THB?
- Should the Thai government put additional restrictions on Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural co-operations BAAC to distribution of loans, as many farmers have debts at the BAAC?
- Is there any sort of evaluation of recruitment companies conducted on annual basis, as well as on migrant workers in the berry industry, if so then who does it?

#### 4. Questions about the Embassy

- Could you tell me a bit more about the administrative processes that the embassy handles in terms of the work permit and visa applications etc...
- What are the embassy's responsibilities in this matter?
- You mentioned in the email that the embassy is responsible transfer information from Sweden to the Thai authorities and other international organization could you tell me a bit more about the work? Please provide examples in the context of berry pickers?

#### 5. Questions about the Organization

- Could you tell me a bit more about the organizations work relating to the Thai migrant berry pickers?
- What are the organizational departments' responsibilities and tasks in this matter?
- How long has the organization been involved with the labour migration of the Thai migrant berry pickers?
- Is the organization likely to continue its work related to the berry pickers?

#### 6. Questions for Personal Opinions

- Do you think what is done by the Swedish authorities, changes of migration policies are good and sufficient enough to prevent the past of repeating itself?
- What do you think the Thai authorities could and should do?
- Do you think the Swedish authorities are helping in terms of assistance to solve this problematic issue of Thai dependent seasonal migrants?
- In your own opinion what is the root of the problem?
- Could you provide me with some other additional sources, people who are active that I could contact for future information?
- Do you think there would be a sustainable solution to this matter in the close future?

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Born in 1985, Julia Kamoltip Kallstrom is the fourth child of loving parents Kurt and Tina Kallstrom. She spent her first 19 years in Sweden, sparing her time with studies, friends and winter sports.

After having enrolled in the international program of natural science in Ostersund, she studied one semester in Scarborough United Kingdom majoring in Mathematics as a part of an exchange student program, then followed by a language program in Almunecar Spain. Being very fascinated about Thai culture, history, way of thinking and people she decided to return to her roots in Bangkok 2006 to work for nearly 2 years at Siam@Siam Hotel.

In 2010 life took her to a new adventure in Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok where she enrolled in a Development Studies program. She gained valuable knowledge about the fascinating changing world that surrounds her. During her childhood in Sweden she had previously come in contact with Thai migrant berry pickers and later in 2008 the media mirrored their struggle, she then decided to investigate about the Thai migrant berry pickers travelling to Sweden in order to support their cause and rights to development.