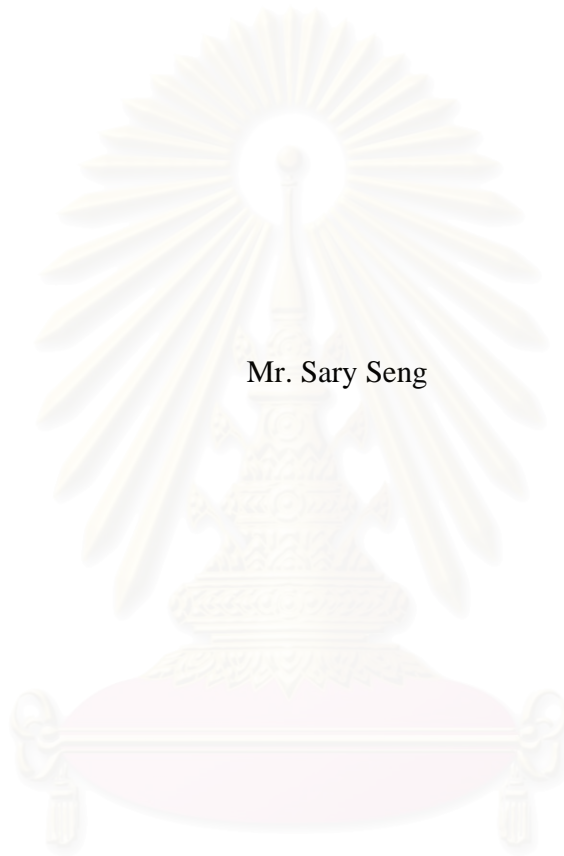


LIVING CONDITIONS OF CAMBODIAN ILLEGAL MIGRANT  
WORKERS IN THAILAND



Mr. Sary Seng

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Southeast Asian Studies  
(Interdisciplinary Program)

Graduate School

Chulalongkorn University

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สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
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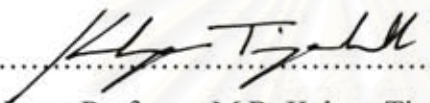
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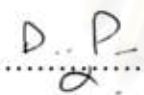
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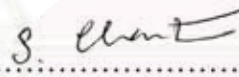
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Accepted by the Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree


..... Dean of the Graduate School  
(Assistant Professor M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh, Ph.D.)

#### THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman  
(Dhiravat na Pombejra, Ph.D.)

..... Thesis Advisor  
(Professor Supang Chantavanich, Doctorat en sociologie)

..... Thesis Co-advisor  
(Ms. Premjai Vungsiriphisal)

..... Member  
(Assistant Professor Theera Nuchpiam, Ph.D.)

สารี เรง : สภาพความเป็นอยู่ของแรงงานย้ายถิ่นผิดกฎหมายชาวกัมพูชาในประเทศไทย  
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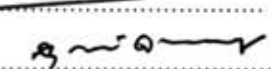
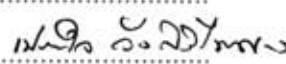
เมื่อสงครามกลางเมืองในประเทศกัมพูชาสิ้นสุดลงและอยู่ในเวลาที่ต้องฟื้นฟูความสันติ  
สุขและการพัฒนาประเทศขึ้นมาใหม่ ชาวกัมพูชาจำนวนมากได้ลี้ภัยเข้าไปประเทศไทยเพื่อหา  
โอกาสการทำงาน รายได้และความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีขึ้น แรงงานกัมพูชาทำงานอยู่ในหลายพื้นที่ของ  
ไทย ที่พบมากคือทำงานก่อสร้างในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานคร และทำงานประมงในพื้นที่ชายฝั่ง

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้ทำการศึกษาชีวิตความเป็นอยู่ของแรงงานผิดกฎหมายชาวกัมพูชาที่ทำงาน  
อยู่ในประเทศไทย โดยศึกษาสภาพความเป็นอยู่ในปัจจุบันของกลุ่มเป้าหมายรวม 30 คน เป็น  
แรงงานก่อสร้าง 15 คนในกรุงเทพมหานคร และแรงงานประมง 15 คน ในจังหวัดระยอง

การศึกษาพบว่าแรงงานผิดกฎหมายชาวกัมพูชาอยู่ในสภาวะความเป็นอยู่ที่เสี่ยงและ  
บ่อยครั้งได้รับการปฏิบัติที่ไม่ดี ปัญหาที่พบคือ ไม่ได้รับการคุ้มครองด้านสิทธิเมื่อถูกนายจ้างโกง  
ค่าแรง ไม่สามารถต่อรองกับนายจ้างและยังถูกขู่ว่าจะถูกไล่ออก อยู่ในสถานการณ์ที่เสี่ยงต่อ  
ความรุนแรงซึ่งส่วนใหญ่เกิดจากแรงงานผิดกฎหมายด้วยกัน การไม่มีสิทธิและเสรีภาพที่จะ  
เดินทางไปไหนได้อย่างอิสระนับเป็นปัญหาหลัก โดยปัญหาเหล่านี้ยากที่แรงงานกัมพูชาจะ  
ป้องกันหรือแก้ไขปัญหาดังกล่าวได้ด้วยตัวเอง อย่างไรก็ตามแรงงานผิดกฎหมายชาวกัมพูชาก็ยัง  
มีความสุขจากรายได้และกิจกรรมทางสังคมขณะที่อยู่ในประเทศไทย เช่น แรงงานประมงได้รับ  
ค่าแรงทุกวันไม่ว่าจะมีงานหรือไม่ หรือแรงงานก่อสร้างก็สามารถทำตามประเพณีในไร่ดงาน  
ก่อสร้างได้ เช่น การจัดพิธีแต่งงาน เป็นต้น

ข้อสรุปจากการศึกษานี้คือสถานะที่ผิดกฎหมายเป็นปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อสภาพความ  
เป็นอยู่และสภาพการทำงานของแรงงานชาวกัมพูชามากที่สุด

สาขาวิชา: เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา  
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ลายมือชื่อนิสิิต .....  .....  
ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา.....  .....  
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# # 4789533720: MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEY WORD: LIVING CONDITION/ ILLEGAL MIGRANT WORKER/ 3D JOB

SARY SENG: LIVING CONDITIONS OF CAMBODIAN ILLEGAL  
MIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND. THESIS ADVISOR: PROF.  
SUPANG CHANTAVANICH, DOCTORAT EN SOCIOLOGIE. THESIS  
CO-ADVISOR: MS.PREMJAI VUNGSIRIPHISAL.

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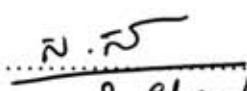
After the civil war and the process of peace and economic development in Cambodia, hundreds of thousands of Cambodian people have continuously been immigrating illegally into Thailand mainly for the purposes of finding new job opportunities and higher wages to increase their living standard. The Cambodian illegal migrants work almost everywhere in Thailand, especially in the Bangkok metropolitan area, mainly in the construction zones and in the fishing industry provinces as fishermen.

This thesis examines the living conditions of Cambodian illegal immigrants in Thailand, focusing on the experiences and current living conditions of 30 people, 15 of whom are working as construction workers in Bangkok and 15 working as fishermen in Rayong province, Thailand.

The Cambodian illegal immigrant workers are working and living under very risky conditions and are often treated indecently. This study finds they experience and continue to face the following difficulties; They have no right to protest if their employers cheat them on labor wages, instead they are often threatened and will quit their job as solution; they are living under violent conditions, generally caused by the illegal immigrants themselves; and they have very limited space and right to travel, which was considered a main problem by them. In addition, there is no intention to protect them or provided them with any means to solve these problems. However, the Cambodian illegal migrant workers can enjoyed some economic and social activities while working in Thailand. Fishermen are paid everyday for daily expends no matter they are working or not. Construction workers can practice traditional ceremonies like wedding in their living areas. A conclusion to this study is that the Cambodian immigrants illegal status strongly affects their working and living conditions in Thailand.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Academic Year: 2006

Student's Signature.....

Advisor's Signature.....

Co-Advisor's Signature.....

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1. Research Goals and Objectives

In Thailand it is commonly known that Cambodian illegal immigrant workers are living in vulnerable conditions—especially the fishermen and the construction workers. There is little to no adequate research studying the specifics of this problem as yet. Responding to this inadequacy of information about living condition of Cambodian illegal immigrants is the goal of this thesis, in addition to contributing to the field of Migration Studies within the Southeast Asian Region. Potentially, the information in this thesis will also provide analytical tools for the policy makers from both the sending and receiving countries (Cambodia and Thailand) and facilitate decision-making concerning illegal migrant problems. Moreover, this thesis, if nothing else, will offer a resource for advocating and protecting the rights of these Cambodian illegal migrant workers as human beings.

#### **Objectives:**

- To study the backgrounds and economic experiences of Cambodian illegal migrant workers in Thailand.
- To examine the living conditions of Cambodian illegal migrant workers in Thailand.

### 1.2. Definition of key words

- Living condition: The life in a particular circumstance or the way of people's life that are living in a particular situation and place and time.
- Illegal migrant workers: The people who fled from one country to other without any documents and the journey and their residence are considered to be against the law of those countries.

- Economic experience: The experiences of working life or the ways in which the people make income to support their daily life.
- 3D job: This a new term that refers to jobs with three conditions, specifically: dirty, dangerous and difficult.

### 1.3. Conceptual Framework

There are many theories addressing the causes of migration and migration process suggested by leading scholars. Among those approaches, there are three main theories chosen to be reviewed and drawn together to become my thesis framework.

The *neo-classical economic equilibrium* perspective approach, *Historical-structuralist* approach and the *Migration system theory* are the main theoretical frameworks to be used in this thesis. Each chapter and all the topics in this thesis directly or indirectly reflect the factors that these approaches emphasize.

The neo-classical approach originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from *geographical theory* and is still popular among geographers as well as economists.<sup>1</sup> The “Push and Pull” model is sometimes referenced by this approach because it sees migration flows as being caused by push factors (poverty, lack of land, natural disasters, overpopulation, etc) in the sending countries, and the pull factors (economic opportunities) in the host countries. This theory says that labor will migrate from the low wage countries to the high wage countries until the real wages are equalized, with the assumptions of the corporative static framework, homogenous labor, constant returns of scale, zero migration costs, and perfect competitive labor markets.<sup>2</sup> This theory is essentially individualistic and a historical. It emphasizes the individual decision to migrate, based on rational comparison of the relative cost and benefit of remaining in the area of origin or moving to various alternative destinations. A clear example is provided by Borjas of the model of an immigration market:

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<sup>1</sup> Castles, S, Causes and Consequences of Asia’s New Migration (Bangkok: ARCM, Institute of Asian Studies, 1995), pp. 1-23.

<sup>2</sup> Savitri, G.G, Internal Migration into the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (University of Pittsburgh, 1974), pp. 12-44.

Neo-classical theory assumes that individuals maximize utility: individuals search for the countries of residence that maximize their well-being.... The search is constrained by the individual's financial resources, by the immigration regulation imposed by competing host countries and the emigration regulation of the sources countries. In the immigration market the several of information are exchange and the various options are compared. In a sense competing host countries make migration offers from which individuals compare and choose. The information gathered in this marketplace leads many individuals to conclude that it is profitable to remain in their birthplace... Conversely, other individuals concluded that there better off in some other country. The immigration market non-randomly sorts these individual across host countries.<sup>3</sup>

This theory, however, has been criticized by the *historical-structuralists* because the assumption of free choice for the individual is unrealistic.<sup>4</sup> Rather, inequalities in resources and power between different countries, combined with the entry policies of potential immigration countries, put great constraints on migrants' choices.<sup>5</sup> Migration cannot simply be explained by income differences between two countries, but should also be looked at through factors such as the chance for secure employment, availability of capital for entrepreneurial activity, and the need to manage risk over a long period. For instance, as Massey (1987) points out, Mexican farmers may migrate to the USA even though they have sufficient land, because they simply lack the capital to make it productive.<sup>6</sup>

The most common reason to permit entry is the need for workers—with states sometimes taking on the role of labor recruiter on behalf of employers—but demographic

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<sup>3</sup> Borjas, G.J, Economic theories and international Migration (*International Migration Review*, Special Silver Anniversary Issue, 23:3, 1989), p. 461.

<sup>4</sup> Hugo, G, International Migration of Contract Labour in Asia: Major issues and implication. Australia: Adelaide, 1991, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> Zolberg, R with A.S. Astri.and A. Sergio. Escape from Violence: Conflict and the refugee Crisis in the Developing World. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 14-17.

<sup>6</sup> Castles, S. and Miller, M.J, The Age of Migration: International Population in the Modern World. (eds), Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, p. 5.

or humanitarian considerations may also be important.<sup>7</sup> The idea of individual migration, making free choices which not only maximizes their well-being but also leads to equilibrium in the marketplace, is so far from historical reality that it has little explanatory value. It seems better, as Zolberg suggests, analyzing labor migration as a movement of workers propelled by the dynamics of the transnational capitalist economy, which simultaneously determines both the Push and the Pull.

Therefore, an alternative explanation of international migration was provided in the 1970s by what come to be called the historical-structural approach. This has its intellectual roots in Marxist political economy, and stresses the unequal distribution of economic and political power in the world economy. Migration is seen mainly as a way of mobilizing cheap labor for capital. It perpetuates uneven development, and exploits the resources of poor countries to make the rich even richer. As stated, the *historical-structuralist* analysts criticize the neo-classical perspective; they see the assumption of free choice for the individual as unrealistic.<sup>8</sup> However, the *historical-structuralist* approach was, in turn, criticized by many migration scholars: if the logic of capital and the interest of Western states were so dominant, how could the frequent break-down of migration policies be explained, such as the unplanned shift from labor migrants to permanent settlement in certain countries? Both the Neo-classical perspectives and the historical-structuralist approach seemed to be too one-sided to analyze adequately the great complexity of contemporary migration. The Neo-classical approach neglected historical causes of the movements, and down-played the role of the state, while the *historical-structuralist* approach often saw the interests of the states capital as a small determinant and paid inadequate attention to the motivations and action of individuals and groups involved.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.22.

<sup>8</sup> Hugo, G. *International Migration of Contract Labour in Asia: Major issues and implication*. Australia: Adelaide, 1991, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> Castles, S. and Miller, M.J. *The Age of Migration: International Population in the Modern World*. (eds), Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, pp. 12-19.

Out of such critiques emerged a new approach, the migration systems theory, which is increasingly influential in comparative research. Migration system theory emphasized international relations, political economy, collective action and institutional factors. Many countries have developed a migration system, which serves to exchange migrants between countries. The tendency, however, is to analyze regional migration systems, such as the South Pacific, West Africa and also Southeast Asia region. The migration system approach means examining both ends of the flow and studying all the linkages between the places concerned. These linkages can be categorized as 'state-to-state' relations and comparisons, mass culture connections and family and social networks.<sup>10</sup>

The migration systems theory suggested that migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonialism, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties. Thus the migration forms between Mexico and the USA were created by the expansion and deliberate recruitment by US employers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>11</sup> The migration from the Dominican Republic to the USA, on the other hand, was initiated by the US military occupation of the 1960s. Similarly both the Korean and the Vietnamese migration to USA were the long-term consequences of the US military involvement.<sup>12</sup> The migrations from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to Britain are linked to the British colonial presence on the Indian sub-continent. Caribbean migrants have also tended to move to their respective former colonial power. The Algerian migration to France was expanded by French colonial presence in

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<sup>10</sup> Fawcett, J.T. and Arnold, F. Explaining diversity: Asian and Pacific Immigration System. In J.T Fawcett and B.V. Carino (eds), *Pacific Bridges: The New Immigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1997), pp. 45-49.

<sup>11</sup> Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R.G. Immigrant America: A portrait. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 224-230.

<sup>12</sup> Sassen, S. The Mobility of Labour and Capital. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 6-9.

Algeria, while the Turkish presence in Germany is a result of direct labor recruitment by Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>13</sup>

The interaction of a parallel influence, the micro-structure, within the migration system approach clarifies the role of informal networks developed by the migrants themselves to cope with migration and settlement. This structure is very similar to the concept of chain-migration. It refers to the personal relationships and family patterns, friendship and community ties and mutual help in economy and social matters. Such links provided vital resources for individual and groups, and may be referred to as “social capital”.<sup>14</sup>

Informal networks bind migrants and non-migrants together in a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relationships.<sup>15</sup> These bonds are double-sided; they link migrants with non-migrants in their areas of origin, but also connect settlers with the receiving population in various relationships of cooperation, competition and conflict. Such networks are dynamic cultural responses, which encourage ethnic community formation and are conducive to the maintenance of transnational families and group ties. The family and community are crucial in migration networks.

Research on Asian migration has shown that migration decisions are in response to conditions of rapid change, i.e. a family may decide to send one or more members to work in another region or country in order to maximize income by the elders, especially the men, while the younger people and women are expected to obey patriarchal authority. Family linkages often provided both the financial and cultural capital, which make migration possible. Typically, migratory chains are started by an external factor, such as recruitment or military service, or by an initial movement of young pioneers. Once a movement is

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<sup>13</sup> Castles, S. and Miller, M.J. The Age of Migration: International Population in the Modern World. (eds), Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 119.

<sup>15</sup> Boyd, M. Family and Personal Network in Migration. International Migration Review: Special Silver Anniversary Issue, 23:3, 1989, p. 639.

established, the migrants mainly follow 'beaten paths', and are helped by relatives and friends already in the areas of immigration.<sup>16</sup> Networks based on family or common place of origin have provided shelter, work, and assistance in coping with bureaucratic procedures and support in personal difficulties. These social networks make the migratory process safer and more manageable for the migrant and their family. Migratory movements, once started, become self-sustaining social processes.<sup>17</sup>

However, the social networks are complex and often ambivalent in character. Some people (both migrants and non-migrants) become facilitators of migration. A migration industry emerges, consisting of recruitment organizations, lawyer, agents, smuggler and other middle-people.<sup>18</sup> Such people can be both helpers and exploiters of migrants. Especially in the situation of illegal migration or of over-supply, migrants may find that they have been swindled out of their savings and are marooned without work or resources in a strange country.

Migration networks also provided the basis for processes for settlement and community formation in the immigration area. Migrant groups develop their social and economic infrastructure: place of worship, associations, shops, and cafés, professional services like lawyers and doctors, and other services. This is linked to family reunion; as length of stay increases, the original migrants begin to bring their spouse and children in, or simply find a new family. People start to see their life perspectives in the new country. This process is especially linked to the situation of migrants' children: once they go to school in the new country, learn the language, form peer group relations and develop bicultural identities, it becomes more and more difficult for the parents to return to their homelands.

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<sup>16</sup> Stahl, C. Explaining International Migration. In C. Stahl, R. Ball, C. Inglis and P. Gutman (eds), *Global Population Movement and their Implications for Australia*. Canberra: Australia Government Publishing Service, 1993, pp. 16-24.

<sup>17</sup> Castles, S. and Miller, M.J., The Age of Migration: International Population in the Modern World. (eds), Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, N, The New Untouchables: Immigration and the New World Worker. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996, pp. 132-136.

The links between immigration community and area of origin may persist over generations. Remittances fall off and visits home may decline in frequency, but familial and cultural links remain. People stay in touch with their area of origin, and many seek marriage patterns there. Migration continues along the established chains and may increase dramatically at a time of crisis.

Although each migratory movement has its specific historical patterns, it is possible to generalize about the process. For example, most migrations start with young, economically active people. They are target-earners, who want to save enough in a high-wage economy to improve conditions at home by buying land, building a house, setting up a business, or paying for education or dowries. After a period of time in the receiving country, some of these 'primary migrants' return home but others prolong their stay or return and then re-migrate. This may be because of relative success; they find the living and working conditions in the new countries to be better than in the homeland. But it also may be because of relative failure, migrants find it impossible to save enough to achieve their aims, necessitating a longer sojourn.<sup>19</sup>

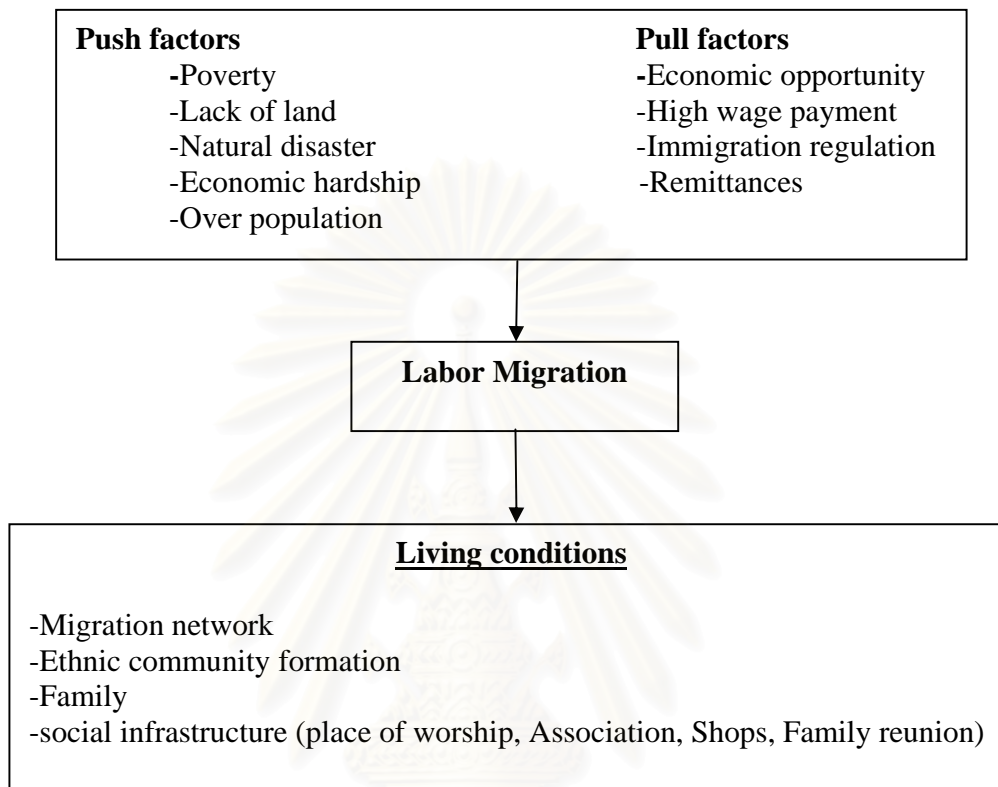
สถาบันวิทยบริการ  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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<sup>19</sup> Bohming, W. R. Studies in International Migration. London: Macmillan and New York: St Martin, 1984, pp. 31-41.



### Conceptual Model



#### **1.4. Research Methods**

There are two main sources of information drawn upon for the writing of this thesis. The first source is collected from the fieldwork and the second source is documentary research. The data from the fieldworks will be considered as the primary data and the data from any documentary resource centers will be considered as the secondary data. The secondary data will be review as a framework and references and the raw data from fieldwork will be analyzed as research findings for this thesis.

Both secondary and primary data collection time period was almost five months, from July till February, 2005. I spent a full month for secondary data collection both in Thailand and Cambodia and full three months for primary data collection , one month and a half in Rayong (case of fishermen) and one month and a half in Bangkok (case of construction workers). Fifteen of each case was interviewed excluding six key informants.

### **1.4.1 Secondary Data Collection**

Various documents and previous research study papers relevant to the field of migration were collected. Many public libraries, NGO documentary resource centers and newspapers in both Cambodia and Thailand were contacted and used to collect this particular information. Data from this part will be presented in Chapter two.

### **1.4.2 Primary Data Collection**

The observation and interview took place at the same time. The observation focused mainly on the socio-economic, living and working conditions. Unlike a typical interview, the guidelines of a Semi-structured In-Depth Interview were used. The guidelines of this interview covered various aspects of the participants' background, life in Cambodia, the migration journey, living and working condition, illegal status, health problems, and future aspiration.

The snowball techniques were used to select the cases. Initially, the Cambodian illegal migrants were introduced by a person who claimed to be a worker leader or monks. The role these persons were very important in making the introduction to the workers, both fishermen and construction workers, in order to establish a level of trust. These people were considered as key informants as well. Thirty cases were decided to select as the informants. After the initial introductions, I relied on snowball sampling with referrals from the migrants themselves. Informants real names are keep confidential.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Historical Background and Overview**

#### **2.1 Situation of Cambodia from 1970s until the Present**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1970, Marshal Lon Nol carried out a coup d'état, which effectively destroyed the peasantry's hope and sidelined the achievements of King Norodom Sihanouk. Fighting occurred in the country and people dispersed all over the country. Students and intellectuals responded to a call by Sihanouk to join a movement against the Lon Nol regime. The movement led the people to flee into the forest and to organize a resistance as guerillas. At the same time, more than two million people were moved from their villages to safe places because of the turmoil, civil war and American bombing. In all the cities and towns, there were plenty of people who had migrated from the rural areas.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1975, the Cambodian Communist Party, led by a man named Saloth Sar, commonly known as Pol Pot, brought a hopeful new revolution, which, however, descended into self destruction with time. All the people were forced out of the cities in order to implement a new policy. The capital city of Phnom Penh was emptied of its population. Under this new regime, more than a million people were killed. The country was closed for almost four years with no economic activity as a result.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1979, a new Communist Party, supported by Vietnamese troops, replaced the old one. Immediately, the people mobilized around it and within the country in search of their lost relatives and livelihoods. More than a hundred thousand people reached the Thai border to ask for political asylum. Many refugee camps were set up along the border with humanitarian assistance. At the same time, some refugees from the camps went to other countries in the West.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson, W.C, A History of Cambodian Refugees in Thailand. Immigration and refugees Service of America, 1994, pp. 4-9.

The Paris Conference on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1991 was the day that a Peace Agreement was signed and marked the end of civil wars in Cambodia. More than 360,000 refugees were repatriated to Cambodia. In 1993 the first National Assembly Election was held under the authority of UNTAC.<sup>2</sup>

Though the political situation in Cambodia changed very often from 1970 until 1993, most Cambodians experienced at least one migration, either within the country or to a neighboring country. Thailand played a very important role in the part of humanitarian assistance in cooperation with the foreign community and allowed Cambodian people to seek political asylum in the country. Now Cambodia is a Constitutional Monarchy and has moved from a centrally planned economy to a free market economic system. The country opened and many foreign companies made investments, but the job market and the labor wage remain low.

As claimed by the government, the Cambodian economy is dependent on agriculture, although periods of flooding and drought hampered this sector for many years. Therefore, the phenomenon of emigration emerged as an opportunity for higher wages in high job market countries. Thailand was the first choice country for Cambodian people to migrate to.

## **2.2 Thai Policy toward Illegal Immigration**

Since the early 1990s, Thailand has initiated several migrant worker policies. The first attempt to try to control a massive, migrant labor flow into Thailand took place in 1992. This attempt, however, failed due to the extremely high “bail” it imposed on

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<sup>2</sup> Rogge, J, Repatriation of Refugees: a not-so-simple solution. Harare: paper presented at the UNRISD symposium on social and economic aspect of mass voluntary return of refugee from one Africa country to another, 1991, p.10.

employers who were to register their workers.<sup>3</sup> Four years later, Thailand's immigrant labor problems expanded throughout the country with large numbers of immigrant workers, mostly from Burma, followed by Cambodia and Laos. Unable to determine needs and adequately assess the impact on the different labor sectors of its economy, the RTG aimed to gain control and learn from its previous mistakes. In June 1996, the Thai Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare implemented a registration policy open to eight industries that required a much lower registration fee. As workers without proof of registration faced deportation, this resolution compelled large numbers of migrants to register.<sup>4</sup>

Following the economic crisis of 1997, the Thai Government was faced with the urgent task of restructuring its labor field to make room for the masses of newly unemployed Thai nationals. While this resulted in the deportation of nearly 250,000 illegal migrants in 1998, the RTG was unable to find Thais willing to replace workers in "3D jobs." Consequently, by April and May 1998, the Thai Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare found it necessary to reassess the labor force's employment needs and initiate a new registration phase. Although official Thai calculations show that roughly 231,000 positions needed to be filled, only 99,974 migrants had registered by December of 1999.<sup>5</sup> The void required the RTG to readjust its labor policy to facilitate a more effective registration of undocumented migrant workers (from Burma, Cambodia and Laos) from September to October of 2001. This initiative resulted in the registration of persons from ten labor sectors, not including seasonal workers, workers in the service industry or child workers.<sup>6</sup> During this registration period, 568,249 received work permits of which 415,255

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<sup>3</sup> Caouette, T., Archavanitkul, K. and Pyne, H.H, Sexuality, Reproductive Health and Violence: Experiences of Migrants from Burma in Thailand. Nakhonpathom: Institute for Population and Social Research at Mahidol University, 2000, pp. 45-47.

<sup>4</sup> The 1996 migrant worker registration provided 303,088 work permits, of which 87 percent were granted to people from Burma and follow by Cambodia.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>6</sup> Caoutte, T and Pack, M, Pushing Past the Definitions: Migration from Burma to Thailand. Washington D.C.: Refugees International and the Burma project, December 2002, p. 24.

were from Burma and followed by Cambodian immigrants.<sup>7</sup> However, this figure, while large in comparison to those registered in earlier years, is still strikingly low when held against the estimated two million undocumented migrants from Burma.<sup>8</sup>

This great disparity between migrants registered and the total number actually residing in Thailand led to many extensive discussions among RTG officials, NGOs and the migrant leaders. Two of the main reasons given for why migrants did not register were the lack of information about the process and the inability to travel and register when the employer refused to participate.<sup>9</sup> However, for the majority of migrants, factors deterring them from registration were far more complicated. First of all, the efforts by the Thai government to register migrants from neighboring countries reinforced dependence on their employers. Those who register with the specific employers were given permits valid for only one year and only with that one employer, after which if their employment with that employer ended, so did their legal status in the country.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, employers typically kept the work permit, giving the worker a photocopy, if any document at all. Without such documentation, even registered migrant workers found themselves threatened by deportation, harassment and arrest as a result of their inability to prove their legal status.<sup>11</sup> Workers also expressed grievances regarding the regulation that prohibits them from changing employment for a period of one year, as this prevented workers whose contracts were terminated from finding a new job.<sup>12</sup> It is also worth noting that many families have been separated as a result of registration. Children under the age of 18 were not allow to

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<sup>7</sup> Mekong Migration Network, Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. An Annotated Bibliography, Asian Migrant Center, September 2002, pp. 24-45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> Document for discussion distributed at the NGO Forum on Migrant Worker Policy on Transactional worker Protection Mechanism held at Chulalongkorn University on February 21, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Caoutte, T and Pack, M, Pushing Past the Definitions: Migration from Burma to Thailand. Washington D.C.: Refugees International and the Burma project, December 2002, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-15.

<sup>12</sup> Onnucha, H, "Paperless Foreign Workers Facing Police Harassment." The Bangkok Post, January 30, 2002

register and, given the high cost of registration, most families did not register all adult members for fear of incurring large debts.<sup>13</sup>

Another negative consequence of maintaining the work permit was the mandatory health check-up that was implemented in March 2002. The health test checked for seven health “risks,” with the risk that any individual proving positive for any test was faced with immediate deportation. In addition, efforts were made by the RGT to include testing for pregnancy as a means for revoking one’s work permit and initiating deportation proceedings. The threat of such punishment not only deterred hundreds of female migrants from registering, but also sparked a widespread rise in illegal abortions.<sup>14</sup> After much opposition, the RTG officially withdrew pregnancy testing, though many employers still found reason to terminate female employees and to report them to immigration for deportation. Meanwhile, migrants who were found to have any of the seven communicable diseases were to be immediately arrested and sent back to their original home place without even the most meager health treatment or counseling.<sup>15</sup>

Although HIV status was not one of the seven diseases being tested in Thailand’s health check-ups, each country has a responsibility to undertake HIV testing on all migrants *officially* deported.

Initial registration and subsequent re-registration is contingent on payment of a required fee. For the first round, a fee of 3,250 baht (US\$ 1: 39 baht) was collected to pay for health insurance (1,000 baht), to pay the fee related to returning migrants to their home country (1,000 baht), and for administration cost of the registration process (1,250 baht).

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<sup>13</sup> Awatsaya, P., Therese, C., Khaing M. K. Z. and Sureeporn, P, Migrant domestic workers: from Burma to Thailand. Nakhonpathom, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2004, p.12.

<sup>14</sup> Strait Times Reporter, “Thai Pregnancy Ban on Foreign workers Sparks Abortion Rears.” The Strait Times, January 18, 2002, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Awatsaya, P., Therese, C., Khaing M. K. Z. and Sureeporn, P, Migrant domestic workers: from Burma to Thailand. Nakhonpathom, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2004, pp. 13-14.

The second round, six months following, including the health exam and payment of related administrative costs of 1,200 baht. The health insurance provided the same coverage as for local Thais for a full year, and establishes a fee of 30 baht for most all health services as long as service is rendered at the hospital identified in the locality where they are registered. For those who fail to re-register, they lose all benefits of registration, and none of the fees paid in the first round are refunded, including that for the health insurance. Fees were increased the following year, where the base fee listed above was raised to a total of 3,650 baht, and work permits in durations of three, six and twelve months were paid for additionally at a cost of 1,800 baht respectively. In the year 2002, approximately 850.8 million baht was garnered from the registration process.<sup>16</sup>

A number of problems have limited the success of this registration system. First, the fees are high for migrants, and are usually deducted from the workers' wages. Second the system makes it difficult to change employers, forcing migrant worker to make a choice of staying with an abusive employer or changing employers, and risk potentially losing their documentation. Third, for fishermen especially, the limited period for registering may not coincide with shore leave, and they may still be at sea. In this case, fishermen may miss the registration or re-registration periods and drop out of the system. Finally, many employers and migrant laborers generally fail to see any benefit from registration. This is especially true among migrants whose employers keep their registration card as a form of insurance to prevent their employee from fleeing, thus effectively nullifying the rights granted by registration in the first place.

As a result, the number of migrant workers registering has steadily decreased. At the end of the 2002 registration period, which included supplemental registration periods, one for fishermen and one for a worker at Tak province, 409,339 migrants had registered; in November 2003, without any supplemental registration, the initial number registered was

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<sup>16</sup> Chantavanich, S., Beesey, A., Amaraphibal, P., Vungsiripaisal, P. and Paul, S, Cross-border Migration and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability at the Thai-Cambodia Border Arayaprathet and Klong Yai. (Bangkok: ARCM, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University), March 2000, pp. 12-17.



288,780 (compared to 363,100 in the same period of previous year prior to the supplemental registration).<sup>17</sup> The majority of those who did not re-register are most likely still working in Thailand without documentation. It is estimated that the actual total number of unskilled migrant workers in Thailand, including registered, ranges from 800,000 at the conservative end up to 1.2 million or more. This does not include family members who are unemployed, children or refugees.<sup>18</sup>

Migrants who are not registered are considered as illegal by law. Immigration Police make regular sweeps, which intensify prior to registration periods, arresting undocumented migrants and deported them back to their home countries. The Thai government has recently declared its intention to remove up to 600,000 illegal migrant workers.<sup>19</sup> It is estimated that approximately 10,000 migrants are currently being returned to the borders every month.<sup>20</sup> By the end of September 2003, it was reported that 96,296 migrants from Burma, as well as Cambodia, had been returned through the border checkpoints.<sup>21</sup> It is suspected that many of these people return to Thailand as soon as possible.

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Labour: and Social Welfare, Thailand, Statistical Data of Irregular Migrant Worker Registration, Office of the Administrative Commission on Irregular Migrant Worker, Department of Employment, Bangkok, 2003, pp. 4-15.

<sup>18</sup> Press. B, Untangling Vulnerability: A Study on HIV/AIDS Prevention Programming for Migrant Fishermen and Related Population in Thailand, Thai Rak Thai Foundation, Bangkok, 2005, pp. 21-23.

<sup>19</sup> Martin. F Thailand: Improving the Management of Migrant Workers, International Labour Organization, Bangkok, 2003, pp. 14-19.

<sup>20</sup> The Nation, The Land of Compassion is Slowly Growing Cold, January 27, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> The Nation, In Brief: Immigration. Oct 05, 2003.

### Comparison of Registration for all Migrants by Occupational Category: 2001-2003

Category of Employment	Nov. 2001	Nov. 2002-Jan 2003**	Nov. 2003***
General labor	177,375*	71,338	60,955
Fisheries	99,578	95,594	55,862
Factory and Warehouse	71,730	91,618	52,755
Housemaid	81,045	65,361	52,685
Animal Husbandry	29,675	16,258	11,137
Agriculture	103,124	69,170	55,386
<b>Total: 562,527</b>	<b>409,339</b>	<b>288,780</b>	

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

\*This figure included categories “with and without employers” for the registration in 2001. It was found that women working in indirect commercial sex venues were registered under these categories, which led to re-classification as “General Labor” in following registrations.

\*\* Included the two supplemental registration periods in Nov-Dec-Jan.

\*\*\*No supplemental registration reported

### 2.3 Literature Review

There is limited data regarding the living conditions of Cambodian illegal immigrants in Thailand. March of literature on the situation of migrant workers has focused on migrants from Myanmar. However, in recent years there are some research studies about Cambodia migrant workers in Thailand but those tried to give information about migrant workers in more general terms rather than giving in-depth focus on the living conditions of Illegal immigrants. Still those studies are very useful for my study because they gave an overview that can guide me to do this small research about Cambodian illegal immigrants in Thailand.

One interesting research study in providing information on migrant workers especially the fishermen who are works along the Thai sea coast is named “Untangling Vulnerability”. The author Brahm Press provided very in-depth information in three

sections. The first section provided a profile of migrant fishermen and related population in Thailand. Starting from source communities that characterize the group and the factor that contributed to their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, it provided an inkling of the complications implementers face in this type of programming. In this context, “vulnerability” can be considered as a set of socio-political factors that included cultural and sub-cultural characteristics related to the ethnic groups and particular occupations, and structural barriers that limited migrant access to health services, community and rights. The second section of the study reviews the program for migrant fishermen and related populations at fishing sites throughout Thailand. This section used case studies to illustrate the range of programming used by the implementer at their respective sites, highlighting successes, constraints, and adjustments made in implementation. The final section analyses current strategies and interventions to identify lessons learned, best practices and weaknesses, and leads to identification of possible future directions for this type of programming.<sup>22</sup>

Another report, *Labour Migration to Thailand and the Thai-Cambodian Border* (by a team of Cooperation Committee for Cambodia) is a very useful survey which looked at the reason for level of labor migration to Thailand including both availability of relatively higher-paying jobs in Thailand as well as the lack of earning opportunity in Cambodia. The report likewise recorded a decrease in Cambodian labor migrants in 1998 due to the downturn in the Thai economy. The cutbacks at this time resulted in severe difficulties including the non-payment of wages, and the harassment and arrest of workers by Thai police. Despite numerous problems encountered by migrants abroad and their families at home, labor migration to Thailand persists and continues to be an important livelihood strategy for many households in Cambodia.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Press. B. *Untangling Vulnerability: A Study on HIV/AIDS Prevention Programming for Migrant Fishermen and Related Population in Thailand*. Bangkok: Thai Rak Thai Foundation, 2005. p.8

<sup>23</sup>Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, *Labour Migration to Thailand and the Thai-Cambodia Border: Recent Trend in Four Village of Battambang Province*. December 2003. p.3

A paper from the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University “Migration of Labour into Thailand” by Sumalee Pitayanon mentioned mainly the impact of the illegal migrants who work in Thailand. The conclusion of the author mainly concerned negative impacts from the illegal immigrants rather than positive impacts. Therefore, when the information of these impacts spread out it strongly affect to the Thai people and also the policy makers or government officers. According to these the situation of illegal immigrants in Thailand seemed to be difficult and in a bad condition.<sup>24</sup>

Several papers and research studies related to the topic of living conditions of migrant workers or mobile populations were written by Supang Chantavanich from Asia Research Center for Migration (ARCM). One of interesting report submitted to WHO Thailand in 2000 which mainly talking about the labor migrants who vulnerability by the HIV/AIDS. This report not only focused on the HIV/AIDS issues but also provided an overview of the living conditions of Cambodian migrant workers who work along the Thai-Cambodia border and the workers who travel further into Thailand. Moreover, migrant workers who travel further into Thailand may migrate for a longer period of time. They may face difficulty of not finding jobs, which has occurred during economic crisis, and they need more financial resources to sustain themselves in their travel.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Pitaya, S, Migration of Labour into Thailand. Chulalongkorn Journal of Economic 13 (2), May 2001: 142-188.

<sup>25</sup>Chantavanich, S., Beesey. A., Amaraphibal. P., Vungsiripaisal. P. and Paul. S. Cross-border Migration and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability at the Thai-Cambodia Border Arayaprathet and Klong Yai. (Bangkok: ARCM, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University), March 2000.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Findings**

#### **3.1 Life in Cambodia and Reasons for Migration**

As Cambodia is an agricultural country with more than 80% of the population working as farmers, undoubtedly, most of the illegal immigrants in Thailand (both fishermen and construction workers who were interviewed) come from a farming background. Some of them responded that they were students, moneylenders, construction workers, factory workers, monks, and Motor Dups.<sup>1</sup> when they were in Cambodia, but these jobs only added extra income alongside their farm work. Their background itself is a sign of migration flows within Cambodia—that people move around in order to find extra jobs to make enough money for their daily needs. Why do they have to move around to make extra money? Most of them responded that the yields of rice are enough for eating for the whole year but they point out that they have nothing left over to pay for uses outside of eating, traditional ceremonies in the village, and health care. So they have to seek other jobs when they are free of the farm or simply shift over to other jobs permanently and abandon the farm altogether.

##### **3.1.1 Personal Background of Respondents**

The data in these following tables are not representative of the whole population of refugees and just covers the interview sample that were conducted in both Rayong Province and Bangkok. An in-depth discussion of each table will not be carried out, although an evaluation of the significance of these figures will be included in the conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Motor Dup: common reference used by Cambodian people to refer to Motor Taxi Drivers.

Table 1: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by age

Age	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
15-20	2	0	2
21-30	6	11	17
31-40	5	3	8
Over 40	2	2	4
Total	15	15	30

Table 2: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by sex

Gender	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
Male	14	13	27
Female	1	2	3
Total	15	15	30

Table 3: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by marital status

Marital Status	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
Single	6	7	13
Married	8	8	16
Divorced/separated	1	0	1
Total	15	15	30

Table 4: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by number of children

Number of children	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
No children	0	4	4
1-3	8	2	10
4 or more	1	2	3
No. of Single	6	7	13
Total	15	15	30

Table 5: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by place of birth

Name of Provinces	No. of Construction workers	No. of Fishermen
Siemreap	5	0
Banteaymeanchey	6	0
Svayreing	1	0
Battambang	2	1
Kompongcham	1	1
Preyveng	0	10
Kampongspue	0	2
Kandal	0	1
Total	15	15

Table 6: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by level of education

Level of education	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
No education	0	2	2
Primary school	10	8	18
Junior high school	3	4	7
Senior high school	2	1	3
Total	15	15	30

Table 7: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by Thai language spoken

Thai language spoken	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
None	6	5	11
A little or some	7	4	11
Good	1	1	2
Very well	1	5	6
Total	15	15	30

Table 8: Number of Illegal Immigrant workers interviewed by first time of migration

First time migrating to Thailand	Occupation		Total
	Fishermen	Construction workers	
Before 1990	0	1	1
1991-1995	2	1	3
1996-2000	2	3	5
2001-2006	11	11	22
Total	15	15	30



### 3.1.2 Influence of the Last Two Decades of Civil Wars

It seems that every discussion about the Khmer people begins with the infamous civil wars. Most articles, written in Khmer language and some in English, always started from this point of view in their introductions and tend to imply that the war, which was finished more than ten years ago, is still the most important item to know about Khmer history. That being said, when we talk about the social problems in Cambodia, we really cannot ignore that there are lingering influences of the civil war period, including handicapped soldiers, landmines, poverty and so on. In this case, I will focus mainly on the influence of the civil wars on migration in Cambodia, especially the Cambodian migration into Thailand.

In this research, four of my interviewees are former soldiers. When the war finished, fortunately they managed to survive without sustaining a handicap, but unfortunately they were banished and more or less uncared for by the society because they know nothing besides shooting and guerilla warfare. Additionally, they are all illiterate. Day by day, they fell deeper into the difficult conditions of their status in Cambodia and often struggled to find food. This is the primary reason why most of them gave up their activities in Cambodia and migrated to Thailand.

Uncle Saan, 42 years old, has five children, from Battambang Province. Currently, he is working as a construction worker in Bangkok. He migrated into Thailand in 1992.

“After more than ten years as a soldier I had nothing besides the uniform on my back. I had no rice field and nothing to eat. My wife works very hard to feed the children but I never helped her at all because I was always in the battlefields. Nobody cared for my wife and my children at all, and they were suffering greatly. As a result, two of my oldest children never went to school at all in their life. Moreover, after the peace agreement between Sihanouk and Hun Sen, I was ignored by the commander because I was uneducated. My commander said to me that when the war was happening, the country

needed brave people but when the wars finished, the country needed educated people. I felt very disappointed about that so I quit and then migrated to Thailand.”

Noun, 39 years old, from Siemreap Province has two children. Currently, he is working as fisherman, after he migrated into Thailand in 1996.

“I lived in the refugee camp almost ten years and at the same time I was also a soldier. After being repatriated to Cambodia I was banished by my commander. My commander is a big officer in the government now. After repatriation from the refugee camp, my family was sent to the remote areas and all my rice fields were taken by other people under the re-division policy of the Hun Sen regime. After the food assistance from the UNTAC finished, my family fell into very bad conditions. My wife and I tried to find jobs to work in order to buy food for my children but no jobs were available to us. We faced more and more difficulties and suffered much. When one of my relatives encouraged me to go work in Thailand, he told me that it was easy to make money and find a job and that the labor wage is very high. Without thinking anything, my wife and I came along with him and left my children behind with my parents. Nowadays, I always reminded to my children not to want to be soldier because I hated soldiers very much.”

### **3.1.3 Natural Disasters**

The agriculture system that depends on the natural rainy season and the attitude toward cultivation one time a year, cause Cambodia farmers to fall into hopeless situations and sometime face structural inadequacies of food. Traditionally, Cambodian people cultivated just for subsistence although, in certain cases, some leftovers can be sold for cash payment. During the dry season most of the Cambodian people are living with nothing to do but just enjoy their free time. Some people migrate to the cities to find jobs in order to complete their daily needs or save for problems that will happen by accident in the

future, such as sickness. But there are fewer and fewer people that have the opportunity to get a job in the city. In the last few years most of the agricultural fields were either flooded or dry and rarely very productive. The agricultural yields were much decreased, and many farmers drew close to starvation. The migration phenomenon dramatically emerged from these conditions; with the experience of adequate job opportunities in the city, Cambodian people started to think about another direction, that is Thailand.

Nang, 33 years old, from Siemreap Province has one son. He is working as a construction worker in Bangkok. The first time he migrated to Thailand was in the year 2000.

“I had four hectares of rice fields. Before the years of flooding my family’s living conditions were quite high. My wife and I never worried about starvation; we were living as same as standard of the city people. After my rice paddies were flooded for the first time, we were still O.K., but the big trouble came in the second year, when, once again, my rice fields were flooded. That year we sold everything in order to buy rice for eating. A year later when the rainy season came we started to cultivate as usual but that year I had to borrow money from the lender as the capital to cultivate because we had nothing left after two years of regular flooding. Unfortunately, that year was the same as the previous two years, and the entire rice paddy was destroyed as usual but, at this time, we fell in debt and the interest was increasing every month. So we started to think about migrating to Thailand, as the recruiter often announced. We asked that man about working in Thailand and he had guaranteed the job both for me and my wife if I go with them. Just one night after asking that man, I sold my daily-used motorbike for travel expenses. I escaped with nobody knowing where I and my wife were going. I left my lovely son behind with my parents. Now I have repaid all the debt.”

Nary, 24 years old single, from Battambang Province. She is working as fish processor in Rayong. She just arrived in Thailand in the last eight months. Because her rice field was destroyed by flooding, and her parents are older, and she has many siblings to support, she was forced to move to work as a garment factory worker in Phnom Penh for two years. But she always returned home to farm when the rainy season came. Every year, the rice field was destroyed by flooding or lack of rain. Moreover, in the last year she had lost her job as a garment factory worker because no job opportunity was available for her because she lost her connection or did not have enough money to pay an agent. She decided to migrate to Thailand when her neighbor, who works as fish processor, visited home. She asked to come along with her neighbor and paid these women 5,000 baht for travel costs and job placement for her and her younger brother.

“My family every year depended on the yields of farms but the crop was regularly destroyed. I felt hopeless with my living conditions. All of us in the family tried to find jobs to do but we could not because our family had no more connections. My parents could not work anymore because they were getting older. Our family dramatically fell into a poor condition and starvation. So we could not wait around anymore with that situation and decided to move to Thailand when a chance opened up when our neighbor visited home. My younger brother is also working as a fisherman here with me.”

Bunna, 30 years old, from Kampongspue Province has one son. Currently he is working as a fisherman in Ban Phe, Rayong Province. He came to Thailand in the last two months.

“I could not stay in the village anymore. I will not hope for the yields of rice in the next year anymore. I experienced the destruction of the floods. If I remained in the village, I am sure that my son would have had nothing to eat. My life in Cambodia was really hopeless but I will go back this year if my rice paddies provide a good yield.”

### 3.1.4 Economic Hardship

As we see in the two parts above, there is some contribution of economic hardship in Cambodia as well (a “push” factor). In terms of economic hardship, there are other components that force the people to move, some of which are both internal and external such as low price of agricultural productivities, high rate of unemployment, poverty and all kinds of goods are always increasing in price everyday. At the same time Cambodian people, even when successful, make very small incomes. These problems force them to fall into a spiral of poorer and poorer living conditions and bleaker outlook. Their life seems to be only aimed at filling the stomach. After eating they realized they had nothing left. So, they started to move to any place that they thought might bring higher incomes and later move forward in order to gain some money to improve their living standard and raise their confidence in the future.

Sokun, 24, years old, from Svayrieng Province currently working as a construction worker, complained that:

“Immediately after farming, I went to the city and tried to find a job to do. At least, I would have to stay one or two weeks before I could get a job. I worked as construction worker and I could get 5,000 riels (50 baht) per day. At that time, I could save around 60,000 riels (600 baht) per month after I paid for food and some daily expenses. In the year before I came to Thailand, in 2000, I got a serious sickness during work, and no one cared for me. I went back to my village and my parents spent all the money that I had saved, including the money from the sale from the rice paddy, to treat me. My family quickly fell into trouble when my parents started to borrow money from the lender to treat me and buy food. As you know, the interest is very high in Cambodia. In order to repay the debts, I thought that I could neither stay in the village nor work in the city anymore. So I decided to migrate to Thailand. Now I repaid all debts and built a small house for my parents.”

Sareourn, 22 years old, from Bateaymeanchey Province is currently working as a construction worker. He first migrated to Thailand in 2000.

“I had nothing to do in Cambodia and the yields from farming were also not enough to eat. Moreover I had 6 siblings and four of them were studying. I went to find a job in the town but all the time I could not get it because I did not know anybody in the city. Finally my parents suggested that I go to Thailand to work because most of my neighbors migrated to Thailand and they had a lot of money when they visited home. I saw them wearing a big necklace of gold and building a big house for themselves and as well for their parents. My parents had borrowed money from lender in the village for my travel to Thailand. Now I already repaid the debt but I have not built the house. My brother came to Thailand last year and he is now working with me.”

Ra, from Preyveng Province, 35 years old is currently working as a fisherman in Rayong. He migrated into Thailand in 1995. He has two children.

“I was a poor farmer in Cambodia because I had a small rice field to cultivate and the yield was never enough for eating even though we are a small family. Even though the yields were low, this is not the main reason I migrated to Thailand, rather what worried me were my family’s future and my children. I was always afraid of what I would do if someone in my family got sick and what would become of my children if I am in this condition. I kept thinking about this many times before I decided to migrate to Thailand. Actually, I did not want to come to Thailand because I always heard that the workers were killed easily and they were forced to use drugs and the working condition was very difficult. But I had no choice because if I did not migrate to Thailand I also did not know which country I could go to, and if I kept staying in the village my family might fall into big trouble in the near future. So, finally I migrated to Thailand and have worked in many

place since I arrived here, but always as a construction worker. I feel confident working in Thailand.”

To sum up these quotes and other findings, it appears that the influences compelling Cambodian people to migrate to Thailand were strongly related to their life in their homeland. As they are coming from farming backgrounds, have low education and have no connection with the people in the city, many had little or no opportunity to work in the city at all. So their choice is to migrate to neighboring countries, which attracted them by high wages, plenty of job opportunity, and perhaps convenient travel (all “pull” factors). In any case, there are also many reasons that contributed to these phenomena. In the following information that was found during the fieldwork in Rayong and in Bangkok, from both those who are working as fishermen and construction workers, we see clearly the reasons for Cambodian illegal immigration into Thailand. This information is drawn from the above three main reasons. According to the Neo-classical economic approach concerning migration factors, I will divide the issue into two main factors, namely the Push and Pull factors:

#### **-Push Factors on the Cambodia Side**

No job opportunities, with the rate of unemployment compounded by the difficult living conditions in the rural sector, which included inadequacy of food, debts, sickness, poverty and so on. Motivation factors might include being just married and wanting to make money to feed the children, wanting to buy farming tools for the parents, saving money for an uncertain future event such as sickness or sending children to school, or simply seeing others successful stories as they return from Thailand. Other factors also increased the “push” phenomenon, such as escaping from personal problems such as killing, separated couples, disputes within family, a desire to get rich quick, and responsibility for many children.

### **-Pull Factor from the Thai Side**

The entirety of unskilled jobs opportunities, high wages payments, the success of friends and relatives who are working in Thailand, and the simple fact that it might be enjoyable to live in Thailand, which is often seen as a modern country. Those turned to the mainly pull factors that make Cambodian people decided to migrate into Thailand.

## **3.2 Migration Processes**

### **3.2.1 Migration Facilitators: Their Roles and Business Activities**

There are many types of migration facilitators, both male and female. They could be the real brokers, who includes the recruiter that they working with closely, police and local authorities who cooperate and make this kind of business more convenient, and the workers themselves who serve a role as brokers. All of them work and cooperate in a very systematic way and maintain good networks. Cooperation between the Thai brokers and the Cambodian brokers, between the broker and the employers, between the workers themselves who play roles as the brokers with the employers, police with the brokers, police with the employers and police with workers, makes up the network of this particular kind of business. There are both the brokers taking the migrant workers into Thailand and those taking the migrant workers back from their destination.

This kind of business develops when the Thai government seems to need foreign unskilled workers from the neighboring countries and decreases when the Thai economy or job market faces any problem or when the relationship between Thailand and neighboring countries breaks down or there are disputes in diplomatic relations between the countries.

#### **- The Roles and Activities of the Cambodia Brokers**

There are two types of Cambodian brokers who are doing this kind of business. There is a person who serves as the recruiter in the village and another person who serves as the border passing guide. They do business together much like collective business owners. The recruiters in the village could be the village heads, members of the village



themselves or former workers who have long working experience in Thailand and also very successful former workers as well. The recruiter always announces to the villagers the possibility to find jobs, higher wages, and the ease in passing the border to work in Thailand. When someone in the village wants to work in Thailand they have to contact these recruiters and pay them in advance. When there are at least five villagers that have been recruited, the recruiters will take those villagers to the border and transfer them to another recruiter. For the broker who works along the border, they will guide those villagers to pass the border which takes one day and night, which means that the villagers have to stay along the border for one day at least. The journeys always happen in the night time. The migrant workers have to walk or follow brokers in a very strict line otherwise they might step on landmines or lose their way during the journey. When the broker reaches a meeting place that was set up in advance with Thai brokers, they will transfer those migrants to those Thai brokers, although sometimes the Cambodia brokers have to go along with migrant workers until they reach the destination or working place.

#### - **The Roles and Activities of the Thai Brokers**

There are no indicators or signs that explain exactly who these Thai brokers are. It is difficult to understand exactly because sometime they serve roles as the drivers, brokers themselves, or sometime as recruiter. That being said, it is clear that they are working and doing this kind of business very well together and have very good cooperation with the Cambodian brokers, employers and police. These Thai brokers make income from the Cambodian brokers by travel cost and commissions ('tea money') from the employers. But again, it is unclear how much that they get from the employer for one migrant worker.

According to the informants, these Thai brokers have their own truck, van, or pick-up for transporting the migrant workers from the borders to the destination. They parked their trucks in the forest and call a meeting point so that when the Cambodian broker arrives with migrants, the migrant workers quietly get in the trucks that the Cambodia broker points out for them. Each truck will go to the particular destination that the broker in

the village promised to the migrant workers while they were in the village. If someone wants to change their job, they can change at that time as well.

- **The Roles and Activities of Cambodian and Thai Police**

Both Thai and Cambodian police directly or indirectly contributed to this kind of business. They serve as the facilitators in the process of passing the border illegally, although both Cambodian and Thai brokers have to pay them in order to 'open the ways' to pass the border, otherwise these police will not smooth this passing process.

One interesting story that was told was that when an immigrant worker wants to go back to Cambodia they often contact the Immigration Police 'Tor Mor,' who will take them to the border. The immigration police act like they have arrested the illegal immigrant worker and are sending him or her back to Cambodia. This is one type of business that brings very good money to Thai police. But this method only works if the group wishing to return is made up of at least thirty to fifty people or else the Tor Mor will not agree to take them by this means. The illegal immigrants have to pay the Immigration Police somewhere from 2,000-2,500 baht for a journey back to their own homeland. The reason why many workers want to go back by this means is because it is a convenient and safe way of reaching Cambodia. The police just put them in the truck that is normally sending illegal immigrants back to Cambodia. If the illegal immigrants elect to go back to Cambodia by themselves, they may have to pay nearly equal or perhaps more that amount of money and are not guaranteed a safe journey. Sometime when Thai police ask for money and the illegal immigrant workers have none, the police will put him or her in jail for a couple of weeks before they send them to the Cambodian police. Once in the hands of Cambodian police, returning immigrants may be asked for additional money. The police might delay them by forcing them to stay at the border for two or three days or longer without any food and water if the illegal worker is not able to come up with the funds. Passing the border back into Cambodia is not easy. The illegal immigrant workers have to pay the police as much as they can when back in Cambodia and hardly anyone receives special treatment. Moreover, police always insult the illegal immigrant workers by using very impolite words,

even toward older people or women. Generally, then, it is advised to contact the Tor Mor to receive accompaniment back to Cambodia.

This information also shows, more or less, how the cooperation between Thai and Cambodia police works toward making extra money for their own uses.

- **The Roles of the Workers Themselves**

Some workers intend to be recruiters when they go back to their original village. Those who intended to be the recruiter are mostly the successful workers in Thailand. They always recruit their own relatives first and sometimes neighbors in the village. Each time before they want to go back to visit their family in Cambodia, they contact their own employer to see whether they need more workers. If the employer needs more workers they offer to seek them out.

Still, those who intend to be recruiters often have to use professional brokers to help them pass the border because, for a variety of reasons, they are not able to escort the new recruits across the border by themselves. However, these local recruits are often the most successful because they are trusted by the villagers, or are their relatives and friends. The villagers have to pay for them in advance and they will arrange for everything. Therefore, recruiting is also a possibility for some extra income, both in the form of local income and also commission from the employers.

There is another case in which the workers themselves do not wish to be recruiters but if they are trusted by their employer and when the employers need their help to find more workers, they might call upon the broker they know to take their relatives from their village to come to work in Thailand as well.

Uncle Sovann, 42 years old, from Preyveng Province. After quitting his job as a province banker in 1995, he migrated to Thailand to work as fisherman. Now he is working as a fisherman and also as a cook on a boat in Rayong Province. He is a successful

fisherman because in the first one and half years of his work he could send 100,000 baht to his wife in Preyveng. He said that, “many villagers and also my relatives asked me to take them along because they saw that I could make a lot of money within the short time.”

“When I visited home after I sent money to my wife, many people came to my house and asked me to take them along. I did not recruit anyone at all but they saw me making a lot of money. At that time there were 60 people coming along with me to Thailand. Now some of them are still working with him in the same work and some went back to village and some of them have succeeded, and some simply do not have anything to go back to because they enjoy Thailand so much.”

#### - **Traveling Cost**

Most of the illegal immigrants have to spend at least 2,500-3,500 baht for the brokers, and these amounts of money include traveling cost from the village to the final destination, food during the journey; and a guarantee for a job. But no broker can guarantee their safety during the journey. Many borrow the money from lenders for traveling to Thailand with very highest interests, often in the range of 10-50% per month. There were some cases that the migrants could travel by themselves, which meant that the travel cost was less than the cost that they spent for the brokers, but is not much lower. They have to spend from 1,300- 2,500 baht to pass the border and most of them used a weekly passport to pass the border. The problem is that they have to find a job by themselves and receive no guarantee of finding work at all.

### **3.2.2 Problems On the Road to the Border**

There are two options for the people who want to travel to Thailand. In the first option, they can pay for the whole journey from the village to the destination. In the second option, the migrant workers can travel by themselves to the border area and then contact the brokers there to guide them past the border. According to this research, most of the migrant workers migrate to Thailand through the recruiter in the village. In their own country, Cambodians clearly have full right to travel. But there are some cases in which the

migrant workers firstly travel and stay or work along the border areas in order to observe the situation and find the cheapest means to cross the border. Sometimes, they stay with relatives who are living along the border areas and sometimes they work at the border checkpoints themselves, such as at the Poipet International Border Checkpoint.

Sokun, 24 years old, from Svayreing Province is working as a construction worker in Bangkok. He has come to Thailand since the year 2000, but he lived a year along the border before having a chance to cross.

“As you know, there is no problem traveling in our country. We can go everywhere that we want, unlike in Thailand. After I quit school, I went to live with my grandparents in Banteaymeanchey Province. I stay with them for nearly a year before I passed the border to work here. I used to work many jobs at that time in the Poipet border checkpoint. One day my friends let me pass the border to work in Thailand and they told me about the modern things and high wage. So I borrowed money from my grandparents and came along with them.”

### **3.2.3 Border Crossing Points and Methods to Pass the Borders**

There are many illegal passing points along the Thai-Cambodia border both overland and using waterways. By land, there are seven main passing points where Cambodian illegal immigrants pass regularly, while the most popular one is the Poipet passing point. Using the water way, only one crossing point has been identified in this research, and this is at the Koh Kong passing point. By this exit, most of the illegal immigrants do not even need a broker guide because this point is hard to guard by land because of the steep mountain areas. Using a boat bypasses the overland route and can be done easily via Klong Sun town. Immigrants might have to stay for a couple days to wait for a fishing boat to their destination. Most of the migrants who passed Koh Kong border will automatically become fishermen or at least they will be fishermen en route until they reach the Thai shore.

### 3.2.4 Problems On the Road to Destinations

Starting from the border areas on the Cambodia side, immigrants have to walk through the forest in order to reach the meeting place where the Cambodian and Thai brokers had arranged with each other. Many problems can slow the journey to these meeting points by anywhere from 2 hours to 10 days. During these periods of time, sometime they have to stay in the forest waiting for the situation to get better and sometime the broker struggles to find a suitable way to proceed. At or after the international lines, the broker will go out first to observe or negotiate with the Thai police or soldiers, and, if the situation is bad, may be forced to take the migrants to find a new passing point. The condition of the roads that the illegal immigrants have to walk through is dependent on the border point. For some passing points, the migrants have to walk very long distances on difficult roads; sometime they have to walk up mountains and cross rivers and so on. After some passing points, the migrants might spend only two hours to reach the meeting place. There might be at least 5-300 migrants passing the border per night. Additionally, there are some serious problems happening during the journey, such as: shooting by the Thai police or soldiers, stepping on landmines, rape by the brokers, losing their way and so on.

Mr. Dam, 28 year olds, from Siemreap Province just migrated and has been working as a construction worker for five months. He came from his village by himself and then he contacted the broker in Poipet to guide him to pass the border.

“I spent 2,500 baht for the broker to guide me into Thailand. The broker brought the weekly passport to me and other six people who would go along with me. I walked just only two hours and then I took a van that was parked waiting for us. I, the broker and the other six took that van from the border to the destination. Nothing happened and it was an easy journey.”

Mr. Veng, 29 years old, from Kompong Cham province is working as a construction worker. He is one of the workers who passed the border into Thailand illegally. He came to work here in Bangkok for only a year and a half. He passed at the

Sasda passing point located in the Bateaymeanchy Province closed to Buriram Province in the Thai side. He said;

“During the journey passing the border, it was very difficult and I felt very afraid. I came along with my wife and 200 other people both male and female mixed together, some of whom were my relatives and others my neighbors. That was during the rainy season, and it was raining every night. We could walk in the night time only and we walked two nights without reaching the meeting point and all the time we were told by the broker that we had nearly reached that point and the broker said do not worry so much, we are luckier than most other groups. I slept under trees with nothing to cover me. It was very cold and there were a lot of mosquitoes and naturally we have nothing to eat at all. For the three nights at the beginning in the forest, the broker gave us a small piece of bread in order to reduce hunger and he told us that we would have to wait until the situation got better for more, but it wouldn't be so long. When I reached the destination here, one of my relatives told me that the broker raped a girl in the forest and now we did not know where that girl was because we were divided at the meeting point, the place that we took the van. So, the reason why we spent many nights in the forest was not because of the bad conditions during the journey but because of the broker's plan for raping this girl. I spent one week to reach the meeting point. That was the first time I migrated to Thailand.”

It seems to be a two-step journey to reach the destination; one starting from the Cambodia side to the meeting point and another from the meeting point to the destination. After reaching the meeting point and getting picked up by the vans or pick up trucks the immigrants will still be faced with many difficult problems, such as arrest by the police during inspection of the cars. The problem is that immigrants often have to lie in the back of the pick up car with around twenty people and are only covered by plastic roofs. In order to put them together in one truck, the Thai brokers often have to force them to lie on each other: the big body sizes have to lie below and the small body sizes or women have to lie

above those bigger ones. In this condition, it is not easy to breath and they will be in pain or be sluggish when they reach the destination. These problems are the most often-heard complaints by the illegal immigrants.

Ponlok, 23 years old, from Preyveng Province. He has been a fisherman for two years in Rayong Province, Thailand. He experienced quite a rough transition to Thailand.

“It was very difficult and I suffered a lot. I could not see anything at all since I passed the border and took that pick up truck and I could not know any direction at all. We were put in that truck with 40 people and then covered by the plastic roof. We forced to lie on one another and I was under another two smaller men. It was very difficult to breathe and there was a bad smell in that environment because of all the sweat and some were farting. I was in that condition for four hours before we arrived in Banphe town. When I got off the truck I fell down because my body was numb. I could not walk at all. We all felt like pigs that were being transported to a factory.”

To conclude this part, we can say that Cambodian illegal immigrants have many means to pass the border into Thailand and the migration facilitators play important roles in this flow of people. Facilitating the Cambodian illegal immigration is a very profitable business, both for local police and other authorities, in addition to the brokers and employers. The migrants can often pay between 2,500-3,500 baht for a whole journey from the village to the destination, although this includes all expenses and a job guarantee. On the other hand, immigrants can come to the border area by their own, and may still have to contact a broker along the border to guide them past, but these costs are almost identical to purchasing a whole trip. There is another means of travel, naturally, that immigrants can migrate to Thailand on their own as adventurers but this way is always faced with the problem of finding a job, safety, and the costs may still turn out to be similar or higher. The popular journey for Khmer people who want to migrate to Thailand is the first means, being guided by a broker because there is no need to worry about anything even finding a job, since the broker guarantees this for them from the time they were still in Cambodia.



### 3.3 Case Study One: Fishermen

#### 3.3.1 Living Conditions

##### 3.3.1.1 Accommodations

There are two choices for the fishermen to choose for their accommodations. First the fishermen can stay on the boat and thus pay nothing. The employer allows them to stay on the boat without deducting anything from the wage payment at all. Second the fishermen can rent a room to stay by themselves but they have to pay for rental cost. Most of the single fishermen choose the first option because they have no family members who come along with them. For the fishermen who have family members who come along with them, normally they intend to rent the room to stay rather staying in the boat. There are no beds or sleeping rooms on the boat; the fishermen can sleep wherever they can find a place. According to my own observation, they use the fishing nets to tie up as a hammock to sleep but some of them just sleep on the grilling woods. At least there are usually 20-30 fishermen sleeping on the boat, thus sleeping on the boat seems to give them very little space. Nevertheless, the fishermen responded that this choice is the best for them because they could save money from spending on the rental room. However, they added that renting a room to stay is safer than staying on the boat but legally they have to obtain an ID card in order to escape the scrutiny from both local and immigration police. For those staying on the boat, they do not worry about the scrutiny by local police because the local police never come to arrest them at the pier except the immigration police that monthly come to check the fishermen, whether they stay on the boat or on land.

Pisit, 38 years old, from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand to work as a fisherman just five months ago.

“I sleep on the boat because we have nothing to worry about unlike someone who has their family along with them. In the boat, we can sleep wherever we want except the captain’s a room. We just tie the useless nets as the hammock to sleep. Even though it is a tiny space to stay but we feel safe and it is beneficial. We can save some money from renting a room and we have no need to worry about being disturbed by the police unlike the fishermen

living on land. On my boat there are 22 fishermen living and sleeping together.”

Dan, 23 years old, from Kompongspue Province. He first came to Thailand in 2002. Currently, he works as a foreman of fishermen on the boat.

“I do not stay on the boat anymore because I have a wife now. I rent a room close to the pier and it cost 1,500 baht per month excluding electricity and water. Even though, when the boat was at sea and during the downtime still I relax and sleep in the captain’s room or with other fishermen as well. There are no problems sleeping on the boat because we can save some money and it seemed happy and free but also a bit unsafe. The fishermen trust each other and nothing happened at all but naturally there were some disputes that happen between the fishermen.”

### **3.3.1.2 Meals**

The fishermen are provided meals by the employers or the owners of the boats such that the expenses of the meals are included in the fishermen wages. Normally, the food is sent by the employer everyday before the boat leaves the port. Each boat has their own cook, who is also a fisherman as well. The cook is paid extra money over their actual wage payment. The cooks are paid from 1,000 to 2,000 baht per month according to each employer’s regulation. Generally, the fishermen are provided three meals per day and moreover they can eat whatever fish is caught that they want during the downtime. But there are some boats where the fishermen are not allowed to eat the fish caught on the boat at all. They eat as groups of four to five people together with one bowl of food. Mostly they have their own plate but sometimes they use one plate for two people. Generally the fishermen who are relatives, close friends or come from the same village always eat in the same group. When the time comes the cook will ring for the fishermen to come and eat and the cook will share through out each group. Most of them responded that they have enough food to eat and they can eat whenever they want except in the working time. They added that even if the boats are not going out to fish, still the employer sends food for them.

Doung, 30 years old, from Preyveng Province, he first came to Thailand in 2003. Currently he works on the boat paying as contract wage (Si Soun)<sup>2</sup>.

“I never worry about starvation at all because even if I did not work; still I would have food to eat. I can eat whenever I am hungry, at least the fish we catch but I have to cook by myself. Actually, there are not enough plates to eat because the fishermen are so lazy to clean the bowls or plates. After eating, they just throw them away and when they need a new plate to eat, they have to find it again. Everybody is doing like this. I eat with my neighbors who come from the same village. Talking about cleanliness of food, I really do not know but I never saw anyone with upset stomach or diarrhea at all since I have been working here. But I and three other fishermen were once poisoned by eating one kind of fish and we had diarrhea for a whole night. To conclude, working as fishermen we never have to worry about lack of food at all; even if the employer is very bad, they still sent food for us to eat.”

### **3.3.1.3 Communication and Ceremony Celebrations**

The fishermen have limited freedom to communicate or celebrate traditional or religious ceremonies because of their illegal status, barrier in speaking the local language and the risky situation within their own society. Their illegal status limited their travel and this became the measurement of their freedom to celebrate religion or traditional ceremonies as well. They not can go far from the pier otherwise they risk being arrested or asked for money by local police. The telephone is very important in the communication between fishermen because they have no need to travel or go out from the port or boat, but most of them have no hand phone. Normally when they want to communicate with family or relatives in Thailand or in Cambodia, they have to buy the account phone card and

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<sup>2</sup> Si Soun is a word that is used by the fishermen. Even the fishermen themselves do not know where the word comes from. But it means the fishermen work not to get a daily or monthly payment but to share benefits with the employers. A ratio is that boat owner or employer gets 75% and workers get 25% of the catch sold.

borrow a phone from their friend, relatives, foreman, captain or employer for calling. Normally, they call their family at the same time as they send money home. The fishermen responded that when Thailand has a national celebration, police seemed not to care about them. They can go out and enjoy those ceremonies freely unlike in the normal time, when even if they want to go to the market still the police arrest them. One more thing is related to the attitude of the fishermen; most of them act very cruelly and even scary, especially the teenagers. Many teenagers form groups of ten or twenty peoples and then start acting like gangsters. Sometimes they dare to beat up the police if the police are alone and sometimes they throw things at the local people's houses as an enjoyable activity. Sometimes they beat other fishermen who go to visit their friends who are in a different boat and ask them for money. If those fishermen have no money for them surely they will be seriously beaten and sometime even killed. These violent activities are also a barrier to communication as well because the police will be stricter on them and other fishermen not dare to travel.

Dara, 35 years old, from Preyveng Province, currently works in Rayong. He first came to Thailand 2001.

“I call to my family just when I send money home because the cost of calling is very expensive. So when we call home in order to send money at the same time, I say hello to my children and my wife as well. I never go out to visit my relatives who are working in Thailand too because I have no card to travel but sometimes I call them. Since I have been working as a fisherman in Rayong, I never go to the pagoda even one time because I am scared of the police and another main point is how I could talk with the monk. I never saw a Khmer monk too. I can make a ceremony only when I go back to Cambodia. Anyway, I keep thinking that I come here for working not for making religious ceremonies or enjoying myself here in Thailand that is why I do not care so much about this. Even though, sometimes I go to join the National Thai celebrations as well during Songgran days or Thai King's Birthday because the police never arrest us and also I and other fishermen working in the same boat were told by the employer as well to go.

Still we are not the same as their nationality. I fell not comfortable because we are so different from Thai people in terms of clothing or attitudes.”

### 3.3.1.4 Entertainment

There are two proverbs that the fishermen created for their activities toward their entertainment. In the Khmer language, the first is “*Chos Touk Puol Lolok Neek Mea Tea Peal Touk Chol Pear Neek Sree Took-long*<sup>3</sup>” means: when the boat is at sea and they got seriously seasick and feel alone, they missed their mother in their hometown; but when the boat arrives at the pier they changed to miss Karaoke girls. The second is “*Nouv Touk Deak Si Douch Chhkae Tae Peal Laeng Paer Reuk Douch Mahasetesy*” meaning: in the boat they eat and sleep as dogs, but when they get out of the boat they act like millionaires. Those two Khmer proverbs mainly refer to the entertainment of the fishermen during the time the boats are docking at the pier. The most popular entertainment places of the fishermen are the Karaoke shops, drinking shops and snooker shops, followed by some sport activities. Those Karaoke shops provide services such as alcohol and Karaoke along with sex services in some cases. Most of the shops are located close to the piers that make it easy for the fishermen to reach those places. Most of the karaoke shop owners and girls are also illegal immigrants from poor families in Cambodia, but also including some Thai people from Isaan in the Northeast of Thailand. The karaoke girls’ role is very important in creating conflicts between the fishermen, especially for the teenagers. This does not mean that the girls have a role in the conflict activities by themselves, but they are often the catalyst. Naturally, the men will show their power when they are in front of the girls and, according to their level of education and their status, they always show their power by fighting each other even if they come from the same nationality or village. Most of the fishermen respond that many fishermen are killed and kill each other because of this problem, a problem that continues. As a result of these activities some of the teenage fishermen not can save money to send home and when their parents called them and ask for remittances they will reply that they were cheated by the employers. Their wage are spent

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<sup>3</sup> *Sree Tooklong*; *Sree* is a Khmer word meaning ‘girl’ and *Took-long* is a Thai word meaning ‘agree’ or ‘promising’. Thus *Sree Tooklong* refers to the karaoke girls or prostitutes.

almost all on these kind of things and they just say that; “We are working so hard in the sea so we have to enjoy the life when we are on the land”. Beside the karaoke girls, the services of prostitutes are available to the fishermen. For instance, if they want to go to a prostitute there are motor taxi services to take them there for free and if they are in a group of more than ten people, the owner of the brothel will send a pick up car to take them and guarantee their safety and security.

### **3.3.1.5 Marriage in Thailand**

In Thailand, even if they are illegally migrated to Thailand, the Cambodian illegal migrant workers can still celebrate wedding ceremonies as in Cambodia. The fishermen respond that police never come to disturb them during their wedding ceremony and sometime police joined those wedding ceremonies too. Most of the fishermen who are married in Thailand get married with Khmer girls who are working in the fish processing industry and Karaoke shops, although some fishermen also get married with Thai girls who are working in karaoke shops, mostly from Isaan provinces. Most of them celebrate the marriage ceremony in the karaoke shop or in the rental rooms if they have one. For someone who gets married with a Thai girl, normally they will celebrate in the bride’s village or sometimes also in the karaoke shop as well. There are some cases that they are married two times, once in Thailand and also in Cambodia. Most of the wedding ceremonies that are celebrated in Thailand are just for the wedding gifts or money because when they are married in Thailand they can get nice gifts or more money than in Cambodia. A fisherman, who was married in Rayong, responded that at least they can get 300 baht from each one unlike in Cambodia because here in Thailand they can make money easier than in Cambodia.

The Khmer fishermen believed that someone married with a Thai girl will always be unsuccessful in the future because they will have nothing and their wife will leave them in the end. They responded that most of fishermen married with Thai girls were foremen who made a lot of money from working. The fishermen who married with Khmer girls

were satisfied as successfully life in Thailand because they could make a lot of money. In addition, they will not waste any money to visit girls anymore.

Dan, 23 years old, from Kompongspue Province. He first came to Thailand in 2002. Currently, he works as a foreman of fishermen on the boat.

“I was married last year with my wife here, Banphe town. I knew my wife when I went to drink beer in her working place, a karaoke shop. I knew her one year before I married her. I married her because she is gentle and cute. I did not care about her background and it meant nothing to me. Now she stopped working there and she is working in a souvenir shop near by the Banphe port. We are going to have a baby now. Actually, I want to celebrate the wedding ceremony one more time in my village in Cambodia but I am not making enough money yet to do so.”

### **3.3.1.6 Family and Children**

There are a small number of fishermen who take their family along with them from Cambodia. The women who come along with their husband also work mainly in the fish processing industry. Most of the children who come along with their parent are under five years old. The children will be sent back when they reach the age when they can go to school. It is very rare that the fishermen can send their children to the Thai school because there are many barriers for them to access that system, such as their illegal status, there is no connections to access the Thai education system, and a lack of money.

Wuth, 35 years old, from Preyveng Province. He currently is working in Rayong as a fisherman. He first came to Thailand in 2005.

“I came here first with my wife and after three months I took my child who is three years old along. Actually, I do not want to take my child here but I have no choice because there is nobody to take care of him in Cambodia. Here, when my wife goes to work, he stays with my cousin. I will send him back when he will be able to enter school.”

### 3.3.1.7 Remittances

The fishermen normally remit money home through an intricate system of agents. There are several agents doing this business who used to be fishermen. The agents will charge 30-80 baht per 1,000 baht, excluding the phone service cost. The process of this system is; for instance when the fishermen want to send money home, first they have to tell the agent how much they will send and then the agent will give a mobile phone to the fishermen to talk to their family in Cambodia. After the call they can get money there in the village by another agent in Cambodia who has a business connection with an agent in Thailand. Then the fishermen can pay the agent here in Thailand. The fishermen responded that it is a very safe way to send money home by this system unlike in previous times when they always worried about sending money home. The fishermen created their own system in order to be able to send money home, especially for the fishermen who are working on the contract wage payment. They form a group, between ten to fifteen fishermen, that they think they all can trust each other. They collected the money that the employer gives them for their daily expenses to give to a member and then move from one to other within the group as routine. The main reason why they have to create this method is because the period of a typical working contract is normally 18-52 months, thus it is a very long period. If they wait until the end of the contract their families whom they have left behind in Cambodia will face economic problems. The fishermen added that they created this system because if the employer cheats them at the end of the contract, at least they could send some money home one or two times and moreover this system seemed to force them to save money for sending home. The remittances were sent to their family or relatives. Their family or relatives in the village normally saved or did whatever they were told from Thailand. Normally, they used the remittances for building a house, buying agricultural tools, and for their children's education. The remittances also attracted other villagers to migrate to Thailand and moreover the remittance also showed the success of the life of migration abroad.

Sovann, 42 years old, from Preyveng Province, first came to Thailand in 1995 and has worked as a fisherman since.



“I sent money home several times since I came to Thailand and the last was just last month. I normally sent it by the intricate system of agents ‘*Neak Raap Luy*’ (Money Taker) and he charges me 30 baht per 1,000 baht, excluding the telephone charges. I am one of the members in the group of ten fishermen that normally collect the *Wiss*<sup>4</sup> money, one per each time. Every one in the group has to give to leader at once 1,000 baht a time. I like this system because it forces us not to spend much and everyone has to trust each other within the group. I sent money to my wife to support my other two children to study. Now I have built a house by the money from working in Thailand as a fisherman. I have nothing beside these kinds of things. I will go back when my children finish high school.”

To conclude this section, the boats are the fishermen’s house, kitchen, relaxing place, a place to escape from scrutiny by the police as well as working place. According to their illegal status, it is not easy for the fishermen to access any communication system, Thai national institutions or join any ceremony freely. They have a limited space and right to travel and live. By contrast, they can access the entertainment places easily, such as karaoke shops, drinking shops and brothels freely, because those kinds of entertainment place are located very close to the port. These kinds of entertainment create several problems and often lead to violent activities. The girls who work in this industry are considered as catalyst of these conflicts. There is a very rare number of fishermen who take their family and children along because of the situation along the journey and the risky problems associated with their working place. Notwithstanding, there are many Khmer women and children living and working in Rayong, although most of children are under school age. Those children will be sent back to their village when their parents think that they are able to go to school. The remittances are representative of the success of the fishermen is migration and we can see the physical aspect of the remittances through the

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<sup>4</sup> *Wiss* a word that is commonly used to refer to the period of work payment. For instance, one *Wiss* is equal to two to five days in the fishermen society, but in the construction workers, one *Wiss* is equal to exactly two weeks.

living standards of their family in the original village, such as building a house and wearing gold when they go back to their village.

### **3.3.2 Working Conditions**

#### **3.3.2.1 Labor Wages Payments**

In this research I found that for fishermen there are three types of wage payments; firstly, daily wage payments that the employer will pay to the fishermen day by day when the boat comes to dock and after unloading the catch; secondly, monthly wage payments that the employer makes to the fishermen, but usually the salary is paid three-five months a time according to each employer; and thirdly, the fishermen are paid in the end of contract within 18-52 months. Each type of payment system has its own advantages and disadvantages, although the third type of wage payments was considered the most unfavorable.

##### *- Advantages and disadvantages of the first type of labor wage payments*

The daily wage payments of fishermen are between 180-200 baht per day. The fishermen will be paid day by day after the boat comes back from the sea and unloads the catch. In actuality, the employer usually provides the money once or twice a week according to each employer's regulation. The advantage of this first type of wage payments is that the fishermen do not need to worry about being cheated by the employers and the working conditions are usually less dangerous because the typical boats that use this type of payment system are small and fish not too far from the shore. All the fishermen responded that if they were cheated, it was just a short period of time so they will not be very disappointed like what can happen if working under the third type of payment system, which will be explained in the following part. The disadvantage of this first type of payments is that the boats do not regularly go out to the sea for fishing and if the boats do not go out to sea, the fishermen who work in that boat will not be paid. Even though the employer pays the fishermen 100 baht per every two days for their daily expenses, a

payment that is called “Wiss Toch<sup>5</sup>”, this payment is included in their regular wages and the employer will calculate the total amount on the day of wage payment. The boats that utilize the first type of payment system are mainly small and require approximately 13-20 fishermen only.

Veasna, 20 years old, from Preyveng Province, first came to Thailand in the year 2000.

“I get 200 baht per day and within every two days my employer pays me 100 baht for daily use. That money will be included in my actual wages. My employer will pay me all my actual wages every two weeks, but the wages will not include payment for the days that the boat does not go out to fish. The reason why I chose to work in this boat is because I experienced being cheated by employers. From then on, I promised myself that I will not work for contract wage payment boats anymore. I have worked with this boat for three months already and I have gotten my wage every two weeks all the time. This employer is a good man but the problem is that I not can save any money at all because this boat normally goes out to fish just only three or four days per week and sometime, when the sea has a storm or heavy rain, the boat not can go out to fish and docks at the pier at least one or two weeks until the storm or rain gets weak. So during that such time I am not paid, but the good point is that even if the boat does not go out to fish, still we have meals to eat every day because the employer buys for us even if we do not work. We do not have to care about our stomach at all. Anyway, I planned

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<sup>5</sup> Wiss Toch is a Khmer term that is commonly used among the Cambodia fishermen to refer to the wages that the employer pays for every two, three, four or five day to the fishermen for daily expenses. Most often the employers pay 100-500 baht according to the period that the boat is docking in the piers, but not over five days otherwise they will call Wiss Thom. Wiss Thom also refers to the same meaning of this kind of payment, but the period will be normally be over five days up to twenty days and the payments is around 500-2,000 baht.

to change to another boat, otherwise in the end I will not have any money to go back home.”

- *Advantages and disadvantages of the second type of labor wage payments*

The second type of wage payment is that in which the employer will pay the fishermen a salary. This system would seem to be more convenient than the first and third type of wage payments because even if the fishermen do not work, they still are paid as normal. However, the salary is usually a little bit low; the fishermen can get around 4,000-5,000 baht per month according to each employer or boat. For instance, for a small size boat, the fishermen are paid 4,000 baht and, for a medium size boat, normally the fishermen will get 5,000 baht. The size of the boat represents the working scale. The bigger the boat, the harder the fishermen will work. The working conditions under the second type of wage payments are almost the same as working conditions in the first type of wage payment. For the daily expenses, “Wiss” are paid the same (100 baht for every two days) but the method of payment is a little bit different for the fishermen who work under the second type payment system, in that the employer will pay as (Wiss Thom), common known as ‘Full Moon Docking’, or if the boat is docked because of a big storm or heavy rain. For the “Wiss Thom” payment, the fishermen will get 500 baht for ten or fifteen days that the boat could not go out to the sea, but the salary will still be paid the same. The money that the employer pays for “Wiss Toch” and “Wiss Thom” is both included in the actual salary wages. The fishermen responded that it was not easy to get work in the boats that pay salary wage.

Mina, 43 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand in year 1999.

“It was not easy to get work on my current boat because many fishermen competed to get it. I could work on this boat because I know the team leader (foreman) who is working on this boat for a long time. The foremen came from the same village as mine. Most of the fishermen working to get a salary are more confident than those working to get daily wage or contract wage

because even if the boat does not go out to fish, still I get a regular payment. I think that I am a lucky one to work in this boat. I get 4,000 baht per month with free food and accommodation. After deducting my daily expenses that the employer pays as “Wiss Toch” and “Wiss Thom” at least I get 2,500 or 3,000 baht for each month. If the employer still continues to hire me, I will not change this boat at all because it is suitable and I am fearful as I get older and weaker.”

- *Advantages and disadvantages of the third type of labor wage payments*

The third type of wage payments is a common practice in the fishing industry. The fishermen working under this payment system never knows how much they will get in the end of specific time of working. Only the foremen and captain know how much the fishermen will get in the end because they are working closely with the employer and they are the persons responsible for noting down the catch. All the captains are Thai and the foremen are Khmer, so between them both, the foreman is the only one that the fishermen will trust. The period of the contract time of working is anywhere from 18-52 months, depending on each employer's set up of their own boat. The third type of wage payment is considered the most unfavorable by the fishermen, both with respect to working conditions and wage payments. Most of the fishermen experienced cheating by the employers and were forced to work very hard with long working hours. Moreover, the fishermen who work under the third payment type often respond that they are threatened by the captains and employers. The fishermen that I interviewed added; at least one time they were cheated by the employers while working under this payment method. However, currently the rate of cheating by employers is less because the employer that cheats will face a lack of employees to work for them because the news of their cheating can spread very fast among the fishermen and then nobody will work for those cheaters anymore.

Sovann, 42 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He first migrated to Thailand in 1995 and has worked as a fisherman since then.

“There were only a few Khmer working as fishermen when I arrived in Rayong province the first time. Most of the fishermen were Thai people from the Northeastern Part of Thailand (Isaan). I have been cheated three times by employers since I have been working as a fisherman. I did not know how much those employers cheated me because I did not know how much I would earn when I started my job. But when I felt that I had been cheated, I moved to find a new boat instead of protesting and I keep doing this when I felt cheated. The last boat that I had worked on for 22 months under contract, I got only 8,000 baht with an unreasonable explanation when we asked. When we want to protest, the Chhev<sup>6</sup> (foreman) told us that we have no rights. The way that I consider if the employer is good or bad depends on the wage payments. If I work for a full 22 months and at the end of the contract I was paid only 5,000 or 10,000 baht, it means that that employer cheated me so he is a bad employer. On the other hand, if I could get around 50,000 baht I will consider that the employer is ok but if I could get over 80,000 baht, I will consider the employer as a good employer. At the same time, many fishermen will come asking to work in those boats but it very rare to find such a kind of good employer like this here. The reason that the employer always brings up when they pay us less wages is they always complain that this year the oil price was up, the price of fish was down and less catch and so on. By contrast, I saw most of the employers getting rich very fast. I have worked as a fisherman for several years, so I know everything here especially the wage payments. Actually, the employer pays nothing except only for the body of the boat because all the payments for the boat such as for the nets, oil, repairing the machinery, food, the captain’s salary, foreman’s salary and so on, are included in the fishermen’s wage. The employer will only pay the fishermen after he has deducted every other expense.

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<sup>6</sup> Chhev is word that commonly speaks in the fishermen world, referred to the foreman who is working on the boat that most of them are Cambodian.

Dan, 23 years old, is from Kompongspue Province. He first came to Thailand in 2002. Now he is working as a foreman (leader of the fishermen in the boat) in Ban Phe.

“I work so hard and very seriously at every job on the boat. After three years of working as a normal fisherman, the employer announced that I would be the foreman. I have worked as a foreman for already one year. The employer pays me different from the normal fishermen; I get my wages as a salary and also a commission. I get 10,000 baht per month and the employer will pay me 3,000 baht as commission per 1,000,000 baht of catch price. For my own daily payment, I can get as much as I want but the money will be included in my salary. My employer is good because since I work for him for already three years he has never cheated anyone at all. He pays very well and fairly to all the fishermen. Nobody working on this boat ever complains about him unlike other employers. Now the cheating by employers is decreased; if the employers cheat the fishermen, the only thing that the employer can do is to sell their boat and quit this business because nobody will work for them anymore since now the fishermen have strong connections with each other and the information will spread out very fast within the fishermen’s society.”

No one responded that they got extra or bonus money even if they work very hard or did overtime work. Most of the fishermen interviewed experienced being cheated by the employers, except the comers new who had just started working as a fisherman recently.

### **3.3.2.2 Working Hours**

There are no exact hours for the fishermen to work. Normally, they started to work when the captain rings for them. The ring is a sign sound when the captain is searching for a group of fish. Therefore, if the captain cannot find the fish, the fishermen are free. However, when the captain finds many groups of fish, the fishermen have to work very hard at that time. The timetable depends on the situation of the sea, fish, the season

and the type of the boat. Generally, the small boats go out to fish and back to the dock everyday, unless there is some condition such as storm and a cyclone. For the medium sized boats, normally they go out to fish and return to the dock within two or three days, unlike the big boats that spent 4-20 days at sea to fish. The docking time of the boats is totally dependant upon the period of fishing, and normally the docking time is considered as the enjoyable time for the fishermen. There is also no exact relaxing time and day off as well. When not fishing, the fishermen can relax or sleep and do whatever they want, such as when the boat is traveling to the target fishing point, after hauling in the nets, docking times and during the downtime. Even so, the working hours are dependent on the attitude of the captain. Some time even if they could not find fish, he will order the fishermen to release the net and then haul it back. Most of the fishermen responded that some of captain would not let the fishermen free at all; they can do whatever they want because they are the king on the boat when the boat is at sea. By contrast, most of the fishermen claimed that working as fishermen; they have a lot of free time rather than working on the land. Generally, the fishermen at least work from 6-15 hours, depending on each boat.

Ponlok, 23 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand in 2004 and is currently working on a small boat and works for a daily wage.

“There is no exact time for working as a fisherman; I and the others start to work when the captain rings when he has found the fish. Besides that, I sleep from when the boat leaves the pier until the fishing point or, sometime if the captain could not find the fish, I and the others will be free since the boat leaves the pier until it comes back to the pier. On the other hand, I have to work very hard sometimes when the captain finds many groups of fish. Working as fishermen, we have a lot of free time to relax and sleep. All the boats have their own regulations for leaving the port, if some one misses one time to fish, the employer will deduct half of their wage and some boats fine 1,000 baht. But, if someone misses more than three times, they will be kicked out from the boat and normally they will not be paid by the employer at all.”



Koy, 40 years old, from Kompongcham Province, he first came to Thailand in 2002.

“I work at least more than 12 hours a day and some days everybody in the boat is forced to work nearly 24 hours. In the boat, everything depends on the captain and foreman; if they are gentlemen, we will not face any problems, but if they are cruel, the fishermen will suffer. Normally, on the boat that I work on, we have very little free time because the captain always pushes us to work. Even when he could not find fish; they let us repair the nets. The reason why I keep working for this boat is because I am waiting for the end of the contract. After that, I will change to work on another boat where captain is kinder. If I keep working in this boat I will be dead soon.”

### **3.3.2.3 Working Responsibility**

The Khmer illegal immigrants do not need to hold any document even an ID card, in order to work as fishermen. They just come and work and most of them can get this kind of job through the introduction of the brokers, relatives, and friends. It is a very rare case that the fishermen can find the job by themselves. Moreover, they do not need to have any skills or background in fishing in order to work as a fisherman. Most of them came from the traditional agricultural background with a low level of education. When they reach the working place (Rayong or Ban Phe) where the fishery industry is located, they just jump on to the boat and start to work doing whatever the captain or foreman ordered them to do. There is no training for the fishermen provided by the employers before starting work. The fishermen's responsibilities seemed to be wide and complicated because every fisherman has to be able to work all the jobs on the boat and they have to learn each of those kinds of jobs from each other. The main jobs on the fishing boat are releasing and hauling fishing nets, repairing nets, unloading the fish, cleaning the nets and boat, stocking the fish on ice and so on. The man with a big responsibility on the fishing boat is the foreman because he is able to solve any problems that may happen during fishing.

Koy, 40 years old, is from Kompongcham Province. He first came to Thailand in 2002.

“When I arrived in Klong Sun (border passing point located in Trat province), my adopted brother took me to ask for job as a fisherman. The captain allowed me to work even though I did not have any skill or experiences at all. My adopted brother told me that I have to observe the others and try to work as they did. At the beginning, I worked to haul the nets from the sea and later I changed to work cranking the boat machine. Just within two years, I could work as every job on the boat. My job is my trainer. Now, I can work like the foreman. Even though the scale of job depends on the size of the boat, if we work on the small boats, the responsibility is less than working on the big boats because the big boats are at sea longer, there is a bigger fish stocking room and the nets are heavier than in the small boats, thus we have to work harder too.”

#### **3.3.2.4 Protection and Accident in the Working Place**

There is no particular protection equipment such as boots, rescue equipment (life jacket or life ring) provided to the fishermen to work either at sea or at the pier to protect them from any accidents. The fishermen use their daily clothes to work and traditionally the fishermen are not allowed to wear shoes or boots on the boat because of the employers belief, unless in the ice stocking room. The accidents that usually happened in the fishing jobs include; when the sea is storming or during heavy rains, the boats can hit each other during fishing in the night time, breaking the unload machines and so on. One more thing that the fishermen often face is when they get seasick, they can easy fall into the sea and immediately they will disappear if nobody sees them. These cases happen very often.

Dan, 23 years old, from Kompongspue Province, is currently working as boat foreman in Ban Phe. He tried to give a general aspect about the life working as fishermen.

“Working as fishermen we have to be careful all the time because we are not on the land and can escape to anywhere. At the same time, we have to help each other when accidents and problems happen. Since I have been a fisherman, I have seen many problems happen, such as storms at sea, the boat being hit by another ship, the fishermen being swapped by the unloading machine ties and the fishermen disappearing during the working time. What I am most scared about is when the boat gets hit by another ship because most of the people will die and sometime the shipmen will kill us instead of helping. For me I always tell my group of fishermen, especially the newcomers that when they have serious seasickness, do not walk around when other fishermen are working otherwise nobody knows when they fall into the sea. Because the boat machine is very noisy, we cannot hear someone call for help, but if they hang on to the nets, surely we can help. Normally they have no such chance like that and most never come back so what we can do wait for the dead body to float on the sea few days later. If someone gets seriously sick during the working time the captain will take them back to the pier and then take them to the hospital because on the boat we have only medicines for normal sickness.”

Sovann, 42 years old, from Preyveng Province, first came to Thailand and has worked as a fisherman since 1995.

“I never forgot what happened in 1995, many Khmer fishermen died at that time. I was one of the lucky men who could escape from that very risky situation. I was very scared at that time; some of my friends who were working with me on that boat disappeared until today. That time there was a big storm at sea. I remembered that there was an announcement to ban the fishing boat, meaning no boats should go out to fish, but my captain did not listen and he left the pier even after the ban. Luckily, the boat just went out around ten kilometers from the coast. The sky started to get darker and darker and immediately the storm arrived. The captain turned in the

direction of a nearby island. Just mid way to that island, the boat was struck by the storm and the boat started to sink. I caught a water container and tried to swim to that island. I spent nearly a night to swim and finally I reached that island. I stayed on that island three days with nothing to eat. When the storm calmed down I walked around the island shore and I saw three Khmer people and one Thai. We took a police boat to Rayong. After one day I went back to Cambodia and made a merit ceremony in my village.”

In conclusion about the working conditions of the fishermen, most of the fishermen have no prior skills, experience or background related to the sea before they became fishermen. They just come and work and get training on the job. Additionally, the employers never provide any training their employees because they think that there is nothing difficult to working as a normal fisherman. Working as fishermen there are three types of wage provided; daily wage, salary wage and the end of contract wage payment. The contact wage payment is considered the most risky since the main problem is cheating by the employers. There is no extra or bonus money provided to the fishermen even if they work very hard or overtime. Every expense that the employer spends such as food, boat repair, the net, ice, oil, and so on is included in the fishermen’s wages. There is no exact working time for the fishermen. The timetables are dependent on the situation at sea, the season and the captain or foremen’s orders. The working conditions of the fishermen are mainly related to the size of the boat and the kindness of each employer. Accidents and dangerous work conditions are commonly known to happen in the fishermen’s working environment. There are no protection equipment provided to the fishermen and moreover the fishermen are banned by the employer from wearing shoes or boots on the boat according to the employer’s beliefs because the employers beliefs the boat is similar to their house and moreover their boat has soul that is protecting everybody and makes the employer benefits. Therefore in order to respect the soul of the boat everybody even the employers have to take off the shoes before stepping on the boat. Therefore, according to all the information from the respondents, it shows that because the fishermen lives with illegal status; the employers, police or local officer tried to take

advantage from the fishermen rather than trying to solve or improve the working conditions that their conditions of living remained the same since the past until the present day.

### **3.3.3 Illegal Status**

#### **3.3.3.1 Knowledge about Laws and Regulations**

All of the illegal immigration fishermen knew nothing about any government policies or laws toward their immigrant status before they migrated to Thailand. The main reason beside it being easy to make money, Thailand is also possible to immigrate illegally as well. Meanwhile they faced many problems because they live with illegal status. When they started to know the problems some tried to legalize themselves by many ways such as trying to make permit card, even sometimes they were charged over the normal price. The administration system is still a big barrier to their legalization in Thailand. Some of the fishermen confirmed that they wanted to make a passport or visa to come to Thailand in order to work legally, but it is generally impossible for them. There are several agent companies doing business on this but they not can be trusted. Some of the fishermen said that they wanted to come to work in Thailand legally but they do not have enough money to make a passport or visa and the administration system seemed to be very complicated. If they had the amount of money to make a passport or visa, they would not come to Thailand, they would be better to take that amount of money and run a small business rather than go through the suffering of coming to Thailand to work. The main point is that they have no better choices than coming to Thailand to survive or complete their expectation of working outside Cambodia. Interestingly, the migrant workers consider the word 'immigrants' as a negative word to use for calling them. During the fieldwork I myself interviewed a key informant who is an NGO staff. While I used the word "immigrant" he forbade me not to use this to them because it can make them unhappy or angry because this word seemed strong for calling them. A fisherman explained that "immigrant" is a word that considered referring to the illegal people and he himself is unhappy with this word.

### 3.3.3.2 Attitudes to Applications for Working Permit Card<sup>7</sup>

Most of the fishermen do not want to apply for working permit card even though they know clearly how useful it is. There are many reasons that affect their decision to decide not to make a working permit card such as;

-First, almost all of their time is spent at sea so they have little fear they will be disturbed by police or local authorities. Most of the boats just dock for a short period of time and moreover they always move from one pier to another. This makes it difficult for the police to be able to control the illegal migrant fishermen. Sometime when the immigration police come to check the fishermen who have no working permit card, the employer just orders the boat to leave the pier so police will not be able to do anything about it.

-Second, the low wage payments make it such that even if they intend to make a working permit card, they cannot afford to do so.

-Third, even if the fisherman obtains a working permit card, they normally could not keep the original card themselves because the employers would not allow them to hold it. Normally, the employer would keep the card for them, except for the fishermen who are trusted by the employer. One of the employers says that if he does not keep the working permit card he could not control the moves of fishermen. The fishermen will move out when they get a working permit card. But still they can hold the copy in order to show to the police when they are arrested. Some of the employers have made the working permit card for their employees, but the cost will be calculated in the fisherman's wage. At least the fishermen paid 4,000-6,000 baht for the card that they could not hold, except for perhaps a copy.

-Fourth, they normally come to work as fishermen only seasonally. The Khmer immigrant comes to work as fishermen normally in the dry season and they will go

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<sup>7</sup> Working Permit Card is called by the immigrant in Thai language 'Bat Taang Daav'.

back to Cambodia when the rainy season comes. Therefore, these people will not make the card even if the employer forced them to do it.

-Fifth, they often come too late to Thailand, after the Thai government closes the period for the illegal immigrant to make a working permit card.

-Sixth, they think that even if they have or do not have a card, still they are paid the same wages.

-Seventh, even if they hold the working permit card, still they cannot travel freely in Thailand. The card authorizes movement in a limited space and the fishermen all have to run away or escape when the immigration police come to check in the port. Because normally the police do not care who does not have a card, they just firstly arrest and then call the employer to negotiate about that. They responded that still they have to pay at least 200 baht even when they have the card.

Given all these reasons, the working permit card is generally meaningless for the immigrants who work as fishermen. However, in the pier areas there is not much scrutiny because the police usually do not come deep into the pier. Thus, if they do not go out far from the pier, they have nothing to worry about. Undoubtedly, for fishermen who have their family along with them, have to make a working permit card; otherwise they do not have easy access to their life on the land. The fishermen are really just scared of (*Tor Mor*) Immigration Police rather than the local police or authorities because the local police are considered by the fishermen as just expecting money when they arrest the fishermen and the fishermen always negotiate by using money with those police. With the Immigration Police, the fishermen cannot negotiate by using money and undoubtedly the fishermen will be sent back if they are arrested and if they have no working permit card.

Pisit, 38 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He just came to Thailand to work as a fisherman five months ago.

“I knew nothing before I came here, even the sea I had never seen when I was in Cambodia. Now I am familiar with the situation and I feel more confident. I do not want to apply for a working permit card because my wage is very low and I will go back to Cambodia when the rainy season comes. My friends told me that the police never come to arrest the illegal fishermen in the port and, if I do not go somewhere far from the port, I have no need to make a card. Some of my friends who work with me said that they have a card but when I want to see what it looks like they just show me a sheet of paper and confirm that the original was kept by the employer. So this also caused me not to make the card as well. What for, even if we did make the card we could not keep it? I do not care now if I am arrested by the police, then I will go back. ‘Life is suffering here, we work like cows and buffalos, but we eat like pigs and sleep like dogs’.”

Because of the lack of training or information, the fishermen know the usefulness of the working permit card is for traveling only. Of course, one of the main uses of the working permit card is freedom to travel in a specific zone. However, the working permit card can be useful in many other ways and it shows clearly in the differences between those fishermen who hold or do not hold the card, especially when problems happen. For example, when the fishermen who hold the working permit card got sick and they need to go to hospital, the hospital service will charge as the Thai people (30 baht) per day unlike the fishermen who have no working permit card who will be charged very high. Another example; when they were arrested by the police the fishermen holding the working permit card will be released or just pay for negotiation but they will be sent back directly if they have no working permit card.

Vasna, 20 years old, from Preyveng Province, first came to Thailand in 2002 and is working as a fisherman in Ban Phe town.

“I want to make a working permit card because I want to see the outside world besides the port and the sea. I came here to Thailand not just to work



to save money and send back home, but also I want to know modern things that are happening nowadays.”

### **3.3.3.3 Experiences of Arrest by Police**

Most of the fishermen who have been in Thailand more than two years have experienced being arrested by the police. There are two kinds of police officers, first there are the local police and second are the immigration police. The fishermen responded that the local police need money rather than wanting to arrest them and send them back unlike the immigration police. They can normally negotiate with the local police by themselves and, if not successful, the employer will come to negotiate or insure them back from the police station. Almost all the time the fishermen and employer can use money to solve the problem. The fishermen are normally arrested when they are going out to enjoy their life at the karaoke bar or drinking shops near by the piers or when they make some conflict or dispute. However, sometimes the employers themselves call the local police to arrest the fishermen when the day comes for the end of their contract. The employers and police seem to work together very well on this point. Even so, the immigration police come to check them every month and some of fishermen are sent back to Cambodia, although some are insured by the employer. The fishermen confirmed that the employer will insure them from the police during the time when there is a lack of workers particularly in the rainy season when many of the fishermen go back to their farms in Cambodia. The guarantee money normally is paid by the employer first, but then the employer will calculate this payment into their wages and deduct it when the end of month or contract comes. One way that they can escape from being arrested by the police is by jumping into the sea, as the police will not follow them. However, if they are arrested after trying to escape, surely they will be beaten seriously by those police, whereas, if they did not try to escape and let the police catch them, they will not be beaten. After they are put in jail for some period, they will then be sent back to the Cambodian border. The reason that the fishermen always try to escape is because, if they are sent back and arrested by the police, they will lose a lot of money or their wage will be totally deducted by the employer. Further, if they come back again after

being sent away by the police, they have to start as a newcomer, even if they have worked nearly to the end of their contract.

Mina, 43 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand in 1999.

“Since I came to Thailand I have been arrested two times by the police and one time I was sent back to Cambodia after staying in jail for 25 days. At the time that I was sent back to Cambodia I was very disappointed with my employer because he did not give me my wage that I had worked for nearly 18 months. I came back and asked him for the money but he said that if I want the money I had to start the work again and he would make me wait until the end of the contract in order start to work as a new fisherman. I was very angry at that time but I could do nothing besides finding a new boat to work on. I really want to kill my employer if I could. Now I vow that I will not allow the police to arrest me anymore and I will not go out far from the port.”

To conclude this part, almost none of the fishermen know anything about the policy or immigration law regarding their status; they just know that they have come to Thailand illegally. The fishermen want to have a working permit card but they do not want to go through the process to apply for the card because of many reasons; the card seemed meaningless to them and at the same time they can hold a original one as well. Still they want to have card because they want the freedom of travel and to escape the scrutiny by the local police. Most of the immigrants who stayed and worked as fishermen in Thailand for more than two years experienced being arrested by the police are some time. In this part, it is shown clearly that their illegal status has a very significant effect on their living and working conditions, especially their freedom and rights. They want to legalize their life after illegally passing the border but, at the same time, there are many barriers that make it difficult to get legalized. No one responded that they wanted to protest against the cheating employers but they responded that we are Khmer and they are Thai and we have no right here in Thailand.

### 3.3.4 Health Problems

#### 3.3.4.1 Types of Illnesses and Accessing to Medical Services

Not one of my informants responded that they got seriously sick by working as fishermen. The common illnesses that the fishermen experience are those considered as normal, such as, fever, stomachache, headache, diarrhea, and so on. Seasickness normally happened with new comers. The employer has some medicine on the boat to treat these kinds of normal illnesses, but, if someone does not recover, the employer will take the fisherman to the hospital when the boat reaches the port. For fishermen who have no working permit card, the employer normally does not dare to take them to the hospital but will go instead to the drug stores, pharmacies or private clinic. The medicines and treatment cost will be included in the wage payment. For fishermen who hold a working permit card, they just spend 30 baht per day for their treatment, even if they get a serious sickness. Normally the fishermen who hold the card will go to hospital by themselves when they feel sick. During the time the fishermen get sick, the employer will still pay them if they work under contract or monthly wage payment. However, for the fishermen who work in the type of daily wage payment, normally the employer will not pay them if they did not go to work. On the other hand, if they have an accident during the time they are working, the employer will be responsible for them and they will pay for everything. However, if they get injured by being beaten or having a conflict outside the port areas, the employer will pay nothing for them and moreover those fishermen will usually be kicked out of the job as well. By contrast, there are some cases that the fishermen reported where on some boats the captain and foremen are very bad and forced the fishermen to work even if they are sick.

Mina, 43 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand in 1999. “I never have gotten seriously sick, but very frequently I get fever and cold. Normally, it takes me two or three days only to recover from these kinds of sicknesses. In the boat there are medicines for us that we can ask for when we feel sick. Anyway, I keep thinking that if one day I got seriously sick I would go back to Cambodia because here the medicine is very expensive and as I have no working permit card, surely I will not be able to afford it

unlike the fishermen who have a card, and they just pay 30 baht a day. I think that my current employer, captain and foreman are good people because they never forced us to work when anyone gets sick.”

It seemed that it is not easy for the illegal fishermen workers to access the medical service, even if they have a working permit card. The main barrier is language for communicating with the doctors. If they are taken by their employer, it will be convenient because the employer will act as the interpreter. It was not easy for the employers that take their employees to the state hospitals because they will have to spend a lot of time and money, and moreover they are scared that they will be accused that they employed illegal immigrants. Some employers pay the fishermen the travel cost for going back to Cambodia instead of taking them to a hospital in Thailand. Even so, there is an NGO working in Rayong Province and most of the NGO's projects focus on health problems. Moreover, that NGO role is very important in the fishermen's community as a middleman between the fishermen and the hospital. That NGO is named Center for AIDS Rights (CAR).

#### **3.3.4.2 Knowledge and Attitudes toward HIV/AIDS**

Some of the fishermen responded that they knew something about HIV/AIDS since they were in Cambodia, some were trained by Center for AIDS Right (CAR) at the pier in Rayong and Baanphe, and some said they do not care about this issue because they never go to prostitutes. Even so, the fishermen, especially the teenagers, added that they could not just work but they have also to enjoy their life after working otherwise they will go crazy. The places that they normally go to enjoy their life are karaoke shops that surely provide sex services and brothels. All of them responded that they know how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS that is, using condoms.

It not easy to identify those who are HIV/AIDS positive because most of them are illegal immigrants and they never have had their blood tested. We can often only recognize their HIV status when they fall into serious illness. For fishermen who have a working permit card, they can easily know their HIV status because they will be checked during the

time of making their card. Moreover, many boats perform monthly tests both that are holding the working permit card and the fishermen have no working permit card, if the fishermen test positive for HIV, they will be kicked out from job and will be sent back to Cambodia by the police.

#### **3.3.4.3 Drug Abuse**

The experienced fishermen mentioned that in the present day there is only a small amount of drugs used, unlike in the last four or five years when at least 10 among 20-30 of fishermen were using drugs on one boat. There was a very good network to sell drugs to the fishermen. All of the fishermen responded that nobody forced them to use those kinds of things but they took them by themselves because they want to make a lot of money by working very hard on the boat and then they expected to get higher wages at the end of their contract. Most of the captains and foremen were also drug users. Nowadays, there are some who keep on using drugs but only in the very secret places or when nobody is on the boat because if the employers or captain knows, they will be kicked out from the job or the employer will call the police to have them arrested. The fishermen said that for someone who used drug and if the police arrest them, they will be very seriously beaten by those police. The main reason that the employers are very strict on this matter is because, if police knows that there are fishermen using drugs on that boat, the employer of the boat will be held responsible.

Bunthouern, 25 years old, from Kandal Province, came to Thailand three years ago. He has worked as a fisherman in Trat, Pattani and also Songkla. Currently he works in Rayong.

“When I was working in Pattani many fishermen in my boat used drugs. Once I tried some, but I feel nothing much except on that day I could not sleep at all. There was a man who sells drugs to the fishermen and he is Khmer. When I came to Rayong, still I saw fishermen were using drugs but only in very secret places and they do not want someone to see them unlike in Pattani. Now on the boat that I am working, still there are a few using

drugs but I do not care about them because those guys act very cruel and speak very impolitely. Nobody on this boat likes them. I think some day soon they will be arrested by the police. When I was in Cambodia, I heard that the employer forced the fishermen to use drugs, but when I arrived and worked with them I saw that the fishermen used drugs by themselves.”

By conclusion to this part, the fishermen normally faced slight health problems such as, fever, stomachache, diarrhea, cold, and headache. In this case, they do not need to go to the hospital and, at the same time; they do not intend to go to the hospital because there are many barriers to access to the health services according to their illegal status. For the fishermen who have no working permit card they have two choices; first, they have to go back to Cambodia and, second, they have to stay in the hospital and pay by themselves. The first choice is commonly used and even encouraged by the employer as well.

All of them know about the danger of the HIV virus but their attitude toward this virus seems to be not serious because some just want to enjoy their life and some feel confident of themselves by not going to prostitutes. There is an NGO playing a very important role in the fishermen society both in Ban Phe town and in Rayong Province. This NGO is working mainly on HIV/AIDS issues and birth control but, according to the fishermen respondents, this NGO role was also to act as the middlemen between the fishermen and the every government institution especially hospitals.

Nowadays, it is very rare to find drugs used by people in the fishermen society unlike in the last four or five years. The captain and the foremen were considered as the more active drug users, followed by the normal fishermen. The fishermen, who did use drugs, used them in very secret places and did not let anybody see them. If they are caught, they can be kicked out from their jobs by the employer or arrested by police.

### 3.3.5 Conflicts and Rights

#### 3.3.5.1 Between Khmer Fishermen

There are many serious conflicts among Khmer fishermen and it is often very violent. They can kill each other very easily. Most of them have their own killing tools, which they usually consider as protection devices. The kinds of tools used are Dek Chharp<sup>8</sup>, swords or knives, and guns, and these are all readily available in the markets.

The main reason causing the conflict among Khmer fishermen is due to the Karaoke girls and generally after heavy drinking. Most of the fighters are teenagers and they like to act like a gangster. They form their own group in order to protect themselves and go out in the night. If someone has no group, they will often be attacked when they go out to enjoy themselves on land far from the port. The fishermen usually solves the conflicts by beating up or killing each other because they considered themselves as an illegal person and living without recourse to law society, moreover when the conflicts happened, the police seemed not intent to come to intervene. However, when they injured or killed someone, one way that they can escape is to go back to Cambodia or to change the place of work. Nobody cares or seriously investigates the dead body and, moreover, the police will take the dead bodies to burn very soon.

Sothea, from Preyveng Province, first came to Thailand in 2000. Currently he is working in Rayong.

“When I was in Cambodia I heard that Thai people treated on the Khmer fishermen very cruelly but, when I arrived and work here, it is mostly Khmer who kill each other. Most of them are teenagers without parents who

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<sup>8</sup> Dek Chharp is a kind of specific tool that can be used to kill people and they can buy it in the market. The tool called “Dek Chharp” in Khmer is commonly used in the fishermen society, mainly for killing people. The effectiveness of this tool is that when someone is stabbed with this tool, the blood will not come out from the injury point but within ten minutes, they will die. The fishermen responded that when someone is stabbed by Dek Chharp, certainly they die in a short period of time and most of them died before they even reach the hospital.

come along and nobody gives them advice thus they are free here to do as they want. They act very scary and cruel. Normally, when I go for a walk, I never dare to look at their face because they can kill me just because I look at their face; they did to some fishermen before. Even though I used to be soldier for many years, still I am scared of them, especially the tool they used such as Dek Chharp because, after being stabbed, the blood does not come out. If you want to see a Khmer dead body, you just stay here for a couple of days and you will see one, especially during the time when most of the boats are docked in the port. The dead bodies float on the sea nearly every day here. The main reason is Karaoke girls. I still wondered why they do that because the girls do not belong to them; they do business and welcome every man not only their group. There are a few working on my boat that is in the group of Big Brother in Rayong. I hope that they will die soon.”

### **3.3.5.2 Between Khmer Fishermen and Thai Local Gangsters**

The conflicts between Khmer fishermen and Thai local gangsters almost always are instigated by the Thai gangster. When they are drunk, especially after mid-night, and when they see the Khmer fishermen walking along the street near the ports, they will throw beer bottles or give a swipe with a knife and it happened very often. They usually drive by on a motorcycle to do this, otherwise the Khmer fishermen will likely fight back. Even so, when the fishermen have a chance they will take some revenge, which normally they will end up by killing the Thai gangster and then the Khmer fishermen will run away back to Cambodia. Regarding this problem, most of the fishermen responded that both of them are gangsters. The serious conflict happens after coming back from the drinking or karaoke shops and they have some dispute along the road back to the ports. They will start to attack each other in many ways such as throwing bottles, using knives, using the Dek Chharp, and sometimes even shooting guns. The fishermen added that most of the time the problem maker can escape after the dispute, but when the Thai side comes to take revenge against the fishermen, the fishermen are vulnerable since they usually know nothing. By



contrast, there are some fishermen gangsters who are also the problem maker but normally they never dare to make conflict with Thais unlike with other fishermen. According to the respondent; the police seemed to be biased trying to solve the problems between Thai gangsters and fishermen.

Kosal, 17 years old, is from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand with his brother last year and works as a fisherman in Rayong. He was beaten by a Thai gangster.

“In the last three months, when my brother and I went to a restaurant near the port. We had beer bottles thrown at us without knowing anything. We tried to run away to the port but my brother fell down after reaching the port because blood was flowing into his eye. My head was injured. They were Thai people and all were driving motorcycles. Nobody helped us at that time; it was around 9 o’clock at night. Luckily, my employer believed me that I did not cause any problem and he took me and my brother to a clinic and after a week we could work as normal. Later on I found out that those Thai gangsters were beaten by one group of Khmer fishermen so that is why they came to take revenge on some Khmer fishermen. Now I am very scared about living in this area. I never go to the land anymore in the night time.”

### **3.3.5.3 Between Khmer and Burmese Fishermen**

The conflicts happened when most of the boats were docking while many fishermen started to enjoy their life in Karaoke bars. The attacks were always started by the Khmer fishermen and some problems seemed not to have any reason, for instance even they just looked at to each other they could end up in dispute, many respondents said. Some Khmer fishermen said that they were encouraged by their employer to beat or kill the Burmese fishermen when they feel that they dislike those Burmese fishermen. In order to make the employer happy, the Khmer fishermen, especially the teenagers, will immediately attack or kill those Burmese fishermen without thinking anything. They added that before the Burmese fishermen were famous for their cruelty, or being the meanest in the

fishermen's society, but now the Khmer fishermen have taken this name. Even so, the revenge attacks between all sides will likely continue.

Bunthoern, 25 years old from Kandal province, currently working as fisherman in Banphe town. He is a person that many young fishermen considered as a master in the boat. He said;

“Now the Khmer fishermen are very powerful in fishermen society. I am satisfied with what the Khmer fishermen had done with Burmese fishermen. It was very cruel. I can say that the Khmer fishermen are the master now and many are crazy. They do not care anything and they just do what they want but normally they dare to do that with only normal fishermen.”

#### **3.3.5.4 Between Khmer Fishermen and Employers**

The fishermen never dare to make a conflict with their employers but, when they cannot bear what the employers have done to them, they will fight back in both direct and indirect ways. In this situation most of disputes happened not with the owner of the boat but almost always with the captain or foremen on the boat. The conflicts between the fishermen and the captain or foremen mostly happened during the time they are working. Normally the fishermen are very angry when they are insulted or cursed at (Che Mae).<sup>9</sup> One word that is considered as a strong insulting word for the fishermen and for all general Khmer people is “Kanduy Mae Aeng—Fucking your mother”. If some one used this word for insulting someone later on a serious problem will happen or they will be going to kill each other. Most of the captains never dared to use these kinds of words.

Sometimes they have conflict and beat each other when they are at sea but sometimes they wait until the boat comes to the port. Most of the fishermen replied that if the captain just insulted them, they can bear it and calm down, but if the captain insults their mother, they will fight that captain. There are also some cases that happen when the fishermen will attack the employers if the employer cheats them. Normally they will attack

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<sup>9</sup> Che Mae is a Khmer word means insult or cursing at. For instance “Fuck your mother.....”

the employer directly. A fisherman told me that; in the last two years a Khmer fisherman tried to kill the children of the employer who is cheated him. He works for almost two years but the employer did not pay him while the conflict happened and that employer threatened to call police to arrest all fishermen who want to protest. So, all fishermen very anger and a fisherman says that he will kill that employer and even his children. This problem happened in the last two years and it was big problem in Rayong province.

Koy, 40 years old, from Kampongcham Province, currently is working in Rayong. He described the conflict between his adopted brother and the captain and how finally his adopted brother was killed by that captain.

“When the boat came to the shore for unloading the fish, at that time my adopted brother stood on the head of the boat waiting to tie the boat with the pier post. He told the captain to reduce the speed of the boat. Then the captain said that “I have worked as a captain for 30 years, there is no one who dares to order me. You are the only person who dare order me”. After saying that, the captain cursed his mother ‘*Che Mea*’<sup>10</sup> and then came to beat his head. My adopted brother replied that “I just tell you not order you, why you ‘*Che Mea*’ me. My mother is my most respected person and also she is not relevant to this problem as well. You can curse only me is ok.” When the captain beat him, he tried to protect himself. Immediately, I and some other fishermen, along with two Thai fishermen, intervened between them and then the conflict was finished at that time. At that time, my adopted brother and I did not know that the captain called his friends to kill my adopted brother. After unloading the fish from the boat, immediately the captain called all the fishermen to get on the boat and then we left the port. After the boat left the port around twenty kilometers, the boat stopped and suddenly five other boats came around and more than twenty men jumped into the boat and beat my adopted brother very severely again.

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<sup>10</sup> By using this expression, the insulting words are targeted not only at him but also his mother. This is unacceptable in Khmer society and makes Khmer people very angry.

My adopted brother tried to protect himself and finally he escaped by jumping into the sea. Still those men did not let up on him. They kept beating him by throwing a *Chhbaa*<sup>11</sup> at him even though my adopted brother was in the water. Me and the others just kept silent and stood looking at what was happening to him. They had guns and they threatened us not to get involved with this problem otherwise they will kill all of us. I cried and pitied my adopted brother. He was very kindly and gentle. There was a Thai man who was born in Surin who threw a water container to him so he could swim, but it could not help because he died since the beginning after he was stabbed by Chhbaa. There were only five Cambodian people who worked on that boat and others were Burmese and Thai. The boat came back to the port and stopped for a week before going back to fish as usual. Thus, the reason to leave the port the last time was just to kill my adopted brother. After we came back to the port, that captain took all the Cambodian fishermen who had seen the event to a restaurant and Karaoke shop and paid for everything. Then those fishermen were told that if they tell about the event to the police or someone else, they will be killed. A day later I and some others escaped and found another boat to work on because we were scared to be killed if we kept working for that boat. Even so I swore to myself that I will take revenge by killing that captain before I leave for Pattani. During the time I was working in Pattani, I tried to investigate that captain when that boat came to the pier, but I could not find that captain anymore. Maybe, that captain escaped after killing my adopted brother. I never thought that it could happen to my adopted brother because he was a gentleman and very helpful. This happened one year ago.”

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<sup>11</sup> A kind of fishing tool with long handle and sharp blade.

### 3.3.5.5 Domestic Violence

In this research, there was no response about serious domestic violence concerning the fishermen whose family came along with them. However, they noted that it was a normal problem within the family that small disputes happened, such as insults between husband and wife. Nevertheless, there are very rarely of the beating happened because they are scared that the police will come to arrest them and, if they start beating each other, the owner of the rental house will not allow them to stay any longer. Normally, Thai people who are living as the fishermen neighbors will call the police if they saw any seriously domestic violent happened. The fishermen themselves admire someone whose family comes along because they make a lot of money and they considered those fishermen as very successful in migrating to Thailand.

Nary, 24 years old, is from Battambang Province. Currently she is working as one who processes the fish in the port. Her work is just to sit and divide the types of fish into each container. She said that:

“I never see the fishermen beat their wife and it seems that they love each other more than when they were in Cambodia, especially my sister. Even so, sometimes they insulted each other. Here if someone beats their wife, Thai people will call the police to arrest them, unlike in Cambodia that nobody cares about this. So the men do not dare to beat the women anymore.”

To conclude, in the fishermen society the ways that they solved the problem and conflicts are usually by beating and killing each other, instead of talking or asking what is the problem first. The conflicts between Khmer fishermen were considered as mostly happening in the fishermen's society in the present time. Many of them have formed their own groups in order to protect their own number. Each group has many killing tools that are readily available in the markets. However, those groups usually act, not to protect themselves, but to make conflict with those fishermen who have no group. They act very cruelly and sometimes they killed each other with no apparent reason at all. Conflicts also happen between Khmer fishermen and Thai people, Burmese fishermen and also with the

employers as well, although now such incidents do not happen as often as before. The police seemed not to intend to solve the problem if the conflict happens between Khmers or between Khmer and Burmese fishermen, but they will seriously intervene if the conflict happens between Khmer and Thai people.

### **3.3.6 Future Aspirations**

#### **3.3.6.1 Changing their Current Job**

Most of the Khmer fishermen do not want to change their current job because: firstly, they have no connection with other people in Thailand; secondly, they cannot move freely from one place to another because of their illegal status, even if they hold a working permit card, since the card has its own limit of space for them to travel, and thirdly they think that working as a fisherman is easier than working other jobs since they have enough time to relax and sleep. Moreover, if they work on land, they have to spend for food and accommodations. Fishermen are provided free accommodation and food, although the food cost is included in their wages and not necessarily provided free, the fishermen did not have to spend by themselves. Thus, there is no need to worry about a lack of food even if they have no job. Even so, there are some fishermen who want to change their job as fishermen because of the instability and lack of security in the fishermen society. Normally, when they want to change jobs, they just move from one to another boat in order to solve the problem of being cheated by the employers, if they have conflicts, if they are in search of a better wage payment or perhaps to move to work with their friends or relatives. In the fishermen's society, working with a friend or relative can make them more confident of their work situation, than if they work on a boat where they do not know anyone else.

Wuth is from Preyveng Province. He first came to Thailand in 2003 and now he is working in Rayong Province.

“I would not want to change my job as a fisherman to work on the land, especially as a construction worker, because there is no time to relax at all. Moreover, we have to spend a lot of money for renting the room and buying

food and escaping from the police, which is one of the difficult points. If I want to change jobs, better that I go back to Cambodia.”

### **3.3.6.2 Intention to Permanently Settle in Thailand, Plan to Return to Cambodia and Plan to Re-immigrate**

Because the conditions in Thailand are never really convenient to the fishermen's life, they never think that they want to live permanently in Thailand, even if they can make a good income. They will go back to Cambodia when they can or when the right time comes. In the present day, most of them cannot decide whether they should go back because, once they go back to Cambodia, they often immediately re-immigrate to Thailand because they have nothing to do in Cambodia. Most of them responded that they better not go back to Cambodia if they keep coming back to Thailand again and again. For the seasonal immigrant, they will go back and forth depending on the farming season. In Thailand, the main reason the fishermen decide not to permanently settle is usually due to the limited freedom and rights. Their status limits them in the space they can travel and the right to protest on their own benefit. They felt nobody really cares about their living conditions and, since they are not Thai citizens, they considered themselves as people with no rights.

Koy, 40 years old, is from Kompongcham Province and currently working in Rayong Province.

“I will go back to Cambodia when I can save some money then I will make a small business in Cambodia. I will not live in Thailand even if they allowed me to live here. This is not our hometown. Nobody speaks Khmer language and we cannot go somewhere freely like in Cambodia. Everyday I am stuck on the boat, even if I have nothing to do. These days, I bear it for the money only. Even so, I do not want to go back at this time because I think that I will just re-immigrate if I go back now. As you know, there is nothing to do at all in Cambodia if we do not have any connections. I have

no choice at all. Our Khmer are suffering here and they bear it just for their life.”

### **3.3.6.3 Perspective towards Local Thai People**

In this section, local Thai people will be categorized into three groups: firstly, the employers and captains of the boat; secondly, the people who live or do business near the port; and thirdly, the Thai teenagers. Generally, the fishermen make a judgment about the employer and captain through the wage payment system. As mentioned in the working conditions part (Part: 3.3), if the employer pays them well at the end of the contract, the fishermen will evaluate that employer as a good person. With respect to the captain of the boats, the fishermen seem to evaluate them as the cruelest people in the fishing industry. When the fishermen talk about the captain of the boat, they always talk about cruelty. For the local people living near the port, the fishermen responded that Thai people are generally kind and helpful. Sometimes the fishermen are told by the local people when to escape if the police come and sometimes the fishermen invite those Thai people to join in the wedding ceremonies. Thus, these kinds of relations give the Khmer fishermen positive feelings toward those Thai local people.

There are two perspectives toward the teenagers that are commonly considered as gangsters. The fishermen who were also considered by the other fishermen as gangsters responded that those teenagers are very cruel and they always look down on the Khmer fishermen, that is why the fishermen cannot bear it and fight back with them in order to release their anger. By contrast, the fishermen who are older said that if we do not go out to make conflict, surely nobody will come to fight us. Moreover, we have to know ourselves, what our position is and what we are doing nowadays. They added that those young Khmer fishermen are also not normal; they are also the conflict makers as well.

Sovann, 42 years old, has experience working as a fisherman for a long time. He said that he knows a lot in the fishermen’s society.



“The Khmer fishermen now are very unusual; even though here is not their country but they dare to fight Thai people when they are angry. I am not on the Thai side and also not on the Khmer side, but I speak as I see. Both Khmer and Thai sides are bad. They make their own conflict and they cause problems to others that they know nothing about. Many people are killed and injured without knowing anything. The trouble makers escape and the police arrest the fishermen who did not even know how the conflict happened. I always run away to escape from the police because of those guys.”

#### **3.3.6.4 Change of Attitudes**

Most fishermen try to speak the Thai language rather than Khmer language when they meet strange people and normally, if they have children, they never speak Khmer with their children at all. There is no strong evidence to support why they intend to do this. But, according to my observation in the fieldwork, perhaps this is done in order to conform their daily life to Thai society and show to other people their own ability to speak a foreign language. I do not think that they intend to speak the Thai language because nobody speaks Khmer with them or they have no time to speak Khmer. They live in a community that normally uses their own language rather than Thai language. With respect to the way they dress and act, they often try to be like Thai people. Perhaps this is due to the influence of the new thing they experience in Thailand and, as stated above, because they think that if they can mix with Thai society so they will not be recognized as illegal immigrants. The ability to speak, dress, and act like Thai people is very important so that they can benefit from such things when they are traveling. Most of them added that they are never scrutinized by the police when they speak Thai and dress well because the police could not tell whether they are Thais or Khmers.

In conclusion, the fishermen do not seem to want to change their current job because they think that they can gain benefit from this job rather than other jobs in Thailand. They always emphasize the amount of time for relaxing, the free accommodation

and food. These kinds of thing seemed to cover the hardship and dangerous aspects of this working society. If they are dissatisfied with their job, they change the boat they are on, especially if they think they are being cheated or forced to work too much by the employers. The fishermen never intend to live in Thailand permanently because of their illegal status and their treatment from Thai society, particularly with respect to freedom of travel, which is limited, and the right to protest for their benefits. They cannot do anything to improve their situation and at the same time they will be threatened if they try to protest. The captains are considered by the fishermen as the cruelest people in the fishing industry, followed by the employers who cheat them. Because of their status, the fishermen, especially when they go out from the port or those fishermen who live on land, try to speak, dress and act like Thai rather than Khmer because they want to integrate their life into Thai society. As result, they can gain some benefit from that as they are not scrutinized as closely by the police but they often look strange to the local Thai people.

### **3.4 Case Study Two: Construction Workers**

#### **3.4.1 Living Conditions**

##### **3.4.1.1 Accommodations**

Construction workers are generally provided free accommodations. The employer will build shelters for them to stay in, mostly in or close to the construction sites. They usually live up to 20 workers in one place. The biggest such place is called “the Camp” located in Khet Rangsit, Bangkok. The shelters are built and covered with zinc sheets, both the roof and walls. The shelters are separated into rooms, with each room for two or three workers, if they are single, and for one family if they are a couple. Moreover, the construction workers also provided electricity and water for free with no limit as to use. The employer usually builds a cement pond for the workers for communal use. The workers have to carry water for their personal use such as cooking or drinking from these ponds. Normally, the workers share a room with friends or relatives who come from the same village or the workers who work for the same employers or labor contractor.

In my research, I discovered one camp where more than a thousand Cambodia illegal construction workers, apart from Burmese and Lao workers, are living. It was considered by the workers themselves as the largest living place in Bangkok for illegal construction workers. This camp is surrounded by the many construction sites and it seems to be one of the largest markets for construction jobs as well. This camp was constructed in approximately 1999 when this area was developed to be a modern village. There are bodyguards watching and controlling the construction workers. Regularly, the construction workers who live in this camp are not allowed to go out from the camp after ten o'clock at night. If any workers disobey this order, the bodyguard will not be responsible for their security and, moreover, if they are arrested by the police, the employers or construction undertakers will not guarantee them. According to my observation, most of the rooms have a TV with big speakers. The workers who own these kinds of things are mostly those who have been working or living in the camp for a long time. The respondents confirmed that normally it was safe only during the day. In the night when all the workers come back from work, they drink and that is when the conflicts start. Nobody dares to walk past or around after dark. There are some workers who always move from one job to another when they finish their contract in that place or perhaps when they have a problem at their place of working or living. Most of the Cambodian illegal immigration construction workers are always on the move.

#### **3.4.1.2 Meals**

The construction workers can buy food in the market nearby or within the living place. There are Thai shops located at their living places and, moreover, there are also Thai mobile sellers that bring food to sell them at the living places as well. The Thai shops are most popular because they can buy food on credit and they will pay back at the end of each week. It is very rare for workers to buy food at the regular market because they are scared of being arrested by the police or local authorities. Normally, the construction workers wake up in the early morning to cook and pack their lunch because they have only one hour to relax during lunch. Interestingly, in some living sites there are big ponds or they are close to a river and thus the construction workers can fish. Those respondents in

such a situation confirmed that they can save a lot of money on buying food because they can catch fish which they do everyday after coming back from work.

Ty, 22 years old, from Banteaymeanchey Province, came to Thailand four month ago.

“I cook by myself because I cannot afford to eat in the restaurant at all. Normally I buy food from Thai sellers on credit and then I will pay them back in the end of each month. I live with two other friends and everything we share with each other even cooking. Everything here is very expensive but we have to eat to survive and work.”

### **3.4.1.3 Communications and Ceremony Celebrations**

The telephone has a very important function for the construction worker's communications. They generally communicate with each other by phone rather than go out to visit each other because their illegal status is a main barrier to their being able to communicate in person. They have limited right to travel, thus they are not able to go out to visit each other. They responded that sometimes they can go very freely without being caught by any police but sometimes, even if they just go to the market, they are arrested by the police. Even so, the Cambodian construction workers can celebrate any ceremony at their living place and they are never disturbed by any police or local authorities. Most of the ceremonies are wedding ceremonies but they added that the more ceremonies that are held, the more conflicts happen. On the other hand, some people are able to celebrate ceremonies with Thai people in monasteries, especially Cambodian labor contractors. When they went to monasteries they were followed by other construction workers because the labor contractors had a good relationship with local police that make the worker comfortable to go with labor contractor. Obviously the Cambodian construction workers know very well about local police or authorities because they have stayed here for a long time, thus when they go somewhere in that particular area, they are never caught.

Sarn, 42 years old, is from Battambang province. He came to Thailand and has worked as a construction worker since 1992. Currently he is a Cambodian labor contractor.

“I came to Thailand and have worked as a construction worker since the wage was only 60 baht per day. I moved to many places to work according to the contract. I know many Thai employers and police, especially in my current place. When someone wants to celebrate a ceremony, they always contact me and let me negotiate with the police. Sometimes when I go to a monastery, many workers asked to come along with me and I have no problem being caught by the police at all.”

#### **3.4.1.4 Entertainment**

TV/Videos are the most popular entertainment for the construction workers followed by volleyball or Takraw sport.<sup>12</sup> Most responded that they did not know how they can enjoy their life because they are illegal immigrants. Their main purpose for coming to Thailand was to work and save money to send back to Cambodia, not for entertainment. Some of the teenage workers confirmed that they did not know where the brothel was, but they knew that the prostitute here is very expensive. In general, their illegal status is the main barrier for them to be able to access any entertainment place. They are stuck in their living place so when they have free time they watch TV/Videos, which is the most popular entertainment for them.

Sokun, 24 years old, is from Svayreing province. He came to Thailand and worked on a farm in Chonburi province for six months and then moved to work as a construction worker in his current place for nearly four years.

“Since I came here I never go to visit anywhere at all because I worry about being arrested by the police. I do not want to go back to Cambodia yet because I am still in big debt. When I have free time or there is no work to do I just go around and visit others or watch TV within the camp. In the evening, I go to play volleyball with other Cambodian workers here in the

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<sup>12</sup> Takraw is a kind of sport in which a ball is kicked around a circle.

camp. Living here is scary all the time unlike in Cambodia where we can do whatever we want.”

#### **3.4.1.5 Marriage in Thailand**

Marriage in Thailand among illegal immigrants is mostly between Khmer workers, followed by Cambodia women getting married with Thai undertakers. They get to know each other when they work together in the same working sites or under the same employer or undertakers and then they decide to marry. Most of the construction workers confirmed that nowadays there are many Cambodia women who have become the second wife of the Thai undertakers or workers. They added that most of these women get married because they expect some money.

Most of the weddings between Khmer people are celebrated in the living places in Thailand, although some are celebrated again when they go back to Cambodia. The wedding celebrations of illegal Khmer immigrants in Thailand are usually just a small party because normally they cannot celebrate a traditional ceremony. They will eat and drink and then finish by dancing. Actually they cannot celebrate the whole set of traditional practice because it is difficult to find the traditional Khmer wedding articles in Thailand. The Cambodian workers generally said that the wedding ceremonies here are celebrated to receive money and gifts because, once they are married, all the other workers will join and give them something. Nevertheless they married because they love each other and most of the marriages in Thailand are successful because the couple tries to work together to save a lot of money.

Chunly, 21 years old, is from Battambang province. She immigrated into Thailand in the middle of 2005.

“My husband is Thai and he has worked as a construction worker here for many years. I met him when I worked for him because he is a construction undertaker. In the beginning of 2006, he asked me to get married and I agreed because he is gentle and kind. I married him not because he is Thai

or because he had money, which is what other Cambodian workers thought. They think like that because they are jealous of me. My wedding ceremony was held in this camp.”

#### **3.4.1.6 Family and Children**

Most of the Cambodian illegal construction workers came along with their family, although, as noted above, some got married in Thailand. The women’s role is to be a helper to make extra income and also as a helper doing the household jobs. Most of the women who come along end up working with her husband. There are many factors to facilitate them coming along with their husband, such as: they are provided a long-term living place; they can make more income; they can continue to live together and help each other as a family and; it reduces the risk of such problems as contracting HIV/AIDS. Once they decide to immigrate to Thailand, especially as a family, normally their children will be brought along also, although some children are born in Thailand. The main reason for bringing their children along is that nobody will take care of them in Cambodia. The children of Cambodian illegal construction workers are often living under risky conditions. They often go without education and receive less medical care. There is no NGO assistance to them and they do not want to access the Thai state hospital because of their illegal status, as well as not enough information and the high cost of medicine. Most of them responded that if their children get seriously ill, they will send them back to Cambodia.

Romdoul, 44 years old, after being repatriated from a refugee camp, she resettled in Battambang province, which is her husband’s birthplace. Her husband immigrated to Thailand in 1999 but she just came to work with her husband in 2003.

“In the beginning I came to Thailand because I thought that more or less I could help my husband make more income, but I had no job to do for almost one year in the beginning. I just stuck in our room and cooked for my husband. When I got a job and work for one year, our son immigrated to Thailand also. Now I have a baby who is just one year old. My husband does not allow me to work anymore and now he wants me to go back to

Cambodia in order to take care of the baby because here it is not easy to go to the hospital when the child gets sick.”

#### **3.4.1.7 Remittances**

The main method to remit money to Cambodia is through the intricate system of agents. When the construction workers want to send money home, they call the agent who they trust to come and then call to someone who they want to send the money to in Cambodia. When their family, relatives, or parents receive the phone call and collect the money from the agent in Cambodia, then they will give money to the agent here in Thailand. Generally, the service costs are between 30-80 baht per 1,000 baht, according to the place or agents. If the workers live far from the agent, they will charge a little bit more and the worker will have to send at least 10,000 baht. The Cambodian illegal construction workers confirmed that remitting money home by this means is very safe and economical worthy because they only give money to the agent after the recipient in Cambodia gets the money. Normally, the construction workers send money home approximately once every one to six months, according to their wage payment or their commitment to save. The workers mostly send money home to let their parents or relatives save it for them for when they will go back. The other reasons for remitting money is for their children's education, building a house, buying a motorcycle or repaying debts. Most of them noted that they worried about their future, so they have to save while they are able to work so that when they get old, they will have some money to survive.

Sarouern, 22 years old, is from Banteaymeanchey province, and came to Thailand to work as a construction worker almost two years ago.

“Within three months time, I will send money home because I have to support my brother who is studying in Cambodia and the rest of the money my parent save for me so that when I go back I can buy a motorcycle. I will go back when I can save enough money to buy a motorcycle for doing business.”



To conclude this part, the Cambodian illegal immigrants who work as construction workers are provided free accommodation, which are mostly located in or close to the working sites. These places could be considered as a big construction worker camp. In the slum, there are many Thai shops and Thai mobile carts selling food for the construction workers. They is no need to go out from the slum to buy food at the market. Moreover, they can buy food from the Thai sellers on credit and then pay at the end of each week. Because of their illegal status the Cambodian construction workers do not have easy access to be able to celebrate traditional ceremonies while they are in Thailand but they can freely celebrate wedding ceremonies in their slum. Cambodian illegal construction workers do not have easy access to the outside world, thus the phone plays an important role for communication with their relatives and friends who live in different slums. Television and videos are the favorite form of entertainment for them in the slum, instead of visiting outside where they run the risk of being caught by the police and local authorities. Most of the construction workers bring their family because they can help each other both personally and in making more income. Children come because nobody is available to take cares of them in Cambodia. The children live in risky conditions, with no access to education and good medical care due to their parents' illegal immigrant status. When they bring along their family, they can save and send more money home rather than if they come alone. Even so, the illegal construction workers compared that, apart from the lack of freedom of travel, their living condition in Thailand is better than in Cambodia mainly because of an economic reason.

### **3.4.2 Working Conditions**

#### **3.4.2.1 Labor Wage Payments**

The range of wage payments for the construction workers is between 110-300 baht per day, depending on the gender, employers, type of work and experience. The worker will not be paid when they are not able to work due to sickness. Females are paid less than the males, even if they work in the same jobs, although normally they are encouraged to work in the easier jobs. The workers who have experience working for a long time at construction jobs are paid higher than workers with no experience. Once they

work for a long enough time in a particular job, they become specialized and moreover they will be trusted by their employers. Normally these people will become labor contractor (*Nak Raap Moa*). There is no extra pay or bonus even if they work on a holiday, which will be paid as a normal working day. For overtime wage payments, the employer will pay according to the daily wage divided by eight hours. For instance, suppose they get paid 160 baht per day and, if they work overtime, they will get 20 baht per hour. This is practiced only with Thai employers or labor contractors not for Khmer labor contractor. It is not practiced with Khmer labor contractors because most of the workers who work with Khmer labor contractors are their relatives, friends or people who came from the same village. In these situations, it seems that they work to share the wages or to help each other. When the employers forced them to finish on time, they work together very smoothly and amicably to finish without worrying about the overtime pay. In order to create a condition like this, the Khmer labor contractors have to form their own group of workers or find their own workers because they are responsible for everything after they make labor contracts. Generally, Khmer labor contractor takes the construction jobs as a subcontract from the Thai construction labor contractor.

The construction workers normally are paid every two weeks (one *Wiss*), although for someone who works with a Thai labor contractor, within two *Wiss* they are paid only one *Wiss* and the rest will be paid at the end of next *Wiss* and they kept doing like this routinely in order to keep workers from leaving their job. The Thai employer and labor contractor do this because they do not want the workers to move and work on other construction projects. The construction workers themselves responded that when working with Khmer labor contractors, they were more confident of being paid their wage payment than when working for Thai labor contractors because mostly the Thai labor contractors cheat them. Furthermore, the Khmer labor contractors never force the workers to work and they can take a rest whenever they want, unlike when they work for the Thai labor contractors. However, the Khmer labor contractor confirmed that if the employer cheats them obviously they will have no money to pay the workers. The only thing that the workers can do is quit that job and then find a new one.

Noun, 39 years old, is from Siemreap Province. She came to Thailand two years ago and has worked as a construction worker since she arrived. Currently she works as a construction worker in Bangkok with her cousin.

“I get 140 baht per day. My wage is lower than the men but my job is slightly easier the men job too. Normally the men workers are paid 170-300 baht per day. My cousin is a Khmer labor contractor and currently I work with him. I was not paid even I worked overtime some days, but I am happy to work with him because I never worry about wage cheating.”

#### **3.4.2.2 Working Hours**

Normally the construction workers start to work at 8 o'clock in the morning and finish at 5 o'clock in the evening, with a one hour break in the mid-day. If they work either for a Khmer or Thai labor contractor, they are expected to work overtime. They are usually taken back and forth from their living place by the employer's pick up truck. During working time the construction workers can relax ten or fifteen minutes within two or three hours or when they feel tired. There are some employers who are very strict about this and the worker will not be allowed to relax during the working times at all. In such cases, the workers are threatened with a deduction to their wages if they relax during working time.

Nang, 33 years old, is from Siemreap Province. Currently he and his wife work together for a Thai employer.

“My employer is Thai and he is very cruel. During the working time, he does not allow any worker to relax or take a rest. My wife was deducted half of one day wage when she went down to buy papaya salad (Som Tam). The reason that I continue to work with him is because he pays a high wage and he never cheats the workers.”

#### **3.4.2.3 Working Responsibility**

In this research, I could not find what particular jobs that the construction workers are responsible for, they just do as they are instructed and move around the construction site according to whatever the labor contractor orders. The women are separated to work in the easier jobs and the men are encouraged to work with the heavier jobs. The labor contractor, who is usually very experienced with all kinds of jobs, is responsible for everything. Their role is as a seeker or recruiter and they also manage the construction workers. Mainly the construction workers do not need any education level, skills or background to work, except for the labor contractors. The Khmer labor contractors are not actually trained in construction jobs but they gain experience by working on these kinds of jobs. Thus, they can contract the construction jobs to work on their own.

#### **3.4.2.4 Protection and Accidents in the Work Place**

The construction workers are provided nothing for protection from accidents when they work. The construction workers themselves do not expect, nor do they really want any protective gear, as they feel such gear is inconvenient to use. They wear normal clothes to work but the shirts are generally provided by the construction companies with a working ID card. They will not be allowed to enter the construction site if they do not wear that card.

Serious accidents are common on the construction jobs, such as falling from the building, stepping on the nails, getting wounded by construction tools and so on. The workers responded that normally they never face accidents unless when the police come to arrest the workers at the working sites. When the police come, the workers immediately run away without caring about anything because they just want to escape. Some workers fall from the building and some are injured. Normally, when the employer got information from police in advance, they will tell the workers who have no working permit card to escape or not to come to work, but when the employer did not get any information in advance from police, thus many were arrested. Even so, if the worker has an accident while escaping, the employer will take them to a hospital or private pharmacies and pay for the medicine. However, if the worker dies, the employer will just call the police and then take the body to

cremate. Some employers will give some money to the dead worker's relatives in order to help them send the body to their family in Cambodia.

Sophat, 24 years old, is from Siemreap Province. He came to Thailand in 1999 and is currently working as a construction worker in Bangkok.

“I do not want to wear the protection gear that the employer gave me because it is inconvenient while I am working. I had an accident by stepping on some metal when the police came to arrest the illegal construction workers. I lost a lot of blood because I could not do anything while I was hiding from the police. After the police went back, my employer's wife went to get some medical help for me.”

To conclude this part, the labor wage for Cambodian illegal construction workers is in the range between 110-300 baht per day. The ones who work for the Khmer labor contractor normally are not paid for working overtime, unlike the ones who work for Thai employer or labor contractor. The construction workers will be paid the same wage, even if they work on a holiday or weekend. Normally they start to work at 8 o'clock in the morning and finish at 5 o'clock in the evening, with a one-hour break in the mid-day. Some of the worker can rest whenever they want during the working time but some were not allowed to rest at all. The construction workers work at whatever the employer or labor contractor orders. They have no particular job responsibility. The construction workers are not expected to wear any protective clothes or any protective gear because it makes it inconvenient while they are working. Normally the Khmer labor contractor never provides any protection gear for the workers, unlike Thai employer or labor contractor. There are some cases where the employer will force the workers to wear the protection gear while they are working by threatening to deduct their wages.

### **3.4.3 Illegal Status**

#### **3.4.3.1 Knowledge about Laws and Regulations**

Before immigrating to Thailand, the Cambodian construction workers generally knew nothing about the laws or regulations relevant to their status or living conditions. Even so, they knew that they passed the border illegally and they will have no rights when they reach their destination. This information spread through the recruiter and immigrants themselves. Nowadays, the information that is told by the immigrant workers themselves to the villagers is considered to be more reliable than that given by the recruiters. The information that comes from the recruiters is always good and is often the opposite from the information from the workers who returned to the village. However, the information which returnees bring will depend on the experience of that immigrant worker, whether they are successful or unsuccessful in the life of an immigrant into Thailand. Traditionally, when the people just come back from Thailand to the village, the villagers will come to say hello and at the same time, they will ask about everything related to their life on their journey and destination in Thailand. Those villagers will then make a decision as to whether they are going to migrate to Thailand. Most of the respondents confirmed that before they decided to come to Thailand, they got information mainly from two people, first from the recruiters and second from the migrant who returned to the village. The information that they get is both bad and good, such as on the bad side, lack of freedom to travel in Thailand; being cheated by employers; the way Thai people treat Cambodian people; the police always asking for money from illegal immigrants; being forced to use drugs by the employers. On the good side, it is easy to get jobs and they can earn higher wages than in Cambodia. They noted that the information that was told in the village by the recruiters is mostly incorrect.

Noun, 39 years old, from Siemreap province. He is working in a construction zone near the Airport. He came to Thailand and worked as construction worker for almost two years.

“When I was in Cambodia I felt worried when someone left to work in Thailand because I heard that the Cambodian workers in Thailand live in

very bad conditions. Finally, I decided to come to Thailand because there is unemployment in my village. When I reached here (working zone, Bangkok) everything is different from what I heard when I was in Cambodia. It is normal here. If we come and just work then our condition is better than in Cambodia.”

### **3.4.3.2 Attitudes to Applying for a Work Permit Card**

Construction workers generally want to apply for a work permit card because normally their working place is located in the towns or cities where obviously the police and local authorities are located also. As they have experience with the police and local authorities being scrutinized or stopped, they decide it is better to make a work permit card, even if they could not actually keep it. The Cambodian construction workers ask their employers to take them to make the card. Normally, the employers will pay in advance and then will deduct little by little each month. The work permit cards are not allowed to be held by the workers themselves but the employers, but they will give a copy to the construction workers. The main reason is that the employer does not trust the immigrants. One of the employers responded that even if the workers are not allowed to hold the card, still they keep moving from job to job without informing the employer. So if they are allowed to hold the card, the employer will not be able to control them. At the same time, there are some workers who are not interested in making a working permit card because they come seasonally and will go back and forth, or they just come to work and are not interested in the other benefits of holding the working permit card.

Romdul, 44 years old, from Battambang province. She said that;

“I want to have a working permit card because I want to work legally and be able to travel even in the limited space. The employer can insure us from the police if we have work permit card. Some people say that the working permit card is meaningless because even we have no card still we paid the same as the worker who have work permit card.”

### 3.4.3.3 Experience of Being Arrested by the Police

Most of the living places are guaranteed by the employers from being inspected or disturbed by the police or local authorities. The Cambodian construction workers who have experienced being arrested by the police are usually those who went out far from the living site. For instance, when they go to visit relatives in other slums or when they go to the market. For the workers who are arrested outside the living place, normally the employer will not insure them; they have to pay the police on their own and the fine depends on the negotiation between them and the police. For the workers who have no working permit card and are arrested by the local police, generally they are fined at least 1,000-4,000 baht. However, if they are arrested by the immigration police, they will obviously be sent back to Cambodia. Normally they are put in jail at least one week to 48 days before they are sent back to the border.

Sann, 42 years old, works in the construction zone located in Phraram 2, Bangkok.

“I had experienced arrest by the immigration police. The immigration police arrested me with 15 other people in the slum. I was put in the jail for two weeks at Saunphlu Prison before being sent back. But I came back again after one week in Cambodia because my employer told me that if I do not come back, the rest of the money that he owed me will not be given. My employer added that if I come back he still welcome and return all the money to me. Therefore I have to come back.”

In conclusion, from the time since the construction workers started to immigrate and worked as construction workers they know nothing about the law, regulation or any government policy toward their status. What they care about is how they can find a job that can make a lot of money, search for the good employers and how to escape from being arrested by the police. For instance, they know that if they have no working permit card, it will not be easy to find work, to travel and to live in Thailand. Furthermore, when they are arrested by the police, which, based on my interviews, happens at least once a year, they will be deported to Cambodia and have to re-immigrate. Notwithstanding all these



conditions, they still have no intent to make a working permit card because they do not want to pay for it and the system makes it complicated to apply for such a card. It would appear that these attitudes are widespread within the group of illegal construction workers.

### **3.4.4 Health Problems**

#### **3.4.4.1 Types of Illness and Accessing Medical Services**

None of the respondents interviewed ever got seriously sick during the time they have been in Thailand. Generally, they just get normal sicknesses such as fever, stomach ache, diarrhea or headache. None of them ever expected to go to a Thai state hospital because they have many barriers to access these kinds of places. Normally they go directly to a pharmacy or drug stores when they get sick, even if they have a working permit card. However, they will be sent to the hospital by the employers when they get seriously sick, such as an accident during the working times. Nevertheless, the construction workers themselves expect to go back to Cambodia rather than to a hospital when they get seriously sick or have a serious accident.

#### **3.4.4.2 Knowledge and Attitudes toward HIV/AIDS**

Most of them responded that they knew about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and how the virus is spread. Some of them knew about this subject since when they were in Cambodia and some heard from their friends or relatives while others have seen the illness on their own. There are some brothels available nearby their living places but they said that they are very expensive and the girls act very impolite to them. There are also many more reasons that cause them not to have easy access to sex activities. One reason is that they often change jobs and move to a new living place in order to find a higher wage or they are moved by the employers. Therefore, they have to spend quite a long time to get to know the new place. If they want to go to visit prostitutes, they have to spend a lot of money and obviously, they will face the potential of being arrested by the police. Therefore, these reasons seem to be a barrier for them to be able to access sex activities in Thailand.

### **3.4.4.3 Drugs Abuse**

No respondents claimed that there were drug users in the construction workers society but unlike in the last four or five years there were many construction workers using drugs. While they never see someone using drug around their place, alcohol is common for them and it generates a lot of conflict and violence.

Veng, 29 years old, comes from Kompongcham Province. He is working as construction worker in a place located in Rangsit zone, Bangkok.

“There is no drug user here in my slum but the Khmer workers are crazy with alcohol. All the time in the end of each Wiss almost everybody here in this slum are drunk and all the time when they are drunk they always create conflicts.”

To conclude this part, none of respondent got seriously sick. But they often faced accidents at the work place because the illegal construction workers were not provided any or did not want to use construction protection tools. However, the construction workers will rely on private medical services such as pharmacies or drug stores for medical services. The exception is when they get seriously sick such as serious accident, and then the employer will take them to the hospital.

Generally, the construction workers know about how to protect them from HIV/AIDS. When asked about HIV/AIDS, everybody seemed to respond that they were trained in Cambodia or by some NGOs during the time they are in Thailand. Because the people seem to be quite scared about drug use, especially by teenagers, there is not a single case found during the fieldwork related to drugs abuse.

## **3.4.5 Conflicts and Rights**

### **3.4.5.1 Between Khmer Construction Workers**

The violence and disputes between Khmer construction workers happen mostly when they get drunk and very often because of the competition over a girl. They

solve this problem by fighting rather than by talking. Disputes usually start from a very small problem, such making a noise or looking at each other, then they escalate the dispute to be a serious one, until finally the problem can lead to killing each other. After such conflicts or fighting, very often they will escape to Cambodia or change the workplace. Nobody will investigate after the conflict happens. However, afterwards they will take revenge on each other when they meet somewhere else.

Another conflict happens because the construction workers often set up their own group, often acting like a gang, with each group having their own master. When someone has a dispute with a member of a group, the master of that group will come to talk in order to solve the problem. However, if the master does not come, they will come as a gang to solve that problem, and then there will be fighting.

One of the masters working and living in Khet Rangsit said that;

“If we do not have a group, it will not be easy to live and work as a construction worker. We set up a group because we want to protect ourselves from other bad people. The members of my group mostly are my friends and relatives. We promise to each other that when we have a problem we will help each other.”

However, according to the respondents, the more gangs are established, the more problems happen. Most of the victims were not the members of the groups, but the people who are not a member of any group.

#### **3.4.5.2 Between Khmer Construction Workers and Thai Local Gangsters**

Normally the construction workers never dare to make a conflict with Thai people even if they have a group. The construction workers responded that they are often threatened by local gangsters who come into their living place. Those gangsters are considered by the construction workers as intimidators and usually show up when they have problems or conflicts with each other or the employers. They seem to work on behalf

of a particular local powerful person. For instance, when the Khmer construction workers have conflicts with each other or with the Burmese workers, these gangsters will come to crack down on that conflict. Normally, when they come, everybody runs away. These Thai gangsters do not care who they are, even women, they will beat anyone in the area of the conflict. They normally used knives or even guns to crackdown the workers. They just comes and beating the worker with ask any reason that why the construction worker there are very scary those gangsters.

Eang, 26 years old, from Banteaymeanchey Province. He first came to Thailand in 2004. He has never worked another job beside construction. He and his wife are working in Klong 3 construction zone, Bangkok.

“My wife and I were beaten by a group of Thai gangsters who we call Asorakarn. This happened last year when I and my wife came from an open market near the living place. At that day, there was a serious conflict between Khmer construction workers and one worker was seriously injured. After a while a group of Thai gangsters came to crack down on the conflict while we were standing there. Immediately everybody ran away and yell that ‘Asorakarn coming’ but I did not know who Asorakarn was? But we just run away because everybody else is running away. Unluckily, we are too late and one man came and kicked my wife and another kicked me. We asked for forgiveness from those men. Luckily, they looked at me and my wife and they went out to find some other people. After one day, we went back to Cambodia to get medical treatment because we were both hurt very bad.”

#### **3.4.5.3 Between Khmer and Burmese Construction Workers**

Burmese and Khmer construction workers live together very well. However, when they are drunk, conflicts happen. The main reasons given that cause the conflicts is when they are drunk, they make noise by playing karaoke or they make loud noise by

laughing or talking especially late in the night. Thus, when someone goes to tell them to calm down or reduce the noise, then the conflict will happen.

#### **3.4.5.4 Between Khmer Construction Workers and Employers**

The conflicts between the construction workers and employers are mainly because of wage payment. Sometimes the employers pay them late or sometimes they cheat the construction workers. When the workers cannot bear such treatment any longer, they will attack the employer directly or indirectly, such as fighting or stabbing. Normally, when the construction workers are paid late, they will protest by not going to work and the employer tries to solve the problem by threatening to call the police to arrest them. This solution makes the workers very angry and cause the workers to take revenge when they have a chance.

Dam, 28 years old, from Siemreap Province. He came to work in Thailand as a construction worker five months ago.

“I have worked for two employers already because the first one cheated me. I work very hard for two months but my employer paid me for only two weeks and he said that he has no money to pay so he let me wait for the next time that he can pay all. Again and again he kept doing this and moreover he threatened to call the police to arrest me if I still asked for money. Finally, I decided to get away from him.”

#### **3.4.5.5 Domestic Violence**

The construction workers considered the conflicts within the family as normal problems or as nature of living together. They added that when the people have jobs to work, normally they will not fight each other within the family. By contrast, this seems to force them to love each other more and more, rather than when they have nothing to do.

Rommdul, 44 years old, from Battambang Province.

“That is a normal problem when two people are living together. The conflict within the family is a sign of happiness in the family. Nobody will care when we have conflicts within our family. Anyway, in this place I never heard a serious conflict happen in the family. Everybody is very busy with their work that is why they have no time or energy to have conflicts.”

To conclude this part, within the construction worker society, conflicts usually happen because of alcohol. Normally, when they are drunk, they will make some problem that will lead to a conflict. The workers normally solve these conflicts by using their energy rather than their heads. For instance, as they mentioned, domestic violence is a normal problem between the people who are living as a couple. It means that nobody cares when the husband fights his wife. One more problem that should be mentioned is the role of Thai local gangsters. These groups are very powerful and the construction workers are scared of them. Their role is to crack down on the conflict that happen in the construction workers society, but the ways they use to solve the problem are very scary and violent.

### **3.4.6 Future Aspirations**

#### **3.4.6.1 Changing Their Current Job**

Most of the construction workers do not want to change their current work especially those who work in a group with their relatives or friends. They work very amicably together and also do not worry much about being cheated on their wage payment as well. Even so, they added that they would consider changing to work other jobs if they will get higher pay than as a construction worker. One of the main barriers of changing jobs is the connection to getting a job because they come to work as a construction worker since they had a connection in their village. By contrast, when they were in Cambodia, if they had no connection to the person who works in that particular job, they will face trouble when they reach their destination because usually they come to Thailand by the broker or their relatives.

Yeourm, 22 years old, from Siemreap Province.

“I came here and worked as construction worker because I was introduced by my friend. He told me that his employer is a good man, never cheated and paid on time. When I started to work he is really as good as my friend said. We are working as brothers and sisters. We enjoy working with my employer. I do not want to move to work with other employers even if they pay me more than my wage today. Many workers have experience being cheated by employers, so I do not want to be like them.”

#### **3.4.6.2 Intention to Settle Permanently in Thailand, Plan to Return to Cambodia and Plan to Re-immigrate**

For the Khmer construction workers who have been living and working in Thailand for a long time, they think they will be allowed to get nationality to live in Thailand because they speak Thai very well and are very familiar with Thai society. Some of them have a car to drive in Thailand, even though they are illegally working here. At the same time, they added that they want to go to Cambodia but just to visit not to live. The main reason for thinking like this is because there are no job opportunities in Cambodia. Even so, other respondents said they have no intention to live in Thailand because they experience many problems and difficulties living in Thailand. They will go back when they think that they have fulfilled their expectations. Responding to the plan to re-immigrate to Thailand, all of them responded that they will surely re-immigrate if their situation is the same as their life before coming to Thailand.

Sokun, 24 years old, from Svay Reing Province. He has worked four months as a construction worker in Klong 3 construction zone, Bangkok.

“When I can save some money to buy a motorcycle, I will go back to my village and I will not come back any more and I will not recommend to others to come to work in Thailand as well.”

Nang, 33 years old, from Siemreap Province.

“I want to stay in Thailand and I want to become a Thai citizen if I can. My life gets better when I come to work in Thailand. Here I can make a lot of money, buy a pick up truck unlike when I was in my country. If I have time I will go to Cambodia but just to visit my parents and relatives.”

### **3.4.6.3 Perspectives toward Thai Local People**

Because their living places are separate from the Thai community, the Khmer construction workers have very little chance to associate with Thai people, mostly just the food sellers and their Thai employers. Therefore, these are the two main groups that the Khmer construction workers are familiar with and interact with everyday. The perspectives of the Khmer people toward the food sellers are more positive than toward the employers. They felt scare of and generally do not trust the employers or labor contractors, mainly due to the fact that the Khmer construction workers have experienced being cheated by the employers. Even though, they look up to Thai people because of the living conditions in Thailand.

Sareourn, 22 years old, from Bateaymeanchey Province. He has worked as a construction worker in Thailand for almost 7 years.

“Even though I work with Thai people for almost seven years, I never trust them. When they feel good they act well, but when they feel bad, we are victims. They looked at us as very low people and every time they talked they looked down on us. When we go to the market they looked at us as strangers. Even so, there are some people who are good but I never seem to meet them.”

### **3.4.6.4 Changing Attitudes**

Most of the construction workers have negative feelings to the Thai people. However, at the same time the way the workers dress and the way they act seems to be adopted from the Thai. Some workers try to learn to speak Thai. The workers who have



children that come along try to teach their children Thai language rather than teach their children to speak Khmer. Even so, their children still can speak Khmer very well because among their friends they normally speak Khmer. However, this can benefit the children because they can mix in Thai society when they go out from the living place and the police cannot recognize them as well. One construction worker responded that he tried to teach his son to speak Thai not because he wants his son to work in Thailand like him but he hopes that his son will have a good future when they go back to Cambodia or at least his son can speak two languages. Another said that they tried to act and dress and speak Thai language because they did not want Thai people to look down on them.

To conclude this part, the construction workers feel they gain benefit from working in their job. They did not intend to change their job but they will change if they can make more money. Again, this shows clearly that the main purpose of immigrating to Thailand is to make money rather than intending to stay in Thailand. Most of the construction workers intend to go back to their village when they can get some money to fulfill some part of their expectations.

The construction workers want to act and dress like Thai people. The main reasons are because they feel safer from the police when they go out of their living place so that people will not recognize them as Khmer immigrants. Another point is that it makes them confident when they are with Thai people. Therefore, the way they dress can be very beneficial to their daily life especially when they went out their living zone.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations**

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

To sum up these interviews and other findings, it appears that the influences compelling Cambodian people to migrate to Thailand has been strongly related to their life in their homeland. As they come from farmer backgrounds, low education and have no connection with the people in the city, many have little or no opportunity to work in the city. So their choice is to migrate to neighboring countries, which attracts them by high wages, plenty of job opportunity, and perhaps convenient travel (all “pull” factors). In any case, there are also many reasons that contribute to these phenomena. In the information that was found during the fieldwork in Rayong and in Bangkok, from both those who are working as fishermen and construction workers, we see clearly the reasons for Cambodian illegal immigration into Thailand and those reasons have been incorporated into the conceptual model.

Studying the migration process, we can say that Cambodian illegal immigrants have many means to pass the border into Thailand and the migration facilitators play important roles in this flow of people. Facilitating Cambodian illegal immigration is the fact that it is a very profitable business, both for local police and other authorities, in addition to the brokers and employers. The migrants can often pay between 2,500-3,500 baht for a whole journey from the village to the destination, which includes all expenses and a job guarantee. On the other hand, immigrants can come to the border area on their own, may still have to contact a broker along the border to guide them past the border, but these costs are almost identical to purchasing a whole trip. There is another means of travel, naturally, that immigrants can migrate to Thailand on their own as adventurers but this way they face the problem of finding a job, safety, and the costs may still turn out to be similar or higher. The most popular journey for Khmer people who want to migrate to Thailand is the first means,

being guided by a broker because there is no need to worry about anything, even finding a job, since the broker guarantees this for them.

The following part of the conclusion is focused on the finding of each case of the Cambodian illegal immigrants, that is first the fishermen case and second the construction workers case.

### **Fishermen**

The boats are the fishermen's house, kitchen, relaxing place, a place to escape from scrutiny by the police as well as a working place. According to their illegal status, it is not easy for the fishermen to access any communication system, Thai national institutions or to join any ceremony freely. They have a limited space and right to travel and live. By contrast, they can access entertaining places easily, such as karaoke shops, drinking shops and brothels freely, because those kinds of entertainment place are located very close to the port where they live. These kinds of entertainment places create several problems and often promote violent activities. The girls who work in this industry are considered as a catalyst of these conflicts. There are a very rare number of fishermen who take their family and children along because of the situation along the journey and the risky problems associated with their working place. Notwithstanding, there are many Khmer women and children living and working in Rayong, although most of children are under school age. Those children will be sent back to their village when their parents think that they can be able to go to school. The remittances are representative of the success of the fishermen migration and we can see the physical aspect of the remittances through the living standards of their family in the original village, such as building a house and wearing gold when they go back to their village.

Most of the fishermen have no prior skills, experience or background related to the sea before they became fishermen. They just come and work and get training on the job. Additionally, the employers never provide any training to their employees because they think that there is nothing difficult to working as a normal fisherman. Working as

fishermen there are three types of wage provided; daily wage, salary wage and the end of contract wage payment. The contact wage payment is considered the most risky since the main problems is being cheated by the employers. There is no extra or bonus money provided to the fishermen even if they work hard or overtime. Every expense that the employer spends such as, food, boat repair, the net, ice, oil, and so on is deducted from the fishermen wages. There is no exact working time for the fishermen. The timetables are dependent on the situation at the sea, the season and the captain or foremen orders. The working conditions of the fishermen are mainly related to the size of the boat and the kindness of each employer. Accidents and dangerous work conditions are commonly known to exist in the fishermen's working environment. There is no protection equipment provided to the fishermen and moreover the fishermen are banned by the employer from wearing shoes or boots on the boat according to the employer traditional beliefs. Therefore, according to all the information from the respondents, it shows that because the fishermen live under illegal status, the employers, police or local officer try to take advantage of the fishermen rather than being intent to solve or improve the working condition. This results in their conditions of living remaining the same from the past until the present day.

Almost none of the fishermen know anything about policy or immigration law regarding their status; they just know that they have come to Thailand illegally. The fishermen want to have a working permit card but they do not want to go through the process to apply for the card because of many reasons; the card seemed meaningless to them and at the same time they are not allowed to keep original card. Still, if possible, they want to have a card because they want the freedom of travel and to escape the scrutiny by the local police. Most of the immigrants that were interviewed who have stayed and worked as fishermen in Thailand for more than two years experience being arrested by the police a some time. In this part, it is shown clearly that their illegal status has a very significant impact on their living and working conditions, especially their freedom and rights. They want to become legal despite illegally passing the border but, at the same time, there are many barriers that make it difficult to get legalized. No one responded that they wanted to

protest against the cheating employers but they responded that we are Khmer and they are Thai and we have no right here in Thailand.

The fishermen normally face minor health problems such as, fever, stomachache, diarrhea, cold, and headache. In this case, they do not need to go to the hospital and, at the same time; they do not intent to go to the hospital because there are many barriers to accessing the health services because of their illegal status. For the fishermen who have no working permit card they have two choices; first, they can go back to Cambodia and, second, they can stay in the hospital and pay by themselves. The first choice is commonly used and even encouraged by the employer as well. All of them know about the danger of the HIV virus but their attitude toward this virus is not very serious because some just want to enjoy with their life and some feel confident by not going to prostitutes. There is one NGO playing a very important role in the fishermen society both in Banphe town and in Rayong Province. This NGO is working mainly on HIV/AIDS issues and birth control but, according to the fishermen respondents, this NGO role also acts as the middlemen between the fishermen and government institutions especially hospitals. Nowadays, it is very rare to find drugs used by people in the fishermen society unlike in the last four or five years. The captain and the foremen were considered as the more active drug users, followed by the normal fishermen. The fishermen, who did use drugs, used them in very secret places and did not let anybody see them. If they are caught, they can be kicked out from their jobs by the employer or arrested by the police.

In the fishermen society the ways that they solve problems and conflicts is usually by beating and killing each other, instead of talking or asking what is the problem first. The conflicts between Khmer fishermen are considered as the source of most conflicts in the fishermen society in the present time. Many of them have formed their own groups in order to protect their own members. Each group has many killing tools that are readily available in the markets. However, those groups usually act, not to protect themselves, but to make conflict with those fishermen who have no group. They act very cruelly and sometimes they killed each other with no apparent reason at all. Conflicts also happen between Khmer

fishermen and Thai people, Burmese fishermen and also with the employers as well, although now such incidents do not happen as often as before. The police do not seem to be intent to solve the problem if the conflict happens between Khmer or between Khmer and Burmese fishermen, but they will seriously intervene if the conflict happens between Khmer and Thai people.

The fishermen do not seem to want to change their current job because they think that they can gain benefit from their job rather than other jobs in Thailand. They always emphasize the amount of time for relaxing, the free accommodation and food. These kinds of thing seemed to cover the hardness and dangerous aspects of this working society. If they are dissatisfied with their job, they change the boat they are on, especially, if they think they are being cheated or forced to work too much by the employers. The fishermen never intend to live in Thailand permanently because of their illegal status and their treatment from Thai society, particularly with respect to freedom of travel, which is limited, and the right to protest for their benefits. They cannot do anything to improve their situation and at the same time they will be threaten if they try to protest. The captains are considered by the fishermen as the cruelest people in the fishermen industry, followed by the employers who cheat them. Because of their status, the fishermen, especially when they go out from the port or those fishermen who live on land, try to speak, dress and act like Thai rather than Khmer because they want to mix into Thai society. As a result, they can gain some benefit from that as they are not scrutinized as closely by the police but they often look strange to the local Thai people.

### **Construction workers**

The Cambodian illegal immigrants who work as construction workers are provided free accommodation, which are mostly located in or close to the working sites. These places could be considered as a big construction worker camp. In the slum, there are many Thai shops and Thai mobile carts selling food to the construction workers. They have no need to go out from the slum to buy food at the market. Moreover, they can buy food from the Thai sellers on credit and then pay at the end of each week. Because of their illegal

status the Cambodian construction workers do not have easy access to celebrate traditional ceremonies while they are in Thailand but they can freely celebrate wedding ceremonies in their slum. Cambodian illegal construction workers do not have easy access to the outside world, thus the phone plays an important role for communication with their relatives and friends who live in different slums. Television and videos are the favorite form of entertainment for them in the slum, instead of visiting outside where they run the risk of being caught by the police and local authorities. Most of the construction workers bring their family because they can help each other both personally and in making more income. Children come because nobody is available to take care of them in Cambodia. The children live in risky conditions, with no access to education and good medical care due to their parents' illegal immigrant status. When they bring along their family, they can save and send more money home rather than if they come alone. Even though, the illegal construction workers compare that, beside the lack of freedom of travel, their living condition in Thailand is better than in Cambodia mainly due to economic reasons.

The labor wage for Cambodian illegal construction workers is in the range between 110-300 baht per day. The ones who work for the Khmer labor contractor normally are not paid for working overtime, unlike the ones who work for Thai employer or labor contractor. The construction workers will be paid the same wage, even if they work on a holiday or weekend. Normally they start to work at 8 o'clock in the morning and finish at 5 o'clock in the evening, with one-hour break in the mid-day. Some of workers can relax whenever they want during the working time but some are not allowed to relax at all. The construction workers work doing whatever the employer or labor contractor orders. They have no particular job responsibility. The construction workers are not expected to wear any protection clothes or any protection gear because it makes it inconvenient while they are working. Normally the Khmer labor contractor never provides any protection gear for the workers, unlike Thai employer or labor contractor. There are some cases where the employer will force the workers to wear the protection gear while they are working by threaten to deduct their wages.

From the time the construction workers start to immigrate and work as construction workers they know nothing about the law, regulation or any government policy toward their status. What they care about is how they can find a job that can make a lot of money, search for the good employers and to escape from being arrested by the police. For instance, they know that if they have no working permit card, it will not be easy to find work, to travel and to live in Thailand. Furthermore, when they are arrested by the police, which, based on my interviews, happens at least once a year, they will be deported to Cambodia and have to re-immigrate. Notwithstanding all these conditions, they still have no intent to make a working permit card because they do not want to pay for it and the system makes it complicated to apply for such card. It would appear that these attitudes are widespread within the group of illegal construction workers.

None of respondent has gotten seriously sick. But they often face accidents at the work place time because the illegal construction workers were not provided any or did not want to use construction protection tools. However, the construction workers will rely on private medical services such as pharmacies or drug stores for medical services. The exception is when they get seriously sick such as serious accident, and then the employer will take them to the hospital. Generally, the construction workers know about how protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. When asked about HIV/AIDS, everybody seemed to respond that they were trained in Cambodia or by some NGOs during the time they are in Thailand. Because the people seem to be quite scared about drug use, especially by teenagers, there is not a single case found during the fieldwork related to the drugs abuse.

Within the construction worker society, conflicts usually happen because of alcohol. Normally, when they are drunk, they will make some problem that will lead to a conflict. The workers normally solving these conflicts by fighting rather than using their heads. For instance, as they mentioned, domestic violence is a normal problem between the people who are living as a couple. It means that nobody cares when the husband fights with his wife. One more problem that should be mentioned is the role of Thai local gangsters. These groups are very powerful and the construction workers are scared of them. Their role is to



crack down on the conflicts that happen in the construction workers society, but the ways they use to solve the problem are very scary and violent.

The construction workers feel they enjoy and gain benefit from working in their job. They did not intent to change their job but they will change if they can make more money. Again, this shows clearly that the main purpose of immigrating to Thailand is to make money rather than an intent to stay in Thailand. Most of the construction workers intend to go back to their village when they can get some money to fulfill some part of their expectations. The construction workers want to act and dress like Thai people. The main reasons are because they feel safer from the police when they go out of their living place that will not recognize them as Khmer immigrant. Another point is that it makes them confident when they are with Thai people. Therefore, the way they dress can be very beneficial to their daily life especially when they going out of their living zone.

#### **4.2 Comparative Analysis**

This study has explored many aspects that show the living condition of Cambodian illegal immigrants, especially the fishermen and construction workers. This study chose two sites. The first site was a site with a large fishery industry and many thousands of Cambodian illegal immigrants working there. This site was located in Rayong province, but the fieldwork was divided into two parts; first in Banphe town and second in Paknam, Rayong town. The second site was located in the Bangkok Metropolitan area where most of the illegal Cambodian construction workers are working. My fieldwork was in the biggest construction zone located in Klongsam, ten kilometers to the east from the Don Muang Airport. Table 10 clearly present a comparison of the two sites and the following discussion elaborate on the differences and similarities.

##### **Living conditions**

The living condition of fishermen and the construction workers are almost the same except the accommodation and meals. The fishermen have two choices for choosing their accommodation. The fishermen were provided accommodation that the employer allowing

them to stay on the boat but if they do not want to stay on the boat they have full right to rent a room which is located nearby the ports but they have to pay by themselves and they will not be provided meals. The fishermen who have their family members normally choose this kind of accommodation. Generally the fishermen were provided meals three times a day but construction workers have to spend for food by themselves.

Beside the accommodation and meals both remained under the same situations such as; the limit of freedom to travel or making ceremonies and communications and moreover, undoubtedly they are under crackdown and being taken advantage of by the police as well as local authorities. They can have entertainment in such places as karaoke bars, drinking shops, prostitutions places and some sports that are normally located in the living zone or near by the working place and the celebration of marriage ceremony going on as well. However, they do not have easy access to any Thai states public services such as hospital, laws because there are many barriers such as their status, problem of language, which seemed to be complicated to them. There are some civil society groups working to solve problems mainly focused on HIV/AIDS program only. Both fishermen and construction workers are using the same system to remit the money home.

### **Working conditions**

Comparing working conditions of the fishermen and the construction workers, there are many differences especially the system of pay wages, structure of working responsibility and working hour. There are three types of labor wage payment practiced in the fishermen careers which are daily pay, monthly pay and pay according to long term contract that the fishermen have to work at least 12 to 54 month then the employer will pay at the end. The construction workers are paid as “Wiss” every two weeks. Related to the labor wage payment, there are many problems that happen. Based on the interviews, many cheating cases happen both in the fishermen and construction workers society.

One problem that happens in both fishermen and construction workers working condition is related to the use of protection tools and accident during the working time.

Both were not provided any protection tools but at the same time the workers themselves responded that they felt uncomfortable with using such kinds of protection tools because they are disturbing to their work. However, there is usually no intention of the employers to provide any protection tools. However, if they do provide protect to the workers, then the workers will tried to use those kinds of tools and hopefully, later on they will become familiar with such gear.

Because both fishermen and construction workers remaining in an illegal immigrant status, they have many barriers that when they have an accident while working, normally they do not intent to go to the hospital or any public service. Instead, they are comfortable to use the private clinic or drug stores. Even though, the employer will take the workers to the hospital in case the accident was seriously.

### **Illegal status**

Both fishermen and construction workers know nothing about the law, regulation or any government policies related to their status but they know that they are living and working illegally in Thailand. At the same time, the Thai government provides a chance for them to legalize their status by let them make a working permit card. The employer roles are very important in this process, but in reality the employer seemed to not have good cooperation with the government because there are many undocumented fishermen still working without any serious problem excepted when they went out of the ports. Moreover, in order to make a working permit card the illegal workers have to spend at least 3,800 baht for whole process to get the working permit card.

However, between the fishermen and the construction workers, the attitudes to apply for the working permit card are different. The fishermen are not intent to make working permit card unlike the construction workers because the fishermen spend most of their life on the sea rather on the land and moreover if they makes the working permit card still they will get paid the same as the fishermen who have no working permit card. The ways that they think seems to be reasonable because polices can not catch them when they

are working on the sea. The fishermen only benefit from the working permit card in that they are free to travel. On the other hand, the construction workers are intent to make working permit card because their living and working places are located in the city and they quite often met the police. The other reason is that normally they have to move from one to another place depend on the job contract. Thus, the working permit card is very necessary for the construction workers and it is really beneficial to their living and working situation.

Commonly, the Cambodian illegal immigrants who worked over one year in Thailand experienced getting arrested at least one time by the police and normally they were deported back with 48 days but some will return after reaching the border.

### **Health Problems**

The fishermen have more opportunity to get health services especially related to the knowledge about HIV/AIDS than the construction workers because in the fishery areas there are some NGOs working on this that provide free training and condoms. But both fishermen and construction workers knows clearly the dangers of this disease because they knows how HIV/AIDS is spread out and how to protect themselves from this disease. Anyways, related to other diseases normally the fishermen and the construction workers have not faced serious ones. The common diseases are fever, stomachache, diarrhea or headache and generally they will use the private service rather than public services.

There is no response about drugs use both in the fishermen society and construction workers. According the observation during the fieldwork in both sites the respondent seemed very scared with drug abuse but at the same time they responded that at the present day the employers are very strict for the workers who used drugs. If the employers knew someone who using drugs they faced getting kicked out of the job and arrested by the police.

### **Conflict and rights**

The conflicts happened mostly between Khmer workers rather than with other nationalities and employers. The main reasons of the conflicts are girls and alcohol. Setting the group and acting as gang are common activities in both the fishermen and construction workers society and this is also a main reason causing the conflict but the group will act very effective and powerful while the members of the group get drunk. Later on one group will try to occupy the drinking bars and the girls there but other groups are intent to do the same that finally the dispute happened. As the result, it can someone result in people getting killed or at least serious injures because they fighting by using swords or materials.

There are other conflicts happened between the employers and the workers and both fishermen and construction worker faced the same problem being cheated by employers. Until the present day, there are many employers still doing so that this problem make the workers both fishermen and construction workers do not trust each other. But what the problem is that when the fishermen or construction workers experienced this problem normally they will generalize to all Thai people. Thus, these problems always make the negative perspectives and misunderstanding between Thai and Cambodian.

### **Future aspirations**

Most of the respondents both fishermen and construction workers say that they will go back to Cambodia if the economy gets better and more job became available. Even though they added that they will go back even if the economy still remains the same but they have achieved their expectations first. By the way many illegal immigrants failed in of expectation such that they have to expand their living period but some are unsuccessful because the more they enjoy their life in Thailand the more they could not save money.

It is very difficult to compare the success of fishermen and construction workers because some succeed in working as fishermen but some do not. Again some are successful working as construction workers but some are not. However, whether they are successful or unsuccessful still we can see clearly that their life style change and day by day their

attitudes are changing as well such as the ways they dress, act and speak the language but surely they can get benefit from these changes. It seemed materially influenced by what they regular sees from Thai people around them or by the any media. One point that interested to me and it should happened in the further study is the influences of the illegal migrant workers' life during they work in Thailand to their life when they return back, whether their living standard is improved after they returned back to Cambodia.



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Table 10 Summary of the living conditions of Fishermen and Construction Workers

	<b>Living conditions</b>	<b>Working conditions</b>	<b>Illegal status</b>	<b>Health problem</b>	<b>Conflicts and rights</b>	<b>Future Aspirations</b>
<b>Case one: fishermen</b>	<p><b>-Accommodations</b> living on the boat or rent the room</p> <p><b>-Meals</b> provided by the employers</p> <p><b>-Communication and ceremony celebration</b> limited of freedom to directly communicated and celebrate traditional or religion ceremonies</p> <p><b>-Entertainment</b> Karaoke shops, drinking, prostitutes, snookers, and some sports</p> <p><b>-Marriage in Thailand</b> Mostly with Khmer</p>	<p><b>-Labor wage payment</b> daily payments, monthly payment and contract payment</p> <p><b>-Working hours</b> not regularly</p> <p><b>-Working responsibility</b> no contract, no need to have skill, do what ever the captain or leader team</p> <p><b>-Protection and accident in the working place</b> no any protection tool provided</p>	<p><b>-Knowledge about law and regulation</b> no nothing about law, regulation or any government policies</p> <p><b>-Attitude to apply for working permit card</b> do not want to apply for working permit card</p> <p><b>-Experiences of arresting by police</b> mostly experienced at least one time of</p>	<p><b>-Types of illness and accessing to medical service</b> fever, stomachache, headache, diarrhea and using their own medicine</p> <p><b>-Knowledge and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS</b> mostly they knows about the dangerous of HIV/AIDS and they were trained by some NGO that working on it</p> <p><b>-Drug abuse</b> There is very small amount of drug abused</p>	<p><b>-Between Khmer and Khmer fishermen</b> Drunk, girls</p> <p><b>-Between Khmer fishermen and local Thai gangsters</b> Drunk, some without any reasons</p> <p><b>-Between Khmer and Burmese fishermen</b> encourage by the employers</p> <p><b>-Between Khmer fishermen and employers</b> wage payment, insulting, cheating</p> <p><b>-Domestic violence</b> domestic violence are</p>	<p><b>-Changing the current job</b> mostly do not want to change jobs as fishermen</p> <p><b>-Intention to permanent settlement in Thailand</b> they want to go back when Cambodia get better in term of economic</p> <p><b>-Perspective toward Thai people</b> negative</p> <p><b>-Changing attitudes</b> they tried to act, dress, speak like Thai people</p>

	<p>girls who are working in fishes processing industry or Karaoke shops, and Thai girl working in karaoke shops.</p> <p><b>-Family and children</b> not easy to access to medical services and education</p> <p><b>-Remittance</b> remit money home through intricate system of agents</p>		arresting by the police		normal problem for them	
<b>Case two: construction workers</b>	<p><b>-Accommodations</b> living in the construction zone</p> <p><b>-Meals</b> cooking by themselves</p> <p><b>-Communication and ceremony celebration</b> limited of freedom or</p>	<p><b>-Labor wage payment</b> two week a time</p> <p><b>-Working hours</b> regularly plus over time</p> <p><b>-Working responsibility</b></p>	<p><b>-knowledge about law and regulation</b> know nothing about law or any regulations</p> <p><b>-Attitude to apply for</b></p>	<p><b>-Types of illness and accessing to medical service</b> normal sickness and not intent to use Thai medical services</p> <p><b>-Knowledge and</b></p>	<p><b>-Between Khmer and Khmer construction workers</b> drunk, groups</p> <p><b>-Between Khmer construction workers and local</b></p>	<p><b>-Changing the current job</b> they intent to change their job as construction worker</p> <p><b>-Intention to permanent settlement in Thailand</b> mostly intent to go back but some want to be the</p>



	<p>rights to do so</p> <p><b>-Entertainment</b> Karaoke, drinking, shopping, and some sports</p> <p><b>-Marriage in Thailand</b> with Khmer and Khmer and also some Thai</p> <p><b>-Family and children</b> not easy to access to any services and also education</p> <p><b>-Remittance</b> remit money though the intricate system of agents</p>	<p>more responsibility and specialist</p> <p><b>-Protection and accident in the working place</b> mostly not provided any protection tools but some</p>	<p><b>working permit card</b> mostly want to get working permit card</p> <p><b>-Experiences of arresting by police</b> mostly experienced of arresting the police</p>	<p><b>attitudes toward HIV/AIDS</b> Know how to protect themselves</p> <p><b>-Drug abuse</b> they scared with the drugs</p>	<p><b>Thai gangsters</b> started from Thai gangsters and everybody scared them</p> <p><b>-Between Khmer and Burmese construction workers</b> drunk, make noise, or small problems</p> <p><b>-Between Khmer construction workers and employers</b> wage payments, cheating</p> <p><b>-Domestic violence</b> normal happened but not seriously</p>	<p>Thai citizen</p> <p><b>-Perspective toward Thai people</b> negative but appreciation</p> <p><b>-Changing attitudes</b> act, dress and speak as Thai styles</p>
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### 4.3 Theoretical discussion

There are three main theories were used to explain the migration flow from Cambodia to Thailand such as; first the neo-classical economic equilibrium perspective approaches, second historical-structuralist approach and third the migration system theory. Among these theories, neo-classical economic equilibrium perspectives theory which explained the push and pull factors are mostly fix to the migration phenomenon of Cambodia migrant workers into Thailand. Even so, it is not meaning that other two theories that were explained in the conceptual framework are wrong but it seemed complete or fulfill to the first theory. In the following is a discussion to finger out whether the findings in this thesis are replied to the first theory says.

The neo-classical economic equilibrium sees migration flows as being caused by the 'pull and pull' model. This theory also mentioned by Borjas, G, J. and Savitri, G. that labor will migrate from the low wage countries to the high wage countries until the real wage are equalized, with assumption of the cooperative static framework, homogenous labor, constant returns of scale, zero migration costs, and perfect competitive labor market. In my findings the Cambodian illegal migrant workers migrated into Thailand because mainly poverty and the economic hardships. High employment rate in Cambodia caused the people's living standard harder and at the same time in Thailand the labor wage and plenty of unskilled jobs are on the high rate and demands, which is why caused the migration flows of Cambodian illegal migrant worker into Thailand happened. Therefore, in the findings are really replied to what the neo-classical economic equilibrium approach proposed.

Relevant to Castle's says, the process of recruitment indicated a migration system is true because there are many parts were role as the recruiters including police, authorities, and brokers in both sides and migrant workers themselves. In findings the recruiters provided a very easy service to the people who want to work in Thailand, the migrant workers just pay and for other are the recruiter's responsibility. Moreover, the migrant workers themselves became recruiters and they provided more easy services than other agents because normally the person they recruited are mostly

their friends, relatives and villagers. As what the Castle, Bourdieu and Wacquant mentioned about the interaction of a parallel influence, the micro-structure, within the migration system approach clarifies the role of informal networks developed by the migrants themselves to cope with migration and settlement. This structure is very similar to the concept of chain-migration. It refers to the personal relationships and family patterns, friendship and community ties and mutual help in economy and social matters.

Informal networks bind migrants and non-migrants together in a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relationships. These bonds are double-sided; they link migrants with non-migrants in their areas of origin, but also connect settlers with the receiving population in various relationships of cooperation, competition and conflict. Such networks are dynamic cultural responses, which encourage ethnic community formation and are conducive to the maintenance of transnational families and group ties. The family and community are crucial in migration networks. Migration networks also provided the basis for processes for settlement and community formation in the immigration area. Migrant groups develop their social and economic infrastructure: place of worship, associations, shops, and cafés, professional services like lawyers and doctors, and other services. This is linked to family reunion; as length of stay increases, the original migrants begin to bring their spouse and children in, or simply find a new family. People start to see their life perspectives in the new country. This process is especially linked to the situation of migrants' children: once they go to school in the new country, learn the language, form peer group relations and develop bicultural identities, it becomes more and more difficult for the parents to return to their homelands. The links between immigration community and area of origin may persist over generations. Remittances fall off and visits home may decline in frequency, but familial and cultural links remain. People stay in touch with their area of origin, and many seek marriage patterns there. Migration continues along the established chains and may increase dramatically at a time of crisis.

Responds to what Castles and Boyd discussion, some points do not exist in the reality in migrant workers society such as community formation, migrant developed their social and economical infrastructure. The migrant workers could not form any communities in Thailand by themselves because those shelters were built and provided by the employers and it will disappear whenever the construction projects finished. However, they are still living as communities in the contemporary communities. There is no any social and economic infrastructures were found in the fieldworks both in Rayong province and Bangkok runs by the Cambodian migrant workers. However, there are two cases were found in Rayong province that the Karaoke shops are running by the migrant workers but those are marriage with Thai people. Moreover, there is no any Cambodia association, lawyers working in Thailand yet. The main reasons why they could not be able to form these kinds of things because they are living illegally in Thailand, most of them are living contemporary in Thailand, they can go back to Cambodia easily when they have any problems. For instance, some migrant workers went back to Cambodia when they get sick either marriage or any serious problems. Normally, the migrant workers seemed not to care to these kinds of things as well because they migrate to Thailand just to work and collect money then going back. According to my observation the geographical situation of Cambodia and Thailand are very close and neighbor that they go back and fort very easily and do not cause them much time and money. So the migrant worker do not intend to set up any regular communities or any social or economical infrastructure as Castles and Boyd had discussed. However, there are some points were found in the fieldworks as Castles and Boyd had discussed such as family reunion, the original migrant being bring their spouse and children in or simply find a new family.

In conclude to this part, the push and pull factors that was explained so far are mostly relevant to cause the migration flows of Cambodian migrants workers into Thailand and it was explained in the whole process of this thesis. The process of recruitment indicated a migration system is similar to what I found in the fieldworks. Castle and Boyd discussed about the living conditions and working conditions of the

migrant workers, some point could not find in my fieldworks but maybe we can find in other fieldworks such as European countries.

#### **4.4 Recommendations**

Up to the grass root level of understanding, the living condition of illegal immigrants will be improved if everybody tries to listen and look at the reality that is happening in the society. In the following are some recommendations that hopefully will turn to be practical;

-Legalize status: There should be more cooperation between all parties in legalizing the status of people who are living and working in Thailand. At the national level, the system is very effective for legalizing the status of the workers, but the cooperation from the employers is very important. However, the legal status is just one component of improving the living condition of Cambodian workers in Thailand. At the same time the workers should receive other training especially related to quality of life and how to live harmoniously and peacefully in the destination or in the host countries.

#### **-Understanding basic law**

Understanding the basic law of Thailand is very important for illegal immigrants in Thailand. As the description in the finding section, the Cambodian illegal workers are very much abused and live in violent situation because they feel that they are living in a 'no law society'. It seemed as if it is an animal society based on strong leaders or powerful persons. In the immigrants' society, this is why they have to form their own groups because nobody will protect or care about them and they have to protect themselves. Therefore, the workers should receive more training about basic laws and their rights.

-Reducing the cheating cases: cheating by the employers is commonly known in the illegal immigrant society. Normally the employers threatened the worker by calling the police to arrest them if they try to protest for their labor wage. According to my research the police and employer are working very well together. They are both

got benefit from this situation. As a result, many problems occur, such as misunderstandings and negative perspectives toward each other, which can lead to general misconceptions of Thai people by the Khmer workers and moreover this activities will automatically generalized. Therefore, there should be more rights of the workers to bring case of cheating to the authorities and prosecutes such employers.

**-Public services**

Public services although available, the illegal immigrant do not intent to use such services. There are many barriers such as language, high cost and even the workers feeling uncomfortable when the doctor asks for documents. Thus, NGOs who are working at the grass root level are very important to helping with this problem because the workers seem to be comfortable to use NGOs rather than state level public services. Thus, NGOs should be given more support and funding in this area and the Thai government should give opportunity to the Cambodia NGOs to set up and work in this area as well.

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**APPENDIX**

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# APPENDIX A

## Semi-Structure Interview Guidelines

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

Place of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 1. Personal Backgrounds

- a. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Place of birth, name of the province: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. How many brother and sister do you have?
- d. Marital status:  Single  married, if so when you get married? And are you divorced/ separated or widowed now?
- e. How many children do you have?
- f. Education level? \_\_\_\_\_, Can you read and write in Khmer?
- g. Could you speak Thai language? Can you read and write it?

### 2. Life in Cambodia

- a. What did you do in Cambodia?
- b. What are your family members doing now?
- c. Did you earn income in Cambodia? How much did you earn per month?
- d. How many peoples in your family are the income making positions?
- e. Besides the main job, how could you make more income and how much did you gain per day?
- f. Do have any furniture in your house such as TV, Refrigerator, and Air-conditioners?

- g. Do you have Car, Motorcycle and Bicycle?
- h. Do you use electricity in your house? Is it a private or state owner?  
How much that you spent per month?
- i. Do you have land for cultivation? How many heaters do you have?
- j. How and what kind of material do you use for cultivation?
- k. The productions from cultivation were enough for your family?
- l. How much did you spent for food per day in Cambodia?

### 3. Migration Journey

- a. Did you ever move out from you original village to other village or province? If, yes. Why?
- b. When did you first come to Thailand?
- c. Why did you decide to come to Thailand?
- d. How did you get money to come to Thailand at that time?
- e. How did you come to Thailand and what problems and experiences did you have a long the way?
- f. Who guided you to go to Thailand and how much did you pay for them?
- g. How many people came along with you to Thailand?
- h. Did your neighbors come along with you?
- i. Do you have travel cost for passing the border? How much?
- j. Which checkpoint did you passed?
- k. Did you hold any document to pass the border?
- l. How could you find this job?

### 4. Working Conditions in Thailand

- a. Since you come to Thailand what kind of jobs have you done?
- b. If yes, why did you move to work at this job?
- c. What are the differences between this job and others you have had?
- d. What are your job responsibilities in this current work?
- e. What is your salary? Do you have any bonuses or extra money?
- f. What time do you start and finished work?

- g. How many days off do you get per week?
- h. Do you still get paid for your day off?
- i. Could you save money for sending home? How many times did you send money home? How you send that money to Cambodia? How much do you sent home per year?
- j. Do your employer allows you to contact with others in the working time through out:
  - i. The telephone
  - ii. Go out to meet
  - iii. Allow visitors in
  - iv. Other
- k. Safety during the working time?
- l. Are you satisfied with the present work? Or do you want to change your job?
- m. What do you feel with your employers, are they good or bad?
- n. What other problems that your employer had done with you in the previous time? How could you sole the problems?

#### 5. Living Condition in Thailand

- a. Are you living in the working site or rent the room?
- b. If rental the room, are you sharing room with your friends or family or relatives?
- c. How many people living with you?
- d. What do you spent money for?
- e. Do you cook by yourself?
- f. If you cook by yourself, where you buy those foods?
- g. Do you have any toilet nearby?
- h. What do you do in the free time?
- i. Are there members of your family with you now?

- j. How often do you joined or celebrated in social events in this community? (Ex: go to the temple, make merit, and attend a religious ceremony).
- k. How often do you go to visit your friend or relatives in Thailand?
- l. How is their situation in Thailand?
- m. How often do you go back home?
- n. Did someone ever .....on you, your friend and other workers?
  - a. Sword
  - b. Hit
  - c. Thrown things
  - d. Threatened
  - e. Pinched
  - f. Pushed
  - g. Locked down
  - h. Cheat money
  - i. Raped
  - j. Punished
  - k. Other\_\_\_\_\_

#### 6. Illegal Status

- a. Did you ever apply for the ID card?
- b. Do you want to have an ID card? Why?
- c. What is difference between you and other people who have ID card?  
Are they paying differently?
- d. How do you do when you meet polices?
- e. Has you ever arrested by Police or Thai authorities? If yes, how did they do with you?
- f. Do you understand the policy, law or your right as being the illegal migrant?
- g. What about your children in Thailand? Are they going to school? If yes do you pay for schooling? If no, why?
- h. Are there any NGOs and Organization trained and giving you services?



- i. What do those NGOs and Organization do?
- j. Did you get assistances from them?

#### 7. Health Problems

- a. What health problems do you and your families have in Thailand?
- b. Do you use any protection during your working time?
- c. Have you ever had any accident while working?
- d. If you are sick, could you ask for permission off from your work?
- e. If you have any kind of illness, what do you do?
- f. What the employers do when you sick? Do they take you to hospital?
- g. Are there any health care service centers here?
- h. If you ever use the health service what kind of major problems that you encountered?
- i. Do you use birth control?
- j. If you or your wife has children, where did you deliver them?
- k. Do you or your wife have a pregnancy that you did not want?
  - i. If so, why did not want them?
  - ii. What do you do?
- l. Do you know about HIV/AIDS?
- m. Do you use condom with partners who not your spouse?

#### 8. Violence

- a. Have you ever seen mental or physical abuse of illegal migrant in Thailand?
- b. Has anyone ever caused mental or physical abuse to you?
  - If yes, please explain what happened?
  - If no, are you afraid this happen to you?
- c. How do you protect yourself from this?
- d. Do you ever see the serious violence between Cambodian and Cambodian workers? Cambodian with other workers? Cambodian with Thai workers? And Cambodian with Thai local people?
- e. Did the Thai authorities intervene toward these problems?

- f. Did you see any domestic violence here?

#### 9. Future Aspiration

- a. Since you arrived here, have you been able to save some money? How much did you sent per year? Did you save money in the last year?
- b. Do you want to bring your family members here? If no or yes, why?
- c. When was the last time that you visited home?
- d. What did you do when you visit home?
- e. How many people under your financial support?
- f. Do you want to continue with your current job or you want to change?
- g. If you want to change the job, what kind of job that you expected and why?
- h. Do you think, you will go back when you fulfill you expectations? If not why?
- i. Do you want to stay in Thailand or in Cambodia? If you want to return when you plan to return? Will you come back again? Why?
- j. If you can choose between to stay in Cambodia or working in Thailand, what will you choose? And why?
- k. Do you think you can learn something from your current jobs? And do think it will be useful for you when you go back country?

#### 10. Other

- a. What do you think about your situation in Cambodia?
- b. What do you think about Cambodia illegal migrants in Thailand?
- c. What do you feel with local Thai people and Thai authorities?
- d. What do you think the situation in Cambodia compare to Thailand?
- e. If there anything else or suggestions you would like to tell us?

Thank you for kind cooperation!!!

## APPENDIX B

### Focus Group Discussion Guideline

1. Did you ever see any effect of drug use to your friend or other Cambodian workers?
2. Did you ever see any effect of alcohol use to your friends or other Cambodian workers?
3. Did you see any effect of gambling to your friends and other Cambodian workers?
4. Are there any of your friends go to prostitutes? And what do you think on them?
5. Did you ever see any workers marriage with Thai people?



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## APPENDIX C

### Question Guidelines for Key Informants

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

Place of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. What do you think about the living's condition of Cambodia immigrant in Thailand?
2. What do you think about the Working's condition of Cambodia immigrant in Thailand?
3. Did you ever see someone caused mental or physical abuse to Cambodia immigrants?
4. Did you cause any problems by Cambodian immigrants?
5. Did you ever see any effect of drug use to Cambodian immigrant workers?
6. Did you ever see any effect of alcohol use to Cambodian immigrant workers?
7. Did you see any effect of gambling to Cambodian immigrant workers?
8. Did you ever see any Cambodian immigrants get marriage with Thai people?
9. What do you think about the relations between Cambodia workers and Thai people?
10. What do you think about the attitude of Cambodian illegal immigrant toward Thai people?
11. What do you think about the attitude of Thai people toward Cambodian illegal immigrant?
12. Did you ever see any serous problems happen between Cambodian immigrants and Thai people?

## BIOGRAPHY

Sary SENG was born in Battambang province, Cambodia. He was educated from primary until junior high school in the Thai-Cambodia refugee camps since 1992. After repatriation, he started his senior high school in Pursat province and finished in 1998. He graduated from Royal University of Phnom Penh with a bachelor degree in sociology in 2003. A few months after he graduated he got a scholarship from Toyota Foundation as a junior fellow in the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS). In 2004, he enrolled in the Master program in Southeast Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University.

Contact:

Address: # 178E4, St. 107, Sangkat. Oreusey 4,

Khan. 7 Makara, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

E-mail: [sarypursat@yahoo.com](mailto:sarypursat@yahoo.com)



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