

การย้ายถิ่นสู่เขตเมืองภายในประเทศและข้ามพรมแดน: ปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการเลือกพื้นที่ปลายทาง  
ของแรงงานย้ายถิ่นไร้ฝีมือชาวกัมพูชา



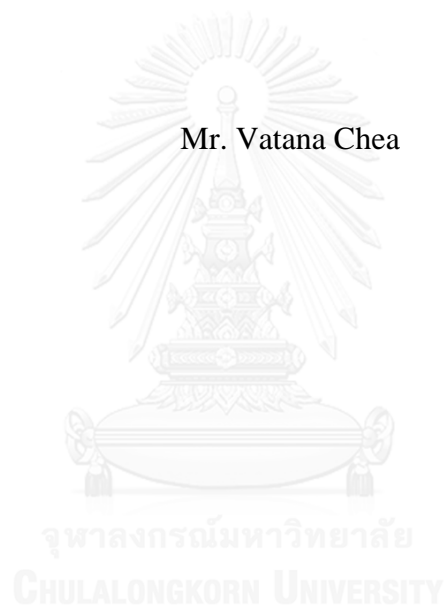
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Urban Migration Within and Across Border: Factors Influencing the Choices  
of Destination of Cambodian Unskilled Labor Migrants

Mr. Vatana Chea



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Demography  
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วัฒนา เชีย : การย้ายถิ่นสู่เขตเมืองภายในประเทศและข้ามพรมแดน: ปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการเลือกพื้นที่ปลายทางของแรงงานย้ายถิ่นไร้ฝีมือชาวกัมพูชา (Urban Migration Within and Across Border: Factors Influencing the Choices of Destination of Cambodian Unskilled Labor Migrants) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ศ. ดร. พ็ชราวลัย วงศ์บุญสิน, 149 หน้า.

ปัจจัยทางเศรษฐกิจเป็นสาเหตุหลักของการย้ายถิ่น แต่ไม่ได้หมายความว่า ความแตกต่างทางเศรษฐกิจระหว่างพื้นที่เป็นตัวกำหนดพื้นที่ปลายทางของการย้ายถิ่นเสมอไป ในบางครั้งการย้ายถิ่นเกิดขึ้นแม้ไม่มีความแตกต่างดังกล่าว เป็นที่ประจักษ์ว่า แรงย้ายถิ่นไร้ฝีมือชาวกัมพูชามักเลือกที่จะย้ายถิ่นไปยังพมเปญมากกว่าการย้ายถิ่นไปต่างประเทศ และในกรณีที่มีการย้ายถิ่นไปต่างประเทศนั้น ประเทศปลายทางเป็น ประเทศไทยมากกว่าเกาหลีใต้ ถึงแม้ว่าได้รับค่าตอบแทนมากกว่าที่พมเปญ ทั้งนี้ข้ออธิบายประการหนึ่งคือประเด็นที่ว่าด้วยการคัดสรร ระดับของการคัดสรรส่วนใหญ่มี ลักษณะทางเศรษฐกิจสังคมในระดับปัจเจกชนเป็นตัวกำหนด กล่าวคือผู้ย้ายถิ่นพิจารณาความแตกต่างระหว่างพื้นที่หลายแห่งซึ่งน่าจะเป็นพื้นที่ปลายทางและเลือกพื้นที่ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับลักษณะของตนได้ดีที่สุด ซึ่งไม่จำเป็นต้องเป็นประโยชน์สูงสุดทางการเงิน ทั้งนี้ เป็นผลจากงานศึกษาปัจจัยกำหนดหลักในการเลือกพื้นที่ปลายทางของแรงงานย้ายถิ่นไร้ฝีมือชาวกัมพูชาทั้งภายในประเทศและข้ามพรมแดน โดยอาศัยข้อมูลปฐมภูมิจากผู้ย้ายถิ่นจำนวนทั้งสิ้น ๘๐ รายซึ่งกำลังทำงานอยู่ในพมเปญซึ่งเป็นเมืองหลวงของกัมพูชาและในประเทศไทยโดยเป็นการย้ายถิ่นแบบถูกกฎหมาย

ข้อค้นพบจากงานวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า โดยทั่วไปแล้ว ปัจจัยที่ผลักดันชาวชนบทกัมพูชาออกจากพื้นที่ต้นทางเป็นปัจจัยทางเศรษฐกิจหลายปัจจัยประกอบกันที่ไม่อำนวยความสะดวกในการสร้างรายได้ได้อย่างเต็มที่ กระนั้นก็ตาม แรงจูงใจในการย้ายถิ่นครั้งแรกมาจากผู้ย้ายถิ่นแต่ละคนมากกว่าบุคคลที่สาม โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งครัวเรือน ซึ่งขัดแย้งกับแนวคิดที่ว่าวัฒนธรรมในครัวเรือนของคนเอเชียมักส่งเสริมให้แรงงานย้ายถิ่นตรงกันข้ามผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์ส่วนใหญ่กล่าวว่าครอบครัวของตนได้พยายามห้ามปราม จากความกังวลใจเรื่องความไม่แน่นอนและความเสี่ยงจากการย้ายถิ่น ซึ่งเป็นผลจากการทำงานที่ไม่เหมาะสมของสื่อมวลชนและข้อจำกัดในการเข้าถึงเทคโนโลยี อย่างไรก็ตาม เพื่อไม่ให้ถลำลึกสู่ความยากจนอันเจ็บปวด หรือการก่อกวนนี้ ผู้ย้ายถิ่นมองการย้ายถิ่นเป็นความจำเป็นมากกว่าทางเลือก กล่าวคือ เป็นที่ประจักษ์ว่า การย้ายถิ่นสำหรับชาวชนบทกัมพูชาเป็นกลไกเพื่อประกันความอยู่รอดอย่างต่อเนื่อง มากกว่าการหารายได้เสริมเพื่อรองรับปัญหาภัยพิบัติทางการเกษตรหรือความล้มเหลวในการเพาะปลูก ท้ายที่สุดงานวิจัยนี้ชี้ว่า เครือข่ายทางสังคมในพื้นที่ปลายทาง มักนำมาซึ่งบทสรุปในการตัดสินใจเลือกพื้นที่ปลายทางในการย้ายถิ่นจากบทบาทอันหลากหลายของเครือข่ายทางสังคมนั้นที่อำนวยความสะดวกกระบวนการย้ายถิ่นลุล่วง ตั้งแต่ก่อนการย้ายถิ่น ในระหว่างการย้ายถิ่น และภายหลังการย้ายถิ่น

# # 5786855551 : MAJOR DEMOGRAPHY

KEYWORDS: DESTINATION CHOICES / CAMBODIA / LABOR MIGRATION / UNSKILLED WORKERS / SOCIAL NETWORK

VATANA CHEA: Urban Migration Within and Across Border: Factors Influencing the Choices of Destination of Cambodian Unskilled Labor Migrants. ADVISOR: PROF. PATCHARAWALAI WONGBOONSIN, Ph.D., 149 pp.

Economic factor is the primary cause of migration; but it does not mean that economic differentials between regions will always determine the destination of migration. Migration sometimes still continues to exist without such a gap. Evidently, many Cambodian unskilled migrant labors chose to move to Phnom Penh rather than abroad, and for the latter, it was to Thailand rather than to South Korea. This was the case despite a higher payroll there than in Phnom Penh. An explanation is that migration is selective, and the degree of selectivity is determined largely by individual socio-economic characteristics. In other words, the migrants tend to consider different possible destinations and choose the one that fits their attributes the most to maximize the benefit, which is not necessary the highest monetary gain. This study investigates the underlying determinants of the choices of destination of Cambodian unskilled labor migrants both internal and cross-border, using primary qualitative data with the total sample of 80 participants who were working in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia and Thailand and retaining a legal status.

In general, the study finds the rural population of Cambodia to have been pushed from their area of origin by a combination of multiple economic factors that restricted their income generating activities. Even so, motivation for their first migration mainly came from each individual migrant rather than a third person, particularly the household. The findings are contradictory to the idea that in Asian culture household often encourages labor migrants to take mobility. In contrast, most interviewees denoted that their family attempted to dissuade them from migrating due to the notions of uncertainty and risks of migration resulted from malfunctioning mass media and limited access to technology. Nonetheless, to prevent from falling deeper into grievous form of impoverishment or indebtedness, migration was considered a must rather than just an option. That is to say, migration for Cambodian rural population was apparently a mechanism to ensure their continuous survival instead of a method for extra earning against unfortunate agricultural shocks or crop failure. Ultimately, it is discerned that multiple roles of social connection at the destination in facilitating pre, during, and post successful migration process regularly conclude the decision on migration destination.

Field of Study: Demography

Academic Year: 2015

Student's Signature .....

Advisor's Signature .....

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## ABBREVIATION

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>3D</b>     | Difficult, Dirty, and Dangerous                                      |
| <b>ARCM</b>   | Asian Research Center for Migration, Chulalongkorn University        |
| <b>ASEAN</b>  | Association of South East Asian Nations                              |
| <b>CDRI</b>   | Cambodia Development Resource Institute                              |
| <b>GDP</b>    | Gross Domestic Product   |
| <b>ILO</b>    | International Labor Organization                                     |
| <b>IMF</b>    | International Monetary Fund  |
| <b>IOM</b>    | International Organization for Migration                             |
| <b>MoLVT</b>  | Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, Cambodia                  |
| <b>MoP</b>    | Ministry of Planning, Cambodia                                       |
| <b>MoU</b>    | Memorandum of Understanding  |
| <b>NCPO</b>   | National Council for Peace and Order, Thailand                       |
| <b>NGO</b>    | Non-Government Organization  |
| <b>NIS</b>    | National Institute of Statistics, Cambodia                           |
| <b>OFWA</b>   | Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Thailand Ministry of Labor |
| <b>OSSC</b>   | One Stop Service Center, Thailand                                    |
| <b>RGC</b>    | Royal Government of Cambodia   |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nation  |
| <b>UNFPA</b>  | United Nation Population Fund  |
| <b>UNICEF</b> | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund               |
| <b>US</b>     | United States  |
| <b>USD</b>    | United States Dollar   |
| <b>WB</b>     | World Bank   |

*\*Note:* 1 USD is approximately 35 Thai Baht or 4,000 Khmer Riel

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Demography is mainly a study of why and to what extent particular population changes its size. Besides from fertility and mortality, which naturally impact the quantity of the population, migration can also make an adjustment to the dynamics of growth by having people moving in or out of a certain country or region. But in ancient time, relocation of people between places to place rarely happened, for transportation depended mostly on animals and took a lot of time. However, change in technology has given migration a new era through making mobility cheaper and quicker. Migration is also more special than the other two principle aspects of demography because it can happen to each one of us multiple times in life, or we may never experience it unlike birth and death, phenomena that occur to anyone of us once and only once in a life time. Furthermore, migration has slowly shaped the world via the increase in fertility of the destination and the decline in fertility of the area of origin with the emerging number of mixed ethnic children leading to Third Demographic Transition (Coleman, 2006).

Additionally, migration does not have a clear-cut definition. In United Nations context, migration is seen as a permanent change in residence with at least a minimum distance (UN, 1970), but changing a residence does not always mean individual is a migrant if the distance is short. Therefore in this study, it is necessary to define migration using regional boundary as limitation of movement in order to prevent any confusion. That is to say, those who make a move within provincial border are not considered as migrants. Notably, there are two types of migration, that is, internal and international. Therefore, migration in this study is a permanent change of residence to another place in another province or country regardless of actual distance.

Traditional migration research normally concentrates on two broad areas,

determinants and consequences. Determinants are factors that influence the decision including micro, macro, and meso-levels while consequences usually refer to costs and benefits of migration compared to a benchmark. However, in this study I only focus on the former. Economists and demographers have gradually developed a wide array of theories to answer migration phenomenon, for the reason that it is impracticable to see people randomly move without a destination in mind all because they just want to leave their current place. In fact, reaching a decision is a very complicated process, and so far no theory alone can fully explain why people move although the economic one seems to be widely accepted. It first began with the push-pull theory in the Laws of Migration introduced by Ernest Ravenstein (1885, 1889) using data from 1871 and 1881 census of England and Wales, and it is the most basic model in this concept. Nonetheless, not all migrants moved due to economic rationales, which often measure as earning gain or in a simple term, migration is seen as a key strategy to improve quality of life.

Understanding why people migrate is essentially important for most developed countries, which are the destinations of immigrant. The scale and complexity of international migration have grown exponentially larger over time. In 2015, 244 million people or 3.3% of world population are living outside of their country (UNFPA, 2016). This value has invited many governments to discern the challenges and opportunities presented by advanced human mobility, for not only immigration increases population size but also young labor forces leading to more human capital and productivity. However, these countries also attempt to regulate immigrants and its flow to prevent adverse effects that these people may bring, but doubtfully even if a country try to shut its door, will it intercept migration and prevent people from migrating? In addition, it is to remind that migration is not only a concerning topic for developed countries but also developing such as Thailand, a main pivot of cross-border migration in Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Southeast Asia is not exclusively distinct from the rest of the world. Urbanization and industrial growth are acting as pull factors to attract low economic status population from rural to urban area where employment exists, as for the case of Cambodia,

Phnom Penh the capital city. For a post-conflict and low-income nation where population has doubled its size in the last few decades, migration within and outside of Cambodia is far more complicated as a result of improving transportation and communication facilities (Acharya, 2003). Nonetheless, migration in the country occurs mostly within its political border while rural to urban mover concentrates only on Phnom Penh to find employment in the 3D sectors, but it only allows them to maintain their current economic status and hardly improves their quality of life (Maltoni, 2006). Much need to be done, as Cambodia is still on the early stage of labor migration management and understanding.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

*“RGC has set out 2 objectives: ... reduce the gap between urban and rural areas, and improve the living standards of people as well as reduce migration from rural to urban areas and to foreign countries to seek jobs.” (RGC, 2014:163).*

Cambodia has experienced a rapid increase of migration both within and across border during the past two decades. However, the issue has just recently become a topic of the main concerns despite rising tensions since 1999. In early June 2014, Thai military junta moved to curb and deported more than 225,000 Cambodian illegal migrant workers back to their homeland, according to the data provided by IOM (2014). As a consequence of this unprecedented exodus, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) urgently negotiated with the Thai government to legalize those workers so that they could go back to their workplace. Meanwhile, Cambodian urban citizens were criticizing the legalization method to have encouraged rather than mitigated migration of people at risk. As a response, the National Strategic Development Plan 2014 – 2018 was passed in late July 2014, and the RGC redirected its policy toward reducing migration.

Labor migration in Cambodia can be traced back to the political crisis there in the last forty years. The political situation in Cambodia has become relatively stable after

gaining a membership in the ASEAN in 1999. However, the stability of Cambodian political arena has contributed little to reduce migration. Poverty and agricultural problems have played a major role in pushing people to search for a job in the urban city or other countries of better development, such as Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea. Until this last decade can we see the migration concern listed as a priority to the public. Since then, some few constructive studies have been done; but they have focused mainly on remittances and poverty reduction in response to the state's interest then (Chan, 2009; Tong, 2011). As a result, the causes of migration and factors that contribute to migration decision at the individual level of concerns were not paid much attention to until mid-2014, when the debates about migration heated up.

While I also agree that remittances can be used to improve a family's living standard, their contribution alone does not go without any side effect. Even though Cambodian rural household's income increased from less than 2,000 Baht before their international migration to more than 5,000 Baht later (Jampaklay & Kittisuksathit, 2009), migration does not always lead to more development. Although remittance might be able to contribute to economic growth, other factors also determine to what extent this potential is realized. Under some unfavorable conditions and constraints, remittance hardly succeeds its anticipated purpose. These include poor infrastructure, corruption, and absence of appropriate policies, which are likely to play a role in preventing remittance from contributing to the country of origin, and it may as well lower migrants incentives to return and participate to their home economy (Massey, 1988; De Hass, 2005). Betancourt et al. (2013) sees migration in India as a problematic issue rather than a potential solution to poverty reduction and describes it as a disaster. In the long-term development perspective, labor migration in Cambodia may cause more troubles, given these three-folded reasons.

First, although Cambodia is one of the nations with the longest remaining demographic dividend period in ASEAN, it is reaching its end in approximately three decades (Mason, 2005; Wongboonsin & Kinnas, 2005). As a result, the state should try to take this unique advantage of its large working age population to boost the economic growth now to provide resource for the future after the window fades away



instead of exporting labor force to elsewhere. As a sending country, Cambodia loses this favorable moment to capitalize their manpower to maximize demographic dividend, and once these workers return home after entering old age, it can be expected that they will turn into financial burden rather than bonus to the society (Wongboonsin, 2004). Likewise, it is important to examine why rural population keeps moving away in order to reduce migration rate including the rural-urban because even internal migration can swell urban labor forces and deplete rural human capital creating an uneven development and result in a large difference in the dividend between regions. Moreover, if the first dividend is not strong enough, triggering the second dividend remains almost impossible to achieve (Mason & Lee, 2006)

Second, Cambodia can be expected to experience a slow growth of the stock of the young population, who will later turn into human capital to contribute to the rural labor market once they reach their working age. The notion refers not only to those who become dependent migrants themselves and those who were born in receiving areas, but also to those left behind without appropriate familial care. This situation can be expected to shorten and minimize the first demographic dividend in the rural areas, as human capital in term of quality productivity is believed to be the key in successfully capturing full dividend, which also serves as an explanation to rapid and sustainable economic growth in East Asia from 1960s to 1990s (Crespo Cuaresma et al., 2014; Wongboonsin & Kinnas, 2005). In addition, these children's educational outcome, health, and development can also be threatened by their parents' migration and inherit poverty themselves (Coffey, 2013; UNICEF, 2014). Temporary residency of their parents in a host country can serve as hindrance against children's school attendance on a regular basis. Some of them may have to leave school early in their hometown to be on the move along with their parents.

Third, although Cambodian National Strategic Development Plan manifested the necessity in reducing labor migration, there are no clear indicators provided inside, and without indicator, policy is merely a speech rather than a tool to achieve a desired end. Also, RGC persistently intends to rely on remittances for economic growth as proclaiming in the 2014 and 2015 policies on labor migration and employment

respectively. On the other hand, so far the Cambodian legislative regime relevant to regulate outflow migrants has still remained at dawn and insufficient capacity to handle situation while some legal frameworks are inconsistent making remittance itself least reliable and easily collided by depression such as the economic crises in 1997 and 2008, which led to decreasing demand for migrant workers in general the unskilled in particular resulted accordingly in many ASEAN international migrants returning home (Wongboonsin, 2009). In addition, remittance can also be depreciated by currency devaluation, which impacts the exchange rate when host countries desire to increase their exports or face financial collapse. Nonetheless, with the current condition in labor migration management, ramifications of international economic slump could only be worse for Cambodia then and now.

As a result, it is essential and imperative for policy intervention to reduce labor migration to capitalize on the first demographic dividend while also paving the way for the second dividend before Cambodia turns into an aging society. However in order to do so, it is necessary to come up with a better perception of the factors that contribute to migration, as understanding its causes and determinants also means knowing the characteristic of its development process so as to find a solution to reduce migration. In response, this qualitative research study is mainly conducted in order to contribute to the important change in Cambodian national development plan implementation, to mitigate the earlier-mentioned problems, and ultimately to examine the factors that play major parts in the decision between rural-urban and cross-border migration as well as the causes of Cambodian labor migration in purpose to improve knowledge for better understanding.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The purposes of this study are fourfold:

1. To investigate factors contribute to the decision in the choices of destination to migrate.
2. To examine the reasons and causes of labor migration in Cambodia.
3. To improve the understanding of the role of social network and proximity in Cambodian migration context.
4. To develop and reduce the gap of knowledge in Cambodian migration literature.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study is set to focus on analyzing and answering one main research question: what are the factors that contribute to the decision making on the choices of destination for Cambodian unskilled labor migrants?

In addition, there are also three sub-questions that need to be addressed in order to accomplish a series of understand including the causes of migration, the role of social network in the current migration context, and the reason why migrants choose a certain place to relocate and work. Also, it will provide insight regarding of whether or not current unskilled labor migrants had knowledge or were aware of the situation of the receiving area before they migrate. The sub-questions are as followed:

1. What are the reasons and causes of unskilled labor migration in Cambodia?
2. What are the roles of social network in Cambodian migration process?
3. Why did migrant choose their current employment and site?

### **1.4 Limitations of the Study**

Despite the valuable insights primary qualitative study can provide, it is not without limitations in practice. One of these common restrictions is that this work is not

intended for generalization purpose since number of sample is not quantified enough. However, it is rather designed to explore and explain occurrences. Thus findings and conclusions do not entirely represent the whole population. Second, this study covers only four case studies in two types of Cambodian labor migration from three unskilled sectors, which are garment and construction work for internal migration and fishery and construction sector for cross-border migration. Participants; in addition, were at the time of interview, retaining legal status; therefore, their opinion may not reflect that of those from other sectors or illegal migrants in Thailand.

Another limitation of this study is quite unusual. During my interview period, Thai fishing industry was demanded by European Union to consider the issue of human right and unfair exploitation while fresh pressure was put forward to urge Thai authority to take action against intolerable condition in fishery sector. As a result, fishery management was strictly regulated, and many boats were banned from going to the sea to fish until it was equipped with necessary fishing apparatus and followed the new standard. Consequently, those who were working on the boat that did not comply with this new mandate, were also fleetingly jobless and being paid 200 Baht every several days by their employer to cover daily expenses. Some of them decided to search for an employment in the other sectors to earn money whereas those who were bound to stay were unhappy with their situation, so it might or might not affect their satisfaction of working atmosphere in general, but worth mentioning.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

### **1.5.1 Site Selection**

To effectively achieve research's objectives, answer study's questions, and overcome foreseen challenges such as difficulties in reaching targeted migrant workers both internal and cross-border, methods for data collection were cautiously designed in advance in order to obtain a wide access of subjects for sampling feasibility to

minimize time and resource constraints. The selection of the sites and employment sectors for the field interviews was based on a combination of statistical data provided by the Ministry of Planning, Cambodia and the Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Ministry of Labor, Thailand (MoP, 2012; OFWA, 2014) and reports of the most prominent destination for Cambodian labor migrants in previous studies provided in the following chapter. Rural to urban migrants from all four corners in Cambodia congregate only in the capital city and heart of the economy, Phnom Penh, which is also perceived as the industrial hub for those who show interest in seeking job opportunities in the most popular low-skilled sectors of garment and construction. Therefore, it is not that difficult to understand why migration inflow rate there is very high and the most pertinent place to conduct interview.

Nevertheless, Cambodian migrants in Thailand working in different sectors tend to cluster in different provinces. For example, Bangkok and its vicinities are mainly inhabited by construction workers. Therefore, taking into account the given fact that they tend to be in areas where a particular kind of employment is segregated, the locations of eligible sample were accordingly defined using information of regular migrants in Thailand retrieved from OFWA (2014) to ensure that a sufficient number of samples could plausibly be accumulated. In the site selection process, to ensure accessibility allowed by time and resource constraints, I utilized a convenience sampling technique and chose Bangkok Metropolitan Area for construction industry and Rayong and Chonburi provinces for the fishery sector, of which notion was also driven by actual data and researches that both shared a recognition as the top employment sectors Cambodian migrants were engaging in. On top of that, I was also fascinated in exploring the behavioral distinctions of those who were working in the same sector but different receiving areas. Thus, I attempted to interview migrant labors from various sites.

Nonetheless, initially Rayong and Chonburi were not intended provinces to conduct interview if not the fortuitous situation that took place in Thailand unexpectedly as mentioned in the limitation of the study despite the preceding awareness of potential barriers in approaching samples. Samut Sakhon province was; however, the

premeditated location for fieldwork as a consequence of its high population of Cambodian documented migrants but failed to comply because many vessels were banned from fishing while some migrants who had worked in the fishery sector before, left their job in search for other available employment. In addition, boats that did not conform to new regulation usually parked at their own private pier rather than public docks leaving crews on those boats inaccessible. Some ports; moreover, were strictly guarded and forbidden to any outsider, and migrant workers there were also precluded from interacting with strangers. For these reasons and sampling limitations, other sites were determined to substitute the lacking number of interviewee to carry on the study. Additionally, Pathum Thani, the surrounding province of Bangkok was also incorporated into research setting boundary to reduce strain in locating provincial border whereabouts plus this province is also under the administration of Bangkok Metropolitan Area.

Additionally, while there has been no systematically elucidated emphasis on how many qualitative interviews should be adhered to for a robust study and a pool of 15 samples tended to be considered as the smallest empirically, a modest quota size concerning the purpose of the research was deliberately predetermined by myself without an attempt to guarantee the representativeness of entire population. In total, 80 unskilled labor migrants consisted of 40 internal and 40 cross-border or 20 samples per each group were decided for this study. In Phnom Penh, construction laborers were chosen from 6 different sites while interview with garment employees was conducted in two separated garment industrial zones located in the suburb. In addition, construction workers in Thailand were also recruited from 2 construction sites in Bangkok and 2 in Pathum Thani province. Likewise, Cambodian migrants working as deckhands in Sattahip District, Chonburi province and Muang District, Rayong Province were invited for the in-depth interview. Samples were easily reached with the good cooperation of the companies and factories they were working for except fishermen who were got in touch with by the facilitation of an NGO called Foundation for AIDS Rights (FAR). Full permission from construction companies and garment industries to conduct interview at site was obtained prior to data collection. Sample matrix is shown in the following table.

Table 1. 1 Sample Matrix

| Place of Interview     | Sector              | Selected Number of Interviewees | Actual Number of Interviewees |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Phnom Penh, Cambodia   | Construction Worker | 20                              | 20                            |
| Phnom Penh, Cambodia   | Garment Worker      | 20                              | 20                            |
| Bangkok, Thailand      | Construction Worker | 20                              | 08                            |
| Pathum Thani, Thailand | Construction Worker | 0                               | 12                            |
| Rayong, Thailand       | Fishery Worker      | 0                               | 10                            |
| Chonburi, Thailand     | Fishery Worker      | 0                               | 10                            |
| Samut Sakhon, Thailand | Fishery Worker      | 20                              | 0                             |
| <b>Total</b>           |                     | <b>80</b>                       | <b>80</b>                     |

### 1.5.2 Field Data Collection

Data was gathered using purposive sampling approach, and subjects, who were suitable to be recruited, were selectively chosen, but it was also susceptible to bias and subjectivity. Collection process took 3 months to complete beginning from June 1<sup>st</sup> until September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015. All participants were invited for in-depth interviews with semi-structured questionnaires (appendix A) that lasted around 1 hour, and the whole conversation was tape-recorded but kept confidential. A total of four pilot tests, one for each case study were also conducted before the actual data gathering during this 3 months period to evaluate the effectiveness of questionnaire and see whether or not it needed any readjustment in term of terminologies or phrases, but intentional meaning was left unchanged. For example, instead of asking what do you think the government should develop in your village to encourage you to live and work there permanently? I paraphrased this question as what would you like your village to have so that you are able to live and work there permanently?

Asides from general method of data collection, I believe that relationship between interviewer and participants in qualitative research is essential to achieve the goal of in-depth interview. Thus, in order to establish high level of trust with interviewee, I initiated this relationship by first interacting with so-called Cambodian worker leader at site or local NGO and presenting them my identity as well as the purpose of doing

this research. Two of these key informants were also interviewed and taped recorded to gather their opinion toward current situation of migrant workers at the destination and what mainly drives these people to work there (appendix B). Thereafter, I asked informants to refer and introduce me to the first purposively selected participant.

To be eligible for inclusion in the research sample, there were also requirements that participants must meet. First, they must be legal breadwinner migrants and have worked at least one year as construction, garment, or fishery worker in Phnom Penh or Thailand. This requirement was set in order to purposefully get migrants that could provide clearer picture of nature of their work and other information as well as to see if they were interacting with area of origin and feeling satisfied with their current setting or inclined to opt for alternative places. Second, migrants had to be age 15 and above and have migrated to the destination after the year 2000 otherwise the reason of migration could only be civil war or mass eviction policy during the Pol Pot regime, which means there will be no variety among the cause of migration. However, recent migrants were preferred.

During the interview, participant's name was not taken in order to maintain their anonymity and allow them to speak more freely. Instead their identities were recorded using code number. As a result, identified name usually appears below quotation is omitted from this study substituted by *case number*. Subsequently, I also used snowball technique and referral from the first interviewee to locate his counterpart. However, next referred participant was purposively picked in order to avoid having many samples from the same village in case first contributor referred more than one potential sample. A small gift was given after the end of each interview in order to show my gratitude to participants for spending their valuable time taking part in this study. Field note and memos were also written after the end of each interview.

The in-depth interview with migrant workers started with an initiation phase by introducing them research topic, providing a clarified purpose of this study, assuring the anonymity of the data in purpose to build up confident level between the interviewer and interviewees and not creating any misunderstanding and concern that



their participation, information, and opinion will cause future harm. Before starting the real interview, I began with opening questions to try to know more about their demographic characteristics as well as tried to make a friendly environment to ease sample's anxiousness while following questions were related to previous employment at their home village. During this stage, I made my own decision to judge whether or not participants were ready to proceed to deeper questions. At the end of each interview, I reaffirmed about the confidentiality again and thanked them warmly.

During the data generating, not only was I aware of reliability of the information but also its validity. In order to avoid biasness in my data and conclusion, I employed two methods to counteract. First, I tried to collect information from diversified range of individuals with different background. I intentionally aimed to interview migrant workers from various regions in Cambodia with different perspectives or manifold situation. This strategy helped me reduce the chance of getting a group of labor migrants from the same village with similar condition or having endured almost the identical difficulties. Second, the domination over the answer of contributor was also my concern. In such a case, I made a maximum effort to get interviewee in a good responsive environment with no outside reactivity and participant's respond would not be influenced by other people distraction including myself.

### **1.5.3 Data Analysis**

Raw data first comes in the form of audiotapes, hence materials management initially involves in transcribing the data into verbatim text. It is also important to note that all the interviews were conducted in Khmer, native language of Cambodian; thus, first full transcription of the information was documented in the native language then translated into English by myself to build intimate knowledge of the data and to reduce loss of meaning or misinterpretation during the translation process. This procedure took almost 3 months to finish starting from early September to late December 2015. In addition, a codebook was developed before data analysis to place

a limit on coding frame and clear boundary of each code. It was used to reduce and codify segmented data within a rule of one-dimensional main categories and mutually exclusive subcategories. Codes and coding frame are driven using deductive and inductive methods generated by theories drawing upon prior researches and actual data respectively. Each code is given a name instead of number and a description. After codebook was successfully developed, open coding was carried out to see its effectiveness on real data and evaluate whether or not some readjustment is needed for the coding frame or add and organize new emerging codes into categories to make it structurally complete. Open coding was conducted on all transcribed information.

Following the end of the first phase, all transcribed data was recoded again using focus-coding method with a fully modified and functioning codebook. This time each segmentation of all information was read and coded carefully. Therefore, all transcribed interviews were coded twice to reduce error and make use of data potentially. A qualitative data analysis software called MAXQDA 12 was utilized to facilitate my work on breaking down information, ordering data, generating and rearranging codes, and linking data and memos together. The entire coding process took almost 1 month and a half to completely finalize starting from late December 2015 until early February 2016. The final data analysis is divided into 3 types namely single case, cross case, and pooled case comparison, and I employed qualitative content analysis as the method to interpret my data since content analysis is well-suited to report common problems mentioned by participants and explore crucial and sensitive issues in an area where not much is known like Cambodian migration context. This technique involves in quantifying the data and scrutinizing frequency of codes to find its significant meaning and visualize the results in a descriptive manner.

### *Single Case Analysis*

In this research, each of all 4 case studies, which based on the type of jobs migrants are being employed specifically construction work in Phnom Penh and Thailand, garment and fishery sector, is scrutinized separately first in order to gain a clear insight of the factors that influence migrants to choose each type of job and site in a

particular country. This kind of method creates finding in chapter 4 and 5 and made study easier to find uniqueness of the group making result more comprehensible.

#### *Cross Case Analysis*

In cross-sector analysis, all 4 cases are analyzed using comparative method against one another to see the similarities and differences between them, so in this study, 2 kinds of employment in Phnom Penh and 2 kinds of sector in Thailand are examined. The comparative analysis revolves around the factors that contribute to the decision on choices of destination such as demographic selectivity of migrants, pull factors of the host area, social network factor, and obstacles to other destinations. This mechanism; furthermore, provides finding in Chapter 6 Conclusion.

#### *Pooled Case Comparison*

Asides from the other 2 approaches, a third technique is employed to substantially explain and answer collectively the common question, why do people migrate? Data from all 4 separated case studies are combined altogether as one or two kinds depend on the necessity, as there is not much differences between causes of migration across cases as will be seen in Chapter 3. In the illustration of sub-chapter 3.3 Migration Process, 2 cases from each country are pooled conjointly more often to make a comparison individually between migrants to Phnom Penh and those to Thailand to attempt to recognize their differentiations and similarities.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The contribution of this study is fourfold.

First, although labor migration in Cambodia has occurred more than two decades ago and become a major topic for public debate, academic work in this field is still largely insufficient especially from a perspective of demographers mainly due to the lack of

data and information. Therefore, this study will pay some contribution to explore more knowledge in migration field in Cambodian context from a perspective that is not economics. For example, demographic selectivity and social network roles are normally omitted from economic study on migration, but in fact it does impact the determination and decision of migration to a large degree.

Second, while previous studies in Cambodia usually focus much on the consequences of migration, this study will instead play a part in filling the gap of literature in determinants as well as providing information on the causes of migration to respond to new scheme adaptation of the Royal Government of Cambodia and aim to give adequate evidence to address the real issues to support recommendation on policy indicators. Hopefully it will draw more attention and encourage Cambodian legislative body on actual policy implementation.

Third, even if this study does not represent the whole population of Cambodian labor migrants, it gives participants a chance to express their idea while policy-makers can also hear the factual voices and opinions of migrants themselves, know what they really want, sense their feeling, and deeply probe into the behavioral factors laid behind the determinants of migration, which are usually limited to quantitative questionnaires such as influences of social network and amenities attraction of the urban area. Therefore, it is also expected to provide a better postulation and conclusion.

Fourth, phenomenon of labor migration is generally recognized as a movement of people from less developed countries to more developed nations due to the economic magnetism or called South-North migration and dominated predominantly by Mexico-United States studies. This research; however, will come up with a new insight on South-South and internal migration to denote that concerns over labor forces mobility does not only stress out policy-makers in developed countries but also developing states. In addition, this work will raise awareness and enhance perception on the importance of obstacles of migration, which stay as the underlying components why desire relocation cannot happen.

## **1.7 Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of 6 chapters in total including this introduction. Following the introductory chapter is chapter 2, which reviews the literatures and theoretical frameworks relevant to the choices of destination of labor migration. It also presents research findings from previous studies related to decision of migration. By doing so, this chapter paves the way for further study presented in the remaining parts of the dissertation.

Chapter 3 is basically an answer to the first sub-question on the causes and reasons of unskilled labor migration in Cambodia. It also provides detail of the general information of participants whose contribution largely makes this study possible as well as comparison on migration process between internal and international movers.

Chapter 4 and 5 present findings on the second and third sub-questions: What are the roles of social network in Cambodian migration process? And why did migrant choose their current employment and site? The case of Cambodian garment and construction workers in Phnom Penh are presented in chapter 4 while chapter 5 offers the case studies of Cambodian migrant workers in the construction and fishery sectors in Thailand. The analysis of both chapters focuses on demographic selectivities, pull factors, social network factor, and obstacles respectively.

The final chapter presents a conclusion of the study. It includes a comparative analysis of the case studies above, synopses, discussion, and suggestions for future research, as well as policy recommendation that the Royal Government of Cambodia should implement in order to reduce labor migration rate.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Cambodian Political Background

Kingdom of Cambodia is located in the Indochina Peninsula, Southeast Asia and shares border with Vietnam to the south and east, Laos to the north, Thailand to the northwest, and Gulf of Thailand to the southwest with the total area of 181,035 square kilometer and is divided into 24 provinces excluding Phnom Penh, the capital and largest city. The population of Cambodia is approximately 15.5 million with a large dependent population of children and adolescents (UN, 2015). In 1953, Cambodia achieved its independence from France after almost a century of colonization, but military situation within the country and in the region where it used to be under French control remained largely unsettled since the First Indochina War, and it became worse especially after the war between United States and North of Vietnam broke out in the late 1950s.

In March 1970 with support from the United States, King Norodom Sihanouk, who was at that time the head of state and head of the government, was overthrown by General Lon Nol and Prince Sisowat Sirikmatak. This coup d'état effectively ended all the population's hope of having Cambodia remains neutral, as the newly installed government known as the Khmer Republic declared its allegiance to American belligerent in the war against communist armed forces in South of Vietnam. Since then, Cambodia was not only put on the brink of civil conflict that paved the way for a socialist revolution within but also simultaneously dragged deeper into the Second Indochina War and turned the country into a battleground while military chaos and bombardment along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border also raged across the land resulted in thousand civilian death and starvation.

In April 1975, Khmer Rouge army led by a Marxist-Leninist, Saloth Sar, commonly known as Pol Pot defeated the Khmer Republic's forces and consolidated power over Phnom Penh. To implement a new idealistic modernization policy, Pol Pot regime immediately started to empty the capital city and evicted the entire population to rural area to do intensively forced agricultural farming. As a result, the wholesale economic activities were shut down, and Cambodia turned out to be a state without currency. In the first process of cleansing the society of bourgeois, former government officials and urban educated citizens were accused of bringing capitalism into Cambodia and executed. However, even peasants and Khmer Rouge's comrades suspicious of intending to initiate individualism or betrayal were also murdered later. Consequently, it was estimated that approximately 2 million Cambodians or 1/3 of total population at that time perished of execution or succumbed to diseases (Gellman, 2010).

In January 1979, Pol Pot's reign collapsed. A new communist government called People's Republic of Kampuchea was established in Phnom Penh with reinforcement and material support from Vietnam and USSR. Many Cambodian people, who were living under Pol Pot's administration, then took refuge promptly in some area between Thai-Cambodian border, one of which famous among them was called Site II Refugee Camp in search for international humanitarian assistance and hoped to emigrate to a third country like France and United States as asylum seeker. This camp was shut down right after the restoration of Cambodian monarchy and first general election held in May 1993, which was organized and run by United Nation Transitional Authority in Cambodia as prescribed in the 1991 Paris Peace Treaty Accord that marked the official end of the nation civil war and republicanism. But it was not until 1999 that the remaining in-exile Khmer Rouge guerillas surrendered themselves completely in a coalition government amnesty.

Nevertheless, many displaced persons in the refugee camps, who had not yet been granted rights to move to another country, were also repatriated back to Cambodia. A large number of them later turned into voluntary undocumented migrants in look for job in Thailand or helped other people to cross border illegally and became a broker themselves. With their experience, it was feasible to them since they had learned how

to smuggle into Thailand smoothly without getting caught, and more importantly they were aware of the unskilled labor situation and certainly knew which part of the country and employment sectors the Thai nationals were unwilling to do and in need of migrant workers. Since then, international migration has become well known to Cambodian rural population with poor economic status, and it is increasingly popular among single youth who has low education. Nonetheless conclusively, through various change of political unrest in Cambodia from 1970 to 1993, it is recognized that majority of Cambodian citizens have at least experienced migration once.

## **2.2 Understanding Poverty in Cambodia**

Poverty remains a big challenging affair for Cambodia, as poverty rate of many rural regions except Phnom Penh and its vicinities exceeds 20% (MoP, 2014). The effect of twenty years of civil warfare and the massacre of around 2 million people mainly the elite and high educated during the Khmer Rouge regime are probably the main reasons of this slow industrialization in Cambodia. Although Cambodia GDP growth rate from 2000 to 2014, contributed by garment industry, construction, rice export, and tourism, is promising with an average of 7% annually (IMF, 2014), 3 million people out of 15 million population are still living in poverty while another 8 million living condition is a bit upper the poverty line, and approximately 90% of these 11 million citizens are from the countryside (WB, 2014). Thus, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that Cambodian migrant mostly comes from poor family in the rural area with the intention of improving his household living condition via remittances (FitzGerald et al., 2007; Heng, 2012).

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery, Cambodia (2014) reports that 80% of the entire population is still living in the remote region doing traditional farming as their main source of income. Poverty happens mostly in rural area because farmer has to depend on rainwater to grow crops while irrigation system has remained underdeveloped. Therefore without taking into account natural disaster, generally



Cambodian farmers can only cultivate once in a year during the rainy season. With low production and falling price on agricultural commodity in the market, they cannot possibly earn enough to compensate the input cost of the cereal grain they bought to sow (WB, 2014). In this circumstance, they have no choice but to take loan to cover dairy expenses and/or buy additional seed for next cultivating project. In Cambodian cultural context; moreover, family lands will be divided among offspring normally after they get married, and so this practice makes small land even smaller and hardly enables them to earn a living especially for those with many siblings (MoP, 2012).

Landlessness is another significant issue causing destitution in an agrarian nation like Cambodian, and it pushes rural inhabitants to leave their hometown in seeking for jobs or better living condition in another area (Hap, 2010). During the Khmer Rouge's regime, all land registration and ownership were abolished prompting further destruction to legal system and numerous land disputes. After the end of civil war, many refugees returned to their home village just to find out that their previous land was squatted by someone else. Illegal land tenure is still happening until now to those who leave their home for several years and move back to see their land is occupied. Proper entitlement protected by law to prevent unlawful possession is not practical due to the complicated registration procedure and costly expense, in which putting the effectiveness and objectives of land law in question. But despite that, when land price was not desirable, land grabbing was not a big deal, yet after the price has risen up over times, scramble of land by powerful elites and the rich is seen quite often leading to mass eviction of the poor (ibid). Furthermore, expropriation without fair compensation also ensues long-term poverty to those who suffer it. Hap (2010) postulates that evicted dweller often end up enduring worse form of impoverishment because they are obliged to move from the future development zone in the city to another remote community reserved by the government, but it is usually inadequate of infrastructure such as road, schools, and hospitals and income generating activities.

Evidently, another existing study suggests that poverty and economic insecurity are major explanations to cross border migration phenomenon of those from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar into Thailand (Wongboonsin, 2004). Phann (2015) asserts that

landlessness or nearly landlessness in Cambodia is a major factor that causes rural penury as their livelihood depends almost entirely on agriculture as a mean to secure their subsistence. As a result, household members have to carve out a strategy for survival, and even children must work sometimes in order to contribute to family's income. This is also consistent with a comparative study on the effect of land ownership on probability of migration in Western Mexico and Northeast Thailand (Vanwey, 2005). Even though Mexico is not considered as a country that relies largely on rice cultivation to furnish GDP growth like Cambodia, it is discovered that household that perceives growing crops as their investment opportunity and wealth, landlessness is a main reason of their migration to the United States.

In addition, insufficient infrastructure and utilities such as water and electricity in the rural region makes it inaccessible by direct investors, create an uneven development, and unable people to thrive by themselves. Inter-Censal economic survey in 2014 reveals that total number of establishment that operates their own business and supports Cambodian economy and its peoples' lives is 514,278 or approximately 35 establishments per one thousand population or equivalent to 1 establishment per 28.5 people. Notwithstanding a fair number of premises, it is unfavorable to rural residents, for around 1/5 of these business and non-business institutions together are located in Phnom Penh alone while more than 50% of all economic units are founded in the capital city and its vicinities and the cultural city of Siem Reap (NIS, 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising why Phnom Penh is seen as the only developed place in Cambodia, yet many other provinces are recognized in the sense of least developed.

### **2.3 Labor Market in Cambodia and Thailand**

War not only brings about poverty and devastation but also shapes the demographic and social setting, and the aftermath of civil armed conflict in Cambodia is not different from what anyone would anticipate. The on-going demographic transition and bizarre population structure were also consequences of Cambodian brutal history.

A genocide carried out by Pol Pot's government and the baby boom took place in late 1980s and early 1990s altered dramatically the age composition and made Cambodia a young country with small number of elderly age 60 and above accounting for only 7% of the entire citizen (UN, 2015). Every year, about 300,000 new Cambodian labor forces enter the market (MoLVT & ILO, 2014), but this value is contributed mainly by rural population due to the lower fertility characteristics of urban city (NIS, 2008).

It is also worth mentioning again that economic development and poverty rate in Cambodia are not equally dispersed among the regions; therefore, it makes employment opportunity other than farming in certain areas slight causing an excess of manpower specifically for provinces further from the capital. With local economic growth that cannot attain commensurate employment growth, it comes as no surprise that workers have to migrate out of their hometown to where regular works exists. Additionally, it is important to note that agriculture can only provide job during the rainy season, which lasts from 3 to 6 months, so for the remaining period, engagement in cultivating activities is not possible (Lim, 2007). Consistently, this is largely accurate since lack of working opportunities, in addition to unfavorable living conditions, is the explanation of international migration from Cambodia to Thailand or from a poorer to a richer country (Wongboonsin, 2009).

Other previous researches; moreover, can also be employed to supplement this statement. On the one hand, (Lewis, 1954) two-sector model and Ranis & Fei (1961) assume that a developing country normally has a surplus of unproductive hands in the agricultural sector in rural area, who are pulled to the growing industries in the urban where a great amount of labor is demanded and higher wages are also provided. On the other hand, it is found that the cause of international migration is not always the push factor of the country of origin but the pull factor of the destination (Piore, 1979). For Piore, labor market consists of two sectors, primary and secondary of which the former contains more highly paid and stable job, populated by the natives and the latter; in contrast, includes poorer paid and unstable job and dominated by migrant workers because it is difficult to attract citizens of the richer country into those kind of employment. Correspondingly, Wongboonsin (2009) asserts that most of the work

engaged by unauthorized migrants in Thailand are generally refused by the locals while; in addition, Thai entrepreneurs are more interested in these migrants, as they can save at least 3 billion USD on their wage bill.

In the similar manner, the demand for unskilled labor in Thailand is probably the most important element that draws low educated Cambodians. Maltoni (2006) points out three primary factors that stimulate Thailand to thirst for migrant workers. First, Thailand is now an aging population. The percentage of elderly people is increasing gradually due to the modern healthcare, and it is a situation that entails considerable national budget. Second, total fertility rate of Thailand keeps declining over time, which also means fewer working-ages and more pressure for the remaining to carry out the duty of economic development. Third, Thailand's growing economy calls for more labor forces to fill in empty position especially in 3D jobs, but Thai population thinks it is an inferior employment; therefore, they would rather remain unemployed than to work in these sectors. In fact, the confirmation was apparently given during the economic slump in 2008, which resulted in return of one million Thai migrant labors from more developed countries. Thai employers; however, were not able to recruit enough workers for these types of job still (Chan, 2009).

#### **2.4 Rational Individual and Migration Selectivity**

Migration is selective and distinctive from other demographic concepts because it does not happen randomly. The degree of selectivity is determined largely by the individual socio-economic characteristics namely age, gender, level of education, marital status, and region of residence (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2011; Feliciano, 2005; Massey, et al., 2010; Ravenstein, 1885, 1889). In migration decision-making process, these personal factors will influence predominantly the choices of destination of migrant, who will choose a place where he believes his characteristics fit. Borjas (1989) refers this as individual utility maximization, which means migrant would search for the "*best country*" in order to try to maximize his possibility of employment,

income, and/or better employment condition. Bouvier et al. (1976) earlier work could be used as obvious evidence to support this assertion that high educated people are pulled into the city where they need a job that equal to their human capital while low educated people are pushed away from certain areas because of their limited capacity.

In the human capital version of neo-classical economic, Sjaastad (1962) advocates that migration is selective and highly associated with age and gender. Additionally, he believes that migration is seen by migrant as a kind of investment, a mean to achieve a dream, in which premise lead to the introduction of human capital migration model of investment that sees migration is not only caused by a result of wage differences between two regions but also the foreseen post-migration human capitalization derives from on-the-job training. Nonetheless, he states that migrant or the investor also considers the cost of migration before moving. These migration's costs include the out-of-pocket cost such as airfare and cost of foregone earning or known as an "*opportunity cost*" – the money migrants are supposed to earn from the time they spend on travelling and looking for a job at the destination. Furthermore, migration related expense can also be non-financial or called "*psychic cost*" – a price of migration imposed when migrant physically stays far from his family (ibid). It is probably far more important than the monetary cost and to some degree does impact the choices of destination and duration of stay. Unfortunately, it is invisible and cannot be measured by simply quantified calculation method.

Starting with the postulation that migration is primarily driven by economic rationale, Todaro (1969, 1976) and Harris & Todaro (1970) argue that labor migrants respond to their expected difference between expenses and gains, which are something migrant have anticipated that it would cost or benefit him respectively if he decided to move, or simply a perceived net return from a secure job at the destination rather than actual earning differential. The higher the expected income, the more possibility that migrant will move. That is to say, migrant considers various destinations available to him and chooses the one that provides him the most benefit. But duration of stay at the destination is also put in his consideration, and migrant may move with his long-term total expected income in mind. This is why in every society, migration especially the

long distance one is dominated by young adults, as they can enjoy longer advantages from their migration, but enticement to move diminishes with age. However, conforming to Sjaastad (1962), Todaro and Smith (2015) acknowledge that migration is also stimulated partly by psychological cost.

Similar to the rest of the world, Cambodian migrants tend to be young population from 15 – 34 years old and is responsible for almost 90% of total number of migrant while internal migrants are more likely to be females than males, but cross-border movers are overwhelming by male population (MoP, 2012). It is also indicated by another study that international migrants in Thailand, which include Cambodians, are normally young at age (Pholphirul & Rukumnuaykit, 2010). Moreover, MoP (2012) also reveals that low educated people are more likely going to choose outflow migration instead of rural-urban but detailed explanation was not given leaving the question to be further discussed because although migration is selective, there are many other factors that contribute to the decision including both macro and meso level and even the obstacle, which individual will take into account before he makes up his mind. Lee (1966) argues that because of the different demographic background, migrants do not respond the same way to push-pull factors in each host country, and they also have disparate methods to overcome obstacle that stay as a barrier between area of origin and area of destination.

## **2.5 Social Network in Cambodian Migration Context**

Poverty keeps lingering in agrarian countries also due to crop failure in some unfortunate year. This disaster eventually leads to insufficient income for household to finance a new sowing project, so family starts to diversify sources of their income to minimize the risk of deterioration in economic situation by forcing one or more family members to migrate in order to provide a backup (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark & Taylor, 1991; Castles, 2004). In this case, the tendency of migration most likely comes from household decision instead of individual. This statement is supported by

recent studies by Funkhouser (2009) and Zeitlyn et al., (2014) who find out a significant effect of household in determining the location of individual migration. But role of social connectivity in Cambodia is more important than just motivating movement. On average, 45% of all Cambodian migrants refer social network as their main financial support in migration process; moreover, 85% of total migrants said that they received encouragement for migrating from their family at home (MoP, 2012).

Another kind of social network in migration is the connectivity at the destination. It is more than just a chain migration, but a tie that connects migrants and non-migrants within and between the area of origin and the host country and increases the likelihood of the flow of movement (Massey, 1990b; Massey et al., 1993). Migration network proximity can be divided into two types, strong and weak tie, which influence the probability of migration decision at different degree due to the level of mutual trust. Strong tie consists of friends and family members while weak tie contains only the community of the prospective migrants (Samers, 2010). In contrast, it is found that rural urban migration in Cambodia is not necessary to be facilitated by network in the receiving area, and many migrants come to Phnom Penh alone without knowing any connection to help them find shelter or jobs (MoP, 2012).

There are 2 probable explanations to this finding. Firstly, it is because the risk associated with migration such as human trafficking occurs rarely to internal migrants, or secondly migrants are more confident in moving within political border due to the similarity in language and culture, which are also the primary reasons why Dominican and Cuban people choose to migrate to Puerto Rico instead of United States although the average level of earning in Puerto Rico is lower (Funkhouser & Ramos, 1993). Fafchamps and Shilpi (2013) provide evidence to prove that choosing between migration destinations is not essentially driven by economic differentials but other factors including relationship proximity. Therefore, it leaves without doubt that migrants will opt for a country or a certain area where there are many other migrants who share the same language and ethnic background. The larger size of ethnic community in the receiving area, the higher possibility new migrants will move there (Spörlein, 2015).

However, social linkage in this new era is not the sole actor in facilitating migration. There are emerging agents that becoming popular, and their function is to fulfill the needs of migrant, but their operation can be legal or illegal. Their services include providing advices and counseling, helping migrants cross the border, finding a job or a shelter, and negotiating with employers. This kind of people can be brokers who see migration as a business or institutions such as recruiting agency, organization, and government that work for profit or non-profit (Massey et al., 1993; Teitelbaum, 2008). In Cambodian international migration context, a broker is either a former migrant or someone who has an association with both Thai employers that looking for unskilled labors and potential migrant workers, and his skill in facilitating migration is very important because it determines the outcome of illegal migration (Maltoni, 2006).

## **2.6 Destinations of Cambodian Unskilled Labor Migrants**

So far, Cambodia has still remained one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia and struggled to recover from the legacy of Khmer Rouge and warfare destruction that resulted in chronic poverty suffered by its population. But in spite of the fact that Cambodia is still predominantly considered as a rural country, the percentage of urban development is improving rapidly especially since the last decade when large number of people continue to flow into Phnom Penh every year. In 1998, there were only 1 out of 20 Cambodian lives in the capital, but by the year 2012, this number increased to about 1 in 10 (MoP, 2012) while total population of Phnom Penh itself jumped from 567,860 in 1998 to 1,237,600 in 2008 and finally to 1,688,044 in 2014 with total fertility rate around 2.1 (NIS, 1998; 2008; 2014). As a result, it obviously produces enough evidence to substantiate a claim that the largely growing urbanization in Phnom Penh is not, to a great extent, contributed by natural increase. Practically, rural-urban migration in Cambodia mostly occurs between the rest of its territory and Phnom Penh where it is believed as the primary domestic destination for all kind of migration. However, among all the incentives of movement to the capital city, 75% of total migrant refers employment as the main inducement (MoP, 2012).



With more population growing and foreign investors steaming there annually, Phnom Penh has changed from a ghost town in 1979 into a giant boom city in the later year with much of its agricultural land in the suburb area turned into enormous garment industrial zones and massive infrastructure while residences and commercial buildings are developed within the city center where million tourists visit yearly to see Phnom Penh's cultural heritage and historical architecture built during the French colonization of Cambodia. Consequently, this is also a boost in construction business indirectly. But again, development in Cambodia is; to a great degree, taken place merely in Phnom Penh while outside of the capital, Cambodia remains in a sense of low progression with many households living under or barely upper the poverty line and being forced to find a pressing mean to supplement their meager earning. For that few reasons, it is not perplexing to understand why populations in rural area keeps moving into Phnom Penh invariably in search for employment. The most popular jobs; in addition, are garment and construction work (Lim, 2007; Phann, 2014).

Nevertheless, some migrants that choose to settle in Phnom Penh have no intention to stay there continuously but waiting for their opportunity to migrate to a desire destination. Ravenstein, (1885, 1889) argues that by nature, the majority of migrants move stage-by-stage, which means that they do not go directly to their destination but temporarily stay at a place for a period of time before they continue to proceed again. For Ravenstein, the primary motivation for migration are higher wages and better working condition; therefore, migrants intent to opt for only big industrial and commercial cities. In my point of view, there are two possible reasons to explain this impediment. First, these migrants do not hold any social connectivity with someone at the host area who is able to help them access to employment and makes their mobility more reliable by providing confident information regarding of cost and benefit of moving since lacking of complete information in general the expected wage in particular will raise the sense of uncertainty and insecurity, which affect the possibility of migration (Harris & Todaro, 1970). Hugo (1981) and Massey (1990a, 1990b) also claim that potential migrants often expect their connection at the receiving country to provide them physical as well as emotional support.

Secondly, prospective international migrants staying in Phnom Penh are perhaps prevented from journeying to their anticipated destination by substantial cost involves in migration that associated with distance, which is also a proxy for direct money, opportunity cost, information cost, and psychic cost as well as uncertainty. Increase in length usually means increase in size of barrier to that destination and eventually deters migration. Lee (1966) and Borjas (1989) postulate that distance is a big hindrance to migration gravity, and only those, who can afford to migrate, are able to migrate. This is why reducing transportation cost will lead to an augmentation in movement rate and also its complexity. However, the barricade of moving internationally nowadays can also be immigration policy.

While 50% of total Cambodian migration concentrating solely within the boundary of Phnom Penh, the second most popular flow is internationally bound and accounted up to 30% of all migrants. Thailand; however, remains not only the principal destination for Cambodian outflow and is responsible for 81.5% of all labor migration abroad (MoP, 2012) but also a main hub for international mobility in hunting for unskilled job opportunities in mainland Southeast Asia with the total amount around three millions in this category while migrants from Myanmar are the large majority (Wongboonsin, 2009; Huguet, 2014). There is no precise information to determine an approximate number of Cambodian migrants both legal and undocumented in Thailand, but some sources estimate that the inflow of Cambodian migrant workers to Thailand including the dependents has increased gradually and annually and can be plausibly about 1 million already with at least 700,000 registered at the One Stop Service Center and holding temporary work permit (Wongboonsin, 2009; ILO, 2015; OFWA, 2016). In addition, relevant studies have shared a general notion that Cambodian migrants concentrated in three major sectors namely, construction, fishery, and agriculture. Among others, an explanation to the strong gravity of Thailand labor market is the comparatively favorable minimum wage, which is four to five times higher than that in Cambodia (Ra, 2014; Wongboonsin, 2009). Remittances accordingly becomes a crucial key for Cambodian rural development, and it was estimated that in 2005 Cambodia received remittances from overseas mainly Thailand roughly 200 million USD inflow or 3.23% of total GDP that year (Chan, 2009).

## 2.7 Cambodian-Thai Policy Toward Labor Migration

Of course, the contribution of migration to unemployment and poverty alleviation in Cambodia is certainly undeniable. This reflects also in research projects carried out by local and international organizations that analyze its impact and suggest policy implications to the government to maximize the benefit. In recommendation section, Chan (2009) suggests Royal Government of Cambodia to pass a new law to supersede the 1995 sub-decree on labor migration management and pay more attention to regulate and protect Cambodian migrants abroad from being exploited so that they will be able to remit more money back home. In respond, the Prime Minister enacted sub-decree N°190 in August 2011 on the management of the sending of Cambodian workers abroad through private recruitment agencies in order to facilitate migrants and replace 1995 sub-decree, which is outdated. In 2013, other eight ministerial declarations (*Prakas*) were also passed by the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training to supplement further implementing details to the sub-decree N°190, but it is more like a guideline or a tool that prescribes their official authorities over the recruitment agencies and does not carry the full law enforcement power.

Following the mass exodus in June 2014, the RGC has addressed itself to the effectiveness of its bureaucracy and the cost of regular migration particularly the burdens of obtaining a passport. It has been known before when migrant's advocate indicated that emigrants were charged exorbitant fee for their passport and other necessary documentation by Cambodian governments (Wongboonsin, 2009) while the total cost of sending a migrant worker to Thailand via private recruitment agencies is approximately 700 USD, which is typically borne by migrant himself through a combination of upfront payments and payroll deductions and requires about 3 to 6 months to process (Tunon & Rim, 2013). Therefore, considering that migrants are able to earn the minimum wage in Thailand of 300 Baht per day, it will take them around 3 months working on a consecutive basis to compensate their journey expense. In contrast, migrants can hire a middleman to help them cross the border illegally into Thailand for a price ranges from 100 to 200 USD (Hing & Lun, 2011).

In addition, MoLVT, Cambodia and ILO had jointly worked on the policy for labor migration, which was put into practice in June 2010, and another one in December 2014 to build on the previous. A year later, National Employment Policy 2015 – 2025 was also approved by the Council of Ministers. However, both Labor Migration and National Employment Policy have two characteristics in common. First, it still recognizes the importance of international labor migration as a mechanism to cope with local unemployment issues and strengthen economic growth and tends to promote outflow migration, which is mutually contradictory to the previous acknowledgement conceded in the National Strategic Development Plan 2014 – 2018. Second, significant attention has been paid to facilitate safe migration with decent payment rather than focus on creating appropriate domestic employment for migrants now or upon their return. As a result, this persists in being a continuing unfinished business for the country since the push factors that forces them to leave Cambodia in the first place remains largely unchanged, so remigration or continuous stay at the destination is the only option left for them making the purpose of acquiring proficient workers with skills capitalized through on-the-job training to contribute to the economic development upon their return will barely accomplishes.

Migration policy and management in Thailand have shown significant change and improvement especially during the Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration in 2001 (Rukumnuaykit, 2009). However, there was no clear migration policy between Cambodia and Thailand that allowed Cambodian low skilled migrants to enter Thailand legally existed until 2003 when both countries signed an established bilateral memorandum of understanding on the cooperation in the employment of workers in order to reduce irregular migration rate as well as legalize undocumented migrants so that they can enjoy rights protection and freedom of movement, but it was not until 2006 that the final discuss and regularization were implemented. By then, a new category of visa and work permit for low-skilled migrants was ratified, but this work permit is only valid for 2 years and renewable for additional 2 years. Nonetheless, the high cost, complex procedure, and long processing duration of legal labor migration through MoU were still big constraints to Cambodian rural population who could barely survive, and the objective of having many migrants registered was

hardly achieved because as of June 2014, there were only about 90,000 Cambodian migrants registered and entered Thailand via this process (ILO, 2015).

In respond to this undesirable result, in late June 2014 the Thai National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) has begun to establish One-Stop-Service Center (OSSC) first in Samut Sakhon province and later throughout the country and required Thai employers to take their migrant workers whose work permit had expired or had never registered before to register. Following the complete registration process, a non-Thai identification card or so called the pink-card work permit were issued and given to migrants so that their status would temporarily become regular, and they could also access to health care. The card was to be due to expire on 31 March 2015, by which NCPO expected that those migrants would have completed Nationality Verification and be in regular status, yet due to the insufficient officials from Cambodia who were to dispatch to help in the nationality check process and lack of proper documentation of migrants, it was delayed and extended to June 29, 2015. Effort has also been made in the ministerial regulation issued by Thailand Ministry of Labor on 30 April 2015 to lower the cost of 2 years work permit as well as its extension to 1,800 Baht.

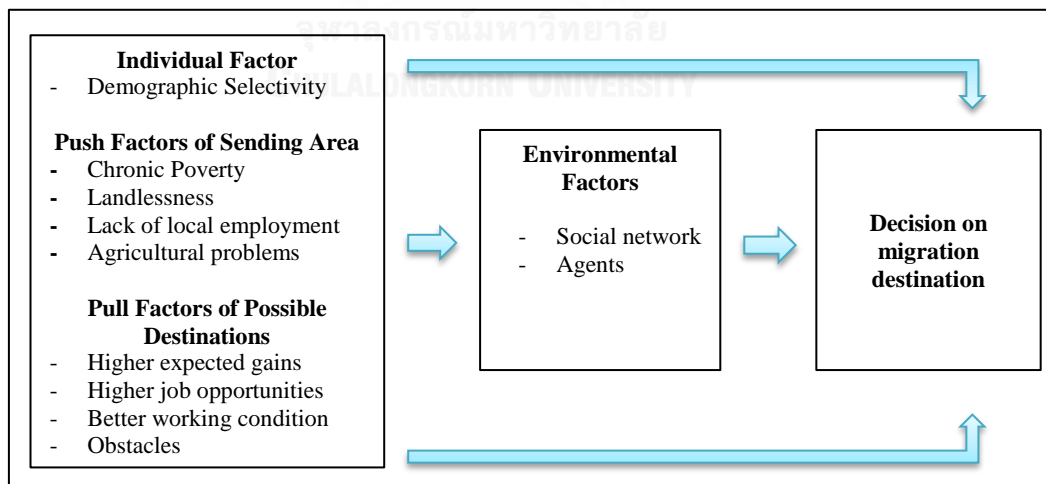
## 2.8 Conceptual Framework

By reviewing migration at the micro, macro, and meso levels above, I managed to develop a theoretical framework comprising individual demographic factors, push-pull factors, and intermediate variable affecting the choices of destination shown in figure 2.1 below. The socio-economic selectivity at the individual level consists of age, gender, region of residence, marital status, and education although year of schooling does not seem that significant for the unskilled jobs that demand largely physical power rather than intellectual capacity. Furthermore, the financial difficulties and disparities of economic growth between regions in Cambodia or across countries and for the latter, between that and Thailand, to engender a combination of continuing push-pull conditions, cannot be ignored in the process of migration decision, but

sometimes possible receiving areas can also be obstructed by unaffordable travelling cost.

In term of the push factors, in summary, labor migration in Cambodia regardless of destinations were brought about by chronic poverty as a result of constantly low household's income, landlessness or nearly landlessness, shortage of local employment rather than just agriculture, which was rather seasonal while occasionally migrants themselves had to face serious cultivation degradation and/or falling price on farming commodity. Regarding of the pull factors, it clearly showed that a dual labor market paved the way for a great desire of low-skilled labors and higher expected wage payment for migrants from rural to urban areas (Piore, 1979; Maltoni, 2006). However, both types of social network may also influence migration destination selection in a way that encourages prospective movers such as providing necessary information that reduces risks aversion, improves safety level of mobility, and decreases the toughness of obstacles.

Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Framework



## CHAPTER 3

### MIGRANTS AND CAUSES OF MIGRATION

#### 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

As mentioned early, this study is not intended for generalization, thus figures and tables below do not deliberately purport to represent the whole population, but they rather provide general information of the samples that participated during data collection process in both Phnom Penh and Thailand. They serve to provide a visual insight of demographic characteristics of the contributors to this migration study in association with their choices of destination. More information and rationales about sample's demographic selectivity will be discussed in detail in each case study.

Figure 3. 1 Number of Participant by Gender and Work Sector

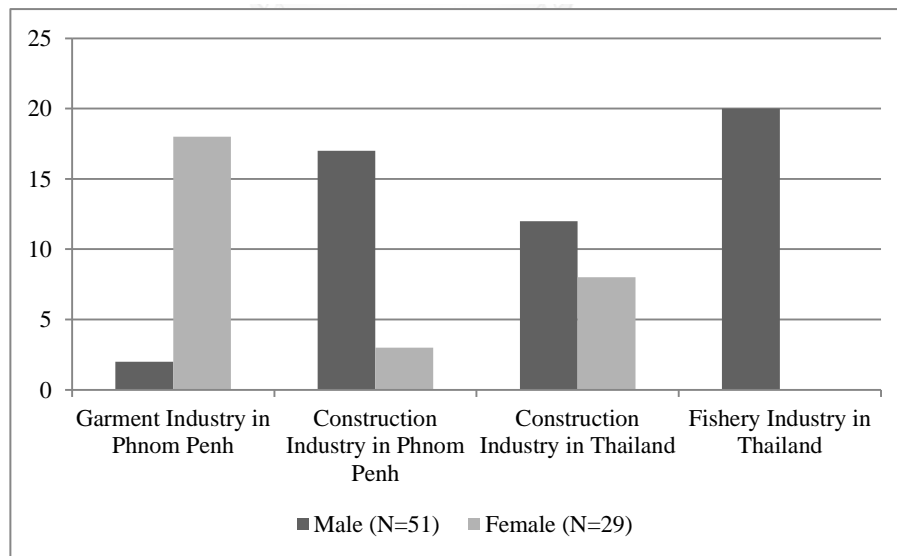


Figure 3.1 shows the number of Cambodian migrant workers who participated in the in-depth interview by gender and work sector. Altogether, there were 51 male and 29 female migrant workers in both internal and cross-border flows. Base on literatures, construction work is usually considered as male sector and consistently overwhelmed by male population up to the point that female is mostly omitted from the study due to its very few number (Arndt et al., 2005; Riise et al., 1995; Claessen et al., 2010). But this study found out that there were also female participants working in construction sector especially in Thailand where number of male and female workers seems to be increasingly balance despite the nature of work, which entails considerable strength (OFWA, 2016). Likewise, garment work is female oriented, but male migrants are also discovered. Additionally, there is no female migrant working as a fisherman in Thailand participated in this study, but there are those who work in the fishery related sector such as seafood processing industry. Nevertheless due to the scope of this study, none of them was invited for the interview.

**Table 3. 1 Percentage Distribution of Migrant Worker by Age Group and Level of Education**

| Characteristics               | Overall<br>(N=80) | Sector   |   |   |  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--|---|---|--|
|                               |                   | Garment<br>Industry in<br>Phnom Penh<br>(N=20) | Construction<br>Industry in<br>Phnom Penh<br>(N=20) | Construction<br>Industry in<br>Thailand<br>(N=20) | Fishery<br>Industry in<br>Thailand<br>(N=20) |
| <b>Age Group</b>              |                   |  |   |   |  |
| 15 - 19                       | <b>5.0</b>        | 5  | -   | 15  | -  |
| 20 - 24                       | <b>23.8</b>       | 40   | 10  | 20  | 25   |
| 25 - 29                       | <b>33.7</b>       | 25   | 45  | 25  | 40   |
| 30 - 34                       | <b>21.3</b>       | 15   | 30  | 25  | 15   |
| 35 - 39                       | <b>10.0</b>       | 10   | 10  | 10  | 10   |
| 40+                           | <b>6.2</b>        | 5  | 5   | 5   | 10   |
| <b>Age at First Migration</b> |                   |  |   |   |  |
| <15                           | <b>7.5</b>        | 5  | 10  | 10  | 5  |
| 15 - 19                       | <b>35.0</b>       | 65   | 30  | 20  | 25   |
| 20 - 24                       | <b>31.3</b>       | 10   | 20  | 45  | 50   |
| 25 - 29                       | <b>11.2</b>       | 10   | 20  | 10  | 5  |
| 30 - 34                       | <b>7.5</b>        | 10   | 10  | 5   | 5  |
| 35 - 39                       | <b>5.0</b>        | -  | 10  | 5   | 5  |
| 40+                           | <b>2.5</b>        | -  | -   | 5   | 5  |



**Level of Education**

|                  |             |    |    |    |    |
|------------------|-------------|----|----|----|----|
| No Education     | <b>13.7</b> | -  | 25 | 20 | 10 |
| Primary School   | <b>52.5</b> | 40 | 50 | 60 | 60 |
| Secondary School | <b>23.8</b> | 45 | 15 | 10 | 25 |
| High school      | <b>7.5</b>  | 10 | 5  | 10 | 5  |
| Higher Education | <b>2.5</b>  | 5  | 5  | -  | -  |

*\*Note:* Primary school in Cambodia comprises grades 1 to 6. Secondary school refers to grades 7 to 9. High school is grades 10 to 12. Higher education denotes university level from the bachelor onward; but none of the samples completed bachelor degree.

The result in Table 3.1 is the percentage distribution of migrant workers by age group and level of education. As an overview, the participating Cambodian migrants, both internal and cross-border, tend to be young adult between 20 – 34 years old with the mean age of 28.75 and the mean age at first migration of 21.8. Participants in garment and fishery sectors are relatively young, mostly between 20 – 29 years old; on the other hand, migrants who work at the construction site in Phnom Penh are concentrated on the later age group of 25 – 34.

Basically, it is vital to be reminded that this study only focuses on legal migration and employment conforming with the enacting 1997 Law on Labor of Cambodia, Section 8, Article 177 and The Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 of Thailand, Chapter 4, Section 44, which both strictly prohibit employment of child under 15 years of age. Therefore, under-aged labor migration is also considered as against the law. For that reason, migrants are also required to be age 15 and above to be interviewed, so essentially there are no contributors, whose age below 15, appearing in this table. The Cambodian law; however, also denotes that if the nature of the work is hazardous to health, safety, and morality, employer is only permissible to hire workers at age of 18+. Thus, it leads to a contentious discussion here. As garment and construction works are generally regarded as risky jobs, many migrants still got hired to work even though they were not supposed to be provided employment before they turned 18.

Looking at the table, it makes sense enough that international migrants are often younger than internal migrants because of the cost and benefit meaning what they might get from such a long distance migration; therefore, they tend to move early so that they can enjoy benefit longer. Age indeed has a great negative relationship with distance of migration. Old people are less likely to move very far from home because they believe they will not benefit much from such migration. This notion is based on the fact that younger Cambodian migrants prefer to go to work in South Korea whereas older migrants often refuse to move there because they think it is very costly, and they will not be able to take much advantage from their movement.

Moreover, it comes into sight that 65% garment workers migrated at the age between 15 to 19 years old. Therefore, it makes clear that female participants migrate at the younger age than male counterparts. Nevertheless, first migration is not necessary to be the destination where interview was conducted, but migration must be for working purpose. Apart from what is shown in the table, it implicates that participants did leave formal education when they were still very young specifically female. 7.5% of total sample left school and migrated to work for the first time even before they reached their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday while the majority left schools at the age between 15 – 24 years especially garment workers and those who migrate to work in Thailand.

In general, seemingly both types of migrant share the same level of education, and based on my calculation, their mean year of attending school is approximately 5.5, but garment workers on average have the highest year of education; however, they also migrated earlier, which indicates that they most likely left school for the purpose of migration. In contrast, it is inconsistent with construction workers in Phnom Penh, who left school early but migrated at the later age. Evidently, they were more likely to leave their education to help their family doing cultivation or search for a domestic employment to supplement their household inadequate income for several years before they first migrated out of their province of residence.

This is nonetheless controversial since high level of truancy is a major obstacle to economic development as well as human capitalization that will be certainly resulted

in low productivity and GDP growth, and it is absolutely not allowed by the 2007 Cambodian Law on Education, Chapter 4, Article 17, which proclaims that basic education is compulsory and comprise the first 9 years of the formal general education. Therefore, without any repetition and taking into consideration that children start school at the age of 6 years, at least they will not finish grade 9 before they turn 15 years old, yet only a minority of interviewee completed mandatory education while 14% never attended school and more than half left school somewhere between grade 1 to 6. Remarkably, a large number of garment workers left their education during their secondary level.

Based on the notion provided by participants themselves, in general, unfavorable dropout rate could be indirectly caused by low job motivation but in particular it is discovered that young prospective migrants and/or their family either disvalue the long-term benefit of education by being convinced that even if they stay in school, high education is not always rewarded, or are made to believe that education is the cause of their chronic poverty, but it is doubtful, as all twelve years of general education is free of charge.

*“Yes, if I didn’t ask him [her son] to come to work in Thailand, why would he come when he was still studying in the village? Working at this construction site is easy enough that I asked him to come and work with me in order to earn more money and remit back home.”*

Case 61, 36 years old female construction worker in Pathum Thani province, Thailand from Kampong Cham province.

*“At that time, they [her parents] had their own money too, but they borrowed some more money from my aunt to buy threshing machine. I took pity on them because if I continued my study, my family had to spend much money on my books and daily expenses, so I decided to stop studying and come to work in Phnom Penh.”*

Case 30, 22 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Prey Veng province.

Table 3. 2 Percentage Distribution of Participant by Their Region of Residence and Work Sector

| Name of Province          | Overall (N=80) | Garment Industry in Phnom Penh (N=20) | Construction Industry in Phnom Penh (N=20) | Construction Industry in Thailand (N=20) | Fishery Industry in Thailand (N=20) |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Banteay Meanchey          | 12.5           | -                                     | -  | 50                                       | -                                   |
| Kampong Cham/Tboung Khmom | 17.5           | 10                                    | 15   | 20                                       | 25                                  |
| Kampong Chhnang           | 5.0            | 10                                    | -  | -  | 10                                  |
| Kampong Speu              | 2.5            | 5                                     | 5  | -  | -                                   |
| Kampong Thom              | 3.8            | 10                                    | 5  | -  | -                                   |
| Kandal                    | 5.0            | 15                                    | -  | -  | 5                                   |
| Prey Veng                 | 22.5           | 10                                    | 35   | 5  | 40                                  |
| Pursat                    | 5.0            | 10                                    | -  | 10                                       | -                                   |
| Siem Reap                 | 1.2            | -                                     | -  | 5  | -                                   |
| Svay Rieng                | 3.8            | 15                                    | -  | -  | -                                   |
| Takeo                     | 10.0           | 5                                     | 20   | -  | 15                                  |
| Battambang                | 2.5            | -                                     | 5  | 5  | -                                   |
| Kampot                    | 5.0            | 10                                    | 5  | 5  | -                                   |
| Preah Sihanouk            | 3.7            | -                                     | 10   | -  | 5                                   |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>100.0</b>   | <b>100</b>                            | <b>100</b>                                 | <b>100</b>                               | <b>100</b>                          |

Figure 3. 2: Map of Cambodia Showing Migration Destination



Data from Table 3.2 indicates the percentage distribution of participant by their region of residence and work sector. It is important to note that region of residence is not the birthplace of migrants. It is; however, the permanent residence or hometown of migrants before their labor mobility. The top 3 provinces where participants both internal and international migrants come from are Prey Veng, Kampong Cham, and Banteay Meanchey, respectively. This study finds internal flow from Kampong Cham, Takeo, and Prey Veng are in line with those identified in Cambodian Rural Urban Migration Project 2012 and Cambodian Census 2008 in terms of the top sending provinces of internal migrants, given the notion that the population of those three sending provinces are relatively large, and the short distance of 124km, 78km, and 90km respectively between them and the destination in Phnom Penh.

Banteay Meanchey, in addition, shares the border with Thailand's provinces of Sa Kaeo and Chantaburi. Thus, the distance is comparatively shorter to travel from there to Eastern Thai provinces than to Phnom Penh, which is approximately 360km away. This serves as a major explanation why participants from Banteay Meanchey opted for a cross-border migration rather than heading internally to Phnom Penh. However, even if distance from Prey Veng and Kampong Cham provinces to Poi Pet - the main border checkpoint of Cambodia and Thailand, is about 515km and 410km respectively, distance factor seems to not affect the volume of the flow of international migration from those regions. This is based on the notion that those three sending areas share approximately the same percentage of migrants moving to work across the border.

One may consider this is not surprising because those provinces have high density of population, and it is common to see some people move out from heavily populated areas with low chance of employment considering the factual density of 6 establishments with 237 population per square kilometer in Prey Veng, and 5.5 establishments with 179 people in Kampong Cham (NIS, 2014) as well as taking into account that most people from Prey Veng are facing a problem of underdeveloped irrigation system which prevents them from cultivating more than once per year

whereas many people in Kampong Cham can access to small amount of land that restricts their earning.

**Figure 3.3 Percentage Distribution of Participant by Marital Status and Work Sector Pre and Post Migration**

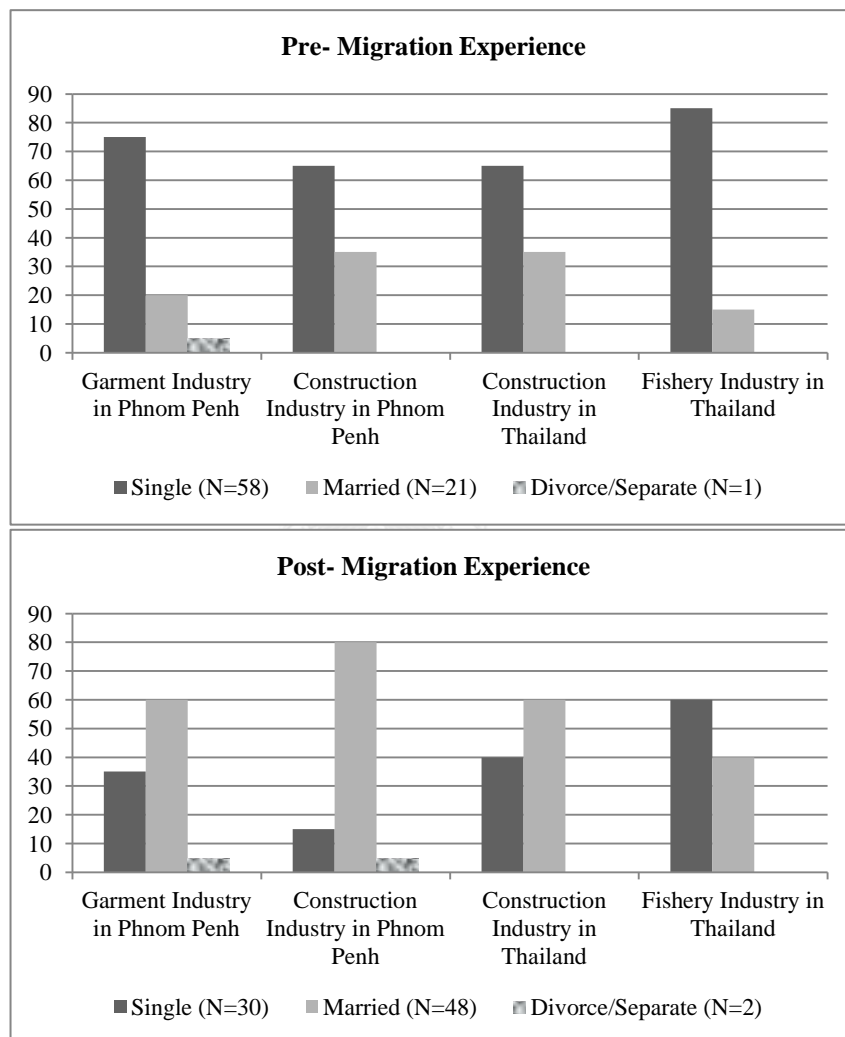


Figure 3.3 illustrates participants' marital status before and after they have experienced their first migration. According to the graph, approximately 75% of total sample were single before they made their movement and got married only after they have become familiar with migration. Logically, it is reasonable for the majority of

labor migrants to be single since they are often at young age when they experience migration. This in addition, implies that migration is also affected by demographic selectivity; or to put it another way, migrants are more likely to be single young adults before they move.

This graph also shows that more than half of fishermen sample are still single although they are also old in age. This might happen either because it is difficult for them to get married and live a family life easily like the other case studies or the nature of their work, which requires them to stay at the sea most of the time. So technically they do not have time for romantic relationship. Another notable remark is that in this study, female migrants with broken relationship are only found in internal migration rather than cross-border probably because international movers are generally young, so they are less likely to experience marriage and divorce while migrating across country individually seems like a very difficult task for lone female.

**Table 3. 3 Percentage Distribution of Married Participant Living With Spouse**

|                                     | Migrant Living With Spouse |               | Overall<br>(N=48) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
|                                     | No<br>(N=14)               | Yes<br>(N=34) |                   |
| <b>By Gender</b>                    |                            |               |                   |
| Female                              | 14.3                       | 52.9          | <b>41.67</b>      |
| Male                                | 85.7                       | 47.1          | <b>58.33</b>      |
| <b>By Work Sector</b>               |                            |               |                   |
| Construction industry in Phnom Penh | 64.3                       | 20.6          | <b>33.3</b>       |
| Garment industry in Phnom Penh      | 14.3                       | 29.4          | <b>25.0</b>       |
| Construction industry in Thailand   | -                          | 35.3          | <b>25.0</b>       |
| Fishery industry in Thailand        | 21.4                       | 14.7          | <b>16.7</b>       |

Table 3.3 indicates the result on percentage distribution of married participants living with spouse. Total number of sample is 80, but those who are single or divorced were dropped out leaving only 48. In general view from the table, it is very precise that male migrant is very much likely than female to live and work at the destination without spouse. There are 14.3% female workers living in Phnom Penh without their husband, but they are not living alone by definition. This value is; in addition,

contributed by only 1 working industry although there are 3 sectors that female employees are populating in except fishery in Thailand. Remarkably, construction worker in Phnom Penh has the highest percentage of those not living with spouse whereas all married construction workers in Thailand both male and female are living with their spouse at the host area.

### 3.2 Causes of Migration

In this sub section, I will delve deeper to explain why people migrate and to provide an answer to the first sub-question, reasons and causes of unskilled labor migration in Cambodia. Frequently, migration phenomenon is rationalized by a merger of push and pull factors together, but civil war and political turmoil are no longer an issue for Cambodian rural population; currently economic hardship is rather the primary concern. Yet the root causes of poverty are various. An in-depth interview with the migrants themselves indeed indicates several major causes of impoverishment acting as push factors, forcing participants to move away from their hometown or even risking their life to resettle illegally in Thailand at first although none of them actually could speak any other languages but Khmer before their mobility. Economically, determinants of poverty in Cambodia leading to labor migration can be a combination of more than one factor, which means they might be pushed by multiple attributes that restrict income-generating activities.

*“My parents were very poor. My father grew watermelon, but the yields were not good enough to earn a living. One of my siblings died because we didn’t have any money to take him to hospital. My other siblings were all sick because it was a contagious disease, so my parents had to sell our land to take them to hospital, but it was not enough, so we took loan from other villagers to pay up hospital charge. We had to pay them interest every month too, so the economic burden became worse. Therefore, my sister and I decided to go to work in the other countries to earn some money to remit to my parents to pay off our debt. I thought that if we worked in Cambodia, we wouldn’t save much money either. But the worst thing was that my*



*mother took more loans from the bank to buy corn to retail hoping she would earn some revenue, but it didn't happen the way she expected. She was incurred huge loss instead of gaining profit. Consequently I had no choice but to leave my home and work abroad to earn some money to support my family."*

Case 22, 21 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Takeo province.

**Figure 3. 4 Percentage Distribution of Participant's Causes Of Migration**

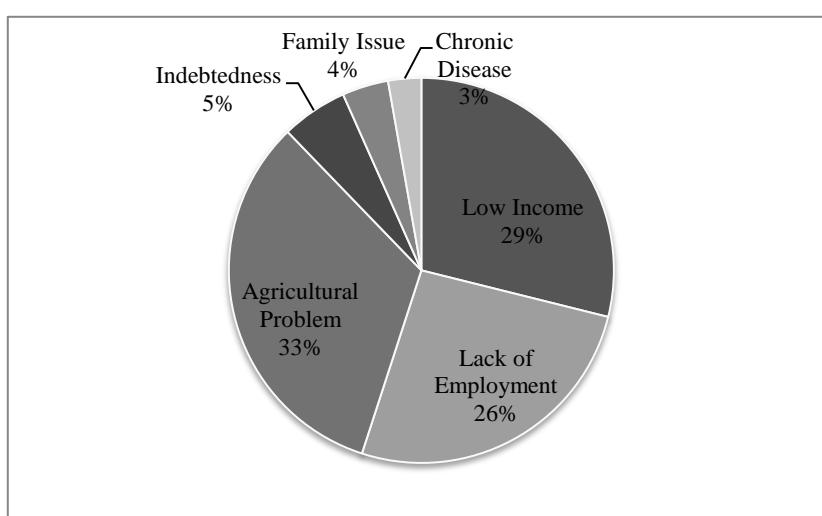


Figure 3.4 provides a clearer view on percentage distribution of participant's causes of migration. There is a little different in percentage of causes of migration between those who migrate to work in Phnom Penh and in Thailand. As a result, it is unnecessary to discuss or go deeper into dividing aspect rather than just showing a pooled value. 33% from agricultural problems, 29% from low income, and 26% from lack of local employment in the region seem to typically contribute to a very large degree in pushing participants from their hometown. There are also a few numbers of samples that moved because of some uncommon reasons of pull factors, but nonetheless it will be discussing in individual case study. In addition, to prevent any further confusion, landlessness and number of land possessed by participants or their family before migration are not put in figure 3.4, but instead it will be shown in a separated chart, figure 3.6 for better insight.

The notion of excluding landlessness or nearly landlessness from the diagram is based on the fact that not everyone in the rural area that owns less land is going to migrate. While I also agree with the literatures that landlessness contributes to chronic poverty resulted in migration, it does not mean that those who are land rich are unlikely to migrate. There are a few reasons to explain this statement. First, numbers of land that can provide a living also corresponds to household size, so family with much land but also many members are implausible to earn a survivorship. Second, size of land does not seem like the biggest concern in land issue, and the real problem is its productivity. If their land is not that productive or called land-poorness, which means they own much unprofitable land and lack of capital to improve or maintain its fertility, they are still much likely to migrate in order to secure their existence or find a mean to purchase fertilizer. In contrast, those who own less highly fertile land with few family members might be able to earn a better livelihood.

### 3.2.1 Agricultural Problems

The most common found cause of migration are the problems related to agriculture in migrant's home village. It is; however, not an astonishing fact because again Cambodia is still an agrarian country with 80% of the whole population living in rural region and depends directly or indirectly on cultivation for livelihood, yet the irrigation system was reported underdevelopment by migrants themselves. Evidently, this is proven accurate, as only about 46% of average land held by household for cultivation in rural Cambodia is under irrigation system (Chhim et al., 2015). Lacking of irrigation system usually puts a constraint to commodity farming especially during the dried season when there is no rainfall. 60% of participants who refer agricultural problem as their cause of migration raised shortage of water supply as the key factor that unables them to farm and earn a living at home. Holistically, not only good water management is the source of income to detain migration from rural area but also a mean to achieve a goal of improving physical access to sufficient food for the poor who reported that they were also facing paucity of food when living in their village.

However, it should be reminded that not all participants do their farming or harvesting in rainy season although dried season seems inconvenient for cultivation as a consequence of deficiency in water resource. It; nonetheless, depends mostly on where they live or where their farmland is located, but mainly they will harvest their crops in October or November while commencing to farm in May or June determined entirely by amount of rainwater. If rain starts falling in May they will begin to farm in May, yet it is not always regular. For instance, in 2015 rainy season comes later than usual; thus, farmers in some certain regions have to delay their cultivation. On the other hand, there are also those who grow rice during the dried season, which lasts from December to May since their farmland is flooded during the rainy season.

**Figure 3. 5 Harvesting Frequency Engaged by Participant Who Own Cultivating Land**

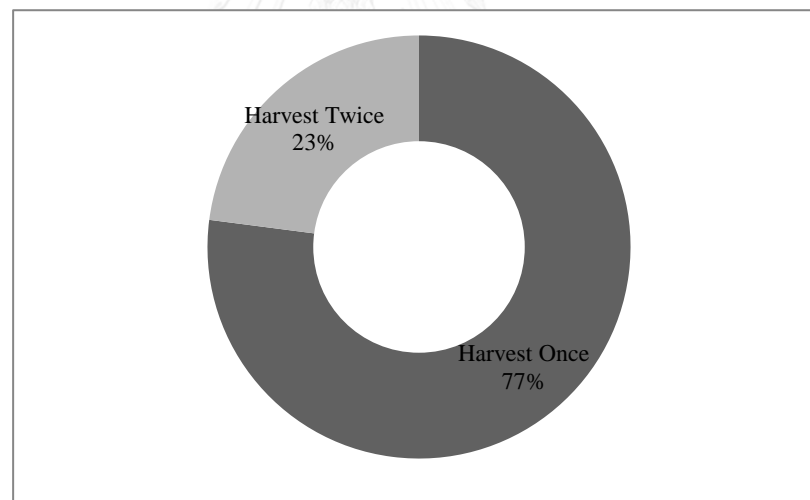


Figure 3.5 reveals harvesting frequency engaged by participants who own land before they first migrated to the destination. It emphasizes that, to a large extent, participants who own arable land for cultivation could only harvest their crops once per year leaving them being free from agricultural engagement approximately more than 6 months in a year. Furthermore, the remaining 40% of interviewees who mentioned problem of agriculture as a cause of their migration also asserted that their soil was becoming exhausted gradually, and so was the output. Unusual decreasing fertility

might presumably happen due to the lack of knowledge for proper use of soil and new technology for sustainable cultivation. Besides the continuous decline of soil fertility, naturally poor land fertility itself also limits rice production. This kind of land is normally a sandy and barren soil, and those who grow rice on this field are generally not going to be able to harvest more than 2 tons of paddies per hectare of land per cultivating season. Continuously preferred traditional farming technique or deficiency in financial capital for innovative methods and value-added items is likely to stand behind this low productivity of land.

### **3.2.2 Low Income and Indebtedness**

Apart from agricultural problem, outstanding debt and low income; in addition, serve as major push factors resulting in either individual or several family members being forced to leave in search for alternative employment to meet their subsistent needs. In fact, this is a problem concerning agriculture product, but it is not the rice output but its price. After crops are harvested, farmers have to face another difficulty in finding a market to sell their product because it is often restricted due to the lack of infrastructure, which connects farmers to potential buyers. According to participant's answers, a kilogram of average quality paddy can be sold for only 600 to 700 Riel, which is approximately 0.15 – 0.18\$, but some of them did not sell their rice since they would not have enough rice to survive until next harvesting season. This price; nonetheless, is approximately two times lower than that in comparison to neighboring Thailand at 0.33\$ per kilogram (Titapiwatanakun, 2012).

Many of these accessible buyers; however, will exploit them unfairly instead as firstly farmers cannot stock all their rice products they harvested because it is going to be tainted especially the surplus from self-consumption. Secondly, these farmers have already fallen into destitution, so disposable income from selling rice is a substantial need to buy basic goods like food and pay back the cost of value added items that they bought on credit with high interest rate like chemical fertilizer, pesticide, and/or

gasoline to pump their rice field, which are also more expensive comparing to neighboring country like Thailand (Kean, 2012). Population in some rural region involves in off-farm activities to supplement their earning such as crafting traditional objects by hand like basket to sell at the market, but these handicraft products are usually cheap and disallow them to achieve a decent living condition.

*“I want them [Cambodian government] to develop my village, find a market for our agricultural products, and reduce the price of other goods like gasoline. Sometimes I can't even find someone to buy my agricultural product, or I can sell it for a ridiculously cheap price. If there is no profit from raising crops, what is the point of doing so? Some people have to take loan from a bank or someone else to survive, but then they are in a more serious trouble because they have to pay off the debt and the interest rate, so they are left with no choice but to migrate.”*

Case 06, 38 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Kandal Province.

Aside from that, this awful circumstance can also be aggravated by natural calamity like drought or flood, which occurs from rarely to sometimes depending on participant's region of residence. These common shocks may cause the rice to die or yield lesser production than it normally does and exacerbates financial situation of migrants. Consequently, they are left with two choices; either they migrate to work, in which case, international migration is seen as a desperate solution to cope with monetary exigency to guarantee their survival, or they can take a large amount of loan to fulfill their urgent demand for the remaining period until next harvesting season as well as to buy a new set of grain to sow again. However, taking a loan is not a good option either, as they might be able to survive the difficult year, but they have to pay interest rate, which increases their expenses; thus eventually they still need more income to square up their debt.

There are two places where migrants revealed that they could borrow money from. It is either a bank or small micro finance institute, which borrower is required to pledge an appropriate collateral, or a villager, to whom migrants have to pay higher interest rate, but collateral is customarily not needed. In case of loan is rice, they have to pay

100% interest. Therefore, migrants occasionally end up facing worse form of penury and more severe indebtedness condition. For heavily indebted people, forced selling properties such as farmland, home, or livestock by financial institution is regrettably inevitable. Nonetheless, seriously indebted individual or family that desires to repay their debt without needing to sell any asset or having no assets to sell, usually end up adopting the first mechanism by migrating to Thailand to work in order to earn high remuneration to settle their loans. Lastly, there is another unusual monetary reason that compels participants to migrate to work in Phnom Penh and worth mentioning. Female migrants with broken relationship tend to migrate internally to find a job in the capital to maintain family sustenance after their husband suddenly deserts them and their children and moves to live with his new lover leaving migrants vulnerable and heartbroken. Getting divorce in a traditional society like Cambodia conventionally means loss of sole breadwinner of the family, so generally it is not a surprise that wife has to search for immediate employment to earn sufficient income to meet household needs.

### 3.2.3 Quality Employment Shortages

Local employment paying decent wage is typically accepted to have positive impact on migration reduction. Although agriculture can absorb a large amount of rural labor forces, it is vital to be reminded again that most participants can only harvest their crops once or engaged in farming 3 or 4 months in a year. Structurally, it appears that there are inadequate available employments possibilities at migrant's home village except some certain provinces like Siem Reap, the main tourist destination of Cambodia. As a result, it is rare to see people from this province migrate to Phnom Penh or elsewhere. Repeatedly, since establishments are constantly developed in Phnom Penh and its surrounding region, it temptingly draws a large amount of excessive manpower form rural area. This surplus of labor derives from either too many members in a household that owns small land, in which a few individuals

exertion are not necessary in the cultivating process, or because rural population are free from cultivation.

Internal migrants from Kampong Chhnang and Takeo province consistently indicate that there are also manufacturing complex located in their province, but it is approximately 20 – 30 kilometers away from their hometown and takes them from 1,5 to 2 hours to reach their industrial compound, which starts work at 6am. Long duration and high cost of transportation are results of poor a long with insufficient infrastructure in the rural area and additionally demarcates direct investment to those regions making industries growing meagerly to incorporate young labor forces of the baby boom generation. Also, these commercial enterprises normally offer lesser salary than those in Phnom Penh, and many participants who get hired to work there usually involve in very poor working condition and absurdly low salary that is not even enough to meet their monthly expenses. Therefore, in order to escape economic distress, rural population needs to migrate and seeks waged employment in Phnom Penh or Thailand where the return to skills and chance of secure job is higher.

*“Anyway in Cambodia, there is no available job for me to do like in Thailand. In case there is one, the salary they offer is unreasonably low, so I can’t have any saving that the reasons many Cambodian people migrate to work in Thailand and hope that they will be able to earn more money to save for their future. It’s not that much, but it’s still more than what I can get from working in Cambodia. In 2 weeks at least, I can save about 6,000 to 7,000 Baht and remit to my family. Sometimes I can get up to 10,000 Baht. There is no way that I will be able to earn this much if I work in Cambodia. They pay me like 20,000 to 30,000 Riel per day, but the living cost there is high, and the job is not regular which means sometimes I won’t get hired, but in Thailand, I can get hired to work everyday.”*

Case 80, 31 years old male construction worker in Bangkok, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey Province.

Although internal migrants are getting paid higher salary working in Phnom Penh, they cited that they would prefer to work near their home village if they could earn

approximately 80% of their current income. Intimately, this preference of migrants implicates that wage and working standard in Cambodia largely differ between regions. Although 1997 labor law of Cambodia has interligibly states that wage must be at least euqal to a guaranteed minimum wage to ensure every worker of a decent standard of living compatible with human dignity, so far law on minimum wage has not yet been passed even it is believed to effectively reduce poverty, as it positively impacts the poor rather than the decent salary workforce. Indeed, quality of employment available in rural area seems to be a significantly decisive state's affair.

### **3.2.4 Landlessness and Land-poorness**

This is the last major originated poverty-stricken trap and vulnerability to rural people in an agrarian country like Cambodian. Land is very critical for rural household livelihood since arable land is generally used to grow rice or other crops for self-consumption or sale for disposable income. Utterly without land, rural families have to depend mainly on selling human labor, but due to the fact that there are scacity of employment opportunities and low economic activities at their home area, migrants are limited with no choice but to migrate to elsewhere where feasibilities of getting a job is higher. Of the participants who had previously owned land and earned a decent living but lost it entirely or partially resulted in a smaller amount of land, the biggest cause of their landlessness status and land scarcity is associated with health care of one or more family members, more specifically by having to pay extortionately expensive rate for the treatment of illness at the hospital, which also precipitates materially to impoverishment and even indebtedness in case their wherewithal is not sufficient to cover medical charge. Other minor cause is in turn related to the poor quality of land like I have mentioned early.

During the period from 1975 to 1979 when Democratic Kampuchea government took control of Phnom Penh and put the country into slavery, the entire population was evacuated brutally to countryside to do farming, but immovable private property was



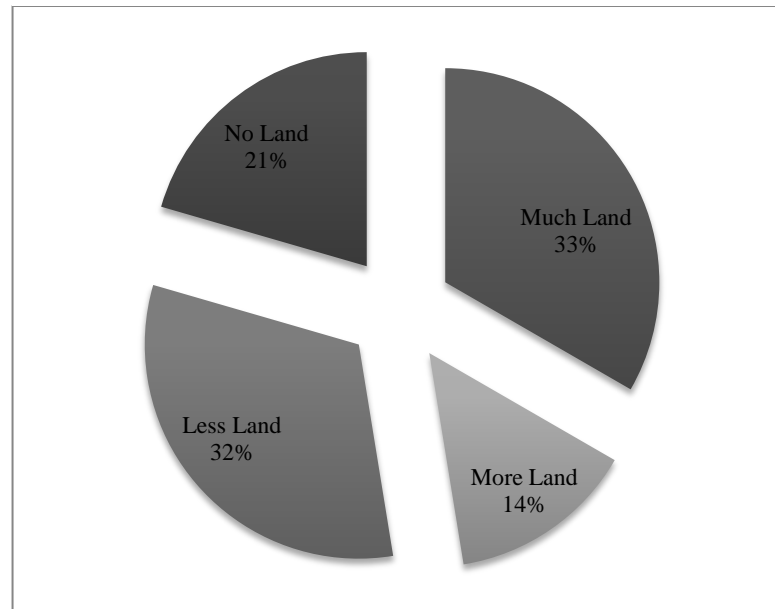
not allowed. All previously recorded land registration, cadastral map, and entitlement were declared illegitimate and destroyed, which created a further obliteration to land administrative system and caused uncertain landholding. After Pol Pot's rule collapsed, the People's Republic of Cambodia government later announced that they did not recognize any property ownership before 1979. Subsequently, when the demand for land keeps increasing gradually due to the economic development of Cambodia, privatized land also becomes more expensive and unaffordable by rural penurious population. As a result, some families have never even had accessed to any land until now.

*“My mom told me that my family used to own some land too before, but during the time of civil war, Pol Pot armies pillaged the village and burned village headman's house where we left our land title to the ground, and so everything became ash. Later the government refused to entitle the land ownership to my family and expropriated it, but we couldn't do anything because we didn't have any proof. There was nothing left for us besides our house. We got impoverished and couldn't even find any money to buy rice to eat. Before I came to Phnom Penh, I planted morning glory and sold it at Thmor Kol market for 1,500 to 2,000 Riel every morning.”*

Case 20, 31 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Battambang Province.

On the other hand, the government did try to find effective resolution and mechanism to solve land problem by establishing social land concession and distributing it to poor and landless families to settle and grow rice for their living. The size of farmland is given based on number of adult members in the household, which usually consists of 5 to 7 people and also the available land in that area. However, each family is not normally provided more than 2 hectares of land unless they buy it more from other villagers. Most are only granted 1 to 1.5 hectare while some participants reported that their family got less than that. In fact, it means that land entitled to them is generally too small to earn such a living.

**Figure 3. 6 Percentage Distribution of Participant by Number of Family Landholding Before Migration**



*\*Note:* **Much Land** means they or their family own land equal to 2 hectare or more; **More Land** refers to those who own at least 1 to 1.99 hectare; **Less Land** indicates that they own less than 1 hectare; **No Land** literally means they do not have access to any land.

Figure 3.6 provides a clearer view on percentage distribution of participants by number of their household landholding before migration. I divided participants into 4 different classifications without taking into account number of their family member or whether or not they could fulfill their needs with the amount of land they possessed, as again it depends tremendously on household size and rice commodity they harvest. As illustrated in the graph, almost a quarter of participants did not have any land on their own, and presumably they sustained oneself by selling labor for any kind of available employment in local area they could possibly find before migrating whereas around 46% owned a land of less than 2 hectare to grow rice. Only 33% of participants did possess 2 hectare of land or more for cultivation.

### 3.3 Migration Process

#### 3.3.1 Journey to Destination.

Before going farther into the process of migration, it is essentially vital to recall the knowledge that although most migrants living in Thailand specifically participants in this study, are retaining legal status, their journey back and forth between Thailand and Cambodia; however, is still mostly illegal as a result of freedom of movement limitation of migrants by their employers who feel it is necessary to detain migrants to work. Consequently, employers are reluctant to give migrants their original work permit but copied version, which is rather worthless during the border crossing process, and it discommodes migrants home visit in Cambodia. Retention of migrant's legal documentation to reduce their chance of changing employment is a widespread practice to guarantee that migrants will be strongly tied to their employer because currently new employer does not generally desire to hire those who possess no work permit; that is to say, illegal migrants. In fact, many Cambodian international migrants do not know that they can even change employer. In contrast, they believe that their work permit binds them to only one particular employer, and thus they will lose their legal status immediately if they change employment.

*“I can't go there [Rayong] because I have already applied for a card, which only allows me to work for this company. If I go to work in Rayong, Thai policeman will arrest me and send me to prison, but if I stay here, I don't need to fear them.”*

Case 80, 31 years old male construction worker in Bangkok, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey province.

*“My card only allows me to work in the fishery sector, so I can only work on the boat. And it even specifies which boat I have to work for, and I have to work for that boat until the card expires. Then I can go back home, and after I come back to Thailand again, I can choose another job I like.”*

Case 51, 22 years old male fishery worker in Rayong province, Thailand from Kampong Cham province.

As a consequence, like it or not, persistently migrants have to cross border using facilitation of a broker or in Khmer “*May Kjol*”. This word is used to describe broker, intermediary, smuggler, or anybody that provides them such services in cross-border migration process for some brokerage. These informal brokers; in addition, are generally paid not only by undocumented migrants but also by Thai employers for expediting, recruiting, and delivering workers to them. Nevertheless, migration within country does not require brokers to facilitate, and the journey itself is not problematic or noticeably imperative that demands attention or discussion, but garment workers who have migrated to work in Phnom Penh in the early new millennium demonstrated that they had to bribe a broker around 20\$ to 30\$ to help them get a job in the cloth manufacturing industry, yet currently this practice does not happen anymore because job in the garment factory is much easier to find. However, role of the brokers and their cooperated maintaining systematic business activities at the borderline are still considerably important to Cambodian international migrants in Thailand.

Geographically, the 803 km span of land border shared between Cambodia and Thailand allows the creation of many informal entry points along the frontier that not only fuel international migration but also make border control burdensome. However, it is found that both countries’ local authorities namely some of those who involved in border control such as the immigration police also contributed directly or indirectly to ease illegal migration process from Cambodia to Thailand after being bribed a sum amount of money by the broker to open the pathway or commonly expressed as “*close one eye*” for this kind of a merger business. This is why powerful broker having good sustaining network and collaboration with the officials can even have firmly

guaranteed a success and made irregular migration a lot easier. The main routes for cross-border migration in recent years as mentioned by samples are:

Poipet, Banteay Meanchey – Aranyaprathet, Sa Kaeo;

Daun Lem, Battambang – Ban Laem, Chantaburi;

Malai, Banteay Meanchey – Aranyaprathet, Sa Kaeo;

Journey of the illegal migrants through porous border is not that enjoyable. They are usually guided by a Cambodian broker and have to travel across the frontier with many other movers during the late night by different means into and out of the forest, small stream, and/or remote plantations that requires many hours walk to avoid being seen by border patrols until they arrive at a Thai broker's house or an arranging point in the isolated jungle in Thai territory where a car and a Thai driver was organized beforehand to pick them up and deliver them to their workplace. Sometimes they have to stay overnight in the forest or somewhere else halfway safe from being arrested and wait for a suitable time to proceed or look for alternative routes. Talking about the car that used to give migrants a lift, it is often a pick-up or a truck, and 20 to 30 migrants are put in the trunk at the back sitting on each other.

Nonetheless, since the establishment of One Stop Service Center to register illegal migrant workers in Thailand and the agreement between Cambodian and Thai government in mid-2015 to ratify Border Passes that allow migrant workers to stay in Thailand for 10 days or up to a month, there has been an adaptation to border crossing mechanism for new potential migrants who have never registered before. This new technique generally starts with migrants buying the Border Passes and travel to their workplace in Thailand with a job position secured in advance by their social network. Upon their arrival, these migrants will be taken by their employers to have their identity registered at the OSSC and obtain necessary documentation to work. However, this method is only feasible when One Stop Service is available.

### 3.3.2 Migration Related Costs

Migration cost from rural area to Phnom Penh is not a major problem to migrants because the expense is basically cheap and ranges from 20,000 to 40,000 Riel. Some internal migrants acknowledged that they actually wanted to go to work in Thailand, but they did not prefer to risk their life utilizing neither broker nor agency services, which they described as untrustworthy. Many migrants show no interest in agency not because they have no intention of seeking a legal status, but time and process are even more important than the actual cost since they are in need of urgent solution to their serious financial condition. Also, malfunction and corruption within recruitment system exacerbate migrant's credibility toward agency. In recent years, there is widespread public dissatisfaction with incumbent authorities and fulmination against various both legal and illegal recruitment companies of cheating, coercing, and deceiving especially those that operate to mobilize young female migrants to work as domestic maid in Malaysia, who end up physically and mentally abused by their employers and return demented.

Nonetheless, cross border migration is still comparatively expensive although the distance is short; for example, the distance from Banteay Meanchey province, Cambodia to Bangkok, Thailand is relatively shorter but more expensive than from the same area of origin to Phnom Penh. External migrants have to pay a lump sum price, varying from 1,500 to 3,500 Baht for a single journey depending on how comfortable of transportation migrants wanted and also some extra pocket money for meal before they reached the destination. This fees were customarily paid in advance before the journey commences to the Cambodian broker who would eventually also distribute this allocating resources to the Thai broker or so-called the driver and relevant Cambodian and Thai government officers that helped smooth border crossing operation, but the proportion of commission to give as a share to each party was unknown.

Repeatedly, rural-urban migration does not need facilitation of the broker, but internal migrant workers still desire to have at least someone they know at the destination to

make sure that there is a job position guaranteed for them upon their arrival in order to avoid long period of unemployment otherwise they are unwilling to migrate due to the high cost of foregone earning or called the opportunity cost. As a result, almost all of them commence to work on the very next day after they arrive at the destination. The value of opportunity costs varied from one labor migrant to another. It is considered more or less important depends assumingly on the financial status of each labor migrant. The notion is based on the fact that there are already those who could afford such cost and travel to work in South Korea and a much larger number of people who wasted a lot of time and money attempted to migrate there but failed, yet there are still mass population trying every year. Hence, to superior migrants, this cost might be less important than expected high benefit from working in South Korea, and they are more willing to take risk of loss whereas this must be more important to poorer migrants.

*“I have to study [Korean language] for 3 months, which means I will have no income for 3 months. If I work in Thailand for 3 months, I can probably earn and remit about 20,000 to 30,000 Baht to my family.”*

Case 80, 31 years old male construction worker in Bangkok, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey Province.

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### 3.3.3 Companionship

Although majority of the participants believed that their migration was a fruitful mechanism to escape financial distress, they have also realized that they might face many difficulties during their migration experience namely international migration because impediment to unskilled labor migration is not just the cost but mainly risks of migration such as human trafficking or risks of being deceived or abandoned half way. Nevertheless, current migrant at the host area can reduce these risks, making migration itself more reliable and convenient by providing cross border strategy or accompany prospective migrants on their journey to the destination.

**Figure 3. 7 Percentage Distribution of Participant's Companions on Their First Migration to Destination**

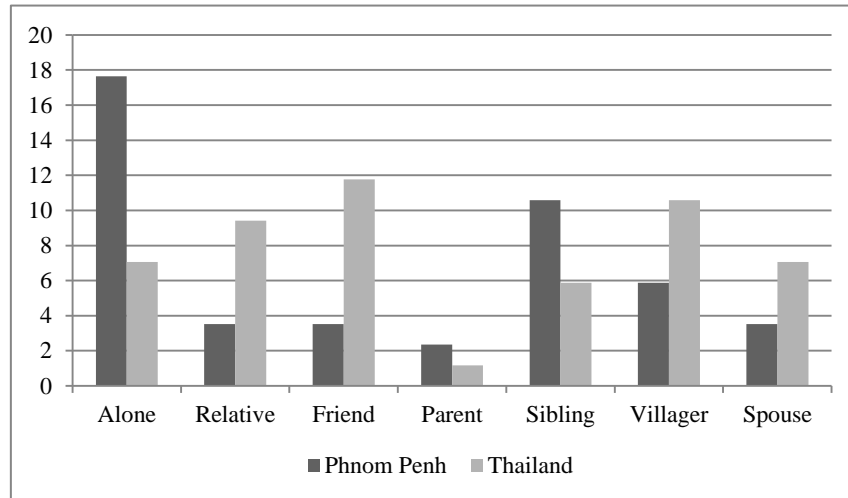


Figure 3.7 displays a clearly informative result on the percentage distribution of participants' companions on their first migration to destination. It should be reminded that companions of migrant could be more than one known or associated person and fits in multiple classification as seen above specifically those who accompanied outflow migrants, so they are also put in different categories unless all these companion belong to the same group. In addition, this is to clarify that companion of cross border migrants are either people that already have a job and go back to work after home visit or those that intent to go to find employment in Thailand with participants while it is not necessary for internal migrants meaning some of them just go along to deliver migrants to their destination and go back to their home village.

Migrating alone hardly ever happens to international migrants while it is very practical to their internal counterpart. External migrants often cross border a long with villagers, friends, or relatives rather than siblings, as the cost is relatively more expensive than moving locally; thus, some family are perhaps not able to finance more than one household member journey at once. In contrast, sibling plays a more important role in accompanying internal migrants. In addition, parent; in general circumstance, does not accompany any type of migrants especially international migration unless they have also intended to work at the destination. Also, there are

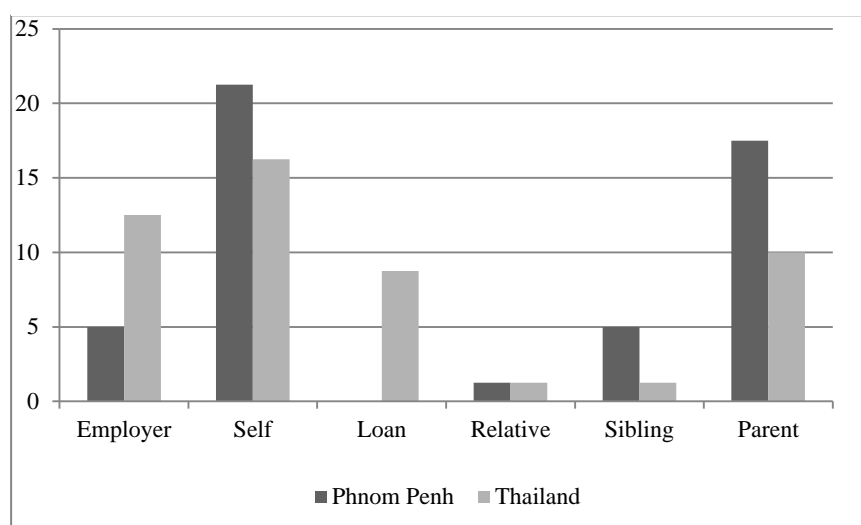


other 2 internal migrants who stated they were accompanied by their parent to Phnom Penh. Remarkably, all these 3 migrants appear to be single young female. Therefore based on this notions, it is rare for male migrant to be accompanied by his parent. Apart from what is shown in this figure, women generally do not migrate alone, but if they do, they are just internal migrants whereas international female migrants normally migrate with their husband rather than anyone else.

### 3.3.4 Financing Travelling Expenses

Out-of-pocket cost is still one of the major obstacles to desired migration; and only those who can actually afford such a cost would be able to migrate. The implication of the notion is that the further the distance to migrate the more financially superior a migrant is. Despite that, not everyone could fully fund his or her own movement. Graph below imparts detail of migrant's sources of financial support for migration.

Figure 3. 8 Percentage Distribution of Participant's Source of Travelling Expense



Presented in figure 3.8 is the percentage of participant's source of travelling expense to the current destination. Both internal and outflow migrants especially the older adult can finance themselves for the trip to the destination using their own capital. However, as they normally come from poor household, they do not often have cash at hand to cover their travelling cost particularly those who left for Thailand and utilized a broker's service, which they requisitely need to pay in advance. In such case, they are likely to sell valuable asset like motorbike or livestock to gather money. Cow or buffalo are considered farming animal, so in case that there are still family members left behind to do cultivation, farming animals are typically kept to secure a source of family income. Because international mobility is much more expensive and in case that participants and their parents are not capable to afford upfront fee, they usually take loan from other villagers or in rare case, bank. Generally the amount of loan they take, can be worked off in a few months period if they manage to get a job in Thailand, but this kind of indebtedness situation has the potential and possibility that might lead to a heavier debt bondage condition when attempted cross-border migration is somehow unsuccessful.

*“I intended to go to work in Thailand with my husband and my husband's villager from Kampot province. He told me it was easy to cross the border. After the New Years Day last year, we agreed to go with him to work in Thailand. He even told us that the company he was working for paid easy money, and they never cheated on workers. They paid male workers 400 Baht per day and female workers 250 Baht per day with another 50 Baht per hour for overtime work. At that time, I haven't bought my house yet, so I thought that I would be able to earn some money to buy myself a new house. I told my mother about my plan of going to Thailand, and she agreed to that. Then my mother decided to borrow 10,000 Baht from a villager using her land's title as collateral. My mother gave me 8,000 Baht and kept for herself 2,000 Baht. However, I couldn't cross the border and got caught by Thai police who put us in prison for 3 days until I decided to pay them 1,800 Baht to get out.”*

Case 25, 32 years old female construction worker in Phnom Penh from Battambang province.

In addition, it is also likely possible that international migrants are financed by their own prospective employer but in the form of installment; that is to say, employer bears the upfront cost of recruitment, but migrant's monthly payroll is deducted gradually as repayment for their debt until the debt is settled. However, this kind of financial assistance is only made plausible if prospective migrant is recruited by a broker who was sent by this employer to look for more laborers or vouched by a current migrant working for him. Nowadays the latter is more common than the former. Parent is generally the main reliable source of monetary aid for single young migrants, and it is even more common for those who intent to move to Phnom Penh in search for a job, but the origin of this financial support can possibly be a loan or property sale.

### **3.3.5 Remittances Sending Method**

Economic benefit is the most important factor in driving labor migration as people move in purpose to improve their financial condition via remittances. The amount of money sent home; however, varies depending on what kind of work migrants do, and it is not the total earning but the net saving after their daily living expenses at the destination. This is why in term of monetary gain, migrants focus more on how much they can probably save rather than how much they get paid. Nonetheless, it does not mean that everyone, who migrates to work, sends remittance home. Based on the notion provided in participants' answer, migrants with high proximity and dependent family members including spouse, children, and/or parents in need of financial aids to survive at the area of origin tend to remit money back home regularly and more often than those who do not, yet notably migrant does not typically remit money to sibling or other relative. More generally, my assumption is that the amount of remittances sent home depends mainly on who are left behind.

*“[...] My father has a motorbike, and he uses it to take my child to school everyday. I remit 200,000 Riel to my parents every month for the gasoline and food. In case, my child gets sick, I need to remit 300,000 Riel to my parents, so they can have some extra money to take him to hospital [...].”*

Case 25, 32 years old female construction worker in Phnom Penh from Battambang province.

*“Because I didn't have any money to save and remit to them, but I'm going to start saving some money now. I have just visited my parents during the New Year Day, and they blamed me for not saving any money after 2 years working in Thailand.”*

Case 46, 19 years old male construction worker in Bangkok, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey province.

Transferring remittances both internally and internationally is mostly done via informal channel without any proper record and conclusively making it difficult to track or estimate how much migrants send remittances back to their home village every year. Migrant in Phnom Penh either remit money via unofficial money transferor like friend or villager or take the money home themselves when they pay them a visit, as their home is normally located not that far from the capital, and it permits them to go back and forth very often. In contrast, this method is by far less common for international migrants owing to high cost of travelling between countries. They instead remit money to their family by a more complex way even some participants themselves do not understand.

Usually, this money transferring system involves in many steps and people. It generally begins with migrants giving the money and their address in Cambodia to a broker or employer to send further, or transferring the money themselves via a Thai bank into an account of a known middleman who lives at the border on Cambodian side after migrants have phoned the middleman telling him their family address and the amount of remittances. The former usually costs a little bit more but either way guarantees the safety of remittances. Then the middleman will cross the border to

withdraw the money and continue to transfer it to a collaborating agent or shop nearest to the receiver's residence. This agent will either phone migrant's family member to go and pick it up at his place or take the money directly to migrant's house with some extra charge. This whole procedure normally takes one day to complete, and the service fee is forfeited in the process. There is no report from participants that the money has ever been wrongly transferred to somebody else or lost.

There are also a few private money-transferring operators like E-Money, Wing, and True Money, which provide this kind of services within Cambodia to migrants in the similar manner, but still it is likely half formal since there is no record on the background information of sender and recipient. In addition, there are also no exact details of common standard of charging for remittances transferring, but it seems that the commission is paid in accordance with the amount of money remitted and middleman's rule of thumb.

## CHAPTER 4

### PHNOM PENH AS DESTINATION

#### 4.1 Case Study 1: Garment Worker in Phnom Penh

##### 4.1.1 Demographic Selectivity

Migration of young single female to garment industry in Phnom Penh has been a very popular phenomenon since the early decade of this new millennium, and it is proven by other studies that vast majority of Cambodian rural-urban female migrants age between 18 – 25 years old are employed in clothes manufacturing industries (Kheam & Treleaven, 2013; Webber et al., 2010). However, it is not surprising because growing textile commercial enterprise is one of the four major economic driving sectors of Cambodia. Garment work in general is a female oriented employment since sewing cloth, weaving, and embroidering are traditionally believed to be woman's specialization. This is rather true considering the cultural setting, which defines the ideal responsibilities of gender in Cambodian society, and this historical gender roles and principles of patriarchy, in which men enjoy more freedom is valued and continues to be taught to girls since younger age onward even today (Derks, 2008).

Aside from individual belief, job selectivity is also a matter to consider because to be able to choose a job, job must be available for choosing. Although there are many continuing complaints on sex segregated recruitment against male worker in the clothes manufacturing industry, feminization is somewhat ignored in the development discourse. Employer; moreover, prefers to hire female laborer thinking that they have a better enduring stamina in such an unpleasant working environment and more submissive than male workers who also occasionally get dismissed first in case economic depression happens (ILO, 2012). Some industries even specify "*Female*

*Only*” in their job announcement. However, even if it is female dominated, a few numbers of men are also found working in the garment factories.

Many garment industries do not normally hire workers under the age of 18 years to avoid any legal accusation and charge due to their usage of hazardous chemical substances, so citizenship card is always required to attach with candidates’ CV if they are to submit their application for possible employment consideration. However, this study found out that there were actually those who commenced to work in the cloth manufacturing factories in Phnom Penh both full-time and part-time when they were younger than 18 years old. This is the reason why there are many samples that migrated to work in Phnom Penh when they were between 15 to 19 years of age and some even before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. The reason of violating such legal entity mainly starts from migrants themselves desire to move and work in the capital by various motivations followed by a collaboration of felonious garment enterprises, which intend to exploit these underage workers. Additionally, an in-depth interview reveals that local authorities have also involved in falsifying necessary documentation to apply for the job after being bribed by worker’s family.

*“At that time I was still underage. My mother asked the village headman to help us to change my year of birth and make me fully 18 years old, so I could get my citizenship card and ready to work. My family was very poor that I was needed to come to work in Phnom Penh to earn some money.”*

Case 18, 20 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Svay Rieng province.

Considering the fact that they often migrated at the early age, garment workers in the capital of Cambodia were normally still single, but most got married after they experienced their migration and brought their spouse back to live and work in Phnom Penh but normally left their children behind at their home village. Nevertheless, this is reasonable enough because garment workers always live in a rented room near the place they work with people they have closed relationship with, so it is also convenient for them to live with their spouse after they get married, but it is difficult

to raise children or leave their kids in their accommodation alone when they go to work plus bringing children into the garment factory is strictly forbidden. Another reason is that in Cambodian traditional context, parents especially mother often provides childrearing to their children's children, and since garment workers are typically married at young age, it is likely that their parents at home are still capable of taking care of migrant's younger babies. Additionally, migrants themselves are able to visit their families often, for they mostly come from provinces that located near Phnom Penh.

In addition, due to the limitation of their knowledge, female migrant workers that move to find a job in Phnom Penh usually jump directly to this kind of employment. On many occasions, there is also a widely popular notion that convinces girls in rural region of Cambodia to believe that they are bound to work in the clothes industrial complex or become a housewife, so to them high education is not that remunerative. In garment employment practice however, this is correct that education is not taken into account during the recruitment process, and those who finished secondary school normally find themselves sitting in the same position with the same payroll as people that did not even complete primary education as long as they can sew clothes. False instilling belief toward education restricts girls from attending higher schooling and working in more formal sectors. Garment workers in general have 7.3 years of education, but male counterparts are still able to stay in school longer with the mean of 9 years while females have an average of about 7 years. Moreover, all of them have at least ever attended formal education before they migrated.

*"I'm just a girl. What job can I do? Every girl from rural area always does the garment work."*

Case 27, 22 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Kampong Chhnang province.



### 4.1.2 Pull Factor

**Joint wage:** Unlike many other kinds of business, which are thriving rapidly mainly within the boundary of Phnom Penh, garment industries are growing very fast not only in the capital but also in the other nearby provinces such as Kandal, Kampong Speu, Takeo, Kampong Chhnang, and Preah Sihanouk, but a common standard system of working atmosphere and wage payment are hardly achieved particularly for factories located further from Phnom Penh with less frequent inspection. This might be a reason why some people prefer to work a bit further from home to enjoy a better working environment. Moreover, many married garment workers are detained or pressurized to move to work in Phnom Penh although there are also job opportunities available for them within their province of residence. Some garment workers stated that their husband would possibly not going to be able to find any work if they stayed at their home village, and it was likely going to make them the sole breadwinner, but their salary is supposedly not sufficient to earn a family life. In this circumstance, tendency of staying or moving is likely decided by husband and wife joint net return.

*“Int: Why don’t you just take him [her husband] back home with you?”*

*Res: There is no job for him there.*

*Int: How about you ask him to work in the factory there?*

*Res: He can’t work in the factory.*

*Int: How about you just ask him to grow rice?*

*Res: Growing rice doesn’t provide any income. Honestly, I really want to go to work at my home village because it’s convenient. I keep living in Phnom Penh because of him otherwise I would have gone to work in Thailand already.”*

Case 20, 31 years old female garment worker  
in Phnom Penh from Kampong Speu province.

Apart from the opportunity of getting a job individually or collectively that pulls garment workers to Phnom Penh, it is also not odd that some garment workers from poor households are attracted by higher wage that job in Phnom Penh offers, as it is a

way to relieve their financial distress. However, it is very commonly heard as well among single young females who migrate to work just because they want to be financially independent even though their families are not facing economic hardship at all. In a more simple term, they migrate to work, for they want to have access to their own financial subsistence to acquire the things they want without any suppression from their parents. It might also be a surprise to learn that some young single females decided to migrate without any particularly clear purpose, but they did so just to follow their friends to Phnom Penh.

**Amenities:** This is another factor that increasingly popular among young adult migrants in Cambodia. Appealingly they only response to the attractiveness of urban city, as their families do not apparently have any financial problem, so they did not migrate on account of economic motivation. Nonetheless, the problem is that they decided to leave school purposively and went to work in the unskilled sectors just to have a chance to experience the modern life in Phnom Penh. Of 20 participants, 55% acknowledged that their purpose of streaming into the capital for the first time was to experience the urban lifestyle not for working intention. Even so, only 10% in which 5% is male admitted they also wanted to go to work in Thailand to see the beauty of the country if there was an opportunity for them whereas 45% indicated otherwise. As a result, it seems that single young adult female is easily attracted by amenities of the city, but she only aims to move within a short distance and internally. More generally, superior migrants with better financial position are more likely to be prompted to migrate by pull rather than push factors. Also, this might serve as an explanation to table 3.1 and provide a more accurate answer to the question why a large proportion of garment workers said goodbye to their school and immediately migrated to work.

*“My parents didn’t want me to stop studying, but after I saw many people came to Phnom Penh, I wanted to come too.”*

*“My friends, they quitted school and came to Phnom Penh. I didn’t want to study alone.”*

Case 12, 24 years old female garment worker  
in Phnom Penh from KG Chhnang Province.

#### **4.1.2.1 Living Condition**

Because garment employees do not live at site, and the interview was conducted at the industrial zones where they work, it does not permit me to be able to picture a visual insight of each participant real living situation, but questions regarding of their living situation were asked so that they could describe their life condition in Phnom Penh as well as satisfaction. However, I also spent some time to visit several various compounds where garment workers in general live. Clothes manufacturing laborers both single and married normally live in a rented room closed to the factories they are working for, shared with their relatives and/or friends, or live with their spouse, but he is much likely doing other job such as construction work or motor-taxi driving. It is very rare to see a garment worker lives alone in a room although the room is small, and the space is usually just enough to fit in a bed for 2 people but is used by 3 or 4 instead if they are single.

Compound's size is various. Small compound usually consists of around 20 to 30 rooms, which are made up by concrete wall and zinc roof whereas big compound can have up to a hundred rooms. Additionally, garment workers have to pay for their own utilities usage at an inflated price, which has also led to many protests persistently. This leaves no doubt why 40% of the samples are very dissatisfied with their current living condition in the capital and mentioning that it is somewhat worse than living in their home village specifically the environment of their living quarter, but their continuing stay comes from different reasons such as the joint net return.

#### **4.1.2.2 Working Condition**

Garment worker in Phnom Penh begins to work at 7am in the morning until 11am when they will have an hour lunch break then resumes at 12pm until 4pm. But a very large majority of those who work in the cloth manufacturing complex do overtime work right after 4pm to 6pm but sometimes until 8pm or more and/or even on Sunday

although Cambodian Labor Law article 140 imposes a limitation on extra working duration, which cannot exceed 2 hours per days at any circumstance and at least 1 day-off in a week. Most people willingly agree to do it for additional income to meet their demand, earn a better living, or remit home to their family, but some participants reported that they were intimidated to work by their supervisors who scolded or threatened to dismiss them. Thus, eventually they had to comply with their request.

*“They [the factory] fired me. I worked there regularly until 7 January, which was a national holiday, but the factory was still open for those who wanted to do overtime work for extra money, but I didn’t go to work. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, when I went back to work, I was summoned by the factory manager to her office along with those who didn’t go to work on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and she scolded us for not going to work. Then I stood up and said that it was a national holiday, so I had my rights to take a day-off and relax at home, and if anyone wanted more money, they could go to work, but I wanted to relax at home. I also asked her why she dared say such a harass word and if she understood the labor law of Cambodia? Then she fired me saying that I was offensive.”*

Case 09, 46 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Kampong Thom province.

According to participant’s answers, there are currently two types of remuneration payment mechanism that garment factories are practicing. Some factories pay a fixed amount of salary to their workers regardless of worker’s production, but by law they have to work 8 hours per day and 6 days per week excluding overtime work. Some other factories carry out wage payment method using piece-rate system, which means worker’s payroll is calculated based on how much more piecework they can produce after a production target is achieved. However, they are still required to work 48 hours in a week, but in the circumstance that employees cannot fulfill the productivity goal, a minimum wage is used to pay them instead. So far, it has been recognized that clothes manufacturing industry is the only sector that has a regulation to set minimum wage after a series of strike (ILO, 2012). Recently, minimum wage of the year 2016 is set to 140\$ per month increased from 128\$ in 2015.

Despite the difficulty at work and dissatisfaction with their undesirable working situation, a large numbers of garment worker often stick to one employer from time to time until the factory itself goes bankrupt, or they face some personal problems that require them to resign. Among 20 participants, 35% are not happy with their working condition in Phnom Penh mostly because they believe that growing rice in their home village, their self-employed work, is much more pleasant than working in the garment industry where they are often yelled at when they do not meet the production target that the factory expected.

#### **4.1.3 Social Network Factor**

With so many influence levels, there is no surprise that social connection also plays a role in rural-urban migration decision of the garment worker. Nevertheless, it is instructive to note that social network in migration context consists of two types, network at the area of origin and network at the area of destination which influence individual in different degree. Social network at the area of origin refers to migrant's family, and their main role is to either directly encourages potential migrants to take mobility or forbids them from migrating, but sometimes family also chooses to do nothing at all, meaning they neither encourage nor forbid personal movement. CRUMP has pointed out that 84% of total Cambodian internal migrants were encouraged by someone mainly parents (MoP, 2012:38) while similar conclusion has also been made in the work of Bhattacharyya (1985) on the role of family decision in internal migration elsewhere. He manifests that family will choose the most favorable member to send to urban city in purpose to maximize their income. However the answers of sample in this study seem very divergent in direction.

Of 20 participants, only 15% actually admitted that their parents did try to convince them to migrate for the first time to the current destination to earn some money to support the entire household that facing serious monetary situation whereas 60% claimed that their parents were; in contrast, attempting to persuade them not to leave

school and strongly forbid them to go to Phnom Penh, yet they resisted. This value; in addition, means only a small percentage of family that actually influence individual migration decision. The central reason is mainly because garment workers were still young at the time of first movement, and based on their description, many migrants family's financial situation are considerably not detrimental. Rest of the sample affirmed that their family did nothing when they told them they were migrating.

The remarkable difference is the question asked by the 2012 CRUMP. While this study only asked if migrant was motivated to move for the first time by any of her family member at home, MoP's research asked household head whether or not someone encouraged individual? But question did not specify if it referred to first time migration. Similarly, Bhattacharyya (1985) certainly believes that migrants' family somehow knew the cost and benefit migrants would embrace upon successful movement, yet rural families in Cambodia generally have vague information about net return leaving them uncertain if it is a good option to go to Phnom Penh. This study's finding is consistent with another research, which asserts that mass media does not pay any contribution in spreading information necessary for internal migrants while parents usually feel reluctant to let young adult children especially girl to migrate to work in the urban area (Lim, 2007).

It is found that information related to inducement of mobility that potential migrants receive usually derives from their relatives or friends, the current migrants who actually know to what extent migration is beneficial. Furthermore, migrant workers in the garment industries are also provided a guarantee on job position upon arrival, and they constantly work with each other. However, there are also a few circumstances when job securement is by some mean unsuccessful leaving migrants struggling to find a job themselves but normally not exceeding a week. Of all contributors, 70% revealed that they were offered physical supports such as sharing shelter by social connection when they first reached the destination. The roles of social network in garment sector are consistent with another study on women migration in Cambodia, which claims that 76% of garment workers' connection in Phnom Penh help them find a place to live and 74% secure a job position (Kheam & Treleaven, 2013).

Garment workers choose to live together not only to share the expense but also to assist each other in emergency cases like sickness. As more and more people are recruited to work in the same industrial complex, migration network also expands making a certain compound habitually populated by people from the same region.

#### 4.1.4 Obstacle

**Lack of social network:** Migration between man and woman generally shares some obstacles together, but they respond to them disparately because of the natural differentiation from one person to another, and it is highly distinctive in a society such as Cambodia where gender roles are strictly valued by the majority. Absence of social connectivity at the destination still stays on top of the list of impediment to alternative destinations of garment worker with 90% interviewees in this case study mentioned it. Lack of social network ordinarily means a dearth of information on job concerns leading to uncertainty on cost and benefit of migration as well as lack of necessary physical aid and job guarantee. For single young woman, who is considered by many Cambodians as more vulnerable principally to sexual harassment, no support provider at the destination exposes them to higher form of migration risk. Ultimately, it creates a doubt that migrant worker is likely going to move without knowing anyone in Phnom Penh in advance.

**Family tie:** When garment workers mention “*long distance*” between Cambodia and Thailand as an obstacle, figuratively it often refers to the concern over household members that binds their movement rather than migration cost associated with long distance. As garment workers are mostly female, it leaves without doubt that family to them is somewhat still a priority over employment but also a hindrance, for unskilled labor migration usually means leaving family behind. This is an underlying reason that 70% of participants mentioned family condition as the deterrent to other possible cities rather than Phnom Penh, but alternative host for Cambodian unskilled migrants is generally a foreign country mainly Thailand but also South Korea in particular

since the developing city of Siem Reap only longs for skilled and semi-skilled workers. Of 13 married samples, 9 are having at least one living child making the tendency of long distance journey even slighter than single young migrant. Another vivid example is mentioned by a sample that her desired destination was not Phnom Penh, but she decided to stay there due to family conditions.

*“Like I told you early the reasons why I didn’t go back to work in Malaysia again. It’s [Thailand] far from my home. If something bad happens to my mother, I will not be able to reach her on time. This is why I choose to work in Phnom Penh because I can go back home easily, but Thailand and Malaysia are too far.”*

Case 08, 27 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Kampot province.

**Lower working condition:** 45% of sample in garment sector; furthermore, complain about the standard of working condition of cloth manufacturing factories nearest to their home village, which is also a barrier that prevents them from moving back although there are local employments opportunities available for them. However, it is also important to note that nearly all of these migrant workers are from surrounding provinces of Phnom Penh, which normally takes them about 2 hours to travel back home. On the other hand, repeatedly this also indicates that wage and working standard are not universally carried out within the cultural border of Cambodia, and each region might have a very discrete system on their own making Phnom Penh the best among them and a better destination for those living in the surrounding provinces of the capital. Lower working condition and lack of mechanism to establish a common quality of employment provision within the country boundary is a major disadvantage of Cambodian occupational environment that the government should intervene and scrutinize to ensure that working standard of all functioning commercial enterprises is up to par otherwise many people still prefer to remain working at the destination although the gap of benefit between two places is reduced.

**Traditional roles:** Traditionally, woman is obligated to do their parents’ bidding when she is still single and has to be subordinate to her husband when she is married,



and this customary notion also partly influences migration decision. Consequently, This is a situation when a wage difference between two areas has very little effect on the choices of movement. 35% of previous and current single young females claimed that they were forbidden by their parents to migrate to work in the foreign countries even if they were not going to migrate alone, and it was mainly because they were girls and bound to stay within the sight of their parents. Additionally, married woman is no longer in the supervision of her parents but husband, so she intends to comply with her spouse's decision on the choices of destination.

*“No, I am their daughter. I have to be obedient to them. If they don't allow me to go [to Thailand], I cannot go.”*

Case 10, 19 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Prey Veng province.

**Int:** *So if there are job opportunities in a garment factory for you in your own home village, will you go to work?*

**Res:** *No.*

**Int:** *Why?*

**Res:** *If my husband goes there, I will go too otherwise I will not go.*

**Int:** *What if there are jobs available for you in your husband's home village?*

**Res:** *If he goes, I will go.*

**Int:** *What if he says he will keep staying in Phnom Penh then?*

**Res:** *I will stay in Phnom Penh too.”*

Case 27, 22 years old female garment worker in Phnom Penh from Kampong Chhnang province.

**High cost of migration:** Lastly only 25% of participants in total admitted that they could not proceed to work abroad because of financial constraint. This number consists of 20% impeded to move to only South Korea and 5% hindered to both Thailand and South Korea. Manifestly, it means travelling expense to Thailand is still

affordable by the majority in this case study, and it is reasonable, as their family's financial background seems a bit superior as a rural population. However, again source of financial aid can be a loan or sale of property, but they are likely to believe that they will be able to find a way to finance themselves to Thailand.

## **4.2 Case Study 2: Construction Worker in Phnom Penh**

### **4.2.1 Demographic Selectivity**

Talking about labor migration selectivity, it refers to both characteristics of migrant and the work itself because not only migrants will select job that fit their attributes, but job also selects migrants via their characteristics. Repeatedly in western literature, construction work is; to a very large extent, dominated by male population. It is; in addition, regarded as very uncommon to see a woman work in this sector. However, in employment practice in Cambodia, construction work is normally both male and female oriented, but due to the lacking of proper space to sleep and shelter, in general circumstance construction companies do not usually accept female migrants to work alone at the site because traditionally it is very inappropriate for a woman to live with a group of guys even if they are friends. Therefore, it makes sense why female migrants who work at the construction sites in Phnom Penh in general, participants in this study in particular are typically married and working along side with their husband. Majority of male construction workers; in contrast, ordinarily migrate to work alone leaving their family members behind although 14 out of 17 are married while 12 are with at least one living child, for they are generally older in age. However, commonly construction workers in Phnom Penh both male and female will leave the care of their children to their parents at home unless it is temporarily necessary to do so themselves.

There are three possible reasons to explain the decision of not having their children migrating with them. First, construction sites in Phnom Penh are often small in scale

and in most situation, without appropriate area to build shelter, thus workers will sleep at any available space they can find resulted in difficulty to live as a family. Second, construction workers move very often from one site to another because each site is normally complete within just 1 year regardless of the possibility of changing employment during that period, so bringing children along is not really a good option considering the fact that children need to go to school and the burden of relocation. Third, construction workers in this study are mainly from nearby provinces of Phnom Penh with travelling time approximately 1.5 to 2 hours, so it is convenient for them to visit home anytime they want while migration as a family to urban area will prompt more pointless expenses including travelling cost and cost of living in the city.

Furthermore, it is found that construction workers in this study on average have spent about 4.9 years in education, but males stay in school longer than females with the number of year of 5.2 and 3 years respectively. On the other hand, 25% of the samples have never attended formal schooling. However, education does not seem that important for an unskilled sector that requires only physical strength, but particular set of skills in construction working are very rewarding, and it predominantly determines the amount of wage payment. Years of education in addition, provides one important implications, construction workers in this study are ordinarily too poor to even afford a continuous attainment in schooling towards higher education. This notion is based on the fact that many of them came from very poor family background in the rural region where they had access to small or no arable land to cultivate and left school at the young age but migrated at the later age.

#### **4.2.2 Pull Factor**

**Higher job opportunities:** Although agriculture provides employment to rural population, it only generates seasonal income, which hardly allows farmers to earn a living for the entire year, and it is even more severe for those who own small or unproductive land. With more and more families practice sowing rice as a technique

of growing, which takes lesser time and fewer labor forces, surplus of manpower in the rural area is somewhat inevitable. Therefore, to cope with shortage of local income-generating activities, migration to urban city where employment opportunities exist seems like a must rather than just an option. As the development of Cambodian social and economic infrastructure constantly occurs within the capital city, it leaves without doubt a place where construction business is booming and so highly demanding for workers. This is why 80% of sample report that Phnom Penh provides them higher chance of getting a job.

**Flexible wage:** This is very popular among construction workers in Phnom Penh. Rigid wage of the other unskilled sectors; in contrast, is an unfavorable drawback that encourages circulation migrants to choose to work at the construction sites. Female construction workers in Phnom Penh often refer flexible salary as a main advantage point of attraction since it is convenient for them to leave work immediately to take care of their sick children or parents at home without being afraid of salary deduction. Construction workers in Phnom Penh are not bound to employers by any commitment or restraint, and they will move to work for another construction business that agrees to pay them higher wage than the one they are working for. Most construction companies in Phnom Penh have a common standard of 2-weeks salary and working hours, so if any company is willing to offer high payment, laborers will move to work for them even if the current site is not complete.

Presently, the demand for construction workers is quite high due to the rapid development in Phnom Penh, creating an unbalance between demand and supply side but also increasing worker's salary. Current wage based on sample's answer ranges between 6\$ to 9\$ for a novice whereas veteran gets paid somewhere between 9\$ to 12\$ excluding overtime work, and those who can use motor vehicles or modern equipment normally get the highest salary. This is an important reason why migrants always prefer to work in the same sector when they remigrate. Nonetheless, female construction workers are regularly paid lesser salary than males even for the same type of work, as they are believed to be as not productive as men. Apparently, this is in line with the study on women migration in Cambodia (Kheam & Trevealen, 2013).

But not only that, most construction laborers consider their employment as very beneficial because they can gain specialization in construction working through on-job training, which they can later utilize these dexterities they possess to efficiently maximize their income by either undertake works from companies to build parts of a bigger project or easily find employment in a company that offers higher wage.

*“Currently, they [construction workers] like to migrate to work in the other countries because they can get paid higher salary. Locally, Phnom Penh is the only place where they can get a job because there is no development in the other provinces in Cambodia, so they will not be able to find any job anywhere else. Actually in Phnom Penh, it’s not easy to recruit construction workers now. Most of the construction workers nowadays come from Vietnam while technical staffs are from Thailand.”*

Case K01 key informant, 27 years old interior designer and site supervisor.

**Amenities:** This is another pull factor that worth mentioning here. However, attractiveness of the urban area is not a very common reason for migration among construction workers in Phnom Penh, for only 10% of total participants in this case study asserted that they were interested in going to work in the capital city of Cambodia because of its amenities and nightlife. In addition, these 10% samples also admitted that they would take any opportunity to work abroad in order to see the beauty of foreign countries. For further detail, they were young single men with better family’s economic status than most of their counterparts. Remarkably, this might also explain why they were more likely to get drawn by pull factor. As their families were not really facing any monetary constraint, their migration was more likely a matter of choice rather than a matter of concern over household distress. That is to say, for them migration is not seen as a respond to deal with poverty itself.

#### 4.2.2.1 Living Condition

Talking about living condition, construction workers are normally allowed to sleep at any available space they can find at site and make use of utilities such as water and electricity free of charge and without limitation. There is no tank or pond to store water, but migrants have access to pipe water in sharing manner. Furthermore, they have to buy their own food or cook for themselves, but it is difficult since there are no retailers at site, so migrants need to go out and buy food from the nearest market or small passing carts that carry vegetable and meat for sale, but nearest market does not always mean it is near. Construction companies do not usually build shelters for their workers, as the site is not normally large enough to spare any section for that. In addition, construction laborers generally do not have any proper bed to sleep but plywood used to contain delivering materials. Number of construction workers varies from one site to another depending on the scale of each project. Bigger project can have up to a few hundred workers, but some of them might be illegal migrant workers from Vietnam since local employees are hard to recruit these days. However, Cambodian and Vietnamese workers do not normally interact with one another although they live together at the same site.

In total, 15% of the participants complained about difficulty in buying food in Phnom Penh while only 5% mentioned that they disliked living in Phnom Penh in general, yet all of them have one thing in common, they are all married with at least one living child but leaving their families behind. Nevertheless, the rest seem satisfied with their living situation in the capital city even if they stated that it was not as good as when they were living in their home village. Young migrants who were attracted to urban life; with no doubt, had a positive opinion toward living condition in Phnom Penh where they always wanted to go, but they are also likely to move to another city or country if opportunities are offered to them. Also, it is instructive to remind that it was the current satisfaction at the time of interview, and it can change by many factors or circumstances such as surrounding environment.

#### 4.2.2.2 Working condition

Construction workers in Phnom Penh start work at 8am in the morning and take a break for lunch at 12pm while they will resume their work again at 1pm until 5pm under the supervision of a site monitor who is in charge of recording workers' attendance and paying them their wage. Construction workers usually get their remuneration paid once every two weeks based on how many days they have worked for the company. Thus, they are willing to work everyday on a consecutive basis without any day-off unless it is necessary to take leave. However, they can have their day-off any time they want, but they will not be paid.

Some construction companies also encourage migrants to continue to work overtime if they need their project completed urgently by paying additional money for extra hours. Overtime work normally commences right after 5pm and indeed the money is good, but this is uncommon for those who work for labor contractors that undertake works from construction companies to build some parts of the project. These contractors control over their own workers and pay their wage themselves. Both site monitor and contractors usually are under another direct superintendence of a site manager whose work is to regulate over company's several construction projects.

*“She [site supervisor] told me that I would be the only woman at the site, and I would be paid 6\$ per day working full time, but if I continued to work from 5pm to 8pm too, I would be paid another 6\$ as extra money. The company would rent a room for us [interviewee and her husband] to stay, but we had to pay for our own meal.”*

Case 16, 29 years old female construction worker in Phnom Penh from Takeo province.

There are many reports from the construction workers that some contractors cheated on them. For example, when the payment date is due, contractor disappears with worker's salary. This is a reason why migrants like to work for trustworthy employer, but to know who is not going to cheat on them, they need to gather information about this employer first from someone they have known to guarantee that such act of

dishonesty will not happen to them. According to participants, they have never been dismissed from their job probably because it is elusive to find someone else to replace them. The most commonly reported reason of change of employment is low salary, meaning they left their former employer to work for someone else who offers higher wage. In general, 80% of all interviewees believe that their current job is better than doing farming at their home village since it presents regular income. As a result, they are mostly satisfied with their working situation, but they still prefer to work in their hometown if possible although it might reward them a little lesser salary.

#### **4.2.3 Social Network Factor**

Labor migration is not merely a relocation of labor force determined by push-pull model in term of economic benefit, and it is patently more complicated than it looks when sociological factor involved. Numerous contemporary studies have been trying to explore the role of social network in migration decision, and most researches found out that migrants were greatly motivated by social connectivity. In addition, it is also clear-cut that network composition does impact migration in Cambodia to a great extent, but role of network is not similar from one case to another since they also value attributes of each place differently and react in disparate manners. For that reason, it is necessary to investigate separately the function of social connection of each case study rather than combine it all.

In this case study, most participants acknowledged that their family did not encourage them to move to Phnom Penh. In contrast, 35% of respondent's families even tried to forbid them from going to the capital to work, for they thought it would be difficult for migrants to stay away from home alone, but eventually migrants decided to do so without listening to their family because either they wanted to go and work for money to ensure their continuous survival or they would like to experience city life in Phnom Penh. More than 50% families chose to do nothing at all and let prospective movers choose their own way of life. This implicitly stresses the importance of migration



acting as a tool to survive life-and-dead circumstance rather than an alternative mean to alleviate seldom agricultural risks so that like it or not, for them, labor movement is unavoidable.

*“No, they [his parents] did not say anything, but with or without encouragement, I still had to come to Phnom Penh because I was very broke.”*

Case 02, 33 years old male construction worker  
in Phnom Penh from Prey Veng province.

*“No, I wanted to come here myself. If I stayed at home, I would have been jobless. I couldn’t find any job there, so I had to come to Phnom Penh to work at the construction site to earn some money. My wife dissuaded me to come here, but I told her that if I didn’t come to work in Phnom Penh, what would become of our children? What did we eat? How did we pay our daily expenses?”*

Case 04, 29 years old male construction worker  
in Phnom Penh from Prey Veng province.

Of 20 interviewees, only one female construction worker mentioned that she decided to migrate for the first time because her sister insisted her to do so. Her case; nonetheless, is rather unusual since her parents were all dead, and she was living with her elder sister who got married to a disable man with many children under their responsibilities. However, this is remarkably not odd considering her sister was facing severe financial problem while diversifying financial sources or reducing dependent family member seems like a good method at time. Other than this one case, migrants’ decision to move to a certain place depends highly on social network at the destination. Current migrants play very important roles in both directly and indirectly motivate the movement. They provide rich information related to employment such as amount of salary and working condition to prospective migrants making migration very fruitful. In addition, connectivity for construction workers in Phnom Penh is very necessary to guarantee them a future job after company’s projects are fully complete. But before migrants change their employer either because the site is done or they dislike their company, they will gather all essential information about the new

potential job from their connection at the destination first such as payment and working condition.

It is also momentous to mention that construction worker's social network does not always supply physical and mental support because sometimes they do not live with each other at the same site if the construction company is big with many projects in hand. Assumably, job securing and information providing are the most important roles of the social network in construction sector in Phnom Penh. Lastly, it is also imperative to learn that potential migrants do not normally have many work choices because of the limitation of their knowledge and available employment itself, and they will not be offered many options to choose who they would like to work for if they have limited number of connection because social network at the destination typically finds a job in the company where they are also working for. Therefore, bigger network or knowing many people will certainly help allow migrants to access to more available employments and choices.

#### 4.2.4 Obstacle

**Lack of social network:** Intervening factor as mentioned before is something that prevents desired migration destination, but each person surely faces different obstacles, and of course they have disparate mechanism to overcome it. There are three most common found impediments to movement to alternative destinations for construction workers in Phnom Penh. First, it is the lack of social network at the destination. Even if many of them have the ability to finance their way to Thailand, they will not move unless there is someone they highly trust working at the destination securing a job for them in advance as well as accompanying their journey. Unlike migrating to Phnom Penh, they claimed that if they were to move to Thailand, they needed information from someone closely associated with them.

Numerically, 95% of sample in this case study mentioned absence of connectivity as their obstacles to alternative places. Connectedly, no social network at the destination also means no information regarding of job and working condition, as well as living situation in case of outflow migration. Therefore, it is considered very risky to migrate without information more specifically the cost and benefit of migration and what their movement may bring. But there is also information that actually discourages flow. Since last decade, there has been an ongoing popular news about human trafficking in Thailand, so many potential migrants feel uncertain and insecure about streaming to work in Thailand, for it was known before that some migrants who attempted to work there were sold to work on the boat instead by broker or the worst case was disappearing. Generally, migrants are aware of these perils that they rather remain in Phnom Penh than to put their life in jeopardy.

**Family tie:** Apart from lacking of social network, obstacle can also derive from migrant's characteristics itself such as gender or marital status. For example, married female migrant with living little children is unlikely to migrate to South Korea leaving their children behind although she knows that it is a very good choice of destination for Cambodian rural population. In such a case, family relationship binds migrants closer to home village and restricts their movement, or migration will increase migrant's emotional concern that those with looser family tie also pay lesser psychic cost when they relocate. It is true that majority of construction worker both male and female prefer to work for the highest bidder regardless of distance, but their household members at the village are even more important to them, and this is the reason 75% are hindered to move further from Phnom Penh. Consequently, my assumption is that they would prefer to work for any construction company that offers them highest salary but within limited distance boundary namely Phnom Penh, as it is the only destination with job opportunities and closed to their family. Moreover, they are less likely to go abroad although working in the foreign countries will certainly provide them better income. This notion also leads to an inference that the further distance to move, the lower possibility they will migrate there. Indeed, psychic cost is closely associated with distance of migration, and it stands between migrants and their desired destination.

**High cost of migration:** Locally, Phnom Penh is the best choice of destination not only for unskilled migrant labors who live in the surrounding provinces of the capital but also for those living further and intending to work at the construction sites because it is much likely affordable. On the other hand, migration across political border always leads to more expensive travelling cost regardless of actual length of movement, and this is why around 40% of the interviewees also referred migration cost as a barrier. Although most of them know that foreign country specifically South Korea is a place where workers can earn much higher salary than that offered in Phnom Penh, they are unable to move there due to the very high cost of journey and opportunity, which refers to the time they have to spend studying the language and a test to pass, but job is not guaranteed as well as high psychic cost, as they will certainly not going to be able to visit their family often. Travelling expense including airfare and application process is various depending on the organization that provides this kind of service, but it is usually in the range between 2,000\$ to 3,000\$.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THAILAND AS DESTINATION**

#### **5.1 Case Study 3: Construction Worker in Thailand**

##### **5.1.1 Demographic Selectivity**

Construction work can be considered as a very important sector because not only it provides employment for unskilled labor migrants in Phnom Penh but also beyond Cambodian border. However, to fully understand the migration phenomenon of Cambodian workers to Thailand, it is necessary to commence with job selectivity and opportunities available in the unskilled labor market there. Similar to construction business in Phnom Penh, Thailand as a whole has been demanding for more labor forces to contribute to its development process since 1990s due to the economic boom. Concurrently, the rapid economic growth happened since the early 1980s in the Middle East and East Asia also pulled Thai workers to those regions in search for higher paid job causing a shortage on the supply side in Thai labor market (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012). A gradually declining fertility and increasing aging population that created big unfilled gap of employment are also parts of the explanations.

By providing higher salary and better working condition, Thailand is able to draw a large number of Cambodian unskilled labor forces both male and female to work at the construction sites in its territory especially in Bangkok and its vicinities instead of opting for Phnom Penh, where similar employment is also available. Seemingly, participation of Cambodian female workers in construction sector in Thailand is becoming more common to such a career, which Western World women do not pursue. They are frequently seen at the construction area working side by side with their spouse, and their size is increasing to be roughly equal with male counterparts

(OFWA, 2016). Precisely, it implicates that this sector in Thailand is also open fully for both male and female employees.

Additionally, male construction laborer normally moves as a family to Thailand in case he has already been married before migration or takes his wife to live and work with him at the construction site if he gets married later, as their provided accommodation is more like a proper shelter and appropriate for a family setting. Those whose home is located near the Cambodian-Thai border; for instance, in Banteay Meanchey province, are likely to leave the care of their children at home to the grandparents because they can travel back and forth between their workplace in Bangkok and the border to visit them easily, but very young children are often tagged along with female migrants to the destination. Moreover, female migrants working at the construction sites in Thailand are very much likely to be married for the reasons that they are usually at the later age when they migrate, and international construction employment is not that favorable for lone single young ladies. In contrast, single male construction worker often migrates to work in Thailand typically at early age.

The most commonly examined selectivity includes not only age, gender, and marital status, but also their educational attainment although it has little effect in unskilled labor section, as physical strength and dexterity are more substantial. On average, construction workers in Thailand spend 4.7 years at school, but male counterpart has higher year of education of 6.0 than female, which is only 2.6 years. However, this number is not peculiar since 75% of people in this sector, who have never attended school, are female.

### **5.1.2 Pull Factor**

**Flexible wage:** Statistically, construction work is recognized as one of the top 3 populated sectors for Cambodian unskilled labor forces in Thailand (OFWA, 2016) and considered very popular among young rural population especially those who live

in the western provinces of the country as migration flows from there is cheaper; thus, more possible to cope with monetary constraint. Cambodian construction workers in Thailand are not regularly cyclical, so they do not return home during the cultivating season even if their hometown is located near the border taking into account the fact that they can earn more from working in Thailand than growing rice on their small land, but flexible salary is still a very interesting feature that draws many people to choose construction employment and an underlying reason to explain why many migrants prefer to remain working under this payment system.

Flexible payroll usually leads to higher income, as most of the time, migrants will work consistently on a consecutive basis and even over time for extra money whereas fixed salary normally means rigid payment, so they are less likely to get paid any more supplementary remuneration than their basic wage, which is not rather fascinating for those who need a large sum of money to cover their expenditure and their family livelihood in Cambodia where 35% of interviewees in this group own no land, and 75% of those who have access to land, can only cultivate once per year. As a result, more financial gain will help them relieve their entrenching poverty faster. But still Cambodian labor migration to construction sector in Thailand does not seem like a method of expanding sources of income to alleviate agricultural menace but a mechanism for emergent incident.

However, it seems rather unusual to know that although migrants are eager to move to work in Thailand with the expectation of earning higher income, they are not likely to change to new employer who agrees to provide them higher wage than the one they are working for. The perception that makes Cambodian construction workers in Thailand reluctant to move to work for another business company or contractor are first they think that movement will cost them a lot of money. Second, almost all of them have either heard or experienced defrauding or did not get paid the amount of promising salary before, so it creates a conviction that those who offer to pay more salary are more likely cheaters. Third, most of them believe that work permit firmly sticks them to one particular employer who can provide them safeguard in Thailand if they remain working for him otherwise they will lose their legal status immediately.

**Higher working standard:** Construction employment in Thailand is; in addition, acknowledged by both current and return migrants to have higher working standard than that in Cambodia and significantly detains employees to remain working in Thailand for long period. 90% of total sample in this case study denote that they are mesmerized to move to current sector because of the good working atmosphere of construction employment in Thailand. Accordingly, good occupational condition is also an incentive that weaves a stronger relation between employer and employee. For that reason, migrants hesitant to change employer, or they are likely to throw away what they already have.

*“Because my current job is not that difficult or tiring. If I get tired, I can walk to my room and relax until I’m recovered then I can go back and continue my work. They never pressed us to work. I don’t mean to look down or bias against our own country, but it is true. It is difficult to work in Cambodia that’s why many people come to work in Thailand where we can also get paid more and enjoy better working standard.”*

Case 43, 28 years old female construction worker in Pathum Thani province, Thailand from Pursat province.

**Higher job opportunities:** Higher chance of getting employed regularly seems less interesting to Cambodian construction workers in Thailand than the other two pull factors early, and they did not cite this much. Among all interviewees in this case, only 30% of who mainly came from western provinces of Cambodia, happened to quote this as one of the reasons that pulled them to work abroad. Without careful contemplation, this number seems a bit surprising, as Thailand is considered by international labor migrants from nearby countries as a destination for unskilled workers to hunt for a regular job. Nevertheless, to many Cambodian construction workers, it is rather a destination where they will certainly have an opportunity of getting paid higher for the similar work they provide to local business companies. The notion that they do not just simply want a paid employment but a quality job is based on the fact that these migrants especially those whose residence is closed to Phnom



Penh or in Banteay Meanchey province can also find other works with ease around the capital or near the border respectively where demand for labor is also high.

*“Like I told you early, in Cambodia, job was not that difficult to find, but the salary was very low. It doesn’t matter where I work in Cambodia. But in Thailand, the salary was higher, so I could save and remit a lot of money to my family. This was the only difference between working in Cambodia and working in Thailand.”*

Case 41, 39 years old male construction worker in Pathum Thani province, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey province.

**Amenities:** Temptingly getting pulled to urban city owing to its delightfulness is conclusively unusual to Cambodian migrants working at the construction sites in Thailand because as attested early, they can be classified as financially poor among the poor considering their family asset. This notion is based on their landlessness status and deficiency in regional income generating activities. Of all participants, only 15% who happen to be young single male admitted that they decided to move here because they actually wanted to see the beauty of Thailand itself, but remarkably those who are drawn to attractive cultural infrastructure are often young single adults from a more superior financial household and without or less family obligation. To put it another way, they are more carefree of their family economic prospect and marriage responsibility.

#### 5.1.2.1 Living Condition

Construction workers in Thailand are provided free accommodation and utilities usage. But since construction projects in Thailand are normally big and lengthy, employers are also willing to build proper shelters for workers to stay. Shelter is built using zinc roof and plywood or zinc wall in a big compound with just 1 or 2 floors located within site or close to the site. Shelter of construction employees in Thailand looks somewhat similar to apartment room except the size and its quality, as it is only

intended for temporary relocation. A few large concrete ponds are also built in the compound to contain water for worker's usage.

Located within the compound as well are small retail shops selling daily consumption goods and seasoning, which workers can buy on credit and pay the shop owners back when they get their wage paid. In total, only 10% of participants find accommodation unfavorable, as they have to sleep on the floor, which also serves as a dining table because bed is not habitually provided to migrant workers at the construction site, but other 90% are satisfied with living situation in Thailand in general saying that they can easily access to the market and health care system. Conclusively, it appears that Cambodian international migrants being employed to work at the construction sites are; to a large number, appeased with their living situation in Thailand.

#### **5.1.2.2 Working Condition**

Uniformly, construction workers in Thailand share a common 2 weeks salary payment and working hour which starts from 8am to 5pm with 1 hour break for lunch at 12pm. Overtime work begins at 6pm in the evening, and many people choose to do it up to 8pm or 10pm for additional money while some migrants at a construction site in Pathum Thani province work overnight. Basic wage of construction laborers varies from one person to another depends on their experiences, capabilities, and employers, but it is usually in the range from 200 Baht to 350 Baht per days for a novice, and 350 Baht to 500 Baht for a veteran excluding overtime payment, which is calculated using another rate, but female workers standardly get paid less than males; however, they are also assigned to do easier work.

In addition, construction workers believe that working in this field also provides long-term benefit to them because their skills will be improved through working, and ultimately they can become a contractor or are still able to utilize it when they return to Cambodia. Evidently, this is correct as I have the chance to interview 2 labor

contractors who were ordinary workers themselves at first when they arrived in Thailand. However, being a contractor does not mean he can always earn more income than being an employee, as they can also lose their money from undertaking certain contracts just like the other business. Contractor also gets paid once every 2 weeks based on the percentage of work he has completed for the company.

Slightly, only 10% of contributors reveal that they are not pleased with their current working life and have never intended to do construction work, but they are left with no choices whereas the rest are satisfied with their situation, but the majority still prefer to go back to work in Cambodia regardless of distance if they are able to earn approximately their current salary in Thailand, yet unfortunately available domestic employment, which also includes job in Phnom Penh, cannot provide them roughly the amount of income they earn in Thailand. Better working and living condition; as a result, detain construction workers in Thailand from moving to another destination or changing their job. Moreover, they are very unlikely to get dismissed from their employment. The most commonly found reason of change of employment is self-resignation following by being cheated by the contractor.

### **5.1.3 Social Network Factor**

It is true that international migration is very costly although sometimes the distance is short, but such a barrier can also be minimized by migrant's connection at the destination making mobility itself more feasible for inferior financial condition migrant. But social network of cross-border movers to Thailand has another extra function in expediting during the process of migration rather than just facilitating before and after successful relocation. 75% of sample within this group traverse the Cambodian-Thai border illegally and assisted by current migrant, who became an intermediary that introduced prospective migrants to brokers. Powerful broker can guarantee a more successful and easier migration whereas weak systematic network broker occasionally leads to a failed attempt that migrants need to know which one is

powerful, and they also want to avoid unscrupulous smugglers who would abandon them half way somewhere in the forest along the Thai-Cambodian border.

*“The villager, who asked me to come and work in Thailand with him, contacted that broker for me. He then gave me phone number of that broker who was living in Poi Pet but came to pick me up at my home in Prey Veng. After I successfully crossed the border into Thailand, I stayed alone at his home for 3 nights.”*

Case 48, 27 years old male construction worker in Bangkok, Thailand from Prey Veng province.

Apart from that, roles of network of construction workers in Thailand are providing career concern-related information and securing a job position upon arrival for potential migrants. Indeed, social connection does reduce the cost of job seeking and increase possibility of employment. In addition, network at the destination might as well provide physical and mental support; for example, taking care of each other during sickness or cooking in case they are in a very closed relationship like siblings or relatives, as they mostly work or even change employment together meaning if one of them is not happy with current employer mainly because he is a cheater, it can be expected that this group of family migrants are going to move to another job altogether at once when possible. In contrast, a mere villager might not provide much of any other types of support rather than just securing an employment for prospective migrants. It normally depends on relationship proximity between them.

*“My brother knew many people in Thailand. His friend gave him phone number of the manager of this site. He told him that this company was good, and they had never cheated on workers. After my brother contacted them, and they agreed to hire us, we moved from our old site where we had some problems there.”*

Case 73, 25 years old female construction worker in Pathum Thani province, Thailand from Battambang province.

Looking at the direct influence of family members upon individual in migration determination, decision is predominantly made only by migrants themselves rather than being motivated by household particularly parents. 70% of participants are able to reach a final conclusion whether or not they should move without any interference from a third person; on the other hand, 25% are strongly forbidden to seek a career in Thailand at first, but migrants chose to resist and move. The most important reason why family elects to prohibit individual is that they believe international movement will put their children's life in a more dangerous predicament than their penurious status specifically after the breakout rumor about migrants being sold to work on boat that does not make berth or abandoned halfway by broker in the forest starving. Out of 20, only a single young male happened to report that he was told to go and search for a job in Thailand by his father, who got remarried and moved with his new wife.

Nevertheless, this finding is in line with previous literatures on the influence of family upon individual migrants in Cambodia. Jampaklay & Kittisuksathi (2009) found out that 81% of total Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand made the decision on their own at the time when they first moved. In addition, this value has been claimed higher by a later study, which asserted that 91.5% of Cambodian individuals determined to move by their own preferences without any encouragement from anyone else (Maltoni, 2010). Moreover, same question was asked to household head, and 89% demonstrated that they did not motivate migrants at all. However, it seems contradictory to general research on ascendancy of family's head over its members, which have proven otherwise that household in agrarian countries namely in Asia does influence individual to respond to income incentive and sometimes even pairs them to a destination (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark & Taylor, 1991; Castles, 2004).

This diverging result might be explained assumingly by a reason. The latter studies did not mention if it was individual first time migration or not, but they anticipated that family had somehow known already about the cost and return of its member's migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985:174; Stark & Taylor, 1991:1177, Castles, 2004:859) whereas my study and the formers indicated in the question that we referred to the first time migration. However in unskilled labor migration context in Cambodia,

family does not normally encourage individual to migrate for the first time although some household are facing poverty mainly because they are afraid of risks of mobility and have vague or no knowledge regarding of expected net return derives from such a relocation until they ultimately receive remittances and clear information concerning the host country from their migrating member.

Another study on Cambodian irregular emigrant also asserts that not only family of migrant but also many migrants themselves are not very much aware of legal protection and practice of international migration while at national level, useful information was not disseminated properly (Hing & Lun, 2011). This; however, eventually leads to uncertainty, which can also demoralize migrant's family as well as individual to take mobility. Therefore, it can be assumed that only after sufficient and clear information is provided to parents, will individual migratory motivation be probably produced by household. Another vivid example to supply support for this notion is provided by an international migrant in one of whose many times remigration experiences to Thailand, was encouraged by his mother, but it was not necessary to be his first migration. Consequently, if question is left without specific indication whether or not it is his first time migration, the answer is likely to be yes.

*“Int: Did she encourage you to come when you first migrated to work in Thailand?”*

*Res: No, she [his mother] didn't. But after seeing me earned a lot of money from working in Thailand and remitted to her, she always encouraged me to come.”*

Case 76, 24 years old male construction worker in Pathum Thani province, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey province.

#### 5.1.4 Obstacle

**Lack of social network:** Difference in income between two places, that is to say, the gap of benefit, is the main driven force of migration, but sometimes earning disparity

cannot influence migration decision when migrant himself is deterred. Lack of social connection at the alternative hosts is still a major barrier to construction workers in Thailand with 90% of sample mentioned it at least once. Uncertainty and doubt created by the deficiency of information dishearten any intention of movement, and more importantly migrants are limited to employment option because they do not have any information of where suitable and quality jobs are available.

Long distance resulted in lack of information is also one of the reasons why many rural population in Western provinces of Cambodia namely those that are closed to Thailand cannot be absorbed to work in Phnom Penh, as they have no or vague information regarding of vacant position there. But by distance, it literally refers to the length not travelling cost that associated with distance, as moving geographically within political border is still much cheaper than crossing cultural boundary in this contemporary international migration setting. However, longer distance generally also implicates that fewer people will move there resulted in more limited information about that destination, bearing in mind the fact that currently rural population in Cambodia cannot retrieve information technologically while many villages do not even have access to electricity. Assumably, distance is negatively associated with information of the host regions for Cambodian rural population.

*“I didn’t know what kinds of job available in Phnom Penh. When I first knew there was a Thai company looking for workers, I decided to come immediately. I had never even thought of going to work in Phnom Penh. I only wanted to come to Thailand.”*

Case 46, 19 years old male construction worker in Bangkok, Thailand from Banteay Meanchey province.

**Lower salary:** secondary intervening hindrance to optional destinations specifically internal migration for construction workers in Thailand is related to payroll. A question was asked whether or not sample was willing to migrate to work in Phnom Penh or elsewhere in Cambodia if they were to be provided a regular employment. In total, 80% of respondents in this case study alone are disinclined to this offer because

some of them used to work but mainly presumed that working in Cambodia would not provide them as much income as they could earn in Thailand; however, they would not hesitate to move if the salary was approximately equivalent or otherwise regardless of distance of movement.

**High cost of migration:** Lastly, 70% of contributors named traveling cost as an obstacle that prevents them from moving to work in South Korea. Traveling expenses again includes not only the airfare but also tuition fee and the opportunities cost that they have to spend during the period of learning Korean language, which is a requirement. Exceptionally, it is worth to note that 30% of all construction worker samples in Thailand, who appeared to be all married females, cited that they were also much likely to be subservient to their husband in the collective migration decision. Evidently, it proves that Cambodian rural woman usually follows her husband choices of migration although it might not her desired destination.

## 5.2 Case Study 4: Fishery Worker in Thailand

### 5.2.1 Demographic Selectivity

Thailand is one of the top seafood exporting countries in the world, but Thai fishing industry has also become a topic of concern in recent years specifically problems related to the rights of both irregular and regular migrants from neighboring countries working on the boat with high vulnerability leading to unfair exploitation. However, there are still many migrants from rural Cambodia decided to search for employment in the fishery sector with intentional saving target in mind while some fishery workers believe their job is the most well paid work among the unskilled although in fact it is partially true based on the notion that they can save more money mainly because they spend less. It is also necessary to remind that fishery worker in this study refers only to fisherman, and it does not include those who work in the fishery related industries such as seafood processing unit.



Fishery employment is very unique in its characteristics in general, and it is also an exceptional case in this study that does not comprise female worker, as this kind of job is only made available for men. Evidently, previous study affirms that those who work in the fishery sector are always male whereas fishery related employment is populated by both gender but dominated by female (Wongboonsin & Chimmamee, 2009). The essential reason behind this sex segregation resulted in total absence of female fishery worker relies entirely on the traditional conviction of an old nautical superstition shared by both Cambodians and Thais, which forbids any woman on board of fishing vessel, or she will bring frightful bad luck because it is believed that present of a female crew during the voyage will anger *Manimekhala*, Goddess of Lightening and the Sea, who will conjure up violent weather.

In addition, fishermen are usually single young adults when they first start to work in Thailand, and the majorities still remain single at their later age. But for those who are married, they are more likely to bring their wife to live in Thailand and find an employment in seafood processing industries in the area where their boat makes port. Another notable remark in fishery workers' attribute is that those who work on the same boat are normally the same nationality and sometimes even from the same area of origin. To put it another way, this happens mainly because typically a group of prospective mover including friends, villagers, and relatives are recruited to work on the same boat in Thailand by a current migrant who is visiting his home and bring back information regarding of how much he can possibly earn working as a deckhand on the boat, which also draws many people to follow him on his journey back to work. On average, fishery worker has attained approximately 5 years of education.

### 5.2.2 Pull Factor

**Large lump sum wage system:** Occupational selectivity does not only make fishery employment's natural characteristics mutually exclusive from other jobs but also exceptionally pulls many migrants to join its course. But before going further, it is

vitaly important to note two features. First, fisherman gets his wage paid either by a fixed or piece-rate system. That is to say, payroll is calculated based on how much kilogram of catch he can fish. Second, a fishing vessel cannot go to the sea if it is lacking of certain numbers of crew; therefore, to detain workers from leaving their employment particularly for long haul boat, customarily boat owner will withhold employee's salary in bulk to retain regular deckhands for future voyages. In case if any worker decides to jump ship, the remaining balance will be forever withheld. As a result, crews are intimidatingly bound to go fishing multiple times making them more like a permanent migrant rather than seasonal.

There is no practical routine about the salary deduction to withhold, and it is mostly based on employer's rule of thumb, but workers affirm that they are given 2,000 to 3,000 Baht per time to cover their expenses or remit home in the interim, incurred periodically when boat makes berth for several days to unload the catch while the rest remains withheld until the end of each *round* or so fishery workers call it. A *round* can last somewhere between 3 months to 2 years depends on employer's preference, and some migrants claim that they can get paid more than 100,000 Baht for a long duration *round*, which is about 1 and a half year. Consequently, prospective large lump sum payment becomes a main appealing factor for Cambodian rural population who bears intentional saving target as the sole purpose of migration. Particularly, this single young adult male migrant opts for Thailand just to seek a temporary employment with an expectation to accumulate enough wealth for specific materials such as motorbike or to afford the wedding ceremony, but after their goal is achieved, a return migration back to Cambodia is the choice.

**Int:** *Do you want to live and work in Thailand permanently?*

**Res:** *No. When I save enough money, I will go back home. I want to open up a small business myself. I want to open a small shop to repair motorbike."*

Case 54, 27 years old male fishery worker in Rayong province, Thailand from Prey Veng province.

**Flexible high income:** Long haul boat's workers and also represent the majority of total participants in the fishery industry appear to like their wage payment method, for not only salary withholding works like a bank system that fishermen can use to deposit and keep their money for income saving intention, the amount of wage itself is also very flexible because employees get paid pivoted on how much they can catch. A few workers disclose that they can sometimes manage to fish up squids worth 1,000 Baht salary per night if they are lucky enough. Besides from their remuneration, fishery workers can earn extra money by going fishing on their free time when boat makes berth. In addition, apparently, fishery workers can indeed save more money than those who work on land, as they frequently have to go to sea to fish where they have no place to spend their money, and normally they are also provided free meal during their voyage. Intensively high income earning is no doubt the reason why many migrants choose to work as a fisherman, and it is confirmed evidently by 90% of participants who supported this statement.

**Amenities:** Besides income incentive, out of 20 samples, 40% also mentioned attractiveness of Thailand as another factor that motivates them to decide to go and experience a life there. In addition, it is contemporaneously found out that they also have a superior economic condition among the poor. Perceptibly, it is correct, as only 10% of them have no access to arable land but sufficient income business, and almost 50% own at least 2 hectares of land. Conclusively, it seemingly implicates that superior migrant is more likely to respond to the delightfulness of urban region than inferior migrant, and single young male is also likely to migrate to a city across cultural border.

*"I came to work in Thailand just for travelling purpose. Even without me, my family still has enough members to grow crops, so I decided to come to work in Thailand to see how delightful and beautiful it was. How it was like."*

Case 50, 21 years old male fishery worker in Rayong province, Thailand from Kampong Cham province.

### 5.2.2.1 Living Condition

It is worth mentioning again that numerous interviewees working in fishery sector prefer their salary payment system, which allows them to accumulate capital and utilize it to effectively improve their family living standard; for example, investing in small-scale business or purchasing more tillable land to improve their agricultural production. However, it is startling that 25% of participants are not satisfied with their current living environment in Thailand, and commonly their dissatisfactory feature is food. They keep whimpering about their provided meal although it is very sufficient. Nonetheless, food is served freely only when boat leaves its port to the sea to catch, but a few participants also reported that they were still supplied complimentary food even if their vessel stays at the dock.

Fishermen do not cook for themselves because normally each boat has its own cook who also happens to be a fisherman, but paid some additional money for his extra responsibility. Cook has to prepare food for all other workers on boat, which usually contains from 15 to 40 people, depending on boat's size and what they catch. Food and rice are bought either by cook from nearby market or sent by boat owner. Therefore, workers do not normally have the option to choose what they want to eat, as it is collectively concocted for the majority. In most case, fishermen are allowed to eat squid or fish they caught for free. Furthermore, fishery workers living in Thailand without family members do not regularly have any domicile on land, and they intend to sleep on the vessel because it is free of charge; thus, they can save more money from accommodation fee. Fishermen sleep at wherever available spaces they can find since there are no bedrooms or beds on the fishing boat. Conclusively, free meal and housing together are predominantly why workers on vessel can save a lot of money. Married fishermen with their wife working and residing in Thailand always live in a small rented room in the compound near the pier where their boat makes port.

### 5.2.2.2 Working Condition

Working condition of the fishery workers seem very unpleasant, as they will have to normally engages in indefinite long working hours and responsibilities meaning they do not have specific assigned duties but carry out all the different works on board such as fixing net, catching, and unloading fishes. However, based on my own observation, it is more like a time consuming employment rather than intensive laboring, in which requires a lot of physical strength. Fishermen work in accordance with the orders given by boat owner and the captain or commonly called *Tai* (in Thai it means driver). As a result, 45% of participants express disapproval of their working situation although they think they can earn a lot. Nevertheless as already mentioned in the limitations of the study, satisfaction of fishery workers might also be impacted by the recent ban on Thai fishing vessels during the interview period because the majority of them cannot go to the sea to fish, which also means they have no income.

Manifestly, long haul vessel workers are the majority of those who are not happy with their working condition, and reason derives essentially from the nature of the work. While short haul boat usually returns to port daily or once in a few days with timetable relies on the catch, deep-sea boat voyage duration can last between 2 weeks to a month, which makes the journey itself monotonous. Besides that, long haul ship's crews have to engage with unconditionally long hour work especially at night on a consecutive basic when they are at the sea. In addition, with a large proportion of their salary remains withheld, they are very much unlikely to switch boat during the payment interval even if they are not happy working with their current employer, captain, and/or anyone on boat or despite the difficulties at work.

Again, there are 2 types of wage payment system. It is either fixed or piece-rate. Fixed salary can be monthly or dairy but for daily basic, workers only get paid if the boat goes to the sea; on the other hand, monthly wages will be paid to the crews even if the boat does not leave its port. However some employers refuse to pay deckhands' salary during the prohibition period claiming that their boat has been staying at the dock for several consecutive weeks. Quotidian paid workers are given money when boat

arrives at the pier to unload the catch daily, and it ranges somewhere between 400 to 500 Baht whereas their monthly paid counterpart can get from 7,000 to 10,000 Baht, and it mainly depends on employer, boat's size, and type of catch, but regardless of the amount of catch. Nonetheless, this kind of paying system is only common for coastal vessels.

The most practical payment mechanism for long haul vessel is the piece-rate, but it was also very controversial before among the Cambodian illegal migrants, as they acknowledged that it could riskily lead to a serious unfair exploitation because this system also provides an ample opportunity for unscrupulous boat owner to deduct large amount of money from their remaining balance or deny the payment entirely and sometimes even threatens to inform local authority of their illegal status making employees reluctant to file for a petition. However, it is less problematic now because of two reasons. First, majority of the fishery workers are legal migrants, so they are more willing to assert their rights if they get cheated. Second, unethical fraudster who cheats on his own workers will eventually face a shortage of crews since victims are normally going to inform the others of this swindling. Nevertheless, of all samples in this case, 30% reported that at least they got cheated under this method once. Notwithstanding the lower rate of underpayment, a few interviewees demonstrate that unexpected deductions from their balance still happens sometimes, but for a matter of fact, none of the deckhands are certain on how much money they are supposed to be paid since they have never even noted down how much fishes they caught per time and calculate it themselves.

*“He [Chiv, what all fishermen call the foreman who works like an accountant] took money from the boat owner but told him that the crews needed it. He used our name to borrow money from the boss, but we didn't even know. Sometimes Chiv deducted our salary and used it for his own purpose, but we couldn't say anything because he controls everything. Although we often complained, the boat owner wouldn't listen.”*

Case 56, 25 years old male fishery worker in Rayong province, Thailand from Kampong Chhnang province.

### 5.2.3 Social Network Factor

The central role of social network at the destination is still largely important to explain the complex perpetuation of migration flow into fishery sector in Thailand. In Cambodia, international labor movement has begun to become popular approximately two decades ago, and those who migrated to work in Thailand at that time, conventionally got information from Cambodian brokers that went household by household recruiting laborers from rural area to work for Thai employers in the fishery industries. When a few people migrated and came back with better economic position, they attracted more people to follow them when they re-migrated especially those who were in closer relationship with these migrants, and it eventually becomes a well-known practical tactic for the poor to cope with financial distress.

Another study also shares this notion that there is a very high possibility that Cambodian migrant workers in fishery sector are commonly mobilized by broker with the same nationality, who used to be a fisherman themselves before turning into a recruiter and muster potential migrants at the area of origin using their successful migration experience and inspiring and uplifting family socio-economic status via remittances (Wongboonsin & Chimmamee, 2009). These movers have ultimately established a very broad web network and strong community around their workplace in Thailand like in Rayong province to share information or concerns on job availability as well as living environment in the host country. As a result, presently it is more feasible that potential migrants are recruited to work on the boat in Thailand via current migrants, who appear to be their trusted proximate connection. Usually, these prospective transients have no choices of employment, and they will accept the first job their friend or relative can promise to secure.

Nevertheless, Cambodian migrants cited that they were willing to emigrate to work in the fishery industries by their own judgment but guided by the network at the destination; on the other hand, none samples referred family members particularly parents as a part in the migration decision. This finding is also conforming to other studies relevant to employment of Cambodian migrants working in the fishery sector

in Thailand (ILO & ARCM, 2013; Jampaklay & Kittisuksathit, 2009; Wongboonsin & Chimmamee, 2009). In contrast, household of the fishery workers would instead try to forbid them or choose to do nothing at all rather than motivate movement. Of 20 samples, 50% of their family members strongly disagreed with their determination to entry into fishery sector whereas the remaining 50% sat on the fence. However, migrants voluntarily decided to seek a job in Thailand mainly because of the social connectivity at the destination such as relatives, friends, and villagers, who provided information and sometimes even encouraged potential migrants to take mobility.

Furthermore, current fishermen also provide new migrants physical support since they will usually live together on the same boat. Apart from the expected roles as a social network such as mediating, job guarantee, and information providing, connection also teaches new-coming apprentice how to survive at sea, live on the boat, and even how to fish, as none of the participants have a background in this kind of job. In their preferences, they are more likely to choose to live and work together to help and protect one another from famous endangering harm in the fishery sector because they believe that they will be more vulnerable if they work alone.

*“Because it is not an easy job after all. It is very dangerous to work on the boat. People can get killed easily because of little argument. I can work on the boat alone because I have never had any argument with anyone. Unless you have many villagers or relatives working on the same boat with you or you will not be safe enough trust me. Seriously I will not help anyone to come to work in the fishery sector.”*

Case 54, 27 years old male fishery worker in Rayong province, Thailand from Prey Veng province.



### 5.2.4 Obstacle

**Lack of social network:** Before going further, it is to remind that salary withholding is a very big obstacle of leaving work in the interim, and migrants are asked in the assuming condition that they already get their wage paid. In the identical manner, lack of social connection at the alternative destinations is still the most cited obstacle to another host area and/or employment provided by samples with a range of multiple consequences such as risk of migration, limited information, and high opportunities cost in searching for employment. In this group, 100% of fishery workers at least mentioned it once as the underlying reason of their continuing stay and working in the fishery industry. Again as asserted before, absence of connectivity at the host area leads to many unfavorable conditions that make migration largely less possible and beneficial. Potential migrants; therefore, are also subject to different social networks, in which they will choose the one that provides them the most benefit to maximize their utilities, but mutual trust and relationship between them are also important determinants in the decision process. That is to say, in case that prospective migrant has connection at multiple locations at once, he will eventually decide to move to the place where he thinks he will be offered the highest benefit. Nonetheless, he is also likely to select a destination that he has trusted and close proximity network.

*“I heard some people said that those who worked at Mahachai could earn a lot of money, and there were many factories located there too. I heard that fisherman there could earn almost 20,000 Baht in a month, but I didn’t trust them. I’m telling you now you cannot just trust what other people said unless someone you knew working there, told you that story otherwise you shouldn’t go there because they might plan to deceive you and take you to sell as a slave there.”*

Case 68, 35 years old male fishery worker in Chonburi province, Thailand from Takeo province.

**Lower Income:** 70% of total fishery worker interviewees aim to work in Thailand instead of Phnom Penh where the majorities can easily visit their household, as they mainly come from Prey Veng and Kampong Cham, mostly because of the payroll and

saving. To put it another way, since fishermen do not necessarily spend much money, they can earn a lot in term of remittances, and this is the principal reason why they agree to temporarily live far away from their family and visit them less often. Conclusively, it is acknowledged that psychic cost has a certain price, but the gap of benefit can also overpass it if the net difference is large enough.

**High cost of migration:** Lastly, South Korea is still the most desired destination for young migrants even among fishery workers in search for labor employment, but they are having a common complication in moving there just like what most participants are facing. Upfront transportation fee that is currently not allowed to work off through salary deduction and opportunities cost are still the main barriers of migration to this higher income nation. Unaffordable price derives from the requirement for legal status to work, as undocumented migrants cannot be smuggled undetectably taking into consideration the geographical area between Cambodia and South Korea.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Comparative Analysis

Giving the nature of labor migration, in a broad sense it is difficult to define an accurate answer to the question why or why not people move, but if case is limited to a certain group of people or possibly individual, accuracy can be more precise. Indeed, it can be proven easily through looking at the distinction in pull factors and impediment to optional areas between construction and fishery workers in Thailand. Although both employments are unskilled labor migration to the same destination, obstruction of moving to alternative places can be quite dissimilar.

Nonetheless before proceeding to the comparative analysis, it is instructive that I make a brief summary table as shown below and illustrate the differences in each case study I have discussed early for better comprehension. Following the table is the detail comparisons of each factor that influencing the choices of destination of participants from all four studies. Repeated, cross-case analysis focuses on demographic selectivity, pull factors, social network factor, and obstacles of migration to optional locations particularly Phnom Penh or Thailand and South Korea, the most desired destination of Cambodian unskilled labor migrants. It should be notice that much of the reason and evidence have been given already in the previous chapters, so it is unnecessary to provide any proof to support statements again because my intention here is to compare it.

Table 6. 1 Summary Table for All Case Studies

| Attributes                     | Garment Worker in Phnom Penh   | Construction Worker in Phnom Penh   | Construction Worker in Thailand  | Fishery Worker in Thailand  |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Demographic Selectivity</b> |  |   |  |   |
| Age at first migration         | Concentrate on very young age between 15 – 19 years old                      | Concentrate on later age between 15 – 29 years old                          | Concentrate on young age between 15 – 24 years old                             | Concentrate on young age between 15 – 24 years old                        |
| Sex orientation                | Majority are female, but a few number of male is also found                  | Majority are male, but several number of female is also found               | Number of male and female workers are closely balance                          | Male only   |
| Education                      | At least primary education but male has higher year of schooling             | From 0 to primary education but male has higher year of schooling           | From 0 to primary education but male has higher year of schooling              | Majority have primary education   |
| Marital status                 | Majority were single, most get married later                                 | Male was mainly single and later married but females were generally married | Females were generally married before migration but males likely remain single | Majority were single and likely remain single                             |
| Family migration               | Yes, even if they get married after migration experience                     | Yes for female, majority of male migrate alone                              | Yes both male and female if they are married                                   | Majority, yes   |
| <b>Pull Factor</b>             |  |   |  |   |
| Wage                           | - Phnom Penh offers more salary than local industries<br>- Joint wage return | - Flexible wage<br>- Locally good amount of wage                            | - Flexible wage<br>- Higher wage than Phnom Penh                               | - Large lump sum wage<br>- Flexible wage<br>- Higher wage than Phnom Penh |
| Higher job opportunities       | Yes for those who migrate in the early 2000s but no for recent migrants      | Large majority move due to higher chance of getting a job                   | Some, mainly those live in western provinces say yes                           | A few say yes   |
| Higher working standard        | Many say yes   | A few say yes   | Very large majority say yes  | A few say yes   |
| Amenities                      | Majority say yes   | Very few say yes  | Several say yes  | Almost half of sample say yes   |

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Living condition  | - 60% satisfied<br>- 40% dislike<br>living cost and<br>environment                | - 80% satisfied<br>- 20% dislike<br>market access                                 | - 90% satisfied<br>- 10% dislike<br>accommodation   | - 75% satisfied<br>- 25% dislike<br>food  |
| Working condition   | 65% satisfied   | 80% satisfied   | 90% satisfied   | 55% satisfied   |
| Change of employment                                      | - Dismissed<br>- Factory goes<br>bankrupt   | - Cheated<br>- Low salary   | Cheated   | Cheated   |
| <b>Social Network Factor</b>                              |   |   |   |   |
| Household influence                                       | 15% say yes   | 5% say yes  | 5% say yes  | None say yes  |
| Role of connection at<br>the destination                  | - Provide info<br>- Secure job<br>- Provide physical<br>support                   | - Provide info<br>- Secure job<br>- Often also<br>provide physical<br>support     | - Provide info<br>- Secure job<br>- Provide physical<br>support<br>- Introduce<br>migrant to broker | - Provide info<br>- Secure job<br>- Provide physical<br>support<br>- Introduce<br>migrant to broker |
| <b>Obstacle</b>   |   |   |   |   |
| To Thailand   | - Family tie<br>- Lack of network<br>- Female intends<br>to follow her<br>husband | - Family tie<br>- Lack of network<br>- Female intends<br>to follow her<br>husband | -   | -   |
| To Phnom Penh   | -   | -   | - Mainly Lower<br>income<br>- Lack of network<br>- Female intends to<br>follow her husband          | Lower income  |
| To South Korea  | High cost of<br>migration   | High cost of<br>migration   | High cost of<br>migration   | High cost of<br>migration   |
| To other destination<br>within current cultural<br>border | - Lack of network<br>- Lower working<br>condition                                 | Lack of network   | Lack of network   | Lack of network   |
| <b>N</b>  | <b>20</b>   | <b>20</b>   | <b>20</b>   | <b>20</b>   |

### 6.1.1 Demographic Selectivity

**Age:** Migrants working at the construction site in Phnom Penh concentrate on the later adult age and usually migrate at the oldest age compared to the other 3 case studies in this work. On the other hand, cloth manufacturing industry in Phnom Penh have so far attracted a lot of young female population from rural area, and these workers are usually a lot younger than construction labors although the destination is the same whereas relatively garment employees move at the youngest age of all case studies which comprise mostly male workers. Thus, my assumption is that single female migrates at the earlier age than male but mainly opt for internal migration. This finding is also consistent with migration report, which asserts that rural-urban female migrant often migrates at the younger age than male counterpart (MoP, 2012).

Comparing to international migrants case especially those working at the construction site in Thailand, internal migrants are on average older at age when they first migrate, but this is not surprising taking into account the fact that migrants usually consider about their net return of migration, so if they migrate early, they will be able to work at the destination for longer duration and enjoy more benefit. There are not much differences between construction and fishery workers in Thailand as they both generally migrate to work abroad when they are typically still very young about the same age on average.

**Sex Orientation:** It seems that there is a very clear gender selectivity in the two most popular unskilled employments in Phnom Penh. However, a few number of the opposite sex that dominates the sector are also found working meaning it is not that very strictly sex segregated. Nevertheless, employment in fishery industry is not possible for females and only made available for male workers, and this is the only case in this study that seems very unique while the reason of this sexual orientation has already been given.

Although construction employment in Phnom Penh and Thailand share most major characteristics of work, employment practice does not. Empirically construction

sector in Thailand is open widely for both male and female. This is also consistent with the case studies of their counterpart in Phnom Penh, but number of female workers in Thailand that participate in this field is a lot higher. However, it is contradictory to western countries, which found otherwise. According to statistical data, ratio between male and female construction worker in Phnom Penh is about 8:1 whereas in Thailand it is closely balance around 1.5:1 (MoP, 2012:30; OFWA, 2016).

**Education:** On average, garment workers have the highest year of education among all the 4 case studies, and at least all of them have ever attended formal education before migrating while there are still a few construction workers and even fishermen have never gone to school. Comparatively, fishery workers are second in number of year of education while both internal and international construction employees share about the same average year of schooling.

In addition, it is rather valuable to note that male migrant worker in this study in general always has higher year of education than female within homogenous group, and it tacitly demonstrates that girl is more likely than boy to drop out of their formal education early. Conformingly, this finding is supported by another research on education and gender in contemporary Cambodia (Booth, 2014). It is; nonetheless, not a very good practice and deserves much attention from relevant authorities. Consequently, it is troublesome to tout to promote more women's participation in a more formal sector. Implicitly, it can be construed that gender parity in educational enrollment in Cambodia more importantly in upper level is not equally and effectively ensured by the government making universal aim to prevent woman from being relegated to secondary role hardly achieves in a society of patriarchy.

**Marital Status and Family Migration:** The majorities of garment worker were single before experiencing their migration, but most get married after, and they prefer to bring their family to live and work in Phnom Penh. Also, since international migration happens mostly when movers are still young, male migrants are normally single when they first migrate. In comparison with other cases, fishery workers were largely single and tend to remain single, but a remarkable recognition is that if they

are married, it is possible to see their spouse also working in that area too. Nevertheless, similar to female construction workers in Phnom Penh, female counterparts in Thailand are very much likely to be married before migration for the reasons that they are usually at the later age when their mobility happens, and migration in search for construction employment especially outflow is not that suitable for lone single young lady. Relatively, both construction sectors have the equally largest number of those who have been married before they migrate compared to other industries.

Additionally, there is a remarkable dissimilarity between construction laborers in Thailand and their brethren in Phnom Penh. Half of total construction sample working in the capital of Cambodia state that they stream to work at the destination alone and leave their spouse behind. This is probably because construction sites in Phnom Penh typically have no space to build a proper shelter and inconvenient and inappropriate for a family setting. On the other hand, construction workers in Thailand generally live and work as a family and even move collectively rather than individually in case they are married before migration experience although mainly the decision to migrate comes from husband rather than wife as women in Cambodia are expected to be subordinate to their spouse. Comparatively, construction sector in Thailand has the largest value of those who migrate to work as a family, and conclusively, female is much likely to migrate as a family if she is married before migration.

### **6.1.2 Pull Factor**

**Wage:** Garment industries in Phnom Penh are reported to offer much higher wage than the locals although it is not recognized as appropriate yet. Married garment workers might also migrate or remain staying in Phnom Penh due to the joint net return of their migration, but this is dissimilar from the case of internal married construction worker since majority of them migrate alone except female workers, so it is necessary for them to consider about this factor. However, flexible and appropriate



payroll is the factor that pulls laborers especially married female migrants with young children to choose construction industry. Salary deduction due to the absence from work, which ensues often in garment sector, is the key reason female construction workers do not like it. In comparison, it seems that the current gap of basic wage between construction workers in Phnom Penh and Thailand is not that large except international migrants can earn more income as they can do longer hours overtime work for extra money.

In addition, fishery workers seem to be able to earn the most income among all 4 case studies because of low expense and extra money from going fishing when their boat makes port. Therefore, It also leaves no doubt that they can earn a bit more than construction workers in Thailand on average. To put it another way based on the answer of participants, fishermen can probably save on average about 3 times more than a garment employee and approximately 2 times more than a construction laborer can possibly do in Cambodia. Without consider the risk of cheating, large lump sum of money at the end of each *round* is a very unique characteristic of payment that pulls Cambodian migrant workers to join this sector.

**Higher Job Opportunities:** To majority of construction workers, Phnom Penh again is the only developed place in Cambodia where job opportunities exist or simply where they can find a regular job as constant development of infrastructure; to a large extend, happens here. Moreover, it might also be true for garment workers who migrated in the early last decade when clothes manufacturing factories have just grown, but it is not for recent young migrants since garment industries are also founded in the surrounding provinces of Phnom Penh; therefore, it is probably not really necessary for them to migrate to work in Phnom Penh if not joint wage or better working condition.

There is a big dissimilarity between construction workers both in Thailand and in Phnom Penh here. Higher chance of getting a job is mentioned by large number of participants in Phnom Penh, but only some construction employees in Thailand raised this point. But it makes sense because construction employments in Phnom Penh are

also available for international migrants while most of them had a regular job but just low salary that they did not cite this factor and those who mentioned this as a reason that pulled them were people living in the western provinces where they could not be absorbed to the capital of Cambodia.

In addition, fishermen case is also consistent with construction labors in Thailand. However based on their characteristics and answers, it is likely to be true, as they only intend to go to work in Thailand temporarily to accumulate wealth, and many of them were also not unemployed when living in Cambodia. Evidently, if one considers the case of garment worker, it can be easily comprehended. Taking into consideration job opportunity alone without higher wage, it can be hard to understand why clothes manufacturing laborers do not choose to work locally in their region but migrate to Phnom Penh. Indeed, they rather need a quality employment than just a paid job.

**Higher Working Standard:** clothes and footwear manufacturers are the most controversial sectors in Cambodia while employees often go on a strike, walkout, or protest to bring about changes to working environment and salary. Therefore, it is not astonishing that many workers dislike the standard of working in the garment factory especially local industries further from the capital itself with less frequent modulation from the government relevant authorities. Although working environment of manufacturing complex in Phnom Penh is not universally acknowledged as appropriate and favorable, it still seems better than the rest that it is able to pull many internal migrants. Likewise good employment condition of construction sector in Thailand draws many international migrants and continuously detains them to work.

In contrast, a large number of fishermen in Thailand and construction workers in Phnom Penh appear to share the same notion that higher working standard is not the reason why they choose to migrate to work at the current destination. However, it is not baffling to understand why only a few number of fishery workers said that they were attracted by working environment on the boat taking into account the reasons have been given in detail early. On the other hand, only a minority of construction hands in Phnom Penh are drawn by the similar manner as their counterparts in

Thailand, and the reason is perhaps due to the lack of construction jobs in the local regions; hence, migrants are not able to make a comparison between employment in their hometown and Phnom Penh where most employers follow the same standard.

**Amenities:** Construction workers in Phnom Penh are precisely pushed rather than pulled to the destination due to their extremely poor economic status and low level of education, which is a result of lack of financial aid to attend school. Migration at a later age with low or no education at all also provides an evidence to support the statement that they are much unlikely to leave school for the purpose of migration to urban city for amusement. However, a very few financially superior young migrants among them referred amenities as their motivation. Likewise, it is also uncommon to see migrants decide to move to work for construction companies in Thailand just because they want to experience an urban life in the foreign city although they migrate at the younger age than their fellow in Phnom Penh.

In contrast, it is relatively different from those working in garment and fishery sectors. Majority of cloth industry workers admit that they migrate to Phnom Penh just to see the beauty of the city and merely for working intention. This reason is also cited by many fishermen although their number is not as large as the former, but it is considerable. In addition, materialism is another reason of migration for many single female garment labors. It is rather weird to learn that they decide to move to work in Phnom Penh just to be financially independent and buy everything they want without parental restraint. A case like this; on the other hand, is not mentioned by any female construction workers both local and abroad. It is probably because they are mostly married and older whereas female garment workers are predominantly single and younger with better financial status.

**Living Conditions:** It is a bit remarkable that 25% of fishery worker in Thailand are not satisfied with their current living situation compared to only 10% of construction employee from the same destination, but their dissatisfactory feature is different. While workers at site complain about their accommodation, workers on boat express dissatisfaction with their provided meal even though it is normally sufficient.

Relatively, only a minority of construction workers in Phnom Penh and Thailand do not seem to feel pleased with their condition in the urban city with the percentage of 20% and 10% respectively. In comparison among the 4 sectors, garment employment has the highest value of 40% of those who feel unsatisfied with their living circumstance at the destination, and it appears to be accurate since they also have to pay for other living cost besides food such as utilities and accommodation themselves at an inflated price whereas participants from 3 other cases in general do not.

**Working Conditions:** Construction sector in Thailand has the highest number of 90% of sample feeling satisfied with their working condition while fishery worker at the same destination has the lowest percentage of only 55% although construction job is more intensively laboring in term of physical strength. Likewise, it seems that a large majority that comprises up to 80% of those who work at the building site in Phnom Penh are also happy with their employment environment, but not as much as their counterparts in Thailand. In addition, garment section in general needs much improvement on standard of employment because only 65% of interviewee expresses satisfaction of their working situation in Phnom Penh, which is considered as the best in Cambodia compare to quality of that elsewhere.

**Change of Employment:** Majority of international construction workers migrate because of the attractiveness of flexible and higher income that job in Thailand can provide them, yet they are less likely to be willing to move to work for other employers who agree to offer them higher wage since they are afraid of defrauders who will not pay them promising salary, and they switched their boss only if they were cheated. Similar case also happens to fishery workers at the same host country who jumped ship normally because the boat owners exploited them, or they believed so. It is; nevertheless, constructive to bear in mind that their previously illegal status could be a reason they were unable or unwilling to change employment, as it was difficult for them to find an employer who would agree to hire undocumented migrant workers. It is also instructive to mention that some of them used to get arrested and repatriated by Thai relevant authorities back to Cambodia, but they often ended up re-migrating shortly afterwards and sometimes changed employment in the process.

In comparison with other cases, it is mutually opposed the idea of construction workers in Phnom Penh who incline to move to work for any construction industry without much hesitation if they are offered higher payroll. This is why they revealed that they sometimes changed their employer because of low salary. Of all the cases studies in this work, 3 of which are less likely to move around looking for new potential employers meaning they usually stick to one industry from time to time until something unpleasant happens and in case of garment workers, they are dismissed or the factory itself goes bankrupt.

### **6.1.3 Social Network Factor**

This study focuses on the notion of family influence, which here refers to the direct motivation of family members at the area of origin upon individual that involves in the migration decision for the first time to current destination. However, sometimes household also discourages its members to move or does nothing at all and let migrants themselves conclude a final decision regarding of their own life, and it is not counted as an influence in this context although it seems like one but in opposite direction of what is intended to clarify. However, it is worth mentioning that majority of garment and fishery employees and even some internal construction workers were forbidden to take mobility largely because these people were single youth with no or least experience in migration plus many families did not want young migrants to leave their formal education when they were not facing any serious financial situation.

On average, Cambodian migrants both internal and international are very unlikely to get influenced to migrate by household particularly parents, and this percentage is even slighter for outflow migrants than the internal one. Visually, garment sector has the highest value of 15% of those who get motivated by family compare to only 5% of construction industry similarly shared by both types and 0% of fishery sector. In comparison between genders, single women from poor economic family have more percentage of those who are persuaded to migrate to work than single men, but they

only move internally whereas married women is no longer bound to listen or likely to take any encouragement from their parents, but instead they will collectively migrate as a family with their husband.

#### 6.1.4 Obstacle

Standing between migrants and their truly desired destination are obstacles, but before proceeding further to obstacle of migration, it is very helpful to reiterate that Cambodia is a country of patriarchy where ancient traditional gender roles are still highly valued. As a consequence, married female migrants across all sectors are intentionally subordinate to their husband and follow their husband's choices of destination in a collective family migration decision. In addition, following numerous complaints of abusive working environment, the RGC has also imposed a temporary ban on sending migrant workers to Malaysia since 2011, and because illegal labor migration to Malaysia is a very rare case, it is not put below for discussion.

**To Thailand:** This question was asked only to internal migrants in Phnom Penh, and conclusively, vast majority of them could not move to Thailand because they had no trusted connection there or they are having major family responsibilities that limit their long distance movement considering the fact that they are; to a large number, married, and many with at least one living child and old parents. Significance of family tie varies from one migrant to another mainly depends on migrants and their family's characteristics, but it seems to naturally impact female more than male because of tradition and culture. As a result, young single migrants seem to be able to pursue their desire whereas married migrants especially those with living children have to compromise the situation and choose a destination that appropriate for their current attributes. In general it leaves no doubt that single migrants with lesser family tie are able to move more freely and stay for longer duration than migrants with family commitment. Likewise, migrant worker who does not have any family member left in Cambodia will certainly be able to stay in Thailand longer than those who do.

In addition, monetary cost of migration to Thailand is not a big obstacle to them either, as question was put forward to those that already have a job. Therefore, they are likely to be able to afford the price of crossing the border to work, but without social network at the destination seemingly it is likely impossible to convince them to migrate to Thailand since lack of connectivity leads to several major disadvantages as discussed early. Moreover, with recent One Stop Service policy with less complexity and much lower fee of only 1,800 Baht for 2 years work permit for Cambodian unskilled migrant workers in Thailand, it is obvious that they are able to enter Thailand legally in search for higher paid jobs. However, according to participant's answer, very large number of them are not aware of this new proclamation due to the lack of information resulted from absence of network in Thailand.

On the other hand, it seems that language barriers has little impact in hindering migration of Cambodian rural population to Thailand since only a very few number of total sample in this study mentioned language as an impediment. Apparently, it is accurate based on the notion that no interviewees, who are working or used to work in Thailand, spoken Thai before they moved there. Wongboonsin and Chimmamee (2009) assert that more than half of Cambodian migrant children in Rayong province cannot speak Thai language at all while about 40% can do it passably, but almost all of them cannot read or write, and Khmer language is still used in their daily life even when they are living in Thailand. In accordance with this finding, it is more likely that they only start to learn to speak Thai when they are already in Thailand.

**To Phnom Penh:** Likewise, this question is only raised to migrant workers in Thailand to understand the reason they did not migrate to work in Phnom Penh and whether or not they intend to do so in the future. In summary, lower income in term of remittances is consistently a very big obstacle to migration to Phnom Penh across cases. Apart from this factor, for fishery workers, it is also almost impossible for them to jump ship during the payment interval, as a bulk of their salary is still being withheld whereas some construction workers from the Western provinces prefer to remain in Thailand rather than migrating to Phnom Penh because of lack of network leading to shortage of necessary concerning information about available job there.

**To South Korea:** This is a destination where most migrants currently consider as the best choice because so far there has been no report of migrant workers being abused or exploited, and the payroll is very high. Nevertheless, it is only feasible to move to work there not by any kind of social network but agency services, in which quota number of migrant workers to be sent is strictly regulated by both government of Cambodia and South Korea, and passing a Korean language proficiency test is a requirement but does not guarantee a possible job. In addition, not only the travelling cost is expensive, it is also costly and time consuming to study Korean language, which makes the price unaffordable by the majority of migrants. Therefore, it is not unusual to learn that migrant workers across all cases cite high cost of migration as the obstacle of moving to work in South Korea.

**To Other Destinations within Current Cultural Border:** It should be clarified that it refers to other possible places within the same country border as where migrants are working. In general, lack of connection at the other alternative host areas or employments is a big barrier that prevents migrants from moving there, but to those in Thailand, it is also not convenient for them to move to somewhere else within the country due to their false perception about work permit and potential new employers. On the other hand, working standard of garment industrial complex in Phnom Penh is considered as the highest in Cambodia; thus, for some garment employees, it is unfavorable for them to move to work for other factories in another provinces with much lower working condition, wage, and/or forced labor.

## 6.2 Synopses and Discussion

It is obvious that the causes of unskilled labor migration in Cambodia in this new millennium are economically related to push factors such as agricultural problems, low income, and local employment shortage rather than civil conflict and political instability, and it is usually a combination of more than one factor that is able to force migrants out of their home village. Furthermore, landlessness is also an unfavorable



condition resulted in poverty, yet land-poorness is even a bigger detriment to rural population livelihood. That is to say, to a large extent, migration tendency is negatively associated with the number of fertile land migrants own, as land serves as an employment. Therefore, if they do not have any arable land to cultivate, they are likely to move to a place with higher chance of employment to generate wealth. Under such a circumstance, land is also seen as a source of income insurance, thus potential migrants are less likely to take a risky movement if they possess land, but they still eventually migrate if they own low fertility land. As a result, productivity of land is extremely crucial.

It was known before that female migrants only intended to migrate as a dependent rather than a breadwinner (Kofman, 1999; Todaro & Smith, 2015). Weeks (2012) denotes that increasingly more number of women in the US opt for a migration on their own rather than just to trail their spouse and have roughly the same migration rate as men do now. Nevertheless, he also claims that in the traditional societies like those in Africa and Asia where women's status is not recognized, and their job is to be at home taking care of children and other family members, it is not a surprise that men are more likely than women to migrate. However patently, it makes clear in this study that Cambodian female migrants who move with their spouse, are also breadwinners rather than just tied movers. It; moreover, ended the historical belief which was assumed for a long time that women in a traditional society generally migrated to accompany their spouse instead of seeking economic opportunity. Consistently, MoP (2012) pointed out that Cambodian young single women have higher propensity to migrate than young men and actually migrate internally to find employment somewhat more frequently than men do, but women are less likely to migrate to another country or if they have children.

Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) models on rural-urban migration partially explain the pull factor of Phnom Penh. They hypothesize that individuals migrate to urban city with the objective of obtaining employment in a more formal sector; that is to say, migrants intend to go to Phnom Penh or urban Thailand bearing a hope that they will be able to get a more regular and/or quality job with permanent

and higher income to cope with destitute condition resulted from seasonal agricultural work, which hardly allows rural population to live. In such a condition, their wealth is severely depleted leading to chronic poverty from one generation to another. Migration in this circumstance seems like a method for survival rather than a method for extra earning to render agricultural risk and provide insurance of crop failure. In addition, this emphasizes that migration is also a mechanism to prevent them from falling deeper into grievous form of poverty or indebtedness. With more and more families practice sowing rice as a technique of growing thus spares more manpower, migration to urban city to cope with lack of local income-generating activities seems like a must rather than just an option.

Borjas (1989) argues that people decide to migrate to a place where they believe opportunities exist to maximize individual utilities, so in order to move, they have to know clearly how much they can benefit from such a migration unless their migration is not for working purpose or in another term, their migration is not to improve their family financial condition. However, decision of movement is not only about the economic advantages alone, but mainly a result of social connectivity. Relationship proximity and subsequent interaction between current and potential migrants can predominantly conclude a specific destination. That is to say, migrants are more likely to choose the best place that they have existing connections rather than disconnected host areas because potential migrants react differently to attribute of destinations based on what information available to them. Fuller et al. (1985) conduct an experiment in Thailand and conclude that information about the opportunity of employment is an important ingredient in migration decision, and cities where information about job is wide, migration rate to that place is also high.

However, unskilled labor migrants in Cambodia have very limited sources of information regarding of working and living condition at the destination, and they can only utilize information that derives from their social network such as family members, friends, or villagers who are working at the destination rather than modern technology due to the lack of knowledge to access to it and local development such as internet connection and mass media. Nonetheless, information is also a double edge

sword that either increases the desire of moving or discourages migration to that area, for it depends on what kind of information it is and who gives that information. When migrant workers are surrounded by bad news about a place; for example, Malaysia, they tend to believe it and will not consider moving there. It can be expected that information regarding of destination that is supplied by unsatisfied migrants will discourage other prospective migrants to choose to go there.

On the other hand, migrants are more likely to believe information from those who have higher level of connectivity or mutual trust with them. Therefore in general perspective, information from closer relationship network will influence migration decision in higher degree. Additionally, encouragement or stimulation of mobility is usually passed from current migrants to prospective migrants rather than from household members living in the area of origin with no information about migration destinations. Therefore, those who can actually motivate movement are people that know about costs and benefits derive from migration. When Cambodian unskilled labor migrants choose a certain place where there are many other movers who share the same cultural background, it is not because they want to settle at a place with many people from similar ethnic group but the information from that place is broader.

Following their first initial movement, current migrant usually not only provides information to other potential migrants but also more importantly secure a job. This is why they often end up working and living with each other in the same compound and even assist each other in case of emergency as well as share the expenses. Social network at the destination in international migration context plays a very crucial part in making migration process more affordable and reliable to future migrants by introducing them to brokers whose role is very important in determination the result of illegal border crossing. So far, it has also made clear that the function of agency in this study is not vitally important, but it might be so in the other sectors like industrial manufacture. This notion is based on the answers of participants who used to utilize agency services, and they were put to work in the factory.

Structurally, chain migration leads to a bigger and more sophisticated network that reduce many difficulties and much migration related cost making migration itself more possible to the poor and poorer. Besides travelling expense and documentation charge, there are also 2 non-out-of-pocket costs considered by migrants in their initial cost-benefit calculation to select the best choice of destination. One of these is opportunity cost, which is added up overtime if migrants face long period of job seeking at the destination. This is eventually resulted in more and unnecessary expenses and sometimes becomes unaffordable, but superior migrants with financial insurance are more willing to take such a risk of losing opportunities cost while inferior migrants are less likely to move without a job guarantee. Another one is psychic cost imposed when migrants move away from their family. Traditionally it is valued more by Cambodian female than male, as women believe that it is their obligation to take care of children and parents. Therefore, if they have young children living at the area of origin, in general circumstance they do not want to go and work very far from home, but in special circumstance, they do not intent to stay far from home for long duration. However, this kind of migration cost can perhaps change its value if migrant's household characteristics change. Indeed, these costs are also major obstacles to migration and prevent people from moving to the desired destination.

Fundamentally, it is very constructive to learn that parents in Cambodian labor migration context both rural-urban and cross-border are found not to generally encourage individual first migration although some studies on the influence of household in migration decision have proven otherwise particularly in Asian countries where it is usually believed that family; to a large degree, influences its member in migration decision to diversify source of income to prevent financial deterioration due to agricultural disaster or crop failure. Nonetheless, Cambodia might be one of the exceptions taking into consideration the fact that many other works about Cambodian unskilled labor migration to Phnom Penh and Thailand also share the general notion that it is very uncommon to see family members encourage individual movement (Lim, 2007; ILO & ARCM, 2013; Jampaklay & Kittisuksathit, 2009; Wongboonsin & Chimmamee, 2009; Maltoni, 2010). That is to say, a final migration decision normally comes from migrants themselves rather than third persons, but parents are main

source of financial support making the travelling cost more affordable to young labor migrants.

In comparison to this finding, MoP (2012) has found out differently assumingly because of the question they asked. In addition, there is also another noteworthy contradiction on the contact at the destination. MoP (2012) claims that 50.9% of total migrants did not know anyone in Phnom Penh before moving and only 25% received help in finding job from their network. Consequently, chain migration is not found very practical in that study, yet almost all participants in my study except a male garment worker who went to Phnom Penh first as a student acknowledged that they actually decided to move there instead of elsewhere because they knew a connection in the capital and expected this contact to provide them support to ease their difficulties in finding employment. As chain migration normally amplifies the probability of getting a job, it makes clear that those who move without a network will definitely find labor migration much more difficult. As a result, it is incomprehensible that a household without job related information and contact at the destination would encourage individual to wander in search for a job in Phnom Penh aimlessly.

So ultimately which theory is best? This is regularly the last vital question asked in many occasions but remain unanswered. It seems that even with the same area of origin, same destination, and/or the same nationality, migrants choose to migrate depends on many different attributes of the place and themselves. Lewis two-sector model in internal migration (1954) can also be expanded and used to explain the phenomenon of international migration from poorer to nearby richer country like Cambodia and Thailand respectively, but its weakness is that it does not investigate individual reason for migration. While neoclassical micro economic theory attempts to capture both push and pull factors in their explanation to migration, there is still a space in-between, and it is not concerning with expected wage differences. Migrants may choose a certain location because they want to be closer to their family for physical and emotional assistance or because they have heard of it before migrating. This is the reason Todaro (1969, 1976) and Harris & Todaro (1970) and Borjas (1989)

failed to explain why sometimes a big gap of wage difference cannot motivate migration, but sometimes migration still continues to happen without such difference.

In human capital version of migration, Sjaastad (1962) indicates that one person can also recognize the probability of choosing a destination to increase their human capital. But seemingly they will only discern this additional benefit if they perceive that they can utilize this set of skill they gain from on-the-job training when they become a return migrant like the case of construction worker. However, for dexterities that are unlikely to be made used efficiently upon return like fishing skills, migrants seem to hardly ever consider human capital investment as a possibility of migration. Massey et al. (1994) make an effort to evaluate the competency of theories in contemporary migration context, but conclusively he can reach a final judgment that each theory is supported by one evidence in some way or another and particularly no theory is refuted, which means that each one of them plays an important role in explaining this complicated phenomenon, yet no single theory alone can capture all the full comprehension but add something to the understanding of migration pattern.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

#### **6.3.1 Amelioration Predicament of Current Migrants**

Notwithstanding the fact that this study emphasizes chiefly the importance of reducing migration rate conforming to the RGC's National Strategic Development Plan 2014 – 2018, certain solicitude for current individual migrants and their rights to receive an equal treatment like an ordinary worker also peaks my interest. This notion refers not only to those engaging in employment in Thailand below the minimum wage of 300 Baht per day enforced by Thai Acts but also to internal migrants taking up residence in Phnom Penh particularly garment labors who are sometimes abused by local entrepreneurs that do not comply with the labor law of Cambodia and impose on worker's submissiveness. Therefore, following implications are suggested to

pertinent parties involving in labor migration at individual and institutional level including both types of migrant labor, industries, and governments in purpose to hopefully improve each and every one's interest so that everybody will be able to enjoy a higher form of benefits, as labor forces movement does not only play a part in the economic growth of the sending but also the receiving areas of those migrants. Therefore, maximum participation from the association in bringing about more productivity to migrant workers is a win-win mechanism.

#### *Individual level*

- Migrant workers should at least understand the labor and employment laws of the destination country, particularly the rights, e.g. if they are entitled to switch employment or employer, and comply with the laws to assert and protect their own advantages and privileges.
- Do not hesitate to file for a petition against unscrupulous employers to prevent perpetuation of mistreatment.
- Migrant labors should try to enhance their competence and language proficiency through the development of a lifelong learning habit to expose themselves to opportunities for a higher payroll and better employment condition.

#### *Institutional level*

- In their own interests, industries should offer a favorable career atmosphere and decent remuneration to attract and ensure superior migrant employees while avoiding the practice of intimidation or coercion, which is more likely to yield negative effect on their performance and the lack of quality workers.
- Relevant authorities should regularly organize vocational training at site to educate both employers and employees to meet the demand, safety at work, rights and obligations to increase workers' dexterity, welfare, and productivity of migrants.

- Relevant authorities in the destination should proactively and frequently conduct workplace inspections to monitor and ensure the quality of employment in all industries.
- The conventional methods of retaining migrant's legal documentation such as work permit and passport and/or withholding of their salary in bulk to bind them with particular employers should be abolished, as it is an act of unfair exploitation and against the law.

### **6.3.2 Alleviation Labor Migration.**

Previous Cambodian literatures in migration usually focus on how much migration would affect economic growth but disregard its long-term impact on dynamic of population and human capitalization, which are also the main driven force of economic development. In a long term perspective, problems regarding of migration are not just the challenges mentioned before, but in turn, contemporary migration in Cambodia will gradually turn into a practical culture of the society where people no longer migrate because of the economic differentials between two places or intention of improving their quality of life, but they do because everyone else does so, or in a simple term, they follow one another.

This phenomenon is far more problematic and deserves even much more attention to the case of young female migrants from rural regions that leave school purposively before they complete their compulsory education to migrate to work but not due to economic distress but amenities of urban city without clear intention of working. These movers are; in addition, bound to believe either by gender norm or social environment that higher education is not always rewarded. While migration is believed as a method to cope with impoverishment or improve current living standard, leaving formal education to migration even when households are still capable to support migrant's schooling, migration will instead turn migrants themselves into



inheriting poverty rather than escaping it. In respond, a lot of effort must be made to reduce high level of absenteeism in formal education.

The manifestation of declining total fertility rate in Cambodia is more precise and unabated from time to time while the proportion of older population keeps rising due to the share of advancement in medical technology. Therefore, if migration issues are not taken into hand seriously, it can be expected that Cambodia will start to face shortage of labor and stagnation soon or later. Borjas (1989) postulates that people decide to migrate to a place where they believe opportunities exist in order to maximize their utilities. However in doing so, destination must provide them more benefits than the area of origin in term of economics. This leads to the assumption that if either benefit from migrating is shrunk or benefit from staying is augmented, which either way reduces the gap of benefit between these two places, migration rate will be retarded. As a result, Cambodian policymakers are suggested to consider following counter measures to the causes of migration both short-term to immediately respond to decrease migration rate and long-term to cease migration or at least make it only internal and short distance to minimize the aftermath.

#### *Short term*

- Priority should be given to provinces or regions with the highest emigration rate like Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Cham, and Prey Veng. A following research to evaluate policy effect should be conducted. If migration rate is reduced successfully, all the regions should be done the same things.
- Water appears to be the key in reducing labor migration rate, as most migrants have been facing problems regarding of restriction of agricultural activities. Therefore, irrigation system must be developed in a faster speed to provide and store enough water supplies to cover most farmland in rural area and enable them to grow rice at least twice a year. Irrigation system will also help decrease the amount of floodwater and prevent natural shocks.
- Government should hasten land registration and make it less complicated to reduce squatting on private land while amount of arable land given to rural

population as social concession should be appropriately equivalent to the number of household members that allows them to earn a decent livelihood.

- Substantial improvement on land production technologies should be continuously introduced to rural population because productivity of the land is more vitally important than its actual amount. An agronomic study on soil acidity and fertility to encourage sustainable cultivation should be conducted regularly. A separated research must also be done for barren and sandy land in order to attempt to maximize its economic advantages.
- Government should interfere with the rice market to prevent monopoly of commodity trading and unfair exploitation either by determine the minimum price of paddies or rice, use the government budget to buy rice from rural population with appropriate prices and sell it back to international market, or find a market and potential buyers for rice.
- Government should have clear economic policies to control inflation and particularly lower the price relevant to energies and transportation so that the cost of living and input cost of agricultural products will be cheapened.
- Working standard is currently an unfavorable drawback of employment that deserves intentional measures from the government especially in garment sector, where strikes and demonstrations arouse occasionally because people want quality jobs not just a regular job. Therefore, law on minimum wage that provides all workers a decent living and regulations on working conditions are still required to enact and obeyed by everyone and everywhere in the country. Those who fail to act in accordance with the law must be punished severely.
- Mass media should be utilized to spread information regarding of long-term disadvantages and risks of migration to deter potential migrants.

#### *Long term*

Short-term policy can provide employment for rural population to reduce migration rate, but it is not sufficient for long-term development due to the proliferating income of rural population that perhaps leads to first investment in modern agricultural technology, which creates more surplus of labor from agricultural sector and second

increase in higher education resulted in more semi-skilled workers that stipulate skilled employment position. Therefore, labor market in Cambodia has to be expanded to be able to absorb large amount of skilled and semi-skilled workers.

- Urbanize and develop some targeted provinces or regions to make migration occur in short distance.
- Create more skilled and semi-skilled employment opportunities by encouraging foreign direct investment with eco-friendly business not only in Phnom Penh and its vicinities but also in the other provinces.
- Improve quality of educational system to equip individual population toward skilled-base society and promote life-long learning and long-term advantages of high education and skilled working sector.
- Encourage women to attend higher education in particular, motivate them to take formal role in employment, and promote their status in the society.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

Based on the findings and some limitations of this study, I would like to outline some suggestions for future research as follows.

Social network at the destination is playing an extremely crucial part in influencing migration destination both rural-urban and cross-border due to its multiple roles in facilitating before, during, after successful migration process making migration more possible. Therefore, further studies In Cambodian migration context are suggested to consider social connection and their proximity in order to avoid invalidity, and it helps to understand migration phenomenon in a broader boundary. Additionally, it is also very useful to clarify in the study that question about social network influence refers to network at the destination or household and whether or not it is individual first migration or otherwise because in one of his many times remigration experience, migrant might be encouraged by his family, but it is not always his first time.

In addition, we need to understand not only why people migrate and what factors are contributing to their decision-making process but also the consequences of labor migration and its impact to economic and social development especially in the long run. Focusing on construction and garment employment, it seems very hazardous to personal safety especially workers in Phnom Penh, as job itself is often conducted in very poor conditions with frequent accidents and without access to healthcare, social protection, and even proper protective gears. In addition, it is also considered as harmful due to their usage of chemical substances. Therefore, further researches are needed to analyze the impacts of this kind of employment on worker's health and safety so that relevant authorities might know what to improve.

Remittances complement national economic growth, and it can also improve livelihood of low-income people. It functions as a tool to mitigate the demand for government development assistance and thus diminish officials' distress. However, positive impacts of remittances on economic growth are likely to occur only through savings and long-term investment such as financing bigger agricultural projects or raising children formal education rather than supporting mere daily consumption. So far, there has been no study to prove if Cambodian children from migrant households are able to attend higher education and improve performance at school and well-being via remittances or otherwise they are provided such an example of alternative method to cope with economic difficulties such as leaving school and migrating. As a consequence, an investigation on the usage of remittances and how much it impacts migrant's children human capitalization process seems very necessary at time.

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**APPENDIX**

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

## Appendix A

### Semi-Structure Guideline For In-depth Interview

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current participant job: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Current age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Marital status (self defined): \_\_\_\_\_, when you get married? Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you divorced/ separated or widowed now? \_\_\_\_\_, If yes when: \_
3. Educational level \_\_\_\_\_, Can you read and write simple sentence in Khmer?
4. Can you speak Thai language? \_\_\_\_\_, Can you read and write it? \_\_\_
5. When did you first migrate here? Year: \_\_\_\_\_
6. In which province were you born? Name of Province: \_\_\_\_\_
7. When did you start working at the site? Year: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where did you live before you arrived at the site? Name of Province: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Why did you leave your hometown?
10. What did you do in your home village?
11. Were the agricultural productions or income from selling it enough to feed your family until the next harvesting season? If no, Why? How did you fulfill your need?
12. What did you do during the dry season?
13. How did you get here? How many people came along with you?
14. How did you get your first job? How about this current job?
15. Did your family encourage you to migrate here for the first time? If yes, what did they do?
16. How important your family decision to you?
17. What information about the situation in here and the job did you have before you migrated? How did you gather all of this information?
18. What information related to the traveling cost did you have before you migrated? How did you gather all of this information?
19. Do you have contact with your family while working here? If yes, how? If no, why?

20. Do you send money to your family while you are here? If yes, how? If no, why?
21. Why would you want to come here?
22. What make you decide to come to Phnom Penh/Thailand rather than some other place?
23. Why do you choose to work as construction worker/fishermen/garment worker rather than some other job?
24. Why do you choose this site to work rather than some other site?
25. What was your first job when you come here? Why did you move to this job? What are the differences between this job and the job you had?
26. Can you tell me the differences in term of living condition between here and your home village?
27. Can you tell me the differences in term of working condition between here and your home village?
28. Between this place and your home village, which one do you think is more convenient to live?
29. Are you satisfied with the current work? Or do you want to change your job?
30. If you want to change the job, what kind of job that you expect and why?
31. Would you like to live here permanently or would you like to return to your village to live? Why?
32. Do you want to bring your family members here? If no or yes, why?
33. When do you plan to return back home? Will you come back again? Why?
34. If a job opportunity for you is available at your home village, will you be willing to go? Why?
35. If a job opportunity for you is available at Phnom Penh/Thailand, will you be willing to go? Why?
36. If a job opportunity for you is available both at Phnom Penh/Thailand and your home village, which one will you choose? Why?
37. If a job opportunity for you is available in other provinces, will you be willing to go? Why?
38. Would you like to migrate to other country but Thailand for work? Why?
39. Do you know about the One Stop Service policy for labor migrants in Thailand (For labor migrants in Phnom Penh only)?
40. In your opinion, what would need to change in order to make you decide to go back to your hometown?
41. Is there anything else or suggestions you would like to tell me?

## Appendix B

### Semi-Structured Questionnaire for Worker leaders and NGOs

Code Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Current job: \_\_\_\_\_

1. In your opinion, what are the causes of labor migration?
2. In your opinion, why do migrants choose to come to work here rather than some other place?
3. In your opinion, why do migrants not choose to work in Phnom Penh (Thailand)?
4. What do you think about the living condition of migrants here?
5. What do you think about the working condition of migrant here?

Do you think that current migrants situation is better than their home village?



**VITA**

Vatana CHEA

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Personal Data

Sex: Male

Nationality: Cambodian

Year of Birth: 1987

Place of Birth: Phnom Penh

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2016 M.A in Demography, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

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