

VALUING THE SOCIAL COST OF MIGRATION

An Exploratory Study

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FOREWORD

Labour migration has always been an important trend in the Asia-Pacific region which has resulted in visible monetary gains for countries of origin as well as social and monetary gains for countries of destination. The development of discourse on migration over the last decade has increasingly acknowledged the role of labour migrants, remittances and social transfers as key drivers of development.

According to the World Bank, remittances to developing countries are estimated to have reached USD372 billion in 2011. Remittances sent home by migrants to developing countries are three times the size of official development assistance and provide an essential lifeline for millions of poor households in addition to profound implications for development and human welfare. The World Bank also predicts that, despite the current global economic conditions, remittance flows are expected to continue growing with global remittances expected to reach USD615 billion by 2014, of which USD467 billion will flow to developing countries.

While there is no denial of the individual and national benefits of migration, temporary labour migration also comes with its costs and consequences. Migration can create a “care deficit” and always has an emotional impact on children confronted with parental absence. Spouses left behind are also faced with complex issues, such as adjustments to gender role reversals. Unemployed husbands taking over the household duties and child rearing when their wives are working abroad presents a whole new set of issues, such as tendencies toward alcoholism and infidelity. Migrant families also bear the cost of compensating for the mother’s absence by employing another domestic helper or relative to help with child care. Emotional ties need to be maintained and strengthened which entails additional communication and other costs.

While some of the above household level social costs and impacts are well known, many other dimensions of the social costs of migration, particularly at the meso and macro levels, require further examination. The massive migration of nurses and other technical services from IT specialists to engineers has resulted in serious depletion of human resources and expertise with negative impact on the health and industrial sectors of countries of origin. Loss of educational investments in training doctors, nurses, engineers and other high skilled workers who work abroad needs to be examined in terms of social and economic costs. Lastly, an analysis of how governments are managing migration resources, not just deployment and remittances, needs to be conducted with greater focus on the social cost dimensions of migration.

To examine all of the above facets of migration, UN Women has commissioned this study to the Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College.



Roberta Clarke

Regional Director

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIR-TIP	Anti-Illegal Recruitment-Anti-Trafficking in Persons
AKAD	Antar Kerja Antar Daerah (Inter-professional Inter-regional)
AKAN	Antar Kerja Antar Negara (Inter-professional International)
BKLN	Bursa Kerja Luar Negeri (Bureau of Foreign Affairs)
BLA	Bilateral Labour Agreement
BNP2TKI	Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers)
BP3TKI	Balai Pelayanan Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Services Unit on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers)
CFO	Commission on Filipino Overseas
CHAMPSEA	Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia
CMA	Center for Migrant Advocacy
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology
JAKERLA PRT	Indonesian Network for Proper Working Conditions for Domestic Workers
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
OFW	Overseas Filipino Workers
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
PDOS	Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar
PEOS	Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar
PJTKI	Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Indonesian Worker Providers Organization)

POEA	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
PPSW	Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita (Center for Women's Development)
PPTKIS	Pelaksana Penempatan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia Swasta (Private Indonesian Overseas Worker Deployment Managers)
SMS	Short Messaging Service
SSS	Social Security System
TKI	Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Indonesian Labor Migrant)
TOEA	Thailand Overseas Employment Administration
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPT P3TKI	Unit Pelaksana Teknis Pelayanan, Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Technical Operation Unit of Services, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers)



1 INTRODUCTION

Aurora Javate de Dios

Migration has become a pervasive phenomenon in today's world with impacts on both developing and developed countries. According to the World Migration Report of 2010, the stock of international migrants has been projected to increase to as high as 405 million by 2050 (IOM 2010). One notable development in migration is the increasing number of females among temporary labour migrants mostly concentrated in vulnerable jobs such as domestic work.

Migration has always been positively viewed in terms of the visible monetary gains generated for the origin country. Many studies on remittances (Ratha 2011) assert that migration itself can be a driver for development in many migrant-sending countries. The massive amounts of remittances flowing into national coffers is the main reason these countries are institutionalizing market- and demand-driven migration policies to further encourage the labour migration of hundreds of thousands of women and men to different countries. Visible and positive benefits of migration, such as education for children, better housing and food on the table with improved economic and social standing, have been the yardstick measuring the success of migrants.

However, in assessing the benefits of migration, the issue of the invisible, non-monetary social costs remains largely unrecognized as part of the inevitable "cost" migrants have to pay in exchange for the prospect of a better life for their families. Migration inevitably affects the individual migrants, families and communities in many different ways. Migration decisions represent critical turning points in the lives of women, men, children and families as a whole. Furthermore, migration decisions are usually made in response to the compelling need to ensure the economic survival of the family. Most migrants cite the lack of economically rewarding jobs and the precariousness and insecurity of livelihoods and jobs as a major reason for their decision to work overseas.

Without adequate government-provided social protection programmes for the poor and marginalized, migration may be considered an informal coping strategy and a "means of reducing the probability of shocks before they happen, or an informal means of coping with shocks once they have occurred" (World Bank 2001, 141). This view is reinforced by other studies also perceiving migration as a private and social protection strategy at the individual or household levels providing income to disadvantaged households (Sabates Wheeler and Waite 2003, 14).

The positive material benefits of migrant labour remittances for the family have been well documented and confirmed. "Remittances help lift recipients out of poverty, increase and diversify household incomes, provide an insurance against risk, enable family members to benefit from educational and training opportunities and provide a source of capital for the establishment of small businesses" (Global Commission on International Migration 2005, 26). "Not only do remittances increase the consumption levels of recipient families, thereby putting education and health care within reach, but they also contribute to infrastructure development and investment for increased income in the long term when consciously saved and aggregated" (Wolfensohn 2005, ix, cited in Kunz 2006).

However, such optimistic assertions often fail to account for the social costs migrants incur with direct impact on migrants themselves and the families left behind. Many studies have shown that migrants and their families pay a steep price for the remittance generated from overseas work (Asis 2008; Carandang 2007; Baggio 2008). The hidden social costs of migration take the form of prolonged separation from spouses and children, and the care deficit experienced by families; human rights violations and deprivation suffered by migrants in destination countries; and the cost of human capital of skilled and less skilled migrants which should have gone to productive use for the development of the countries of origin. The scope of this study is limited to the social costs of families left behind.

Valuing the Social Costs of Migration

In migration, social costs are outcomes with negative impact on stakeholders. In general, social costs may be quantifiable or non-quantifiable, intended or unintended and the result of dynamic social processes generated by migration. Human subjectivities, for instance, cannot be adequately captured in numbers because narratives account for an ongoing social process. Narrative data call for interpretation rather than computation and gendered meanings can be drawn from narratives to provide a glimpse of the “inner world” of the respondent migrant.

Social costs may be located at the micro level of society in the form of personal problems experienced by the migrants and their family members, which in a prolonged unresolved state translate into social issues in the migrants’ communities of origin on the meso level. Social costs also arise at the level of macro institutions and organizations affected by the departure of productive human labour (professional, technical, skilled) required in the provision of all kinds of services (business, social, technical) intended to realize the development goals of the sending country.

The aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of the political, economic and social dimensions and costs of migration and consequences on the family, community and society. The study analyzes the social outcomes of migration and identifies strategies in response to the issues of families left behind with further examination of the government policy framework on migration in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines to justify the deployment of hundreds of thousands of women and men to work abroad. The study also inquires about the effectiveness of government programmes in addressing issues related to migrants and migrant families. Lastly, the study looks into the following issues of displacement, adjustment and adaptation faced by individuals within the family in response to the problems brought about by the migration of a family member:

In what way does migration transform power relations between men and women in the family?

In what ways does migration disrupt, change or transform gender relations and the notions, practices and performances of feminine and masculine gender roles?

How does migration empower and/or disempower women? Are there differential impacts in the migration of women as compared to the migration of men?

How are children affected by the migration of mothers or fathers?

What interventions can governments offer in response to family and community issues brought about by migration? And how do families cope with prolonged separation?

Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines were chosen as the sites for the study due to significant commonalities in migration patterns. All three countries are labour-sending countries with significant numbers of female migrants. The country teams examined the migration policies of the countries and interviewed key informants in the government about insight regarding migration policies. As part of the study, 500 households in selected communities were surveyed and intensive focus group discussions were conducted with community leaders and families left behind. Each country team conducted public consultations for the study with government, non-government organizations (NGOs), migrant organizations and academics to generate comments and suggestions which tremendously enriched the study.

While the study gives particular focus to the social aspects of migration, it recognizes the need for migration to be contextualized in a globalized world where migration policies are essentially mediated by states and markets. The concept of “transnational or cross-national transfer of genderized labour (Heyzer and Lyclama 1994), or what Truong terms as “transfer of reproductive labour,” reflects the link between international migratory processes and the relations organizing reproductive labour at various levels. The massive commodification and transnationalization of reproductive labour, particularly of domestic service, (Heyzer and Wee 1994; Mies 1998; Eviota 1980), entertainment and sex-industry-related services are manifestations of macro and micro socioeconomic processes that are influenced and shaped by the gender division of labour. The ideological underpinning of the transfer of reproductive labour is reinforced by patriarchal concepts in both sending and receiving countries. The emergence of the “global care chain,” or the interconnection of different households in different places around the world transferring care-giving tasks from one household to another, is directly related to the feminization of migration (Orozco 2010). The migration of women from the South to developed countries requires a reorganization of households and a reconfiguration of gender roles in the family. In contrast, men’s departure as migrant workers does not result in the reorganization of the household or global care chains. When men do take on care tasks in the family in the absence of migrant spouses, they are supported by a wide circle of family relations, including mothers, sisters and other relatives (Orozco 2010; Parrenas 2005).

Gender, Rights and Child-Sensitive Perspectives

The study utilized gender, rights and child-sensitive perspectives to understand the many layers and nuances involved in the migration of women and men. An understanding of gender and its impacts on every dimension of migration is necessary to unravelling the ways in which male and

female migrant workers manage, navigate and survive the many challenges of migration. Gender is a central organizing principle of social life and permeates all social institutions. It also affects migration patterns, processes and outcomes while influencing government policies on migration and labour market segmentation as well as access to rights, entitlements and services. “Gendered perspectives illustrate the gendered character of the complex and contradictory realities constituting the social costs” of migration and remittances (Kunz 2006).

The human rights of migrants are among the least observed and respected rights as reflected in the low number of ratifications of the Migrant Convention and the absence of a unified international mechanism to systematically address the issues and concerns of migrants. Consequently, a number of protection gaps exacerbate the situation of migrants, especially migrant women. A few examples include the differential valorization of women’s and men’s work; differential access to legal remedies and social services because domestic work (where female migrant workers usually cluster) is not legally protected by law; and differences in the work categories and work conditions intensifying women’s vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation (de Dios 2008).

Notably, significant changes have taken place in gendered migration during the last two decades. Not only has there been a remarkable increase in the volume of gendered migration, but also in the national and ethnic diversity of female migrants in response to the market demand for less expensive, more docile, even less “right conscious” female migrant workers. Filipina, Indonesian and Sri Lankan women migrant workers are normally ranked by nationality, ethnicity, class and even education. Another development is the longer duration of employment in what is termed “temporary migration,” which in fact has become “circulatory migration”. While contracts normally last two to three years, women migrant workers can, in fact, work in one or more countries from five to fifteen years, usually driven by family dependency on remittances (Piper and Yamanaka 2005; interviews with Filipina women migrant workers in 2010). Hence, the observation that although migration does not necessarily assure lasting economic upliftment for the family, the temporary economic relief brought by migration is better than having no relief at all.

Lastly, there has also been an increase in the number of NGOs organized to help and defend the rights of women migrant workers (Piper and Yamanaka 2005; Alcid). As the Philippine case study shows, the NGOs’ advocacy of migrant rights has not only exerted political pressure on governments to commit to assistance and defense of migrant workers nationally and internationally but also to bring international attention in the United Nations through the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which has been meeting annually since 2007 to discuss various dimensions of international migration.

Gendered stereotypical roles influence the occupational categories for women. As Parrenas (2011) points out, the movement of women migrant workers is simply a movement from one unequal system to another where gender social roles are recreated and reproduced. Thus, contrary to the popular presumption, the migration of women may not necessarily or automatically lead to greater freedom of movement and increased independence or empowerment (Erel et al. 2003 cited in Piper 2008, 6) due to the many structural, cultural and occupational constraints rendering migrant women workers’ lives vulnerable. Women migrant workers are usually employed in low-skilled categories, such as domestic

work, where legal and labour protection is weakest. Given the private context of this type of work in cultural settings where women in general are not highly regarded, the vulnerabilities of migrant women migrant workers to exploitation and abuse are heightened. It must be emphasized here that “vulnerability” occurs in women because women are viewed as products of “political, economic and cultural forces acting along a variety of identity axes, including gender, race and nationality, that disempower migrants (Piper 2008).”

A child-rights-based perspective is generally absent from migration discussions and policies because children are generally assumed to be passive dependents of adult migrant workers. Migration has, however, affected the lives of millions of children. For instance, three to six million children have been left behind by Filipino migrants. Similarly, one million children have been left behind in Indonesia and approximately half a million have been left behind in Thailand (ESCAP 2008). A study by Edillon (2008) pointed out that children left behind are at the greatest risk for drug abuse, sexual abuse, poor academic performance, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy and even suicide at the critical ages of thirteen to sixteen years. In another study, Parrenas (2005) highlighted the weakening of intergenerational relations, pointing out that the distance between migrant parents and children left behind puts a tremendous strain on familial relationships compounded by the gendered care expectations of children defining these very relations within the transnational (migrant) family. Moreover, spouses left behind are faced with the complex issues of distant marital relations as well as adjustments to gender role negotiations and reversals.

The general assumption is that families left behind have better living conditions than other families because they receive remittances. This is, of course, generally true as evident from the results of the three case studies where remittance has become the source of better living conditions and education for children. However, children left behind in many migrant families may, in fact, be faced with vulnerable situations where they are frequently at risk for abuse or exploitation by relatives or surrogate parents (Abramovich, Cernadas and Morlachetti 2011, 34). Children are undoubtedly key actors in the entire process of migration. This study has shown that migration decisions are made without the meaningful participation of children in the family.

The Study

The Indonesian country study focused on a rural area, Indramayu, a community with a large concentration of migrant families. The Philippines examined migrant communities within and around Metro Manila, including several urban poor areas and middle-class communities. The Thailand study was conducted in Nakhon Ratchasima in northeastern Thailand. The country studies explored the impact of migration on families left behind along the following four themes: (1) shifts and reconfiguration in family structures and roles within migrant families; (2) impact on children: risks, vulnerability and resilience; (3) remittance and its use; and (4) government support and services to migrants and their families.

Shifts and Reconfiguration in Family Structures and Roles within Migrant Families

The family has always been viewed as the bedrock foundation of society. Families compel women and men to seek fortunes in distant countries and it is the families for whom they are willing to sacrifice many years of difficulties and discrimination as migrant workers. Migration brings about profound changes in the family constituting nothing less than an “emotional upheaval” (Parrenas 2001). Notwithstanding the prospect of better economic benefits potentially accrued to the family, the overall impact of migration decisions, especially on children, has been shown to be highly disruptive. Parrenas (2001, 117) identifies three areas of care families are required to provide children: moral care (discipline and socialization); emotional care (emotional assurance and affection) and material care (provision of food, clothing and education). These elements of family life are changed or modified by the absence of one or both parents.

All of the country studies indicate that the decision to migrate is mainly made by couples and the decision-making process is accompanied by very little consultation with children, most likely to forestall the emotional reaction of children to the departure of either parent. Children are informed about the decision to migrate after the decision has already been made and their opinions are not taken into account. As a result, many children resent this exclusion from their parents’ critical decision to migrate and such feelings aggravate the pain of prolonged separation.

In Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, wives left behind become the decision-makers on household matters which were previously the responsibility of their husbands. A certain measure of independence and flexibility in family management becomes possible for the wives left behind. Having assured income from remittances, women sometimes venture into small entrepreneurial activities. However, as illustrated by many of the focus group discussions in the Philippines and Indonesia, women are stressed when remittances from their husbands are only sufficient or hardly enough to make ends meet, or when the remittances are not regularly sent. Migrant husbands can exert social control over their wives by withdrawing either support or remittances and by abandoning their wives for other women. In addition, women left behind must also contend with the social norms and expectations of in-laws, other relatives and the community to behave in a way that would not raise suspicion of infidelity or misconduct (Kunz 2006).

The husbands left behind in the three case studies found it more difficult to handle both childrearing and household activities while their wives were away. Many fathers simply passed on the responsibility of parental care to their elder daughters, mothers, sisters or domestic workers. In Indonesia, however, the husbands generally took on the responsibilities of childrearing and household management, while some men utilized the remittances sent by their wives to remarry, support relationships with girlfriends or pay for sex. All of the three studies noted what is characterized by the Indonesian study as “positive or negative behaviour” when men are left behind.

Gender role reversals do not automatically result in the empowerment of women, because women are required to sustain maternal duties transnationally and, upon their return, resume both reproductive and caregiving tasks. Parrenas (2005) further points out that the types of jobs readily available to women migrants are occupational niches, such as carework (e.g., domestic workers and caregivers) that reinforce rather than change traditional female gender roles. Even as the main contributor to the

family income, women continue to be expected to perform parental roles in addition to managing household expenses transnationally via long distance communication. Migrant women often feel guilty and compensate for physical absence by sending material goods to their children. This guilt is compounded by children's perception of broken gender boundaries because women and mothers are generally expected to stay home and take care of their children. This is not the case when men migrate because the social expectation of men is to provide for the family (ibid.).

Across all country studies, grandparents, especially the grandmother, played a significant role in caring for the migrants' children, especially if both parents were away. Grandparents took over the responsibility of providing for the needs of the children as well as disciplining them. Teenagers, particularly boys, were found to be more difficult to handle or discipline. In most cases, however, children became closer to their grandparents than their parents. In the Philippines, where extended family systems are already established, a multi-tiered extended family system usually emerged when relatives became prominent in the rearing of the children. This situation sometimes created intra-household conflicts between the children of migrants, who enjoyed more material things, and other relatives.

In the Thai study, communication between children left behind and their migrant parents became more frequent or regular. In the Philippines and Indonesia and communication technology, such as cell phones, e-mail, the Internet and Skype, became indispensable tools for maintaining links and sustaining long-distance parenting. Common topics included the children's school-related activities, health, well-being and expenses. Children did not usually share intimate or emotional issues with their parents.

Frequency of communication, however, did not necessarily translate into a closer relationship between children and parents. Both girls and boys felt quite alienated from mothers and fathers after a long absence because parents were not present when the children needed guidance and emotional reassurance. The importance of communication technologies is such that transnational parenting would not have been as frequent or even possible without them.

Children found it difficult to accept long-term separation due to migration. The relationship of children with the migrant parents depended on the age of separation. In the case of Indonesia, children aged 0 to 5 years or those of preschool age seemed better able to cope with separation than children aged 6 years and up. In the Philippines, the stress and angst from prolonged separation were more pronounced among children aged 11 to 14 years and up. Feelings of loneliness and abandonment were most intense during school programmes or family activities (e.g., family day, teacher-parent meetings) and other similar events accentuating parental absence.

Despite the remittances and hope for a better life, children preferred parents to stay home and look for local jobs. In cases where migration was inevitable, children chose to have the father to go rather than the mother upon whom they relied for emotional care. The above finding was especially true in Thailand and the Philippines. Also notable was the children's longing for the love and attention of their parents, despite the presence or support of extended family members and accessibility of communication technology.

Remittances: Benefits and Limitations

The three case studies amply demonstrated that remittances were spent mostly on basic necessities, such as food, education, debt repayment and household expenses. One of the obvious and most beneficial effects of migration was the ability of the household to support the children's education. However, an emerging trend showing more cases of dropouts as the children grew older (19–21 years) became apparent. One NGO working with communities in the Philippines (Atikha n.d.) has noted that young people no longer appeared eager to pursue a college education because they can earn a lot just by working as domestic workers like their mothers in Italy, even without a college degree.

For young children, remittances were a concrete, symbolic substitute for parental absence and may be able to explain in part their construction of parental life abroad as one of luxury and abundance. Migrants tended to show only the positive aspects of their lives as caregivers, domestic workers or nurses and expressed nothing about the difficulties endured while working abroad in order to insulate the family from anxiety over the situation.

The role played by culture in the use of remittances was highlighted in the case of Indonesia. The research team observed in agricultural communities, such as Indramayu, that traditional celebrations (hajatan) and circumcision rituals constituted major expenditures for migrant families. More than just a case of following traditions, participation in these rituals was an indicator of social mobility and acceptance since the families were already able to afford hosting community celebrations. This was also the case in some migrant communities in the Philippines where migrant workers were expected to contribute to town fiestas as well as baptisms, weddings and other events.

Based on the survey findings in the three countries, the money sent was not always sufficient or was just enough to cover the family's daily expenses with hardly any amount left for savings or investment. Migrants with higher salaries could afford to invest in small business and economic investments their families were unable to sustain. The issue of efficient financial management of remittances is relevant in this regard.

Though migration directly benefits families, it benefits the state even more in that the remittances help to strengthen national economic resources. The three studies showed remittances to have increased the community, urban and national resources. In the Philippines, USD20 billion in remittance receipts (POEA 2012) from both permanent and temporary migrants was a greater economic resource than direct foreign investment.

Culture of Migration, a Culture of Dependency

Dependency on remittances and consumerism was strongly manifested in many families across the three countries, because children and spouses tended to rely on remittances for all needs without thinking of saving a certain amount for future needs. Very little attention was paid to investments

and the households engaged in small-scale businesses with very low rates of success when possible. Such dependency was obvious in the phenomenon of intergenerational migration, where children of migrants themselves resorted to migration to sustain their families. As much as 60.8 percent of migrants in the Philippine study and 80 percent of those in the Indonesian study were the sole breadwinners in their families.

In the focus group discussions conducted by the Philippine team, older women and men shared that their children had become second generation migrants sending remittances to their families. Seafarers influenced their sons to take up careers as seafarers, while domestic workers encouraged daughters to work abroad. The phenomenon of intergenerational migration in the Philippines indicates that migration alone is unable to raise people from poverty in many cases, unless there is general economic development in the country of origin, which should be the long-term economic strategy for the country.

The governments of the three countries could also be said to have developed a culture of dependency on remittances which helped to sustain economic stability and increase dollar reserves to cushion the country at times of financial crisis.

Risks, Vulnerability and Resilience

What are the risks faced by families in the absence of migrant parents? In all three countries, the absence of either parent exposed children to many risks, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The Thai study, in particular, highlighted some of the risky health and reproductive issues children of migrants were likely to experiment with, including smoking, drinking, watching pornography and engaging in sex. For instance, one-fourth of the children left behind had tried smoking and one-third was found to smoke daily. Nearly half of the boy respondents (49.6 percent) and 23.2 percent of their girl counterparts admitted to having watched pornography from their mobile phones and CDs. In general, children were more reluctant to disclose information about sexual experience; at least one-tenth of the male respondents admitted to having had sexual experience. While there were no direct reports of sexual violence against children, informal reports imply cases of incest, sexual abuse, early sexual initiation and early marriages. In this regard, health risks and reproductive health issues are definitely relevant to any discussion of migration. The Philippines study also noted a tendency among young men to engage in drinking and even drugs in some cases.

However, in families where dedicated and loving surrogate parents, such as grandmothers, elder siblings and others were present, alienation, displacement and risk of drug or alcohol abuse among the children left behind could be mitigated. New information technologies have made transnational communication with parents much easier. Surfing the Internet is the most common activity among children left behind due to Internet accessibility and availability in the communities. Children often use the Internet for social networking (e.g., Facebook), web surfing, online games and chatting.

In all of the country studies, the families left behind were trying to look at the positive benefits of migration mainly through “remittances” which had materially improved quality of life and well-being, particularly among the children, rather than dwelling on the negative aspects, namely, long separation from spouses/parents from families. The families tried to amend the situation by maintaining regular communication with one another. Children had become accustomed to growing up without mothers or fathers and compensated for parental absence with other ties, such as friends, cousins and relatives. Families do survive the difficulties and impacts of migration but at a tremendous cost to family cohesion and stability.

Conclusion

During the Civil Society Days of the Global Forum on Migration held in Puerto Vallarta, 2010, NGOs asserted “a need for recognition of the social costs of migration, especially for women and families, because of abandonment, alienation of children and difficulty in maintaining family ties while recognizing that migration also has benefits for families. Lack of policy regarding families and too much focus on the individual worker and not the family impedes efforts to protect the families left behind by migration. Within this framework, the rights of families (to reunification for example) must be included.”

To this end, governments need to reaffirm and reinforce family rights, particularly the right to family unity, by easing access to visas and visitation and ensuring pathways to reunification. In partnership with civil society, governments must create mechanisms to facilitate linkages between migrant workers and families left behind to ensure communication in addition to financial and social support for the families left behind. The right to family reunification is guaranteed in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 9) and the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (Article 44). It is time for the international community and countries of origin and destination to adopt a humane migration policy regime that is holistic by taking into account the positive benefits and social costs of balance and recognizing that the strategic stakeholders in the migratory process are not only governments and markets but human beings — the migrants themselves and their families back home.

Exploring Social Indicators on the Social Costs of Migration: Areas for Further Research

Although recent studies already recognize the social consequences or impacts of migration, especially on the migrants and their families, these are often dismissed as anecdotal. Unlike economic indicators, social indicators are difficult to measure and require a comprehensive analysis of migration at individual, community and national levels. As defined by McEwin (1995, 314–315), social indicators “are measures of well-being which provide a contemporary view of social conditions and monitor trends within a range of social issues over time (cited in Genov 2002). A key concept that has been the subject of several studies is well-being (Genov 2002; Gasper 2004; Veenhoven 2004; McGillivray and Noorbakhsh 2004; Sen 1999) defined as a “state of being with others where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully pursue goals and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life.”

While the study did not exhaustively develop an indicator system to measure social costs more systematically, the following broad areas can be developed and further refined to evaluate and assess the social costs of migration. The following are included among the preliminary sets of social indicators for consideration:

1. **Gender** - “Gender inequality can permeate the decision, process and impacts of migration, as well as the networks and support systems that play a key role at all stages of migration” (UNGA 2004 cited in Omelaniuk n.d.). Migration, on the other hand, can also empower women and reconfigure gender relations. Thus, one cannot simply ignore the significant participation of women in international migration. Women’s participation is greatly affected by social roles in society and educational capacity with access to and availability of resources, among others. A look at some of the following elements is essential to the analysis of gender inequalities:

AREAS OF STUDY	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Decision to Migrate	Father, Mother or Both
Productive Work	Type of Work Abroad
Reproductive Work	Person/s Responsible for Reproductive Work
Supervision of Children, Including Caring and Nurturing Functions	Person/s Responsible for Caring and Nurturing Functions

2. **Well-being/Life Satisfaction.** The family’s well-being and life satisfaction cannot be measured by simply looking at remittance levels. One needs to look at both objective (food, shelter, education) and subjective indicators (safety and social support, belongingness and love and self-esteem and respect for others) in order to appreciate the impacts of migration.

AREAS OF STUDY	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Adequacy of Remittance for the Immediate Needs of the Family	Amount of Remittances Sent to Support the Immediate Needs of the Family
Children's Health	Children's Nutritional and Medical Needs
Children's Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Attendance in School Children's Performance in School Before and During the Migration of Parent/s
Family Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Caregivers Presence of Grandparents/or Relatives in Extended Family Arrangement
Transnational Family Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modes of Communication Frequency of Communication Extent of Emotional Gap between Parents and Children

3. **Dependency.** Migration also results in behavioural changes in the family (consumerism, gender attitudes, criminal behaviour, etc.). As observed in the household survey, most of the families left behind were heavily dependent on remittances as their only source of livelihood. "Remittances may create conspicuous consumption that generates imitative demand by other members of the society" (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010 cited in Puentes et al. 2010).

AREAS OF STUDY	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Source of Income	Amount of Remittance; Other Sources
Employment Abroad	Years Worked Abroad
Dependency Ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Persons Working /Employed in the Family Number of Dependent Children and Other Members of the Extended Family
Family Expenses	Basic Family Expenses
Leisure Activities	Frequency of Social Activities (e.g., Watching Movies, Going Out with Friends)
Spending Patterns	Types of Purchases
Savings	Level of Savings

4. Government Services

AREAS OF STUDY	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Information and Orientation	Before and During Migration, and Upon Migrant's Return to Home Country
Sustained Family Services	Availability, Accessibility of Family Services for Families of Migrants
Emergency Relief Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Remittance Does Not Arrive • In Cases of Abandonment • In Cases of Emergencies, such as Conflict Situations and Natural Disasters
Livelihood Options	Returning Migrants and Family Members

So much more could be done to intensify the study of the social costs of migration. For instance, a longitudinal and interdisciplinary study should be conducted in sending countries to determine the impact of the migrant parents' long-term separation from their children over time. Another area of study is the impact of migration on the elderly who are involved in the migration as surrogate parents. Finally, given that circular migration seems to be a common pattern among a significant number of migrants, intergenerational migration must be examined.

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2 **INDONESIAN LABOUR MIGRATION**

SOCIAL COSTS AND FAMILIES LEFT BEHIND

Aurora Javate de Dios

International labour migration is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. Both spontaneous and arranged labour migration has been an ongoing practice since the Dutch Colonial and Japanese occupation of the country. In the global labour market, Indonesia is known as an important labour-exporting country. However, Indonesian overseas labour migration is characterized by the movement of unskilled workers in the plantation, forestry, construction and service sectors. Many women migrants work in the service sector as domestic workers and shopkeepers. The principal destinations of this movement are countries experiencing significant labour shortages, notably several Middle Eastern countries, Malaysia and Singapore.

Since the 1980s, the number of Indonesians working in foreign countries has increased substantially (Hugo, 1992, 181; Raharto, 2001, 10; Spaan, 1994, 105). As of 2007, the informal sector was estimated to account for 78 percent of these migrant workers (Soeparno, 2008). Initially, the involvement of women in international labour migration was ignored since women were mainly considered as passive migrants accompanying family members (parents or husbands) working overseas. Over the past decade, however, the number of women migrant workers has grown significantly and is currently dominated by those employed as domestic workers in Saudi Arabia.

From 1994 to 2008, approximately 6.2 million Indonesian workers were deployed to 42 countries around the world (BNP2TKI 2009b). This number did not include irregular migrants (undocumented migrants in destination countries), who reportedly constituted a considerable number, too. Indonesian migrant workers in the Asia Pacific region outnumbered those in the Middle East and African regions. The flow was dominantly female, with sex ratio falling between 20 and 79. On the average, there were only 36 men migrant workers for every 100 women migrant workers. Migration flow to the Middle East and Africa registered a sex ratio of approximately 12 between 1995 and 2005. The figure for the Asia Pacific region was higher at 79 (Raharto, 2010).

The involvement of Indonesian women as migrant workers in foreign countries has positive as well as negative consequences on the women themselves as well as on the families they leave behind. The impact on families, especially young children, may be psychological, social and/or educational in nature.

Given the increasing number of women working overseas, studies on the social costs of migration are important for Indonesia. In practice, however, a dearth of research has been conducted on this issue. As part of a four-country report including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, this report enriches the understanding of problems in Indonesia individually and in comparison with other countries.

Review of Indonesian International Labour Migration Studies

The phenomenon of international labour migration has been a longstanding issue and is experienced by nearly all countries worldwide. Countries with labour shortages are supplied by other countries where jobs are insufficient to sustain the workforce. Sustained by globalization trends which have eased the process of migration with modern advancements in communication media, information dissemination and transportation facilities, the rate of international labour migration is increasing (Raharto, 2007).

With its large population and government inability to provide sufficient job opportunities, Indonesia's high domestic unemployment rate has made the country one of the largest labour suppliers. Indonesia uses high labour demands in Malaysia, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong SAR, China, Singapore and Middle Eastern countries as an opportunity to export its surplus labour and address its problem of redundant workforce.

The appeal of better salary abroad is the main causal propulsion. However, the entire process of migration in Indonesia requires further improvement for the benefit of overseas workers. Overseas workers seem to be face certain challenges, particularly in terms of recruitment, departure, conditions in the workplace and return to home country. Imperative attention must also be given to the socioeconomic impact of living far apart from families, especially from spouses and children.

This literature review discusses various issues concerning Indonesian overseas labour migration (TKI; Tenaga Kerja Indonesia) and focuses on the history of Indonesian overseas migration, emerging problems faced by workers and the impact of this phenomenon on the region of origin and the families left behind.

History of Indonesian Overseas Labour Migration

Indonesian labour migration can be traced to the Dutch colonization period in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries. At the time, the Dutch-Indian government, through the contract labour programme, sent thousands of Java island inhabitants to work in plantation areas recently opened in Sumatra, Kalimantan and other Dutch-occupied countries, such as Suriname and New Caledonia, British colonies in Malaysia, and the France-occupied Asian region (Raharto, 2007). Additionally, voluntary migration was noted among Java Island inhabitants working on rubber plantations in Malaysia or infrastructure construction projects in Singapore (Spaan, 1994).

The first generation of Indonesian overseas labour eventually opted for permanent residence and established Indonesian communities in their destination countries. One example is the Javanese community in Suriname of 32,896 Javanese sent by the Dutch colonial government in 1890 who now comprise 15 percent of Suriname's total population. Indonesian labour was intended to replace African slaves in Suriname who had been released by the Dutch government. The Javanese were chosen on the basis of the island's density as well as its poor economic conditions due to the volcanic eruption of Krakatau Mountain in 1883. Indonesian labour in Suriname generally came from Central Java and East Java, with only a small number from West Java (Sarmoeedjie, 2006).

During the Japanese occupation in 1942 until the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945, Javanese labour export continued. Thousands of young men, mostly farmers, were forcibly sent to work in former Dutch-Indian colonial government territories and Southeast Asian countries. Those who involuntarily worked under Japanese military instruction were known by the name "romusha" who were sent to Thailand and Myanmar to work on a railway construction project (Hugo, 2005; Hugo, 1980 and Warman Adam, 1994 in Raharto, 2007). The Japanese government further recruited romusha from South Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara to be assigned to Sabah, Malaysia (Aswatini et al., 1999).

Following Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945, the practice of Indonesian labour migration persisted. By then, however, the phase of mobility was more likely to be spontaneous (Raharto, 2007). One of the significant elements sustaining such spontaneous mobility for two decades was ongoing conflicts in some regions of Indonesia (Hugo, 2005). The separatist movement in Irian Jaya, for example, cast away waves of refugees, especially to Papua New Guinea (Garnaut and Manning, 1974 and Roosman, 1980 cited in Hugo, 2005). Another phase of mobility occurred as a result of the conflict caused by supporters of the Dutch colonial government in some communities of Maluku who intended to establish the South Maluku Republic. This radical movement eventually triggered the fleeing of South Maluku people to the Netherlands (McNicoll, 1968 and Kraak, 1957 cited in Hugo, 2005).

The export¹ and distribution of Indonesian overseas labour based on Indonesian governmental policy started in 1969 under the authority of the Labour Department. Private parties began to be involved in overseas labour distribution after the enactment of Governmental Regulation No. 4 of 1970 on national and international labour distribution through inter-professional interregional (Antar Kerja Antar Daerah, or AKAD) and inter-professional international (Antar Kerja Antar Negara, or AKAN) programmes (Soeparno, 2008). However, it was only after 1977 that the government issued a special regulation on labour recruitment. Of particular note in 1979, the government began to exert efforts toward supporting Indonesian labour export (Raharto, 2007).

Over time, Indonesian labour export rapidly increased. The growing labour demand from rich Middle Eastern countries in 1970 resulted in large-scale Asian labour export including Indonesia. Labour migration to oil exporter countries, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, originally involved only male workers. Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Thailand, sent men to infrastructure projects in Middle Eastern countries. As these projects developed, the need for domestic workers also arose in these countries, thereby triggering the feminization of migration to the Gulf. Women workers, especially from Indonesia and Sri Lanka,

1. The term *labour export* has been used by authors. UN Women does not ascribe to the terminology as it is not rights based and commodifies human beings.

accessed the labour market for domestic jobs in Middle Eastern countries (Asis, 2005). As a result, the number of Indonesian female migrants started to increase. The attractiveness of female labour, mostly in the domestic domain, was triggered by government policy promoting labour export in the late 1970s (World Bank, 2006).

The shift toward Asian destination countries began in the 1980s when newly industrialized countries in East and Southeast Asia started to import labour to maintain economic growth. The improved economic status of populations and women workers' contribution to the labour market caused a decrease in labour supply in these countries, especially in the construction, manufacturing, agricultural and domestic domains. The rising labour demand, especially in the domestic sector, from such countries as Hong Kong SAR, China, China, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan, China, made them new destination countries for migrant labour, including migrant workers from Indonesia (Asis, 2005). In the early 2000s, a new trend of labour export to Japan and South Korea was noted when a G to G (government to government) pact² was established between the Indonesian government and the two countries.

The increase in the number of Indonesian overseas labour brought about various problems related to labour placement and protection. To address these, the government established the Indonesian Labour Distribution Coordination Agency through Presidential Decree No. 29 of 1999 on 16 April 1990 (Soeparno, 2008). The government also issued various supporting policies, such as Act No. 39 of 2004 on Indonesian Overseas Labour Distribution and Protection, Presidential Instruction No. 6 of 2006 on Indonesian Overseas Labour Distribution and Protection Reformation Policy and Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2006 on Indonesian Worker Placement and Protection National Agency (Soekamdi, n.d.). Through the Indonesian Worker Placement and Protection National Agency, the government sends workers overseas and keeps data on the migrant workers handled under the G to G pact or by private recruitment agencies and other legal recruitment or sending organizations. The government even keeps track of migrant workers who departed without the assistance of any of these institutions. Despite the existence of this agency, however, undocumented labour migration continues, especially to neighbouring Malaysia. The total number of undocumented Indonesian workers in Malaysia is estimated to be even higher than that of documented workers acknowledged by the Indonesian government.

In mid-2009, the government issued a moratorium on labour migration to Malaysia in response to labour protection issues. While the moratorium was intended to protect the economic, legal or basic rights of Indonesian workers, it only increased the incidence of undocumented migration of workers to Malaysia. In 2006, the government declared a moratorium on labour migration to Saudi Arabia for six months, which then addressed problems on the migrant protection system between the two countries during the period. However, no significant resolution was made in reference to the issue after the moratorium ended. In 2010, the Indonesian government reconsidered declaring a moratorium on Indonesian labour migration to Saudi Arabia and Jordan due to violence and discrimination issues, trafficking and death sentences often faced by Indonesian woman workers in the two countries.³

2. G to G pacts are bilateral agreements between government institutions or agencies of two countries. In terms of labour migration, G to G pacts are an agreement between sending and receiving countries. The agreement may specify wage levels, duration of employment, working conditions and labour market rights of the workers. It may also lay down the obligations of agencies in receiving countries to provide the workers with housing, family allowances, health care and social insurance. The legal status of labour migrants with regard to residency, family reunion and social, civil and political rights are also defined in this agreement (IOM 2003).

3. www.rnw.nl/bahasa-indonesia/article/moratorium-tki-ke-arab-saudi-dan-yordania. Accessed 12 September 2010.

Migration Trends

Indonesian labour migration to foreign countries, which has been going on for decades, is considered a solution to national unemployment issues resulting from the inability of the Indonesian economy to accommodate the employment needs of the workforce (Soeparno, 2008). Migration theory on the causal factors of mobility is applicable to the Indonesian labour migration issue. Slow economic growth is deemed a major cause, especially when domestic employment opportunities are unable to match the rapidly increasing number of workers.

Table 2.1 shows the distribution of Indonesian migrant workers by destination country from 1974 to 1999 (the period of Repelita II to Repelita VI) as shown in the records of the Labour Department, while Figure 2.1 illustrates labour distribution based on gender in 1994–2008.

TABLE 2.1- DISTRIBUTION OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS BY DESTINATION COUNTRY, 1974–1999

DESTINATION COUNTRY	REPELITA					TOTAL	
	II (1974–77)	III (1979–84)	IV (1984–89)	V (1989–94)	VI (1994–99)	N	%
Saudi Arabia	3,817	55,976	223,576	268,858	267,191	267,191	32.81
Other Middle Eastern Countries	1,235	5,349	3,428	5,145	16,071	16,078	1.97
Malaysia/ Brunei	536	11,441	38,705	130,735	392,512	392,512	48.2
Singapore/ Hong Kong SAR, China	3,729	6,768	12,272	38,071	80,222	80,222	9.85
Korea/Taiwan, China/ Japan	451	920	573	6,153	45,256	45,256	5.56
Other	7,274	15,956	13,711	17,010	13,100	13,156	1.62
Total	17,042	96,410	292,262	465,972	814,352	814,352	100

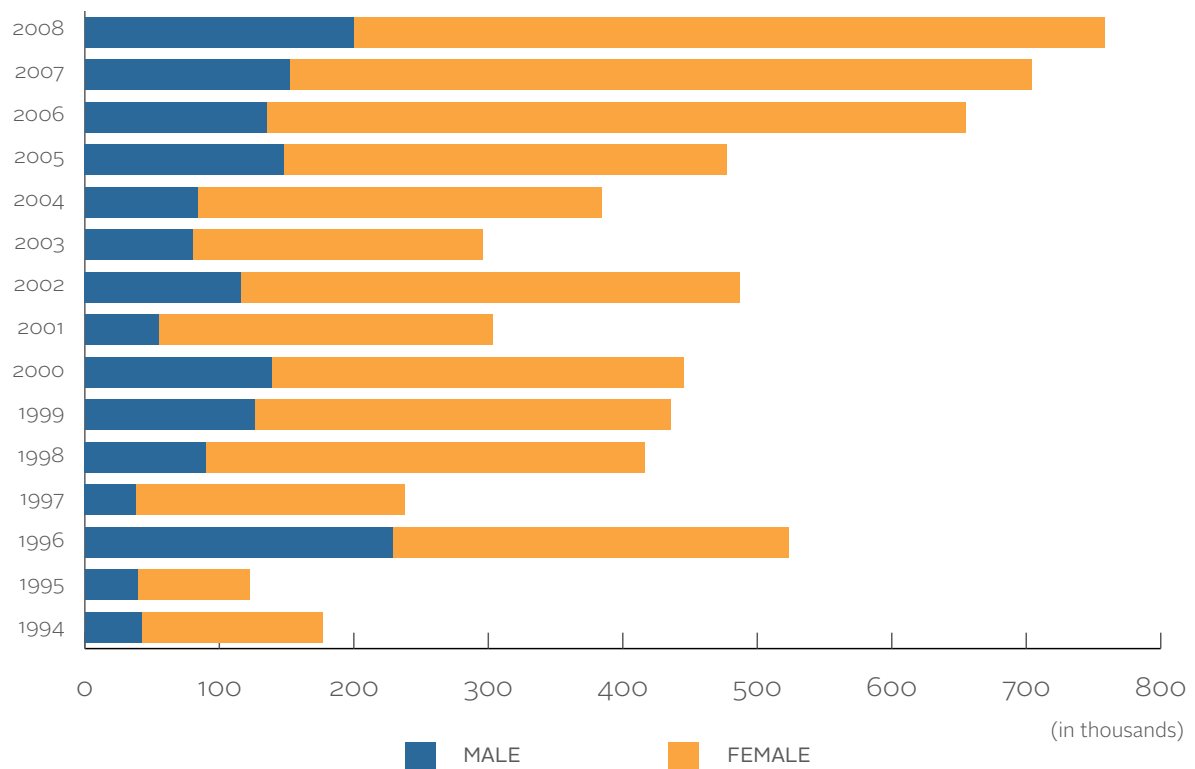
Source: Hugo, 1995 (citing data from the Department of Labour) in Tirtosudarmo and Romdiati 1999.

According to Table 2.1, the number of Indonesian migrant workers increased for most of the period from Repelita II to Repelita VI. This significant increase could also be noted from the period 1997 to 1998 (Figure 2.1) and can be attributed to the economic crisis that hit Indonesia. However, a drastic decline occurred in 2001 and 2003 as a result of the temporary termination of labour export to the Middle East and Taiwan, China, tighter requirements for Indonesian labour migration, the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) epidemic in some destination countries in the Asia Pacific region, and the outbreak of war in the Middle East (World Bank, 2006). The main destination countries of female Indonesian workers were Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Taiwan, China, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong SAR, China, Kuwait and Singapore, while those of Indonesian male workers were Malaysia and Korea (BNP2TKI, 2009b).

By 2008, Indonesian migrant workers numbered approximately six million. According to Figure 2.2, Malaysia was a popular choice (accounting for 33 percent). Aside from its nearby location, Malaysia has a long history of worker migration with Indonesia. From a historical perspective, Indonesian labour mobility to Malaysia began in the early twentieth century. British-occupied Malaysia had a labour shortage, while Java Island was experiencing a high rate of population with poor economic

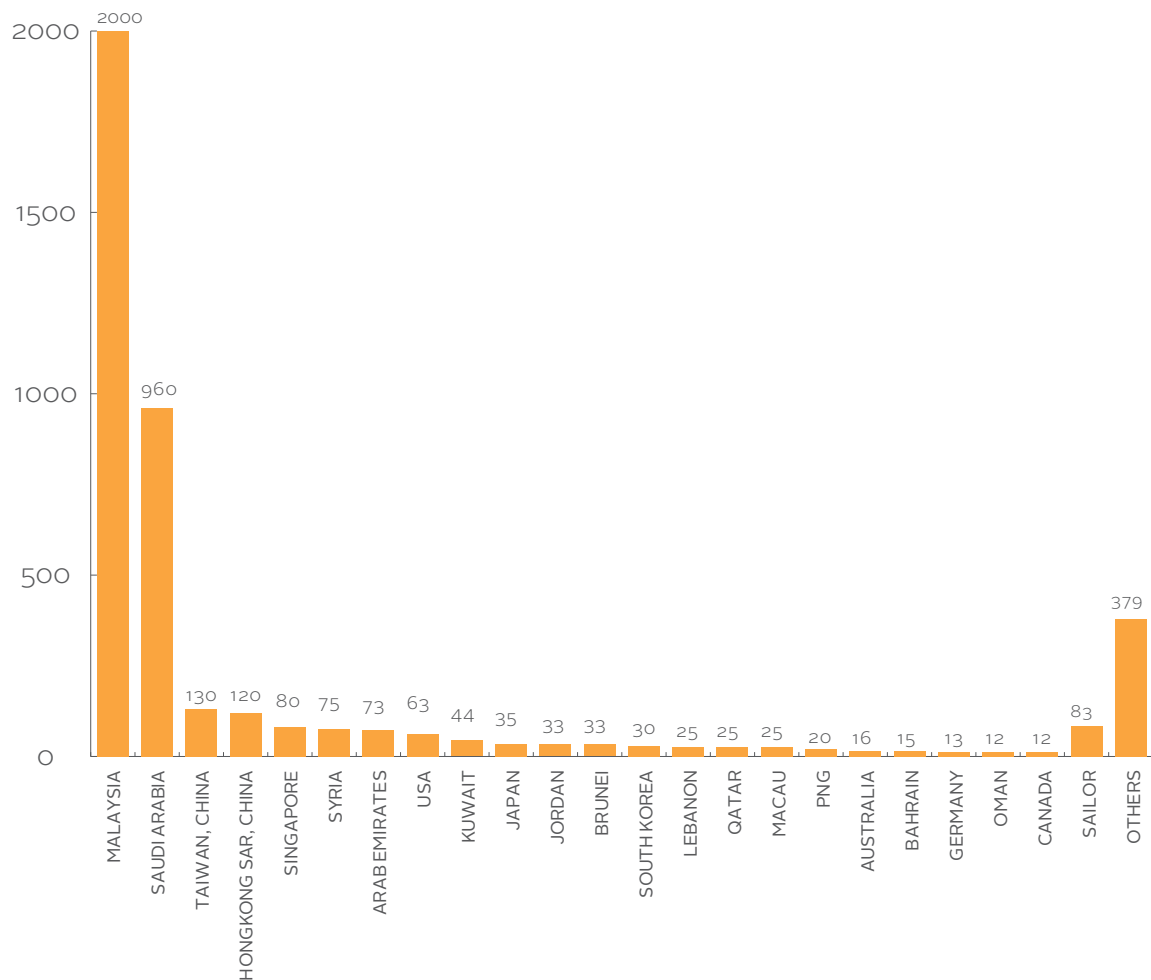
conditions, thereby prompting many inhabitants to migrate to Malaysia as a survival strategy (Kaur, 2004). For two decades during the early twentieth century, some British officials in Western Malaysia recommended the sending of Javanese labour to a local plantation based on the assumption that Javanese people shared the same cultural and religious background as native Malaysians, which would then facilitate the assimilation process between the two cultures. During the first half of the century, Indonesian migrants constituted the third largest group of migrant workers in Malaysia, following the Chinese and Indians (ibid.).

FIGURE 2.1 - GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS, 1994–2008



Kaur (2004) argues that the rapid development of Indonesian labour migration to Malaysia was the most notable change in international labour migration in Southeast Asia during the second half of the twentieth century whether in terms of scale, complexity or significance. However, mobility issues were inevitable, especially as issues related to legal territorial boundaries seemed to offer a loophole for undocumented workers to enter Malaysia. Even though the governments of both countries had enacted regulations, such as well as implementing bilateral boundaries control, to control various affairs associated with the process of Indonesian labour recruitment and distribution in Malaysia, the countries found it difficult to completely eradicate undocumented migration to Malaysia.

FIGURE 2.2 - DISTRIBUTION OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS BY DESTINATION COUNTRY, 2008 (THOUSANDS)



Source: BNP2TKI (2008a, 2009b)

Issues Faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers

Overseas migration offers an attractive alternative to Indonesian workers who have had difficulty finding work domestically and seek to improve quality of life. Regardless, Indonesian overseas labour, commonly referred to as TKIs, do not always have pleasant experiences throughout the process of migration. On the contrary, TKIs encounter many challenges during recruitment both in the workplace and upon return to Indonesia as contracts end or retirement approaches, or even as they decide to return home without completing contracts.

PREDEPARTURE ISSUES

The TKIs facing challenges during the recruitment process are generally those who deal with unofficial middlemen, commonly referred to as panders (calo) (Romdiati et al., 2002). Officially known as Private Indonesian Overseas Worker Deployment Managers (Pelaksana Penempatan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia Swasta, or PPTKIS), panders are actually hired by TKI deployment agents in places where TKIs are numerous. PPTKIS prefers to employing panders instead of establishing branch offices in strategic

locations, since the latter would cost a large sum of money (Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights, 2008). Panders earn up to IDR three million per migrant worker. Such huge earnings have prompted many panders to go beyond the limits of sending a TKI abroad to commit illegal recruitment. Although troublesome, panders play an important role in the TKI recruitment process, as they go to great lengths to recruit potential TKIs in various places. TKIs also rely on pander for important information regarding work in the destination country. A study conducted by the Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights (2008) in various districts known for TKIs (Tulang Bawang, Lampung, and Jember, East Java) found most TKIs to have obtained information and registered themselves as TKIs through panders; only a few cited the local Labour Service or PPTKIS as an information source. Certain conditions, however, make it easy for panders to take advantage of potential TKIs. In some places, panders have a high standing in the community. In Madura, for example, community leaders, such as influential religious leaders (kiais), are panders. Their status facilitates the recruitment process (ILO, 2006), but may also be detrimental to the prospective TKIs.

During recruitment, panders handle the application and documents of TKIs, including ID cards, marriage certificates and parental or spousal consent forms. Some commit forgery, such as falsification of age, address, name, marital status and photographs, just to ensure the successful application of their prospective TKI and thereby guarantee a profit (Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights, 2008). Age falsification, for instance, occurs when the prospective TKI is underage but has a strong will to work abroad (Romdiati et al., 2002).

The TKIs highly depend on panders for document requirements because most TKIs have little knowledge of the aforementioned. Furthermore, panders offer to pay document fees in advance, usually ranging from Rp 250,000 to more than Rp 1,000,000. The fees are listed as outstanding debts, which must be repaid once the TKIs receive salary from employers (Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights, 2008).

PREDEPARTURE PREPARATIONS

Before departing abroad, TKIs must undergo training for one to two-and-a-half months in addition to health screening. After meeting these requirements, however, the TKIs may not necessarily be sent abroad soon. TKIs wait for a certain period at places known as TKI pools, which are mostly located in Jakarta, but may also be found in other major cities, such as Surabaya and Bandung. A study by Romdiati et al. (2002) found the waiting period of TKIs to range from two to four months, stating that most TKIs do not know how long they will have to remain at the pools.

While the TKIs are at the pools, PPTKIS provides for meals. Most of the time, however, the food is insufficient. Consequently, the TKIs are compelled to buy additional food (ibid.). The Indonesian Worker Providers Organization (PJTKI; Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia) provides only lunch and dinner, usually consisting of rice and vegetables in modest quantities. This means TKIs have to fend for breakfast and buy food to supplement lunch and dinner. TKIs also use personal funds to purchase daily and toiletry needs. The longer the waiting period, the more money TKIs spend. Some periodically ask families (parents or spouses) through the panders to send money by wire transfer. This places further strain on TKI families, since they do not generally have extra funds.

Aside from food, lodgings are another issue because some pools are overcrowded and have poor facilities. The TKI Overseas Service Taskforce (Satuan Tugas Pemantauan Pengawasan Pelayanan, TKI) under the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration has raided three TKI pools run by three TKI deployment agencies in Bekasi, West Java and East Jakarta,⁴ finding the pools to hold hundreds of TKIs, despite limited capacity. Some TKIs have to sleep on the floor on thin carpets or in attics. A number of studies confirm similar conditions at other pools (Romdiati et al., 2002; Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights, 2008). The government has taken firm action against any PPTKIS failing to provide satisfactory pools for the TKIs they are sending. In April 2010, the government issued charges against seven PPTKIS found in breach of Decree PER.07/MEN/IV/2005 on TKI Pools Standards.⁵ Furthermore, there have been reports of TKI abuses from the staff of some PJTKI pools.⁶

DEPARTURE PROCESS

As previously mentioned, the longer the waiting period prior to departure, the more money spent by TKIs, especially those staying at the pools. Some incur debts, usually to panders or deployment agents, which they later repay through salary deduction. The lengthy departure process implies the inefficiency of the TKI recruitment system in terms of ensuring, for instance, the availability of employment or quick processing of work visas in the destination countries.

Another issue raised by TKIs is the deficiency of information on itineraries (Romdiati et al., 2002). There have been cases where TKIs have faced problems at the airport upon arrival, despite having a passport and the employer's name and address. Those who are unable to locate their employers even have to spend the night (or a couple of nights) at the airport.

ISSUES WHILE WORKING ABROAD

The migration challenges faced by TKIs continue following arrival in the destination country and meeting with employers. Several studies note the many difficulties TKIs face in compliance with work contracts abroad. These are generally linked to working skills, language barriers and culture shock (Romdiati et al., 2002; Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights, 2008). Such issues could be avoided if the TKIs could be trained in the nature of their work, taught language skills and oriented regarding the culture of the destination country. Nevertheless, as indicated by Romdiati et al. (2002), even if TKIs are offered training in the use of modern kitchen equipment, household appliances and childcare, these skills continue to be inadequate in practice. For example, houses in Saudi Arabia are usually carpeted, but TKIs do not know how to clean carpet. The same could be said of TKIs working on palm oil plantations and factories in Malaysia who have not been taught how to operate high-tech machinery.

The language barrier is a particularly notable challenge observed in non-Indonesian countries, especially Saudi Arabia. TKIs hardly understand what their employers are saying and are unable to express protest clearly if they experience abuse at the hands of employers. While the Melayu language in Malaysia does not differ much from the Indonesian language, a small number of TKIs continue to find it difficult to communicate with employers (ibid.).

4. www.kompas.com/printnews/xml/2010/01/22/03262654/tempat.penampungan.tidak.layak.bagi.ratusan.tki; accessed 22 January 2010.

5. www.radartarikan.co.id/index.php/kategori/detail/Nasional/; accessed 2 September 2010.

6. www.jakartapress.com/www.php/news/id/15376/Kekerasan-di-Penampungan-TKI.jp; accessed 5 July 2010.

Another common issue among TKIs is the tendency of employers to not comply with the stipulations in the employment contract. In Saudi Arabia, TKI domestic workers are usually asked to work beyond the period stated in the Work Agreement Contract Indenture signed by the TKIs, which is eight hours per day (Romdiati et al., 2002; Institute of Ecosoc Rights and Trade Union Rights 2008). This is reportedly not experienced by TKI domestic workers in Malaysia, Singapore or Hong Kong SAR, China. Some countries, such as Hong Kong SAR, China, and Taiwan, China, allow TKI domestic workers to have one day-off within a week.⁷

Most TKIs working in factories or palm oil plantations in Malaysia say they learned about their jobs only upon arrival at the destination country (Romdiati et al., 2002). Some are even told in their home country that they will be employed at a lumber mill in Malaysia, but end up working on a palm oil plantation.

A number of TKIs also suffer from underpayment or no payment at all, which is common among TKIs working as domestic workers. In Saudi Arabia, some employers tend to consider TKIs as slaves they bought at an expensive price. Those living in rural areas are not well off and are unable to pay their employees monthly salary (Romdiati et al., 2002). The report of BNP2TKI⁸ confirms outstanding and unpaid salaries to TKIs in Saudi Arabia,⁹ stating that approximately 80 percent of issues filed by TKIs with the Consulate General of Indonesia in Jeddah pertain to unpaid salaries. A similar situation has been noted in Malaysia. Most cases filed by TKIs with the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia relate to outstanding salaries.¹⁰

The most critical issue faced by TKIs, however, is the absence of legal protection while working abroad, especially from abusive employers. Recently, news of TKI domestic workers who are victims of abuse or torture and whose employers are not charged anything for the offense have become a common finding. Those TKIs usually return home physically challenged or dead. Based on data from BNP2TKI, there were 3,918 cases of persecution and 2,020 cases of sexual abuse involving TKIs in 2008 alone.¹¹

One reason for such lack of legal protection for TKIs is the weak enforcement of Act No. 39 of 2004 on Indonesian Migrant Worker Deployment and Protection overseas by the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration and BNP2TKI. In some cases, the different interpretations of roles between the two institutions affect the provision of protection services to TKIs. Another reason is the TKIs' lack of information about where to go to when issues are encountered in the workplace. Studies show that a number of TKIs do not know where to report abusive employers (Romdiati et al., 2002). There have even been cases in which employers in Saudi Arabia have kept the passport of the TKI domestic servant to prevent flight or reporting of employer abuse.

7. <http://bnp2tki.go.id/content/view/1390/231/>; accessed 9 July 2009.

8. BNP2TKI, or Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, is a government institution dealing with the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers.

9. www.bnp2tki.go.id/berita-mainmenu-231/1793-di-saudi-gaji-tki-tak-dibayar-jadi-masalah-terbesar.html; accessed 17 January 2010.

10. <http://internasional.kompas.com/read/2010/04/11/0740315/TKI.Derita.Tiada.Akhir>; accessed 11 April 2010.

11. <http://kampungtki.com/baca/6636>; accessed 7 September 2010.

TKI RETURN PROCESS

The challenges of TKIs continue, even upon return to the home country. TKIs arriving at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, for instance, are required to pay fees to airport officials for escorts back to respective villages. This is not supposed to be the case because BNP2TKI is responsible for transport costs. In the past, most TKIs were tempted to use the services of panders. There were cases, however, in which panders forced the TKIs to use the transportation provided and the drivers asked for more money from the TKIs, thereby causing the latter to pay higher than the normal cost of travelling home. According to BNP2TKI, a total of 104 agents for TKI transportation services were suspended in 2009–2010 because the services collected more money from the workers illegally.¹²

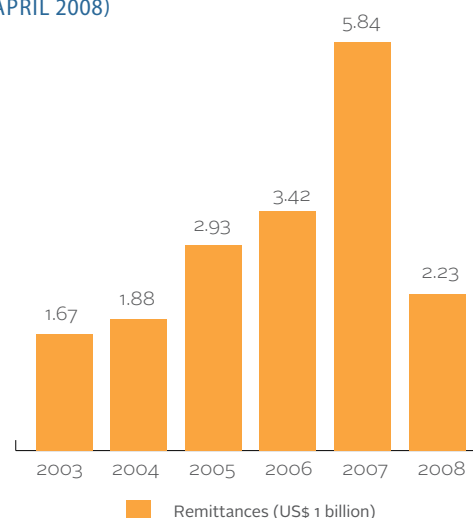
Some TKIs return home without fulfilling employment contracts for various reasons, including employer incompatibility, employer abuse, outstanding salaries, illness, stress and depression (Romdiati et al., 2002). TKIs falling ill and needing to return home are relieved of airfare costs, which are usually shouldered by employers. TKIs who want to go home with no valid reason before completing employment contracts pay the costs. This decision poses further problems if enacted abruptly, especially for TKIs who have not been paid salaries. Since the TKIs have no money, PPTKIS will fund the airfare for the trip home. This adds to outstanding debts to PPTKIS from the training and living expenses while at the pools before departure.

EFFECTS OF OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT

Studies on migration identify a variety of effects from overseas work. This section discusses the impacts on hometowns and families (spouses and children) left behind. For hometowns, the effects focus mainly on the benefits of remittance to the local government. For families, the effects extend beyond the financial aspect and include the social and emotional consequences of parental or spousal absence in the household.

Effects on Hometowns - Overseas migration has several effects on TKI hometowns. One effect commonly noted in the literature is the flow of remittance to the TKI's family, which reduces poverty. Page and Adams (2003) found a correlation between increase in remittance and reduction of headcount poverty. Based on data from 71 countries, a migration increase by 10 percent has been found to reduce poverty (income of USD1 per day) by two percent. Increased household income from the remittance translates into positive effects on hometown economies.

FIGURE 2.3 - REMITTANCES OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS (2003–APRIL 2008)



Source: BNP2TKI (2008b)

12. www.bnp2tki.go.id/berita-mainmenu-231/2325-bnp2tki-sudah-skors-104-angkutan-pemulangan-tki.html; accessed 7 September 2010.

The amount of remittances sent to Indonesia increased threefold from USD1.67 billion in 2003 to USD5.84 billion in 2007 (Figure 2.3). As of April 2008, data on remittances reflected an amount of USD2.23 billion. As the rate of increase was consistent with previous years, the amount of remittances by the end of 2008 was estimated to reach USD6.69 billion. Such enormous foreign exchange generated by migrant workers had brought TKIs to the status of “Forex Heroes.”

Overseas remittance is also a source of income for cities or provinces. The city of Sumbawa, for instance, received a total remittance of IDR171.341 billion from 2,734 workers abroad in 2009. This amount accounted for half of the city’s expenses and expenditures for that year.¹³ Some provinces in Java likewise received a considerable amount of remittances. In 2009, West Java recorded remittances of IDR80 billion per day, while Central Java and East Java respectively reported IDR8.0 trillion and IDR2.5 trillion in remittances.

Effects on Families Left Behind - TKIs leave for overseas work voluntarily and are willing to sacrifice separation from families (spouses and children) if only to improve the family’s standard of living (Rossi, 2008). Remittance is the primary positive impact of migration with temporary migration providing greater prospects for sending remittance home as opposed to permanent migration (Dustmann and Mestres, 2009 cited in Tan and Gibson, 2010). Among TKIs working in Malaysia, only 25 percent reportedly do not send remittance (Tan and Gibson, 2010). Generally speaking, overseas income is mostly allocated for daily expenditures; the remainder goes to education (33 percent), debt payment (13 percent) and housing (10 percent) (ibid.). Adi (2003) arrived at the same conclusions. Such findings imply that remittance is a key factor to a family’s well-being.

The number of children belonging to TKIs is not well known. Bryant (2005) estimated this number to be 1.5 million in 2002 by considering the number of TKIs at the time to be 700,000 with every TKI having 1 to 1.5 children (based on the fertility rate in 2002). This number is assumed to increase with the growing number of TKIs each year.

Studies conducted in other countries to determine the effects of parental migration on children have arrived at two different conclusions. One confirms the positive impact of parental migration on the children’s development, including education. With a steady inflow of remittance, households are able to keep children in school (Adi, 1996) and thus delay entry into the workforce (Hanson and Woodruff, 2003). Studies carried out by the Scalabrini Migration Center (2003) in Manila offer the same favorable results. Another finding relates the contribution of remittance to the decreased incidence of dropouts. Using cross-sectional data from 1997, Cox and Ureta (2003) found significantly lower dropout levels among children aged 6 to 24 years, attributing this rate to fewer issues with household expenses.

The second conclusion is contrary to the first and points out the negative effects of parental absence on children’s education. A study by Farrooq and Javed (2009) in Pakistan found a strong association between parental migration, particularly fathers’ migration, and the dropout rate of migrants’ children from schools, especially among boys. In Mexico, the school participation and academic achievements of students aged 12 to 18 years reportedly deteriorated (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006). While the

13. <http://bnp2tki.go.id/content/view/3004/231/>; accessed 5 September 2010.

remittance from the migrant parent ensures support for the children's schooling, parental absence is said to increase the responsibility of the eldest children in caring for younger siblings, thus affecting school attendance (Acosta, 2006). A study by Battistella & Conoco (1998) found the negative effects on a child's education to deteriorate when the mother is away, as compared to the father. According to Gamburd (2005), the children of mothers who go overseas to work tend to drop out of school in favor of finding employment or helping around the house. Similar outcomes were found in a study by Jampaklay (2006) which indicated the absence of fathers for a period of time to not have significant effects on a child's education in contrast to maternal absence.

The data on the effects of international migration on familial health is scarce because relevant studies are rarely conducted in Indonesia. In other countries, especially those with high international migration rates, such research is common. In general, these studies note negative impacts on children's health, whether the absence is maternal or paternal. Frank and Hummer (2002) observed that children left by parents are predisposed to underweight. Parallel conclusions were indicated in Lopez-Cordova (2006), who analyzed the correlations between migration and child health in Mexico by using data obtained from the municipality. In cases where both parents are overseas and grandparents take on childcare responsibilities, the living costs of the grandparents increase, thereby negatively affecting the grandparents' health (Yeoh and Lam, 2006).

The migration of either parent also has a negative impact on the child's emotional health. Battistella and Conoco (1998) state that children of overseas workers tend to suffer from acute anxiety and loneliness, likewise having difficulty coping socially and experiencing psychological problems. The same results were obtained by the Scalabrini Migration Center (2003) in the Philippines. Children left behind by migrant worker parents showed more signs of disorientation, anger and anxiety than those who were not. Mental health issues were also more severe among children whose parents were migrants. Children of female migrants were reportedly less happy than those whose mothers were present in the home.

The migration of one of the family members may cause a shift in family structure and the roles of family members (Yeoh and Lam, 2006). The absence of the husband, for example, gives the wife more autonomy and power in making decisions on land, children's education and family finances (Jolly, Bell and Narayanaswamy, 2003). Even after the return of the husband, there are cases in which the wife continues to hold decision-making power. If the migrating party is the wife, the husband generally assumes the duty of childcare. A study conducted in the Philippines (Scalabrini Migration Center, 2003) disclosed that the wife reclaims her maternal role upon her return. Role reversal in the case of the husband left behind reportedly has a negative impact on the husband. Gamburd (2005) points out that husbands left behind by their migrant wives for an extended period tend to develop negative habits, such as drinking and drug abuse, which in turn has negative effects on children's mental development and academic performance.

The effects of migration extend to spousal relationships. Adi (1996) reported sexual issues faced by partners left at home in Indonesia potentially leading to divorce and/or extramarital affairs. A number of newspapers disclosed an increase in divorce rates in places where TKIs are numerous. The East Lombok Head of Indonesian Overseas Labour Advocacy reports that 78 percent of 700 divorce cases filed in East Lombok annually involve TKIs; in most cases, the petitioner is the wife.¹⁴ This is

14. <http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/nusa/2010/02/09/brk,20100209-224448,id.html>; accessed 2 August 2010.

primarily attributed to the lengthy period of separation between husband and wife leading to one of the partners seeking remarriage. A similar situation has been noted in the Regency of Banyuwangi, another place teeming with TKIs where divorce cases have numbered 3,685 and have mostly been filed by TKIs.¹⁵ The common motivation for divorce among TKIs is the extramarital affairs of husbands left behind by wives who go to work overseas. In cases where the husband is the overseas worker, the divorce plea put forward by the wife is the husband's lack of responsibility in providing for the family's subsistence.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted in the villages of Juntinyuat and Jutikedokan, which are administratively located in Juntinyuat Sub-district, Indramayu District. The villages were selected as study sites because the communities are among the most important sources of Indonesian overseas workers. While no official data on migrant workers exists at the village level, sub-district data from the Division of Training and Placement of Manpower under the Office of Manpower in the Indramayu District shows that overseas workers deployed from Juntinyuat Sub-district numbered 870 in 2008. This figure was the highest compared to other districts. Historically, labour migration from the two villages has been ongoing for some time and the migration is predominantly female with Middle Eastern countries as the most popular destination.

In this study, the research team employed quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the issues related to labour migration and families left behind. The data collected included quantitative data from household surveys and qualitative data from in-depth key informant interviews. Household and individual questionnaires were developed for the survey, while an interview guide was formulated to facilitate the in-depth interviews and generate a better understanding of migration behavior and its impact on the families left behind.

The survey targeted households with at least one child aged 13 to 21 years left behind by a migrating parent. A total of 201 households were selected based on a list provided by the staff at the office of the village head. Aside from husbands, wives or any family members able to provide substantial information, the survey collected information from at least one child using the questionnaire specifically developed for children. Most of the children had a mother working abroad (86 percent), while only a few had a father (9.5 percent) or both parents (4.5 percent) working overseas.

The household survey questionnaire covered the following ten sections:

1. Demographic Profile
2. Migration History of Household Members
3. Socioeconomic Dynamics of the Households Left Behind
4. Remittance Use
5. Childcare
6. Educational Conditions and Problems

15. <http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/nusa/2010/02/09/brk,20100209-224448,id.html>; accessed 2 August 2010.

7. Respondents' Perception of the Household Conditions
8. Coping with Problems Caused by Migration
9. Government Assistance to Migrant Families
10. General Perception of Families Left Behind

The questionnaire for children covered demographic characteristics, family conditions, academic performance and problems, communication with migrant parents, friendships and activities, health and well-being, parents' migration and personal aspirations toward migration.

Twenty-one interviewers assisted in the survey. The research team trained the assistants before deployment to the research sites in order to gain understanding of the concepts and definitions involved in the study variables and to develop a uniform perception of the aspects being studied. The research team reviewed the completed questionnaires before accepting the questionnaires as research data.

The qualitative approaches included observation, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. The FGDs were conducted in between surveys and involved male children left behind, female children left behind, wives left behind, husbands left behind, local government institutions and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) at the national level. The in-depth interviews were held with grandmothers looking after grandchildren, former women migrant workers, former men migrant workers who were also recruiters, village heads, officials at the Local Office of Manpower, officials of a private labour recruitment agency, members of the Indonesian Labour Migrants Association and the Association of Local Labour Recruiters and the Head of the National Authority for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers. The output from the FGDs and in-depth interviews, which contained more comprehensive information related to overseas worker issues, complemented the survey results, which comprised numerical data and other measurable variables, both reinforcing the database on overseas workers. The survey results were analyzed by frequency counts and cross tabulation.

Socioeconomic Setting of International Labour Migration in Indonesia: The Case of Indramayu District, West Java

Originally emerging as a strategy to address the problem of national labour surplus in the country, international labour migration has been an important issue in Indonesia for years. The large number of migrant workers in the informal sector composed mainly of low-skilled jobs implies the low quality of deployed workers who generally have low levels of education with attainments of only elementary or junior high school. The majority are women (96.56 percent), who mostly work as domestic workers; only 3.44 percent consists of men (BNP2TKI 2009b). On the contrary, men dominate the formal sector (70.29 percent), commonly working in manufacturing or electronic companies whereas women are usually nurses or caregivers.

The regions with the largest labour supplies are West Java, East Java, Central Java, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara and South Sulawesi (Raharto et al. 2002). In East Java, Tulungagung is the top supplier of overseas workers, followed by Malang. In West Java, Indramayu is the number-one source of overseas workers with Cianjur coming in second (Noveria et al. 2010). World Bank data from 2006 shows most Indonesian woman migrants to originate from Sukabumi, Cianjur and Indramayu (West Java); Malang, Kediri and Ponorogo (East Java); and West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, South Sulawesi and Lampung.

Official and accurate data on the origin of Indonesian overseas workers is difficult to obtain because the data in the archives of relevant government institutions (such as BNP2TKI) shows only the place of departure. For example, the records of BP3TKI Jakarta, one of the Indonesian overseas workers distribution units operating in 2008, indicate that not all overseas workers departing from Jakarta actually come from this area. Most migrant workers come from districts of West Java or Banten provinces, such as Indramayu and Cianjur, which are geographically close to Jakarta.

The high rate of undocumented (illegal) migration could account for the deficiency of comprehensive migration data at the national and regional levels. Many sources indicate that undocumented workers are even larger in number than documented workers. Hugo (2000) explains that undocumented workers from Indonesia could be migrants who entered a country illegally and did not pass through official checkpoints — a common practice among a large number of migrants crossing the Strait of Malacca from Riau to the coast of Johor in Malaysia. Other undocumented workers enter a country legally but stay on, even when their visas have expired, which is usually done by workers who enter Sabah from East Kalimantan. Migrants could also use non-working visas (such as Umrah or Haj visas to enter Saudi Arabia or visiting permits to enter Sabah) but actually intend to work in the destination country.

As mentioned earlier, one of the largest migrant-sending areas in Indonesia is Indramayu District. Based on data from 2008, Indramayu residents working overseas numbered 108,500 85 percent of which belonged to the informal sector.¹⁶ Several countries in the Middle East have become the main preference of Indramayu migrant workers, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar. Poverty conditions in this part of the region have forced the people to resort to international labour migration as a household survival strategy (Romdiati et al., 1998).

Indramayu is characterized by an agricultural economy contributing to 30 percent of the national rice production. However, this does not alleviate the poverty of the residents, primarily because 70 percent of those who subsist on farming are labourers, not landowners. The existence of agricultural modernization has further reduced employment opportunities in the region.¹⁷ Consequently, Indramayu people are forced to seek job opportunities elsewhere, including abroad.

Cultural factors also play a role in the poor economic conditions of Indramayu. The people strictly uphold the celebration of traditional ceremonies, known as hajatan. For Indramayu residents, hajatan

16. <http://www.bataviase.co.id/detailberita-10444431.html>; accessed 19 March 2011.

17. <http://www.fahmina.or.id/penerbitan/warkah-al-basyar/772-buruh-migran-dan-pemiskinan-perempuan-di-indramayu-sikap-islam.html>; accessed 19 March 2011.



embodies many important sociocultural values which cannot be abandoned, even if the ceremonies cost a considerable amount of money. Traditionally, even surrounding communities give donations (nyumbang) in the form of money or grain to neighbouring holding hajatan. In return, donation recipients are obliged to reciprocate the gesture upon the donator's turn to hold the hajatan. Although there are no sanctions for those who do not follow the tradition, social sanctions, such as feelings of disgrace, make the local communities preserve the hajatan. Another cultural celebration requiring a huge amount of money and forcing women in particular to work abroad is circumcision.

Labour Migration and Families Left Behind

International labour migration has both positive and negative social outcomes not only on the families, but also on the communities left behind. However, relevant literature in Indonesia remains limited. Most studies on the impact of labour migration focus on the economic costs and benefits. Although the social impact of migration is mostly negative, it is real and requires serious attention from the government, especially as the number of Indonesians working abroad increases each year. Based on currently available sources, this section discusses the social impacts or costs of migration to the families (spouses or partners and children) and communities left behind from both positive and negative viewpoints.

Changing Social Dynamics of Families Left Behind

The departure of a family member, especially the mother, inevitably affects various aspects of family life. Such departures initially cause a change in family dynamics, including the roles and responsibilities of family members and parental practices. Among children, the mother's absence may create emotional problems sometimes leading to unfavorable behavior, such as spending more time with peers outside the home. It is said that a mother's love and care generates a feeling of abundance in children. Hence, the absence of a mother's love and care may compel children to seek attention and belonging outside the home.

Aside from the changing social dynamics of families left behind, this section tackles the decision-making process pertaining to the question of whether or not a family member should leave the home to work overseas.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Working abroad involves many processes from pre-employment to employment and post-employment. One essential process taking place during the pre-employment period is the decision-making about leaving within the prospective migrant's family. Once a family decides to allow its member to work abroad, the family left behind has to accept all the consequences of running the household without that member. Therefore, the importance of decision-making is not to be underestimated.

Among the households covered by this study, the decision-making process on migration was found to mainly involve the prospective migrant's immediate (nuclear) family, especially the spouse. Of

the 201 children interviewed, 39 percent stated the father as the sole party making the decision while 29 percent stated only the mother and 17 percent stated both parents as having taken part in the decision. The majority of the children were merely informed of their parents' intention to work overseas; they were not asked how they felt about it, nor was permission sought. Similarly, among extended family members, especially the prospective migrants' mothers who were frequently the ones requested to care for grandchildren in the mother's absence, only a small number were involved in decision-making. Neither agreement to the childcare arrangement nor willingness to care for the grandchildren was sought before the decision to migrate was made. Many respondents in the study confirmed this as follows:



My mother only told me that she would go to Saudi Arabia to work. My parents did not ask whether I agreed to my mother's leaving. Everything was decided by my parents, particularly my mother. Honestly, I was not happy with my mother working away from home, but I accepted it eventually since my mother would be leaving not to satisfy her own pleasures, but to support my education and my family's needs. (Ay, a 17-year-old girl left by her mother)

My daughter came to me saying she would leave for Saudi Arabia to work. She asked if I was willing to take care of her children as her husband would live with his parents while my daughter was away. I had to accept her request since she would be leaving to earn money for her family. (Sam, a 55-year-old lady who attended to her grandchildren left behind)



This study did not find any “real” decision-making process undertaken by a family when one of the members planned to work overseas. There was no family discussion to ask for the children's approval of, for example, their mother's departure. Moreover, there was no dialogue on how the family left behind would cope with all of the underlying concerns, such as who would perform the household chores while the mother or wife was away. In the case of husband migrants, the issue of household participation in decision-making was not as critical since the household arrangement would remain the same with the wife staying at home waiting for her husband's remittance to cover the family's daily expenses.

CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE

The absence of one family member as a result of working abroad impacts the life of the family left behind. Changes in household roles and responsibilities among family members are inevitable. Among the husbands left behind, in particular, there is a change in gender roles (D'Emilio et al., 2007). They are no longer breadwinners, but assume domestic tasks instead. Many studies have noted that the swapping of roles between husband and wife can bring about marital conflict because the husband continues to maintain his masculine identity while performing domestic chores traditionally considered the women's domain (Bedford, Bedford and Ho, 2009). Older children, on the other hand, take on more household responsibilities because they are expected to assist their father in running the home.

The effects of migration are also felt by the extended families of migrant workers because many migrant workers leave children with parents or siblings. This phenomenon, however, is not restricted to Indonesia because it has also been observed in many other countries in the Pacific, Caribbean and Asian regions (ibid.)

These changes, especially when the wife is the one leaving for work overseas, often create difficulties among the family members left behind as they conduct their daily lives. As previously mentioned, husbands are forced to perform or oversee the performance of all household tasks formerly within the women's domain, including preparing meals for the family, washing clothes, and rearing and caring for the children. Some studies in the Philippines have observed that husbands left behind are often incapable of effectively accomplishing maternal responsibilities (Bedford, Bedford and Ho, 2009, citing Baggio, 2008, and Battistella and Gastardo-Conaco, 1998). Nonetheless, husbands exert efforts toward adjusting to new roles and family life (Bedford, Bedford and Ho, 2009). The same was true among the informants in this study, even though the husbands claimed to be adapting to the changes. Two male FGD participants whose wives had left to work overseas shared their experiences:

“

... for me, sometimes I feel I have [adjusted to the changes] ... after my wife went away. When my wife was still at home, my main job was in the farm. I went to my rice field in the morning. My wife cooked and served me with hot drink before I went to the farm. It no longer happens now. ... I boil water to make hot drinks for myself. (Ud, a 44-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

... myself, cooking, washing the clothes. I do these myself that's why I cannot go out [anymore]. My kids are still young, but I have gotten used to it and I can ... (Sa, a 45-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

”

Indeed, childrearing and childcare become part of the husband's responsibility while the wife is away. In this study, 94 percent of the husbands affirmed this finding. Evidently, when the wife or mother is the migrant worker, all roles traditionally associated with women are assumed by the male spouse whose traditional role has been to earn income for the family.

Another challenge faced by men is related to financial matters, particularly the lack of money to meet daily household needs. Many husbands address this by engaging in income-generating activities, even though they are also required to perform domestic tasks. Those with teenage children are less constrained about leaving home to earning money because someone else can take over household chores, including caring for younger children.

Economic problems are worse for households with children under five years old who require the utmost care, especially where older children cannot assist in caring for younger siblings. This restricts the opportunity of the husband to engage in productive activities outside the home. Consequently, the husband relies highly on the remittance sent by his wife to sustain the needs of the family. Some informants revealed the following:

“

Since my wife left, I have been facing plenty of problems. One is economic problems. However, I have no choice, but to solve them. Another is caring for the children and the whole family . . . It is undeniable that I need a huge amount of money to fulfill our children's needs and I have to exert much effort to earn additional income. I do all kinds of jobs while waiting for the money from my wife. I wait for the money sent by my wife to be able to buy whatever our family needs. I cannot go out to work since I have to do household chores such as cooking, washing clothes and caring for the children. My youngest son cannot be left at any time. I borrow money from our neighbour, if necessary, while waiting for my wife's remittance. (Da, a 41-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

”

Changing roles in the family due to the absence of the mother or wife are not only experienced by the father or husband, but also by the children left behind. Older children are expected to take the place of mothers in attending to younger siblings. This was true for a number of children in this study, with 30 percent claiming to frequently look after young siblings and 11 percent stating periodic assignments of this responsibility. The results of the FGDs with both boys and girls were consistent with the quantitative data. A 17-year-old boy said he had to look after his brother who was under five years of age once he got home from school. This limited his time to be with his peers. Teenage girls, on the other hand, confirmed performance of household chores, such as cleaning the house, cooking and washing clothes.

COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS

In this study, the children left behind mostly communicated with guardians, usually fathers, about issues encountered in daily life. Fathers also conversed with children about general issues, such as what had happened during the day. Specific issues, such as academic issues and relationships with friends, were not among the topics commonly shared with fathers. Only 19 percent of the children shared academic problems with guardians (fathers). A higher percentage (29 percent) confided in classmates and fewer (6 percent) approached teachers.

Communication between the migrant parent and the children left behind seemed to be managed quite well, even though a majority of the children sampled (66.1 percent) disclosed having only infrequent contacts with parents, while nearly one-third had regular communications with parents. The survey results further implied that nearly three-fourths of the children left behind (73.7 percent) reported good communication with parents, while the others perceived the opposite.

Communication took place in the form of phone calls, text messages (short messaging service, or SMS) and letter writing, with phone calls as the most common method of keeping in touch with home. Mothers were generally the ones who put more effort into maintaining communication. FGDs with adolescent sons and daughters revealed that, owing to the expensive cost of overseas calls, the children simply waited for mothers to call, even though most of the children had mobile phones. This new type of relationship between migrants and family members at home, which expands the geographical and cultural universe of the children left behind through the use of modern means of communication (e.g., e-mail, Internet), is called “transnational families” (D’Emilio et al. 2007).

The proliferation of high-technology tools facilitating communication across the globe generally helps lessen the negative impact of migration on the family because children find it easier to come to terms with parental absence. Among the children included in the survey, communication with parents abroad covered such topics as daily life concerns (84.3 percent), good news to make absent parents happy (roughly 6.6 percent), academic achievements, issues in relationships with guardians (5.6 percent), and issues related to education, health or work (3.5 percent).

ROLE OF THE GUARDIAN

Guardians play significant roles in families left behind, including childcare. In general, Indonesian society adheres to a patriarchal system, which means men assume the role of breadwinner while women are responsible for domestic duties and childcare. However, this pattern has been shifting, partly due to the migration of women seeking temporary employment overseas. In this study, a majority of the guardians were husbands of migrant workers who have taken charge of domestic chores while working to earn extra income. Those with children under three years of age have to sleep with toddlers in addition to feeding (preparing infant formula), bathing and playing with toddlers every day. The situation becomes particularly difficult when there are no older children to assist in this task. One husband who had a three-year-old daughter mentioned during the interview that the hardest period since his wife went abroad was the first two weeks. The girl only wanted to be with her father at all times. This then restricted the husband from doing other things, including productive activities.

The parents of migrant workers who have been entrusted to look after grandchildren have a role similar to husbands. One grandmother who was interviewed for this study shared that the most difficult task in caring for her very young granddaughter was preparing infant formula at midnight. At her age, the grandmother was having problems waking up in the middle of the night. Added to this was the financial burden mainly caused by the insufficient money sent by her daughter working abroad. Another older lady shared that her daughter did not send remittance regularly, stating that money was frequently received every three or six months and that the amount was not enough to buy infant formula. Therefore, the elderly lady had to seek other sources, such as borrowing money from neighbours and relatives. She would settle the debts once she received the remittance from her daughter, or she would incur other debts to cover previous ones. This illustrates that the guardians were not only responsible for providing physical care for the children left behind, but also for generating money to satisfy the needs of the children.

DISCIPLINE IN THE FAMILY

Disciplining the children, particularly teenagers, is a major problem for guardians. The degree of the problems varies, depending on the age of the children left behind. Younger children are relatively “easy” to discipline, since they do not have many concerns, except the needs for nutrition, love and care. Children who are in or near their teens are usually more difficult to control because social environments, especially peers, strongly influence behavior. Teens tend to prefer hanging out with friends outside the home and disobey guardians who are usually the fathers. The situation is worse among male children, as declared by one husband participant in the FGD when asked whether it was more difficult to take care of the younger or older children.

It is more difficult to handle children in their preteens as they tend to be rebellious. They do not immediately do what I ask them to do. Although they will do it eventually, it takes quite a long time for them to obey. The situation becomes normal as they grow older. (Ud, a 44-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

Children's activities after school, during weekends and on school holidays are even more difficult to manage. Boys tend to spend more time outside the home compared to girls. Some husband informants noted the reluctance of children, especially sons, to follow orders, attributing this dilemma to the tendency of children to obey mothers whom the children rarely saw in contrast to fathers who were with them every day. Distance made the children appreciate mother more. One of the husbands observed the following:

“

... It is true that it was easy to discipline the children when my wife was at home; they did what I required them to do at once. This has not been the case since my wife left home to work abroad. Unlike when their mother asks them to do something, it takes them a long time to act on my requests. (Ud, a 44-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

”

Many of the guardians interviewed for this study mentioned that preteen or teenage sons frequently failed to come home on time after school and usually played with friends before heading for home late in the afternoon. It was common to find boys spending a great deal of time at the Internet café to play online games, although some boys would claim going there to do research for school. In extreme cases, male children skipped school without the guardian's knowledge. This was the experience of an elderly lady who had been looking after her teenager grandson left behind by his mother. On weekdays, the boy left home in the mornings, supposedly to go to school, and returned home in the afternoons. Instead of attending classes, however, he went to the Internet café or played around. Unknown to his grandmother, this behavior went on for months until the boy eventually dropped out of school. Thus, it was not surprising to hear the elderly lady say the hardest part of caring for her grandson was disciplining him.

Resilience and Vulnerability of Children

Parental migration has contradictory effects. On the positive side, it enhances the family's well-being because of the increased income from remittances. On the negative side, the household situation becomes precarious with heightened family environment risks when the children are left in the care of others. This section discusses the impact of migration on the children from the perspectives of resilience and vulnerability. Parental absence creates displacement, disruptions and changes in childcare arrangement, as well as emotional difficulties for children. Despite the presence of extended family members and the availability of modern means of communication (e.g., telephones, cell phones, Internet), children continue to long for the love and care of parents. The absence of a parent poses a threat to social and emotional well-being, especially when the guardian does not help children become resilient. In exceptional cases, however, children have the capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened or even transformed by the adversities of life.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

Both male and female labour migrants at the research site left children behind with spouses or extended family members. Based on the household survey, 383 children had a migrant parent. A considerable number of females were younger than the males (Table 2.2), especially when considering the group aged 13 to 15 years where girls accounted for nearly twice the number of boys. Also worth noting is the difference in the proportion of male and female children at the age of 19 years and above where males outnumbered females. One reason might be that female children of that age were already married and no longer living with their parents.

TABLE 2.2 - AGE AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND, INDRAMAYU DISTRICT, 2010

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
<i>Age (years)^a</i>			
< 7	12.3	16.0	13.8
7–12	14.5	16.0	15.1
13–15	18.9	34.0	25.1
16–18	22.9	25.0	23.8
19+	31.3	9.0	22.2
TOTAL	59.3 (227)^b	40.7 (156)	100.0 (383)
<i>Educational Status (ages 7 years and above)^c</i>			
Yes	59.2	84.0	69.4
No	40.8	16.0	30.6
TOTAL	100.0 (201)	100.0 (131)	100.0 (330)
<i>Years of Schooling</i>			
0–6	33.6	25.5	29.8
7–9	34.5	47.2	40.7
10–12	31.1	25.5	28.4
13+	0.8	1.8	1.1
TOTAL	100.0 (119)	100.0 (110)	100.0 (229)
<i>Reason for Not Attending School</i>			
Illness	4.9	0	3.9
No Money to Pay for School Tuition	11	23.8	13.6
Sufficient Education	76.8	52.4	71.8
Unwillingness to Attend School	3.7	19	6.8
Other	3.7	4.8	3.9
TOTAL	100.0 (119)	100.0 (110)	100.0 (229)

^a All children in 201 household samples.

^b Figures in parentheses pertain to the total number.

^c All children aged seven years and up in 201 household samples.

More than three-fourths of the girls included in the survey were in school. Among the children left behind, the highest proportion of students (40.7 percent) was in junior high school (the years of schooling were between seven and nine years), with girls constituting a higher percentage than boys (47.2 percent versus 34.5 percent). Most of the children (both boys and girls) had reached the minimum nine years of education recommended by the Compulsory Basic Education Programmeme of the Indonesian government. For those with schooling from zero to six years, the proportion of girls lagged behind that of boys (25.5 percent versus 33.6 percent). The same could be said for girls with 10 to 12 years of schooling (25.5 percent versus 31.1 percent). The reverse was true in the highest years of schooling, as the number of girls more than doubled that of boys. On the whole, however, it can be said that the girls were as equally educated as the boys. Based on individual data collected from 201 children left behind, the average of years of schooling for boys was 9.36, while that for girls was 9.21.

Among 82 children who were not in school, approximately 71.8 percent did not enroll because they believed they were sufficiently educated with girls constituting a lower number than boys. Apparently, these children had completed junior or senior high school, which means they could not be classified as dropouts. Insufficient funds to pay school tuition were a reason offered by only 13.6 percent of the children (23.8 percent of girls and 11.0 percent of boys). Another reason mentioned was the weak support of parents or guardians, thereby indicating that parental absence affected the continuation of schooling.

RESILIENCE AND COPING WITH SEPARATION

Information from in-depth interviews and FGDs confirms that children left behind, mostly by mothers, tend to face social and emotional or psychological problems. Parental absence implies loss of parental affection, attention and support. Thus, young children view parental migration as a form of “abandonment”. For adolescents, however, the acceptance could be either “receptive or resentful” (Tobin, 2008). A number of children are somewhat happy because of the material benefits, but the painful outcome is an inability to hide sadness (Arellano-Carandang et al., 2007 cited in Reyes, 2008). At the research sites, the extended family network could be relied on to take care of the children left behind, but children generally continued to feel less love, attention and support in daily lives. Based on the FGDs conducted with boys and girls, the absence of one parent (in most cases the mother) was the most disruptive factor in the lives of the children left behind. A number of the children who had a mother working overseas were aware that remittances did help improve quality of life, but parental absence created in them a feeling of loneliness and abandonment. The following excerpts from the FGDs imply the low resilience of children left behind by migrant mothers.



... It feels different without my mother around. I lack parental affection. For instance, when mother was at home, she usually looked for me whenever I was a few hours late in coming home. Things are different now with my father. He is not aware if I come home late at night. He is rarely angry. He also seldom gives advice. This is not good for children who need attention. My father just takes care of finances, but I know I should be able to manage my day-to-day life and be a good boy. I realize that my mother is working overseas to meet my family's needs. It's really for our own benefit. (Eng, a 16-year-old boy left by his mother)



“

... My mother is not home; I feel sad. Mothers always look after and support their children. It does not mean that fathers do not do the same things. But a father's support and attention is generally less than the mother's. Similarly, the attention of a grandmother is not the same as that given by a mother. (Ay, a 17-year-old girl left by her mother)

”

Most children are likely to understand the reason behind parental migration, which is to address the economic needs of the family. However, the departure of the parent, especially the mother, exacts an emotional toll on the children left behind.

“

... My mother is pursuing a job in Saudi Arabia. It's okay because she wants to provide for our needs, such as my school tuition. But I was still young when my mom went abroad. I was in the fourth year of primary school at the time. I cried a lot. It took me a long time to adjust [to my mother's absence]. Even now, I still feel sad and lonely, especially when I have problems. (Nov, a 15 year-old girl left by her mother)

”

The degree of resilience among child respondents varied with age. Acceptance was somewhat easier for preschool children (0-5 years old), perhaps because they still did not understand the sense of maternal separation. Adjustment was more difficult for children aged six years and up because the children had already developed maternal attachments. These children were more vulnerable to negative feelings, especially when insufficient attention was received from guardians.

For children under five years of age or in pre-adolescent years, the adjustment period was not long. The first month of separation from parents was the hardest. However, with the help of the remaining parent, siblings or other guardians, these children were generally able to handle emotional problems and become resilient. The father and grandmother were found to be essential to strengthening the resilience of children left behind. Family members employed various ways of strengthening the resilience of children left behind, holding to the belief that emotional burden could be eased when family members helped one another in coping with the situation. In general, older family members gave support, love and autonomy to enable the children to adjust to the changes and become self-reliant. The in-depth interviews with two adolescent girls illustrate how children left behind tried to deal with emotional or psychological problems.

“

... I was still young when my mother left to work abroad for the first time. I was very sad . . . it was hard for me . . . my mother abandoned me. I cried a lot. Although my daddy was really kind . . . but I don't know . . . I felt lonely. Initially, I was lazy to go to school. It took a long time for me to adjust [to my mother's absence]. My friends give me support and love. My daddy also provides me with autonomy, love and support. (At, a 14-year-old girl left by her mother)

”

“ . . . definitely yes . . . I am sad without mother around. Daily life became very different. Fortunately . . . I have a sister . . . we support each other. Yeah . . . I was sad and felt lonely for about a month. Every time my mother has left to work overseas (twice already at the time of the interview), I felt very sad. But I bear in mind that it is for our own good . . . to enable us to study. (Tu, a 15-year-old girl left by her mother)

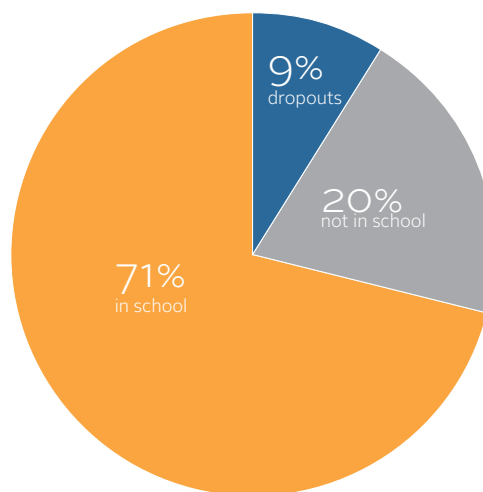
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CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Although the evidence is often mixed, the large scale of migration flow has implications for the education of children. The migration of a parent often means better educational prospects for the children left behind since a large proportion of the remittance is used for school tuition. Various studies in Indonesia and other countries have indicated a correlation between remittances and the continuity of education of the abandoned children (Hugo, 1995; Cortes, 2007). Parental absence, however, is also an important reason children left behind have such poor academic performance. The absence of parents could lead to increased absenteeism and deteriorating school performance. A study carried out by Save the Children in Sri Lanka (cited by Yeoh and Lam [2006]) shows that the school attendance and academic performance of children left behind by a migrant mother tend to be low. Such social costs of labour migration were noted, albeit not significantly, at the research site.

Survey findings confirm 71 percent of 142 children left behind to have been enrolled in school; the remainder did not enroll in school or dropped out of school (Figure 2.4). The availability of funds for school tuition seemed to be the most important factor in the schooling of children. Among 40 children sampled who were not in school, approximately 80 percent cited economic burdens as the reason for discontinuing studies. Formal education entails direct costs (such as tuition and other fees, uniforms, books and transportation) and indirect costs (such as forgone earnings and other economic contributions of children attending school). Only a small proportion of the children sampled (20 percent) was not in school due to lack of interest, illness or desire to work. Funding limitations were mentioned by the majority of the dropouts (68.4 percent, or 13 of 19 respondents); the remainder offered less attention and support from guardians as reasons.

FIGURE 2.4- EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE CHILDREN SAMPLED



The results of FGDs with boys and girls show the decision to drop out to be related to inadequate parental (in this case, the fathers) or guardian (usually the grandmothers) support where the children were perceived as not concerned with education. A 16-year-old boy revealed the following:

“ . . . I dropped out when I was in my first year of junior high school. There was no money for paying school fees. No . . . no . . . because the money remitted by my mother working in Saudi Arabia was spent on house construction. I lack care and educational support because my mother is away. My father seems unconcerned with his children's education. He did not stop me when I wanted to drop out of school (Udi, a 16-year-old boy left by his mother) ”

Qualitative data from the FGDs with mothers who were former migrants affirms that the absence of mothers caused the children's studies to suffer, as exhibited in decreased school attendance, deteriorating academic performance and tendency to drop out of school.

The negative effects of the migrant parental absence on children's schooling cannot, however, be generalized. Both boy and girl FGD participants attributed school attendance to overseas remittances from parents, even though the children felt lonely and sad over the distance from mothers. Based on the survey, among children enrolled in school (142 of 201 respondents), most were able to maintain school attendance after mothers or fathers or both parents had left for abroad (81 percent); 16.9 percent even reported improved academic performance while only 2.1 percent claimed to be doing even more poorly than before (Figure 2.5). Academic grades were also maintained for approximately three-fourths of the children, most of whom had migrant mothers (Figure 2.6). Nearly one-fifth (17.6 percent) achieved higher grades, while only 5.6 percent received lower grades. The aforementioned data suggests that parent-child separation does not involve social costs in terms of the children's education. This could be attributed, however, to the fact that the child respondents were left behind at a very early age thus preventing comparison of academic performance before and during the time parents migrated.

Data from in-depth interviews with children confirmed that parental absence did not necessarily affect academic performance. Any unfavorable effects occurred only during the first month of parental absence and this seemed to be experienced mostly by children in primary school.

“ . . . in the first month my mother was not home, my school performance was disrupted. It's very difficult to concentrate on studying. My father couldn't help me because he had to attend to my younger siblings. (At, a 14-year-old girl left by her mother) ”

The insignificant effects of parental absence on schooling could partly be the result of the assistance of extended family members, generally grandmothers, especially in terms of household chores. Children were spared additional household responsibilities potentially taking away from time spent studying.

ACTIVITIES, BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

The absence of a parent (mostly mothers) did not have a tendency to affect the activities, behaviour or social networks of children. Based on the survey findings, the children had generally adjusted well socially, enjoying strong support from and getting along well with family members and friends. As

FIGURE 2.5- CLASS PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN SAMPLED (PERCENTAGE)

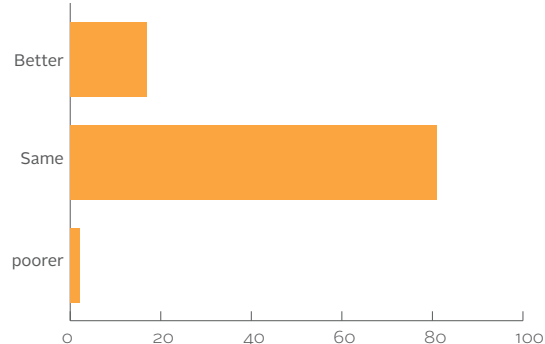
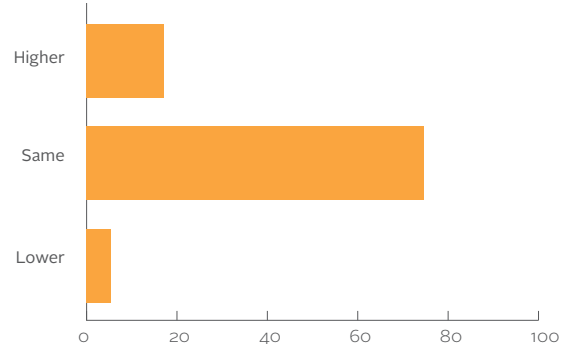


FIGURE 2.6 - SCHOOL GRADES OF CHILDREN SAMPLED (PERCENTAGE)



many as 54.2 percent of the 201 children surveyed played more often with friends as compared to when the parents were still around. Only 2.5 percent claimed to not be spending time with friends. The major cause of limited social activities, particularly among older children, was household responsibilities. In-depth interviews with some girls confirmed assisting fathers with domestic chores, such as taking care of younger siblings and house cleaning. It is important to note, however, that extended family members, especially grandmothers, helped ease such burdens on children. The same practices have also been documented in many other migrant-worker-sending countries, such as the Pacific, Caribbean and Asian regions (Bedford, Bedford and Ho, 2009).

Survey data reveals that 57.7 percent of the children saw friends every day while 17.5 percent hardly mingled socially. Some 10.9 percent went out with friends two or more times weekly while 11.4 percent did so once a week. Approximately two-thirds of the sampled children had both male and female friends; the remainder socialized exclusively with girls (12.9 percent) or boys (21.4 percent).

Internet use increased among the majority of the children sampled (62.7 percent) following the departure of parents. This could be attributed to the accessibility and availability of Internet in the village, not to mention Internet affordability. Approximately 34.1 percent of the children used the Internet once a week; this figure was only slightly higher than that of children who did web browsing twice or more a week. Only approximately 11.1 percent reported daily use of the Internet, while the remainder surfed the web only Sundays. The duration of Internet use varied from as short as less than an hour (4.0 percent) to as long as more than two hours (2.4 percent). More than half of the children spent only one hour at web surfing (54.8 percent); 38.9 percent stayed online for an average of two hours. Online social networking, such as Facebook, was a common activity of children using the Internet (53.2 percent). A number of the child respondents (37.7 percent), however also mentioned the Internet as a useful tool for doing homework. Chatting, online games and news searches were other uses of the Internet mentioned by 9.1 percent of the children. These findings are consistent with the qualitative data obtained from the in-depth interviews with several children.

Hence, the study found no major effects of parental migration on the social relationships of children left behind. Most of the children reported having good relationships with friends both at home and in school. However, a small number of those who received less care and supervision from fathers or guardians resorted to hanging out with friends until late at night, drinking alcohol and even taking drugs.

CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF MIGRATION

This study looked into the children's perception of parental employment overseas, including participation in the family's decision-making process in relation to migration. Of the 201 children surveyed, only 27.4 percent claimed to have been involved in parental decisions to leave. This small figure could be merely because most of the children had been left by mothers who worked abroad on several occasions. Moreover, the children might have been very young (under five years) when the parents first left to work abroad. This could mean that adolescents had more active participation in the decision than younger children. The decision-making process, however, was generally more complex, involving negotiation and discussion, rather than as depicted by the quantitative data. Therefore, it is possible that the data did not indicate the level of involvement of even the key players in the process. At best, children's involvement went as far as being informed of the parent's plan to migrate as indicated by the qualitative data:

“

My mother only informed me that she was going overseas. I left the choice to her because I wanted to stay in school. I need money for my schooling. (Lin, a 15-year-old girl left by her mother)

”

The in-depth interviews with the children and spouses left behind confirm that the decision to migrate was generally made by adults in the family without consulting the children, especially the very young ones. Most children were unhappy with maternal migration, but generally accepted the separation. The early months were the most difficult, but the children were able to cope with the separation. The data gathered from the FGDs with adolescent boys and girls further revealed that most children had no choice but to accept parental migration because the families needed the money to survive.

Most of the 201 children surveyed (65.7 percent) were not in favor of parental migration. As previously mentioned, the migrant workers at the research sites were mostly mothers. From the children's perspectives, the mothers should not have left home to work overseas. For nearly three-fourths of these children, if one parent had to go abroad to earn money, the departing parent should be the father. As implied by girl and boy participants in the FGDs, the reason was that the father was the breadwinner and the mother had multiple roles in the day-to-day lives of the family. Nonetheless, the children realized that they had to make a sacrifice in letting mothers go for economic reasons, given the high demand for female migrant workers and the very limited employment opportunities in the village. If this condition persisted, the children would also become likely candidates for overseas work and some adolescent girls and boys said they had plans to work abroad.

“

... If there is no good job or opportunity to develop business here, I want ... I will go abroad. I really prefer it here. My first option is to work in Indonesia, but it seems difficult. (Eng, a 17-year-old boy left by his mother)

... I will go abroad. To get a job here is very difficult. When I finish school ... I should work abroad and my mother should come back home. I will replace my mother in earning money and meeting my family's needs. (Fit, a 15-year-old girl left by her mother)

”

Apparently, the children view migration as a means of improving economic conditions, possibly because the children were aware of the factors compelling the parents to work away from home.

Resilience and Vulnerability of Spouses and Other Adult Family Members

As previously noted, the largest concentration of female overseas workers at the study sites was in the service sector. As in the case of children, the absence of the mother or wife in the household affected the resiliency and vulnerability of the spouses and extended family members left behind. Female migration reconfigures many aspects of the family. Gender relations are reversed as women become the main breadwinners and men turn into secondary earners or even homemakers or caregivers where no female relative is available to take over the domestic duties left by the wife.

Husbands are forced to assume reproductive tasks traditionally considered within the women's domain, such as preparing meals for the family, washing clothes and rearing and caring for the children. Some studies in the Philippines (Bedford, Bedford and Ho, 2009, citing Baggio, 2008 and Battistella and Gastardo-Conaco, 1998) note that husbands left behind are often incapable of effectively carrying out a maternal role. The change in gender roles is not really a problem for husbands who make an effort to adjust to the new family life, but a small number remains who feel burdened, partly due to limited capacity to confront, overcome and become strengthened or even transformed by the adversities of life.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The migration of a spouse leads to changes in family relationships, whether between husband and wife, or the migrating spouse and other adults in the family, or the spouse left behind and other adult members of the family. Husbands and wives take on a transnational relationship to the face-to-face relationship (Mahler, 1999) associated with marriage. As noted at the research sites in conversations with some husbands left behind, family relationships were generally maintained with the use of telecommunication and web technologies, such as telephones, SMS, e-mails and the Internet. Thus, couples were allowed some real-time communication at a low cost. Sending remittance was also facilitated by the instant money transfer services offered by banks. The ease of communication, therefore, certainly plays a role in maintaining the relationships of the migrant and the families left behind.

Maintaining transnational relationships is very important to the family. At the study sites, these relationships were generally managed quite well. Both the in-depth interviews and the FGDs with husbands left behind reveal regular communication with wives, which helped the couples maintain spousal relationships and overcome daily problems. Many studies indicate, however, that the gender role reversal between husband and wife brings about marital conflict because the husband who is left to perform reproductive roles in his wife's stead wants to maintain masculine identity (Bedford, Bedford and Ho, 2009). The problem increases when the husband finds it difficult to accomplish maternal roles.

To relieve the pressure from the gender role reversal and other consequences of the wife's absence, the husband adopts various coping methods, some of which may be negative, while others are positive. Table 2.3 presents the adjustment strategies of husbands of migrant workers who were included in the survey for this study at the study sites.

As indicated in the table, most of the husbands carried out "positive" efforts in adjusting to life without a wife and mother at home by primarily caring for the children, accomplishing household chores and generating extra income. Although some husbands engaged in "negative" activities, such as gambling and drinking alcohol, these constituted a very small proportion. The quantitative data were consistent with the qualitative data obtained from husband participants in the FGDs as illustrated below:

“

... loneliness makes me work a lot. I also take care of our children. What are the kinds of amusement for people like me? My hobby is not a form of amusement. My hobby is working; I work to overcome loneliness. (Ud, a 44-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

I look for activities to keep me busy. When I feel lonely, I listen to music or turn on the VCD player to make me happy. (Sa, a 45-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

I think I have no time to be bored. I am busy doing everything, so I just fall asleep [at the end of the day]. I wake up in the morning, go to work and conduct household tasks, such as washing clothes. I have no time for things that are not worthwhile or a waste of time. I am scared and never think of going to a sex worker while my wife is away. (Un, a 42-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

”

TABLE 2.3. ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES OF MIGRANT WORKERS' HUSBANDS (IN PERCENTAGE),
INDRAMAYU DISTRICT, 2010

ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY	(N=166)		
	YES	NO	TOTAL
Caring for Children	71.1	28.9	100
Going Outside the House Frequently	10.8	89.2	100
Going to Shopping Centers Frequently	1.8	98.2	100
Busily Attending to Businesses or Livelihoods	14.5	85.5	100
Busily Attending to Jobs	58.4	41.6	100
Conducting Household Chores	69.3	30.7	100
Smoking and Drinking Alcohol	1.2	98.8	100
Gambling	0.6	99.4	100

According to the reports from the two study villages on some husbands of migrant workers conducting negative behavior, the staff of the sub-district office and village informants disclosed that many husbands of woman migrant workers engaged in activities putting marriages at risk. Some remarried while the wives were working abroad and did not inform the wives about subsequent marriages. Although there were no accurate data on remarriage, the practice was a common phenomenon in both villages.

Many informants in this study mentioned cases in which the husband spent the money sent by wives to remarry, thus meaning that only the husband benefitted from the remittance. This could be a reason the migrant wife of one informant had not sent him money since her departure.

“

My wife assumes that I will be like our neighbours who . . . spent the money sent by their migrant wives on remarrying or in irresponsible ways like going to amusement places or shopping with other women. When the wife returns home and asks if the husband saved the money she had sent and how much had been saved, she finds out that all the money has been spent. This condition often mars their marital relationship. My wife is probably worried I will engage in such “negative behavior.” (Da, a 41-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

”

Given the significance of a mutually constitutive relationship between migrant workers and spouses left behind, communication is essential to maintaining feelings of love and keeping the family intact. Those who have poor communication are likely to be the ones who already have preexisting relationship problems, especially marital conflict.

PARENTING AND GRANDPARENTING

With the mother working overseas, parenting is undertaken solely by the father. In some cases, it is the grandparents, mostly the grandmothers, who take over this role. Notable, however, is the difference in parenting practices among mothers, fathers and grandmothers. Research findings indicated that fathers and grandmothers tend to not monitor the daily activities of children left behind strictly, especially concerning school. Fathers and grandmothers are normally concerned only about whether the children leave home to go to school in the morning and return home from school in the afternoon, rarely asking about the problems and difficulties the children faced in academic subjects. Quite expectedly, many fathers and grandmothers did not help or supervise the children in studies.

Fathers and grandmothers also did not seem to care much about the emotions of the children, especially those related to maternal departure. This was stated by girls who participated in the FGD.



My father never asks me about school, like whether I have problems in understanding my lessons. He takes care of us, his children, in terms of fulfilling our daily needs, but he never asks us about how we feel. Sometimes I get sad thinking of my mother, but I cannot express it to my father because he does not pay attention to it. (Ay, a 17-year-old daughter of a female migrant)

A mother's care is different from a father's. When there were instances in which I came home late, my mother would look for me and tell me not to do it again and to come home on time. This is not the case with my father. He never looks for me even if I come home late at night. Sometimes I miss my mother's attention and loving like that. (Hd, a 17-year-old son of a female migrant)



Grandparenting, on the other hand, had a negative impact on children's behavior because grandmothers tended to spoil the children to compensate for maternal absence, wanting to please the grandchildren, thinking that the grandchildren were already going through so much, having to sacrifice losing the mother's love and caring for the survival of the family. Interviews with former women migrant workers confirm this. The women disclosed difficulty in disciplining children who had been under the care of grandmothers while the mothers were working overseas.

TRANSNATIONAL PARENTING

Transnational parenting involves women migrant workers, mainly mothers, who continue to perform "long-distance" parenting responsibilities. Some migrant mothers are not freed from parental activities, as they are contacted by the family left behind to discuss issues related to childrearing and care.

The husbands of migrant workers interviewed in this study mentioned the absence of the mother posed problems in rearing and disciplining children, simply because the children tended to obey mothers more. The husbands generally discussed these problems with the wives over the phone. One husband participant in the FGD shared the following:

“

... my wife said, "Please care for the children, especially the girls. Please do not let them spend much time playing with their friends." Thank God I can follow my wife's request. I have been teaching them since they were young. I tell them stories before bedtime ... (Da, a 41-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

”

As previously mentioned, children left behind often contact mothers when in need of advice or when the children simply want to share feelings. This helps the children overcome feelings of abandonment by the mothers. On the mother's side, this communication is a chance to be involved in parenting activities, which then lessens the feelings of guilt over leaving children for work.

Remittances and Use

Migration for work is often voluntary (Rossi, 2008). As previously explained, people of economically productive age prefer to work overseas to improve the family's standard of living, especially given deficient employment opportunities at home. Among the positive impacts of migration is the flow of remittance from the workers to families. This is a positive effect of migration commonly noted in various studies.

Some studies have indicated that temporary labour migration (that is, with no intention to live in the destination country), as opposed to permanent migration, provides a larger prospect for sending remittance to families at home (Dustmann and Mestres, 2009, cited in Tan and Gibson, 2010). IRIN (2009) states that in some Indonesian provinces (e.g., Lampung, West Java, Central Java, East Java and West Nusa Tenggara), overseas remittances are the primary source of household income. Approximately 37 percent of households with a member working abroad are fully dependent on the remittance from the migrant worker's income. Approximately 80 percent of the migrant workers are the sole breadwinners and the majority are women from poor rural families. A study conducted by Tan and Gibson (2010) on Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia states that only 25 percent of migrant workers do not send money home. Most of the remittances are reportedly used by the family for daily expenditures; the remainder is allocated for education (approximately 33 percent), payment of debts (13 percent), and house construction (10 percent) (ibid.)

Adi (1996) similarly notes that the remittances sent by Indonesian migrant workers contribute significantly to the children's education, thereby implying that remittances are essential to the family's well-being. IOM (2010) found labour migrants to rarely use earnings for investment in long-term businesses in the area of origin. Many find it safer to purchase land, a house or a motorcycle to be used as an ojek (motorcycle taxi). Some use the earnings to start a business upon return home. Due to the migrant worker's lack of technical knowledge and assistance in managing and conducting a business, however, not all ventures are successful.

Theoretically, the remittances sent by migrant workers should bring social benefits to the families left behind, especially with respect to the children's health and education. A World Bank study (2006) illustrates another fact in the utilization of remittance. In most cases in Indonesia, the major priorities in remittance use by migrant families are payment of debts, daily expenses and house construction rather than improved health and education. Any remaining money will be used to buy a vehicle, buy or lease rice fields, buy livestock and pay for the children's education.

In Indramayu District, this study found the majority of the migrant workers to send remittances home, albeit in varying frequency. During the last working contract, approximately 44 percent of the workers sent money home on one to three occasions. Allocation of the remittance was mostly determined by the husband (78 percent), and only in a few cases did extended family members, such as the migrant worker's mother or sister or in-law, decide how the money would be apportioned among the household expenses. This data is not surprising since the children were left in the care of the husbands in the majority of the households. It is important to note, however, that the female migrant workers were also involved in the decisions on allocation, even though the husbands controlled the use of remittances. The couple discussed this when they conversed over the phone or via SMS by using mobile phones.

The remittances primarily served the daily needs of the family left behind, including food and school allowance; tuition and school-related requirements; and social activities, such as when the family needed to contribute to a religious or customary ceremony held by neighbours or relatives. The third household expense mentioned is important to maintaining social relationships in the community. This study further found some families to have used the remittance to celebrate a boy's circumcision, which entailed a substantial amount of money. Interviews with some informants revealed many mothers to have left to work overseas to earn money for a son's circumcision celebration.

Remittances were also used to purchase commercial goods, the most common purchases being television sets, compact disc (CD) players and motorcycles. These types of purchases, however, were made only once the family had set aside money for daily essentials. Other households allocated the money for household repairs or construction. This practice of saving, however, applied only to households where the husbands left behind also earned additional income. Unemployed husbands normally spent all of the remittance on the family's needs and even experienced financial shortages. Approximately 18 percent of the families surveyed used the remittance for productive activities by purchasing agricultural land (4.5 percent), setting up a small shop in the village (3.5 percent) and purchasing cattle (3.0 percent). In 75 percent of such households, the husband decided on the allocation of the remittance; only in 11 percent of the households did the migrant worker decide on the use of the remittance.

As mentioned by many informants in the study, there were reports of husbands misusing the money sent by wives working overseas. Some husbands remarry and use the remittance to support new households. Others spend the remittance on girlfriends or prostitution. This destructive behavior threatens marital relationships and could even cause the marriage to break up. It also hurts the children's feelings and, in extreme cases, creates resentment toward fathers leading to conflict in

father-child relationships. Fortunately, this behavior was not practiced by the husband respondents and informants in the study who mainly spent the remittance on family needs and made use of time performing “positive” activities.

Institutional Support for International Labour Migration

Government Support

Globalization and the liberalization of labour markets have facilitated the process of migration for employment purposes. The Indonesian government has further promoted international labour migration to expand the employment opportunities of the people in addition to generating foreign revenue. As a protective measure, the government has issued various instruments to safeguard the rights of overseas workers.

This section first examines Indonesian government support for international labour migration in home countries, followed by all government supportive efforts in the destination or host countries. The analysis focuses on relevant regulations and the involvement of Indonesian institutions in the management of Indonesian migrant workers prior to migration and while the migrants are working abroad. Given the close relationship to the legal protection of migrant workers’ rights, especially the women, these factors warrant particular attention. Other forms of government support include skills training for prospective labour migrants to enable migrant workers to engage in productive activities after returning home and thereby maintain quality of life.

Four basic legislative instruments influence the recruitment and placement of Indonesian workers overseas:

1. Government Act No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower
2. Government Act No. 39 of 2004 on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers
3. Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2006 on the establishment of the National Authority for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, or BNP2TKI)
4. The Head of BNP2TKI Regulation No. 28 of 2007 on the Overseas Labour Market Agency (Bursa Kerja Luar Negeri, or BKLN).

Article 5 of Government Act No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower states: “Any manpower is entitled to equal opportunity for employment without discrimination.” This article means every person who is available for a job will have the same right and opportunity to find a decent job and make a decent living without prejudice on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, political orientation, interest or capability. Until now, however, implementing this policy remains a challenge in Indonesia that is aggravated by the lack of public welfare provision for unemployed people, thus influencing the decisions of many to work overseas.

With the increasing number of Indonesians working abroad and the need to address disorder in recruitment and placement processes, protection issues and cases of irregular migration, the Indonesian government issued Government Act No. 39 on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers in October 2004. This law is the first comprehensive instrument regulating overseas placement and ensuring the protection of migrant workers.

Subsequently, the government created and enforced several instruments to support the formal procedures for the recruitment and placement of Indonesian migrant workers. These include Presidential Instruction No. 6 of 2006 on Policy Reform of Placement and Protection System of Indonesian Migrant Workers and Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2006 on the establishment of BNP2TKI. Article 49 of Government Act No. 39 states that the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration should turn over to BNP2TKI all documents and activities related to the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers within six months of signing the regulation into law. This regulation recognizes BNP2TKI as the legal institution authorized to formally register and deploy Indonesian migrant workers, which includes overseeing the G to G migrant workers recruitment programme, the migration process handled by private recruitment agencies and migration processes personally arranged by individual migrant workers. At the provincial level or place of departure, the Services Unit on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (Balai Pelayanan Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, or BP3TKI) represents BNP2TKI in facilitating document processing in cooperation with related institutions.

BNP2TKI has likewise crafted and implemented several regulations to support its policy on the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers, such as the Head of BNP2TKI Regulation No. 28 of 2007 on BKLN and Regulation No. 1 of 2008 on Services for Returned Migrant Workers at Sukarno-Hatta Airport. Located in the district or sub-district, BKLN is a private agency charged with providing services in the recruitment process and facilitating the registration of migrant or potential migrant workers.

Information, education and communication (IEC) is another form of important government assistance to migrant workers. Ideally, prospective migrants should have adequate knowledge of the entire process of labour migration, such as how to apply to sending companies and what documents are needed for the application. Important documents include the identification card issued by local authorities (village head) for passport issuance and the consent letter from family members (husbands or fathers, depending on the applicant's marital status). Applicants are further expected to be well informed of the terms and conditions of overseas employment (e.g., job or task description, working hours), as well as the social norms and values of the destination community and regulations for overseas workers in the destination country. Through its manpower office at the provincial and district levels, the Indonesian government has taken concrete steps toward disseminating such information to prevent migrant workers from being deceived in the recruitment and placement processes. IEC activities are carried out in collaboration with other government institutions such as the Office of Information and Communication (Soewardi, 2000). Aside from producing printed materials, including posters, brochures and booklets, and distributing the aforementioned at different locations nationwide, the

government arranges community meetings or gatherings as a venue for information dissemination through the local manpower office, especially in areas that are popular sources of migrant workers.

Despite the above efforts, however, a significant number of potential migrant workers remains notably ignorant of overseas migration processes. These are usually the migrant workers residing in remote and rural areas. The tendency of these applicants is to delegate to recruiters the handling of all related processes, such as the completion of required documents. Furthermore, is not unusual to find recruiters committing document manipulation, such as securing identification cards from a local government agency that is different from the one covering the prospective migrant worker's village. In this case, recruiters change the address of the applicant, which in the long term may pose difficulties in tracing the family of the worker when circumstances require such information.

In the destination country, the main party responsible for protecting migrant workers is the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia through its labour attaché. If the labour attaché is not available, the consular section of the embassy attends to the issues of labour migrants. Some Indonesian Embassies, such as those in Singapore and Malaysia, have made tangible efforts toward protecting migrant workers. In Singapore, the Indonesian Embassy set up a hotline service for migrant workers to facilitate migrant worker access to the embassy officials.¹⁸ The embassy also has a radio programme to provide information on Singapore, including laws, regulations and daily living, while tackling migrant workers' rights and obligations in addition to current issues requiring the attention of migrant workers. Furthermore, the programme offers temporary shelter with meals to migrant workers who have lost employment in Singapore for various reasons. Other forms of embassy support include helping facilitate the insurance claims of eligible workers and providing legal assistance to migrant workers involved in or accused of involvement in a crime. The Indonesian Embassy likewise provides accreditation to selected labour agencies in Singapore as prospective partners to Indonesian labour agencies in recruiting or sending migrant workers. Non-accredited Singapore labour agencies are not permitted to transact with Indonesian labour agencies.

In Malaysia, the Indonesian Embassy has shortened the period of time for renewal of passports and other documents required for working overseas (Palupi et al. 2010). This helps migrants significantly because the workers are no longer required to leave work for a long period of time in order to process these documents. The embassy also fights middlemen pretending to offer assistance to migrant workers in renewing or processing documents but actually producing counterfeit documents. Similar to the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore, the Indonesia Embassy in Malaysia provides shelter to migrant workers who have escaped employers and assistance to those with legal problems brought about by various reasons, such as undocumented worker status and criminal involvement. The Indonesian Embassy also collaborates with Malaysian labour agencies in helping migrant workers who have disputes with employers, particularly due to unpaid work and/or working unreasonably long hours.

Apart from protection efforts, the Indonesian government has initiated programmes to increase the quality and skills of migrant or prospective migrant workers. For example, BNP2TKI developed a collaborative programme with private training centers (e.g., PT Sahid Training and Recruitment Services) to equip prospective migrant workers with certain skills required for overseas work, such

18. <http://kampungtki.com/baca/3346>; accessed 17 September 2010.

as jobs in the hospitality sector. BNP2TKI also collaborates with private recruitment and placement agencies in cooperation with some receiving countries, such as Japan, as well as nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies, such as the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the World Bank, in programmes to empower Indonesian labour migrants and families in terms of access to information and financial services.¹⁹

For returning migrant workers, government assistance includes arrangements to make certain returnees arrive home safely. UPT P3TKI (Unit Pelaksana Teknis Pelayanan, Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, or Technical Operation Unit of Services, Placement, and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers) in Surabaya, for example, has “an arrival counter” at Surabaya Airport for returning migrant workers. If, for example, the returnees have to take another flight to a hometown and there is no scheduled flight that day, the travelers are taken to a transit place served by the local government where lodgings are provided for one night before leaving for the place of origin. This is the case with returning migrant workers from East Nusa Tenggara who arrive at Surabaya Airport in the afternoon and are scheduled to leave for Kupang the next day. This arrival counter helps protect migrant workers from falling victim to those who offer similar assistance, but charge a huge amount.

Long-term government assistance takes the form of livelihood training to help returning migrant workers make productive use of overseas earnings. In East Java, the local manpower offices offer training in food processing. Participants who complete the training are given the necessary equipment to jump-start a new enterprise. Unfortunately, however, the training programme reaches only a small number of returnees due to budgetary limitations.

Recently, the Minister for Manpower and Transmigration has developed a similar programme to empower returning migrant workers through training in entrepreneurship with proper use of simple technology, “link and match” and other skills improvement programmes, such as car driving. The expectation is that participants will be able to get or create jobs and no longer opt to work overseas once adequate productive skills have been obtained. To reduce the number of overseas domestic workers, government efforts have also been aimed at increasing the education requirements of prospective migrant workers to at least secondary high school, or 12 years of schooling.²⁰

At the international level, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has two legally binding instruments relating to labour migrants, namely, Convention No. 97 of 1949 on Migration for Employment and Convention No. 143 of 1975 on Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers. The United Nations, on the other hand, adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (ICRMW) in New York on 18 December 1990, which came into force on 1 July 2003. To date, however, Indonesia has not ratified the convention.²¹ The majority of the state signatories to the ICRMW are not among the major receiving countries of international migrant workers (Cholewinsky, 2005), thereby rendering it difficult for Indonesia to protect its migrant labour in the international context.

19. www.jakartapress.com/www.php/news/id/6291/Australia-Jepang-Danai-Pemberdayaan-TKI; accessed 12 January 2011.

20. Data obtained from a recent broadcast of Radio VOI, or Voice of Indonesia.

21. <http://www.tempo.co.id/hg/nasional/2006/10/29/brk,20061029-86739,id.html>; accessed 17 September 2010.

Indonesia, one of the major labour-sending countries to the Asia Pacific as well as the Middle East, only has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with some of the host countries. The MOU with Malaysia was signed in 2004, while those with Jordan and Kuwait were signed in 1999. The MOU, however, is not a powerful instrument providing protection for Indonesian migrant workers. It is not an international convention, but only an agreement about commitments between the two signatory countries. Therefore, the MOU cannot be used as a basis for demanding responsibility from the breaching party (Iskandar, 2011). Government Act No. 39 (Article 11) states that Indonesian migrant workers may be deployed only to host countries where the government already has a written agreement with the Indonesian government. If Indonesian migrants work in countries without written agreements with the Indonesian government, it will be difficult for the Indonesian government to ensure migrant worker protection in those countries.

Support from Other Institutions and Organizations

Similar to Indonesian government efforts, a number of institutions, such as NGOs, have taken initiatives to empower migrant workers by providing adequate knowledge concerning international labour migration and thereby preventing unfavorable experiences in the destination country, especially those in violation of migrant worker rights. Some of these work at the village level, while others work at the regional and international levels. As the organizations differ in the scope of their activities, the target groups of NGO activities vary. Local NGOs assist grassroots communities, such as potential migrant workers and their families, as well as formal and informal village leaders. NGOs working at the regional and international levels coordinate and network with the governments of sending and receiving countries and NGOs with the same mission abroad.

Many local NGOs are also involved in disseminating information on the whole process of working overseas, especially in villages known to be sources of migrant workers. In Indramayu District, West Java, SBMI (Serikat Buruh Migran, Indonesia, or the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers) conducts advocacy in three of 31 Indramayu sub-districts. NGO volunteers are fielded to the villages during certain periods with target groups ranging from potential migrant workers and community members, to formal and informal leaders of the community.

Prospective migrant workers are given comprehensive information on international worker mobility, such as conditions to qualify for overseas work, prerequisite documents and working conditions in the destination country. The workers are also oriented in the culture of Middle Eastern countries to prevent the commission of acts considered as “misconduct”. In Indonesian culture, for example, smiling at others is an expression of politeness or respect; the same practice is not common and even prohibited in Saudi Arabia.

The SBMI also carries out language training, mainly in English and Arabic, to facilitate effective communication between migrant workers and host families in order to reduce the tendency for misinterpretation and misunderstanding, which is a likely cause of abusive treatment from employers. Village heads, on the other hand, are encouraged not to allow prospective applicants to work overseas without “official permission” that is, the formal document issued by the office of the village head.

Prospective migrant workers are made aware of the importance of this document in protecting potential migrant workers from being deceived by abusive recruiters. It is not uncommon to hear reports of potential migrant workers being issued “official permission” from other village offices, as this has been a practice of some recruiters offering to handle document processing on behalf of the applicant.

In Sukabumi District, West Java, PPSW (Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita, or the Center for Women Development) works in 11 of 47 sub-districts in Sukabumi with advocacy directed at groups of women organized by volunteers in collaboration with female residents of the communities. All women in the village, including former migrant workers, are eligible to join the group. The members’ activities vary, involving a range of issues affecting women. The main objective is to empower women by building capacity for critical thinking, increasing self-esteem and changing lifestyles from consumptive to productive. Since the PPSW covers villages known as sources of woman migrant workers, advocacy also touches upon international labour migration, conducting awareness training to increase women’s understanding of rights and obligations stipulated in employment contracts and activities for strengthening and motivating the women, helping the women become mentally prepared for working overseas and teaching the women how to send money home and do financial planning. PPSW volunteers also provide information on legal and recommended labour-sending companies. Assistance to potential migrant workers extends to pre-employment preparations, including document processing, to prevent manipulation of their documents.

Activities focused on economic empowerment include savings and loans (*simpan pinjam*), where members save money together and members with financial needs can take out loans using the group’s savings (Rianingsih, 2000). In many cases, loans are incurred to finance applications for overseas work. The PPSW also organizes livelihood skills training, such as handicrafts, sewing and cooking, to enable interested members to engage in small-scale economic activities.

The role of NGOs is noteworthy, even during the employment period of migrant workers, especially in terms of protective efforts. The PPSW, for example, searches for information on migrant workers in destination countries, including employers’ addresses and phone numbers in addition to migrant workers’ mobile phone numbers. PPSW volunteers contact workers for updates on conditions in destination countries, and migrant workers may share any experiences involving inconvenience or mistreatment from employers with these volunteers. The workers can communicate through a variety of channels, such as surface mail and SMS via mobile phone. PPSW volunteers help liberate mistreated migrant workers by explaining different ways to seek assistance, such as where to go or who to contact. The PPSW also has collaborative efforts with similar NGOs in Indonesia to free migrant workers who are abused by employers. PPSW volunteers likewise assist in tracing remittances failing to reach the intended recipients in the home country. In some cases, the money can be recovered and given to the worker’s family.

Another NGO with affiliations and networks with similar NGOs in many countries is Migrant Care where volunteer staff members initiate rescue efforts for abused migrant workers, sometimes in collaboration with NGOs in the host country. The NGO also appeals to the governments of host

countries to help release migrant workers from abusive employers. In extreme cases, such as when migrant workers are threatened with criminal conviction, whether voluntary or involuntary in nature, the NGO lobbies the Indonesian government to carry out a diplomatic approach aimed at achieving fair sentencing for the migrant workers.

NGOs in host countries take part in providing protection for migrant workers. Some NGOs in Singapore and Malaysia provide temporary shelter to escapees from employers, just like the Indonesian Embassies. NGO officers intervene to help solve migrant worker-employer issues, such as not receiving salaries and overworking conditions; officers approach employers and appeal for payment of workers' salaries. Migrant worker assistance is equally as important upon the return home. In Tulungagung District, East Java, some NGOs, such as Yayasan Paricara, organize training for former migrant workers in various livelihood skills, such as sewing, cooking and handicrafts, with the aim of helping the workers make productive use of earnings and/or continue to generate income for the family's subsistence. Due to budgetary constraints, however, this training is only available to groups of eight to 10 workers. The NGO sometimes procures local resource persons with particular skills to conduct the training rather than professionals to save on costs.

Thus, the advocacy efforts of NGOs are beneficial to migrant workers, including potential migrant workers, and communities. The challenge lies in securing sufficient funds to broaden the outreach and even assist migrant workers in villages that are not project sites. The NGOs are self-sustaining and receive no special budget from government to support activities.

Emerging Patterns and Trends in Indonesian International Labour Migration

Indonesia is a key source of low-skilled international migrant workers. The increasing labour demand from rich Middle Eastern countries in the 1970s accounted for the large volume of Asian labour export. Labour migration to oil exporter countries, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, originally involved infrastructure projects and male workers only. The primary sending countries in Asia were India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Thailand. Over time, the need for domestic workers also grew in these Middle Eastern countries, thereby triggering the feminization of migration phenomenon in Gulf countries in the 1980s. Women workers, especially from Indonesia and Srilanka, accessed the labour market for domestic jobs in Middle Eastern countries (Asis, 2005) during a period when newly industrialized countries in East and Southeast Asia were beginning to emerge as destination countries for migrant workers. Improved economic conditions in destinations such as Hong Kong SAR, China, China, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan, China prompted the need for migrant workers in these countries, especially in construction, manufacturing and agriculture as well as domestic sectors. The increased demand for domestic workers, in particular, was considerable, thus making these countries a new destination for overseas migrant workers, including those from Indonesia (ibid.).

According to estimates, Indonesia meets approximately 30 percent of the international demand for domestic workers.²² The entry of Indonesian women into the domestic sector has, however, attracted considerable controversy. While there are success stories, women working as domestic help overseas are clearly outside the protection of labour legislation, both in Indonesia and in some destination countries. However, this has not stopped the flow of female labour to other countries for domestic work, especially from Indramayu District.

Most female migrant workers originating from Indramayu District have taken on domestic jobs in some Middle East countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates; some of these jobs have been for long-term periods. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear from the children of these migrant workers, including daughters, the desire to follow parents who are migrant workers overseas to work. As Asian countries are becoming more and more popular as destination countries, those who have already experienced working in Middle Eastern countries tend to shift toward Korea and Taiwan, China, for instance, due to closer proximity and much higher salaries as compared to salaries offered in Middle Eastern countries. Asian countries also have fewer employment requirements. Applicants for work in Middle Eastern countries appear to be first-time overseas workers. Hence, more migrant workers can be expected in the flow from Indonesia to Asian countries, especially with experienced workers who have acquired more knowledge and skills from previous employment abroad.

Conclusion and Recommendations

International labour migration in Indonesia is no new phenomenon. The positive and negative effects of international labour migration have also been discussed in many studies conducted by national and foreign researchers. While economic value is often the point of discussion, minimal attention is given to the social costs of migration on families left behind, especially concerning children. According to this study, many social problems experienced by the respondents in Indramayu District stem from the absence of a key family member due to overseas work.

Women migrant workers were identified in approximately 86 percent of the 201 households surveyed with husbands left to care for the household, including preparing meals, washing clothes and overseeing childcare. In some cases, this shift in gender roles has created conflicted gender identities embedded in family life where husbands are traditionally perceived as breadwinners, the husband–wife relationship is disturbed and older children are the primary assistants of husbands in accomplishing household tasks.

There has also been some shift in women's responsibilities at home where extended family members (e.g., grandmothers, older children, sisters) and other relatives are entrusted to take care of the children. Childcare is considered the most difficult household task performed by the family left behind when the wife or mother is working abroad. As children grow and approach the teenage years, the task of supervision becomes more difficult and complicated. Social environments, including peer groups,

22. <http://buruhmigranberdaulat.blogspot.com/2009/08/pernyataan-bersama-jakerla-prt-ja>; accessed 12 October 2009.

have a strong influence on children, especially when children believe more attention can be gained from peers. Children whose mothers are migrant workers tend to disobey fathers and recognize only maternal authority, offering the reason that more emotional attention is offered by mothers than fathers. This situation is more common among boys than girls.

Financial matters are another concern of husbands left behind. Those with very young children (under five years) are particularly restrained from earning extra income by an inability to leave the house. Therefore, husbands depend mainly on spousal remittance. While husbands with teenage children are able to work as the latter share the household tasks and attend to younger children, the father-teenage child relationship sometimes deteriorates because the father is not home most of the time. In some cases, children even feel neglected by both parents.

To cope with emotional problems and loneliness stemming from spousal absence, some men keep busy with jobs, small businesses or any activity outside the home. Others engage in destructive activities, such as smoking, drinking alcohol and gambling. Although no such cases were reported among the informants of this study, even other men remarry as disclosed by a number of husband informants.

Only approximately 9.5 percent of the sample households had the husband as a migrant worker, possibly due to the preference for women to work overseas instead of men as confirmed by the findings of this study. Many informants have revealed financial costs to be lower as the middlemen recruiting women migrant workers lent money to the family. No similar loan assistance is offered to men. Moreover, the cost of departure is much higher in men rather than women workers.

This study also found families where the husband worked abroad to be faced with fewer challenges. There was no shift in gender roles in the family since the wives maintained domestic tasks in the home country and the husbands earned income abroad, as usual. However, financial constraints remained a concern in some households because the husband's income was sometimes insufficient to meet all of the family's needs, such as medication for a family member who was sick. In such cases, the wife had to search for other immediate cash sources.

Many of the wives left behind shared during the interviews that the challenge faced was having no one with which to share everyday occurrences. The wives had nobody to chat with, especially concerning childrearing issues. Similar to the husbands, supervising children, especially teenagers, was the hardest task the women had to perform. Adolescent boys were even more difficult to handle due to the considerable amount of time spent with peers outside the home. As previously mentioned, mothers found it difficult to control children, particularly in the way leisure time was spent, even though the children obeyed mothers more than fathers. One mother commented on sometimes having to go out late at night to look for her teenage boy:

“

I went out at 11 or 12 o'clock at night to look for my boy. I felt really sad and cried while I was searching for him; I regretted allowing my husband to work faraway. I think if my husband were at home, I would not have to do that because my husband would do it. It is hard to be alone rearing and taking care of my teenage boy. (Tas, a 37-year-old wife of a migrant worker)

”

Of the 201 children left behind who were interviewed for the study, the majority had had a mother working overseas as early as preprimary school age (under seven years). Some had reportedly been left by the mothers several months after birth. The women usually returned home for a few months of holiday every two years. Childcare was then relegated to fathers, grandmothers or other female members of the extended family. In a number of cases, the older daughters assumed childcare and other domestic tasks, thereby disrupting normal daily life with shared responsibilities left by mothers instead of focusing on studies or hanging out with friends like other adolescent girls.

The absence of one or both parents in the household due to overseas work can affect child development in many aspects by creating displacement, disruption and changes in childcare arrangements with potential impact on emotional well-being. Although the extended family looks after children and the use of modern communication technology (e.g., cell phones, Internet) has made it easier for children to communicate with parents abroad, children continue to long for the immediate presence, love and care of parents. Some children are able to adjust to this situation, but others find it difficult, especially when the mother is the parent working abroad.

In this study, a number of children left behind (mostly by the mother) experienced social and emotional/psychological problems, despite the presence of fathers or extended family networks as a “substitute mother”. A number of these children felt lonely and abandoned, even when the children knew the remittances would help improve the quality of life. In general, the older family members of the female migrant gave support and love, but also trained the children to adjust to a more self-reliant life without a mother.

With regard to the children’s education, overseas remittances could be said to have provided some stability. However, there were cases of deteriorating academic performance, drop-outs and poor school attendance, which the children attributed to inadequate support from guardians (fathers or grandparents).

Concerning social relationships, the children identified no direct impact of parental absence (mostly mothers) due to overseas work. In fact, these children turned to networks of family and friends for attention and support.

Most of the children did not favor parental migration, but shared a general acceptance of a temporary situation. From the children’s perspective, the father instead of the mother should leave home to work abroad. Clearly, children continue to uphold the traditional gender value in which the father is the breadwinner of the family and the mother takes care of the home and children. The children in this study were however, aware, of the economic nature of the decision for the good of the entire household, as very limited employment opportunities were available in local villages. Hence, some adolescent girls and boys declared also having plans to work abroad.

Based on the findings of the study in Indramayu District, some recommendations are proposed to improve the conditions of families left behind (children, spouses and extended family members) as well as the migrant workers:

1. The government (national to local levels) should set up “crisis centers” where families left behind, especially teenage children, can go when they need to talk about problems in finding clarity and a sense of the migrant situation. The crisis center may also be a venue for husbands of female overseas workers to meet and exchange experiences in household management as a sort of association for husbands left behind.
2. The government (national to the local levels) should develop a programme for the management of remittances for family welfare, especially for families with children left behind, in collaboration with NGOs. The programme may be designed as a human empowerment programme to improve community knowledge about how to manage household earnings and effectively meet children’s nutritional and educational needs.

This activity may be implemented in coordination with other ongoing programmes in the villages, such as integrated health services, early childhood education (under five years of age) and parent-teacher organizations.

3. Socialization programmes should be implemented for relatives entrusted with the care of children left behind to help the relatives share experiences and insight on how to handle children, particularly teenagers.
4. A guidance counsellor programme should be initiated for children of migrant workers in schools.

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3 PATTERNS, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES OF LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Focus on Families and Children Left Behind

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Philippine Migration: Trends, Issues and Challenges

One of the most important phenomena with an enduring impact on the lives of Filipinos today is migration. Migrant labour affects individuals, families, communities and the nation in complex ways just beginning to be appreciated and understood. Initially intended as a short-term strategy to help drive the Philippine economy forward, migration has now become a semi-permanent option for many families seeking a better life than what can be obtained at home.

This study looks at the macro and micro levels of migration, beginning with an explanation of the evolution of migration, government policies in response to the increasing outflow of Filipinos for overseas work and the patterns and trends of these movements. The study then proceeds to analyze the effects of migration on the families left behind, focusing on the perspectives of both adults and children directly affected by the long-term absence of one or more family members. The study concludes with a set of recommendations culled from the dialogues and focus group discussions conducted with the household respondents.

Historical Background

The Philippines has a long migration history which can be traced back to the 16th century when some Filipino crew members of the Spanish galleons plying the Manila-Acapulco trading routes jumped ship and settled in Louisiana.¹ During the first half of the twentieth century, Hawaii and California imported cheap Filipino migrant labour to work on sugar plantations. The Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) organized the recruitment of Filipino labourers in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, in the northern part of the country and in Cebu in the Visayas region. In 1907, 150 Filipinos arrived in Hawaii. This number had increased to 639 by 1909 and to 2,915 by 1910. Over the next 10 years, an estimated 3,000 workers

1. <http://www.csuchico.edu/ncpaso/filipino.htm>.

arrived annually.² During the period from 1906 to 1934, some 120,000–150,000 Filipinos arrived in the United States to work and settle, despite low wages, racial discrimination and restrictive policies preventing citizenship and ownership of land (Asis n.d., 119). In the 1960s, doctors and nurses went to the US, Canada and European countries to fill the skills gaps in those countries. By the early 1970s, Filipinos in the US numbered 343,060; this number had more than doubled by 1980 and then again in 1990 with the figures pegged at 782,895 and 1,406,770, respectively.³ Beginning in the 1970s, however, Filipino migration, especially to the Middle East, notably took on massive proportions brought about by an explicit Philippine policy to send migrant workers to the Middle East as a temporary measure to promote employment and reduce poverty in the country.

Notably, previous waves of migration were initiated by private individuals and professional entities and did not involve the state. By the third wave, which started in 1974, migration had become state-sponsored mainly to generate much needed dollar reserves for the Philippine economy and to absorb surplus labour. Seizing the opportunity offered by the growth of oil-producing economies in the Middle East, the government deployed hundreds of thousands of engineers, construction workers and other professionals there. From 36,075 in 1975, the number of migrant workers in the Middle East has now grown to millions, registering 1,470,826 in 2010 (POEA, 2010). Such huge populations of overseas workers necessitated the establishment of an elaborate bureaucracy to manage the massive flows of workers, initially to the Middle East and then to approximately 125 countries in Asia, Europe, the US and Africa over the years. Another feature of the present migration wave is that both skilled and unskilled labour, such as health professionals, especially nurses, IT technicians, pilots, engineers, seafarers, domestic workers and caregivers are deployed. Whereas in the past the workers fielded abroad were mostly men, hundreds of thousands of women have now been deployed overseas for domestic and care work, thus making the Philippines one of three major countries of origin in Asia (with Indonesia and Sri Lanka). By 1992, women migrants had outnumbered men migrants as the demand for domestic workers and entertainers increased in Taiwan, China, the Middle East, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong SAR, China and Japan. Unlike the previous migration movements enabling Filipino migrants to become permanent settlers in the US and Canada, the majority of overseas Filipino workers (or OFWs) currently have temporary work contracts in the Middle East and other economically developed Asian destinations such as Hong Kong SAR, China, Singapore, South Korea and Malaysia. These trends have implications for Filipino families, mainly because temporary migration does not allow any form of family reunification over long periods of time.

To date, 8.6 million to 11.0 million OFWs can be found worldwide with both permanent immigrants and temporary labour migrants accounting for 11 percent of the total population of the country (POEA, 2011). In 2011, migrant workers contributed some USD20 billion to the national coffers, which exceeded the total foreign investments entering the country. These OFW remittances are the life-line of the Philippine economy.

Philippine Economic Context

The issue of poverty in the Philippines has been both extreme and well-documented over the years. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, approximately 4.67 million families, or 30 million people, suffer from deficient income, even for basic consumption needs (NSCB 2011). Although real GDP growth averaged 5.4 percent in 2003–2006 and 4.3 percent in 2006–2009, or well above

2. <http://opmanong.ssc.hawaii.edu/Filipino/labour.html>.

3. <http://opmanong.ssc.hawaii.edu/filipino/1965.html>.

population growth, the poverty incidence rose from 24.9 percent of the population in 2003 to 26.4 percent in 2006, and then to 26.5 percent in 2009 (World Bank 2011). Such poverty data implies that economic growth has not reached the bottom quarter of the population. Coupled with pervasive government corruption, unequal distribution of wealth and income and a runaway population growth, the Philippines has lagged behind in reducing poverty compared to its Southeast Asian neighbours, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Without a clear reproductive health policy, the Philippines continually records increases in population every year. Over the last 50 years, or from 1960 to 2010, the Philippine population grew from 27.1 million to 94.0 million. During the period from 2000 to 2007, the country registered an annual growth rate of 2.04 percent, thus ranking the Philippines as the twelfth most populous country in the world (ILO, 2012, 7). With a booming population and over 200,000 college graduates, many of whom are unable to find jobs every year. Unemployment and underemployment rates have also risen. Not surprisingly, many Filipinos of working age are opting to migrate rather than take chances in what is perceived as a stagnant Philippine economy.

Overseas Workers: Patterns and Trends

According to estimates, 8.6–11.0 million Filipinos work in more than 125 countries. In 2009 alone, OFWs numbered 1,422,586, a rise of 15.1 percent from 1,236,013 in 2008, with an average daily deployment of 3,377 (POEA, 2009). Approximately 1.9 million OFWs had existing work contracts abroad (otherwise known as overseas contract workers) (NSO 2010). Land-based workers accounted for 67 to 70 percent of all migrant outflow between the early 1980s and 2007, while the proportion of permanent migrants continued to decline from 44 percent in 1976 to as low as seven percent in 2007 (Orbeta and Abrigo, 2009).

The proportion of males to females among OFWs remained higher (52.8 percent versus 47.2 percent), although females were generally younger (aged 25 to 34 years, compared to the males, who were within the 45 and above age group) (NSO 2010). Most OFWs were labourers or unskilled workers (32.4 percent), trade and related workers (15.7 percent), service workers and shop and market sales workers (14.3 percent), plant and machine operators and assemblers (13.0 percent).

Over the past seven years, Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain, have figured among the top destinations for both male and female overseas workers (Table 3.1). While the demand for male workers in construction and other manufacturing activities has somewhat declined, the demand for female household domestic workers and nurses has increased. Hong Kong SAR, China, Singapore and Taiwan, China, continue to employ mainly female household domestic workers; Taiwan, China, also absorbs some industrial workers.

Household service workers, mostly domestic workers, comprised the highest number from 2004 to 2010 (Tables 3.2 and 3.3), and significantly consisted of women. A number of women were also employed as caregivers and nurses. Men were mostly wiremen and electrical workers or plumbers and pipe fitters. What differentiates Filipino domestic workers from women migrants originating in other countries is higher level of education in which most have completed high school and some have completed some years in college (Orbeta and Abrigo, 2009).

TABLE 3.1 - TOP 10 DESTINATION COUNTRIES OF OFWS, 2004–2010

DESTINATION COUNTRY	NO. OF OFWs						
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Saudi Arabia	188,107	194,350	223,459	238,419	275,933	291,419	293,049
United Arab Emirates	68,386	82,039	99,212	120,657	193,810	196,815	201,214
Hong Kong SAR, China	87,254	98,693	96,929	59,169	78,345	100,142	101,340
Qatar	21,360	31,421	45,795	56,277	84,342	89,290	87,813
Singapore	22,198	28,152	28,369	49,431	41,678	54,421	70,251
Kuwait	36,591	40,306	47,917	37,080	38,903	45,900	53,010
Taiwan, China	45,059	46,737	39,025	37,136	38,546	33,751	36,866
Italy	23,329	21,267	25,413	17,855	22,623	23,159	25,595
Bahrain	8,257	9,968	11,736	9,898	13,079	15,001	15,434
Canada	4,453	3,629	3,629	12,380	17,399	17,344	13,885
TOTAL	704,586	740,360	788,070	811,070	974,399	1,092,162	1,123,676

Source: Overseas Employment Statistics 2010, POEA.

TABLE 3.2 - MAJOR OCCUPATIONS OF LAND-BASED OFWS, 2004–2010

MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	NO. OF OFWs						
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Professional, Medical, Technical and Related Workers	94,147	63,941	41,258	43,225	49,649	47,886	41,835
Administrative and Managerial Workers	565	490	817	1,139	1,516	1,290	1,439
Clerical Workers	5,323	5,538	7,912	13,662	18,101	15,403	10,706
Sales Workers	3,950	4,261	5,517	7,942	11,525	8,348	7,242
Service Workers	113,423	133,907	144,321	107,135	123,332	138,222	154,535
Agricultural Workers	632	350	807	952	1,354	1,349	1,122
Production Workers	63,719	74,802	103,584	121,715	132,295	117,609	120,647
Other	3	996	3,906	10,613	494	1,645	2,753
TOTAL	281,762	284,285	308,122	306,383	338,266	331,752	340,279

Source: Overseas Employment Statistics 2010, POEA.

TABLE 3.3 - TOP 10 OCCUPATIONS BY SEX, 2010

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	NO. OF OFWs		
	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Household Service Workers	1,703	94,880	96,583
Charworkers, Cleaners and Related Workers	2,612	9,521	12,133
Professional Nurses	1,828	10,254	12,082
Caregivers and Caretakers	543	8,750	9,293
Waiters, Bartenders and Related Workers	4,393	4,396	8,789
Wiremen and Electrical Workers	8,576	30	8,606
Plumbers and Pipe Fitters	8,391	16	8,407
Welders and Flame-Cutters	5,037	22	5,059
Housekeeping and Related Service Workers	701	4,098	4,799
Bricklayers, Stonemasons and Tile Setters	4,478	29	4,507
TOTAL	154,677	185,602	340,279

Source: Overseas Employment Statistics 2010, POEA

From 2001 to 2010, Philippine migration was also characterized by a dramatic increase in the number of new-hire domestic workers among land-based women migrant workers (Table 3.4). In 2007 and 2008, however, the number of male overseas workers was slightly higher than the number of female overseas workers. The figures generally affirm the trend toward the feminization of migration. Notably, however, these figures do not reflect the same for sea-based workers or seafarers. In 2010, for instance, the Philippines deployed approximately 347,000 seafarers, while the demand for the same in 2011 was 400,000 (Philippine News Agency 2011).

Overseas remittance from Filipino migrants has been increasing annually. In 2010, remittance amounted to USD18,762,989, which was up from 2009 by eight percent (USD17,348,052). The highest remittance came from permanent Filipino emigrants to the US and Canada. The Middle East and Asia were popular sources of remittance from temporary migrants (Table 3.5).

TABLE 3.4 - GENDER COMPOSITION OF LAND-BASED OFWS (NEW HIRES), 2001-2010

YEAR	NO. OF OFWs	
	MALE	FEMALE
2010	185,602	154,677
2009	175,298	156,454
2008	163,338	174,928
2007	146,337	160,046
2006	184,454	123,688
2005	205,206	79,079
2004	209,457	72,355
2003	166,322	66,344
2002	198,423	88,732
2001	186,018	72,186

Source: Overseas Employment Statistics 2010, POEA

TABLE 3.5 - TOP 10 REMITTANCE SOURCES, 2005–2010

COUNTRY	NO. OF OFWs					
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
United States	6,424,848	6,526,429	7,564,887	7,825,607	7,323,661	7,862,207
Canada	117,061	590,627	595,079	1,308,692	1,900,963	2,022,611
Saudi Arabia	949,372	1,117,915	1,141,319	1,387,120	1,470,571	1,544,343
United Kingdom	300,725	561,670	684,007	776,354	859,612	888,959
Japan	356,659	453,398	401,612	575,181	773,561	882,996
United Arab Emirates	257,429	427,246	529,963	621,232	644,822	775,237
Singapore	240,149	285,126	386,409	523,951	649,943	734,131
Italy	430,071	574,662	635,944	678,539	521,297	550,515
Germany	142,530	162,020	207,935	304,644	433,488	448,204
Norway	19,814	128,279	159,150	185,619	352,957	372,701
TOTAL	10,689,005	12,761,308	14,449,928	16,426,854	17,348,052	18,762,989

Source: Overseas Employment Statistics 2010, POEA

Policies on the Management of Philippine Labour Migration

The Philippines has been regarded by the international community⁴ as a model for the management of migration programmes, despite much criticism from the migrants themselves. The Philippines has a strong legal framework for overseas workers and guaranteed by the Constitution and the Migrant Rights Protection Act of 1995, or Republic Act (RA) 8042. The country is the first to have passed such a law protecting overseas migrant workers. Among the notable features of the Act are the following:

- Establishment of the Office of the Undersecretary of Migrant Workers Affairs and the Legal Assistance Fund for Filipino Overseas Workers;
- Support for Filipino migrant workers, whether documented or undocumented;
- Stiff penalties for both illegal recruiters and legal recruiters engaged in illegal practices;
- Protection of Filipino migrant workers and promotion of migrant worker welfare as a priority concern of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Philippine diplomatic posts abroad and
- Institution of advisory, information and reintegration services.⁵

The Philippines is one of the countries to have ratified the comprehensive UN Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the UN Optional Anti-Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, both of which provide protection for migrant workers (2000). The Philippines has also ratified ILO Convention No. 97 (ILO Convention on Migration for Employment) and ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers Supplementary Provisions). More recently in last June 2011, the Philippines played a key role in supporting and adopting the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

4. Specifically, the Philippines has been praised for its policy in protecting Filipino migrants, regardless of migrant status and repatriating migrant workers caught in the crossfire of conflicts in destination countries, such as in the recent Libyan revolution.

5. RA 8042 is an Act to institute policies on overseas employment and establish a higher standard of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers, families left behind and overseas Filipinos in distress, etc.

An elaborate infrastructure of offices and mechanisms has been set up since 1974 to manage and support overseas work. In addition, the government provides consultative processes with nongovernment organizations (NGOs) on key migration policies. A strong civil society sector composed of migrant families and migrant rights advocacy groups constantly maintains a critical engagement with the government. Hence, public pressure and NGO militancy have sometimes resulted in changes in Philippine foreign policy.⁶

The Philippine Constitution provides the underlying principles to ensure the protection of the Filipino labour force (local or overseas) and promote equal employment opportunities for all. The Philippine government is guided by the “four-pronged strategy” of managing migratory labour flow: (1) regulation; (2) protection; (3) reintegration and (4) support for family (Calzado 2007; Imson 2009). Regulation pertains to the intervention to facilitate not only the outflow of migrants, but also the return of OFWs. This may also involve bilateral agreements between the Philippines and the receiving countries. Protection is provided on-site (assistance provided in the country where the migrant is working) and off-site (orientation given to workers prior to departure, which includes information about the destination country as well as potential risks). Reintegration entails providing available options such as livelihood programmes; loans for micro and small business enterprises and educational support for the children of migrant workers upon the return of OFWs. Finally, family support refers to assistance in ensuring the well-being of the OFW family (Calzado, 2007; Imson, 2009).

POEA (2010) lists major government policies and programmes for migrant workers and families:

- A predeparture orientation programme, especially for women in domestic employment who are vulnerable to maltreatment, abuse and other forms of violence. Included in the syllabus are modules on health and sexuality, HIV/AIDS, self-defense techniques, etc.
- Presence of Female Philippine Overseas Labour Officers and female welfare officers in countries with large populations of women among Filipino workers.
- Establishment of welfare centres, bilateral negotiations with receiving countries and lobbying for policy reform and programmes for migrant workers at international forums.
- Passage of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, Anti-Mail Order Bride Law, and the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (1995).
- Ratification of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, Optional Protocol on Anti-Trafficking and Optional Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land.
- Reinforcement of the integrity of the Philippine passport as implemented under the Philippine Passport Act, Philippine Labour Code and certain provisions of the Immigration Act.
- Establishment of the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs at the forefront on matters related to assistance for Filipinos in distress overseas by virtue of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act.

The Philippines has actively pursued negotiations and succeeded in signing 82 Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with 59 labour-receiving countries, 35 percent of which are in Europe with the remainder in Canada, Jordan, Korea, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (Agunias, 2008). These BLAs

6. The death of a domestic worker, Flor Contemplacion, in Singapore in 1995 caused the severance of relations between the Philippine and Singaporean governments. Similarly, public pressure to save Angelo de la Cruz, a Filipino migrant worker, caused the Philippine government to withdraw support for the US-led Coalition of the Willing (countries supportive of the war in Iraq) in exchange for the life of de la Cruz.

are subject-specific with the majority pertaining to the recognition of Filipino seafarer credentials, which is crucial to the employment of Filipino seafarers because, without the BLAs, Filipino seafarers cannot board ships owned by or carrying the flags of these countries (Sto. Tomas, 2008). The countries signing a mutual agreement on social security with the Philippines are Austria, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Canada, Quebec, Switzerland, the Netherlands and, just recently, in June 2010, Portugal (CFO 2005; Social Security System; DFA, 2010).

Several Philippine agencies are working on migration-related concerns or issues. Among these are the Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). Table 3.6 shows the distinct characteristics of each agency in terms of target clients and responsibilities.

TABLE 3.6 - AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

CHARACTERISTIC	CFO	POEA	OWWA	DFA
CLIENTS	Emigrants Spouses or Partners of Foreign National Permanent Residents and Immigrants Overseas	Temporary Migrants/OFWs (Documented or Regular)	Temporary Migrants/OFWs (Documented or Regular)	Overseas Filipinos, Whether Permanent, Temporary or Irregular Migrants
FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interests and Welfare of Filipino Emigrants Encourages Assistance to Philippine Development Initiatives Promotes Filipino Culture and Heritage among Overseas Filipinos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes Contracts and Related Documents for Overseas Employment Regulates Recruitment Agencies Coordinates with Host Governments for Reasonable Terms of Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts Predeparture Seminars and Training Implements Reintegration Programmes Provides Scholarship, Livelihood and Other Services to Overseas Filipinos and OFW Families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forges Multilateral and Bilateral Agreements with Host Countries Promotes the Political and Econ-Omic Interests of the Philippines Overseas Implements Government's Assistance-to-Nationals Programme

Source: Commission on Filipino Overseas, FAQ Section, www.cfo.gov.ph; accessed 21 July 2010.

Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. The POEA was established under Executive Order (EO) No. 797 in 1982 to promote and develop overseas employment programmes and to protect the rights of migrant workers. The agency was reorganized in 1987 under EO No. 247 to regulate private sector participation in recruitment and overseas placement to secure the best terms of employment for OFWs.

The core functions of the POEA are **industry regulation** (e.g., issuance of licenses to private recruitment agencies for overseas recruitment, arbitration and hearing of complaints and cases filed against recruitment agencies, setting of minimum labour standards); **employment facilitation** (e.g., accreditation or registration of foreign principals and employers hiring Filipino workers, evaluation and processing of employment contracts); **worker's protection** (e.g., intensification of public education and information campaigns, conducting of pre-employment orientation and anti-illegal recruitment seminars nationwide, conducting of pre-deployment orientation seminars).

To date, the POEA continues to facilitate access to overseas jobs and the provision of intervention programmes to Filipino workers. Among its specific actions⁷ are the following:

1. Provision of legal assistance to complainants with cases against licensed and illegal recruiters. In 2009, the POEA handled a total of 8,173 adjudication cases.
2. Facilitation of settlement agreements with a total value of PHP75 million involving 2,771 beneficiaries. According to the POEA, settlement agreements are effective instruments for de-clogging adjudication cases with fast and acceptable out-of-court resolution of disputes.
3. Conducting of Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar (PEOS), Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS), Capability Enhancement Training, and Anti-Illegal Recruitment-Anti-Trafficking in Persons (AIR-TIP) Seminars.

Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The OWWA is an agency attached to the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) and the lead government agency tasked with protecting and promoting the welfare of OFWs and OFW families. The agency's mandates are twofold: (1) to deliver welfare services and benefits⁸ and (2) to ensure capital build-up and fund viability. The OWWA aims to develop and implement responsive programmes and services while ensuring fund viability toward the protection of the interest and promotion of the welfare of member-OFWs. In recent years, the OWWA has also actively assisted in facilitating the repatriation of distressed Filipino domestic workers who had been raped, exploited or abused as well as Filipinos affected by wars, conflicts and natural disasters.

The OWWA's funding comes from the USD 25 membership contributions of OWWA members. With the contributions, an OWWA member is entitled to the following: (1) health care, disability and death benefits; (2) education and training benefits; (3) workers' assistance and on-site services and (4) social services and family welfare assistance.

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 provides a framework for the stronger protection of Filipino workers abroad with the formation of the Legal Assistance Fund, the Assistance-to-Nationals Fund and the designation of a Legal Assistant for Migrant

7. Based on the 2009 POEA Annual Report, www.poea.gov.ph/ar/ar2009.pdf; accessed 22 July 2010.

8. Aside from the OWWA, Philippine social protection programmes for OFWs are provided by the voluntary social security coverage of the Social Security System (SSS) and the expanded programme of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth). Under the National Health Insurance Program, OFWs confined abroad due to illness or injury are entitled to PhilHealth benefits, provided eligibility certificates are active. Similarly, OFW families in the Philippines may have hospitalization benefits through any of PhilHealth's 1,548 accredited hospitals nationwide (PhilHealth 2005).

Workers' Affairs at the DFA (DFA 2010). Established by RA 8042, the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs of the DFA provides advice to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs on matters concerning the formulation and execution of Philippine foreign policy in relation to the protection of the dignity, fundamental rights and freedom of Filipino citizens abroad.

In 2008, the DFA assisted 7,996 OFWs in distress and coordinated the release of 164 sea-based Filipino workers in emergency situations, including the 117 Filipino seafarers held hostage in Somalia. In addition, the DFA monitored and negotiated death penalty cases involving Philippine nationals, with 26 death penalty cases commuted and now dropped from the list (ibid.).

Commission on Filipino Overseas. Established in 1980 through RA 79, the CFO is tasked with strengthening ties with Filipinos overseas and promoting OFW interests in the Philippines and abroad.⁹ The agency serves Filipino communities overseas under a four-pronged programme, (1) Migrant Social and Economic Integration; (2) Filipino Education and Heritage; (3) Filipino Unity and National Development and (4) Policy Development and Data Banking. The CFO ensures that Filipinos migrating to other countries are aware and prepared to encounter new sociocultural environments. The CFO provides many services (CFO 2008), such as predeparture registration and orientation for Filipino emigrants; peer counselling for children of emigrants; and *Lakbay Aral sa Pilipinas* and *Lingkod sa Kapwa Filipino*, which are programmes to encourage second generation Filipinos in learning about the Filipino culture and heritage.

The issues and concerns of migrant workers in general and women migrant workers in particular, are multifaceted (Table 3.7). Given that hundreds of thousands of Filipino migrant workers are bent on leaving for abroad owing to the dearth of promising options in the country, many simply adjust to available jobs abroad, even if these jobs are far beneath the OFWs' academic credentials. Many domestic workers in Hong Kong SAR, China, Singapore and Canada, for instance, are college graduates or have had some years in college but "underqualify" in order to work abroad. Despite the numerous issues and problems at every stage of the migration process, Filipinos continue to persist in going abroad to improve quality of life, support family subsistence, send children to good schools, build or improve homes and so forth. Of the many difficulties encountered by migrant workers, particularly women, the most difficult to tackle are issues surrounding the families left behind.

TABLE 3.7 - ISSUES AND PROBLEMS RAISED BY WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS

PREDEPARTURE	ON-SITE	RETURN AND REINTEGRATION
High cost of placement fees driving migrant workers to indebtedness, even before working abroad.	Abusive and Exploitative Work Conditions	Deficient Savings
Inadequate Knowledge and Information about Host Countries	Contract Substitution	No viable work opportunities at home.
Illegal Recruitment	Absence of legal, health and social entitlements	Minimal assistance from government programmes.

9. Interview with Atty. Golda R. Roma of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), 1 July 2010.

PREDEPARTURE	ON-SITE	RETURN AND REINTEGRATION
Limited Job Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-recognition of domestic labour as work. • Use of the sponsorship (kafala) system, which governs the entry and residency of migrant workers in most countries in the Middle East. This system ties the worker to a single employer (sponsor) for the duration of employment contract, thereby providing opportunities for employers to exploit workers. 	Issues in family reintegration, particularly for fragmented families; feelings of alienation from spouses and children.
Non-Recognition Of Credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No on-site monitoring by host country on the conditions of migrant workers, particularly domestic workers. • Risk of sexual harassment, rape and other forms of violence and abuse, especially for women, including trafficking in women. • Issues with families left behind, including care/emotional deficit among children and estrangement from spouses. • Sociocultural adaptation problems in the host country, such as racial and gender-based abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of planning upon return home. • Dependence on return migration. • Difficulties in terms of social reintegration into the community/home country, particularly for victims of abuse.

Source: Javate de Dios (2008).

Role of NGOs in Defending Migrant Rights

In view of the problems and issues frequently faced by migrant workers in general and women migrant workers in particular, many civil society groups have been organized to assert and defend migrant worker rights. Since the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, hundreds of NGOs have sprung up as a result of the democratic space opened by the government of President Corazon Aquino. NGO activism concerning migrant issues is particularly active in the Philippines, Hong Kong SAR, China and countries in Europe and North America where migrant Filipino workers are numerous.

NGOs active in migrant issues are varied and operate on multiple levels. The aim of these organizations is to assist migrants in different ways, such as advocating for migrant rights internationally and nationally; assisting migrants by responding to sociopsychological needs; offering economic opportunities for self-help economic projects in the reintegration stage; and offering legal and paralegal services when migrant workers have cases against illegal recruiters. In addition, according to Alcid (2006), NGOs act as fiscalizers by “seeking redress for grievances, engaging the national government to put in place

pro-OFW policies and protective mechanisms, providing direct support (e.g. legal aid, counselling, crisis intervention, welfare assistance), raising consciousness on the structural bases of overseas employment, educating migrants about migrant worker rights and entitlements, while organizing OFW families, research and publications with international networking.”

Organizations like Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation, Inc. (Unlad Kabayan) and Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) initiate income-generating activities for migrants. Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative, Inc., works closely with local governments and communities in assisting families left behind through programmes on financial literacy, management of remittances and psychosocial counselling, particularly for children.

Membership-based organizations and networks are available for current and former migrants, as well as OFW families, such as the International Union of Overseas Workers, Inc. established in 1992 and the Seamen’s Wives Association of the Philippines established in 1978. Also included are sector-specific organizations, such as the Associate Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) (Orbeta, Abrigo and Cabalfin 2009). A number of church-based organizations are similarly active in assisting migrants and families, for example, the Center for Overseas Workers (COW) founded by a congregation of Catholic nuns in 1982. These organizations conduct predeparture seminars for migrants with counselling for migrants exploited while working abroad. The Ecumenical Mission for Migrants Inc. (ECMI) is active in lobbying for migrant rights and the pastoral care of migrants. The Scalabrini brothers established the Scalabrini Migrant Center in 1987, which initiated the high-quality publication, *Asia Pacific Migration Journal*.

In addition to individual organizations, other alliances and networks have been formed to campaign against human rights violations of migrants, including women victims of trafficking, such as the Network Opposed to Violence against Women Migrants (NOVA) and the Coalition against Trafficking in Women. The Philippine Migrant Rights Watch monitors the implementation of the Migrant Rights Act of 1995 and the amended version of RA 10022, while also lobbying for the representation of migrant groups in government consultative processes touching on migrant issues. Internationally, the Migrant Forum Asia, which represents a significant number of migrant rights groups from Asian countries, is one of the leading voices for migrants in the Global Forum on Migration, development conferences and other international events on migrants. The growing political importance of migrant groups stems from the fact that migrant workers comprise nearly 10 percent of the population and contribute an indispensable source of foreign exchange through remittances. Another indicator of this influence is the endorsement and support from politicians who have taken on the agenda of migrant workers as a political issue during elections (de Dios, 2011).

Lastly, colleges and universities have begun including migration courses in academic programmes. Miriam College offers the first full programme on Migration Studies at the MA level, while the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University have integrated migration subjects into academic curricula. These institutions work closely with migrant groups in communities for research and publication projects (ibid.).

Social Costs: Focus on Families Left Behind in the Philippines

The issue of families left behind has been the subject of growing literature on migration in the Philippines. This interest stems from the feminization of transnational migration where hundreds and thousands of women, many of whom are married with children, leave families to be employed as domestic workers abroad for the most part. Such arrangements can cause disruption in the family, especially with the shift in gender roles between men and women. Women, who are principally expected to perform reproductive work and care functions in the family, take on a double burden when husbands or partners migrate. The departure of women, however, results in a major reconfiguration of family arrangements for managing the household and childcare. In cases where the husband or partner left behind is unwilling or unable to assume domestic roles, the household turns to the grandparents and/or female siblings for assistance, or even hires a domestic worker to fill the care gap left by the migrant mother.

Many studies are concerned with how migration results in a “care drain” or “emotional gap” between migrants and children, which may precipitate family disintegration and breakdown. In many instances, migrant women are blamed because stability and family life are more challenged when a woman (wife or mother) migrates. Studies also show that children of absent mothers appear to be more affected by migration (Asis 2006; Carandang, Sison and Carandang 2007).

Aside from exploitation and abuse, separation from children is the most painful social cost of migration for mothers (Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, 2008). In a study conducted by Sobritchea (2005), migrant women reportedly experience difficulties and emotional struggles in long-distance mothering in which motherly influence and presence are reasserted not only through surrogates but also through frequent communication with children. Negative effects can be exacerbated if the long-term migration of one parent or extended separation periods lead to marital instability or even the permanent disruption of family unity due to temptation and infidelity brought about by severe loneliness (Coronel and Unterreiner, 2005; Castro, 2002). The Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) reveals an undetermined number of broken families because the spouse takes on another partner while the husband or wife is away (Marcelo, 2007).

Another area of concern is the challenge of rebuilding relationships with the children left behind by the returning migrant. Tharan (2009) notes that children left behind by migrant parents, particularly migrant mothers, are clearly affected, whether materially or psychologically and emotionally. Conflicts and contradictions emerge between the returning parents and children left behind (e.g., if the parents are unable to support the financial needs of the children as in the past, or if the children are no longer accustomed to being disciplined or told what to do). During the research team’s public consultation with NGOs, Prof. Malou Alcid from the University of the Philippines confirmed the above findings, pointing out numerous problems in the reunification of families, especially after a prolonged absence. These issues include alienation of children from the migrant parent, estrangement from spouses and persistent material expectation of families and relatives nearly compelling the migrant women to migrate yet again “for the sake of the family.”¹⁰

10. This is an oft repeated narrative of many migrant woman workers who, despite the harsh realities of overseas employment and the not-so-positive consequences of migration on the family, persist in working abroad. Malou Alcid, Reactor during the Public Consultation on the Social Cost of Migration organized by WAGI, 30 June 2011, Crowne Plaza, Pasig City, Philippines.

Migration of either parent can also affect the social behavior of children. In a study by Battistella and Conaco (1996), children with absent mothers showed poorer social adjustment and suffered impeded psychological development. Tharan (2009) further observed that children left behind, usually the eldest children, take on adult roles and bear the pressure of assuming the caring responsibility in the family, such as looking after younger siblings.

Description of the Research Sites

This study was undertaken in Metro Manila (National Capital Region), the largest urban centre in the Philippines. Metro Manila has the highest concentration of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the country, followed by the Southern Luzon, Central Luzon and Ilocos Regions. The sampling population was selected from two districts, namely, Quezon City¹¹ and Caloocan City. In Quezon City, the research sites were Escopa, Libis, Palmera, Botocan, Krus na Ligas and Batasan Hills High School. In Caloocan City, the respondents came from the villages of Hillcrest Subdivision, Bagumbong 171, Queensville, Deparo, Natividad, Senate Village, Urduja Subdivision, Kingstown 2, TNR 3, Solar Village, Dolmar and Recom Ville. The respondents were chosen on the basis of relative OFW concentration, accessibility and security. Both sites are considered informal settlements in Manila.

The selected communities are governed administratively by a “barangay,” the smallest political administrative unit of the local government, which is headed by a barangay captain with the assistance of councilors. The barangay hall is built near the entrance of the community to make it accessible to the residents. Small convenience stores, locally known as *sari-sari* stores, are interspersed among the houses. Generally selling consumables in the forms of food and dry goods, these stores are operated by entrepreneurial households, including families left behind by labour migrants who have allocated a portion of the overseas remittance to such forms of investment. The store is not a separate structure of the house, but usually an available space within the living area that is suitable for receiving customers. Such types of convenience stores do not sell in bulk but only day-to-day items for immediate consumption.

OFWs account for a significant number of the urban poor population commonly referred to as informal settlers and generally defined as “. . . households whose tenure status is ‘rent-free’ without the consent of the owner” (Cruz, 2010). Approximately 526 urban poor communities can be found in the cities and municipalities of Metro Manila and account for some 2.54 million men, women and children living in the most depressed areas of the country’s prime metropolis. The houses are located on either private or government-owned vacant lands, along rivers and creeks, in garbage dumps, along railroad tracks, under bridges and beside factories and other industrial establishments.

11. Formerly the capital of the country (1948–1976), Quezon City is the most populous city within the National Capital Region, or NCR, with heavy OFW concentration.

Many of the residents in the selected communities are internal migrants who have moved from the provinces to the city in search of “greener pastures”. Having no means to rent housing, the squatters settle illegally on unoccupied private or public land, including sidewalks, alleys, roads or waterways. Informal settler communities generally straddle a city road that remains passable to regular public commuter vehicles, such as jeepneys and tricycles. Despite exposure to harm associated with the locations, residents resist relocation plans by the government since the aforementioned tend to move the squatters away from work venues. Informal settlements expand without any kind of community planning and zoning, and configuration depends upon how the residents manage available space. Houses are built close together in rows facing one another and randomly distributed in whatever space is fit for occupancy.

Facilities supporting consumer needs and commonly found inside these communities are the following:

- *Sari-Sari* Stores;
- Wet markets;
- Beauty salons;
- Mini grocery stores;
- *Carinderia* or eateries;
- Barbecue stands;
- Other kinds of retail stores and
- Tricycle taxi terminals, the tricycle taxis (three-wheeled vehicles) being the major vehicle used to move around the community.

In Quezon City, most of the male residents earn income as drivers (tricycle and other public vehicles), contractual on-and-off construction or carpentry workers, painters, masons, plumbers or welders. The women are vendors or laundry/domestic workers. The unemployment rate is 40 to 70 percent among adults (20 years old and up) in which the residents attribute to the education deficit. The largest income providers are women engaged in vending and running retail stores. Among men, the most significant sources of income are driving and construction work. Potential OFW workers come from the unemployed sector of the community, whether male or female. Cases of drinking and drug use are not uncommon, especially among unemployed men, which sometimes results in quarrelling among neighbours.

In general, food accounts for 50 percent of the household expenses. School and related fees constitute the second priority in terms of budgetary allocation. Other expense items are house rent, utilities and cigarettes. Clearly, family income is largely spent on daily subsistence, with very little, if any at all, to set aside as savings.

In Caloocan City, the research communities are considerably more developed in comparison to those in Quezon City. The communities have mixed occupancy, including service, domestic and foreign workers; regular employees in the local formal sector and seafarers.¹² Part of the community also consists of fishing families, whose current generation seeks marine careers. On the average, the houses are well-built and made of good construction materials following a special architectural design for OFW high-income earners.

¹² Seafarers are considered as a sector of sea-based high-income earners relative to land-based OFWs.

Sociodemographic Respondent Profiles

The study covered a total of 250 adult respondents and 249 child respondents. The number of adults was nearly equal between the two sites (about 54 percent from Caloocan and 46 percent from Quezon City). The child respondents in Quezon City, however, were significantly higher in number, comprising more than three-fourths of the total sample (79 percent versus 21 percent from Caloocan City).

Adult Respondents

Most of the respondents were female (83.2 percent) which means more women were left behind to take care of the family. In slightly more than half of the households, the respondent was the spouse of the migrant worker, whether female or male, or a female relative. Mothers of migrants comprised 19.2 percent of the respondents, while fathers made up 4.4 percent. The rest were grandmothers, eldest daughters, aunts, uncles, godmothers or neighbours.

The household size ranged from three to six. Some 20.8 percent of the household respondents had three members; 18.0 percent had four; and 14.4 percent had six.

The majority of the respondents belonged to the 35 to 54 age group, with more adults in the late thirties and early fifties (Table 3.8). Over three-fourths were married (85.6 percent). The others were either widows, single sisters or eldest daughters of the migrant.

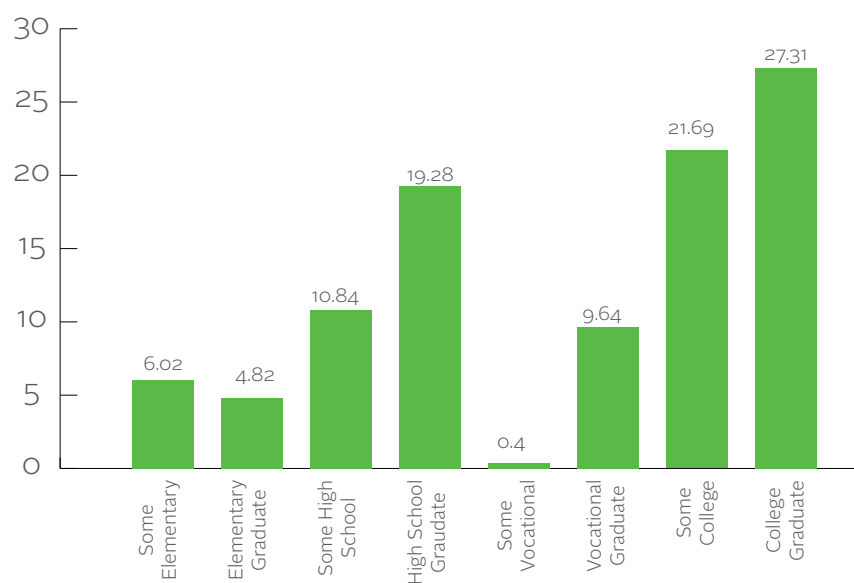
Nearly half of the respondents pursued education after high school. Slightly over one-fourth (27.2 percent) had degrees in accounting, commerce, education, management, chemistry, nutrition and engineering. Approximately 21.7 percent were unable to complete college, and very few took vocational courses (0.4 percent). High school graduates constituted approximately 19.3 percent (Figure 3.1).

More than half of the respondents were unemployed (62.8 percent). The remainder earned income from working as sales agents, usually of cosmetic or beauty products (14.8 percent), providing services (9.2 percent), engaging in production and related work or operating transport equipment (7.2 percent), rendering clerical work (3.2 percent) and taking on professional or technical jobs (2.0 percent) (Figure 3.2). A number were barangay employees and elected officials (e.g., *kagawad*, or councilors), teachers, security guards, insurance and marketing agents, owners of *sari-sari* stores and carinderia, market vendors and street sellers.

TABLE 3.8 - ADULT RESPONDENT AGE DISTRIBUTION

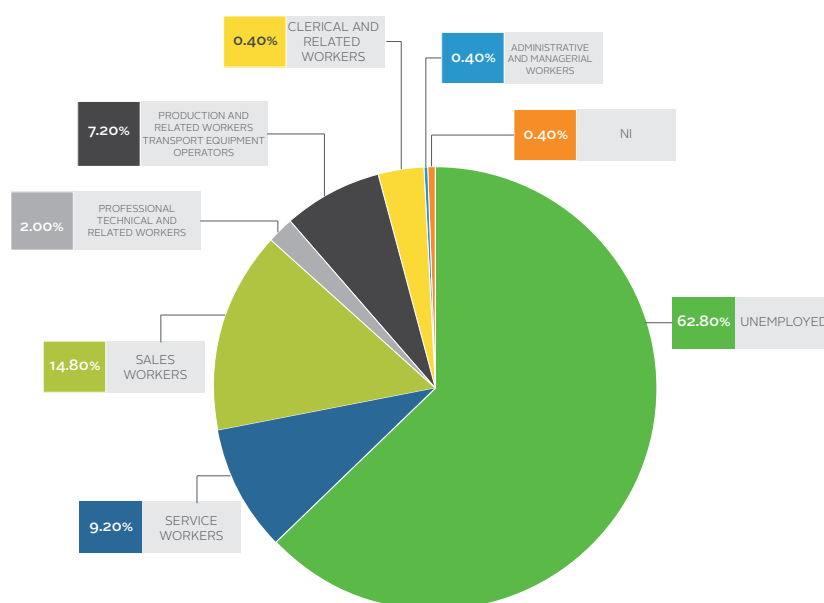
AGE GROUP	NO.	PERCENT
< 25	6	2.4
25–29	9	3.6
30–34	24	9.6
35–39	41	16.4
40–44	36	14.4
45–49	34	13.6
50–54	45	18.0
55–59	25	10.0
60+	30	12.0
Total	250	100.0

FIGURE 3.1 - ADULT RESPONDENT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS



Given the significant number of unemployed respondents, 60.8 percent did not have a regular source of income other than the remittance sent by the migrant workers. Those earning PHP1,000 to PHP5,000 monthly comprised the highest number of income-generating respondents (13.2 percent). Very few earned PHP10,001 to PHP15,000 a month (8.0 percent), and even fewer received a monthly income of PHP15,001 to PHP20,000 (6.4 percent). The monthly incomes declared by the respondents did not include the remittances sent by the migrant workers.

FIGURE 3.2 - ADULT RESPONDENT OCCUPATIONS



The majority of the households owned the current residence (56.4 percent). Houses were usually made of cinder blocks combined with wood. In most cases, the houses had been built part-by-part, as the household depended on the migrant's remittance for buying materials. Some houses were already complete while others remained unfinished. Approximately 18.4 percent of the respondents admitted to being informal settlers, having built houses on government land. The land, however, was intended to be sold to the residents in the future as part of the local government's plan. Only a few of the respondents were merely renting the houses (10.4 percent).

Some one-fourth of the respondents lived in one-room residences; the same proportion had three-bedroom houses. More respondents resided in two-bedroom houses (37.2 percent).

Before the migrants had departed overseas, a number of the household respondents did not own the houses of residence. Approximately 16.8 percent of the respondents even lived with parents. Based on the responses gathered by the research team, there was an increase in ownership from 42.0 percent to 56.4 percent after the migrants left to work overseas which might be attributed to the capacity of the households to set aside a certain amount from the remittance to save for buying a house and making home improvements.

Child Respondents

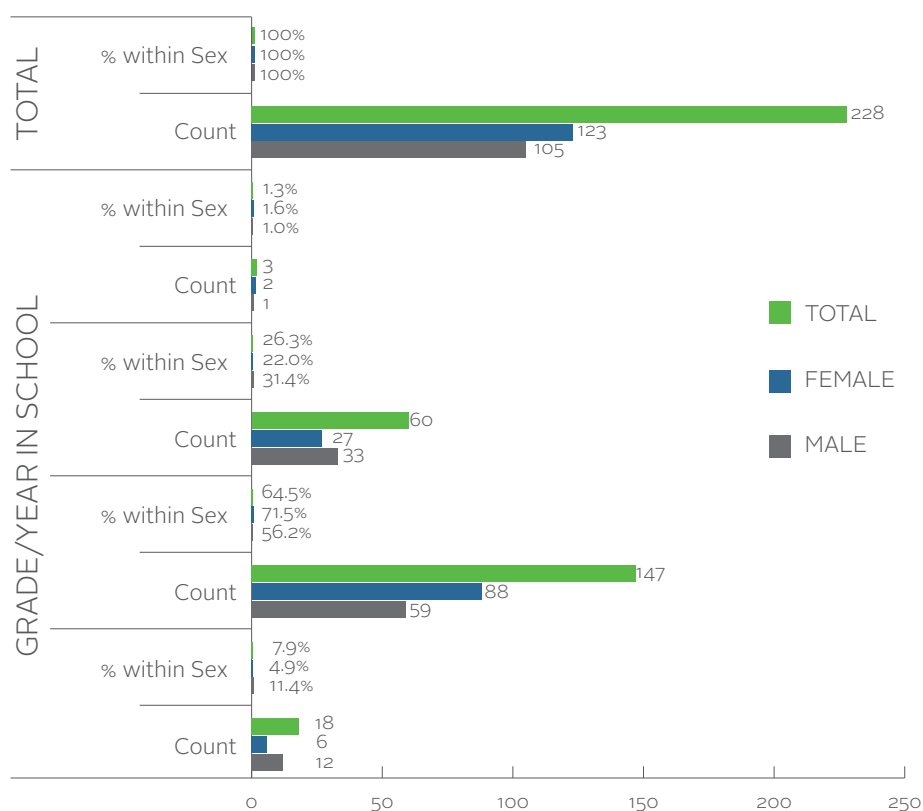
The 249 child respondents were almost equally divided between girls and boys (54.6 percent and 45.4 percent, respectively). Nearly half belonged to the 10 to 14-year and 15 to 19-year age groups (Table 3.9).

Most of the children were in school (228, or 91.6 percent), with the girls slightly outnumbering the boys (123 versus 105) (Figure 3.3). In all, 21 children were not enrolled. High school students comprised more than half of the respondents currently enrolled (147, or 64.5 percent). Girls comprised approximately 60 percent of these. Those in college made up slightly over one-fourth (60, or 26.3 percent) with more boys than girls among them.

TABLE 3.9 - CHILD RESPONDENT AGE DISTRIBUTION

AGE GROUP	PERCENT
< 10	2.4
10–14	3.6
15–19	9.6
20–24	16.4
25 & up	14.4
Total	100.0

FIGURE 3.3 - CHILD RESPONDENTS' GRADE/YEAR LEVEL BY SEX



Sociodemographic Profile of Labour Migrants

The labour migrants in the study were either rehires or second generation labour migrants in first labour contracts. More than half were males (65.2 percent). In order of departure, the men who had left for overseas work were as follows: husbands, brothers, nephews and fathers of a labour migrant. Females comprised 34.4 percent of the migrants and were either sisters, nieces, mothers or wives of a labour migrant.

FGD participants included grandfathers or grandmothers who were former OFWs. One emerging trend noted among these migrants was first generation migrant status who were generally related to an OFW, such as sons (second generation labour migrants), younger sisters, nephews or nieces.

The rehiring pattern shows generational migration as a trend among families who have come to rely on overseas work as a means of survival. In many cases, OFW parents are even the first to encourage children to take courses to qualify for work abroad.

Among the majority of the adult respondents, the migrant worker was the husband (58.0 percent); the remainder were brothers, sons, fathers or nephews. In nearly half of the households (45.6 percent), the male migrant worker had been away for five years. The remainder had been abroad for shorter periods (three to four years for 11.2 percent; one to two years for 8.4 percent).

The case was quite different among females, as nearly half of the household respondents had a daughter as a migrant worker (17.2 percent of the total respondents). The remainder were either mothers (10.8 percent) or sisters of former OFWs (4.0 percent).

Similar to men migrant workers, the majority of the women OFWs were married (17.6 percent of the total respondents). In terms of length of employment, however, an equal proportion of women had been abroad for five years or more (12.8 percent) and three to four years (12.4 percent).

The reasons for deciding to work overseas were predominantly economic (Table 3.10). The majority of the respondents agreed that the migrant should continue working abroad until all the children had completed school and were employed or had even built homes. The family members were fully aware that such separation would be difficult and could cause emotional trauma, especially to the children. However, given a choice between staying home and working abroad where the former meant unemployment and the inability to put food on the table and the latter could potentially offer assurance of financial stability, regular meals and children in school, the second option was the practical choice. It seems, therefore, that migration had become a forced choice for many.

TABLE 3.10 - REASONS FOR WORKING OVERSEAS VERSUS LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

PREFERENCE FOR OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT	PREFERENCE FOR LOCAL EMPLOYMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To earn money for education and to build a house. <i>"... sana sama-sama kaso walang kakainin. Kailangan ang pera"</i> (... being together [is the ideal choice] but it means no food on the table; we need money). There's security for all. <i>"... maganda, may pera."</i> (... it is better; we have money). <i>"Madali ang buhay"</i> (life is easier). Lonely but stable and not groping for money. <i>"Masakit umalis, pero gutom ang aabutin dito."</i> (It is painful to leave, but staying here means going hungry.) <i>"... walang asenso dito sa Pilipinas."</i> (There is no progress here in the Philippines.) <i>"para matustusan ang kinabukasan"</i> (... to support the future of the family). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Masakit umalis, pero gutom ang aabutin dito."</i> (It is painful to leave, but staying here means going hungry.) <i>"... walang asenso dito sa Pilipinas."</i> (There is no progress here in the Philippines.) <i>"para matustusan ang kinabukasan"</i> (... to support the future of the family.) The children miss their father. <i>"Malaking pagtitiis at mahirap. Sana may tulong ang gobyerno."</i> (It is a huge sacrifice and is difficult. I hope there is assistance from the government.) <i>"Mas maalagaan ang bata."</i> (Children will be better taken care of.) <i>"Malungkot at wala akong ka-bonding"</i> (It's lonely; I have no one to bond with.)

The most popular destinations for the study migrants are the Middle Eastern countries, followed by Japan, the United States, Europe and Asia (Hong Kong SAR, China and Singapore). This pattern is the same for migrant workers nationwide (Figure 3.4).

Overall, service workers made up the highest number among the labour migrants studied (Table 3.11). This could be attributed, however, to the fact that more than half of the female migrants were in the service sector. Seafarers constituted the highest number of male migrants, followed by those in manufacturing and related jobs with transport equipment operators.

FIGURE 3.4 - TOP 10 DESTINATIONS OF STUDY MIGRANTS

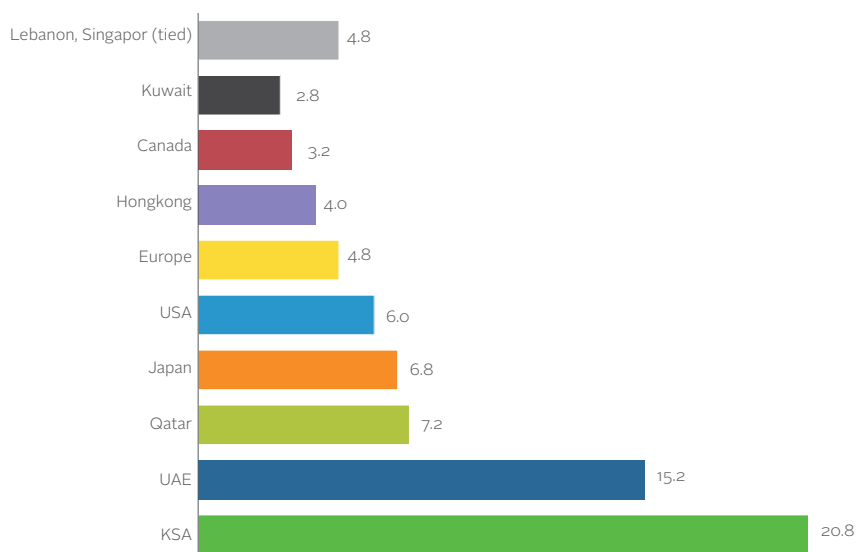


TABLE 3.11. PRESENT EMPLOYMENT OF STUDY MIGRANTS

EMPLOYMENT	NO. OF MIGRANTS		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Administrative and Managerial Workers	8 (5.1%)	4 (4.7%)	12 (5.0%)
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Forestry and Fishing	1 (0.6%)	0 (0)	1 (0.4%)
Clerical & Related Workers	3 (1.9%)	3 (3.5%)	6 (2.5%)
Production & Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators	39 (24.8%)	6 (7.1%)	45 (18.6%)
Professional Technical and Related Workers	33 (21.0%)	13 (15.3%)	46 (19.0%)
Sales workers	2 (1.3%)	2 (2.4%)	4 (1.7%)
Service Workers	28 (17.8%)	57 (67.1%)	85 (35.1%)
Seafarers	43 (27.4%)	0 (0)	43 (17.8%)
Total	157 (100%)	85 (100%)	242 (100%)

OFW males earned more than OFW females. Approximately 38.8 percent of the men received PHP30,000 (USD700) monthly. The women had monthly incomes of approximately PHP20,000 (USD465) and less. The FGD results, however, show the number of women regularly sending remittances home to be greater than the number of men, thus implying the women migrants to be more responsive to family needs and conscious of the importance of saving.

Social Dynamics of Families Left Behind

The approach to interpreting events in the family left behind is phenomenological. This section describes how the different members of the family are affected by the physical absence of the migrant worker.

Decision-Making Process

The decision to migrate was usually made by the parents without the participation of the children. It was simply announced to the children as something necessary for the economic survival of the family. If the father was the migrant, it was generally understood that the mother would take over managing the family, a change the children would not normally object to. If, however, the mother was the migrant, the children showed resistance and suffered emotional turmoil, especially the younger ones with strong maternal attachments. Older children tended to keep feelings confidential. Three-fourths of the children preferred the fathers to leave for overseas work; only 15.3 percent said the mothers should go abroad. The exclusion of children in arriving at such an important decision affecting the whole family reflects the absence of appreciation of children's feelings and ideas about migration. The information and sensitivity deficit regarding children's feelings may also account for the confusion, resentment and alienation experienced by children, particularly young adults, when parents depart overseas.

Changing Structures, Roles and Processes of Family Life

Migration is a major development in the family with potential for disrupting the traditional family setup and requires a readjustment of familial roles and the very structure of family life. The migration of the father normally does not have as much disruptive effect on the family as the migration of the mother (Asis, 2006; Carandang, Sison and Carandang, 2007). Children feel more reassured if mothers stay home because mothers are regarded as the primary source of care and emotional affection. In some cases, readjustment means having the children move to other households, such as the homes of grandparents or aunts, or having the grandparents live with the children. Such arrangements make it easier for the OFW parent to stay in touch with the children and monitor living conditions. Taking on the task of guardian to the children left behind is definitely an added burden to extended family members, especially those who also have children of their own.

The change in family setup, including the plural parental authority faced by the children, often caused confusion and even resistance among the children. Grandmothers as guardians usually required the children to come home immediately after school. Children under 13 years of age followed this order faithfully, while high school and college students tended to be more stubborn, even defiant or “*pasaway*,” a local term often used to describe such adolescent attitudes.

Cases of jealousy and fighting sometimes arose between the children of OFWs and the children of the extended family, especially when all lived under one roof. Some cousins felt jealous of the material things received by the children left behind or resentful of divided parental attention. Even worse, the problems arising from such household setups created tension between the migrant and the extended family.

Household Expenses and Overseas Remittances

The households incurred higher expenses after the migrant departed for abroad (Table 3.12). Food, education, school supplies, utilities (electricity, water), cell phone use, health care and loan repayment took up the bulk of the expenses, since resources from remittances were able to cover these. The difference in water and electricity expenses is not surprising, given the volatility of the utility costs.

The increase in cell phone use was understandable because cell phones were the way the children communicated with family members abroad. The higher amount of money spent on books and learning materials reflects the priority given to education. Respondents did not report any increase in health and leisure expenses. The children usually stayed home hooked up to computers.

These findings are affirmed by a study conducted by Edillon (2008) which shows the families of migrants to have more food on the table, greater ability to send children to better schools (usually private schools) and capacity to afford the purchase of school materials and clothing. Such kinds of spending were not possible prior to overseas employment.

Overseas remittances ranged from PHP5,000 to PHP20,000 (USD465) monthly, quarterly or as the need arose. Male migrants usually entrusted the women in the family (wives, grandmothers or sisters, usually the eldest) to receive and handle the money. Remittances were normally allocated for basic needs and school allowances; any extra money was set aside as savings.

TABLE 3.12 - EXPENSES OF HOUSEHOLDS BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATION

EXPENSE ITEM	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS		
	NO CHANGE	INCREASED	DECREASED
Food	60 (24.1%)	174 (69.9%)	15 (6.0%)
Clothing	136 (54.6%)	109 (43.8%)	4 (1.6%)
Rent	70 (69.3%)	30 (29.7%)	1 (1.0%)
Water	66 (26.8%)	168 (68.3%)	12 (4.9%)
Electricity	32 (12.9%)	208 (83.9%)	8 (3.2%)

EXPENSE ITEM	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS		
	NO CHANGE	INCREASED	DECREASED
Landline Telephone	84 (48.8%)	86 (50.0%)	2 (1.2%)
Cell Phone	99 (41.6%)	135 (56.7%)	4 (1.7%)
Internet	89 (50.6%)	83 (47.2%)	4 (2.3%)
Tuition	82 (38.0%)	119 (55.1%)	15 (6.9%)
Books, School Supplies	65 (30.4%)	140 (65.4%)	9 (4.2%)
Healthcare	145 (59.9%)	91 (37.6%)	6 (2.5%)
Leisure Activities	171 (73.1%)	50 (21.4%)	13 (5.6%)
Savings	103 (57.9%)	54 (30.3%)	21 (11.8%)
Loan Payment	81 (50.6%)	53 (33.1%)	26 (16.3%)
Other	1 (3.3%)	28 (93.3%)	1 (3.3%)

In some cases, the mother-in-law rather than the wife left behind was the one receiving the remittances and deciding on the allocation of funds. Among women migrants, the husband or parents were responsible for receiving remittances and managing the family finances. In other cases, women migrants had a say in the use of remittances (Table 3.13). The husband left behind appeared to have a peripheral role in the handling of remittances, particularly when the husband was employed.

TABLE 3.13 - DECISION MAKERS ON THE ALLOCATION AND DISBURSEMENT OF OFW REMITTANCES

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	
	DECIDES ON ALLOCATION	KEEPS AND DISBURSES THE MONEY
Wife	116 (46.6%)	140 (56.9%)
Husband	24 (9.6%)	24 (9.8%)
Child/ren	5 (2.0%)	8 (3.3%)
Sibling/s	6 (2.4%)	7 (2.8%)
In-law/s	2 (0.8%)	2 (0.8%)
Parent/s	52 (20.9%)	59 (24.0%)
Uncle/s or Aunt/s	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)
Grandparent/s	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.4%)
Both spouses	21 (8.4%)	3 (1.2%)
OFW	22 (8.8%)	1 (0.4%)
Total	249 (100.0%)	246 (100.0%)

CASE STUDIES

Nimfa is a 63-year-old former OFW-mother of three (a daughter and two sons). She is married with children working abroad, particularly her eldest daughter and her youngest son. Her second son, also working, remains in the country. The eldest is a nurse in Qatar while the youngest is a furniture maker in Dubai. The youngest, Rommel, is suspected to be having an affair with another Filipina abroad.

Nimfa shared that, even before Rommel and his sister had gone abroad, she had never failed to remind them of the potential problems brought about by working overseas, especially since Nimfa herself used to be an OFW. Although she wants to end this problem, she is helpless; she cannot stop her son from working abroad because his family needs the money.

Aida, Rommel's wife, who is living with Nimfa, was the first one to find out about Rommel's affair. She seldom opens up to Nimfa, but does so when she cannot handle the problem anymore. Somehow, Nimfa feels Aida's pain. To show her support, she keeps on reminding Aida that she needs to take care of herself for her own family. She also displays anger toward Rommel's other woman. Nimfa further reminds Rommel about the family he left here and the importance of not going astray in order to be successful.

Nimfa is well aware of the temptation and tendency for infidelity if couples are apart for long periods. One or two couples, she says, have made it through the difficulty and she tells Rommel she would like him to be one of the two.

Nevertheless, Rommel does not fail to send support for his own family here. Nimfa is positive that he will come to his senses and this crisis in her family will be resolved.

Impact on the Spouses

Spouses left behind expressed concern about the distance: "... *baka may mangyari sa kanya*" (something might happen to him or her). Some were worried about either physical threats to the migrant's health, accidents, etc., or the constant fear of infidelity of either party. Nimfa's son is one such case:

Among husbands left behind, unemployed men had to struggle with carrying out the tasks abandoned by wives, such as taking care of the the children and managing the household. Such situations often invite jeers from neighbours as the husbands are constantly teased about being "*ander the saya*" (*under the wife's skirts*) which denotes being inferior to the wife.

Being left behind to take on domestic chores does not fit into the social expectations of society and the male spouses' own concept of masculinity. Strength, virility and domination are traits often associated with masculinity. For the male spouse, however, the best indicator of masculinity is the ability to provide for the economic needs of the family. "Providership" (Rubie and Green, 2009, 62; Mckay) not only bolsters male migrants' claim to masculinity and community standing but (more importantly)

reasserts the man's traditional gender role as the main breadwinner. From this perspective, dependency on the wife for family survival diminishes, if not emasculates, men's authority in the family. While many husbands are able to manage the household fairly well by doing household chores and taking care of the daily needs of children, most would rather pass on this burden to sisters, mothers or elder daughters.

Impact on the Children

Based on the responses of the children when asked about opinions on parental migration to another country for employment purposes, many children acknowledged the importance of overseas income in sustaining physical needs, including education (Figure 3.5). The children reporting favorable opinions (71.1 percent), however, expressed apprehension about long-term parental absence. Such ambivalent feelings typically reflect children's desire for family togetherness and a better life with better education.

Aware of the family need to be productive, most of the children (approximately 90 percent) preferred parents to work rather than stay home. Nearly half wanted parents to work locally (42.2 percent) (Figure 3.6) and a nearly equal proportion (47.0 percent) did not mind having parents work abroad, but preferred to have fathers work abroad rather than mothers.

Mothers often found it difficult to leave because of children's reluctance. The girls took longer to recover from the emotional trauma of maternal departure; the boys managed to cope with maternal absence by spending more time with friends. Girls were made to help around the house by cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry, or attended church activities, such as Bible study and singing in the choir. The boys were less helpful at home because computer games occupied free time.

FIGURE 3.5 - CHILDREN'S OPINIONS ABOUT PARENTS WORKING ABROAD

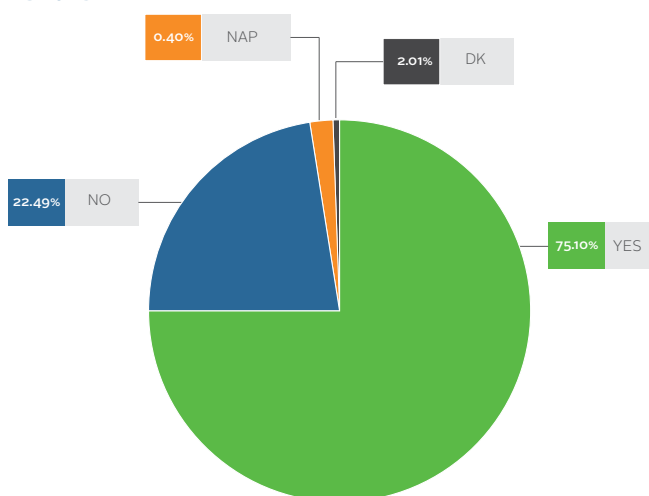
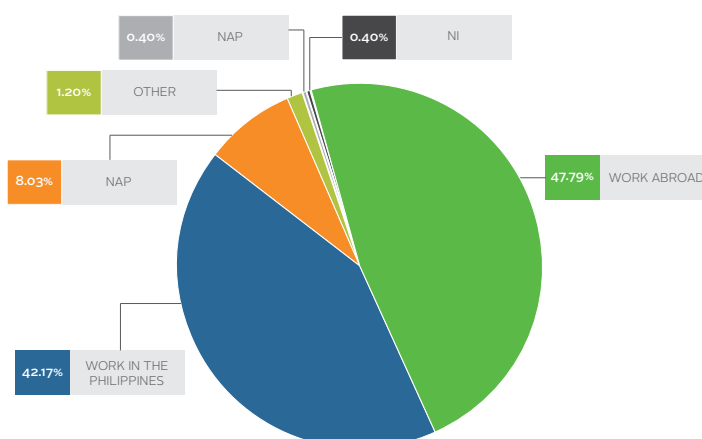


FIGURE 3.6 - CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES FOR HAVING PARENTS STAY HOME, WORK ABROAD OR WORK LOCALLY



One grandmother felt badly for the children left behind, saying, *“Wala na nga ang ina. Kung minsan, wala pang pera. Kawawa naman sila.”* (Aside from the absence of their mothers, children sometimes have no money at all. They are really pitiful.) Grandparents were as concerned about the arrangements as the spouses left behind. Yet they had to eventually accept the arrangements for practical reasons: *“Kailangan ang pera. Kung sana may trabaho dito, dito na lang.”* ([The family] needs money. If only there were jobs here, it would be better for them to work here.)

The children definitely missed migrant parents, despite claims of having gotten used to not having the parents around. While admitting an understanding of the reasons for parental migration, teenagers continued to harbor resentment toward migrant parents. Aware of this, mothers tended to make up for the absence by making frequent calls, sending material things to please children and even increasing children’s allowances.

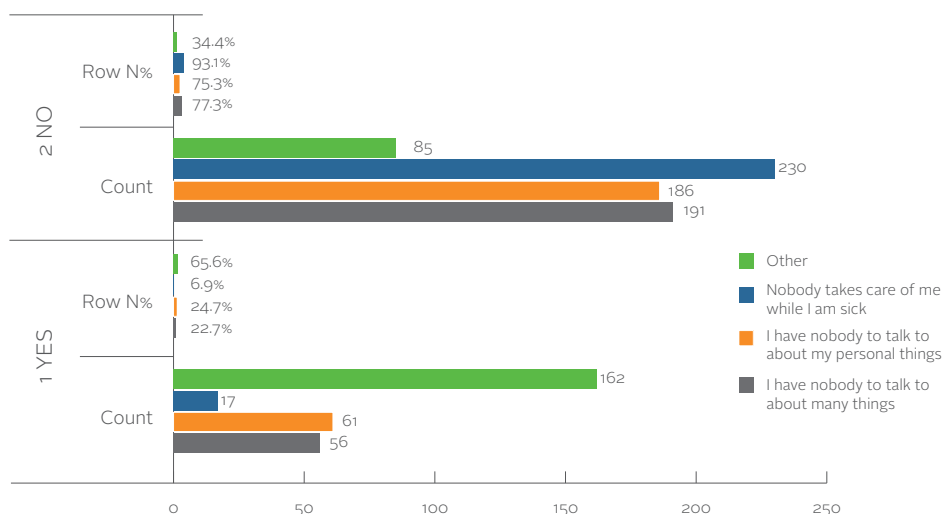
Children of migrant workers were commonly found to spend considerable time with friends or at Internet shops, generally away from home and for extended hours into the night, especially in the case of teenagers. These predispositions could potentially lead to high-risk behaviors, the most common of which was joining friendship gangs or “movements” (e.g., League of Filipino Students, a progressive political organization holding frequent protest rallies against government policies on education). Hence, adolescent children of migrant workers are easily exposed to temptations potentially persuading the adolescents to experiment in some peer activities, such as drinking, smoking and drug use, which some of the respondents admitted to be engaged in.

The children also harbored feelings of alienation in addition to difficulty renewing relationships on the part of the children owing to the transnational nature of the parent–child relationship. This became more apparent during the infrequent times the migrant parents went home during vacations from work. While those occasions were happy family reunions allowing some time to renew family bonds, the reunions were also marked with sadness when the inevitable separation came again.

Problems in Communication between Migrant Parents and Children Left Behind

Migrant parents, especially mothers, were often very anxious about the children left behind. The children constantly received calls from absent mothers nearly every day. This form of communication was made easy by the proliferation of affordable cell phones, the growing popularity of laptops and ready access to Skype and other similar voice phone facilities. Modern communication technology, however, was unable to replace the actual maternal presence. Phone conversations did not allow the kind of private exchange the children would like to have had with mothers. As people tended to listen in on phone conversations, teenagers were hesitant to discuss problems during overseas calls, especially concerning relationships requiring more private surroundings. Consequently, some preferred to send e-mails instead (Figure 3.7).

FIGURE 3.7 - PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND



The usual topics of phone conversations with migrant parents were developments in school, academic requirements and home necessities. Children could only say so much and tended not to tell parents about problems to avoid worrying the parents. The respondents often commented: *“Ayokong ma-istorbo si Mommy”* (I don’t like to disturb Mommy). The exchanges were confined to saying “Hello” and *“Okay kami”* (We are all right), nothing else. The calls were also always hurried, perhaps because the parent could not stay on the phone long. Such brief phone calls allowed no time for sharing personal stories, “. . . not even my excitement over a boy I have a crush on. Corny *talaga* (Really corny). *Puro* homework and assignment *ang tinatanong ni Mommy* (Mommy mostly asks about homework and assignments),” shared a high school student. The children, especially the girls, felt unable to talk to mothers about more personal topics like when the mothers were home. Some children, however, did nothing but ask for extra allowance or money for school projects and material things, such as new and latest brands of shoes, bags and clothes.

The timing of the calls also posed a difficulty, since migrant workers did not have the leisure of time. Furthermore, whenever the migrant workers were free to call home, the children were in school or simply out of the house. Hence, the children’s resentment toward migrant parents for always asking about school was understandable. Whether the children were comforted by the calls remains an unsettled issue.

Problems in Communication and Relationships between Children Guardians and Siblings

Communication with guardians, usually grandparents, aunts or uncles, assumed the same utilitarian pattern. Generally, children and guardians talked when the children needed something or guardians had to attend a parent-teacher conference (PTC) or any meeting or activity in school. Younger children also approached guardians for food, school needs and problems with playmates. Teenagers complained about guardians failing to understand adolescents. When asked for advice on a problem, the guardians offered different views which confused the children further and prevented the children from listening to the guardians. Hence, teenagers consulted peers instead.

Children also absorbed family conflicts and issues; if left unresolved after the departure of the migrant worker, the aforementioned might cause the children to be divided or potentially cause child-guardian tension. Such conflicts or issues included favoritism, the question of who received a bigger share of the allowance, why and when. In one case, a father's favorite daughter always had her way to the extent that the daughter's privileges became an issue between her parents. When the father left for abroad, the mother no longer privileged her daughter and treated all her children equally. The daughter felt rejected and became a problem to her mother, constantly threatening to run away from home. The mother thus made frequent calls to her father, creating tension between the couple.

Younger children spent free time playing. According to a young boy in Grade 5, "*Pag naglalaro ako, pakiramdam ko may kapangyarihan ako*" (When I am playing, I feel I have special powers). Most of the time, the younger children preferred playing over spending time with guardians or siblings. Guardians were usually approached only when the children had difficulty with homework. Although problems in school were not always resolved, the children continued with studies despite the difficulties.

Emerging Dependency Structure

Emerging Multi-Tiered Dependency on the Migrant Worker

The family is bilaterally extended and further includes in this extended structure the ritual or fictive relations acquired through weddings, baptisms and confirmations of younger members. The tradition of keeping the unity of this extended family group embodies internalized values of close family ties, respect for elders, filial piety, social reciprocity and the belief that members "with more in life have obligations to help family members who have less."

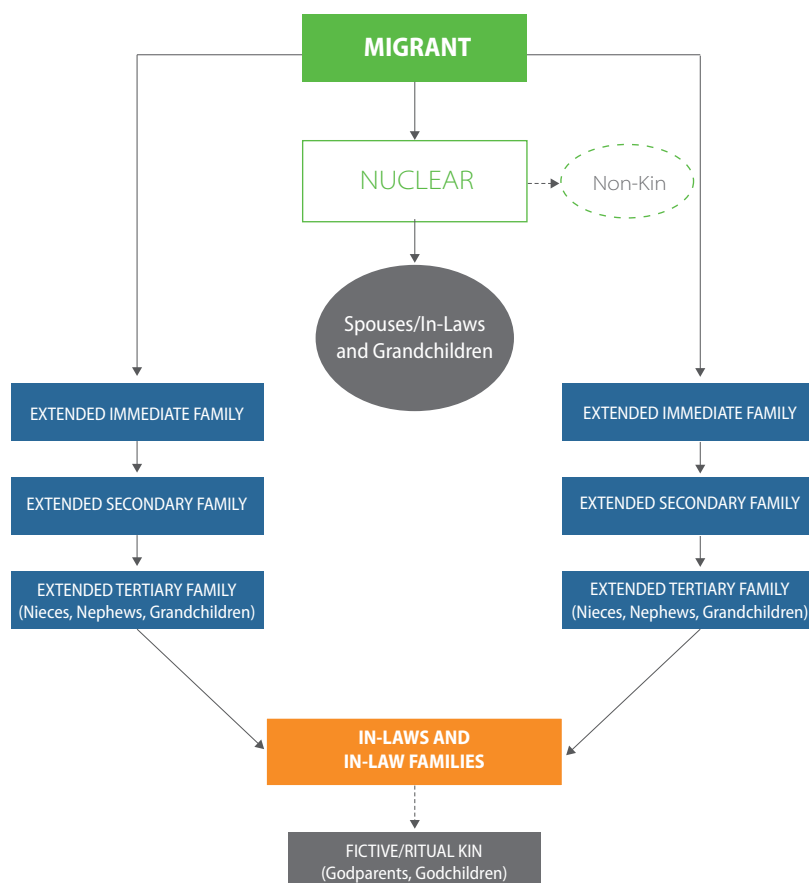
As observed among the households covered by this study, the structure of dependency on the migrant worker stretches to eight tiers (Figure 3.8):

- Nuclear Family
- Spouse/In-laws and Grandchildren
- Extended Immediate Family (Biological Parents and Siblings)
- Extended Secondary Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins)
- Extended Tertiary Family (Nieces, Nephews, Grandchildren)
- In-laws and In-Law Families
- Fictive/Ritual Kinds; Friends and Neighbours
- Family Members in Crisis

In general, upon the departure of the migrant worker, the family members residing together make up the nuclear family of the labour migrant consisting of the spouse left behind and the children. The extended family members include one or two grandparents, cousins, nieces and/or nephews and aunts with some having domestic workers. Traditionally, the extended family is situated in rural areas, while the nuclear family resides in urban areas. Contemporary trends have younger members

of the rural family moving to urban areas to either study or seek employment. These younger family members initially stay with relatives in the city while looking for employment. While the different members of the extended family may not reside together, extended family members reach out to one another for support in times of crisis.

FIGURE 3.8 - EXTENDED FAMILY AND DEPENDENCY STRUCTURE



The longer the migrant parents stay abroad, the more children learn to accept and embrace the extended family system consisting of secondary or tertiary family members, or even ritual kin who volunteer to look after the children left behind. Given this situation, children are sometimes confused by the different perspectives coming from different parental figures who exercise some level of authority. The reliance on extended family systems has implications for the allocation of remittances which can become a source of envy and jealousy among children and relatives assisting in the upbringing of children.

Notwithstanding the generation gap between grandparents and teens, the constraints in the interactions between and among family members and the children become an interlocking web of contradictions and resistance. Children react indifferently to authority. Confronted with rebellious teens, the elderly often end up frustrated and unable to keep communication lines open with adult children.

Other issues augmenting the dependency structure arise from the risky behaviors of children resulting in dropouts due to drug addiction, early pregnancy and other forms of delinquency. These crises cause the family to incur additional expenses and prompt reallocation of the remittance. Such potential for prolonged dependency on the migrant forces the migrant to keep on renewing one job contract after another until other members of the family are able to gain foreign employment and help sustain the necessary support of family members, especially in crisis situations.¹³

Data generated by the study show cases of migrants with eight to 12 dependents running across eight levels. While the migrant might not have seen or heard from some dependents for many years, these family members can suddenly turn up and seek the migrant once the migrant arrives from abroad. Such extended family members may have a myriad of stories behind the need for assistance or simply desire a share in the *“pasalubong”* (in the context of migrants, *“pasalubong”* means imported goods, such as chocolate, cigarettes, liquor and toiletries, etc.). Even friends and neighbours flock to the migrant’s house, expecting to be given something, mostly cash. The migrant may receive invitations from friends to drink or eat out, which eventually drains whatever savings the migrant brings home. As a result, some migrants are no longer inclined to go home in order to avoid this kind of cultural tendency. Thus, the migrants renew employment contracts to save money.

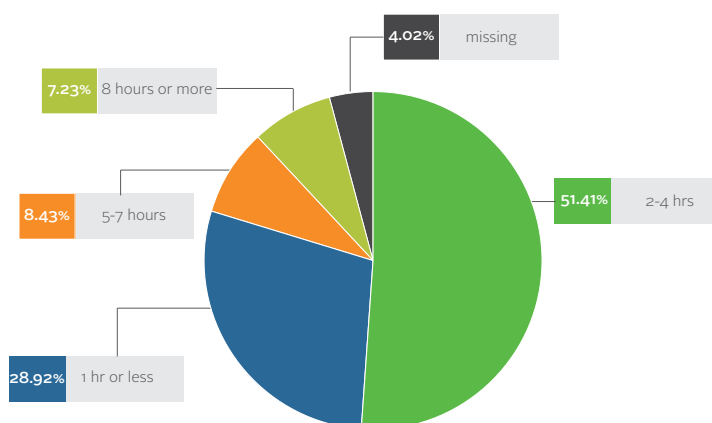
Friends and relatives can positively assist in taking care of the family left behind, but these same family members can also become an added layer to an already multi-layered dependency structure.

Lack of Investment and Tendency toward a Lifestyle of Consumerism

Since most of the migrant workers in this study came from classes D and E, the income earned was insufficient to support the basic needs of the family. Among those who had higher-skill occupations and earned more than what the family needed, the dependency pattern of the extended family became a major impediment to the desire of the nuclear family to save or channel some of the income for investment. Most families of migrants also tended to spend on commodities never purchased before and developed lifestyles oriented toward consumerism rather than frugality.

The children were no exception, especially those whose migrant parent/s earned more than enough to meet family needs. These children enjoyed having extra allowance instead of just enough money to pay for school expenses. In a number of cases, the respondents reported the migrant remittance to help in temporarily forgetting the sadness of

FIGURE 3.9 - CHILDREN'S AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT ONLINE DAILY



13. The role of gender as an important determinant of trust may be noted here. Migrant workers, especially women, prefer to leave the care and supervision of children, particularly daughters, to mothers or sisters, thus implying the consistent participation and sharing of women in child care and managing the remittances.

being separated from a parent or parents. Some, however, tended to spend money carelessly, mostly with friends or playing computer games. More than half of the children (51.4 percent) spent an average of two to four hours online daily (Figure 3.9). On some occasions, the children used the Internet to communicate with parents.

More than three-fourths of the respondents did not invest part of the remittance in any enterprise. Among the others, approximately 44.0 percent put up *sari-sari* stores or any entrepreneurial activity (Table 3.14). Others bought public utility vehicles, such as jeepneys and tricycles, and still others purchased farmlands in home provinces. *Sari-sari* stores were popular, perhaps because these required little investment and entailed low risks. These shops could also earn small income on a daily basis and expanded incrementally as the remittances arrived. Only 5.3 percent of the respondents engaged in moneylending because the activity involved higher capital.

TABLE 3.14. INVESTMENTS SUPPORTED BY OVERSEAS REMITTANCE

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS		
	YES	NO	TOTAL
Entrepreneurial Activities	29 (21.8%)	104 (78.2%)	433 (100.0%)
Purchase of Jeepney/s	3 (2.3%)	130 (97.7%)	133 (100%)
Purchase of Tricycle/s	13 (9.8%)	120 (90.2%)	133 (100%)
Purchase of Automobile	14 (10.5%)	119 (89.5%)	133 (100%)
Purchase of Farmland	9 (6.8%)	124 (93.2%)	133 (100%)
Establishing a Sari-Sari Store	30 (22.6%)	103 (77.4%)	133 (100%)
Establishing a Moneylending Business	7 (5.3%)	126 (94.7%)	133 (100%)
Others	72 (54.1%)	61 (45.9%)	133 (100%)

According to CEO Antonio de Rosas of PruLife, the Philippines reported the lowest savings rate in the Asian region, mostly due to deficient financial literacy. There are three significant reasons Filipinos overseas find it extremely difficult to save. One is that most OFWs have to pay debts incurred with relatives or friends for migrant placement fees, which can be exorbitant and may take at least two years to pay. Another problem is the tendency of OFWs to overspend on consumer goods for children and family in addition to favors for friends and relatives to compensate for the migrant absence. An OFW who comes home with money and goodies creates an image of a successful returning migrant. This way, migration is also viewed as a status symbol in the community. The cost of living abroad can also diminish the ability of the migrant to save (Why OFWs Have a Hard Time Saving, 2012).

CASE OF ELVIRA

Elvira, a 53-year-old mother of four (three sons and a daughter), is married to an OFW who has been working in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for about seven years now. With her husband's remittance, she has been able to put up small-scale businesses, such as a soft drink dealership, an e-loading business, a rental business and, at times, a moneylending business. However, they consider their biggest accomplishment to be seeing their three sons finish college. At present, all three are earning independently and can provide for their own families.

She attributes part of their success to the way she brought up their children. Elvira made sure her three sons shared in the household chores. She believed in the importance of delegating work in the disciplinary process.

She also taught her children to live a simple life. The children grew up without many luxuries. Elvira knew how to prioritize. She would tell them, *"Kahit nag-a-abroad ang papa niyo, hindi natin kailangan ng katulong. Kesa ibayad natin sa katulong, ibibili na lang ng pagkain mo . . . May katulong nga tayo, nagtitipid naman tayo sa pagkain."* (Although your father works abroad [and can earn enough] we do not need to hire household help. Instead of paying a helper, we might as well use the money to buy your food . . . [What do you prefer?] We could have household help but we would have to scrimp on food).

Her children got their own cell phones when they reached college. Elvira was not the type who would give in to whatever her children wanted. She emphasized to them that money could be used up easily without them noticing it, so they had to be conscious of their spending.

Elvira admits that her tightness with money caused some misunderstandings between her and children, but she does not regret being so. Good financial management is an important part of their success. She had seen her brother-in-law squander her sister's remittance on alcohol. He did not make productive use of the money. For Elvira, women are better at handling money.

Nonetheless, she remains positive that other OFW families will be able to experience the success her family has achieved by emphasizing the importance of hard work. She exudes a sense of pride that, even though they live in a depressed area, they were able to raise their children well and give them good educations. This suggests that it is still possible to live a good life, despite being surrounded with poverty.

Overall, Elvira does not regret the decision to let her husband work abroad. Despite the difficulty of being left alone to take charge of the family and the household, she knew their hard work would pay off in the long run.

A study by the Social Development Partnerships Inc. (SEDPI) also shows that approximately 80 percent of Filipinos working abroad overspend on investments in houses and home improvements (Ingles 2011). The study further reveals that eight of 10 OFWs do not have savings and are unable to prepare for retirement, even after many years of working abroad. Hence, these migrant workers are caught in a cycle of “debt and poverty”. (ibid.)

Generally, investment was not a major concern among the households studied. Education proved to be the priority in the allocation of remittance. The case of Elvira is among the few who were able to put to productive use the remittance sent by the migrant family member.

Displacement of Family Due to Unfavorable Circumstances of Migrant Workers

According to the household respondents, remittances were irregular during the initial months of employment because the migrants had to repay debts incurred in job placement and departure. Once these were settled, the sending of remittances usually became regular for most households after two to three months.

There have been cases, however, in which the delay or irregularity of remittances was prolonged, consequently leading to the displacement of families left behind. Various circumstances could account for this, such as the case of the husband leaving with a tourist visa reliant on a promise from the recruiter of being employed upon arrival in the destination country. Such promises often prove to be unreliable and job placement materializes approximately four to five months after arrival. In this study, some OFWs also reported employers who did not pay salaries on time, or did not pay at all during certain times, for one year. In both cases, the waiting period displaced the migrant at the employment site and for the family left behind. As the waiting period could extend to months or sometimes a few years, the wife would find ways to earn income to support the family, such as washing clothes for other households, peddling food, engaging in domestic work and selling cleaning agents and other commodities.

Among male migrants, non-payment of wages or termination of temporary work could lead to despair, vices and womanizing. This was especially true among undocumented migrants or migrants with unstable or nonexistent jobs. In more extreme circumstances, migrant workers faced risks, such as being caught in the middle of civil war or armed conflicts in the countries where they were working. Most recently in Libya, Egypt and Syria, thousands of migrant workers were forced to flee to safer ground and return home without any earnings or savings.

There was one case of an 85-year-old grandmother who had been entrusted with the care of three boys, two in elementary school and one in high school. The migrant parents abandoned them, however. The grandmother was a market vendor and earned barely enough to support the children.

The children, sometimes with the grandmother, went around the city begging or retrieving food scraps from garbage cans in order to survive. They all dropped out of school when their parents ceased sending support.

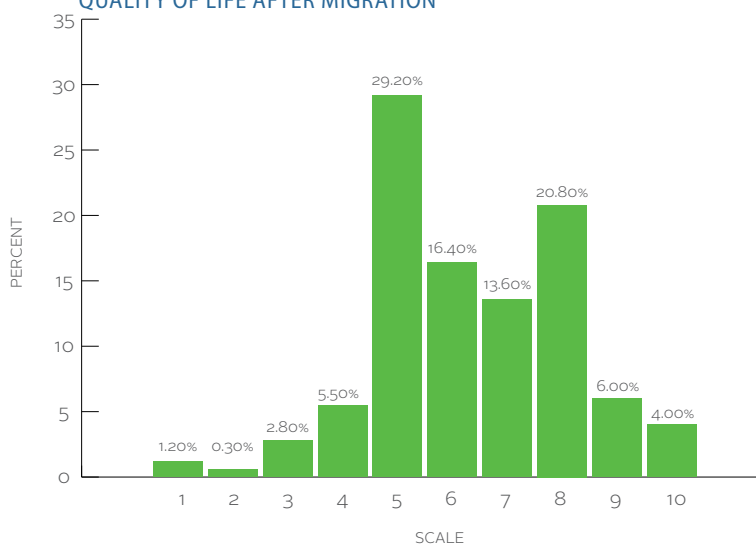
Abandonment of Families

The stress of long family separations may lead to the breakdown of the family itself through the migrant's abandonment of the family left behind. Stories of polygamous unions and infidelity of either spouse are rife in migrant families. The Mindanao Migrant Center for Empowering Actions, Inc., reveals increasing numbers of abandoned families in Davao, a major city in the southern part of the Philippines with a large number of migrants. Among the 55 abandoned families covered by the study, the members had no effective recourse to compel the spouses to face up to familial responsibilities. These findings were confirmed by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), which has reported incidents of family abandonment (Philippine Information Agency 2011). Due to the negative impacts of migration on the families left behind, a more comprehensive study of the extent and actual numbers of abandoned families in the Philippines is vital.

Family Members' Perception of Quality of Life after Migration

In general, the respondents claimed that having one or more family members working abroad meant the family no longer had to worry about sustaining basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) and supporting the children's education. Looking at Figure 3.10, the perception of quality of life with overseas employment appears to be at the midpoint of the 10-point scale with one representing poor quality and 10 representing excellent quality, thus reflecting the perceived security of the family from the regularity of income brought about by overseas employment.

FIGURE 3.10 - RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE AFTER MIGRATION



The following assessments of the respondents regarding quality of life as an outcome of overseas employment support the above data:

- *Mas maluwag ang budget.* (The budget is more liberal.)
- *Nasusunod ang pangangailangan at gusto ng anak.* (The children's needs and wants are being met.)
- *Sa pinansyal na aspeto, nakakaagapay ang pamilya.* (The family can cope in terms of financial aspects.)
- *'Di na kami kagaya nung dati na kulang talaga; ngayon may sapat na pinagkukunan; dati, utang dito, utang doon.* (We are not the same as before when we were really deficient; there is now a constant source of income; we used to borrow money here and there.)
- *Nakakapagpaaral ng mga anak, at kahit paano, nabubuhay naman kami.* (We are able to send the children to school. Somehow, we are able to survive.)

A number of respondents provided contrasting views, claiming quality of life to not have changed. These respondents would even report worsening conditions because one family member was far away.

Nag-abroad ang asawa ko pero hirap pa rin financially, hindi pa kami magkasama." (My husband is abroad but we are still hard-up financially and we are not together.)

Overall, however, a feeling of moderate contentment could be claimed among the respondents with regard to quality of life. Such feelings were justified by the thought that the respondents had been able to send the children to school. The need to be financially secure was always a driving force in the desire to continue working abroad. Given the difficulties experienced in sustaining the family prior to migration, the migrant may even be predisposed to taking on another contract.

The majority of the respondents believed the government would not be able to provide enough jobs to accommodate the Filipino workforce and regarded migration as the only way to secure the future of the family. According to the adult respondents, the majority of the OFWs wanted to take advantage of the opportunity of working abroad for as long as jobs were available. Some were even willing to maintain overseas employment up to retirement, as this would enable the migrants to earn a pension in dollars, which would then become a source of security in old age. In some families, there were hopes of following OFW family members abroad or replacing the latter in earning income for the family.

Key Findings

This study captured sample communities where the households had more women left behind. The research areas were resettlement sites where some residents owned houses whereas others were renters. The migrant workers had been abroad for three to five years, many of them representing second generation labour migrants. The majority of the males working overseas were seafarers, leaving wives to take care of the children. The women left behind were young mothers or daughters supporting an extended household composed of aging parents, some of whom were first generation migrants, in addition to siblings, nieces or nephews.

Examining the shifts in gender relations, family structures and processes, this study underscores the care deficit at three levels — childcare, spousal care and geriatric care — and stresses the growing dependency of Filipino families on the migrant worker in the family.

Empowering and Disempowering Outcomes for Women Left Behind

The survey data and the FGDs reveal migration to have both empowering and disempowering impacts on the lives of women left behind. Most of the women took on dual roles as both mother and father to children, doing chores in the house, supervising the children's education, attending to the daily needs of the household and bearing the anxiety over debts incurred to support the emigration of husbands. In an effort to generate more income for the family, some women engaged in small entrepreneurial activities, such as selling cosmetics, perfumes or beauty soaps, or running a small *sari-sari* store. In taking on more responsibilities, the women were able to exercise greater autonomy, agency and confidence in making decisions on allocating and managing funds for the children's education and household expenses. However, there were cases in which the women left behind were unable to manage finances well, even with the additional money from the husbands' remittances, and sometimes spent beyond the means of the family on consumer goods and even gambling, such as "mahjong." This caused tension in the family, especially when the husbands found out about the misspending.

Land-based OFWs who were mostly migrant domestic workers working under temporary overseas contracts could be away longer for approximately two to three years, but sent lower remittances compared to seafarers. When the migrant was a seafarer, the remittances were usually sufficient to take care of the family's needs, allowing women to save and have the option of working in the formal sector or initiating income-earning activities independently. The job, however, may present challenges to the family left behind. As described by Thomas, Sampson and Zhao, seafaring is a "lifestyle that involves a constant series of partings and reunions with associated transitions from shore-based life to the unique work environment of the ship" (2003, 12). The job may be irregular and have certain risks, such as piracy at sea. Many Filipino seafarers become "one day millionaires" exhausting earnings on 'blow outs' and drinking binges and leaving no savings or support for families.

Converging with the empowerment experience of women left behind are feelings of loneliness and emotional distress, as well as the burden of parenting in raising children who are lonely, confused and eagerly searching for personal identities. During the adolescent years, children are most vulnerable to peer influences and drawn to experimentation in all kinds of risky behavior in rebellion against parental control. While fathers are away, children, particularly male children, are less fearful of mothers, taking the mothers for granted and rebelling against maternal authority. Enforcing discipline, particularly on teenage children, is cited as one of the more difficult roles reported by women left behind.

Though not the general norm, there have been cases in which the husband sends the remittances to his mother rather than to his wife, and the wife has to contend with whatever the in-laws extend to her and the children. Such a situation inevitably leads to tension and conflict, as the remittances and allocation are not in the hands of the wife left behind.

Officials from the OWWA have also expressed alarm over the rising numbers of families abandoned by both documented and undocumented migrant husbands where families complain of irregular, inadequate and total discontinuation of financial support and communication, subsequently resulting in family disintegration.¹⁴ In the communities studied, there were cases of husbands taking on another family in the destination country, usually another Filipina, which marginalized the family back home and aggravated economic difficulties, particularly if the wife did not have any other source of income. The irony of migration is that the gains derived from the material rewards of remittances alleviating the economic conditions of the families left behind can sometimes also bring pain — the pain of estrangement, dislocation and eventual disintegration of the family.

When Husbands Are Left Behind

The feminization of migration in the Philippines over the last eight to 10 years poses critical challenges to the family. The departure of the mother as a migrant worker is regarded by many scholars as more disruptive than the migration of men migrant workers. Women perform multiple roles in the family and are viewed as the only constant support of children during the formative years. When women migrate and husbands stay home, there is a significant reversal of roles. Moreover, the case where the male heads of households automatically assume the role women used to play at home is not usually the norm. The responsibility of childcare is usually taken over by the grandmothers, aunts and other siblings. Within the immediate family, the older children, daughters in particular, are also expected to assume some responsibilities left by the mother (Yeoh, Hoang and Lam, 2010, 5). Extended family members combine care of their own children with that of the children left behind by the migrant parent. Such structural rearrangements in the family have often led to the migrant's children transferring residence to join grandparents or aunts. In some cases, the girls move in with the grandmother or aunt and the boys remain with the father, further fragmenting the unity of the family already threatened by the departure of a parent.

¹⁴. This is one of the more serious aspects of the social costs of migration that have not been fully studied. According to Manuela Pena, Regional Director of OWWA, in the Cordilleras, three of 10 families seeking assistance in her office complain of family disintegration. Similar cases have been reported in the CARAGA region and other parts of the country. See www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/60037/pinoyabroad/ofw_leaving_families_is_top_owwa_problem.

There is a seeming resignation that the only assurance of the family's economic survival in the immediate and medium term is the migrant parent's overseas employment—a decision frequently arrived at by both spouses. Male spouses left behind have been observed to have different reactions when wives depart to work abroad with some husbands willingly taking over the role left by the wife and others generally resisting and developing a lifestyle of vices that eventually fritters away the remittances sent by wives. There are numerous anecdotal stories of men spending the hard-earned money sent by wives on girlfriends and peer groups in community drinking binges. While the aforementioned are painful experiences, many women migrants cope with this reality by looking at the bright side of migration — the continued education of children and the improved quality of life for families.¹⁵

Some men continue to earn a living to support smaller family expenses, allocating the wives' incomes to larger expenses. A number of men claim feeling comfortable performing domestic tasks while working at the same time. Others are devoted to childcare full-time, which makes the men more appreciative of the work performed by women (Yeoh, Hoang and Lam, 2010, 12). It is important to note, however, that the reversal of gender roles may be temporary with traditional gender roles resuming each time the wife returns from work abroad whether for a vacation or permanently.

Role of the Elderly and Surrogate Parents of Families Left Behind

When one or both parents leave, the expectation is that other family members can be trusted to take on the care-giving duties of fathers or mothers. This transference of parental obligation to grandmothers, sisters or aunts is a process fraught with certain complications. Grandparents are at a stage with potential predisposition to illness requiring care and assistance themselves. In the FGDs conducted for this study, one grandmother expressed that she no longer felt strong enough to help her daughter raise the children left behind, even though she was happy to do so. She was also frequently overwhelmed by the growing assertiveness of the children who had become uncontrollable. Sometimes, grandparents negotiate with another daughter to provide assistance even if that daughter has her own children. In this situation, the children of the migrant family member compete with cousins for the aunt's attention.

At some point, searching questions among grandparents become bothersome. For example, “Sino na ang mag-aalaga ng mga bata at titingin naman sa akin kung ako na ang maysakit?” (Who will take care of the children, and who will look after me when I get sick?) The grandparents suddenly feel a heightened sense of insecurity about advancing age, knowing their children will be fully preoccupied with work abroad until sufficient funds have been earned and the migrants are ready to finally return home. However, the issue among the elderly remains, “*Hanggang kailan pa kaya ako makakatagal?*” (How long can I last?)

15. Based on interviews conducted by Aurora Javate de Dios with distressed women migrant workers who ran away from employers and were housed at the Philippine Labour Center in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, May 2010.

One of the major difficulties of surrogate parents (relatives or siblings) or guardians is enforcing discipline among the children left behind. Many are hesitant to impose standards of behavior in order to avoid tension at home. Whether strict or not, guardians assert, *“Pareho din and resulta, matigas ang ulo at hindi nakikinig”* (The results are the same, they are stubborn and refuse to listen). In general, surrogate parents tend to be stricter with girls than boys.

Children’s Perspectives of Migration

Transnational parenting (Bailey 2001; Portes 1996; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Parrenas 2006) often leads to “care deficit” and virtual family relationships eventually developing into indifference among children toward the migrating parent/s. Parents are bothered during visits home and the children do not relate to returning parents well. Communication with a parent working abroad is difficult as teens are unable to share deeper anxieties and doubts with the parent due to the limited time afforded by phone calls. The older children say, *“Pwede naman na hindi na umalis basta sama-sama kami”* (It is possible [for the parent] not to leave [for work abroad] as long as we are together). This implies the children’s willingness to go through difficult times rather than enjoy material comfort with a parent living far away.

However, children hesitate to tell parents about the above opinions for fear the parents will not listen. A teenager notes that parents undervalue the suggestions of children and are even angered that children dare to order parents. Most children feel parents dislike being contradicted, especially by children whose opinions are traditionally not heard in the family. This lack of open communication reinforces the feeling of alienation caused by long periods of separation between children and parents. During visits from abroad, parents are hurt by the indifference received from children, questioning why the children have become so difficult to reach, despite the sacrifices made by the migrant parents in working abroad.

During the FGD sessions with the youths, the boys admitted to drinking and smoking with friends in addition to being with girlfriends after school. Some constantly failed to go home on time after going out with friends, with others even reported being locked out to sleep outside the house by surrogate parents or guardians. With more money to spare and the influence of *barkada* (peer groups), many teenage children of migrants are drawn to risky behaviors and end up hooked on vices (e.g., smoking, drinking, drugs) or getting pregnant.

Perhaps the most devastating outcome of migration on children is the psychological effect of prolonged separation from one or both parents. Age apparently does not erase the emotional impact of separation, as reflected in this young man’s reflection on his mother.

A 17-year-old BS Chemistry freshman at Ateneo de Manila University, the son of a single mom working in the US, had been left in the care of his grandparents since his elementary years but lived at the dormitory while he was studying at Philippine Science High School in Bicol. Currently a college scholar, he wrote this essay about missing his mom:

“Missing Mom”

“All my life I have been separated from Mom. During those years of childhood and growing up, she was never with me. Yes, I got phone calls, pictures and packages full of stuff from her, but those things weren’t what I needed so badly. Yes, she came home during Christmas and other special occasions, but those times were never enough. All the time, I wanted my mom to be with me, to kiss me before I go to school, to invite me to eat when I get home, to hug me when I feel blue, to take care of me when I am sick, to tuck me in bed at night before I go to sleep, to go to Family Day with me, to attend my Recognition Day and to hang medals I worked so hard to earn around my neck. I want her to see that I am doing my part to have a brighter future and that she doesn’t need to work so far away from me anymore.

All this time she has been working hard for my future, she’s failed to realize that my present is crumbling. She doesn’t see that, without the present, there won’t be any future. A child like me cares about the present because that’s what matters most and that’s what will determine the future. I don’t care about rising to the top of the corporate world and being somebody. What I want is to feel that right now, at this very moment, I am not alone; I am loved and I have a mom. Even though I know I am not alone, that I am loved, and have a mom, I want to see it with my own eyes and not just trust what my heart is telling me. Sometimes it is hard to listen to your heart if your eyes tell you otherwise.

All this time I have tried to understand how all of this sacrifice was made for my sake. I have tried to keep in mind that, no matter what, she will always be there for me. I have tried to believe that someday all of our suffering will be over and we will finally be together as a family.

I have tried to understand that in time everything will be all right, but it is not easy. Why do people not realize that understanding all those things won’t take away the pain I am feeling right now and that my future, no matter how great that might be, won’t be able to erase this hurt and emptiness I feel that will forever be with me. This loneliness has scarred me for life and not even a great future will ever make up for that.”

Source: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 March 2011.

This emotionally searing interpretation of a young boy’s separation from his mother clearly represents unspoken meanings for the majority of the children who are unable to identify true feelings feeling other than the ever-present emotional yearnings for an absent mother. The emotional insecurity of a child resulting from the prolonged absence of the mother can last into adulthood and, if unresolved, may last a lifetime.

Bowlby (1975) and Brofenbrenner (1982) affirm the critical nature of the emotional bonding between child and mother as the basic sense of childhood security and a necessary condition for social and psychological development toward adulthood.

Use of Remittances

Undoubtedly, the remittances sent by migrant parents improve the quality of lives of children. As indicated by the research findings, allocations for education and related needs significantly increased once the parent began earning abroad. Families were able to respond to the children's daily needs, including food and clothing, even supporting non-essentials, such as communication devices and leisure activities. Families of seafarers could invest some money in small entrepreneurial activities, such as setting up *sari-sari* stores.

However, as the dependency of surrogate parents on the remittance from the migrant workers grows and when the money sent seemingly becomes limited or insufficient, conflicts and tension are bound to arise. This situation cannot be avoided because the numbers of dependents sharing the remittances have become highly disproportional to the amount available in order to realize the required allocation sufficiently. The often unending and expanding needs of the family back home, such as emergencies when someone gets sick, growing school expenses, etc., compel the migrant to work even harder or borrow money to cope with the demands of the family, often at the expense of personal needs. These factors further force the migrant to keep on working as long as possible until retirement.

Knowledge and Perceptions Regarding Government Services, Jobs, the Economy and Gender Relations

The families who participated during the FGDs generally belonged to the D and E classes and were asked about awareness of government services or support for migrant families left behind. Many answered in the negative and expressed a general frustration over the government's inability to provide jobs due to pervasive corruption in the country among other reasons. Against this backdrop of despair regarding prospects in the Philippines, the migrants also tended to idealize living and working abroad as an easy escape route from poverty.

"...wala akong naririnig or nababalitaan tungkol sa serbisyo na bibigay ng gobyerno"
(I have not heard or received information regarding the service being offered by the government.)

"Meron para sa OFW. Pero si Levi ay isa sa mga displaced workers. Wala syang natanggap na kahit ano from OWWA. Sa loob ng 26 years, naghuhulog sya sa OWWA, PHP2,200 kada alis pero wala syang napala. Hindi sila tinulungan noong mawalan sya ng work. Hindi nag-monitor ang OWWA sa kalagayan ng OFW."
(There is [assistance] for OFWs. But in the case of Levi, a displaced worker, he did not receive anything. He contributed PHP2,200 each time he left for 26 years, but did not receive anything. He did not receive any help when he lost his job. The OWWA does not monitor the conditions of OFWs.)

“Walang kakayahan ang gobyerno na magbigay ng trabaho sa mga tao.”
(The government has no capacity to provide jobs for the people.)

“Mahirap po ang bansa natin dahil wala na po yatang matinong opisyal; limited na po ang pwedeng pagkatiwalaan. Ang daming corrupt officials.”
(The country is poor because we seem to no longer have good [government] officials. The officials who can be trusted are limited. There are many corrupt officials.)

“Mas magandang tumira sa sariling lugar pero gutom ang abot mo.”
(It is nice to live in one’s own native place, but you will go hungry.)

“Walang security ang family dito sa Pilipinas.”
(The family has no security here in the Philippines.)

“Mapipilitan kang lumabas kasi kawawa ang mga bata. Hindi sila makakapag-aral. Ang work abroad lang ang makakabuhay sa pamilya.”
(You will be forced to work outside because the children are pitiful. They will not be able to study. Working abroad is the only means of supporting the family.)

“Magulo ang politika. Hanapbuhay ang trabaho sa gobyerno ng mga corrupt.”
(Politics are a mess. The government is a source of living for the corrupt.)

“Maganda sa ibang bansa, madaling kumita ng pera. Dito walang makuhaang trabaho.”
(It’s nice to live abroad because it’s easy to earn money. There are no jobs here.)

“Mahirap din ang buhay sa ibang bansa. Pag tumanda ka na, ididispatsa ka na.”
(Life is also hard in a foreign land. When you are old, you can be easily dismissed.)

Despite the existence of numerous programmes and services for Filipino migrants or OFWs, many migrant families do not seem to feel any positive impact, possibly because these initiatives by the government are too centred on offices in city centres and inaccessible to the general public. Another issue sometimes raised is the deficient coordination among the different government offices concerned with migrant services and welfare programmes. The government’s migration policy is focused mostly on the deployment of Filipinos for overseas jobs. An entire bureaucracy devoted to this purpose reaffirms the perception that the way out of unemployment in the Philippines is to work abroad. While the government is generally responsive toward the issue of protection of migrant workers (particularly on-site) and given the constant pressures from an active and dynamic NGO community fighting for migrant rights, government initiatives have been less than adequate and responsive to the needs of the families left behind. Except for economic and loan assistance, there has been no systematic programme to examine the issues and problems of family fragmentation, remittance dependency, reported incest cases committed by fathers or relatives on girls left behind, risky behavior of children and the growing incidence of teenage pregnancy and drug use among children left behind.

Recommendations

1. While economic and educational assistance is provided to the families of migrants, there are no systematic programmes addressing the psychosocial needs of the families left behind. Prolonged absence and separation can create serious problems arising from alienation, a sense of abandonment, care deficit and emotional distress on children, which may affect the children of migrant workers for the rest of their lives. There is clearly a need on the part of government to invest in a sustained programme catering to the specific needs of families left behind before, during and after the migration process.
2. Migration policies must have a rights- and gender-based perspective as well as a children's perspective because children are affected by parental migration. The study clearly shows that failure to respect or listen to the voices of children causes alienation and estrangement from absent parents, thereby rendering family reunification and migrant reintegration more difficult.
3. The governments of both origin and destination countries should develop strategies and policies to facilitate family reunification within a reasonable time frame to avoid the problems of prolonged separation (Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, 2009).
4. Services to families left behind need to be decentralized and made accessible to the migrants' families through the establishment of migrant centres at local government levels.
5. NGOs and parishes must be given some level of financial support to augment and strengthen the services for migrant communities.
6. Livelihood and entrepreneurial training programmes, such as those provided by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Training Center, should be part of reintegration programmes for migrants.

Conclusion: From Vulnerability to Resilience

Throughout the course of the study, contradictory patterns of acceptance and resistance, happiness and sadness, vulnerability and resilience emerged from the data and the conversations with the families left behind. No clear demarcations of positive or negative impacts became apparent as both were experienced by the families left behind. The salutary effects of material improvement and less insecurity in the daily lives of the families, especially the children, might not have been possible before the migration of a family member. The provision of material goods, however, could simply assuage the vulnerabilities of children who are the most affected by the separation from migrant parents.

The emotional and psychological impact of migration on the children cannot be discounted, especially since the lack of parental supervision exposes these children to exploitation, including physical and sexual abuse. After many years of circular migration, however, children will come to accept the rhythm of separation and reunion, never really knowing when the family will be able to permanently reunite. Over time, both the migrant parent and the families left behind will learn to adapt, adjust and finally accept separation as a part of family life for a long while.

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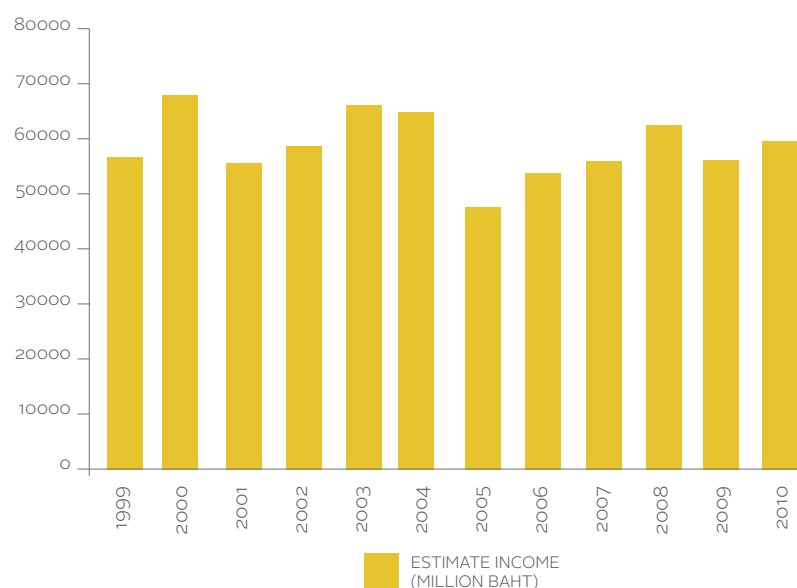
4 SOCIAL IMPACT OF PARENTAL OVERSEAS MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THAILAND

Aree Jampaklay, Kriengsak Rojnkureesatien
and Adisak Rattanasaranyawong

Overseas Migration in Thailand

The 2007 global economic downturn has resulted in rising unemployment or underemployment where sending workers abroad has become one of the popular government programmes aimed at addressing the employment problem in various countries. In addition to being an importer, Thailand is also known for exporting migrant workers. Over the past four decades, the national workforce has preferred to work in other countries since the overseas income is higher than salaries offered in Thailand. Overseas remittance to Thailand averages approximately THB50,000 million per year (Ratniyom, 2008). According to the Department of Employment, the above amount is substantial, but may be considered small compared to incomes in other countries. Figure 4.1 shows the estimated amount of overseas remittance sent to Thailand through the Bank of Thailand from 1999 to 2010.¹

FIGURE 4.1 - ESTIMATED OVERSEAS REMITTANCES TO THAILAND VIA BANK OF THAILAND, 1999–2010



1. <http://www.overseas.doe.go.th/Statistic/incomeYear42-53.pdf>; accessed 13 May 2011.

If managed properly, overseas employment is certainly beneficial to migrant workers, families, communities and society as a whole. The fact that overseas remittance improves the quality of life for the family of origin has long been accepted (ibid.). At the national level, the outflow of Thai workers to foreign countries mitigates the problem of unemployment and makes a tremendous economic contribution to Thailand. Remittances help the migrants' families gain purchasing power, which then offers poverty relief, especially in rural areas. Some are even able to set aside savings for future businesses, especially once the migrant worker ends his or her work contract or decides not to work overseas anymore. Socially, people who have worked abroad become more acceptable to local communities. Returning migrants, particularly those who have gained useful knowledge and experience in foreign countries, can actually play important roles in community activities as village leaders or in housing committee and savings groups. Unfortunately, however the potential benefits of this human resource have not been fully tapped in Thailand (in-depth interview with Nakhon Ratchasima Provincial Employment Office on 24 December 2010).

Overseas employment, however, also has its downsides. Equally as important as the benefits, the challenges accompanying international labour migration must be documented. These include the high cost of finding employment abroad. In most cases, the initial incomes of migrant workers are spent on repaying the loans incurred for pre-employment requirements. According to the village leader during our focus group discussion on 23 December 2010, some migrants are deceived by recruiters and wait for years to have money refunded; this wait is even longer if the migrant workers have no proof of payment. Moreover, not all overseas jobs provide high wages, especially in the case of unskilled labour.

Social costs represent yet another issue. Migrants working abroad have to contend with loneliness and homesickness (Chantawanit et al. 2001). The poor conditions of living abroad and the risk of deteriorating health are also mentioned as negative effects of overseas work (ibid.).

At the national level, international migration is viewed as a cause for tension between countries of origin and destination in relation to cross-border issues, overstaying of the migrant worker in the destination country and illegal employment (working without legal permits) among other concerns (Richmond 1994 cited in Chantawanit et al. 2001).² Some governments struggle with the management and control of foreign workers, especially where migrant labour issues bring more problems, such as decreasing job opportunities for their own people.

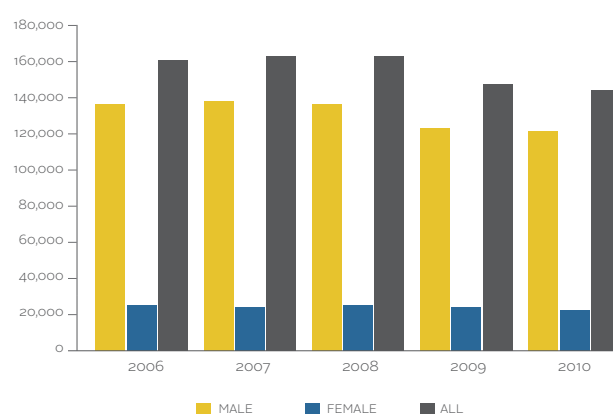
Some staff members of the Nakhon Ratchasima Provincial Labour Office during an in-depth interview mentioned problems concerning migrant behavior, such as drinking alcohol. Added to these problems are conflicts with employers. The Thai government usually helps address migrant worker problems through Thai Labour Administration Offices located overseas as well as the consular officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Chantawanit et al. 2001).

2. A number of governments, however, have granted amnesty to longtime illegal workers in destination countries who then become residents or citizens abroad (Chantawanit et al. 2001).³ Available from www.overseas.doe.go.th; accessed 22 February 2011.

3. Available from www.overseas.doe.go.th; accessed 22 February 2011.

Labour statistics from the Department of Employment show the majority of overseas migrants in 2010 to have been males with females accounting for only 16 percent (Figure 4.2).³ The abovementioned finding reflects Thai culture and norms in which overseas migration is generally perceived as a man's business. Notably, however, Thai women, have relatively high status in society, are not limited in employment choices and may freely decide to migrate if desired. Since international migration tends to have greater impact on gender roles in the household, women are not inclined to take the risk of leaving home to work overseas. Another reason is that traditional job opportunities abroad have been more suitable for males than females in the past (e.g., construction work in the Middle East).

FIGURE 4.2 - GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF OVERSEAS WORKERS IN THAILAND, 2006–2010



Among Thais, the decision to work overseas stems from a number of reasons. For one, changes in national economic conditions and political uncertainty have slowed down investments and industrial growth, thereby weakening national capacity to support the increasing workforce. In rural areas, the instability of agriculture, largely caused by natural disasters, has prompted local residents to seek jobs abroad. Added to this are the changing social values and culture of Thai society, which increasingly perceives working abroad as an opportunity to enhance family living conditions. The popular view is that jobs in foreign countries offer higher wages than those in the domestic market. Hearing or seeing success stories of friends or relatives who have worked in other countries reinforces people's motivation to follow suit (Paenwiset, 2010).

Thai people who go abroad to work are usually knowledgeable in the types of work local people in the destination country find undesirable or in jobs where there is a labour shortage (Promsri, 2004). Thai men migrant workers are usually found in the mineral and metal, chemical, machinery, manufacturing, repair and construction industries while the women are in the service, garment and accessories manufacturing industries (ibid.).

Since the mid-1970s, Middle Eastern countries have been a popular destination for overseas workers. Both private companies and government agencies have set up a system for sending workers abroad, mostly to the Middle East. However, a shift to East Asian countries began in 1990 which might be related to a diplomatic incident between Saudi Arabia and Thailand in the late 1980s leading to a decline in the number of Thai overseas workers deployed to Saudi Arabia. A marked increase in Thai manpower was then exported to Taiwan, China, which was becoming the most popular destination

country for Thai migrant workers at the time, followed by Singapore and South Korea. Other popular worker destinations were United Arab Emirates, Israel, Libya, Japan, Qatar, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia. All ten countries mentioned accounted for approximately 75 percent of Thai workers abroad (Table 4.1).

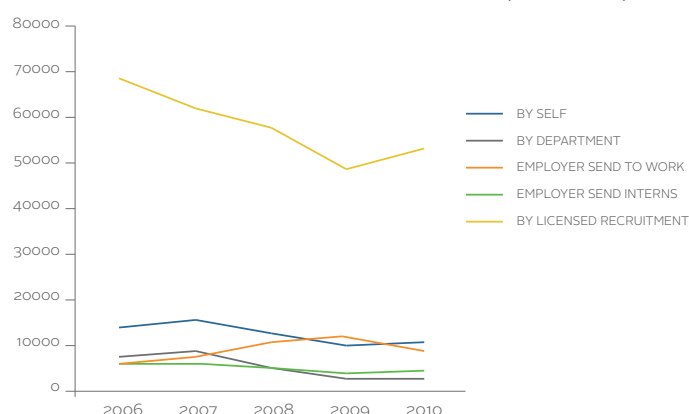
TABLE 4.1. TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION (INCLUDING RE-ENTRY)

COUNTRY	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Taiwan, China	62,068	52,193	45,088	35,863	40,927
Singapore	15,115	16,271	14,934	14,002	12,719
South Korea	16,456	13,287	15,730	14,681	10,094
UAE	3,624	9,850	12,973	9,647	8,308
Israel	9,312	10,903	6,200	6,338	8,136
Libya	1,194	2,269	4,789	7,606	8,090
Japan	7,218	8,002	7,555	5,540	6,102
Qatar	7,516	5,762	10,722	10,444	6,081
Brunei	5,141	4,143	3,349	3,855	3,725
Malaysia	3,418	3,432	3,476	3,882	3,630

Source of data: www.overseas.doe.go.th; accessed 22 February 2011.

In Thailand, five legal methods are employed in obtaining work abroad: (1) through the Department of Employment; (2) through licensed recruitment agencies authorized by the Department of Employment; (3) through the workers themselves, including those who have employer contacts overseas; (4) through the employer and (5) through internships arranged by the employer. It is important to note that the Department of Employment plays a role in all of the above processes. Applicants to licensed recruitment agencies, for example, are required to undergo training with the Department of Employment. Independent applicants, on the other hand, are required to notify the Department of Employment of applications submitted. Similarly, employers of migrant workers leaving the country through internships should report work arrangements to the Department of Employment. During the period from 2006 to 2010, licensed recruiting agencies were a popular choice for prospective migrant workers in processing job applications. Only a few applicants approached the Department of Employment for this matter, and the number has been decreasing since 2006 (Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3 - METHODS FOR OBTAINING OVERSEAS WORK, THAILAND, 2006–2010



Flexibility and convenience are the likely reasons most migrant workers prefer private recruiting agencies, even if the cost of transaction is higher. Private sector recruitment systems have become more sophisticated in which the employers in the foreign country pay the workers who in turn pay the recruitment agency delivering workers. Both employer and worker benefit from this system, as it is convenient and does not involve a long process, unlike recruitment at the government agency.

Based on 2009 records from registration centres, the Administration Office of Thai Workers Abroad Centre had the highest number of registered overseas workers, followed by the Northeast (Table 4.2). Among provinces in the Northeast, Udon Thani sent the highest number of migrants during the period, accounting for 9,859 workers, or 10.52 percent of all job seekers. Next was Nakhon Ratchasima, the study site, with 9,287 workers (9.91 percent) (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.4).

TABLE 4.2 - NUMBER OF REGISTERED THAI WORKERS ABROAD, BY REGISTRATION CENTRE, 2009

REGISTRATION CENTRE	NUMBER		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Administration Office of Thai Workers Abroad Centre	48,493	10,540	59,033
Northeast Registration Centre	14,212	3,383	17,595
Central Registration Centre ^a	5,336	2,213	7,549
Northern Registration Centre	4,241	1,255	5,496
Eastern Registration Centre	2,595	426	3,021
Southern Registration Centre	401	288	689
Western Registration Centre	207	97	304
Total	75,485	18,202	93,687

Source of data: <http://overseas.doe.go.th/Statistic/8.Appendix.pdf>; accessed 7 May 2011.

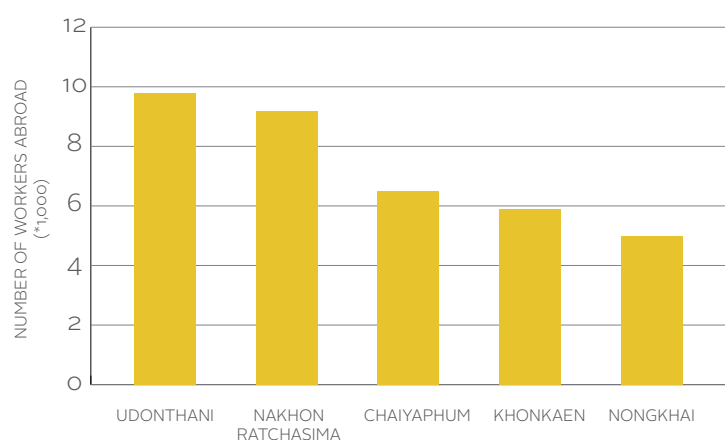
^a Excluding the number registered at the Administration Office of Thai Workers Abroad Centre.

TABLE 4.3 - TOP 5 PROVINCES IN NORTHEAST THAILAND SENDING WORKERS ABROAD

PROVINCE	NUMBER		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Udon Thani	8,260	1,599	9,859
Nakhon Ratchasima	7,709	1,578	9,287
Chaiyaphum	5,666	1,009	6,675
Khon Kaen	4,875	1,034	5,909
Nong Khai	4,170	899	5,069
Other	44,805	12,083	56,888
Total	75,485	18,202	93,687

Source of data: <http://overseas.doe.go.th/Statistic/8.Appendix.pdf>; accessed 7 May 2011.

FIGURE 4.4 - TOP 5 PROVINCES IN THAILAND SENDING WORKERS ABROAD



Source of data: <http://overseas.doe.go.th/Statistic/8.Appendix.pdf>; accessed 7 May 2011.

The Study Site

Nakhon Ratchasima is the largest province in Thailand in terms of area, covering 20,494 square kilometers (sq km)² and ranking second to Bangkok in terms of population (2,582,089). As previously mentioned, migrant workers from Nakhon Ratchasima comprise the second largest number in the country. Their most popular destination is Taiwan, China, followed by Qatar and Libya (Table 4.4).

TABLE 4.4 - TOP 10 DESTINATION COUNTRIES OF WORKERS IN NAKHON RATCHASIMA

DESTINATION COUNTRY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Taiwan	2,242	403	2,645
Qatar	853	2	855
Libya	701	0	701
UAE	482	10	492
Israel	341	30	371
Sweden	315	56	371
South Korea	224	54	278
Japan	113	88	201
Singapore	130	0	130
Brunei	101	17	118

Source of data: <http://www.overseas.doe.go.th/Statistic/Compare.pdf>; accessed 3 June 2011.

Social Outcomes of Parental Overseas Migration on Children Left Behind

One of Asia's middle-income countries, Thailand has undergone drastic changes in its demographic, social and economic aspects over the past two decades (UNFPA, 2010). The country is home to nearly 64 million people. Around one-fifth of the population is under 15 years of age, while 12 percent are aged 60 years and older. More than one-third of the population (36 percent) lives in urban areas. Over the past 20 years, Thailand has recorded low fertility. The current total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.5 is, in fact, below the replacement level. Life expectancy is 76.3 years for females and 69.5 years for males (IPSR 2010). Despite a number of minorities, the Thai population is considered relatively homogeneous, especially in terms of language and religion. The majority of the population speaks Thai and is affiliated with Buddhist ideology.

Thailand is both a sending and receiving country. While internal migration has played an important role in Thailand's economic transformation, the outflow of Thai workers overseas for better-paid work characterizes Thai society, especially in the Northeastern region. Ample studies have been conducted on migration with the aim of understanding mobility patterns, reasons why people move and the consequences on the receiving countries. However, migration's impact on sending communities, especially on children left behind by migrating parents, has received relatively little attention. Data at the national level based on the Socioeconomic Surveys of Thailand in 1986 and 2006 show the percentage of children under 18 left in the care of grandparents by parents opting to work abroad to have increased over the past two decades from approximately two percent in 1986 to eight percent in 2006. The current understanding of the psychosocial impact of migration on children left behind and whether or not these children are more likely to engage in risky behaviors than their counterparts whose parents are both present in the home remains far from conclusive. This type of information, therefore, is essential to the design and implementation of relevant policies. While the positive effects of migration should be recognized and maximized, its negative effects on migrants, families and communities of origin and destination should also be realized and minimized.

This section provides a brief review of a few existing studies on the overall impact of parental migration on the family left behind, especially in the Thai context. Previous studies in other contexts have suggested that migration affects the well-being of migrants' children in two ways. Some findings have highlighted the benefits of migration on the children's well-being while others have suggested the reverse conclusion. Still other studies have illustrated mixed findings. In a study by Kandel and Kao (2001), the authors looked into the impact of migration on Mexican children's educational aspirations and academic performance. One finding asserts that migration allows parents to provide better education for children and reduces the need for children to work to augment the household income. At the same time, however, the study suggests that labour migration has had negative effects on children in setting an example of an alternative route to economic mobility. The researchers concluded high levels of US migration to be associated with lower aspirations to obtain a university education.

As previously mentioned, migration is a common life event in Thailand, but research on its impact on the family left behind, especially the children, has been limited. Most are small-scale. This is especially

true for international migration. Recent migration studies mainly focus on illegal immigrants from Thailand's neighbouring countries and their children, who are seen as living in much worse conditions compared to migrants and families or children left behind by Thai migrants. Very few studies have explored mainstream migrants or compared migrants with the non-migrant population. Moreover, most previous studies have failed to distinguish the effects of internal and international migration. Thus, how the impact of overseas migration differs from that of internal migration remains unanswered.

Similar to studies in other contexts, findings from existing studies in Thailand reveal negative, positive and mixed impacts from migration on the families left behind, especially the children. Some studies have implied that children of Thai migrants do not appear to encounter greater difficulties than other children. One study showing the negative outcomes of migration is a study on intelligence development conducted by Nanthamongkolchai et al. (2006) among 558 school-aged children and adolescents as well as guardians in four provinces. The researchers explored the impact on children's IQ, morbidity during the six months preceding the study, nutritional status and development, finding a negative relationship between parental migration, child development and childcare. The study indicates children with migrant parents to be 1.4 times more likely to have low IQ than children whose parents remain present in the home. The study, however, does not identify any impact of parental migration on the child's morbidity or nutritional status.

Another negative impact of migration is family instability. A study by Puapongsakorn and Sangthanapark (1988) relates international migration to marital disruption and the rise in child truancy. In contrast, a more recent study by Jones and Kittisuksatit (2003) noted no significant differences in marital disruption among households without migrants, households with current migrants and households with returning migrants. The study further reveals little evidence that children left behind by migrant parents experience more social problems. The authors note that respondents view international migration as an effective way of meeting the basic material needs of the household and as a precondition for what is perceived as quality of life. However, the study also concludes that the respondents regarded the international migration of parents as an experience both parents and children would rather avoid.

The impact of parental migration may also extend to other family members. In a recent small-scale qualitative study, grandparents who had been entrusted with the care of young grandchildren found it burdensome to play the role of main guardian. The pressure was particularly felt when the remittance from the parents was relatively low or irregular (Jampaklay 2009).

In a quantitative analysis using a longitudinal dataset from the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System, Jampaklay (2006) delved into the impact of parental absence on children's educational attainments with mixed findings. The analysis reveals a negative impact from the long-term absence of mothers and the short-term absence of fathers, but a positive impact from the long-term absence of fathers. Hence, the above-mentioned findings lend support to the effects of duration of absence and whether the mother or the father is absent. Due to data limitations, however, the study was unable to distinguish the effects of parental migration from other types of parental absence, such as marital dissolution and parental mortality.

On the other side of the coin, a number of studies have documented the positive impacts of migration on families left behind. Knodel and Saengtienchai (2005) show in a qualitative study the favorable outcome of labour migration on the parents of migrants and the role of modern communication technology in facilitating communication between families and migrant workers. The study concludes that distance does not prevent the flow of financial assistance or social and emotional exchange between parents and adult children. The study, however, notes the current low fertility level of Thai society, which may pose new challenges to maintaining a “modified extended family” and substantially changes the implications of migration for the well-being of parents.

The positive impacts of migration are also indicated in a study by Abas et al. (2009). Out-migration of all children compared with the non-migration of some children or parents who have no children is independently associated with less depression in parents. The study took into account social support, parental characteristics, health and wealth. The researchers note that parents with all children working overseas receive more economic remittances and perceive financial support to be as good as that of parents with children living nearby.

The most recent and comprehensive survey, the CHAMPSEA (Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia) project, is a comparative study conducted in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines (Jampaklay, 2011). In Thailand, the study is the first population-based survey focusing on the effects of parents’ international migration on the health of children left behind. The study hypothesizes different effects of maternal and paternal migration on sons and daughters and on younger and older children. The study used mixed survey methods (covering 1,000 migrant and non-migrant households in two highest sending areas) and in-depth interviews with 41 guardians or caregivers. Group interviews with community leaders provided additional insight. According to the community informants, delinquency and deviant behavior among the youth, who were mostly raised by grandparents, are due in part to the lack of parental supervision due to migration. Left-behind mothers tend to be overprotective of children. Remittance from overseas, generally seen as the main benefit of migration to the family left behind, also has a tendency to spoil the migrants’ children. Therefore, from the perspectives of community informants, the children of migrant parents are more problematic because they receive more money, especially when the migrants are the fathers. Returning migrants and members of families with migrants, on the other hand, claim the benefits of migration to outweigh any negative consequences.

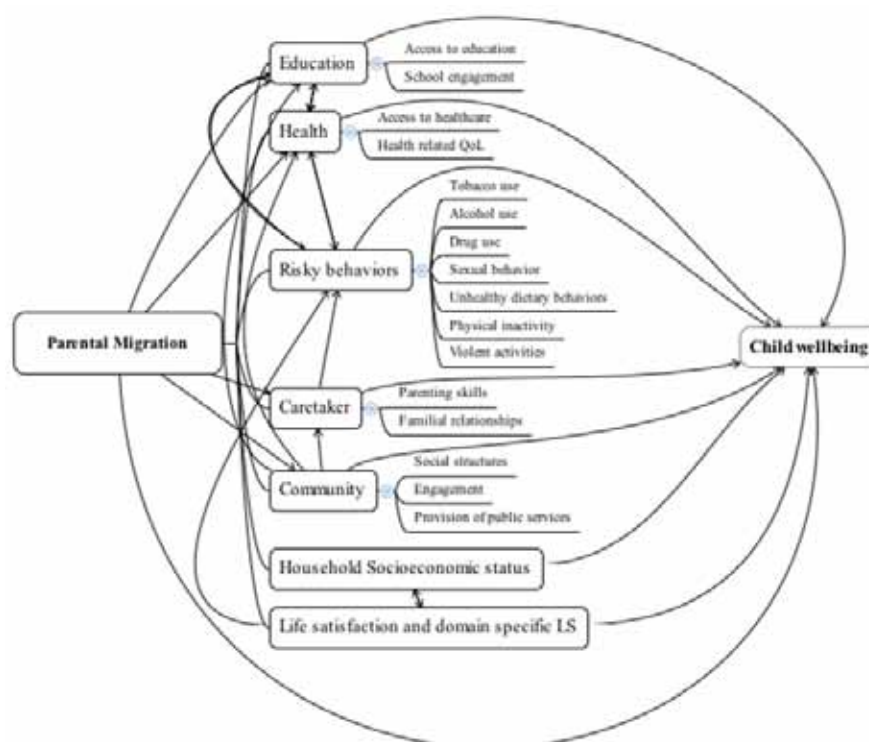
In contrast to qualitative observations from community leaders, quantitative analyses using the CHAMPSEA dataset suggest a positive relationship between parental migration and children’s subjective happiness (*ibid.*). The children are reportedly happier in general and enjoy school. The study highlights children’s perspectives and expressions of how children perceive personal well-being through their own lens.

Whether in Thailand or other contexts, what remains clear in the migration studies (e.g., Kandel and Kao, 2001) is that migration has positive and negative impacts on the well-being of migrants and children (adolescents and younger) as well as guardians. Using the material and psychosocial perspectives in such studies will allow us to uncover this mechanism. Focusing on only one dimension — material or psychosocial — will provide a biased assessment and may not be sufficient for informing effective public policies.

Migration may affect children (adolescents and younger) and guardians through a multiplicity of mechanisms. Determining whether there is impact on the family left behind, especially the children, depends on the different aspects of well-being among other issues. Public policies seeking to minimize the negative impact of migration while maximizing the positive effects should highlight the distinct causal mechanisms by which each group of affected household members is affected in order to inform the design of policy, monitor implementation and evaluate impacts.

Figure 4.5 illustrates some of the mechanisms by which parental migration may impact the well-being of children left behind by using the child rights-based approach derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2010). The diagram presents pathways for the effects of parental migration on children's well-being. The potential dimensions of children's well-being include education, health, risky behavior, caregiver or guardian, community, household socioeconomic status, life satisfaction and domain-specific life skills.

FIGURE 4.5 - IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND: POTENTIAL CAUSAL MECHANISMS



Common Theme: Preliminary Results

General Characteristics of the Child Respondents

The presentation of these research findings starts by describing the general characteristics of the child respondents (Table 4.5). A total of 261 households were interviewed with one eligible child as the target or study child in each household. Of the 261 children interviewed, 134 (or 51.3 percent)

were males. The children's ages ranged from 14 to 21 years with a mean age of 15.9 years and not much difference between the numbers of males and females. The highest proportion of children was in the 15 to 16-year age group (36.4 percent), followed by those aged 17 to 18 years (33.3 percent) and those aged 14 years (more than one-fourth). Adolescents aged 19 to 21 years accounted for only a small fraction (3.5 percent) of the study sample. Among children aged 14 years, females accounted for a higher proportion than males. The reverse was true for children in the 19 to 21-year age group.

TABLE 4.5 - DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY CHILDREN (PERCENTAGE)

DATE CATEGORY	TOTAL (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
Gender	100.0	51.3	48.7
Mean age (S.D.)	15.9 (1.6)	16.0 (1.6)	15.7 (1.5)
AGE GROUP			
14	26.8	24.6	29.1
15–16	36.4	37.3	35.4
17–18	33.3	32.8	33.9
19–21	3.5	5.2	1.6
1	64.2	51.2	57.9
2	30.6	42.5	36.4
3+	5.2	6.3	5.8
Only Child	11.5	13.4	9.5
TYPE OF PARENT			
Only the Father is the Migrant Worker.	93.9	93.3	94.5
Only the Mother is the Migrant Worker.	2.3	2.2	2.4
Both Parents are Migrant Workers.	3.8	4.5	3.2
MAIN GUARDIAN OR CAREGIVER			
Mother	93.9	93.3	94.5
Grandparents	2.7	3.7	1.6
Other	3.5	3.0	3.9

The majority of the children in the study (64.2 percent) were firstborn children. The proportion was lower among boys than girls (51.2 percent versus 57.9 percent). More than one-tenth of the subjects were only children with no siblings whereby the boys outnumbered the girls (13.4 percent versus 9.5 percent). This reflects the low fertility level in Thailand over the past two decades, which is below the replacement level of fertility.

Most of the study children had the father as migrant worker (93.9 percent); the remainder had either the mother or both parents working abroad. Among those whose fathers were working abroad, the main guardian or caregiver was the mother. Grandparents or other family members also had a significant role when the mother or both parents were away.

Changing Social Dynamics of Families Left Behind

Decision-making Process, Changing Structure and Roles of Family Members

The migration of parents for the purpose of work inevitably brings about changes in the dynamics of the family left behind. This study first investigated the reported household heads. More than half of the 261 households surveyed (57 percent) were headed by the father prior to migration. Households headed by the wife or mother were not uncommon, accounting for nearly one-fourth (23 percent) of the total households. The remaining households were headed by grandparents (15 percent), of which the majority were maternal grandparents (13 percent, as opposed to 2 percent for paternal grandparents).

The role of household head changed after the parents of the children left for overseas work. Since most of the migrant parents were fathers (94 percent), the role of household head shifted to the mother for the majority of the households (72 percent), as shown in Table 4.6.

The qualitative data during the focus group discussions with stay-behind mothers supports the quantitative results:

I became the household head [after the father left].

I am a cook, housewife and controller. I am everything. I am the head of the household. I am the keeper of everything.

The number of grandparents taking on the role of household head following parental migration increased from the number before migration (25 percent versus 15 percent). Among these,

maternal grandparents constituted a significantly greater number of household heads than paternal grandparents in the same role (22 percent versus 4 percent). This data parallels the survey findings indicating the number of households with maternal grandparents to be approximately six times higher than the number of households with paternal grandparents (28 percent versus 5 percent). Other household heads following parental migration included the uncles and aunts of the study children.

Aside from mothers, extended family members indeed played a major role in the families left behind as shown in the study data. Among migrant households, approximately two-fifths (40 percent) had extended families with members other than the father, mother and children. About one-third (32 percent) had grandparents. Combining these two pieces of information using cross-tab, the results indicated most of the extended families (80 percent) to include grandparents.

The results of the focus group interviews with mothers whose husbands were abroad also reflect the commonality of families living with maternal rather than paternal grandparents. A stay-behind mother shares the following:

TABLE 4.6 - HOUSEHOLD HEADS BEFORE AND AFTER PARENTAL MIGRATION (PERCENTAGE)

HOUSEHOLD HEAD	BEFORE MIGRATION	AFTER MIGRATION
Father	57.1	1.3
Mother	23.0	71.6
Maternal Grandparents	13.4	21.5
Paternal Grandparents	1.5	3.5
Others in the Current Household	0.4	2.0
Others not in the Current Household	4.6	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Other than mothers, a maternal grandpa-grandma can help discipline the children . . . aunts and uncles also help.

Both fathers and mothers figured as the primary decision makers in the households prior to migration (44 percent and 42 percent respectively). Only in a few households did maternal (10 percent) or paternal grandparents (2 percent) take on this role (Table 4.7). Notably, even if the father was named as the household head in 57 percent of the households, fathers were not necessarily the authority on important matters concerning household matters. Merely 23 percent of the households named the mother as the household head, but mothers constituted equally significant figures as the fathers as household decision makers. In the Thai context, therefore, household head and household decision maker is not always the same person. Among households headed by the father, more than one-third (34 percent) named the mother as the decision maker. Conversely, only in 18 percent of the households headed by the mother was the father reported as the decision maker. However, since the majority of the respondents were mothers (87 percent), it is not certain whether the results would be the same if the respondents were mostly fathers. There might have been a bias among the mothers who thought of themselves as decision makers.

Following migration, the mothers were generally the decision makers in the households (approximately 80 percent, which was twice the figure before migration). The number of grandparents, especially maternal grandparents, performing this role also increased (11 percent), although not significantly. Fathers were reported as decision makers in only six percent of the households.

It is important to note, however, that absence does not automatically mean loss of decision-making authority. As shown in Table 4.8, there were households in which the migrant father remained the decision-maker (five percent). Among the few households where only the mother was the migrant, the father was generally the decision maker (67 percent) while maternal grandparents assumed this role in 33 percent of the households. In households with both parents working abroad, the decision makers were mainly maternal grandparents. Merely a third of the households had other relatives taking on this role.

TABLE 4.7 - HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKER BEFORE AND AFTER PARENTAL MIGRATION (PERCENTAGE)

HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKER	BEFORE MIGRATION (N = 260*)	AFTER MIGRATION (N = 261)
Father	43.5	5.8
Mother	41.9	79.7
Maternal Grandparents	10.0	10.7
Paternal Grandparents	1.5	1.5
Others in the Current Households	0.8	2.0
Others not in the Current Households	2.3	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0

* One case unknown excluded.

TABLE 4.8 - DECISION MAKER IN THE HOUSEHOLD AFTER MIGRATION BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE (PERCENTAGE)

HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKER	TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD			
	TOTAL (N = 261)	MIGRANT FATHER (N = 245)	MIGRANT MOTHER (N = 6)	MIGRANT COUPLE (N = 10)
Mother	79.7	84.9	0.0	0.0
Father	5.8	4.5	66.7	0.0
Paternal Grandparent	1.5	1.2	0.0	10.0
Maternal Grandparent	10.7	9.0	33.3	40.0
Target Child/Uncle/Aunt	2.0	0.4	0.0	30.0
Others not in the Current Household	0.4	0.0	0.0	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

With regard to the decision of whether or not to migrate for work, previous studies have noted that not only the migrant and spouse are involved in decision making, but also other family members in developing settings, especially the migrant's parents or in-laws. Concerning who should leave for overseas work, namely, whether the mother or the father should go, nearly half of the interviewed households indicated the decision to have been made by both parents (47 percent)(Table 4.9). Interestingly, more households reported the mother as the lone decision maker than those reporting the father (28.4 percent versus 17.3 percent). Again, the data reflects the high status of women in Thailand, at least at the household level. It is important to note here the tendency of male child respondents to declare the father as the lone decision maker of the household as compared to female child respondents (25.4 percent versus 17.3 percent).

TABLE 4.9 - DECISION MAKER ON WHICH PARENT SHOULD GO ABROAD

HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKER	PERCENT OF HHs	GENDER OF CHILD RESPONDENT	
		MALE	FEMALE
Father	21.5	25.4	17.3
Mother	27.2	26.1	28.4
Both parents	45.2	43.3	47.2
Other HH members	5.8	4.5	7.1
Don't Know/ Not sure	0.4	0.8	0.0

Only seven percent of the households reported other members involved in the decision about who should migrate, thus implying the autonomy of the couples (fathers and mothers) in deciding on such matters.

Communication Process

Based on the results of interviews with children, regular communication was maintained with parents working abroad (Table 4.10). Among children with migrant fathers, more than two-thirds (69 percent) were able to speak with the fathers at least once a week. Nearly one-fifth claimed to have daily communication with fathers. Girls appeared to report a higher frequency of communicating with fathers compared to boys (23 percent versus 15 percent). Conversely, boys who said they talked to their fathers less than once a week accounted for a higher percentage than girls (37 percent versus 23 percent). Nonetheless, the majority of the children (78 percent), perceived sufficient time to talk with fathers. Not much difference was noted in this regard between girls and boys.

TABLE 4.10 - STATUS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MIGRANT FATHERS AND CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND (PERCENTAGE)

DATA CATEGORY	CHILD RESPONDENTS		
	TOTAL (N = 255)	MALE (N = 131)	FEMALE (N = 124)
Frequency of Communication with Fathers			
Daily	18.8	14.5	23.4
2 to 5 Times a Week	30.2	31.3	29.0
Once a Week	20.8	17.6	24.2
Once a Month	20.0	25.2	14.5
More Than Once a Month	10.2	11.5	8.9
Matters Usually Talked about with the Father			
Children's Schooling	58.2	59.4	57.0
Family's Well-Being	11.7	12.5	10.7
Father's Well-Being	6.0	4.7	7.4
Health	5.6	4.7	6.6
Finances/Spending	4.8	3.1	6.6
Others	13.7	15.6	11.6
Sufficient Time to Talk With Father	77.9	76.6	77.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The efforts of fathers to maintain contact with family members were evident. Schooling was a common topic during these conversations (58.2 percent), followed by the family's well-being (12 percent) and the father's well-being (six percent). This finding is not surprising, since the family's well-being, especially the children's education, was the primary reason the fathers had made the sacrifice of working away from home (Rossi, 2008). The answers were consistent between girl and boy respondents.

The qualitative data confirms the underlying goal of working overseas to be providing the children with a better future. A number of stay-behind mothers shared the following during the focus group discussions:

He [the father] would tell the children to study hard, as he is away to earn money for them. He is okay about contending with the difficult life abroad [due to his separation from his family] as long as the children are studying well. He says he has less education and that is why he has to work as a labourer. If the kids can acquire higher education, they will have choices.

The telephone was the most common means of communication; Internet and message texting via mobile phones were rarely used. This could be attributed to the fact that the study site was in a rural area with limited communication facilities. Stay-behind mothers shared the following during the focus group discussions:

Now, they [father and child] talk to each other via telephone on a regular basis. It's common. Before, when there was no phone, he [the father] would write once a month. Now he calls every day. We can talk while we are in bed. When he [father] takes his lunch break, he calls home. He also calls before he is off to work and when he finishes work each day. So when the children come home from school, they get to chat with their father. It's normal that they are close. So, our kids are happy.

The telephone helps a great deal. He called before the plane took off. He called when the plane landed. So it has become normal and the kids have gotten used to it.

In some cases, however, frequent communication between father and children did not necessarily translate into a close relationship. This was especially true for children whose fathers had been working abroad for a long time and more so for those whose fathers had left the home even before the children were born. The qualitative data suggests that children who had been away from fathers for a long period did not feel close to the fathers and were rather complacent about the current family arrangement. Below is an excerpt from an interview with a child whose father was working abroad and who lived with her stay-behind mother.

Interviewer: Are you close to your father?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: How do you feel about seeing your friends living with both parents while your father is away?

Respondent: Nothing. It's just normal.

Among stay-behind mothers or guardians, having regular communication with the children is equally important. The qualitative data from the focus group discussions with stay-behind mothers indicates that the mothers talk to the children mostly to help them understand why their father had to leave home to work abroad. This helps lessen the children's sadness, especially in the initial period after the father's departure.

I told my kids that he [father] left to find money for them. So, if they want anything, we will have money like other people. If he hadn't gone, we wouldn't have money.

They [the children] are mature . . . They cried at first, but they stopped crying after a week had gone by...

The small kid cried and tried to cling to the father. The big kids were okay because they understood.

Working abroad to fulfill the family's material needs was often the justification mothers used in explaining to the children why the father had to live away from the family, possibly because this was easier for the children, particularly the smaller ones, to visualize. The prevailing idea was that financial needs took precedence over any other household issues and having money would enable them to overcome both material and non-material concerns. A stay-behind mother who participated in the focus group discussion disclosed the following:

I would tell them their father had gone to make money to buy a car, goodies or a motorcycle.

Role of the Caregiver

For the most part, mothers were the primary caregivers in the households (93.9 percent), as is generally the case in the Thai context. Thus, stay-behind mothers play a critical role in every aspect of a child's life when the father is abroad. Approximately two-thirds (66.0 percent) of the children said they had discussed school problems with mothers in which cases the girls accounted for a slightly higher proportion than the boys (69.8 percent versus 62.1 percent) (Table 4.11).

TABLE 4.11 - PERSONS WITH WHOM CHILDREN DISCUSSED SCHOOL PROBLEMS (PERCENTAGE)

CONFIDANT	CHILD RESPONDENTS		
	TOTAL (N = 235)	MALE (N = 116)	FEMALE (N = 119)
Mother	66.0	62.1	69.8
Friend	14.0	16.4	11.8
Teacher	14.0	17.2	10.9
Other	6.0	4.3	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Impact on Children: Resiliency and Vulnerability

Coping with Separation

While 22.6 percent claimed to have participated in the decision about parental migration, the children continued to be directly affected by parental absence. Previous studies on migration and families left behind have mostly acknowledged negative psychological impact as the social cost of migration.⁴ According to this study, nearly 60 percent of the children admitted to missing parents who were working overseas to a great extent ("most" and "a lot"). Girls tended to express this feeling more than boys (64.6 percent versus 51.5 percent). The remainder reporting missing parents moderately with more boys having this type of response than girls (47.0 percent versus 35.4 percent).

According to the data in Table 4.12, the majority of male and female children would clearly prefer parents to stay home (77 percent) which more or less reflects the social cost of parental migration in conflict with the children's preference.

TABLE 4.12 - RESILIENCY AND COPING WITH SEPARATION FROM PARENTS

DATA CATEGORY	CHILD RESPONDENTS		
	TOTAL (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
MISSING PARENTS			
Most	44.1	35.8	52.8
A lot	13.8	15.7	11.8
Moderate	41.4	47.0	35.4
Never	0.8	1.5	0.0
Preferring Parents to Stay Home	77.0	76.9	77.2

4. See <http://crcw.princeton.edu/migration/files/Rossi.pdf>.

DATA CATEGORY	CHILD RESPONDENTS		
	TOTAL (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
ENCOUNTERING PROBLEMS WITH PARENTAL ABSENCE			
None	80.1	79.9	80.3
Absence of a Caregiver	11.1	12.7	9.5
Loneliness/Missing Absent Parent/s	3.1	2.2	3.9
Lack of Affection	2.3	1.5	3.2
Financial Constraints	1.9	1.5	2.4
Other	1.5	2.2	0.8
WAYS OF COPING WITH ABSENT PARENT/S			
None	36.0	35.1	37.0
Taking Care of Self	29.1	29.1	29.1
Helping with Housework	6.9	8.2	5.5
Studying Harder	9.6	8.2	11.0
Obedying the Adults in the Family	6.9	7.5	6.3
Consulting the Adults in the Family	8.1	8.2	7.9
Taking Care of the Family	2.7	3.7	1.6
Other	0.8	0.0	1.6

In support of the idea that it was a better choice to have a parent stay abroad for economic reasons, most of the children (80.1 percent) claimed to not have encountered any problems during parental absence. The responses were almost proportionately similar between boys and girls. Among those who declared encountering problems, the issues included not having a caregiver (9.5 percent), feeling lonely or missing absent parents, lacking affection, and financial constraints.

Among those children who reported encountering problems with absent parents, the highest proportion reported doing nothing to overcome the problems, possibly meaning the children did not consider the problem as a serious issue. The other children indicated different coping strategies, such as taking care of themselves, putting more efforts into their studies, turning to adult family members and paying respect to the elderly, helping the family with household chores and taking care of the family.

The qualitative data from a focus group discussion with a group of stay-behind mothers indicated that, although the mothers would talk with the children about why their father had to work overseas and how many financial benefits the family received, some admitted to feeling sad and lonely, especially in watching the children living away from their father. Nonetheless, the mothers viewed these difficulties as normal and a trade-off for the sake of the family's well-being.

On the day he [the father] left, the kids looked alarmed. It was understandable, as I, too, was alarmed, especially during the first year. But now things are back to normal. We've gotten used to it.

Apparently families left behind used the passing of time as the best strategy for coping with feelings of sadness and loneliness from separation. Despite the fact that time might eventually heal the pain, the intervening period of struggles owing to the new household arrangement portrays the cost of migration. Although this study did not include interviews with overseas parents, these issues are likely to have been similarly difficult at the other end.

Education

Approximately 90 percent of the study children were enrolled in school (Table 4.13). Given that the respondents were aged 14 to 21 years, this data is not surprising. More girls were found among the school-aged children than boys. Across the age groups, the findings suggest the proportion of children enrolled to have decreased with age, going from 100.0 percent among 14-year-olds to 96.8 percent among children in the fifteen to 16-year-old age group and 81.6 percent among the children aged 17 to 18 years. By the age from 19 to 21 (college level), the proportion of school-aged children dropped drastically to 22.2 percent. It is important to note, however, that these figures are not intended to reflect the national picture, as college students might have already left home and were thus not included in the survey.

TABLE 4.13 - EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND (PERCENTAGE)

DATA CATEGORY	TOTAL (N = 261)	GENDER		AGE GROUP			
		MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)	14 (N = 70)	15-16 (N = 95)	17-18 (N = 87)	19-21 (N = 9)
Currently Enrolled	90.0	86.6	93.7	100.0	96.8	81.6	22.2
If Currently Enrolled, Current Class Level (n = 235)							
Lower Secondary	40.4	37.9	42.9	98.6	27.2	1.4	0.0
Upper Secondary	59.6	62.1	57.1	1.4	72.8	98.6	100.0
If Not Currently Enrolled, Class Level Completed (n = 25)							
Lower Secondary	68.0	66.7	71.4	NA*	100.0	80.0	28.6
Upper Secondary	32.0	33.3	28.6	NA*	0.0	20.0	71.4

* Not Applicable.

Nearly half of the children enrolled in school (40.4 percent) were at the lower secondary level. Looking at the age of the children by educational level, the children might be said to be at the right pace in schooling. Children aged 14 years were at the lower secondary level; the majority of those aged 15 to 16 years were at the upper secondary level; and those aged 17 years and above were mostly either at the upper secondary or at the college level. Among those out of school, the majority had completed the lower secondary level (68.0 percent).

The study explored the children's perception of academic performance. The majority of the respondents (63.8 percent) reported moderate academic performance, while approximately 33 percent claimed good academic performance. More boys were included in the former group than girls (71.6 percent versus 56.3 percent) and more girls than boys were in the latter group (42.9 percent versus 25.9 percent). To determine whether parental migration had an effect on school performance, the children

were asked how they did in school after parental departure. Nearly one-third (31.5 percent) claimed improved performance, while the majority (60 percent) reported no change. Only a small minority admitted declining academic performance. The differences in the responses of girls and boys were minimal (Table 4.14).

TABLE 4.14 - IMPACT OF PARENTAL OVERSEAS MIGRATION ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND (PERCENTAGE)

DATA CATEGORY	TOTAL (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE			
Poor	1.7	2.6	0.8
Moderate	63.8	71.6	56.3
Good	34.5	25.9	42.9
COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATION			
Worse	8.5	12.9	4.2
Same	60.0	56.9	63.0
Better	31.5	30.2	32.8
Lack of Affection	2.3	1.5	3.2
Whether Living Apart from Parent/S Affects Academic Performance	6.4	8.6	4.2
Goes Home Directly After School	80.9	78.5	83.2

On whether the children perceived any changes in academic performance as an effect of parental migration, less than 10 percent of the child respondents answered in the affirmative, with the proportion of boys doubling that of the girls (8.6 percent versus 4.2 percent). This implies that the children did not generally relate having an absent parent to attitude toward studies, nor did migration have a destructive effect on after-school activities. Most of the children (80.9 percent) reported arriving home on time after school, although more girls provided this response than boys.

Activities, Behavior and Networking

Outside school, the activities of children involved household chores (44.7 percent), sports (23.4 percent), and studying (18.3 percent). Only a few of the respondents spent time listening to music, watching movies or going out (Table 4.15).

In terms of the frequency of going out, the percentage of children was almost evenly distributed across the following categories: more than once a week (28.4 percent), once a week (33.7 percent) and less than once a week (30.3 percent). Only 7.7 percent claimed to have never gone out, with the number of girls approximately four times more than boys in providing this response (12.6 percent versus 3.0 percent). Conversely, there were twice as many boys who reportedly went out more than once a week. No difference was noted by 37.8 percent of the children in the frequency of going out before and after parental migration. The proportions of child respondents perceiving a difference (i.e., more than or less than before migration) were nearly equal (30.7 percent and 31.5 percent, respectively).

Boys tended to go out of the house more following parental departure (36.9 percent as compared to 23.4 percent among girls), while the reverse was true for girls with 35.1 percent saying they stayed home more following parental migration (as compared to 28.5 percent among boys).

Only a few children spent time watching movies, perhaps because movie theaters are not easily accessible in rural areas. Furthermore, the children could easily view movies through other means (e.g., home videos with DVD or VCD players, personal computers). Table 4.16 shows that 79.3 percent of the children had never gone to a movie theater with the proportion of girls being higher than that of boys (84.3 percent versus 74.6 percent). More children reported less ability to go to the movies following parental departure for work overseas. However, this figure should be interpreted with caution, as it did not take into account the child's age at parental departure, or the changes in entertainment technology, which could have an effect on the movie watching behavior of the young population.

TABLE 4.15 AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

ACTIVITY	PERCENT DISTRIBUTION (N = 235*)
Performing Household Chores/Caring for Siblings	44.7
Playing Sports/Playing	29.4
Study	18.3
Music/Movies	4.7
Going Out	1.3
Working	1.3
Total	100.0

TABLE 4.16 - EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

DATA CATEGORY	TOTAL (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
FREQUENCY OF OUTINGS			
More than Once A Week	28.4	40.3	15.8
Once a Week	33.7	34.3	33.1
Less Than Once a Week	30.3	22.4	38.6
Never	7.7	3.0	12.6
FREQUENCY OF OUTINGS IN COMPARISON WITH BEFORE PARENTAL DEPARTURE			
More Than Before	30.7	36.9	23.4
Same As Before	37.8	34.6	41.4
Less Than Before	31.5	28.5	35.1
FREQUENCY OF GOING TO MOVIE THEATERS IN COMPARISON WITH BEFORE PARENTAL DEPARTURE			
More Than Before	5.8	5.2	6.3
Same As Before	3.8	5.2	2.4
Less Than Before	11.1	14.9	7.1
Never	79.3	74.6	84.3
FREQUENCY OF WATCHING THEATER MOVIES			
More Than Once a Month	11.3	11.8	10.5
Once a Month	32.1	35.3	26.3
Less Than Once a Month	56.6	52.9	63.2
Internet Use	49.0	42.5	55.9

DATA CATEGORY	TOTAL (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE IN COMPARISON WITH BEFORE PARENTAL DEPARTURE			
More Than Before	60.6	59.7	61.4
Same As Before	25.2	24.6	25.7
Less Than Before	14.2	15.8	12.9
INTERNET VENUE			
House	26.6	24.6	28.2
School	72.7	79.0	67.6
Other	49.2	40.4	56.3

As could be seen from the data, the children did not watch movies frequently. More than half of those who had gone to the movie theater did so less than once a month. Around one-third saw movies monthly, and about one-tenth went to the movies more than monthly. Boys seemed to be more frequent moviegoers than girls.

Internet use appeared to be more common among the children, which was not surprising, since the Internet is widely popular in Thailand, even in rural areas. Nearly half of the child respondents reported Internet access with girls accounting for a higher percentage than boys (55.9 percent versus 42.5 percent).

Peer groups were mostly limited to the same sex (Table 4.17). Only approximately one-tenth of both boys and girls reported having a combination of male and female friends. The majority of both boys and girls kept to friends of the same sex (85.8 percent).

TABLE 4.17 - GENDER OF THE CHILD RESPONDENTS' PEER GROUPS (IN PERCENT)

GENDER COMPOSITION OF FRIENDS	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Both Boys and Girls	11.9	11.9	11.8
Girls Only	42.5	1.5	85.8
Boys Only	44.1	85.8	0.0
Other	1.5	0.8	2.4

Children's Perception of Migration: Need for Children to be Involved in the Process

Recent literature places importance on the child's perspective of the migration decision as well as the effects of migration.⁵ This study explores the involvement of children in the migration process, especially concerning the decision-making leading to migration. The data in Table 4.18 indicates that less than one-fourth of the child respondents took part in the decision about whether or not the parent should migrate. Girls constituted a higher number than boys for this response (26.8 percent versus 18.7 percent).

The majority claimed favoring parental employment abroad (70.9 percent), with boys making up a slightly higher proportion (73.1 percent versus 68.5 percent), which concurs with the prevailing trend of overseas migration which is predominantly male (fathers) where nearly all of the children preferred having the father, rather than the mother, work overseas. Boys, however, seemed to be more accepting of the family arrangement in which the mother was the overseas worker.

5. See <http://crcw.princeton.edu/migration/files/Rossi.pdf>.

TABLE 4.18 - CHILD RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL OVERSEAS MIGRATION (PERCENTAGE)

CHILD'S PERCEPTION	TOTAL CHILDREN (N = 261)	GENDER	
		MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
Involvement in Migration Decision	22.6	18.7	26.8
Favoring of Parental Migration	70.9	73.1	68.5
PREFERENCE OF THE PARENT TO WORK ABROAD			
Mother	5.0	6.7	3.2
Father	95.0	93.3	96.9

The qualitative data suggests the involvement of children to depend on age whereby older children are more likely to participate in the decision-making or to be consulted about the possibility of migration. A stay-behind mother shared the following during a focus group discussion:

The kids also shared their opinion when we made the decision. They are already grown-ups.

Risky Health Behavior and Reproductive Health Issues

Approximately one-fourth of the child respondents admitted having tried smoking (Table 4.19). Nearly half of the respondents were boys who began to smoke at the age of 14 for males and approximately 17 for females. Approximately one-third of the respondents smoked every day or almost every day, while more than half had not smoked more than once or twice during the month preceding the study. Nearly half disclosed having friends who smoked (three-fourths of the boys and approximately one-fifth of the girls). The same percentage of children claimed to have a family member who smoked (49 percent versus 48 percent), with boys making up a higher proportion than girls (53 percent versus 45 percent).

TABLE 4.19 - SMOKING BEHAVIOR OF THE CHILDREN (IN PERCENTAGE)

DATA CATEGORY	TOTAL CHILDREN (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
Have Tried Smoking	25.7	48.5	1.6
Mean Age at First Smoking Attempt (S.D.)	14.2 (2.3)	14.1 (2.3)	16.5 (2.1)
FREQUENCY OF SMOKING DURING THE PAST MONTH*			
None at All	26.9	-	-
Once or Twice	20.9	-	-
Once or Twice a Week	19.4	-	-
Every Day/Nearly Every Day	32.8	-	-
Friend(s) Who Smoke	47.7	73.1	20.6
At Least One Family Member who Smokes	49.2	53.0	45.2

*Includes Only Children Who Have Ever Tried Smoking.

TABLE 4.20 - DRINKING BEHAVIOR OF CHILD RESPONDENTS

DATA CATEGORY	TOTAL CHILDREN (N = 261)	MALE (N = 134)	FEMALE (N = 127)
Previous Attempt at Drinking Alcohol	44.1%	62.7%	24.4%
Alcohol Consumption When Parents or Other Adults Were Not Around	34.9%	49.3%	19.7%
Age at First Drinking Attempt When Parents or Other Adults Were Not Around	14.8 (1.6%)	14.8 (1.6%)	14.8 (1.7%)
Mean Age at First Smoking Attempt (S.D.)	14.2 (2.3)	14.1 (2.3)	16.5 (2.1)
FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DURING THE PAST MONTH			
Not At All	30.8%	21.2%	56.0%
Once or Twice	38.5%	37.9%	40.0%
At Least Once a Week	30.8%	40.9%	4.0%
Friend(s) Who Drink Alcohol	69.4%	83.6%	54.3%
Family Members Who Drink Alcohol	68.6%	66.4%	70.9%
At Least One Family Member who Smokes	49.2	53.0	45.2

Similar findings were reported for alcohol consumption (Table 4.20). Some 44 percent of the children claimed having tried drinking alcohol, again with the boys comprising a higher number than the girls (63 percent versus 24 percent). Notably, however, more girls had tried drinking as compared to girls who had tried smoking. The children reportedly had had their first drink at the approximate age of 15 years. Approximately 31 percent of the respondents drank alcohol at least once a week. The remainder had not drunk at all during the month preceding the study (32 percent) or had had some drinks once or twice (39 percent). Between those who drank alcohol at least weekly, the boys accounted for a significantly higher proportion than the girls (41 percent versus four percent), while a little more than two-thirds of the children reported having friends and family members who drank alcohol and more boys than girls reported having friends who engaged in drinking (84 percent versus 54 percent). Interestingly, more girls declared having a family member who drank alcohol than boys (71 percent versus 66 percent).

Since sexual and reproductive health is recognized as an important issue, especially among youths, the children were asked whether

TABLE 4.21 - SOURCES OF PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL AMONG CHILD RESPONDENTS DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS (PERCENTAGE)

SOURCE OF PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Mobile Phones (n = 256)*	36.7	49.6	23.2
Books (n = 251)*	24.3	31.0	17.6
CD (n = 252)*	18.3	28.9	7.3
Videos (n = 252)*	17.1	26.6	7.3
Magazines (n = 247)*	14.6	14.5	14.6
Internet (n = 253)*	11.9	16.3	7.3

*Not all respondents are included in the analysis of this variable

they had ever watched pornography from selected media, such as mobile phones, books, CDs, videos, magazines or the Internet. Cell phones turned out to be the most popular media through which the children had access to pornographic material (37 percent), followed by books (24 percent) (Table 4.21). Across all types of media, more boys watched pornography than girls. For example, boys who used mobile phones for this purpose were nearly twice the number of girls (50 percent and 23 percent, respectively).

The children seemed to feel most comfortable discussing sexual and reproductive health issues with friends (Table 4.22). This somehow implies who they trusted or felt close to. More boys than girls, however, discussed these topics with friends. Discussing this issue with parents was more common among girls, who accounted for more than twice the number of boys in this category). Among those who had girlfriends or boyfriends, approximately one-fourth discussed sexual and reproductive health with their girlfriends or boyfriends. The proportion was higher among boys than girls (29 percent versus 18 percent).

TABLE 4.22 - PERSONS WITH WHOM CHILD RESPONDENTS DISCUSSED SEX AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (PERCENTAGE)

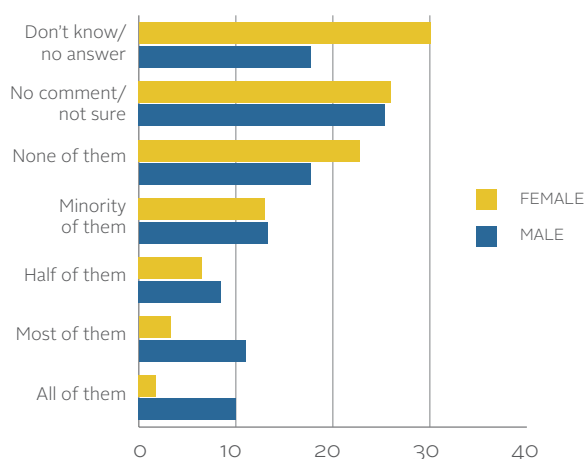
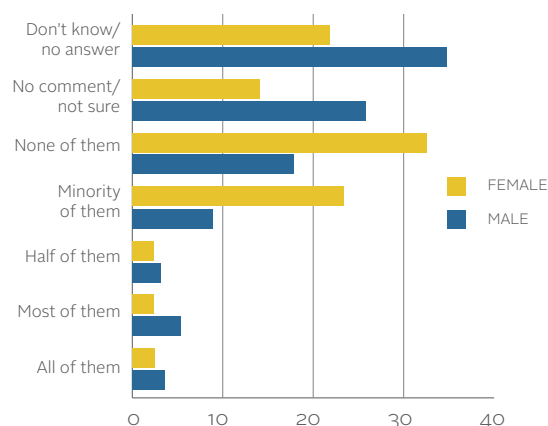
PERSON	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Friends (n = 259)	53.7	57.9	49.2
Parents (n = 257)*	25.7	16.9	34.7
Girlfriend or Boyfriend (n = 140)	24.3	28.9	17.5
Siblings (n = 245)*	15.1	9.7	20.7
Teachers (n = 255)	14.9	10.9	18.9
Health personnel (n = 253*)	13.0	8.7	17.3
Relatives (n = 259)	8.5	6.1	11.0
Columnist or Radio Personality (n = 253)	2.4	2.4	2.4

*Not all respondents are included in the analysis of this variable due to missing data.

The study further asked the child respondents if they had friends who had had sexual experience. This was an indirect question raised in order to get a sense of how common sexual experience was to the young people.

As Shown in Figures 4.6 and 4.7, there was not much difference between boys and girls in terms of peer experiences with sex. Approximately one-fourth reported no peers to have had sexual experience (22.1 percent for boys and 17.2 percent for girls). More than one-tenth reported that a few male friends had experienced sex. Those who disclosed that half of their male friends had already had sexual experiences accounted for a lower proportion (8.2 percent among boys and 6.3 percent among girls). Among approximately 10 percent of the boys and 3.2 percent of the girls, most of their male friends had experienced sex. Approximately the same proportion of boys (9.7 percent) and 1.6 percent of girls claimed all of their male friends to have engaged in sex.

As for the sexual experience of female friends, approximately 33 percent of the girl respondents and 17.9 percent of the boy respondents reported no peers to have had sexual experience. The proportion of boy and girl respondents who reported a minority of female peers to have engaged in sex was 9 percent and 23.6 percent, respectively. Those who claimed half or most or all female peers to have had sexual encounters accounted for a small percentage. Adding these three groups together, the proportion becomes 11.9 percent for males and 7.2 percent for females.

FIGURE 4.6 - MALE PEERS OF CHILD RESPONDENTS WITH
SEXUAL EXPERIENCEFIGURE 4.7 - FEMALE FRIENDS OF CHILD RESPONDENTS
WITH SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

Note that a substantial proportion of the children were reluctant to discuss this issue and offered “don’t know/no answer” or “no comment/not sure” as responses. Concerning male peers, this “providing no information group” accounted for 41.8 percent of the boys and 54.3 percent of the girls. When asked about the sexual experience of female friends, more boys than girls offered “don’t know/no answer or no comment/not sure” as responses (61.2 percent for boys and 56.3 percent for girls), thereby implying the sensitivity of the issue among the respondents and the discomfort in discussing the issue, even if the questions did not directly concern the respondents. Therefore, information on the sexual behavior of the children of overseas workers should be interpreted with caution.

Impact on Spouse: Resiliency and Vulnerability

The stay-behind mothers in this study appeared tough. The main defense mechanism generally expressed was to emphasize the benefits of working overseas, i.e., remittance. Some wives of migrant workers shared the following during the focus group discussions:

Before, we worked in the rice fields. We didn't have income during the year. We would get money only after we sold paddy rice, which was once a year. Now, we have money sent to us every month.

Although I miss him, I have to let him go, thinking that he left to find money for us. We did this [living separately] for our children.

The kids also said that they would not have a chance to continue schooling if their father had not gone.

Despite such justification, on the other side of the coin, interviewed mothers expressed vulnerability. With spouses living faraway, the mothers had to sacrifice a great deal, thereby reflecting the increased burden of overseas migration on women. Not only did these women have to assume dual roles as mother and father, but a number of them had a sense of being unloved by their children:

We all changed. Everything is harder . . . I am like a bad guy in the movies. When I discipline the kids, I am harsh on them. [When the father is home] they listen more to their father because he was never callous on them . . . So, they love their father more than me.

When I scold them, they say they miss their father and would like him to come back since he never scolds them.

Grandparent Roles

Maintaining family life without a father around involves not only the mothers and children but also the grandparents. As previously mentioned, this study confirms the supporting roles of the extended family, especially grandparents, in raising the children. In some cases, the children are closer and more open to grandparents than parents. Stay-behind mothers revealed the following during the focus group discussions:

The kids are close to their maternal grandpa and grandma, as they [grandpa and grandma] are home. Before, they went to look after the cattle.

Sometimes the kids are afraid to request things directly from me. They talk with their maternal grandpa or grandma first. Then the granny tells me for them. Sometimes they ask for money from granny because they know granny has money.

Other than the mother, the grandpa or grandma helps discipline the children . . . aunts and uncles also help.

Remittance

The remittance from abroad was the main financial source of most families who had at least one family member working overseas. The amount of remittances sent home varied, depending upon how much the migrants earned from overseas employment. The wages of Thai workers differed across job types and countries of destination. Table 4.23 shows the minimum wage rates for Thai workers in countries of destination as announced by the Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour of Thailand (2010).

TABLE 4.23 - MINIMUM WAGE RATES IN COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION OF THAI WORKERS (EFFECTIVE AS OF JANUARY, 2011)

COUNTRY	JOB POSITION	WAGE RATE	WELFARE BENEFITS
Taiwan, China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour Semi-Skilled Labour Skilled Labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NT\$17,880/month NT\$18,718/month NT\$19,153–20,410/month 	NT\$2,500 deducted for food and housing across all job positions.
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Labour Construction Labour Agriculture Housekeeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SG\$480/month SG\$552/month SG\$600/month SG\$350/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health insurance + roundtrip airfare across all job positions. For housekeeping: + Housing and Three meals a Day.

COUNTRY	JOB POSITION	WAGE RATE	WELFARE BENEFITS
Brunei	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Labour Skilled Labour Garment Seamstress Housekeeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BN\$20 per day BN\$25 per day BN\$320 per month BN\$380 per month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None None + Meal and Housing + Meal and Housing
Hong Kong SAR, China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Assistant Cook Spa Masseuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HK\$3,580/month HK\$10,500/month HK\$15,000–16,000/month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Meal and Housing + Meal and Housing + Meal and Housing
South Korea	Jobs in Employment Permit System (EPS)	KRW858,990 per month	40 hours per week + meal and housing
Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Labour Cook Cook Assistant Thai Masseuse Child Care Elderly Care Housekeeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MYR30 per day MYR1,000 per month MYR800 per month MYR1,800 per month MYR700 per month MYR1,000 per month MYR700 per month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None + Meal
Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour Semi-Skilled Labour Heavy Truck Driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US\$300–350 per month US\$400–450 per month US\$400–500 per month 	+ Meal and Housing for All Jobs.
Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Worker Semi-Skilled and Skilled Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US\$280 per month US\$295–350 per month 	None + Meal
Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture Caregiver for the Elderly and Disabled Persons Construction Restaurant Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILS3,890 per month ILS20.91 per hour ILS20.91 per hour ILS20.91 per hour 	If staying with employer, housing fees may be deducted at ILS200 to 300 per month.
Morocco	Goldsmith	US\$800–1,200 per month	+ Meal and Housing

As shown in Table 4.24, remittance recipients were mostly the spouses of migrants (91 percent); in the remainder of the households, the child's grandmother was the one who received the money. The remittance was generally sent through a commercial bank. The spouse also decided on the allocation, kept and disbursed the money in most cases (91 percent and 93 percent, respectively). The data reflected not only the predominance of fathers among overseas workers, but also the women's autonomy in managing the remittance.

According to village leaders who participated in the focus group discussions, migrants normally do not receive any salary during the first few months of employment. As soon as the migrants are paid, most of them start sending money home. The majority of the household respondents declared receiving monthly remittance during the previous year, or 12 times (66 percent). The remainder received money fairly regularly, but less frequently, except for those who reported receiving remittance from one to three times (Table 4.25).

Looking at the total amount of remittances during the previous year would show most of the migrant fathers to have sent more than THB100,000 (approximately USD3,300). More than one-fourth of the households with migrant fathers reported receiving amounts higher than THB300,000 during the previous year, which is quite a large sum (Table 4.26). The median amount was calculated at THB192,000 (approximately USD6,400).

The median of household income, including income from agriculture, non-agricultural activities and remittances during the past year was THB254,000 (USD8,467). Taking into account only the income coming from overseas, of which the median was THB192,000, remittance constituted 76 percent of the total household incomes, thus indicating the high reliance of households on remittances as a survival strategy.

TABLE 4.24 - RECEIPT AND MANAGEMENT OF REMITTANCES AMONG HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS

DATA CATEGORY	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS (N = 261)	PERCENT
REMITTANCE RECIPIENT		
Spouse	237	91.0
Other	24	9.0
PERSON ALLOCATING REMITTANCE		
Spouse	238	91.0
Others	23	9.0
PERSON KEEPING AND DISBURSING MONEY		
Spouse	244	93.0
Other	17	7.0

TABLE 4.25 - FREQUENCY OF LAST YEAR'S REMITTANCE AS REPORTED BY HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS

NO. OF TIMES REMITTANCE WAS RECEIVED	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS*	PERCENT
1-3	4	1.6
4-6	28	11.0
7-9	23	9.1
10-11	31	12.2
12	168	66.1
Total	254	100.0

*Excludes respondents with no answer and six households with migrant mothers.

TABLE 4.26 - FREQUENCY OF LAST YEAR'S REMITTANCE AS REPORTED
BY HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS

TOTAL AMOUNT OF REMITTANCE	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS*	PERCENT
<100,000	34	13.4
100,000–199,999	95	37.6
200,000–299,999	68	26.9
300,000+	56	22.1
Total	253	100.0
Median	192,000	

*Excludes respondents with no answer and six households with migrant mothers.

This study further explored the use of remittances to determine whether the remittance followed the plans made by the household before the migrants left the country (Table 4.27). In most of the interviewed households (81 percent), the members had already planned how to allocate the remittance together, even before the migrants had departed for work. The top three priorities in overseas income allocation were children's education (34 percent) and debt payment (23

percent) with food, clothes and utilities (14 percent). Approximately 13 percent mentioned house renovation, construction or purchase, while 10 percent claimed the remittance was intended for purchasing land and investing in agriculture, respectively. Debt payment was not surprising as a priority expense since prospective migrants tended to obtain loans in order to fund employment-related expenses prior to departure.

TABLE 4.27 - PLANNED REMITTANCE ALLOCATION

EXPENSE OR ALLOCATION	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS (N = 120)
Children's Education	33.8
Debt Payment	23.3
Food, Clothes, Utilities	13.8
House Renovation, Construction or Purchase	13.3
Investment in Agriculture or Purchase of Agricultural Equipment	5.3
Land Purchase	5.2
Car Purchase	2.4
Savings	1.9
Investment in Non-Agricultural Activities	1.0

Data on the actual use of remittance, however, showed food, clothes, utilities and social obligations, such as funeral and ordination expenses to emerge as the leading expenses taking precedence over children's education and debt payment (Table 4.28). It is important to highlight that social obligations were not even among the planned uses mentioned earlier. Also noteworthy is the significant number of households allocating the money for savings (72 percent).

The wives of migrants shared the following during the focus group discussions:

Por Yai Uan usually gets THB30,000 to 40,000 a month. If he works overtime he gets 50,000 baht in some months.

He was in debt for THB300,000. In only eight months, he will be free of debt.

I bought land because I could not use it like cash. Otherwise, my money would be gone.

Everyone buys land, small or big, builds a house, or uses [the money] for the future of the kids.

Some people buy cattle. It is a form of savings. When they are big enough, we can sell them at a good price.

TABLE 4.28 - ACTUAL USE OF REMITTANCE

EXPENSE OR ALLOCATION	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS (N = 261)
Food, Clothes, Utilities	98.1
Social Obligations	93.5
Children's Education	88.9
Debt Payment	84.3
Investment in Agriculture	79.7
Purchase of Household Equipment	72.4
Savings	72.0
Purchase of Food for Children	55.9
Purchase of Agricultural Equipment	51.7
Health-Related Expenses, Especially Children's	49.0
Automobile Purchases	39.5
House Renovation	27.2
Purchase of Toys for the Children	23.4
Travel	23.0
Fairgrounds/Religious Ceremonies	21.1
Land Purchases	20.3
Land Improvements	20.3
House Construction	14.9
Assistance to Other Household Members Who Want to Migrate	14.2
Purchase of Animals for Agriculture	10.3

Use of Remittance for Investment

Looking at household investments and comparing investments before and after the migration of at least one family member to work abroad, this study found an increase in the number of households making investments after migration from 180 (or approximately 69.0 percent of 261 household respondents) to 210 (or about 80.5 percent)(Table 4.29). Remittance was thus used not only for immediate household expenses, but also for purposes that would generate income in the long run.

TABLE 4.29 - INVESTMENTS MADE BY HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS

TYPE OF INVESTMENT	BEFORE MIGRATION (N = 180)	AFTER MIGRATION (N = 210)
Agriculture	90.6	94.8
Trade	4.4	2.4
Livestock	2.8	0.0
Agriculture and Livestock	2.2	2.4
Handicraft	0.0	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0

There was not much difference in the investments made by the households before and after migration; most of the respondents invested money in agriculture. A few ventured into small business (e.g., setting up a small grocery store, vending) and livestock husbandry. Handicrafts surfaced as a new form of investment, but engaged a very small proportion of the households. Calculating the median of the amounts invested by the households showed an increase in investments from THB20,000 to THB23,000 after the migration of at least one family member.

Despite the flow of remittance to the household, the number of household respondents claiming the money sent from abroad made the remittance insufficient to cover daily needs or the money might have been sufficient but the respondents continued to face difficulty in meeting daily expenses which could not be ignored (22 percent for each category). The proportion of respondents reporting they even had savings after expenses was just slightly higher (24 percent). Almost one-fifth (18 percent) of the households that reported receiving sufficient remittance to cover only necessary expenses, with nothing left for unnecessary expenses, such as entertainment, leisure and the purchase of modern gadgets. Approximately fourteen percent disclosed having extra money for expenses other than daily needs (Table 4.30).

TABLE 4.30 - SUFFICIENCY OF REMITTANCE AS ASSESSED BY THE
HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS

ASSESSMENT	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENT
Unable to Meet Daily Family Needs	58	22.2
Difficulty Meeting Daily Needs	57	21.8
Sufficient to Meet Daily Needs	46	17.6
Easily Meets Daily Needs	37	14.2
Able to Set Aside Savings after Expenses	63	24.1
Total	261	100.00

In households where the remittance was more than sufficient for daily needs, there was a noticeable increase in household assets after migration. The findings suggest an increase in the proportions of household assets of all types (Table 4.31). These included mobile phones, DVD players, household appliances and personal computers (desktop and laptop). The purchase of computers signified investment in the children's education. Acquiring household appliances, on the other hand, reflected the capacity of the remittance to provide convenience for the household in terms of conducting daily activities.

It is clear from the abovementioned data that the remittances contributed significantly to the household finances, covering not only the households' daily needs, but also the children's education. In some cases, overseas income served productive uses, such as investment for future income. It cannot not be denied, however, that a substantial number of households continued to struggle in making ends meet, even with remittance from overseas migration.

TABLE 4.31 - OWNERSHIP OF HOUSEHOLD ASSETS BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATION

HOUSEHOLD ASSET	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS (N = 261)		
	BEFORE	AFTER	PERCENT INCREASE
TV	96	100	4
Mobile Phone	77	97	20
DVD/CD Player	66	80	14
Radio	59	64	5
Washing Machine	34	52	18
Desktop Computer	16	42	26
Video Recorder	11	15	4
Car	10	17	7
Laptop	2	13	11
Water Heater	6	7	1
Microwave	3	5	2
Big Tractor	2	5	3
Vacuum Cleaner	2	4	2

Thai Government Policy on Thai Workers Overseas

To date, Thai overseas workers have been primarily concentrated in four regions: Asia, the Middle East, North America (United States) and the European Union. The highest number of Thai workers can be found in Taiwan, China, followed by Singapore, South Korea and UAE. Owing to the worldwide economic downturn, many countries in Southeast Asia have limited the inflow of foreign labour. In the Middle East, the United States and the EU, however, the market for foreign labour is growing wider (NESDB 2003).

Thai overseas workers, however, face a number of challenges throughout the entire process of migration, beginning from pre-departure to working abroad and returning home. In pre-departure, workers have to contend with the high cost of recruitment fees. Most borrow money from families and relatives, or even co-villagers, with some interest. Some mortgage houses or land for cash. A number of workers are even unfortunate enough to be deceived by private recruitment agencies, thereby losing money and job opportunities even before leaving the country (Sornmanee, 2008).

While abroad, workers are not without challenges. There have been cases where workers have been denied employment in the contracted factory or company. Some are paid lower than the agreed amount or work for fewer hours than the agreed duration and, therefore, receive less pay. Others are placed in jobs that are different from the ones identified in employment contracts (Arjrit, 2008).

Upon return to Thailand, migrants find it difficult to procure jobs in factories due to limited availability while it becomes even more difficult to find jobs in companies or firms due to deficient educational backgrounds. Some returnees opt for freelance work in their villages and neighbouring towns, such as plumbing, masonry, mechanics and other jobs related to the skills gained from working abroad, or others may resume agricultural activities.

Aware of these issues, the Thai government has implemented and amended laws and regulations related to Thai overseas workers. A plan for the protection and promotion of Thai overseas workers has been developed since the 9th National Plan, which is the national development framework for the period of 2002–2006 (NESDB 2003). The plan includes measures to protect workers from being deceived, especially by private recruitment agencies, before leaving Thailand and from deception by employers while abroad. Protection measures are extended to female migrant workers, who may be victims of sex trafficking. The primary strategy is aimed at providing overseas applicants with useful and accurate information and consultation.

The government, however, must be aware that workers prefer to take risks with private recruitment agencies because of the convenience offered in the application process. Unlike the government, representatives of private recruitment agencies perform “outreach” services and go to the applicant’s house in person to facilitate the process. Applicants seem to not mind the high cost of dealing with private recruitment agencies (which is double or triple the fees charged by the government agency), because private recruitment agencies remain the most popular method of applying for overseas work. It should also be noted that the problems encountered by Thai workers in carrying out employment contracts stemming mostly from miscommunication with employers, which is in turn a result of limited education and knowledge of English. Some workers, for example, do not follow the rules and regulations of the factory and thus fail to receive the agreed-upon wages and welfare benefits (Arjrit, 2008).

As facilitator of job allocation among overseas workers, the government coordinates with and supports every related government agency, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, in order to meet the labour demands in the foreign market. At present, the overseas market for Thai workers has been leaning more toward the service and skilled labour sectors than in the past, particularly in the EU, North America, Japan, Singapore and the Middle East. In the service sector, there is a high demand for workers qualified to perform Thai massage, spa services, childcare and geriatric care. Other service jobs include Thai cooking, information technology (software) and industrial mechanics (NESDB 2003). The government agencies mentioned have thus included these skills in training courses for migrants offered at government occupational training centres in many provinces and in Bangkok. In addition, the government supports and inspects non-government training centres, making certain the migrants follow and meet the standards of the training curricula. Language courses (English and destination country languages) are also part of the curricula.

According to the Protection and Promotion for Thai Workers Working Abroad Plan (NESDB 2003), the government has developed the following six strategies to assist Thai overseas workers:

1. *Protection of Thai Overseas Workers.* This strategy aims to minimize, if not eradicate, the incidence of workers deceived by private recruitment agencies and to help workers receive proper wages and welfare benefits as stated in employment contracts or in compliance with laws or regulations. Information dissemination, including the provision of relevant documents and consultation, constitute the major activities.
2. *Promotion of Effectively Sending Thai Workers Abroad.* This issue is considered urgent. All involved organizations need to work as a team to provide more employment options for Thai workers based on convenience, speed and cost-effectiveness principles, i.e., providing more service points, minimizing procedures and paperwork, and reducing rates for fees and related expenditures. The programme involves the establishment of nonprofit organizations or foundations under the Ministry of Labour in order to survey new markets and develop new skilled labour to supply the market demand and other related issues.
3. *Capacity Building for Thai Workers.* This strategy involves skills development for particular jobs needed currently or in the future. For example, foreign language is considered an important skill for people who want to work overseas.
4. *Plans for Returning Workers.* This strategy aims to create a workers' database and returning workers' network for overseas workers to share experiences and knowledge. The programme further seeks to issue job certificates to these workers to recognize the experience gained in working abroad. This is thought to facilitate future overseas application of migrant workers and enable negotiations for better pay. The strategy, however, does not mention how unskilled returning workers could be developed for employment in Thailand.
5. *Information System for Thai Overseas Workers.* This strategy intends to create a database of all Thai workers who have ever worked abroad as well as those seeking to work abroad, or potential overseas workers.
6. *Public Relations.* This strategy seeks to provide information to workers on the preparations needed for overseas work, working abroad and returning home.

The government has also established a credit system for potential migrant workers who have no money to finance applications and other migration-related requirements. The Department of Employment, in cooperation with three government-owned banks (Krungthai Bank, the Bank for Agriculture and Agriculture Cooperatives and the Government Savings Bank), offers loans to overseas applicants at a maximum of THB150,000, with a minimum interest rate (TOEA 2011).

The government has further set up funding to aid member-workers with financial and health problems, including accidents, as the workers prepare for overseas employment, while working abroad and upon returning home. This fund collects a small amount of money from member-workers before the workers leave Thailand. Whenever any of the migrants encounter any problems related to employment, a financial consultant will be sent to provide assistance.

Another government initiative involves disseminating messages about job opportunities abroad as well as other matters concerned with working abroad through the radio network, including national and provincial broadcasts run during the news hour every morning. This helps the public in finding overseas employment opportunities and protects prospective migrant workers from exploiters (IOM 2003).

In summary, government support for overseas workers has been exemplified in various policies implemented over the years. These policies serve to heighten public interest in working abroad, protect workers' welfare, provide financial and technical assistance to workers, including returning migrants, and promote skills and knowledge development among other things. All of the aforementioned forms a part of government strategy to address the domestic problems of poverty and unemployment.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study tackled an understudied research area in Thailand, namely, parental overseas migration and its implications on the well-being of children left behind. The sampling comprised 261 overseas worker households with children aged 14 to 21 years. In the majority of the households, the migrant worker was the father while the main caregiver was the mother. The findings offer useful insight for future use as a foundation for designing and developing larger-scale studies. The results not only indicate the vulnerability of the family and children left behind, but also reflect the family's resiliency in managing and coping with current family arrangement.

Key Findings

1. After the father left home to work abroad, the mother usually assumed the roles of household head and decision maker. Only a few migrant fathers maintained such roles, even though they were not physically present. Grandparents, especially maternal grandparents, also played significant supporting roles in household matters, including bringing up the children left behind.
2. The decision on whether or not to migrate was mostly made by the couple. The number of households where only the mother was the decision maker was relatively high as opposed to those with "father only" as decision maker, thereby reflecting the high autonomy of women in the Thai context.
3. Migrant parents keep close contact with family members whereby 69 percent of the child respondents reportedly communicated with the migrant parent/s at least once a week. However, some children did not feel close or connected to migrant parents, especially those who had been in that kind of household arrangement for a long period of time. The usual resident mother played an important role in mending the father-child relationship.

4. Material and financial needs were the major drive for working overseas. Non-monetary aspects were often overlooked because the household members had the idea that the aforementioned would be overcome eventually.
5. Most of the children did not encounter any problems in living away from parents. However, the majority preferred that the parents stay home, indicating parental migration as having taken place against the children's will.
6. The social costs of migration were expressed in terms of sadness and loneliness due to the distance. The left-behind family generally relied on the passing of time to overcome the difficulties of the separation.
7. In general, children did not consider living apart from parents as affecting academic performance.
8. Following the parent/s migration, the children's behavior and activities did not evidently change; boys, however, seemed to enjoy the greater freedom in living separately from parent/s more than girls.
9. Approximately three-fourths of the children (77 percent) did not participate in the parents' decision to work abroad. In cases where the children had participated, the girls had greater participation than boys.
10. Approximately one-fourth of the children had tried smoking and approximately half were at risk for trying smoking since either friend(s) or family member(s) were into the habit. Nearly half of the children had tried drinking alcohol, and more than two-thirds had either a friend or a family member who was engaged in alcohol consumption.
11. More than one-third of the children had watched pornography from mobile phones while approximately one-fourth said books were their source of pornographic material.
12. Overseas remittance accounted for a major part of the household income and was used not only to cover the household's daily needs and children's education, but also for savings and investment, thereby implying future income. However, a substantial proportion of the households continued to struggle to make ends meet. Moreover, some of the households deviated from the original plans for how to use the remittance.
13. The Thai government has developed strategies to support potential and current migrant workers, including the provision of accurate relevant information and training during pre-departure, while working abroad and upon returning home. The programmes include skills training to develop a workforce suited to the labour market with fast, convenient and effective services to facilitate the employment application process.

Policy and Programme Recommendations for the Government

1. Greater focus on the social impact of international migration, especially at the micro level, i.e., family and individuals, is needed. Strategies should be undertaken to mitigate the social costs of migration among the spouses and children left behind. For example, responsible organizations should initiate programmes to help children through the process and resolve feelings of detachment from migrant fathers.
2. Households require assistance on how to optimize the use of the remittance. Increased household income due to overseas remittance provides educational support for the children, thereby giving children of migrant workers greater chances for a bright future. However, having more money also enables children of migrant workers to engage in activities potentially distracting the children from studies (e.g., surfing or social networking on the Internet, text messaging through cell phones, computer games). Some even develop unfavorable behaviors, such as smoking and drinking.
3. Cooperation or collaboration must be established with related organizations, especially at the local level, such as the provincial social welfare department and school or community associations, to implement concerted efforts toward protecting potential overseas workers.
4. Family- and child-related organizations need to be prepared to deal effectively with family members and children from transnational families. To date, no organization has explicitly included support for families and children left behind into their responsibility.
5. Households need to be provided with information on how to manage income wisely through leaflets, books and organized training.
6. Policies should be formulated to prepare migrants for the return home through programmes offering advice on how to invest or save earnings, and on how to adapt work skills to the local community.

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