ASSESSING POTENTIAL CHANGES IN THE MIGRATION PATTERNS OF CAMBODIAN MIGRANTS AND THEIR IMPACTS ON THAILAND AND CAMBODIA
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Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Cambodian Migrants and their Impacts on Thailand and Cambodia

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Content

Foreword ............................................................................................................................. I
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... II
List of acronyms ................................................................................................................ III
Executive summary ......................................................................................................... VI

Introduction - Migration of Cambodians to Thailand ....................................................... 1
Literature Review of theories of migration and development ............................................. 2

Chapter 1 - Methodology ................................................................................................. 7
Data collection and analysis .............................................................................................. 7
Migrant population and sample size .................................................................................. 7
Limitations of the study ...................................................................................................... 9

Chapter 2 - Characteristics of respondents .................................................................... 11
Gender, age and religion ..................................................................................................... 11
Ethnicity and place of origin ............................................................................................ 12
Educational attainment ..................................................................................................... 13
Marital status and number of children ............................................................................. 14
Household size in Cambodia ........................................................................................... 14
Previous occupation, income, property and living condition ........................................... 14
Migration process ............................................................................................................. 16
Current occupation in Thailand ....................................................................................... 18
Documentation status ...................................................................................................... 21
Attitude toward Thai authorities ....................................................................................... 24
Opinion on working conditions ....................................................................................... 25
Access to Healthcare ....................................................................................................... 26
Access to banking services ............................................................................................... 27
Access to education in Thailand ....................................................................................... 28
Education .......................................................................................................................... 28
Living conditions ............................................................................................................. 29
List of Figures

Figure 1: Proportion of female and male respondents in research areas 11
Figure 2: Age group and gender of respondents 12
Figure 3: Educational attainment of respondents 13
Figure 4: Educational attainment of respondents by sex 13
Figure 5: Occupations of respondents prior to migrating to Thailand 14
Figure 6: Income of respondents prior to migrating to Thailand 15
Figure 7: Respondents by monthly income in Cambodia and province in Cambodia 15
Figure 8: Income of female and male migrants prior to migrating to Thailand 16
Figure 9: Reasons for migrating to Thailand 17
Figure 10: Migration assistance responses 17
Figure 11: Expense for migrating to Thailand 18
Figure 12: Current occupation in Thailand 19
Figure 13: Current occupation in Thailand by gender 19
Figure 14: Current occupation in Thailand by province 21
Figure 15: Respondents’ documentation status 21
Figure 16: Respondents’ occupation and documentation status 22
Figure 17: Documentation status by province 23
Figure 18: Duration of stay in Thailand by province 23
Figure 19: Migrants’ attitude toward Thai authorities when they first came to Thailand 24
Figure 20: Migrants’ current attitude toward Thai authorities 24
Figure 21: Respondents’ perception of their working conditions 26
Figure 22: Respondents’ access to healthcare by documentation status 26
Figure 23: Respondents’ access to banking services by documentation status 27
Figure 24: Migrant’s access to education in Thailand 28
Figure 25: Migrants’ children’s access to education in Thailand 29
Figure 26: Perception of living condition in Thailand 29
Figure 27: Respondents’ frequency of contact with families 30
Figure 28: Current daily income of respondents
Figure 29: Daily wage of respondents in Central provinces
Figure 30: Daily wage of respondents in Eastern provinces
Figure 31: Daily wage of respondents in the border province
Figure 32: Daily wage of respondents by sector of work
Figure 33: Daily wage of respondents by documentation status
Figure 34: Monthly income of respondents by sector of work
Figure 35: Remittance amount sent per year
Figure 36: Remittances sent by respondents’ place of origin
Figure 37: Remittance channels used by documentation status
Figure 38: Person making decision on spending remittances, by gender
Figure 39: Importance of remittances by respondents’ income level
Figure 40: Importance of remittances by respondents’ sector of work
Figure 41: Impact of migration on home community, by sex of respondent
Figure 42: Impact of migration on home community, by place of origin of respondent
Figure 43: Impact of migration on home community, by urban and rural area
Figure 44: Skills that respondents acquired by working in Thailand, by sex
Figure 45: Respondents’ perception of skills gained, by sex
Figure 46: Respondents’ perception of skills gained, by sector of work
Figure 47: Perception of skills gained and employment opportunity in Cambodia
Figure 48: Most appealing skills, by sex
Figure 49: Changes in Cambodia and effect on decision to return
Figure 50: Five main reasons for willingness to return to Cambodia
Figure 51: Migrants’ time frame for returning, by documentation status
Figure 52: Percentage of migrants who plan to return permanently to Cambodia, by province of origin
Figure 53: Expected work in Cambodia upon return, by skills gained
Figure 54: Expected future income level upon return for female respondents, by province of origin
Figure 55: Expected future income level upon return for male respondents, by province of origin
Figure 56: Five main reasons for not returning to Cambodia
List of Tables

Table 1: Distribution of data collection in six study areas 8
Table 2: Distribution of qualitative interviews in six study areas 9
Table 3: Average amount of remittances sent, by sea 40
List of Maps

Map 1: Target provinces of data collection 9
Map 2: Five main provinces of origin of respondents from Cambodia 12
Over the past few decades, economic growth in Thailand has provided ample employment opportunities for migrant workers. While Cambodia has also seen notable growth and development over the same period, the widening disparities between urban and rural areas continue to motivate many Cambodian migrants to migrate to Thailand, particularly those from rural communities where jobs are scarce and low-paid. Cambodian workers have migrated to Thailand in high numbers for many years, with over 650,000 documented migrants from Cambodia in Thailand, providing a vital contribution to the economy of Thailand and playing a critical role in filling labour shortages in numerous key sectors, a trend that is likely to continue in the future. This notwithstanding, the situation of Cambodian migrants in Thailand has never been comprehensively investigated and understood, which precludes strong evidence-based policy making for both Thailand and Cambodia.

This report therefore aims to contribute towards the Governments of Thailand and Cambodia in their effort to develop transparent and rights-based migration policies and programmes which maximize positive contributions of migration to the economies and societies of both countries.

The assessment follows on from the success of the IOM reports published in coordination with Chulalongkorn University, namely “Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and their Impacts on Thailand” (2013) and “Assessing the Potential Changes in the Migration Pattern of Laotian Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand and Lao People’s Democratic Republic” (2016). These reports encompassed tailored conclusions and recommendations for the respective Governments, as well as for development partners, and both attracted significant interest from policymakers, practitioners and academics. As a key country of origin for migrants in Thailand, it is crucial to analyse the situation of Cambodian migrants in Thailand for the governments of Thailand and Cambodia to design and deliver evidence-based policies, strategies and interventions to maximize the developmental benefits of labour migration.

It is IOM’s sincere hope that the findings of this study will enable relevant stakeholders and development partners in Cambodia and Thailand to understand and maximize the impacts of migration on socioeconomic development in the future. A proactive approach to facilitating and strengthening migration mechanisms while promoting opportunity and protecting the livelihood of migrants is key as we move forward in this rapidly evolving migration context.

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The following study was a collaborative effort led by the IOM Country Mission in Thailand in partnership with the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) of the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. The project’s research team consisted of Premjai Vungsiriphisal, Ph.D., Warany Jitpong and Nithis Thammasaengadipha; with coordination by Mary Grimwade and Nathan Webb of IOM Thailand.

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List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARCM</td>
<td>Asian Research Center for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMG</td>
<td>Global Migration Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>KHR</td>
<td>Cambodian Riel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOI</td>
<td>Migration outcomes index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THB</td>
<td>Thai Baht</td>
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<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollar</td>
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<td>WBG</td>
<td>World Bank Group</td>
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The number of Cambodians working in Thailand has grown rapidly over the past few years. When the Royal Thai Government completed the latest round of migrant worker registrations in March 2018, it had recorded 391,000 workers from Cambodia out of a total of 1.97 million workers from nearby countries. As the Royal Thai Government has announced that henceforth only migrants who enter under the auspices of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government of a country of origin will be permitted to remain and work, an assessment of the impact of labour migration from Cambodia to Thailand, and of potential changes in the volume of such migration, is timely. This assessment complements those conducted earlier on Myanmar and Laotian migrants in Thailand by the International Organization for Migration and the Asian Research Center for Migration (IOM and ARCM, 2013 and 2016).

While the Cambodian economy has recently grown more rapidly than the Thai economy, there still exists a large disparity in job opportunities and wage levels between the two countries, which has driven the rise of labour migration. Such migration has contributed to economic development in Thailand by furnishing a reliable supply of low-wage workers in key economic sectors such as agriculture, construction, fishing and manufacturing. Remittances sent by migrant workers to their families in Cambodia are important to the families’ well-being and to village economies. The impact of migration on development goes beyond the monetary aspect, however, to include family dynamics, education, health and the acquisition and use of labour market skills. This assessment examines all of these impacts in detail.

The Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) conducted a quantitative survey of Cambodian migrant workers in six areas of Thailand that contain the highest number of such workers. The survey was carried out in September and November 2018 and interviewed 901 migrant workers. In-depth interviews were also carried out among 122 key stakeholders, including government officials, employers, non-governmental organization staff members, and migrant workers. Focus group discussions were also held in each of the study areas.

Among the 901 survey respondents, 51 per cent were women, 52 per cent had come from rural areas in Cambodia and most were young. They had migrated from across Cambodia, from provinces near the Thai border to Prey Veng (15 per cent of the total) on the Cambodia-Viet Nam border. The migrants had few employment and income opportunities in Cambodia. Seventeen per cent of them had not attended any schooling and another 30 per cent had not completed elementary school. Twenty-six per cent came from households of six or more persons in Cambodia. One third of them had been unemployed and 55 per cent of them did not have an income before migrating. Only one quarter of the migrants had been farming their own land in Cambodia.

Although Thai labour migration regulations make no provision for family migration, 74 per cent of respondents were married and 85 per cent of those were living with their spouse in Thailand. Most of the migrants had come to Thailand several times and worked for several years in aggregate. Only 30 per cent of them were working in Thailand for the first time. Forty-four per cent of the migrants had worked in Thailand for at least five years.
The cost of migration appears to have been reduced in recent years, perhaps because those persons who migrate several times know how to do it in a more cost-effective manner. Forty-four per cent of the migrants had paid between THB 2,000 and THB 3,000 (USD 62 – USD 94) for their most recent move. Fifty-six per cent had used a broker in one or both countries to assist their migration but only 25 per cent of them had borrowed money from a source other than friends or family members in order to pay for their move.

Cambodian migrants in Thailand are concentrated in the construction sector, where 30 per cent of them work, but 19 per cent of them are considered general labourers and significant proportions also work in manufacturing, fishing and agriculture.

As a result of the recent registration process, 74 per cent of the migrant workers held some personal identification and a work permit. Only three per cent of the respondents reported not holding any identification documents. Migrant workers’ attitudes toward Thai authorities had become more neutral than at the beginning of the process.

The migrants’ perceptions of their working conditions were better than might have been expected. Seven per cent said they were very good, 44 per cent rated them as good and 45 per cent as adequate. Only 3 per cent rated their working conditions as bad and one per cent as very bad.

Well over 60 per cent of migrant workers who held some form of documentation reported that they could access health care easily. Most of the documented migrants who wished to access banking services in Thailand were able to do so. Twelve per cent of respondents had obtained some of their education in Thailand, perhaps indicating that they had first arrived when quite young. The survey also revealed that most of the migrants in Thailand maintained frequent contact with family members in Cambodia.

The daily minimum wage differs somewhat among provinces in Thailand, and some workers are paid on a monthly, rather than daily, basis. In any circumstance, however, significant percentages of migrant workers, especially women, reported receiving less than the minimum wage. Overall, more than 40 per cent of women migrants and about one quarter of male migrants received less than the minimum wage for the province in which they worked. Migrants in fishing, construction and factory work received the highest wages while those in the service sector and trade received the lowest. More-fully documented migrants received higher wages than those who were in Thailand on a day pass and those who were undocumented.

The mean annual value of remittances sent by respondents was THB 39,312 (over USD 1,200). If all of the 374,561 registered Cambodian migrants in Thailand remit at the same rate, total remittances from Thailand to Cambodia equal THB 14.725 billion or USD 460 million per year. Because women migrants earned less than their male counterparts, they were somewhat less likely to send remittances at all and in many cases they sent slightly lower amounts.

Bank transfers have become the most common means of sending remittances to Cambodia, with roughly half of the migrants in several documentation categories sending money this way. Some migrants paid no fees to send remittances but others paid a commission of more than 20 per cent. Decisions on how to spend remittances were made mostly by the respondents themselves or, in order of importance, by their spouse, by the respondent and spouse together, as a collective decision of the family, and other family members. Over 90 per cent of respondents said that their remittances were important or very important for the living condition of their families. Two thirds of respondents said that they now save more and nearly one third said that they now
invest more following their migration to Thailand.

Two thirds of both women and men migrants reported that they had gained some skills as a result of working in Thailand although the skill most frequently cited was in speaking Thai. As migrants from Cambodia had improved their Thai language ability and other work skills, more than half of them believed that their new skills would help them to find better jobs in Thailand and one in six believed that the skills would lead to a higher income in their current jobs. A few of those surveyed thought that their new skills would benefit them in the future. Only 43 per cent of respondents reported that they were interested in obtaining skills development training. Among those who did not want skills training, 79 per cent said that their reasoning was because they did not have enough time for training.

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents planned to return to Cambodia permanently and the other 27 per cent did not yet have a plan. Although most migrants plan eventually to return to Cambodia, very few of them plan to do so soon. More than 40 per cent of those who could specify a planned return thought it would be after six or more years in the future.

The skills that migrants learned while working in Thailand are likely to be of benefit to them upon their return and re-employment in Cambodia but there is no particular pattern in how skills learned in Thailand might affect the work that migrants plan to do in Cambodia. Rather, migrants’ employment prospects upon return appear to be shaped more by the structure of the Cambodian economy than by skills obtained while working in Thailand.

Upon their return to Cambodia, 83 per cent of respondents expected to earn approximately the same amount as they earned in Thailand. It is possible that this expectation could be a factor in delaying the return of many migrants, especially as those who did not have plans to return cited the lack of sufficient savings in Thailand and the lack of job opportunities with acceptable wages in Cambodia as reasons for not planning to return.

As the regularization of migrant workers who are already working in Thailand has resulted in a high percentage of them being registered while lowering recruitment time and cost, this study concludes that the Governments of Thailand and Cambodia should increase cooperation to expand the scope of their MOU on labour migration to permit that regularization process in the future.

**Other recommendations to the Royal Thai Government include:**

- Ensure the payment of the legal minimum wage to migrant workers, especially women
- Carry out more rigorous inspections of working conditions;
- Ensure that all migrant workers are covered by health and accident insurance;
- Cooperate with the private sector to promote the use of electronic means of sending remittances at a low cost;
- Allow migrant workers to participate in Government-sponsored skills training in sectors where there are labour shortages.
Other recommendations to the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia include:

- Provide adequate pre-departure training to migrants that is geared to the relevant educational level;
- Establish a loan fund for prospective migrant workers so that they do not need to borrow from money-lenders;
- Cooperate with the financial sector to safeguard the delivery of remittances to migrants’ families and with reasonable fees;
- Incorporate labour migration, including return migration, in national development plans;
- Provide training for returning migrants on setting up their own businesses and create initiatives for return migrants to increase the productivity of their farms.
For many years a large number of Cambodian workers have migrated to Thailand for employment, providing a vital contribution to the economy of Thailand by filling labour shortages in numerous key sectors and contributing to the economy of their areas of origin through remittances sent back home.

As of March 2018, the Royal Thai Government had registered 1.97 million migrant workers in the country, with 1.40 million from Myanmar, 391,000 from Cambodia and 180,000 from Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The total for Cambodia included 148,109 migrants who had entered the nationality verification process, 226,452 who entered via the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process and 16,279 seasonal and daily labourers (Thailand, 2018). Although Cambodia has seen notable economic growth and development over the past decade, the different economic levels, especially wage levels, between Thailand and Cambodia still constitute a pull factor for Cambodian workers to migrate to Thailand, particularly those from poor rural communities.

Since 1996 Thailand has permitted migrants from Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar to work in low-skilled occupations, including factory work, construction, domestic work and fishing. During that period, migrants who were already employed in the country could register for work permits. Following a final round of such registration that ended in March 2018, the Government has declared that only migrants who have entered Thailand under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding with one of those countries (plus Viet Nam) will be permitted to work in the country. Those migrants with a temporary registration card are permitted to work until 2020. A large number of Cambodian seasonal and daily workers are also employed in Thailand through an agreement between Governors of border provinces.

The study, “Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Cambodian Migrants and their Impacts on Thailand and Cambodia”, has been conducted with the goal of understanding potential shifts in migration patterns of Cambodian migrants to Thailand, the impact of that migration on Thailand, and the linkages between these migration patterns and development in Cambodia, particularly in the area of poverty reduction. The ultimate objective of the project is to contribute towards the Governments of Thailand and Cambodia in developing transparent and rights-based migration policies and programmes that maximize positive contributions of migration to the economies and societies of both countries. This assessment complements those conducted earlier on Myanmar and Laotian migrants in Thailand by the International Organization for Migration and the Asian Research Center for Migration (IOM and ARCM, 2013 and 2016).

The assessment included a quantitative survey of 901 migrants in six areas that have a high number (over 20,000) of Cambodian migrant workers: i.e., Bangkok and Nonthaburi, Pathumthani, Chon Buri, Samut Prakarn, Rayong and Sakaeo. The last is a border province that was included to
provide coverage of migrant daily workers. The quantitative survey was complemented with a qualitative survey of 122 migrant workers, Government officials, employers and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers.

Literature Review of Theories of Migration and Development

Theoretical Perspectives

"Migration embraces all dimensions of social existence, and therefore demands an interdisciplinary approach" (Castles 2010, 1569)

Theoretical discourse on migration and development is perpetually shifting in pursuit of understanding how human mobility correlates with patterns of economic prosperity and socio-cultural change. Although it is virtually impossible to develop a “one-size-fits-all” theory explaining migration on a global scale, De Haas posits, “there is undoubtedly more room for theorizing on migration processes and how they reciprocally connect to broader processes of social and economic change” (De Haas 2011, 15).

In the past, migration and development research has heavily favoured the analysis of remittances as the primary empirical sign of socio-economic growth. In recent decades, however, a more holistic approach has been adopted, which views migration and its effects as part of a multifaceted sphere of development, implicating the well-being and capabilities of both sending and receiving populations. While De Haas (2007) acknowledges the importance of conceptualizing the migration and development nexus within broader economic structures, he simultaneously calls for literature to transcend the use of purely financial indicators. These indicators include income increases and remittance levels, which fail to engage with the socio-cultural context and thus circumvent the scope of analysis.

De Haas tracks migration and development literature along its historical trajectory. He not only notes the oscillating opinions from developmentalist “migration optimists” in the 1950s and 1960s, but also studies the growing pool of migration sceptics after the 1973 economic crisis, who were convinced labour mobility would result in brain drain from South to North, generating remittance-dependent communities (De Haas 2007, 5). Moreover, Portes marks the broad diversity of perspectives by analyzing migration as a cause of change, pinpointing cultural outlooks which favour the potential of migration to impact on value and normative transformation versus structural standpoints whereby migration is understood through its demographic and economic significance (2010, 1544).

Massey (2015) also explores the vast perspectives existing on human migratory patterns by providing a theoretical synthesis of leading migration models developed by social scientists over the twentieth century. These include: neoclassical economics (Lewis 1954, Ranis and Fei 1961), the new economics of labour migration (NELM) (Stark 1991), segmented labour-market theory (Doeringer and Piore 1971), world-systems theory (Sassen 1988), social-capital theory (Bourdieu 1986), cumulative causation (Myrdal 1957, Massey 1990) and the state filter (Massey 2012). Although these models have proved useful in the past to explain the phenomenon of migration, their validity in the contemporary analysis of migration is predicated on their capacity to conform to the new empirical conditions of our globalized sphere. The weakness of these models,
however, is that they only map the causes, processes and patterns of international migration without considering the measurable developmental impacts, particularly poverty reduction.

There are vast and varied academic perspectives that address the integration of remittances within the processes of development. Ellerman (2003, 4) theorizes in a World Bank policy paper that remittances can only truly benefit development when they are invested in local enterprises in developing countries, which can in turn become remittance independent. Conversely, Kapur (2004) investigates, with a certain scepticism, the global value added from remittance growth. He highlights through his findings that their greatest impacts are felt in alleviating transient poverty; however, there is less certainty for their long-term effects in reversing structural poverty. Carling (2008) encompasses both views whilst suggesting that remittances can have resoundingly positive effects on development, whether they come in the form of supporting the daily subsistence of a family to directly alleviate a situation of poverty, or investment in assets to better secure sustained, future benefits (Carling 2008, 188).

Sutherland (2013) engages in the migration and development debate in the post-2015 context, where the conversation has shifted from the historic understanding of migration as a failure of development to one that recognizes the critical and positive role migrants are playing in influencing the nature of the twenty-first century. Sutherland emphasizes the importance of implementing smart policy decisions to harness the potential of remittances but supplements this view by suggesting governments also need to address other gains generated from migration in new policy developments. Alejandro Portes (2010) explores these other migration-related gains through a lens of social change, on the micro, meso and macro levels.

Similarly, Castles (2010) argues that “social transformation” should form the central component of the broader conceptual framework for migration studies; he reasons that this is to motivate an understanding of the complexity and multilayered interconnectedness of human mobility in the continually changing global landscape. To effectively capture this complexity, Castles suggests migration research methodologies must take an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating both economic and demographic quantitative data with qualitative insights that provide a nuanced explanation of mapped socio-cultural behaviours of mobility. Unfortunately, this approach is rare, as much of the existing literature on migration is subdivided by disciplinary boundaries.

The Global Migration Group’s (2017) “Handbook for Improving the Production and Use of Migration Data for Development” explores the existing data gaps and theoretical challenges in migration and development research. A significant challenge in the formulation of remittance data as seen in current literature is the difficulty of tracking and recording the scope of remittance flows through informal channels. All official data on remittances are believed to be underestimated, due to the fact that these studies exclude informal money transfers. Therefore, studies like IOM’s proposed assessment, where surveys and interviews will be completed with remittance senders, are a necessary and crucial addition to the existing literature.

The Handbook also promotes the use of mobile phones, online tools and platforms such as social media or online payment services in migration research; these represent potential innovative “big data” sources of global migration data. In particular, social media is a potentially rich source of migration data, given its widespread usage and some specific features, such as the geo-location of users’ activity. For example, the number of active users on Facebook is approximately 1.4 billion, and the ability to geotag locations via the social media platform could provide detailed data on migrants. Interactions on social media also contribute to the formation of virtual transnational networks of migrants, and can assist in painting an online picture of how such networks are
formed and their role in incentivizing migration (Nedelcu 2012 as cited in Global Migration Group (GMG) 2017, 26). These innovative sources will be incorporated in the research methodology of IOM’s assessment to ensure the movements and characteristics of younger Cambodian migrant generations are taken into consideration.

De Haas (2011) posits the aspirations-capabilities framework as a theoretical synthesis with social, economic and political dimensions, which allows us to conceptualize migration as a function of opportunity rather than income or wage differentials (De Haas 2011, 17). Here, migration propensities are analyzed as a function of people’s aspirations and capabilities to migrate (De Haas 2011, 17). This theory interconnects concepts of both structure and agency, thus individuals and social groups with diverse negative and positive freedoms are influenced to migrate by the relationship between the structural conditions (creating complex opportunity structures) of their lived experience and how this impacts their capabilities and aspirations. The IOM study will adopt a methodology derived from the aspiration-capabilities framework.

**Empirical Studies on Cambodian Migration to Thailand**

Assessing the impact of migration on simultaneous poverty reduction and sustainable development depends entirely on quality empirical evidence (GMG 2017, 87).

Labour migration in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region has recently emerged as a powerful instrument of economic growth and social development for both sending and receiving countries. The direct, indirect, short-term and long-term development impacts of low-skilled worker mobility remains unclear to governments and relevant stakeholders; thus, such a trend necessitates a new focus area within migration research to further explore and attribute meaning to labor migration and the role it plays within the broader nexus of migration and development. The Global Migration Group (2017) argues that, “good data are essential” for government actors to develop evidence-based policy and to practice appropriately responding to the current and future challenges of shifting labour market demands and mobile populations of individuals in search of decent work (GMG 2017, 88). More specifically, compared to the better understood situation of Myanmar and Laotian migrant workers in Thailand, the working conditions and prospects of Cambodian workers are less visible in academia, a situation fueled by the lack of reliable empirical evidence (Walsh, 2011).

The Migration and Development Brief 28, published by the World Bank Group (2017) is a valuable resource, reporting on current patterns in migration and remittance flows as well as changes in the broader structure of migration policy. This brief also emphasizes the heavy dependence of Cambodia’s local economy on migration, recipient to USD 400 million in remittances in 2017 alone (WBG 2017, 22). The Brief also provides a comprehensive overview of the strict policy framework in Thailand and how it has impacted the movements of both Cambodian irregular and regular migrants. According to Cambodia’s immigration police, nearly 14,332 undocumented Cambodians were deported from Thailand in the first quarter of 2017; this is a 27 per cent increase over the same quarter a year ago. In prior years, an estimated 52,000 Cambodians were deported by Thai authorities in 2016, another 67,087 in 2015, and more than 270,000 in 2014 (WBG 2017, 40).

A regional report produced collaboratively between IOM and the International Labour Organization (ILO), titled *Risks and Rewards: Outcomes of labour migration in Southeast Asia*, surveyed 1,808 return migrant workers in Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam, and conducted 96 qualitative interviews. A notable aspect of the study
is the innovative methodology of the “migration outcomes index” (MOI), which was developed specifically for their study and therein proved to be a comprehensive and useful tool for determining the socio-economic changes motivated by employment migration. The MOI framework emphasizes a migration-centered and holistic approach to understanding migrant workers and their experiences, rather than treating them solely as remittance-senders (Harkins et al. 2017, 1150). A multitude of interesting findings were captured from Cambodian respondents in the survey. Cambodian migrants were found to be paying USD 120 on average for a passport, even when the Cambodian Government announced passports for migrant workers should only cost USD 4. Despite the expense of acquiring documents, for Cambodian females the findings showed that migration is an empowering lifestyle choice, whereby 92 per cent of women expressed greater agency with regard to financial management and purchasing decisions upon return (Harkins et al. 2017, 98).

In 2016 an Assessment Report was developed by IOM on Cambodian migrant worker returnees, through which a quantitative questionnaire was used to capture several variables at the three principle stages of the migration process; pre-departure, experience and post-return. The information in the report was driven fundamentally by a gender focus, whereby differences between male and female migration experiences and vulnerabilities were identified, compared and contrasted. Although this report provides a comprehensive snapshot of Cambodian migratory patterns moving both in and out of Thailand, the data captured through stories and inputs of respondents cannot be representative of Cambodian migrants in Thailand in general, as the study was conducted in the context of the mass exodus generated by political crackdowns on migrant populations in Thailand in 2014 (Dickson and Koenig, 2016).

The proposed IOM assessment will aim to situate the theoretical migration and development discourse within the changeable migration policy context in Thailand, with a sustained empirical focus on the structural impact this context has on the agency and capability of Cambodian migrants to be drivers of poverty reduction in their places of origin. Both regional and bilateral studies have been undertaken in recent decades to further investigate labour migration between Cambodia and Thailand, however empirical evidence on remittance behaviour of Cambodian migrants, as well as linkages between migration and poverty reduction, remains scarce.
The border point between Cambodia and Thailand which several migrants travel everyday.

The Jon Knes village is known as the ‘floating village’ as all of their residents are seasonal nomads who live on small houses built on floating platforms allowing their homes to rise and fall with the water levels over the year.

Originally from another location down the river, the residents float along with the current until they settle on a new home location.
This study combines a review of relevant published studies, a quantitative survey of Cambodian migrant workers and a qualitative survey of local stakeholders (including Government officials, employers, representatives of civil society organizations, and migrant workers themselves) in five non-border areas of Thailand that host large numbers of Cambodian migrants workers, and the border Province of Sakaeo.

The assessment framework, methodology and research tools, including the questionnaire for the quantitative survey and a questions guideline for the qualitative survey, were jointly developed by the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) research team and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The questionnaire was pre-tested prior to the survey and was translated into Khmer and Thai. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected by ARCM researchers and staff members of two partner organizations - Raks Thai Foundation and Friends International. Those two organizations have extensive experience working with Cambodian migrant communities in the target areas. The pre-existing relationships that each organization had enabled them to effectively approach the migrant communities for the quantitative survey.

In order to standardize the quality of data collection and strengthen the capacity of field researchers, the ARCM research team provided training for partner organization staff members on data collection methodologies, research procedures, details of the quantitative questionnaires and qualitative questions. On-site monitoring and quality control of the data collection process was conducted by ARCM. Completed questionnaires were sent back to ARCM for accuracy checking and data entry. The data was then analysed using the SPSS statistical software (IBM, 2019).

Migrant Population and Sample Size

The registration carried out by the Royal Thai Government and completed in March 2018 provides the most reliable number of migrant workers in Thailand. Of course, some migrants remained unregistered and the present survey attempted to include some of them.

Five of the areas chosen for the study (Map 1) were identified because they had the highest number of Cambodian migrant workers: (1) Bangkok and Nonthaburi, 95,337, (2) Pathumthani, 75,947, (3) Chon Buri, 54,122, (4) Rayong 23,608 and (5) Samut Prakan, 27,835. The sixth study area was Sakaeo Province, with 12,840 migrants from Cambodia, which is the main point of entry from Cambodia. Sakaeo was included to allow comparisons between the situation of workers close to the border and those in central Thailand.

The quantitative survey was designed to collect data representative of the Cambodian migrant worker population in Thailand.
The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane simplified formula of:

\[ n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \]

N = Total number of population
n = number of sampling
\( e \) = error

Applying the Taro Yamane (1967:888) formula with a confidence level of 99 per cent and a ± 5 per cent range of error to the number of registered Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand (390,840) indicated a sample size of 900.

The assessment was carried out in the six areas shown in Table 1 and Map 1. The total sample size was distributed according to the proportion of registered Cambodian migrants in each survey area but with a minimum sample of 100 in each area in order to capture enough information for the area. The final sample size for Bangkok and Nonthaburi was lower than planned owing to difficulty in locating the migrants and in obtaining their consent to be interviewed. As a consequence, the planned sample sizes for the other provinces were increased. The final sample size by study area and percentage of the total are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of data collection in six study areas (as of March 2018)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of registered Cambodian migrants</th>
<th>Number of survey respondents</th>
<th>Per cent of respondents</th>
<th>Number of qualitative interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok and Nonthaburi</td>
<td>95,337</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chonburi</td>
<td>54,122</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayong</td>
<td>23,608</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samut Prakan</td>
<td>27,835</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathumthani</td>
<td>75,947</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakaeo</td>
<td>12,840*</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>289,689</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes 12,068 daily workers

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 122 persons directly concerned with labour migration: Government officers at central level and local level (14%), staff members of civil society groups and NGOs (13.5%), employers (22%) and Cambodian migrants (56%) in the six study areas (Table 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Government officers</th>
<th>Civil society &amp; NGOs</th>
<th>Cambodian migrants</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok and Nontaburi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholburi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayong</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samut Prakan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathumthani</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakaeo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limitations of The Study**

The survey was conducted a few months after the deadline of March 2018 for migrants to register with the Ministry of Labour. As the detention of migrants in irregular situations was common at the time, both regular and irregular migrants were often reluctant or unwilling to participate in the survey; resulting in an adjustment of the number of respondents in each target area.

Although the field research teams had undergone training in order to have a thorough understanding of the research tools and all field researchers were able to speak Khmer, they still faced a language barrier when carrying out interviews with migrants with different educational levels. Thus, they needed to simplify the language and clarify the questions, which took more time than expected for each respondent.

**Map 1: Target provinces of data collection**

- **Pathum Thani**: 132 persons (14.7%)
- **Bangkok / Nonthaburi**: 179 persons (19.9%)
- **Samut Prakan**: 107 persons (11.9%)
- **Sa Kaew**: 104 persons (11.5%)
- **Chonburi**: 253 persons (28.1%)
- **Rayong**: 125 persons (13.9%)
Irregular Cambodian migrants arrive at the IOM reception center in Poipet, a border town with Thailand.

The migrants arrive at the MRC by the busloads and are a mix of men, women, and children. While for some it is their first time being deported back to Cambodia, for a number of arrivals it is a regular occurrence with them as they repeatedly continue to travel the border illegally.
The sample of 901 respondents comprised of slightly more women (51%) than men (49%), with higher proportions of women in Samut Prakarn and Pathumthani, and a higher proportion of men in Chon Buri (Figure 1).

By age group, the largest number of both women and men respondents was ages 26-30 years, followed by ages 19-25 years and ages 31-35 years (Figure 2).

Some 94.7 per cent of respondents were Buddhists, 2.7 per cent were Muslim, 0.2 per cent were Christians and 2.4 per cent did not specify their religion.
Ethnicity and Place of Origin

Some 99 per cent of the respondents were Khmer, only one was ethnically Vietnamese and eight persons did not specify their ethnicity. Fifty-two per cent of respondents were from rural areas, 38 per cent from urban areas and 10 per cent did not provide an answer.

The respondents came from across Cambodia -- from provinces near the Thailand border (Banteay Meanchey, 20%, and Battambang, 15%), from central Cambodia (Kampong Thom, 9%, and Kampong Cham, 10%) and from near the Viet Nam border (Prey Veng, 15%). There were also smaller numbers of migrants from Pursat (4%), Siem Reap (4%), Stung Treng (3%), Kampong Chnang, Kandal, Ouuddar Meanchay, Kampot, Kampong Speu and Svay Rieng (Map 2).

Map 2. Five main provinces of origin of respondents from Cambodia

- Banteay Mean Chey (20 %)
- Battambang 132 persons (14.7 %)
- Kampong Thom 77 persons (8.5 %)
- Kampong Cham (10 %)
- Prey Veng 139 persons (15.4 %)
Educational Attainment

The educational level of the respondents was generally low. Seventeen per cent had not attended school, 30 per cent had attended but not completed the elementary level and 18 per cent had completed the elementary level. Some 13 per cent had attended but not completed lower secondary school, 16 per cent had completed lower secondary school, 3 per cent had attended but not completed upper secondary school and only 2 per cent had completed upper secondary school. Two of the respondents had attended a vocational school but had not completed it (Figure 3).

In general, the educational level of women migrants was lower than that of men migrants. Specifically, the number of women migrants who had either not attended school or who had not completed lower elementary school was higher than the number of men in those categories (Figure 4).
Marital Status and Number of Children

Seventy-four per cent of respondents were married and 22 per cent were single. Among those who were married, 97 per cent were married to another Cambodian and 3 per cent (18 persons) had a Thai spouse. Eighty-five per cent of the married respondents were living with their spouse in Thailand while 12 per cent of the spouses were living in Cambodia.

Among married respondents, 59 per cent had children under 15 years of age, including 54.5 per cent with one or two children, 3.8 per cent with three or four children and 0.7 per cent with five or more children. Among respondents who had children, 61 per cent had all of their children in Cambodia, 23 per cent had their children living in Thailand, and 15 per cent had some children living in both Cambodia and Thailand.

Household Size in Cambodia

Respondents were also asked about the size of their household in Cambodia, with the household defined to include parents, spouse, children, siblings and other relatives or friends living together. While 15 per cent of respondents lived in a household of only 1-3 persons, 48 per cent were from households of 4-5 members and 26 per cent were from households of 6-7 members. Eleven per cent of respondents had lived in households with eight or more members.

Previous Occupation, Income, Property and Living Conditions

The Cambodians migrating to Thailand for work largely come from poor backgrounds as indicated not only by their educational attainment but also by their occupational status, income, property owned and living conditions. Prior to coming to Thailand, 33 per cent of the migrants were unemployed, 25 per cent farmed their own land, 11 per cent were employees in agriculture, and 13 per cent worked in construction (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Occupations of respondents prior to migrating to Thailand
More than half of the respondents (55%) had no income before migrating to Thailand, while another 13 per cent earned less than KHR 100,000 per month (USD 1 = KHR 4,000 and THB 1 = KHR 125). Twelve per cent of the migrants had been earning between KHR 100,001 and KHR 400,000 and 11 per cent had been earning between KHR 400,001 and KHR 600,000 per month. Thus, the approximate median income of those migrants who had an income was the equivalent of about USD 100 per month (Figure 6).

More than half of the migrants from many of the main source provinces of labour migration to Thailand did not have an income prior to migration. On the other hand, a small number of them had been earning more than KHR one million, or THB 8,000 (USD 250) per month (Figure 7).
The proportion of female migrants who had no income or a monthly income of less than KHR 9,000 was much higher than for male migrants (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Income of female and male migrants prior to migrating to Thailand**

Fifty-three per cent of respondents owned land in Cambodia, although 30 per cent owned one hectare (ha) or less. Twenty per cent of respondents owned 2-3 ha, 3 per cent owned 4-5 ha and less than one per cent owned more than 5 ha. Although 47 per cent of respondents did not own land, 10 per cent of respondents’ families owned land and a house, 28 per cent of their families owned a house, 10 per cent owned a business, 5.5 per cent owned their house and about two per cent owned a shop, other assets or a business (noting that some respondents could fall in more than one of these categories).

Some 48 per cent of respondents reported that their living condition in Cambodia had been unsatisfactory and another 16 per cent reported that it was very bad. Only 33 per cent of respondents felt that their living condition had been adequate while 2 per cent felt it was good and 2 per cent felt it was very good.

**Migration Process**

Seeking employment and improving one’s economic situation were the primary motivations for migrating to Thailand according to the survey. One third of the respondents reported that they had moved in order to earn a higher income and 28 per cent said they moved because of the lack of employment opportunities at home. Thirteen per cent cited better living conditions in Thailand as the reason for their move and 11 per cent reported that they had been persuaded by family members or friends (Figure 9).
Thirty per cent of the respondents were in Thailand for the first time while 56 per cent had migrated between two and five times and 14 per cent had migrated six or more times.

More than half (56%) of the respondents had migrated with the assistance of brokers in Cambodia, Thailand or both countries. Another 24 per cent had migrated with assistance from friends or relatives. Only 12 per cent had come through the formal MOU process and only 8 per cent had migrated on their own (Figure 10). It should be noted that the figure of 12 per cent who came through the MOU recruitment process might be underestimating the actual number due to the fact that most migrants going through the MOU process also use a recruitment agency. Recall that in March 2018, the Ministry of Labour registered 148,000 Cambodian migrants as entering the nationality verification process and 226,000 as MOU migrants.

Migration assistance was similar for men and women migrants although women were somewhat more likely to migrate with help from friends or relatives and men were more likely to migrate on their own. Nearly two thirds (63%) of the migrants had entered Thailand at Aranyaprathet in Sakaeo Province, opposite Poipet in Cambodia.
The largest number of migrants (44%) had paid between THB 2,000 and THB 3,000 in expenses for their move (Figure 11) although 21 per cent had paid more than THB 5,000 (USD 1 = THB 32). The fact that a majority of Cambodian migrants paid less than USD 100 in total expenses seemingly indicates that the migration channels are fairly well known to potential migrants and that perhaps employers are beginning to shoulder some of the costs in order to obtain the desired number of workers.

Figure 11. Expense for migrating to Thailand

Twenty-two per cent of respondents paid the migration expenses from their savings, 21 per cent had borrowed from their family or friends, 18 per cent had borrowed from another private source, and 7 per cent had obtained a bank loan. In 16 per cent of the cases, the individual’s family had paid their migration expenses; in 14 per cent of cases employers had prepaid the expense; in 1 per cent of cases a broker had paid and 2 per cent of respondents sold land to cover their expenses.

Eighty-one per cent of migrants reported that their expenses were solely for the cost of travel, 35 per cent reported paying for a passport and other documents, 36 per cent paid broker fees and 1 per cent paid a bribe. (Note: respondents could cite more than one expense.)

Current Occupation in Thailand

At the time of the survey in 2018, 95 per cent of the respondents were working and 5 per cent were unemployed. The largest proportions of respondents were employed in construction (30%), general labour (19%), industrial production (11%), fishery work (8%), manufacturing (7%) and agriculture and animal husbandry (5%) (Figure 12).
Women were more numerous than men in seafood processing (8:2), food and beverage sales (7:3), manufacturing (7:3) and agriculture and husbandry-related work (5:4). Only women migrants were found in domestic work and garment production and sales. Male migrants were preponderant in fishing (92:8), agriculture and animal husbandry (6:4), other services (6:4), general labour (5:4), industrial production and sales (5:4) and construction (5:4) (Figure 13).
Among women migrant workers, young women were more likely to work in the wholesale and retail trade and as vendors while older women were more likely to be classified as general labourers. Females aged 15-18 years constituted only 4 per cent of female respondents. One third of them worked in wholesale and retail trade and as vendors, one third were general labourers, 22 per cent worked in factories, 11 per cent worked in construction and 11 per cent in service.

Among the women workers aged 19-45 years, 37 per cent were general labourers, 27 per cent were factory workers, 13 per cent were construction workers, 9 per cent worked in seafood processing and 9 per cent worked in wholesale and retail trade and as vendors. Among women older than 45 years, 47 per cent were classified as general labourers and 21 per cent were factory workers.

In contrast to the women migrants, young male migrants were more likely to be general labourers and older men were more likely to have specific jobs. Thus, among the 4 per cent of men who were 15-18 years of age, 88 per cent were general labourers and 14 per cent worked in service occupations.

Men aged 19-45 years were general labourers (41%), or worked in factories (23%), fishing (14%), wholesale and retail trade and as vendors (5%). Men over age 45 years were general labourers (35%), or worked in factories (35%), agriculture (12%), services (12%) or construction (6%).

In Bangkok and Nonthaburi Provinces, 76 per cent of all respondents were employed in the construction sector, while 8 per cent were general labourers and 4 per cent worked in wholesale and retail trade or as vendors. In Chon Buri Province, the three main occupations of the migrants were industrial production and sales (29%), construction (21%) and fishing (17%) (Figure 14).

In Pathumthani Province, nearly half (48%) of the migrant respondents were general labourers, while 11 per cent worked in wholesale and retail trade or as vendors, 7 per cent in construction and 5 per cent in manufacturing. In Samut Prakarn, the main sectors of employment were manufacturing (47%), construction (24%) and agriculture and animal husbandry-related (14%).

Migrants in Rayong were evenly distributed among several employment sectors. Fourteen per cent worked in fishing, 14 per cent in seafood processing, 12 per cent in domestic work, 12 per cent in food and beverage sales, 11 per cent in agriculture and animal husbandry, 10 per cent in industrial production and sales, 8 per cent in services and 6 per cent in wholesale and retail trade or as vendors. In the border province of Sakaeo, 61 per cent of the migrants were classified as general labourers, 13 per cent worked in construction and 12 per cent worked in agriculture and animal husbandry.
As the Royal Thai Government has implemented measures to ensure that all migrant workers are registered, the level of documentation has increased. The survey on migrants from Cambodia found that 74 per cent of the individuals were fully documented, i.e., they held a passport, a temporary registration (pink) card or a border pass, and they had obtained a work permit (Figure 15). Passports could be either a regular one or a temporary passport issued as part of the nationality verification process. Another 13 per cent held a passport, 4 per cent had a pink card and 8 per cent had a border pass but none of these held a work permit. Only 3 per cent of the respondents did not have any documentation for residing and working in Thailand.
Most respondents in every sector of work held some type of documentation, including a work permit. All respondents working in agriculture and animal husbandry reported having a passport and 38 per cent of those also had a work permit. Eighty-four per cent of respondents working in construction had both a passport and work permit, while another 9 per cent of construction workers had only a passport (Figure 16).

Among domestic workers, 38 per cent had both a passport and work permit, 50 per cent had only a passport and 12 per cent had only a temporary registration card (or pink card). Seventy-eight per cent of factory workers had both a passport and work permit, and 20 per cent had only a passport. Among general labourers, 79 per cent had both a passport and work permit, 7 per cent had only a passport, 10 per cent had only a border pass and 4 per cent had no documents.

Seventy-three per cent of respondents working in the seafood sector had both a passport and a work permit, and another 22 per cent of them had only a passport. All respondents working in the service sector reported holding a passport, with 46 per cent of them also possessing a work permit. More than two thirds (68%) of migrants working in wholesale and retail trade or as vendors had both a passport and work permit, and another 23 per cent of them had only a passport. Among respondent in other sectors of work, 58 per cent had a passport and work permit, 15 per cent had only a passport, and 22 per cent had only a border pass (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Respondents’ occupation and documentation status

More than 80 per cent of the respondents in the provinces around Bangkok held both a passport and work permit. In contrast, only 42 per cent of those in the coastal province of Rayong did so. Eighty per cent of the migrants working in Sakaeo Province on the border with Cambodia had only a border pass for documentation (Figure 17).
It was noted above that most of the migrant workers from Cambodia had come to Thailand several times. Only 30 per cent of respondents were in Thailand for the first time while 56 per cent had migrated between two and five times and 14 per cent had migrated six or more times. Those findings are related to the reported total duration of residence in Thailand. Thirty per cent of respondents had been in Thailand for one or two years, 24 per cent had stayed for 3-4 years, 18 per cent for 5-6 years, 15 per cent for 7-10 years and 11 per cent had been in Thailand for more than 10 years altogether. Duration of stay by province is shown in Figure 18. The migrants in Pathumthani and Rayong have stayed for a longer duration than those in the other study provinces.
Attitude Toward Thai Authorities

Respondents were asked about their feeling toward Thai authorities when they first came to Thailand. Eighty-five per cent had encountered Thai authorities at some point since leaving Cambodia. Among them, 32 per cent felt scared during the initial encounter, 22 per cent were worried, 42 per cent had neutral feelings, one per cent felt good about the authorities and two per cent said their attitude was variable depending upon the circumstances (Figure 19). Currently the migrants had more neutral attitudes toward Thai authorities but 3.5 per cent still worried about being arrested (Figure 20). Migrants cited that their encounters with Thai authorities were in specific events such as renewing their work permit or seeking health care but not often in their day-to-day life and work.

Figure 19. Migrants’ attitude toward Thai authorities when they first came to Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changeable, depending on the situation</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/happy</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 20. Migrants’ current attitude toward Thai authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No different</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/happy</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry of being arrested/deported</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel more scared</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opinion on Working Conditions

Overall, the migrant workers rated their working conditions as satisfactory, particularly when considering that many of them were in the so-called 3D jobs that are dirty, dangerous and demanding, such as agriculture and construction. Seven per cent said they were very good, 44 per cent rated them as good and 45 per cent as adequate. Only 3 per cent rated their working conditions as bad and one per cent as very bad.

Logically enough, respondents in any sector differed in their opinions on their working conditions, no doubt depending on their particular job. Thus, among those working in agriculture, 62 per cent rated their working conditions as good and 31 per cent said they were adequate but 7 per cent said they were very bad, which was the highest percentage of “very bad” ratings for any sector of work (Figure 21).

Among migrant construction workers, 8 per cent rated their working conditions as very good, 40 per cent as good, 51 per cent as adequate and only one per cent as bad. One hundred per cent of the respondents in domestic work rated their working conditions as adequate, perhaps reflecting low expectations for such work. Four per cent of factory workers rated their working conditions as very good, 33 per cent as good, 56 per cent as adequate, 6 per cent as bad and one per cent as very bad.

In spite of public perceptions of working conditions in fishing, the fishers were mostly satisfied. One per cent of them rated the working conditions as very good, 34 per cent as good, 59 per cent as adequate and 6 per cent as bad. Eight per cent of general labourers rated their working conditions as very good, 54 per cent as good, 35 per cent as adequate and 3 per cent as bad.

Respondents in some sectors rated their working conditions quite highly. For example, among those in the service sector, 23 per cent felt their working conditions were very good, 15 per cent rated them good and 62 per cent said they were adequate. Among respondents working in wholesale trade, retail trade or as vendors, 16 per cent felt their working conditions were very good, 42 per cent said they were good, 42 per cent said they were adequate and only one per cent rated them as bad. Among the migrants in other occupations, including other services and manufacturing, 7 per cent rated their working conditions as very good, 46 per cent as good, 42 per cent as adequate but 5 per cent rated them as bad (Figure 21).
Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare was not a major problem for most Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand, including those without full documentation. All of the migrants with a pink card (whether or not they also had a work permit) and all of those with a border pass and work permit reported that they could easily access healthcare. More than 70 per cent of those with a passport and work permit could easily access healthcare, as could nearly as many who held only a passport.

Among migrants who had no documentation, more than 40 per cent had not attempted to obtain healthcare in Thailand and one third had obtained it easily. However, about 10 per cent were not able to access healthcare and another 10 per cent obtained it with difficulty (Figure 22). In the qualitative interviews with 66 migrant workers, some without formal access to healthcare indicated that their bosses took care of their health or they bought medicines from a pharmacy.
Access to banking services

Most of the documented migrants who wished to access banking services in Thailand were able to do so. While about one third of those who held both a passport and a work permit had not tried to use banking services, 58 per cent had done so easily, 8 per cent with difficulty and only one per cent had not been able to. All of the respondents who had both a pink card and a work permit reported that they could easily access banking services, no doubt because a pink card serves as a residence permit. The only sizeable category of migrants who reported that they could not access banking services were 20 per cent of those who had a pink card but not a work permit (Figure 23).

About half of the respondents who had both a border pass and a work permit could access banking services easily and the other half had not attempted to do so. More than 90 per cent of migrants with only a border pass had not attempted to use banking services in Thailand.

It is to be expected that those migrants who enter Thailand without documentation would not attempt to access banking services yet 18 per cent of them reported that they had no difficulty to do so (Figure 23). It is likely that the undocumented migrants had accessed banking services through the account of a family member or friend.

Figure 23. Respondents’ access to banking services by documentation status
Access to Education in Thailand

Only 2.5 per cent of respondents had obtained some of their education in Thailand, perhaps reflecting the long duration that many of them have been in the host country. Among those, 42 per cent had completed the elementary level, 33 per cent had completed the lower secondary level, 8 per cent had obtained informal vocational education and 8 per cent informal short courses. In the qualitative interviews, migrant workers mentioned that they did not have time for studies or needed to devote their time to earning money as reasons for not studying.

While half of the respondents reported that they could speak Thai, only 10 per cent said they were fluent and only 1.5 per cent could read Thai easily.

Education

Figure 24. Migrants’ access to education in Thailand

Among the respondents who had children in Thailand, only 5 per cent reported that their children attended Thai schools and 2 per cent reported that their children were in migrant learning centres (Figure 25). In the qualitative interviews, some migrants stated that their bosses encouraged them to send their children to local schools.
Living Conditions

According to the data collected, Cambodian migrants in Thailand were mostly satisfied with their living conditions. Four per cent of respondents rated their conditions as very good, 36 per cent as good and 54 per cent as adequate. Four per cent of the respondents rated their living conditions as bad and one person rated them as very bad (Figure 26).
Contact with Family in Cambodia

The survey revealed that most migrants in Thailand maintained frequent contact with family members in Cambodia. Twenty-eight per cent of them contacted their family daily, another 25 per cent did so weekly and 38 per cent did so monthly. Three per cent reported contacting their family only once a year and 6 per cent never contacted them (Figure 27). Women migrants were more likely than men migrants to contact their families in Cambodia on a daily or weekly basis. Telephone calls and social media were the most popular modes of communication because of their convenience, low cost, and the ease of Internet access. Focus group interviews with migrant workers found that keeping in regular contact with their families in Cambodia was a source of moral support.

Figure 27. Respondents’ frequency of contact with families
Irregular Cambodian migrants arrive at the IOM reception center in Poipet, a border town with Thailand. The migrants arrive at the MRC by the busloads and are a mix of men, women, and children. While for some it is their first time being deported back to Cambodia, for a number of arrivals it is a regular occurrence with them as they repeated continue to travel the border illegally.
Former victims of human trafficking in Cambodia.
The Thailand Ministry of Labour revised the daily minimum wage by province effective 1\textsuperscript{st} April 2018. For the provinces covered by this study, the minimum wage in Sakaeo was set at THB 315 per day; that in Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pathumthani and Samut Prakarn was set at THB 325; and that in Chon Buri and Rayong was set at THB 330 (USD 1 = THB 32).

Respondents in the survey received their wages on three bases: (1) a daily wage paid daily, weekly or every 15 days, (2) a monthly salary, or (3) payment for piece work. Women received lower wages than men for each basis of payment and each minimum wage level. Women were much more likely than men to be paid less than THB 310 per day or paid in the range of THB 311-329 per day. Additionally, men were much more likely than women to be paid more than THB 330 per day (Figure 28).

Among respondents who were paid every 15 days, 57 per cent of women and 31 per cent of men received the minimum wage of THB 9,000 per month. However, only 5 per cent of women but 58 per cent of men received THB 12,000 per month and 22 per cent of women but 37 per cent of men received THB 13,000 per month.

Migrants who are working in factories or in the service sector, such as domestic workers or in restaurants, are often paid on a monthly basis. Among such migrants, 47 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men received the minimum level of THB 9,000 or less. Sixteen per cent of women and 3 per cent of men received between THB 9,001 and THB 9,800 per month. More than one third (37\%) of women paid a monthly wage received between THB 9,801 and THB 20,000, as did 74 per cent of men who were paid on a monthly basis.
Among Cambodian migrants who were paid on a daily basis, 45 per cent of women and 25 per cent of men in Bangkok and Nonthaburi received less than the minimum wage of THB 325 per day. In Pathumthani, 51 per cent of women and 35 per cent of men did not receive the minimum wage. In Samut Prakan, 24 per cent of both women and men did not receive the minimum wage (Figure 29).

Similarly, 59 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men in Chon Buri Province received less than the minimum daily wage of THB 330. In Rayong Province, 45 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men received less than the minimum wage (Figure 30). In Sakaeo Province, nearly two thirds of women and 45 per cent of men received less than the daily minimum wage of THB 315 (Figure 31).
The quantitative survey did not differentiate income by regular wages and overtime but most of the migrants in the qualitative interviews stated that they wanted to have overtime because they earned more per hour than for their regular work. Those interviewed in the qualitative survey were generally satisfied with the wage levels in Thailand. They also believed that workers with more experience or skills could earn more. They felt that men earned more than women because of their belief that the men had more skills.

Despite a standard minimum wage by province, wages for migrant workers differed according to their sector of work. Those in construction, factory work and fishing fared the best. Among those in construction, 66 per cent earned THB 330-500 and 15 per cent earned more than THB 500 per day. Similarly, 65 per cent of factory workers earned THB 330-500 and 17 per cent earned more than THB 500 per day. Fishers were the highest paid migrants by sector, as 75 per cent of them earned THB 330-500 and 19 per cent earned more than THB 500 per day (Figure 32).
Agricultural workers earned an intermediate level of income. While about three fourths of them earned THB 330-500 per day, one fourth of them earned less than THB 311 daily. Workers categorized as general labourers, those in the service sector and those in trade received the lowest levels of daily wages. About one third of general labourers earned THB 300-310 per day and another 10 per cent earned THB 311-330 per day. Forty per cent of service workers earned under THB 311 per day, as did 43 per cent of migrants engaged in wholesale trade or retail trade, or who worked as vendors (Figure 32).

The documentation status of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand clearly affected their level of earnings. All of those earning more than THB 500 had a passport and 88 per cent of them also had a work permit. Respondents who earned less than the minimum wage in Thailand were more likely to have only a border pass or to be undocumented than were those workers who earned above the minimum wage (Figure 33). A similar result is seen when examining the income of the migrants who were paid on a monthly basis (Figure 34).
Figure 33. Daily wage of respondents by documentation status

Figure 34. Monthly income of respondents by sector of work
Six out of every seven Cambodian migrant in Thailand sent remittances back to their families in Cambodia. The percentage of respondents sending various levels of remittances is presented in Figure 36 and shown by sex in Table 3.

The amounts remitted to their families ranged from under THB 10,000 to more than THB 100,000 per year. Half of both male and female migrants remitted less than THB 40,000 per year, with a mean of THB 39,312. In the aggregate, the 901 respondents in the survey remitted THB 35,420,000, or USD 1,180,000 annually. If we are to assume that all 374,561 registered Cambodian migrants in Thailand remit at the same rate, total remittances from Thailand to Cambodia equal THB 14.725 billion or USD 460 million per year.

Figure 35. Remittance amount sent per year

Because women migrants earned less than their male counterparts, they were somewhat less likely to remit and they sent slightly lower amounts. Of course, the mere fact that married women migrants were in Thailand meant that they had fewer family members at home to support relative to a male worker in Thailand whose wife had remained in Cambodia. Respondents who did not send any remittances said that they did not earn enough or could not save enough.
Table 3. Average amount of remittances sent, by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than THB</th>
<th>THB 10,001-20,000</th>
<th>THB 20,001-30,000</th>
<th>THB 30,001-40,000</th>
<th>THB 40,001-50,000</th>
<th>THB 50,001-60,000</th>
<th>THB 60,001-70,000</th>
<th>THB 70,001-80,000</th>
<th>THB 80,001-90,000</th>
<th>THB 90,001-100,000</th>
<th>More than THB 100,000</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In the qualitative interviews, migrants said that they remitted low amounts because they needed to spend most of their earnings for their daily life in Thailand. The qualitative interviews also revealed that migrants’ families asked them to send extra money for unexpected expenses, such as for healthcare, child care and house repairs, for example.

Migrants from Prey Veng remitted higher amounts than those from other provinces in Cambodia, possibly because they were from farther away, they had invested more in their migration and needed to remit more (Figure 36).

Figure 36. Remittances sent by respondents’ place of origin

Remittance Channels

Bank transfers have become the most common means of sending remittances to Cambodia, with roughly half of the migrants in several documentation categories sending money this way (Figure 37). Another third of those migrants used informal agents for their transfers. Because most of the migrants holding a border pass are working only daily or seasonally close to the
border, they are much more likely to send money back with a relative or friend, or to carry it themselves. Undocumented migrants use a number of channels, including bank transfers, informal agents and friends or relatives.

According to respondents, some migrants paid no fees to send remittances while others paid a commission of more than 20 per cent. Half of the surveyed migrants paid between THB 20 and THB 400 each time that they sent a remittance.

Figure 37. Remittance channels used by documentation status

Decisions on Spending Remittances

Decisions on how to spend remittances were made mostly by the respondents themselves or, in order of importance, by their spouse, by the respondent and spouse together, as a collective decision of the family, and other family members (Figure 38). The decision-making was similar for male and female migrants but men were somewhat more likely to have their spouse be the main person making the decision.
Impact of Remittances

While the survey of migrants in Thailand did not attempt to ascertain information on poverty levels in Cambodia, it is likely that remittances sent home by migrant workers lifted some families and communities out of poverty. This is implied indirectly by the volume of remittances noted above and directly by the assessment by respondents of the importance of their remittances for their families. Over 90 per cent of respondents said that their remittances were important or very important for the living condition of their families (Figure 39).
More than half of construction workers and domestic workers reported that their remittances were very important for the living condition of their families (Figure 40).

Migration has positively impacted the saving and investment habits of migrants in Thailand. Two thirds of them said that they now save more, 27 per cent save the same amount and 6 per cent save less. About one third (32%) said that they now invested more, 59 per cent said they invested the same and 9 per cent said they invested less than before. Findings on changes in consumption levels were mixed, with 30 per cent saying they consume more, 40 per cent saying they consume the same amount and 30 per cent saying they consume less than before.

Migrants were asked what they thought about the impact of their migration and that of others on their city or village in Cambodia. Twenty-seven per cent of the women and 22 per cent of the men believed that the impact of migration was very positive. Another 8 per cent of women and 10 per cent of the men felt the impact was positive. On the other hand, 5 per cent of the women and 7 per cent of the men thought that the impact of migration was either negative or very negative, although the reasons for these opinions are not known (Figure 41).
Migrants from all of the major provinces of origin in Cambodia felt that migration had a very positive impact on their cities or villages (Figure 42).

Interestingly enough, migrants from urban areas were much more sanguine about the impact of migration on their place of origin than those from rural areas. About 19 per cent of the migrants from rural areas believed that migration had a negative or very negative impact on their village (Figure 43). Again, the reasons for these opinions are not known, as the quantitative survey did not delve further into this issue.
Figure 43. Impact of migration on home community, by urban and rural area
IOM in Cambodia partners with a local hospitality school where students are trained in the culinary arts, hotel management, and catering.

Graduates from this program are in good spots to get jobs abroad with reputable hotel chains which allows them to be able to migrate legally for work.
Although migrants from neighbouring countries work in Thailand primarily in unskilled jobs, some have gained particular skills from their working experience and have become semi-skilled workers. Migrants believed that the skills they have gained would enable them to gain a higher income in Thailand or to find jobs upon their return to Cambodia. On the other hand, some migrants felt that the skills they have learned made no difference in their job prospects.

This study found that one third (36%) of female respondents did not think they had gained any skills. The skills that female respondents acquired from their working experiences in Thailand were ability in Thai language (26%), agricultural skills (8%), ability to do business (6%), mechanical skills (5%), service skills (4%), management skills (1%), manufacturing skills (1%) and other skills, e.g., in construction and domestic work (16%) (Figure 44).

One third (37%) of male respondents answered that they did not gain any valuable skills. Many, however, had gained work skills in Thailand, including better Thai language ability (19%), mechanical skills (10%), agricultural skills (7%), business ability (6%), service skills (3%), management skills (2%), manufacturing skills (1%), and other skills as in construction and domestic work (14%) (Figure 44).
As migrants from Cambodia had improved their Thai language ability and other work skills, more than half of them believed that their new skills would help them to find better jobs in Thailand and one in six believed that the skills would lead to a higher income in their current jobs. Other respondents saw no immediate benefit but felt that their new skills would benefit them in the future, while some felt that their new skills were of no benefit to them (Figure 45).

Fifty-five per cent of the women who had gained skills by working in Thailand believed that those skills would help them to find better jobs, 17 per cent believed that they would earn more in their current jobs, 13 per cent believed that their skills did not currently benefit them but that they would in the future, and 15 per cent saw no benefit from their additional skills.

Among the men who had gained skills while working in Thailand, 53 per cent believed that the skills would help them to find better jobs, 17 per cent believed they would be able to earn more in their current jobs, 19 per cent saw no current benefit but believed they would benefit in the future, and 11 per cent did not feel that they would benefit from the skill learned (Figure 45).

Figure 45. Respondents’ perception of skills gained, by sex

More than fifty per cent of construction workers and general labourers believed that the skills they had learned would help them to find better jobs. Approximately forty per cent of respondents working in agriculture, factories, fishing, and wholesale and retail trade or as vendors also believed that their skills would assist them in finding better jobs. While migrants in the service sector, including those working in hotels and restaurants, for example, were less optimistic about the benefit of the skills they had learned, more than fifty per cent of them thought that the skills would either help them to get a better job or to improve their wages in their current job (Figure 46).
Cambodian migrants in Thailand primarily acquire new skills from on-the-job training, taught by their supervisors or employers. Information from a focus group interview conducted in Samut Prakarn confirmed that respondents believed that the longer they worked the more experience and skills they gained.

When asked if the skills they had gained in Thailand would improve their employment opportunities in Cambodia, 60 per cent of construction workers reported that they would. More than 40 per cent each of domestic workers, general labourers, service workers, and those in wholesale and retail trade or vendors also believed that their new skills would help their employment prospects in Cambodia (Figure 47).
Skills Development Training

Only 43 per cent of respondents reported that they were interested in obtaining skills development training. Among those who did not want skills training, 79 per cent said that they did not have time for training and 17 per cent said that they were not interested in the training.

Interest in skills training was generally related to previous or current work. Among the migrants who said they would be interested in skills training, 41 per cent wanted to learn mechanical skills, 10 per cent were interested in agricultural skills, 10 per cent in language skills, 9 per cent in business ability, and the remainder were interested in skills related to services, construction, manufacturing, domestic work and computers. The main interest for both women and men migrants was in training in mechanical skills. Women exhibited a greater interest in a variety of skills, however, including in language, agriculture, service and business (Figure 48).

Figure 48. Most appealing skills, by sex

Many respondents in the qualitative interviews were interested in skills training that would certify or accredit them for more highly-skilled jobs. They believed that such certified skills would help them to find jobs in Cambodia because of the increase in investment in manufacturing in the country.

Some participants in a focus group discussion cited as reasons for not joining skills development training that they were not interested, they did not want to take time away from earning an income, they did not know about such courses, their employer would not allow them and they did not see any benefit because they had already gained new skills from their current jobs.

Some employers who participated in the qualitative interviews said that they preferred to take skills training themselves so that they may transfer the knowledge to their workers. Others were willing to have their workers attend skills training if the new skills were applicable to the jobs that the workers were performing. Others felt that workers learned what they needed to from doing their jobs and that additional training was unnecessary. In any case, employers agreed that better pre-departure training would enable migrants to adjust more efficiently in Thailand.
Government officers who were interviewed agreed that better pre-departure training concerning the Thai language, culture, labour laws and rights would benefit migrant workers. Although Government officers agreed with the need for skills training, they said it should be provided by private companies or NGOs because Thai policy only permits local workers to receive skills development training, and considers migrants’ jobs as unskilled work requiring only basic skills.
Dozens of Cambodians commute through the Thai border in Poipet. For many, they work daily in nearby border towns while others might venture further in to work for short to long term periods.
More than half (55%) of the respondents said they were not aware of economic and political changes in Cambodia, while 31 per cent were aware to some extent and 14 per cent were very aware. Among all respondents, 13 per cent said the changes would very much affect their decision to return, 31 per cent said the changes would affect their decision to a certain extent, 35 per cent said the changes would not affect them at all and 21 per cent said they did not know how the changes might affect their decision to return (Figure 49).

Figure 49. Changes in Cambodia and effect on decision to return

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents planned to return to Cambodia permanently and the other 27 per cent did not yet have a plan. Among those who plan to return, the primary reasons provided were because migrants wanted to live with family and friends (76%), they wanted to return when they had enough savings (70%), for employment opportunities in Cambodia (38%), for business opportunities (21%) and because they feel they have stayed in Thailand long enough (20%) (Figure 50). Note that respondents could cite more than one reason for planning to return to Cambodia.
Although most migrants plan on returning to Cambodia eventually, very few of the respondents stated that they plan to do so soon. Only 7 per cent planned to return within one year, 15 per cent said they would return in 2-3 years and 16 per cent said they would return in 4-5 years. Nineteen per cent said they planned to return only in 6-7 years, 24 per cent said after 7 years and 19 per cent had not decided when to return. High percentages of both migrants who possessed a passport and of undocumented migrants stated that they planned to stay in Thailand for at least six more years (Figure 51).

A higher proportion of migrants from Banteay Meanchay planned to return to Cambodia permanently than from other provinces in Cambodia, whereas those from Prey Veng were the least likely to have decided to return (Figure 52).
Expected Income and Occupation in Cambodia

The skills that migrants acquired while working in Thailand are likely to be of benefit to them upon their return and re-employment in Cambodia, especially business skills, management skills, mechanical skills and service skills. Speaking the Thai language could also boost their employment prospects with Thai-owned companies or in the tourism and service sectors. Figure 53 demonstrates, however, that there is no specific pattern in how skills learned in Thailand might affect the work that migrants plan to do in Cambodia. Thus, migrants’ employment prospects upon return appear to be shaped more by the structure of the Cambodian economy than by skills obtained while working in Thailand.
Upon their return to Cambodia, 9 per cent of respondents expected to earn more than in Thailand but 83 per cent expected to earn approximately the same amount. Another 2 per cent thought they would earn at least two thirds of their Thailand wages, 3 per cent expected to earn at least half as much as in Thailand and 3 per cent believed they would earn enough to survive. The expectations of future earnings were similar for women and men migrants and for migrants from different provinces although those from Prey Veng were somewhat less optimistic than others (Figures 54 and 55).

**Figure 54. Expected future income level upon return for female respondents, by province of origin**

**Figure 55. Expected future income level upon return for male respondents, by province of origin**
The migrants who did not have plans to return to Cambodia permanently were asked the reasons. The top five reasons are presented in Figure 56. Three of the top five reasons were related to their income and employment, as 23 felt that they did not yet have enough savings to return, 11 per cent cited the lack of job opportunities in Cambodia and another 11 per cent worried that they would not be able to find a job with an acceptable salary. Fourteen per cent said they preferred the living conditions and services in Thailand and 9 per cent were concerned about political instability in Cambodia (Figure 56).

**Figure 56. Five main reasons for not returning to Cambodia**

- Don’t have enough savings: 22.6%
- Prefer living conditions & services in Thailand: 14.2%
- Not sure about political stability in Cambodia: 9.1%
- Not enough employment opportunities in Cambodia: 11.1%
- May not able to find a job with acceptable salary: 10.7%
Irregular Cambodian migrants arrive at the IOM reception center in Poipet, a border town with Thailand.

The migrants arrive at the MRC by the busloads and are a mix of men, women, and children. While for some it is their first time being deported back to Cambodia, for a number of arrivals it is a regular occurrence with them as they repeated continue to travel the border illegally.

Irregular Cambodian migrants arrive at the IOM reception center in Poipet and receive an info awareness session on the dangers of irregular migration.
For more than two decades Thailand has permitted migrant workers from the three neighbouring countries of Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar to work in the country in low-skilled occupations. Thailand has also recently signed an MOU with Viet Nam to permit Vietnamese nationals to work in some occupations. For many years, the Thailand Ministry of Labour has regularized migrants working in the country if their country of origin would verify their nationality and issue them travel documents. However, in 2017 the Royal Thai Government announced a final round of nationality verification, after which Thailand would accept low-skilled migrants only if they entered under the auspices of bilateral MOUs negotiated with each country of origin. The final deadline for registering for the nationality verification was in March 2018 although migrants who held a temporary registration card (“pink card”) and had applied for nationality verification were permitted to stay and work through March 2020.

As of March 2018, there were 390,840 Cambodians registered to work in Thailand via the nationality verification process, the MOU process or as daily and seasonal workers permitted by agreements between Governors of border provinces in Cambodia and Thailand. Although the present quantitative survey was conducted five months after the deadline for all migrant workers in Thailand to be registered, irregular migrants remain and make up three per cent of the respondents in the survey. The facts that Cambodians can easily enter Thailand at official border crossings with a “border pass” and that Thai employers are willing to hire them means that it is incredibly difficult to eliminate irregular migration altogether.

Because formal procedures for migration between Cambodia and Thailand are relatively complex and time-consuming, a majority of Cambodian migrants have used brokers in either country or both countries to assist them, adding to the cost of migration. Because formal recruitment is more expensive than informal recruitment and employers cannot be certain that migrants will continue to work for them, some employers prefer to hire irregular migrants because of the ease and lower cost.

Migrants’ Lives Prior to Coming to Thailand and Migration History

Most of the Cambodian migrants in Thailand were relatively poor prior to migration. One third of them were unemployed, 55 per cent of them had no income and only a small fraction of them owned more than three hectares of land. Women were more likely than men to not have an income. Thus, it was to be expected that more than 60 per cent of the migrants said that they had moved either to earn a higher income in Thailand or because of the lack of employment opportunities in Cambodia.
Most of the migrants surveyed came from large households. More than half of them had children under 15 years of age, often having to leave their children in Cambodia when migrating. Nearly half of the migrants either had no formal education or had not completed elementary school. This limited level of education available to migrants could potentially affect their ability to fully understand the pre-departure training that they receive, especially regarding topics like contractual obligations, Thai labour laws and labour protection. During the qualitative interviews, stakeholders including government officers, employers and staff members of NGOs agreed that there is a need for more effective pre-departure training.

Although most migrants were aged 19 years to 45 years, 4 per cent of them were ages 15 years to 18 years. Formal employment of youth was often necessary because of the economic situation of their families. No migrant under age 18 years was found in the fishing sector but some were working in construction.

Most of the migrant workers from Cambodia had come to Thailand several times. Only 30 per cent of them were in Thailand for the first time while 34 per cent had migrated two or three times and 14 per cent had migrated more than five times.

Income, Documentation Status and Lives in Thailand

While most Cambodian migrants in Thailand earned more than the daily minimum wage for their province, about one third of those surveyed received less. Women migrants on average earned less than men migrants, and half of the women were paid less than the daily minimum wage. Approximately one third of the migrants working as general labourers, in the service sector, and in wholesale and retail trade or as vendors received less than the daily minimum wage. About two thirds of undocumented migrants received less than the minimum wage. Migrants entering Thailand on a border pass were primarily daily and seasonal workers in the Sakaeo Province, and nearly 60 per cent of those earned below the daily minimum wage.

Overall, migrant workers expressed a high level of satisfaction with their working conditions, as only three per cent of them considered the conditions bad and only one per cent rated them as very bad.

Regardless of their documentation status, most migrants reported that they could access healthcare services easily. Most of the migrants surveyed who sought out banking services reported that they could access it easily.

Contact with Family and Remittances

Mobile telephones allowed migrants to keep in regular contact with family members in Cambodia. Twenty-eight per cent of the migrants surveyed contacted their family daily, another 25 per cent did so weekly and 38 per cent did on a monthly basis.

Eighty-six per cent of the migrants had remitted some funds to family members in Cambodia in the past year. Because women migrants earned less than their male counterparts, they were somewhat less likely to remit, and they sent slightly lower amounts. The mean value of remittances was THB 39,312 per year (or US$ 1,228) per migrant. Those who did not remit any funds cited the lack of savings or low level of wages as their reasoning. About half of the migrants
sending remittances did so by bank transfers and another one third used informal agents. Fees for sending remittances ranged from 5 per cent to 20 per cent depending on the amount sent.

If all of the 374,561 registered Cambodian migrants in Thailand remitted at the same level as those in the survey, the aggregate remittances would equal THB 14.72 billion, or USD 460 million, per year. Such amounts represent a significant contribution to the economies of their communities and to the national economy.

Forty-five per cent of women migrants and 48 per cent of men migrants said that they made the decision on how their remittances should be spent. For both women and men migrants, their spouse made the decision in about one in four cases.

Skills Gained and Interest in Skills Training

About two thirds of the Cambodian migrants surveyed in Thailand reported that they had acquired some skill, most often citing Thai language learning. In addition, both women and men migrants reported that they gained skills in agriculture, business, mechanics, domestic work, construction, manufacturing and management. Skills were primarily gained through on-the-job training, often with coaching from their supervisor or employer. Migrants interviewed believed that their additional skills would help them when seeking a better job or to earn a higher income in their current occupation. In some cases, they believed their new skills would help them to find a job upon return to Cambodia.

More than half of the migrants said that they were not interested in skills development training, but this was usually due to a shortage of the required time it would take to attend such a training. It was also noted that migrants were uninterested in skills development training because they were unaware of training benefits or their bosses would not permit them to attend. For those that were interested in skills training, both men and women most desired training in mechanics. Both men and women expressed some interest in training in agriculture, business, construction, services, manufacturing and management.

The skills that migrants gained from working in Thailand, especially in agriculture, business and management, would benefit migrants who planned to be self-employed, either in farming or business, upon their return to Cambodia. However, those migrants who expected to become employees when they returned to Cambodia were interested in skills training that would provide certification or accreditation.

In the qualitative interviews, some employers favoured skills training for their migrant workers to increase their productivity. This was especially the case for manufacturing work where specialized skills were required. Other employers, especially in agriculture or the service sector, did not favour skills training for their workers. Instead they suggested that employers themselves should receive skills training and that they would then pass the knowledge to their workers.

Also in the qualitative interviews, Government officers were in favour of skills training for migrant workers but said that such training should be provided by the private sector or by NGOs because Thai law does not permit a Government organization to provide training for foreigners. Some Government officers also felt that additional skills training was not required for migrants because they worked only in low-skilled jobs.
Impact of Migration on Respondents and Communities of Origin

Most migrants surveyed believed that their migration had a positive overall impact on their lives. Two thirds of them had greater savings than before they migrated, although half of them reported that they had not been able to invest any more than before. The increase in savings could have occurred because of the higher wages earned in Thailand or because of better savings habits. For some migrants, migration had a negative impact because their consumption habits had increased.

While most migrants felt that migration had a positive impact on their communities of origin because the remittances received helped their families to improve their quality of life, a few migrants, particularly from rural areas, noted a negative impact because of the loss of manpower for farm work or family businesses.

Willingness and Prospect of Return to Cambodia

Three quarters of migrant respondents planned to return to Cambodia permanently. The main reason given was that they wanted to live with their families and friends. Many said they would return when they had saved enough money while others said they would return when they found an employment or business opportunity. While the migrants planned to return in the future, more than half of them planned to return only after six or more years or did not have a timeframe for return in mind.

Upon return to Cambodia, migrants planned to work on their own land, to start a business or to look for employment. Starting their own business would require some savings from their work in Thailand while finding a suitable job could depend on skills that they had gained in Thailand. Most migrants (83%) expected that they would earn about the same level of income in Cambodia as they were currently earning in Thailand but that this would depend upon the future development of the Cambodian economy.

Those migrants who did not have plans to return to Cambodia cited the lack of employment opportunities with an acceptable income or reported that they had not yet achieved enough savings.

Given the expectations of finding employment with an income similar to what they were earning in Thailand, it is likely that some migrants would come back to Thailand if they could not find jobs in Cambodia that met those expectations. Furthermore, their return to Cambodia would entail the loss of remittances to their family. It is difficult to know if the Cambodian economy will expand sufficiently in the foreseeable future to employ all of the migrants returning from Thailand at the wage levels they anticipate.
Recommendations

To the Royal Thai Government

- **Recruitment Process**
  Current economic factors imply that the flow of migration from Cambodia to Thailand is set to continue. At the same time, the Royal Thai Government plans to recruit migrant workers only through the MOU process. One potential way to accommodate both facts would be for the Thai Government to cooperate with the Cambodian Government to apply the MOU procedure to migrants who are in Thailand as well as those in Cambodia. This flexibility would permit Cambodian migrants in an irregular status in Thailand to be regularized in a shorter time and with less expense and involvement of brokers. This procedure would also enable employers whose workers have either taken other jobs or returned home to replace those workers more quickly and efficiently.

- **Pre-departure Training**
  Pre-departure training should be included in the recruitment procedure to ensure that migrants have enough information about working and living condition in Thailand. The training should be appropriate to migrants’ educational background and level of literacy so as not to waste the time of both trainers and migrants.

- **Labour Protection**
  It is imperative that the Royal Thai Government enforce its labour laws more strictly to ensure that migrant workers in all provinces and sectors of work receive the minimum wage. More attention should be given to ensuring that women workers receive the minimum wage and equal pay for equal work. Gender sensitive policies should also promote equal employment opportunities in all sectors of work.

  As young workers are found in many sectors of employment, labour protection should emphasize their situation so that they are not employed in jobs proscribed by the Labour Protection Act. When they are employed legally, they must be subject to the same rules as adults in terms of remuneration, working conditions and safety. Young workers should be encouraged to continue their education parallel to their employment to ensure their long-term career development.

  Labour protections for migrant workers must include thorough inspections of working conditions to ensure that they meet requirements. All migrant workers should be protected by a system of health insurance and have access to healthcare as needed.

- **Remittances**
  The Royal Thai Government should promote access to banking services by migrant workers. It should cooperate with the private sector to promote electronic means of transferring money in ways that would reduce transaction fees and the risk of using informal channels, and thus increase the amount of remittances reaching the migrants’ families in Cambodia.

- **Skills Training**
  The Royal Thai Government should expand the types of work open to migrants to include more semi-skilled jobs in sectors facing labour shortages, e.g., in construction and garment manufacturing.
Migrants should be allowed to participate in skills training provided by Government agencies in order to improve the migrants’ skills and productivity as well as to meet the demands of employers and the Thai economy. Such training could be in sectors with a shortage of skilled workers in order to avoid competition with Thai workers. Such enhanced training opportunities should be available equally to young migrants and to women workers in order to promote gender equality.

To The Government of The Kingdom of Cambodia

- Recruitment Process
  The Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia should cooperate with the Royal Thai Government to expand the MOU procedure to permit entry to it by Cambodian migrant workers who are already working in Thailand. The cost of travel documents and recruitment fees should be reduced in order to encourage migrants to use the formal MOU channel. The Government should cooperate with the Thai Government to promote safe migration and to provide sufficient information about working and living conditions in various sectors so that Cambodian workers can make informed decisions prior to migrating to Thailand.

- Pre-Departure Training
  Adequate pre-departure training should be provided to assist migrants to live and work in Thailand. Such training should appropriate for the educational and literacy levels of the migrants.

- Government Loan Programme
  The Government should set up a migration fund for prospective Cambodian migrant workers to borrow money for migration expenses from with low interest rates so the migrants do not need to rely on money lenders that charge exorbitant rates of interest.

- Remittances
  The Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia should cooperate with the financial sector to enable remittances to reach migrants’ families safely and with reasonable fees, especially in rural areas, in order to reduce the risks inherent in informal channels.

- Skills Development
  The Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia should incorporate labour migration in national development plans. The return of skilled and experienced migrants and their incorporation into the labour force should be promoted in order to maximize their potential to contribute to economic development in Cambodia.

The Government should provide training for return migrants on setting up their own businesses and create initiatives for return migrants to increase the productivity of their farms.
Irregular Cambodian migrants arrive at the IOM reception center in Poipet, a border town with Thailand.

The migrants arrive at the MRC by the busloads and are a mix of men, women, and children. While for some it is their first time being deported back to Cambodia, for a number of arrivals it is a regular occurrence with them as they repeated continue to travel the border illegally.
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