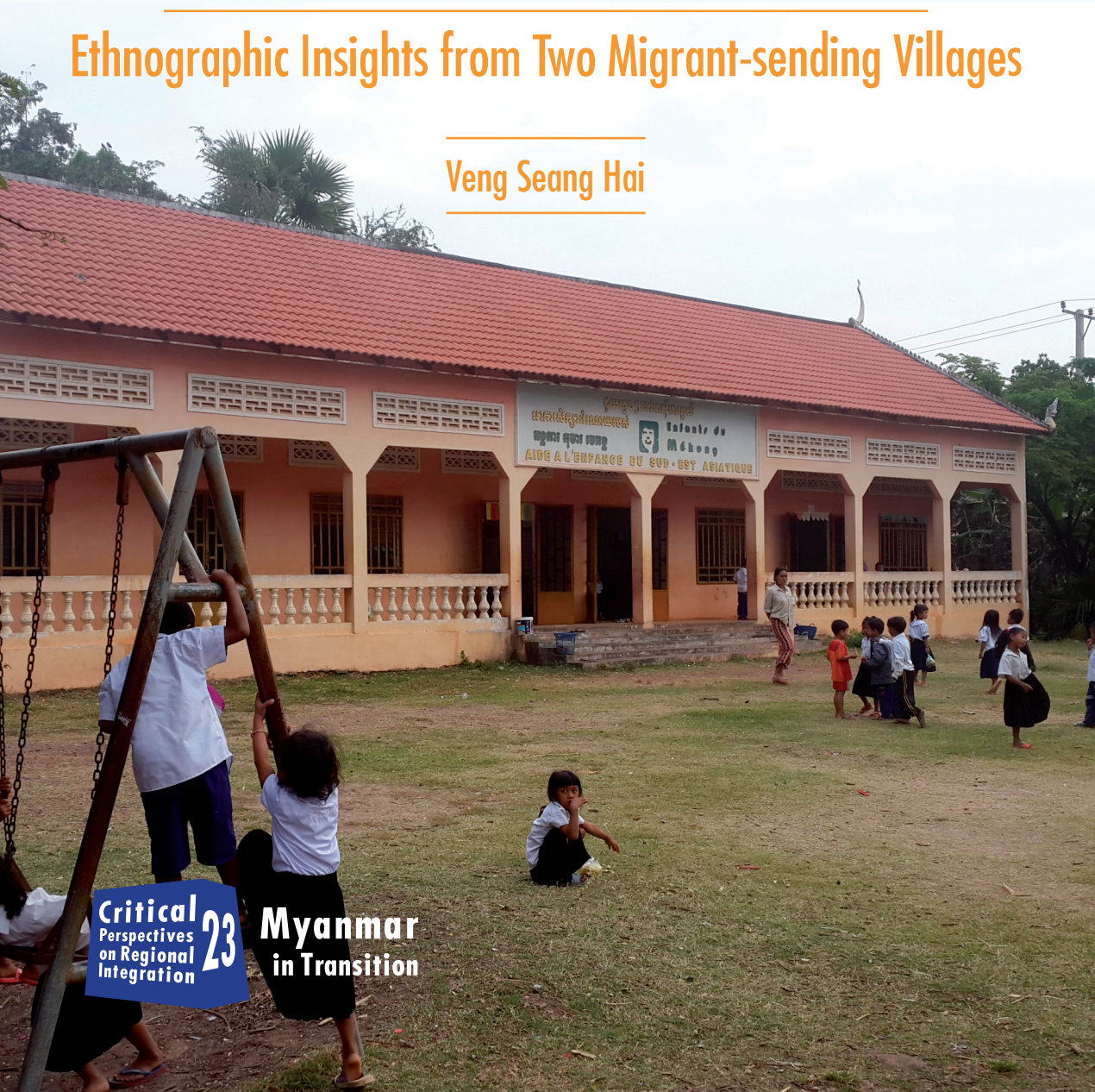
The Impact of Social-Economic Remittances on Social Mobility in Cambodia

Ethnographic Insights from Two Migrant-sending Villages

Veng Seang Hai



Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration 23
Myanmar in Transition

RCSD
Chiang Mai University

'Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration'
Publication Series

About the series

The Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration series is the product of teaching and research at the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University. It draws on primary postgraduate research undertaken for the dissertation in the Center's International Masters of Social Science (Development Studies) program. The focus of the program is to consider the processes and consequences of the increasing interconnections and regionalization between the five mainland Southeast Asian countries (Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), and specifically to examine the relations, exchanges and encounters within the context of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The publication series is informed by the interface between the social sciences and development studies, specifically engaging with concepts which relate to physical and social mobility, boundary crossing, and the construction of ethnic identities. Within these concerns, the series also addresses issues of social, cultural and environmental sustainability, and the ways in which livelihoods are sustained and transformed in the mainland Southeast Asian sub-region. The series seeks to strike a balance between the experiences of both urban and rural life, and to examine the rich variety of responses and adaptations to processes of regionalization and globalization.

The Impact of Social-Economic Remittances on Social Mobility in Cambodia: Ethnographic Insights from Two Migrant-sending Villages

Veng Seang Hai

RCSD The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development
Chiang Mai University

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development
Chiang Mai University

The Impact of Social-Economic Remittances on Social Mobility in Cambodia: Ethnographic Insights from Two Migrant-sending Villages

Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration series

ISBN: xx-xxx-xxx-xxx-x

Author: Veng Seang Hai
Series Editor: Chayan Vaddhanaphuti
Senior Editorial Adviser: Victor T. King
Publisher: Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD)
Tel: +66 (0) 53 943 595-6 / Fax: +66 (0) 53 893 279
rcsd.soc.cmu.ac.th
rcsd@cmu.ac.th
Printed: September 2022
Price: 250 Baht

National Library of Thailand Cataloging in Publication Data

Duangkamon Doncha-Um.
Burmese Migrant Domestic Workers: Tactics of Negotation Among Muslim Female Domestic Workers in the Chang Klan Community of Chiang Mai, Thailand .-- Chiang Mai : Chiang Mai University Press, 2017.
xxx p. -- (Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration).

1. Pa-Oh (Asian people)--Burma. 2. Burma--Social life and customs. I. Title.

305.8958
ISBN: **xx-xxx-xxx-xxx-x**

Copy Editor: Nele Dewilde
Cover Photo: Veng Seang Hai
Layout and cover design: Jeff Moynihan
Printer: Wanida Karnpim Limited Partnership

Contact: Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development
Tel: +66 (0) 53 943 595-6 Fax: +66 (0) 53 893 279
http://rcsd.soc.cmu.ac.th, e-mail: rcsd@cmu.ac.th

Series Foreword

The monographs that comprise the Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration series have emerged from dissertations based on original primary field research and written as a part of the requirements for the Master of Social Science (Development Studies) program of the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University.

As Senior Editorial Adviser, I was engaged by the Center to conduct an overview of the dissertations—which date back to 2001 and now number well over 100 pieces of work—and select which of them would best illustrate the quality of the graduate student research. This was by no means an easy task, but it was decided to choose primarily those written in the past few years, given that empirical research in social science tends to date rapidly. Another consideration was that the monographs should give expression to the main theme of the series of Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration.

As the selection and editorial work proceeded it was decided to organize the publications into sub-series which focus on different parts of mainland Southeast Asia. The first several volumes focus on Myanmar, covering such subjects as livelihood strategies, changing ethnic identities, borders and boundary-crossing, and the commoditization of culture within the context of ethnic tourism. Following volumes will be devoted to Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

The series also illustrates the concerns in the MA program to bring together social science and natural science in order to further the understanding of sustainable development issues in the region. Over some 20 years Chiang Mai University has developed considerable research expertise in such fields as resource management, environmental impact assessment, upland agricultural systems and indigenous knowledge, health, and ethnic and gender relations. Teaching and research in development issues also deploys social science concepts within the development field to address decision-making, policy and practice, and the responses and adaptations of local populations.

This current monograph series also focuses on the processes of social, cultural, economic, political and environmental change among populations and territories undergoing rapid transformations within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Victor T. King, Senior Editorial Adviser,
Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration Series

Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CDRI	Cambodian Development Resource Institute
ELCs	Economic Land Concessions
FCRCWs	Facilitation Center for the Return of Cambodian Workers
ILO	International Labour Organization
KHR	Cambodian Riel
MIF	Microfinance
MLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NELM	New Economics of Labor Migration
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
THB	Thai Baht
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSSCs	One Stop Service Centers
OED Triangle	Origin-Education-Development Triangle
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Glossary of Terms

dom-leong	old measurement unit for gold equal to 37.5 g
kai yang	Thai word for roasted chicken
kak-then (kathen)	Khmer religious festival
katannu (kataññu)	gratitude, obligation - Buddhist teaching implying that children owe great gratitude to their parents for giving birth to them and raising them
katavedi	grateful - Buddhist teaching prescribing the moral obligation of children to pay back for the parents' dedication to their well-being
khanti	patience, forbearance - Buddhist teaching applied to the context of migrant workers meaning that they have to work hard and be patient to save money; otherwise, they will not find a job or be able to save money to send back home
kon-ngan	Thai word for workers, employees
laab	a kind of Northeastern Thai cuisine
Meak Bochea	annual religious festival dedicated to the Lord Buddha and his teachings
mei-kha-chol	agent for migrant workers who guarantees a job and transportation from home village to destination
moo-ka-tha	Thai word for barbecued pork
nek-mean-pi-sangkum	born to a rich family, having rich ancestors
nek-leng	gangster
nek-sa-re	farmer
Pchum Ben	Ancestors' Day, a 15-day Cambodian religious festival
phum-nek-mien	rich village

puj-ke-mei-khum	kin to commune chiefs
saddha	trust, faith - Buddhist teaching applied to husbands and wives separated because of migration. The couple have to keep faith to stay true to each other. Their long-distance relationship must remain solid, regardless of the spatial disconnection
Sak-mai-ii-sarak	Khmer Issarak, an anti-French movement between 1946 and 1970
Sak-mai sangkum	Sangkhum Reastre Niyum regime (1955-1970)
sala-chor-tien	rest house for elderly people
sangkat	commune or district level
sawadee	Thai greeting, often accompagnied with a *wai*
Sila Day	weekly Buddhist ritual of gathering in temple to promote the basic principles of Buddhism against killing, stealing, adultery, lies, and alcoholism
som-nanh-cha-babb	"net of law"; if a net is loose or has wide holes, fish can escape; likewise, if law is not strict enough, justice will never be served
som-peh	Khmer term for the *wai* in Thai, a greeting gesture
som sekdey sok	Khmer term literally meaning "harmony begging" (*som* = beg; *sekdey sok* = happiness or harmony), or to seek blessing
srok-prak-bat	a province were the Thai Baht currency is used
ro-dern	accent common to Khmer speakers in Surin, Thailand, and Khmers in northwestern Cambodia.
thor	baptized, immersed
bong thor	people who have immersed themselves informally and socially as brothers, but biologically unrelated
tontine*, tong ting*	traditional saving practice
yaay	Thai word meaning "to move"

Acknowledgements

This thesis was written by one person, but supported by many. I could not imagine how I would have completed this research without the following academic advisors. First of all, many thanks to Dr. Amporn Jirattikorn, my main advisor, for her efforts to organize and simplify my conceptual framework from the beginning until the end. Without her supervision, this study would have been difficult to complete. Special gratitude also goes to my co-advisor, Dr. Ta-Wei Chu, whose knowledge about Cambodia has made this research contextually correct. Furthermore, I am grateful to Dr. Naruemon Thabchumpon for her wise comments to make this research more useful in terms of future policies. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Kleinod from the University of Bonn for listening very carefully to the briefing of my first draft. His comments made me confident to bring out my ideas.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Prof. Anan Ganjanapan for his helpful course on Economic Sociology through which I began to read and write more critically; Dr. Mukdawan Sakboon for never declining my requests for mentorship; Dr. Chusak Wittayapak for his general supervision; and all professors and lecturers for their informative courses. Profound thanks are given to my proof-reader Dr. Shirley Worland who selflessly devoted her time, even weekends, to polish this research. Also, thanks to Ms. Johanna Ho (Jo) for her selfless help to edit my proposal. Without them, I would have been unable to digest my thoughts well.

I spare no gratitude for the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) and the Department of Social Science and Development for their financial support. I also appreciate the generous fund from the Graduate School of CMU to make my fieldwork financially feasible. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to the people in Kandal and Poy Samrong for their help and warm hospitality. I wish to acknowledge the local authorities, Mr. Hong Huy and Mr. Kong Lep, for letting me freely collect all data, and Ho Kotin and Ho Thona for guiding me to anywhere and anyone in the villages.

In respect to the office of academic affairs, I cannot forget to thank Ms. Rungthiwa Hacker (P'Ann) for her kind support with everything concerning administration. Without her, I would have been in trouble keeping myself on the right track. I would also like to thank all administrative staff at RCSD and CMU for their wonderful service.

On a personal note, there was a significant other who always gave me the strength to move forward whenever I was knocked down by frustrations during the writing of this thesis; she is my mother, whom I deeply love. Without hearing her voice and seeing her face through our video calls, without her powerful words, "Even if you fail or succeed, I am impressed because you have tried your best already", I would have written this research with an empty soul. This masterpiece is written by me for you, mom. Likewise, I thank my brothers, my sisters-in-law, my nieces and nephews for their unconditional belief in me. Through their belief I could resist all despair along the journey towards this accomplishment.

I also wish to thank my best friends who were always by my side: *Ah* Rith, *Bong* Chet, Takashi, Elliot, Beaw, and other friends in Chiang Mai and Cambodia. When I lost focus, these beautiful people helped me to regain my momentum just by their caring talks and cheerful hangouts. Friendship makes sense because of you.

To end, I will never forget some important persons at DC-CAM who first sparked my interest in pursuing an M.A. Special thanks to *Bong* Dy Kamboly, *Bong* Chy Terith, *Pou* Pheng Pong Rasy, *Pou* Chhang Youk, and *Bong* Ly Sokheang for their initial encouragement to become someone. Also, thanks to my former senior, Mr. Mam Sovann, for his introduction to MASS, CMU. These people might have not noticed that every word they have said was a source of inspiration to me. This inspiration is what keeps up my faith that I can be what I am destined to be.

Veng Seang Hai

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background and Statement of Problems

Between the 1970s and 1990s Cambodia was plagued by political instability and fragmentation, causing massive displacement and relocation. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled into Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The United Nations (UN)[1] helped to resettle the majority into Western countries and before the 1993 UN-sponsored national elections, Cambodia repatriated its people from its neighboring countries (Khamboly, 2007; Khamboly & Dearing, 2014; UNHCR, 2000). The elections resulted in a coalition government with Prince Norodom Ranariddh appointed as the first Prime Minister (PM), and Hun Sen as the second PM. They were handed the important task of recovering the national economy and maintain stability. The end of hostilities was marked by an economic recovery and growth, indicated by a low inflation and a 6% annual growth rate of GDP in 1991 and 1995. The GDP growth even rocketed from 5% in 1998 to 12% in 1999 (World Bank, n.d.).

Such growth is not a coincidence, but an outcome of Cambodia's economic regionalization and integration within the framework of the

1 From 1975 to 1987, approximately 34,000 Cambodians escaped into Thailand; 20,000 into Laos; and 170,000 into Vietnam. By 1979, more than 42,000 Cambodian refugees were counted inside refugee camps in Thailand. By the beginning of 1980s, the number of Cambodian refugees inside the camps increased to 100,000 and reached a peak of 140,000 in later months (UNHCR, 2000).

Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, due to the 1997 military coup[2], Cambodia had to wait until 1999 for its official admission into ASEAN (Woon, 2016). Together with other ASEAN members, Cambodia eventually extended its regional economic policies through adhering to joint principles of integration, aimed at facilitating the connectivity and movement of goods, services, investment, capital and skilled labor within and beyond ASEAN countries (ASEAN, 2015). The country enjoyed rapid economic growth again from 2011 to 2016, indicated by a 7% increase in GDP, granting it the title of "Asia's New Tiger Economy" (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2016).

Despite the GDP growth, Cambodia faces human resources' bottlenecks caused by labor migration. Challenges such as unemployment, poverty, corruption, low human development, and a lack of social protection and dialogue mechanisms have instigated Cambodians to migrate abroad in order to improve their lives and income (National Institute of Statistics [NIS], 2010). From 2000 to 2015, the number of Cambodian migrants increased from 3.7% out of a 12 million total population, to 7.6% out of a 15.5 million total population. In 2015, Thailand remained the top destination country, receiving up to 68% of all Cambodian migrants, with fewer than 10% migrating through illegal and undocumented channels (OECD/CDRI, 2017). Male migrants thereby outnumber female migrants; however, women still make up a sizable proportion. In 2007, they comprised about 38% of the registered Cambodian migrants in Thailand (Sciortino & Punpuning, 2009).

The massive outflow of Cambodian migrant workers to Thailand can be viewed as strategic. Bylander (2013), for instance, found that migration to Thailand was a necessary strategy to cope with environmental shocks and stress, such as floods, drought and poor rainfall, causing loss of income for individual households. Particularly migration from Banteay Meanchey province to Thailand has become a means to combat poverty, increase income, improve skills, and seek better work environments (Lee, 2005).

2 The second PM Hun Sen was accused of ordering his troops to eliminate all opponents and supporters of the first PM Ranariddh. Hun Sen, however, claimed that the military operation was necessary to maintain peace and solve the problem of anarchy caused by the first PM Ranariddh, who had brought the illegal Khmer Rouge guerrillas to Phnom Penh and imported illegal weapons (Mintier, Raedler, & Reuters, 1997).

In 2003, the Thai and Cambodian government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Employment of Workers. To foster migration under the MoU, the Cambodian Inter-Ministerial Working Group carried out nationality checks and issued identity certificates for migrants. By 2015, the Royal Government of Cambodia had sent 115,420 workers to Thailand (OECD/CDRI, 2017). Likewise, the Royal Thai government developed mechanisms to legally receive workers from Cambodia. However, this did not prevent the deportation of illegal immigrants by the National Council for Peace and Order. Eventually, the Thai government re-absorbed 680,000 Cambodian migrants who returned through legal frameworks, assisted by Facilitation Centers for the Return of Cambodian Workers, and One Stop Service Centers for the registration of migrant workers (Mekong Migration Network, 2014).

With migration being crucial for national development, different state and non-state agencies, like the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MLVT, 2014) and OECD/CDRI (2017), have emphasized the importance of remittances made by overseas migrants. The predominant definition of remittances focusses on the economic aspect, such as the money earned by migrants in the host countries, and sent to their countries of origin as a fulfillment of certain economic needs (ADB, 2006). Hence, economic remittances are a significant key to unlock economic bottlenecks in developing countries like Cambodia (World Bank, 2016). The World Bank reported that the country had an inward remittance flow of $731 million dollar in 2015, thereby designating its high dependency on economic remittances. In general, remittances send to developing countries are larger and more stable than other external resources such as foreign direct investment, overseas development aid and private debts. Economists like Vathana and Tiberti (2016) therefore acknowledge that economic remittances help to reduce poverty among migrant households.

While economists stress the economic logic of remittances, sociologists contend that money does not tell the whole story. In fact, international migrants also transmit *social remittances* defined as norms, practices, skills, identities, and social capital which circulate between the host and sending communities (Levitt, 2001). Social remittances even potentially generate economic advantages because social networks can, for example, entail lucrative benefits like high-paid jobs as people tend to share occupational information in their social networks (Granovetter, 2005). In other words, a non-migrant receiving remitted money can still remain disadvantaged if he or she has no social ties or business networks.

In order to deeply understand the developmental impact of remittances, the link between the social and economic aspects of remittances has to be borne into consideration. This study therefore aims to look deeper into the economic impacts of social remittances, and the non-economic impacts of economic remittances.

The relationship between remittances and social mobility, or the process through which individuals move up or down the socioeconomic ladder, measured by various indicators such as education and income (Clark, 2014; Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014), has also been discussed in several studies. Alexandru (2012), for example, explored how remittances from Romanian migrants cause upward social mobility in the sending communities. Eversole and Johnson (2014) revealed how Filipino households improved their socioeconomic status through investing remittances in small businesses and their children's schooling. Another discussion by Levitt (1998) touched upon the cultural aspect of remittances through his study on Dominican migrants in the United States of America (USA) who remit aspirations for social mobility to non-migrants at home, and enable non-migrants to enjoy advantages such as better healthcare due to their personal ties with important Dominican figures in the USA. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by extending the inquiry of remittances and social mobility to the context of Cambodia.

Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to gain a profound understanding of the impact of remittances on migrant-sending communities. The focus will be on (1) the nature of, and the extent to which the sending households and communities forge and sustain transnational connections with Cambodian migrants in Thailand; (2) the nature and extent of economic and non-economic impacts of remittances on the sending households and communities; and (3) the extent to which these impacts are employed as a means for social mobility by migrants and non-migrants in the sending communities. Data will be drawn from two migrant-sending villages, Kandal and Poy Samrong, located in northwestern Cambodia.

Literature Review and Research Rationale

The main concepts around which this study has been set up will be elaborated in this section. First, the notion of *transnationalism* with an emphasis on *transnational social fields*, as an important tool to understand interconnectedness between migrants and non-migrants, will be discussed. Thereafter, the concepts of economic and social remittances and their two-fold consequences will be addressed, followed by an elaboration on social mobility in the context of migration. The conceptual framework of this study will then be summarized and visually represented.

Transnational social fields

The opening up of national borders has reconfigured the world population as a result of "uneven geographical developments" driven by political and economic transformations such as the collapse of the communist Soviet Union, and the rise of privatization of state-owned sectors like education, housing and public utilities (Harvey, 2005, p. 88). This phenomenon has driven Third-World migrant workers into countries with an advanced economy, thereby disregarding nation-state boundaries (Harvey, 2005; Sassen, 2000a). Several scholars emphasized the interconnectedness between these migrants and their home country, which instigated a group of anthropologists in the 1990s to develop a conceptual framework called transnationalism. This has led to the development of the term *trans-migrants*, which refers to migrants who not only assimilate into and make an impact in the host countries, but also forge multidimensional relations and networks with their home countries (Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Due to the decrease of the nation-state containment and the tendency of mass societies to be driven by modernization, some scholars like Beck (2000) proposed to redefine societies. Global societies have not only changed their external relations between and beyond nation-states, but also their internal quality or who and what constitutes society or the field in which people are living. These scholars contend that human society is transnational and invisible because international migrants do not just leave. They carry their homelands with them across national boundaries through invisible, but sturdy networks and family ties with non-migrants in their home countries (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton-Blanc, 1994). Even though trans-migrants can be visibly confined by national borders, they are "boundless" in terms of an invisible "sense of nation" carried by them, therefore provoking a reconsideration of society and social membership.

Later scholarship reviewed these concepts based on the notion of a transnational social field, which is defined as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are exchanged, organized and transformed" (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1009). The Catholic religion, for example, functions as a platform to forge a transnational social field for Cuban migrants in Miami. By conducting their Catholic rituals and shrines in the places they are settling, they can symbolically move back-and-forth between the two societies (home and host). In this way, they can sustain their past memories from when they were in Cuba, and at the same time connect with their future for when they will return (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

These ways of being and belonging not only maintain symbolic transnationality, but also serve as a platform for capital circulation. Haitian immigrants in the USA, for example, maintain networks with their kinfolks and non-kinfolks in Haiti through a language of blood and descendants. By calling the left-behinds "brothers" and "sisters", they are defining the non-migrants as family in need of the migrants' obligations (i.e. financial aids). They can also enhance their social capital, like expanding or strengthening their social network, by sharing a common sense of nationalism in their language of blood and descendants. These social networks, in their turn, generate economic benefits for the migrants because they facilitate economic possibilities and investments in Haiti (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999). Another instance is a transnational social field forged by "cross-border ethnonationalism" shared and practiced by Shan migrants in Chiang Mai and Shan elites in Myanmar. Through this structure, Shan migrants pay tributes to their home nation via economic, social, and political cross-border activities. In return, they receive symbolic capital in the form of social and political recognition by the Shan elites in Myanmar. Hence, they become emancipated which allows them to maintain their lives and social membership in both Chiang Mai and Shan state, thus staying forever transnational (Amporn, 2017).

The aforementioned cases only shed light on the transnational linkages from the migrants' perspective, or how migrants build social networks and maintain ways of being in order to secure their future and other gains at home. It is representative for the dearth of research on the perspective of non-migrants in the sending communities. Non-migrants, too, have the potential to build ways of being and belonging with the migrants to secure gains. Functional

theorists argue that people conform to the norm of reciprocity as a universal obligation in order to maintain stable social systems or fields (Gouldner, 1960; Mauss, 1950). Accordingly, this study explores how non-migrants reciprocate to the migrants who are obligated to send remittances necessary for the livelihoods of a wide range of people at home.

Moreover, governments of sending countries also capitalize on remittances, which are of instrumental importance for the national economy and politics (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). This does not mean, however, that transnational relations between migrants and governments are always good. For example, the Indian government's attempts to develop a relationship with its diaspora for national economic development were unsuccessful because of mistrust by its diaspora and ineffective investment management by the government (Lall, 2003). Likewise, the governments of Armenia and the Philippines continue to assert that their nationals working abroad are a part of their national policy for domestic development and investment, despite tensions and inappropriate policies (Panossian, 2003; Alcid, 2003). These examples echo the Cambodian government's controversial policies to use remittances as an input for national development, even though there is a lack of policy coherence and limited social trust in the government (Johnson, 2014; MLVT, 2014; Hing, Pide, & Dalis, 2011). However, attempting to understand the flow of remittances through the state's perspective is problematic because Cambodian migrants keep sending remittances despite their limited trust in the government. This implies that what guarantees the flow of remittances is beyond the national perspective. The focus of this study is therefore on the role of the sending community in facilitating the remittance flow, rather than the national perspective.

Furthermore, scholarly discussions about transnational linkages have been extended to include online media. Komito (2011) found that the emergence of a "virtual community" through new social media, such as Facebook, enhances migrants' capacities to maintain intimate contacts with their family and friends at home. Other popular means of media to maintain contact were phone and Skype calls, followed by e-mails, websites, blogs, letters and tapes (Dekker, Engbersen & Faber, 2016). Online media thus represents a significant space for migrants and non-migrants to interact more freely and broadly, and serves as a platform for non-material remittances such as maintaining social networks. The existence of an online space also challenges our understanding about the extent to which ideas, norms, and worldviews between migrants and non-migrants are being exchanged.

This study argues that the concept of a transnational social field is a powerful tool to understand the transnational linkages connecting those who stay behind with those who leave. It will be demonstrated that without physically moving, the left-behind in Cambodia can maintain cross-border social relations and ties with the migrants in Thailand through various forms of communication. To a large extent, the communication serves as a platform to attract a certain quality and frequency of remittances.

The impacts of remittances

Economic remittances usually flow into the country of origin through informal cash-to-cash transfers as formal regulations for remittances are still lacking. This money represents an important investment capital as it is frequently deposited in bank accounts, or used to set up small enterprises or acquire real estate in the home country, which eventually benefits the non-migrants (notably relatives) (International Monetary Fund, 2009). Besides this, remittances are crucial for financial institutions to mobilize foreign savings to strengthen the recipient's economy (ADB, 2006). The question that begs to be asked is, why is the capital sent in the first place? Why do migrants not just earn money and keep it for themselves? For decades, neoclassical economists contended that individuals decide to work abroad because of wage differentials, employment conditions, and geographical differences in the supply and demand of labor. It is simply a matter of individual choices—no other entities are involved (Massey et al., 1993). In contrast, Stark and Bloom (1985) argued that migration is jointly decided by migrants and non-migrants. They are contractual parties who reserve a right to claim a share of the earnings, making remittances an obligatory return. It is therefore important to examine what assets are transferred to non-migrants, and how they make use of those assets to contribute to the economic well-being of the household and community.

However, economic logics alone cannot fully explain the impacts of remittances. Money only reflects the "primary" analysis, thereby undermining the social logics of remittances. Ideas, values, beliefs, skills, practices and social capital, such as social networks and ties, called social remittances by Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011), also need to be considered. These social remittances can be transmitted and circulated through various mechanisms such as direct visits, letters, telephone calls and emails. Moreover, a social remittance is systematic and intentional since migrants and non-migrants communicate directly and

clearly about particular ideas, values and beliefs concerning, for instance, politics and reform aspirations. It is also interpersonal in the sense that norms, skills or social networks are transferred between migrants and various social groups to gain a particular resource. For example, migrants contribute to a religious group at home to foster neighborliness, and secure social networks necessary for their livelihoods upon return (Levitt, 2001).

This study will focus on the norms, skills, practices and social capital received by the non-migrants in Kandal and Poy Samrong. The transmitting mechanisms will be explained through three terms: (1) return, (2) visits, and (3) contact. Firstly, the distribution of social remittances by return migrants who permanently or temporarily settle in Kandal will be examined. Secondly, light will be thrown on the occasional visits of migrants to Kandal, or non-migrants to host communities in Thailand. Thirdly, transnational contact through channels like the telephone, Facebook and other kinds of telecommunication will be discussed. This will allow to broadly understand the social remittances in the whole community as non-migrant sending households may also receive new ideas, norms or social networks from sending households.

Several studies have also revealed the two-fold consequences of remittances. Firstly, economic remittances potentially have non-economic impacts such as reconfiguring gender positions and roles, (re)constructing identities, or changing family relations (Belanger, 2016; Belanger & Tran, 2011; Kusakabe & Oo Zin Mar, 2007). For instance, money remitted by overseas Vietnamese women married to foreign spouses reconfigured their gender position in their families as they gained more decision-making power due to the financial contributions to their households (Belanger & Tran, 2011). This money earning potential and consequent increase in power also encourages other women to marry foreign men, which has created a shortage of potential brides for the left-behind Vietnamese men, reconfiguring gender positions in the community as the men now have to marry women of lower status from more remote villages (Belanger, 2016).

Likewise, a study of Kusakabe and Oo Zin Mar (2007) on migrant Burmese women revealed how economic contributions to their community of origin enhanced their economic mobility and changed their social position and gender role. The women received more decision-making power in their household through the economic contributions to their family. Moreover, after

the conservative elders at home, who have the power to decide on the women's migration, noticed the benefits of their contributions, they hailed the migrant women for their support to their community. Through this acceptance by the elders, the women could enjoy a sense of belonging to their community from a reconfigured social and gender position. Another study pointed out that remitted money also transformed the political and economic identities of migrants. The Filipino government, for example, hailed their overseas migrants as heroic figures for national development due to their remittance contributions. Recently, they have been given a new symbolic identity as "overseas investors", encouraging them to send money to invest or to become entrepreneurs in the Philippines (Weekley, 2006; Alcid, 2003).

Besides this, social remittances have the potential to create economic impacts such as business opportunities or through instilling economic and saving ethics. A study indicated that Ukrainian women working in Western Europe transferred social remittances to their family members in implicit and explicit ways. For instance, monetary management and saving ethics were explicitly transmitted by the migrant women to the left-behind through phone calls and other media channels. Also, through the implicit and indirect realization of diligence and hardworking norms of their migrant mothers, the migrants' children learned how to use the remitted money thriftily and prudently (Vianello, 2013).

This study therefore argues that social or economic remittances alone cannot tell the whole story of migration impacts. It is necessary to analyze how and to what extent social and economic remittances establish non-economic and economic impacts on the sending households and the community as a whole.

Social mobility in the migration context

Social mobility is defined as a process through which individuals move up or down the socioeconomic ladder, measured and influenced through various indicators on both the material and non-material level (Clark, 2014; Chetty et al., 2014). The predominant material aspect impacting social mobility is income. For instance, research revealed that children from low-income families in the USA have less chance to improve their economic outcomes compared to children from high-income families (Chetty et al., 2014; Chetty, Hendren, Kline & Saez, 2015).

Non-material correlations such as education outcomes, strength of social networks and marriage can also potentially determine the rate of social mobility. For example, children from low-income families could hardly climb up the educational ladder due to the lack of investment by their poor parents (Chetty et al., 2014, 2015). This eventually leads to a lower income because lower educated children barely have a chance to make a good career (Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik & Yu, 2013). Moreover, the accumulation of social capital through, for example, civic engagement in society has led to a higher rate of social mobility because individuals were able to exchange economic opportunities and information with each other (Chetty et al., 2015; Putnam, 1995). Getting to know many friends and acquaintances allows a person to get important information about high-paid jobs which could potentially upgrade their position on the economic ladder (Granovetter, 2005). Lastly, a study in Europe from Clark (2014) revealed that people from a poor lineage could upgrade their social position by marrying a mate of a rich lineage. For instance, maters from richer economic environments with low innate talents (e.g. self-confidence, perseverance or inquisitiveness) tend to marry those from poorer environments with high innate talents, resulting in mutual benefits for both partners (McGee & Warms, 2000).

According to Alexandru (2012), migration can also be used as a strategic tool to improve social mobility. He found that Romanian migrants who shifted their occupational activities from rural farming to migrant labor in urban Italian cities could improve their livelihood and lifestyle. They used the assets (money and skills) gained in Italy to purchase new modern houses or enhance their education outcomes which upgraded their social position. A study in the USA also revealed that children in western states had more chance to become top earners, compared to children in southern states (Chetty et al., 2014, 2015). This implies that children who migrate from less fortuned localities to more fortuned localities with a high-paid labor market, not only "move out" of their home localities where they have been raised up, but also "move up" on the socioeconomic ladder. So, if migrants manage to move out of their home village and resettle in another town or city, their social mobility can increase because the better economic opportunities in that city can drive them to a higher income.

Similar to the Romanian case, Cambodian farmers migrated to Thailand to find an alternative job after their traditional farming activities got affected by climate change and price fluctuations (Acharya, 2003; Bylander, 2013; Chan &

Sovannarith, 1999). An interrelationship between geographical and occupational mobility can be demonstrated through the change in geographical location, from their home communities in Cambodia to an alien place like Thailand, as this move entails a shift in their job status from being disadvantaged farmers to migrant workers. Moreover, Fortunati and Taipale (2017) argued that daily spatial mobility either in physical form (e.g. commuting) or in virtual form (e.g. phone or media) positively influences a family's social mobility. Commuting workers, especially women who traditionally face obstacles to travel, are more likely to get exposed to new worldviews due to their work outside the home, leading to aspirations for social mobility. It offers more opportunities to fight against stagnation and a low-performing economy in their home communities.

Migration also induces the rise of urban spaces in the rural migrant sending communities. Migrants tend to use their income to modernize their lifestyle, such as building new houses in the sending community, adopting modern hairstyles or wearing modern clothes. It creates new jobs in the sending community, like house constructors or modern-style hairdressers (Alexandru, 2012). This study therefore examines how much non-migrant households have increased their material earnings since migration became a trend. The concept of modernity will be used as it allows to investigate the visual transition of social positions.

Migration studies have also discussed intergenerational mobility, with a focus on the role of remittances in creating educational and occupational opportunities for migrants' children, in spite of the criticism over the risk of school drop-outs due to the absence of migrant parents (OECD/CDRI, 2017). This research aims to measure the level of social mobility by examining how much remittances are invested in the education of migrants' children. This includes both formal schooling and non-formal vocational trainings. The young generation can thereby either be direct or indirect recipients of remittances, including migrants' and non-migrants children. The income differentials between migrant parents and their children will also be investigated in order to reveal intergenerational experiences of migration.

Furthermore, a study from Lee (2005) has pointed out that social networks are used by Cambodian migrants to upgrade their socioeconomic status because they could receive information about cheaper migration journeys as well as economic opportunities through their networks. According to social remittance theory it is also possible for migrants to transmit social capital or

networks to non-migrants. This study therefore also investigates whether social networks in Thailand are transmitted to children or non-migrants at home in order to climb the economic ladder, and whether non-migrants use remitted money to gain access to wider social dynamics in order to obtain greater economic opportunities.

It also needs to be noted that the context should be scrutinized very carefully as migration might generate different outcomes in different environments. For instance, rural Burmese women who were dominated by patriarchy and social restrictions became emancipated in terms of gender and social positions after migrating to a borderland town due to their economic contributions (Kusakabe & Oo, 2007). Contrarily, literature on migrants in the USA has revealed that Black and Mexican migrants, though being more socially mobile compared to their conditions at home, could not receive equal opportunities in the USA because of racial boundaries (Fox & Guglielmo, 2012). In a similar way, marriage in the Cambodian migration context might have less to do with non-material cultural capital, such as talents or professional skills like in Europe (Clark, 2014), because Cambodian migrants are mostly low skilled, while their children at home are vulnerable to low education outcomes (OECD/CDRI, 2017). However, they might be attractive to others because they possess a lot of material remittances. For this reason, it is important to describe the role of remittances in changing patterns of marriage, thereby enabling both migrants and non-migrants to change their social position.

In summary, the concept of social mobility challenges the common understanding of inequality usually measured through the unequal distribution of income and wealth like the Gini Index. Social mobility could help to question this politics of growth based on income. For example, Cambodian politicians always honor how much migrants earn, but not how socially mobile they are. While a migrant is moving up the income ladder, he or she could at the same time be moving down on other "ladders", such as education outcome and social capital. Hence, social mobility is a powerful guideline to reveal which areas could provide equal opportunities to disadvantaged people in the context of migrant-sending communities in order to fulfill their potential. The five major indicators of social mobility elaborated in this section – material aspects such as income and urbanization, and non-material aspects such as education outcomes, social relations, and marriage – will be used to analyze data for the remainder of this study.

Conceptual framework

To understand the impacts of remittances on sending households and communities, this study draws on a conceptual framework based on the three bodies of literature discussed in the previous sections. Firstly, the interconnectedness between the migrants and non-migrants is examined. The focus is thereby not only on the migrants, but also on the non-migrants who forge and sustain transnational linkages with overseas migrants. Secondly, the fluidity of economic and social remittances is investigated and to what extent they produce economic and non-economic impacts on the sending households and communities. Thirdly, this study explores the impact of remittances on the social mobility of sending households and communities, or in other words, how do non-migrants convert these remittances into instruments to increase their social mobility. A visual overview can be found in Figure 1.1.

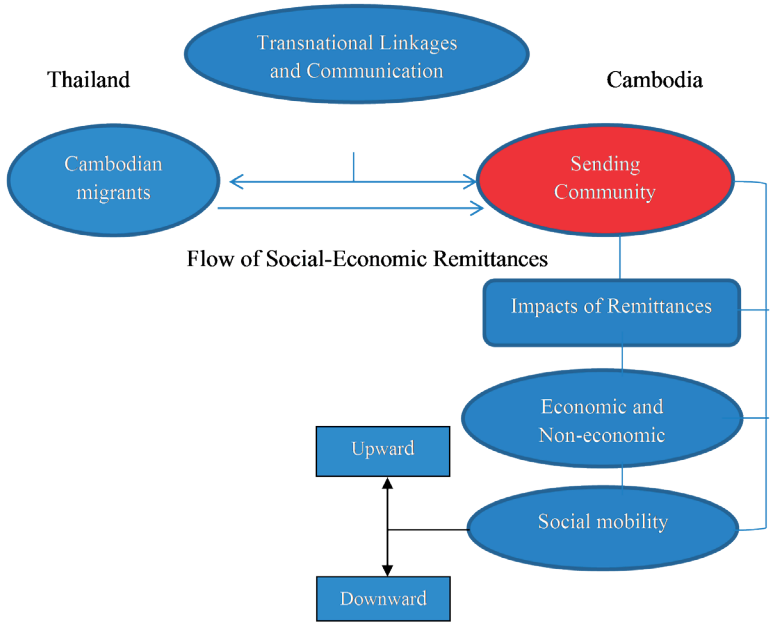


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The methodology of the research was based on triangulation, a multi-method strategy to avoid personal bias and cultural assumptions of the researcher (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2006; Punch, 2014). It comprises both qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting and analyzing different forms of data. More specifically, the research used heavily structured methods like sampling surveys and unstructured methods such as ethnography, participant observation, and in-depth interviews.

Research site

The research took place in Kandal and Poy Samrong, located in Preah Neatr Preah commune in Banteay Meanchey province, northwestern Cambodia. This commune has less establishments or "place[s] where economic activities are performed" compared to its neighboring communes (NIS, 2013, p. xviii). This research site was selected for three reasons. Firstly, both villages are conveniently located near the Thai-Cambodian border and the Thai capital Bangkok. Secondly, the villagers possess a lot of experience about international migration. The first generation started to migrate from the early 2000s, and nowadays the second generation, or the children of the first generation are migrating. Finally, the complexity of the socioeconomic status of the villages makes it an interesting case study as the villages have a complicated history and consist of diverse groups of people with different assets.

Analytical levels

The focus is on both the household and community level. The remittances first flow into the households, and are then further spread to other non-migrants in the whole community. As Cambodian families are mostly extended and complex due to post-war family disruptions as well as other sociocultural factors, the research has covered a wide range of household informants including parents, children, siblings, other related members who live in the same residence, and non-biological members who have been adopted by family members.

The analysis also draws upon data from non-migrants who have no familial relationship with the migrants, but who indirectly benefit from the remittances. They can be non-migrant local businessmen, money transmitters, and other people whose socioeconomic activities are related to the migrants' family

members. In so doing, the research provides a broad insight into the multidimensional distribution of remittances to a wide range of receivers in the whole community, besides the migrants' kinfolks. Besides this, the village headmen in Kandal and Poy Samrong were interviewed to understand the broader picture of the remittances' impacts from an authorities' perspective. It also allows to examine the infrastructure development in public spaces and modernization of housing, hence providing visible evidence of the remittance impacts.

Data collection and analysis

Primary data was collected in 2018 through fieldwork, adopting both quantitative and qualitative tools (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). In terms of the quantitative approach, 64 household surveys were conducted in Kandal and Poy Samrong. The responses provided an insight into remittance flows and usages within the households and their spillover effect onto the rest of the community. In terms of the qualitative approach, participant observation was used to garner deeper understanding into the uses of the remittances and household social mobility. Furthermore, 33 in-depth interviews were conducted with remittance-receiving households, their neighbors, non-migrants, returned migrants, and the village headmen of both villages. The interviews aimed to gather stories of migration, remittance inflow and social mobility.

There was an almost equal proportion of men and women, with 23 people from Kandal and 10 from Poy Samrong. Their ages ranged from mid-20 to 80, with people in their 30s and 50s making up the biggest share. The average household of the interviewed people consisted of four persons. The village headmen and non-migrants who benefit from the remittances were also included to permit an analysis at the community level. In terms of the relative social mobility, several villagers were randomly selected in Poy Somrong to explore their perceptions on the impacts of remittances and social mobility of the remittance-receiving households in Kandal.

The data from both approaches are complementary. The quantitative data present a positivist perspective, providing insight into the transnational communication, flow of remittances, and changes in people's social mobility. The qualitative data then allow for an interpretative point of view. The interviews and field notes were checked whether they were in line with the conceptual framework, and whether they explained the holistic information from the

survey data. For example, the data from interviews and observations on how parents stay connected with their migrant-children helped to explain the norms that facilitate the remittance flows as seen in the survey data.

Chapter 2

Migration Trends and Village Profiles

Introduction

The reasons why Cambodian people migrate to Thailand, instead of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, reside in interrelated economic, social and cultural factors. Existing studies agree that migrants can get greater benefits in Thailand with its more mature industry, such as regular employability and higher payment, compared to younger-industry cities like Phnom Penh and Siem Reap in Cambodia[3] (Walsh & Ty, 2011; Acharya, 2003; Chan & Sovannarith, 1999). For instance, migrants are paid at least 300 THB ($10)[4] per day in Thailand, while the maximum rate in Phnom Penh for the same job is only 130 to 150 THB ($4 to $5) per day. Besides this, employees in Phnom Penh tend to reserve jobs for their inner circle (close ties and connections), leaving non-related migrants jobless. Moreover, in the migrants' home villages there are more agents and relatives who offer help to migrate to and secure employment in Thailand than to other cities in Cambodia. They also lose job opportunities

3 The majority of the establishments in Cambodia began their economic activities in or after 2005, while there were almost no establishments in the 90s. This implies that the rise of businesses was later than in Thailand (NIS, 2013).

4 The currency exchange rate in 2018 was about 30 THB for one U.S. dollar. For the remainder of this study, this exchange rate will be used to provide an estimated equivalent in U.S. dollars for any amount in Thai Baht.

to Vietnamese migrants who have better construction skills (Sumalee, 2015); and taking the industrial structure into account, Siem Reap does not appear to be of choice because the predominant types of jobs are trade and service-oriented, which is beyond the skill-set of most Cambodian migrants (NIS, 2013). In summary, Cambodian migrants choose to migrate to Thailand, in lieu of Phnom Penh or Siem Reap, because of their limited social ties and mismatched skills.

Other minor reasons that make the journey to Thailand appealing are related to road infrastructure and consumption of modernity. It takes migrants from Kandal and Poy Samrong less than six hours to travel to Bangkok, but more than six hours to Phnom Penh due to the lack of highways and time-consuming taxi practices in Cambodia[5]. In terms of consumption of modernity, a link can be made with the research of Amporn (2008) who argues that the consumption of modern images via Thai television dramas draws Shan migrants to work in Thailand. Likewise, people in Kandal and Poy Samrong are inspired to migrate to Thailand because of improvements in their home villages brought about by migrants' remittances which projects an image of modernity.

Kandal and Poy Samrong are both located next to the Thai border, at 360 kilometers from the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, and 300 kilometers from the Thai capital, Bangkok. Banteay Meanchey province has four main international checkpoints, three of which have high volumes of import-export and other cross-border activities. These checkpoints are Poi Pet International Border Checkpoint (Aranyapathet), Malay Regional Border Checkpoint (Sa Kaeo), and Boeung Trokourn Regional Border Checkpoint (Sa Kaeo). Besides these checkpoints, people frequently cross to and from Thailand through smaller checkpoints in other provinces such as Oddor Meanchey province (Chong Jom - O'Smach, and Chong Sa Ngam - Anlong Veng) and Battambang province (Ban Laem - Daun Lem).

Even though Kandal and Poy Samrong have geographical similarities, they are different in socioeconomic terms. Previously, people living in Kandal

5 My experience learned that taxis usually leave Kandal village at 8 or 9 am, and arrive at Siem Reap between 11am and 12pm. All taxis have to wait there until 1 or 2 pm before resuming their journey to Phnom Penh. The journey takes about six hours to reach the final destination and would even take longer if the taxi has to pull over to drop off or pick up more customers.

were believed to have better socioeconomic conditions than people in Poy Samrong. However, the migration wave of the 90s, which took mainly place in Poy Samrong, has entirely changed the socioeconomic settings of these two villages. This chapter will provide an overview of the socioeconomic situation of Poy Samrong and Kandal before and after this migration wave in order to understand the changes that took place.

The following section will discuss the history and socioeconomic profiles of the villages prior to the Poy Samrong migration wave of the 90s. Thereafter, the migration trend in Poy Samrong and the attitude changes that took place in Kandal after a large number of villagers migrated to Thailand will be described, followed by the consequent Kandal migration wave from 2010 onwards. After this, the different profiles of the migrants from Poy Samrong and Kandal will be analyzed. The last section will then depict a picture of the current socioeconomic profiles of the two villages. The data used in this chapter comes mainly from interviews, oral history and other narratives from different local people in both villages, complemented by participant observation.

Village History and Socioeconomic Profile before Migration

According to oral histories from elders and local leaders, Kandal was the first village in the neighborhood to receive large groups of people who settled down and established various socioeconomic institutions such as a Buddhist temple, church, market, hospital, police station and school. Many Chinese-Khmer ethnic people had settled in every village in Preah Netre Preah commune, with Kandal receiving the highest influx. After talking to some senior locals, I realized that Chinese-Khmer people had settled down in Kandal and other villages prior to the Sangkum Reastre Niyum regime (1955-1970), a period known for its high integration of Chinese people and culture in all of Cambodia (Kaonn, 2012). Some elderly villagers claimed that the Chinese-Khmer community was already present before the *sak-mai-ii-sarak* or Khmer Issarak, an anti-French movement (1946-1970) mainly taking place along Khmer-Thai borders (Kaonn, 2012). A Chinese man in his 90s told me that he was born and raised in Kandal prior to the *sak-mai sangkum*, or Sangkhum Reastre Niyum regime. He went to school in the village and married a Chinese-Khmer spouse. This means that the presence of the Chinese-Khmer community predates the Khmer Issarak movement and the Sangkum Reastre Niyum regime as the social and cultural integration seem to have already been well-established before.

Chinese people were perceived to be better at doing business compared to native Khmers, who were mostly farmers growing rice and cash crops. There is a mainstream view that Chinese, having a white complexion, hold a prestige position in society as the rich and smart businessmen, landlords and money-lenders; whereas Khmer natives, having a dark complexion, are perceived to be at a lower position as the poor and unfortunate farmers, land tenants and debtors. Intergroup interactions such as intermarriage were less possible since the Chinese preferred marriage with their own folks from similar socioeconomic linages. This is not a new story; Chinese people are well-known as traders and Khmers as cultivators. Especially, from the mid-80s, the image of Chinese-Khmer as active traders became more visible because they played an active role in supplying the country with foodstuffs and daily necessities, including cigarettes and liquor from Thailand and Singapore (Filippi, 2010; Verver, 2010). Hence, Kandal, as a village of Chinese migrants, had more pronounced establishments such as a market, and other trading and business activities, than its neighboring villages, like Poy Samrong. Oral histories from people in both villages confirmed the reputation of Kandal as "the rich village" [*phum-nek-mien*] and "originally rich" [*nek-mean-pi-sangkum*], or by claiming that its villagers are "kin to commune chiefs" [*puj-ke-mei-khum*]. These socially constructed terms reflect that Kandal used to be the wealthiest and richest village in the neighborhood.

The subsequent Khmer Rouge regime, which caused a total change in the socioeconomic foundations of both villages, could not eradicate the belief that Kandal was wealthier and more resourceful than Poy Samrong. In the 1970s, Kandal no longer existed because it was erased by the Khmer Rouge administration on the grounds that it was a village of capitalists and feudalists. As the Kandal villagers were mostly Chinese who held the majority of capital and other resources, the Khmer Rouge government, with their utopian dream of an anti-capitalist society, relocated all villagers to different parts of the commune to employ them in agricultural work to establish a "classless" community. Kandal was only re-established after the regime's collapse, allowing the villagers to re-occupy their property at the original village's site (Khamboly, 2007). After the end of the regime, the villagers in the commune faced frequent acts of banditry committed by remaining Khmer Rouge guerrillas (Khamboly,

2007). The Poy Samrong headman[6] told me about a robbery case in Kandal. He recalled that the Khmer Rouge bandits said, "Do not rob this village [Poy Samrong] because it has nothing to steal. Let's go further to Post Chas and Kandal. These villages are richer." So, having Chinese blood ties and being resourceful were common images of Kandal villagers, whereas Poy Samrong was known as the village of the unfortunate and the poor.

Villagers in both Kandal and Poy Samrong have various sources of income, such as growing paddy rice and cash-crops, fishing, keeping livestock, or hold jobs at government and non-government institutions such as schools, hospitals, army, NGOs and banks. However, Kandal villagers have more social, cultural and economic opportunities due to differences in infrastructure and land ownership. Kandal is located closer to social and economic institutions and infrastructure such as the market, school, Buddhist temple and agricultural irrigation system (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Geographical advantages between Poy Samrong and Kandal
Source: adapted from Google Maps (n.d.)

6 The headman was hiding inside his house while the Khmer Rouge bandits were crossing Poy Samrong, going towards Kandal village. It was such a silent night that he could hear them talk about Kandal.

These infrastructures and institutions provided Kandal villagers with a greater access to the necessary resources like income, social networks and education, to upgrade their socioeconomic status. For instance, being located closer to the market is more convenient to establish stable businesses like grocery shops, gasoline stations, food vending and rice trading. Being nearer to the school enhanced their level of education, as people from Kandal were believed to be better educated. Tin recalls:

> People in Kandal village were smarter than people in my village. They had abundant resources, decent shelter, [so] people were more educated. The school was close to them, so was the temple. I started school at the age of nine, they started at the age of six or seven. So, they appeared to be smarter. It took very long to go to school back then.

In addition, villagers from Poy Samrong complained that they did not receive the same infrastructure development support as Kandal such as an irrigation system and roads. The complaint pointed to a conflict of interest, where the commune chief was a Kandal resident and thus appropriated projects to his own village.

The uneven economic status was also the result of land grabbing by the local military and foreign investors. Hughes' (2011) study in Banteay Meanchey found that borderland militarization increased the likelihood of land disputes between well-coordinated military elites and the poor, which echoes my findings in Kandal and Poy Samrong. Soon after the Khmer Rouge collapsed, the villagers cleared plots of land to grow rice and cash crops. Unfortunately, high-profile military officers took advantage of the lack of legal land titles to lay claim to the land. They justified their right to the land under the pretext that it was a compensation for their effort of having liberated Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge. In 2009, the affected villagers from Poy Samrong, Kandal and other neighboring villages sought assistance from the Ministry of National Defense in Phnom Penh. They petitioned in front of the Ministry to report the unfair confiscation of their land by the local military unit. There were 100 affected households in total, accounting for a total area of 354 hectares, mainly located in Poy Samrong. However, there was no resolution to their situation.

Additionally, Poy Samrong villagers were also more affected by direct foreign investment (FDI) in 2009. Chinese and Vietnamese investors allegedly bought large tracts of farm land without proper price negotiations. This resonates with Üllenberg's (2009) findings that FDI in Cambodia creates micro-level risks for rural livelihood in terms of forced displacement—famers whose land is located in economic land concessions are requested to leave and receive an unfair compensation from the concessionaires. Villagers from both research sites told similar stories. They claimed that initially, the companies offered a standard price for the land upon which some farmers agreed. When some villagers refused the offer, the companies employed underhand tactics by buying all the plots surrounding the land in question. They then blocked all necessary systems, such as logistic routes and irrigation lines that were connected to the unsold land. These companies operated under the pretext that they had the right to make any changes to their purchased land. This fraudulent behavior put so much pressure on those farmers that they were forced to sell off their land to the companies. The new offer was sometimes worse because the companies took advantage of the situation and offered prices below the market price.

Migration Trends in the Villages

Based on historical and socioeconomic evidence from the previous section, it is safe to claim that Poy Samrong villagers were underprivileged compared to Kandal villagers. Attempting to mitigate their disadvantaged position and looking for the economic survival of their families, Poy Samrong villagers migrated to Thailand much earlier than Kandal villagers. The migration trend in Poy Samrong started already from the late 90s, when migration was still unpopular as the journey was dangerous and discrimination against migrants was rampant.

Several people from Poy Samrong migrated illegally through small corridors and local taxi networks which were sometimes unsafe and expensive. I talked with Ny, a taxi driver who used to work in Bangkok. Like most migrants, he went to Thailand in the early 2000s through what he called a *mei-kha-chol* or an agent who guaranteed an available job and transportation from his home village, Poy Samrong, to Bangkok. Without any documents, he crossed the border through the woodlands and was pursued by Thai soldiers at some point. Luckily, he managed to escape to Bangkok where he was employed underground

in a market for two years before returning home. He explained that at that time, it was hard to find a trustworthy taxi driver who was willing to take migrants to Thailand. Taxi drivers were known to cheat and even steal migrants' money. The information about the risky migration journey soon trickled back to the people at home, making them hesitant to migrate to Thailand.

People were also discouraged to migrate to Thailand due to the negative perceptions of migrants prevailing at that time. In the early years of migration, there was a mainstream belief that male migrants, especially the single ones, were *nek-leng* (a Khmer term for gangsters) and were engaged in drugs. There were also several cases of migrant women returning home with "something unwanted" like an HIV infection or a pregnancy. Subsequently, female migrants faced rumors that they behaved improperly or against the traditional norms of being a good and pure girl. Neighboring villagers, especially from Kandal, therefore perceived the migrants from Poy Samrong as outcasts, bringing shame and depreciation to the commune.

Migration to Thailand did not become a trend in Kandal until 2010, when a larger number of villagers began to migrate, after earlier prejudices had waned because of the improved economic status as a result of the migrants' remittances. There were two factors that motivated Kandal villagers to migrate, namely (1) livelihood stress and (2) property acquired through remittances.

Kandal villagers, who originally were against migration, were suffering from a decline in crop prices which threatened their livelihood and instigated them to find an alternative income source. Narin, who settled in Kandal in 1972 and is a former Preah Netre Preah commune chief, explained how ninety per cent of the villagers were dependent on rice farming for their livelihood. Years later, the people opted to migrate to Thailand to find economic relief. According to him, Kandal villagers were the last group from the area to migrate. At first, they continued to invest in farming because there were some high-profile farmers among them who had a lot of farmland. Narin's family did the same, they betted their livelihood on growing rice. Sadly, the outcome turned out to be unsatisfactory as his family's income dropped sharply due to natural disasters and price fluctuations. As a consequence, four family members migrated to Thailand in spite of having no migratory experience.

Income loss due to low crop prices explains only one aspect of their livelihood stress. Kandal villagers with small businesses were also suffering from

income loss as a result of what I call "the weakness of strong ties". While scholars like Granovetter (1973) contend that strong social networks and ties is a means to upgrade economic outcomes of individuals, empirical data from small business owners in Kandal showed the opposite. Strong social networks, unexpectedly, worsened economic outcomes of individuals. This degradation is related to accumulated unpaid debts made by customers from local businesses. When friends or neighbors consume goods and services, they often do not pay right away; instead, they generate debt based on familial relationships, promising to repay later. Over time, the debts owed to the small business owners increase, as more than one neighbor or friend does the same thing. Any demand to repay is considered as non-saving-face behavior. The money owed adds up, and business owners feel their only option is to write off the debts, thus becoming unable to continue their business any longer. The following cases illustrate the situation.

Sitha was a lottery retailer, selling different kinds of lottery tickets to villagers in Kandal and nearby districts. Most customers were his neighbors or from his social network. As they bought lottery tickets every day, the relationship between him and his customers grew. The business became financially unviable because his *khnea-aeng*, a Khmer term for peers and networks, owed him money. Sitha felt uneasy to ask for repayment because he did not want to upset the relationship. Individual debtors thought their debt was "not a big deal" as the amount for each person was small; only 2,000 Cambodian Riel (KHR) (approximately equivalent to $0.5)[7]. However, for Sitha, the accumulated debt of his customers was a big deal, resulting in unpaid debt of over one million riel ($250). His family's livelihood worsened as his business became increasingly unviable. They decided that his wife would migrate to Thailand to seek supplementary income. His three children followed soon after. At the time of the interview, Sitha's wife had returned to Kandal. Together, they were living on remittances of their three adult children working in Bangkok. Sitha still sells lottery tickets, but now just as a hobby rather than income generating business.

Not only Sitha's family suffered from the "weakness of strong ties", also a young couple who had set up a small business faced problems through unpaid debts from their social network. Chanty has two daughters. The eldest was

7 The currency exchange rate in 2018 was about KHR 4,000 for one U.S. dollar. For the remainder of this study, this exchange rate will be used to provide an estimated equivalent in U.S. dollars for any amount in Cambodian Riel.

running a small motorbike garage in Kandal with her husband. The business became unprofitable because the amount of unpaid debts swelled to two million Cambodian Riel ($1,000). The money was owed by neighbors and other villagers in Kandal and neighboring areas. They repeatedly asked for repayment, but the debtors did not keep their promise to repay. Eventually, the debt slipped from the people's memory as some had left for Thailand. It forced the motorbike garage into bankruptcy, leaving the couple little to no option but to follow the younger sister to Thailand where she was earning good money. Today, the couple is saving money with the aim to open a new motorbike garage in an area outside of Kandal, hoping to make a better living than before.

The second reason that encouraged Kandal villagers to migrate was the increasing standard of living among remittance-receiving households in Poy Samrong through material improvements like modern houses, more land, new motorbikes and cars. Narin explained that the reputation of Poy Samrong has improved since the villagers upgraded their living standards, especially in terms of housing. The belief that migrant women are immoral, or migrant men are criminals no longer exists because villagers in surrounding areas, mainly Kandal, started to notice and appreciate the economic advantages of migration.

The Migrants' Profiles

Over time, the migration journey to Thailand has considerably improved. In 2014, a policy directive from the Thai junta government resulted in large groups of undocumented Cambodian migrants being deported, only to return later through legal journeys. This greatly reduced the number of illegal migrants who undertook the dangerous journey through the woodlands under risk of being arrested. Furthermore, in the context of intra-ASEAN connectivity, a lot of roads and other infrastructure connecting villages to border checkpoints have been built. As the migration journey has become more convenient, back-and-forth migration from both villages has increased as well. For example, migrants now go home more often to attend cultural and religious festivities. Migrants can also go home to take care of sick parents and other family members. Likewise, migrants who have finished a construction project in Bangkok prefer to return home, rather than staying in Thailand to wait for the next project. When they are at home, they keep in contact with their workmates and employers in Thailand to stay informed about upcoming job opportunities. In this way, migrants can save a lot of money because they do not have to pay for living costs in Bangkok.

Three groups can be differentiated among the migrant workers from Kandal and Poy Samrong, based on their age and skills. The first group are married adults, aged between mid-20 and 40; the second are teenagers, between 17 and 19; and the third group are adults aged over 40. Reportedly, migrants of the first group earn the most, followed by the teenagers, and then the older-adult migrants. Male migrants thereby outnumber women, because women mostly have to take care of the household and other economic jobs at home. Also, parents and children below working age usually stay in the village. In some cases, the husbands migrate first to secure a social network and a job in Thailand before calling their wives to follow them. The older adults were encouraged to migrate after they noticed the improved socioeconomic status of the migrants, for instance, via home visits from the younger generation. Unfortunately, there have been frequent cases of exploitation of these late-adult migrants due to their lack of Thai language, networking and assimilation skills. This is related to their ability to live in Thailand without being arrested or targeted by the police, as well as to socialize with other migrants and Thai nationals from different ages and with different living practices.

Even though migration to Thailand has become a normal source of income in both Kandal and Poy Samrong and similarities can be seen in their migration journey and population, there are still differences regarding the type of job they hold and the economic strategies of migration. Migrants from Poy Samrong mostly work in fresh food markets. They are either "informally"[8] self-employed or salaried employees. Especially between 2008 to 2011, it was very common for Poy Samrong migrants to become self-employed sellers. It involves complex underground networks and ties between the migrants and Thai counterparts. Usually, the Thai employers hire migrants to sell fresh food, like meat and vegetables, in the market. Every day, the sellers open the shop until the early evening, but some migrants negotiate with their employers to rent the shop after closing time so they can sell fresh food until the morning[9]. In so doing, they can supplement their daily wages. Sometimes, migrants can rent the shop for the whole day.

8 Thai law does not allow international migrants to become officially self-employed persons.

9 It is Talad Thai which is open all day long. There are different types of customers who come during different times of the day. Most buyers who come in late evening until early morning are migrants, according to return migrants who used to sell vegetables in the market.

Unlike migrants from Poy Samrong who enjoy good profits from the market, migrants from Kandal mostly end up being (low) waged laborers in the construction sector. Only a few skilled migrants have managed to become a building contractor, thereby securing a higher income. They are mostly senior migrants who have been migrating for years and have established considerable business networks and friends in Thailand. They know how to get building projects from Thai engineers or contractors. The waged laborers, on the other hand, are mostly first-time migrants. They only know the Cambodian contractor who comes from the same village. These contractors usually search for young people from their home village who share the same language and village ties. According to several salaried migrants and their household members, they have mixed feelings about working for Cambodian contractors. They feel secure because of their common ties to the home village, however, they are unsatisfied with the low wage given by those contractors.

There are two reasons why migrants from Kandal have less chance to become self-employed, namely the lack of social networks and assimilation skills, and the restrictions due to the migration law. As Poy Samrong migrants began to migrate much earlier, they have established more social networks and speak Thai more fluently compared to Kandal migrants. Also, Poy Samrong migrants seem to keep information about becoming self-employed for themselves. Kandal migrants are complaining that Poy Samrong migrants pretend not to know them when they bump into each other. They feel that Poy Samrong migrants are shunning them, to avoid having to share the fruitful income from the market. In addition, their lack of Thai language skills also prevents them to be self-employed. Phanny, for example, explained that her children and grandchild could only get construction work because of their inability to speak Thai properly, as working in the market requires daily communication with Thai people.

Furthermore, Kandal people began to migrate when the migration law was changing. The only way to go work in Thailand was through the memorandum of understanding (MoU) framework, which restricts migrants to work with only one specified Thai employer. As their name is registered with one particular employer at the Department of Employment, it is difficult to change jobs, even when exploitative practices are occurring. It requires a complicated paperwork process if they want to keep their legal worker status. A Poy Samrong migrant who returned home to wait for her passport, complained that the legal paperwork restricted her from switching to a better

job. In the past, she could easily leave an unsatisfying job, even though it was illegal and there was a risk of being arrested. She managed to avoid Thai police because her Thai counterparts helped her, and she "disguised" herself by speaking good Thai and having a Thai-like appearance. This does not mean that Poy Samrong migrants do not have a passport or work permit. During my fieldwork I noticed that many migrants returned to Poy Samrong to apply for a legal worker status, and then went back to Thailand. As they migrated before the law was in effect, they had to come back to arrange their paperwork. Contrarily, parents of Kandal migrants told me that few of their kin returned because their paperwork was completed before migration.

The other difference between Kandal and Poy Samrong migrants is in their economic migration strategy. Migration scholars like Chaney (1979) have argued that economic exiles are migrants who leave their homeland for a certain period of time to work and save money in a foreign country as an economic strategy. They will return once they have obtained enough economic relief to mitigate certain difficulties or setbacks – like poverty, crop loss or high education fees – or have accumulated enough capital, such as consumer goods, land, and houses (see also Bylander, 2013; Lee, 2005). Evidence from various households suggests that migrants from Kandal are still at the economic relief-level. They are obligated to save money to compensate for their losses, such as debts that the migrants owed prior to migrating. For instance, Sophy has 10 children, some of whom are now working in Thailand. The eldest son migrated first because he experienced huge crop losses due to three years of consecutive natural disasters. He took loans to compensate for his losses, which he could only repay by going to work in Thailand. Even though he has been working there for years, he has not saved much as most of his earnings are used to relieve his debt. In contrast to Sophy's case, Poy Samrong migrants are known to accumulate capital. Because they migrated to Thailand much earlier, they have already relieved their debts. While their initial reason to migrate might have been for debt relief, nowadays their earnings are to increase their assets, such as buying land, gold and other luxuries.

Current Socioeconomic Profile of the Villages after Migration

After migration to Thailand became the main source of income in both villages, Poy Samrong became as rich as Kandal in earlier times. As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, Poy Samrong has been able to modernize its houses and many families can buy modern agricultural tools

and machinery for agricultural intensification, resulting in a higher household income. Moreover, Poy Samrong villagers are now able to give larger merit making donations. This money is then used for infrastructure development in their community, resulting in an improved standard of living, comparable to Kandal. When asked about the economic transformation since the migration trend, the majority of Kandal villagers stated that Poy Samrong is now richer than Kandal. Several historical narratives about economic changes in Poy Samrong and Kandal were shared with me. For instance, Poy Samrong villagers used to have small houses and survived by selling wild vegetables in the market, but now they have become outstandingly rich because of the remittances.

However, it should also be noted that other groups, such as the non-migrant businesspeople are more conservative with their assertions. They stated that while Poy Samrong has improved its economic status, it is yet to surpass the status of Kandal. There are also some cases where parents in Kandal still consider themselves more prestigious than Poy Samrong people, which impacts the level of inter-village interactions, such as marriage. Many older generation parents in Kandal still disallow their children to marry a spouse from Poy Samrong due to the family's historical background of being poor. When asked whether parents in Kandal are still discontented about cross-village marriages, the Poy Samrong headman shared:

> Younger generations interact with each other in a normal way. For the older generations, about 50 to 60% still believe they have higher prestige [than Poy Samrong villagers]. These people are aged from 50 to 70. In fact, their resources are more or less the same as ours [Poy Samrong]. When the young want to get married, the old would be discontented because Poy Samrong villagers were poor in the past and just recently became rich by migrating to Thailand… I think this makes no sense because we should think about the present. Even though they make less money than us, they are still tied up with the idea that they are of a higher status. Some of them have Chinese blood ties, some of them have *mei-khum*[10] (commune chief) blood ties, yet, they are not as progressive as us.

10 In this context, the term mei-khum does not necessarily connote the actual person in the position of commune chief. It refers to a socially constructed meaning of social position embedded in relations to the government—having political connections.

Chapter 3

Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Aspects of the Remittance Flow

Introduction

This chapter will demonstrate how non-migrants in sending households and communities play an active role in forging transnational linkages and ties with migrants in an attempt to regulate the inflow of remittances. They not only play interrelated roles to facilitate and attract the migrants' money, they are also co-constructing and co-consuming remittances through constructing, sustaining and circulating socioeconomic and sociocultural practices, norms and networks.

The first section will elaborate on the remittance flow in general, thereby focusing on the quantity, frequency, and channels conducting the money flow. Thereafter, the socioeconomic practices constructed by the non-migrants in order to condition the remittance flow will be identified, followed by a description of how sociocultural practices and norms condition the flow. The last section will then take a glimpse into the flow of social remittances through mechanisms like contact, visits, and return.

Economic Remittance Flow in General

The data used for this section relies on the findings of a random survey with 64 households receiving monthly remittances. All households were residing in Kandal or Poy Samrong. Different households receive different amounts of

monthly remittances. About 60% of the households receive between 1,000 to 5,000 THB ($33 to $166) per month; 21% receive between 6,000 to 10,000 TBH ($200 to $333) per month; 14% receive between 11,000 to 15,000 TBH ($366 to $500) per month; and 5% receive up to 20,000 THB ($666) per month.

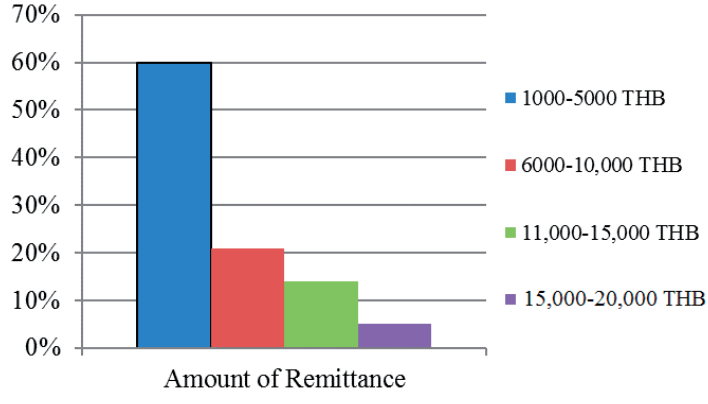


Figure 3.1: Monthly remittances per household

These differences in monthly remittances depend on the number of migrants and their left-behind children in each household. The remittances are used for general purposes such as food, education, supplies for children and healthcare. The results of the survey also provide insight into the gender differentials in the management of remittances. In about 75% of the households, the mothers or wives manage the remittances; whereas in only 11% of the households, the fathers or husbands control the remittances (Figure 3.2).

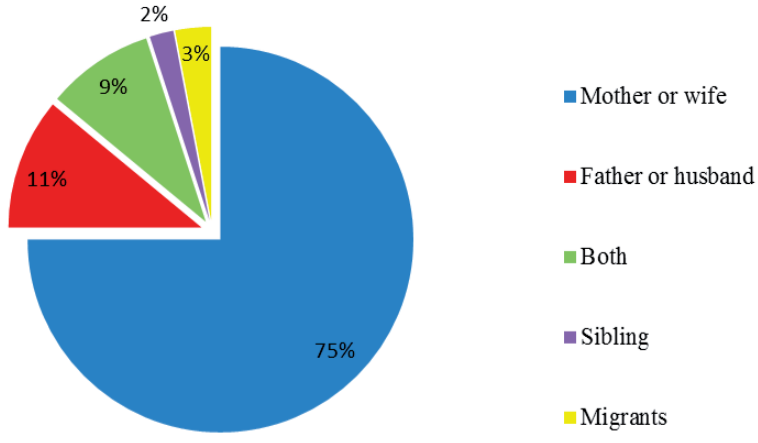


Figure 3.2: Gender differentials in the management of remittances

Besides these monthly remittances, there are also occasional remittances when migrants visit their home village during cultural festivals or when their parents are in need. On annual occasions such as the Khmer New Year and *Pchum Ben*, each migrant sends at least 500 to 1,000 THB ($16 to $33) to their parents. For weddings and housewarmings, the migrants send between 400 and 600 TBH ($13 and $20) to their parents who will attend the rituals on their behalf. During a wedding season, one household receives approximately up to twenty invitations. The parents will therefore update the migrants about their needy socioeconomic conditions which demand additional remittances. Lastly, there are also "investment remittances" which migrants send to their parents in order to buy land or to invest in rice farming.

All money is remitted in Thai Baht (THB) through informal money transmitters based in each village. In the early 2000s, there was a remarkable increase in the number of money transmitters as the previous system of importing remittances through taxis and visits was deemed too insecure due to cheating and robberies. Nowadays, the money goes through a complex transmission system which requires honest networks in both Cambodia and Thailand. The transmitter is a resident in the village of the receivers who has access to a Thai bank account. The first way is by having a counterpart stationed in Poi Pet (Cambodia) who has been able to open a Thai bank account through a network in Thailand. The counterpart then crosses into Thailand to fetch the

money from the Thai bank account, or withdraws money from the ATM. The second way is that the transmitter him/herself opens a Thai bank account with the help of a relative residing in Thailand. When the migrants want to send money to their parents, they transfer the money to this bank account. After the transaction is confirmed, the transmitter hands the money to the parents. The transmitters used to make good money because they charged a 10% commission. However, the commission has decreased to as little as 0.2% (20 THB/$0.6) and not more than 0.8% (80 THB/ $2.6) for a 10,000 THB ($333) transfer, due to the increased competition and availability of many counterparts[11].

Socioeconomic Aspects of the Economic Remittance Flow

In order to sustain the inflow of remittances, both the sending households and community play a key role in creating socioeconomic practices that facilitate the flow of remittances from migrants in Thailand to Cambodia. This is in line with the assimilation theory of Sassen (1991; 2000b) that migrants are not only fueling the informal economy at their destination, but also sustain the informal economy in the sending community through their remittances.

On the household level, there are various socioeconomic practices that allow the sending households to forge invisible, but sturdy relations with migrants in Thailand to generate an obligation to send remittances regularly. It includes the modernization of houses; asset accumulation, such as land and gold; agricultural intensification; education and childcare. Among the poorer households it is generally the parents' first priority to modernize their house from a broken wooden structure to a concrete structure. Since the parents cannot afford to build a house, they ask their migrant children to send money. Other households need money to invest in their domestic businesses, such as growing rice and buying land. My findings revealed that when migrant children are still single, the parents receive remittances to buy plots of land and new farming machines. Even though these assets are bought with remittances, the parents are usually registered as the owner. Migrants are also obliged to send

11 One transmitter in Kandal receives only 20 THB for a 10,000 THB transfer because she does not have a network in Poi Pet nor a Thai bank account. She partners with another money transmitter in a different district who has access to a counterpart in Poi Pet. Actually, the sender pays 60 THB for a 10,000 THB transfer, but because it has to go through three transmitters, the 60 THB is split into 20 THB for each transmitter.

money to their parents to look after their children because, without their parental help, they cannot go to work in Thailand. Payment for childcare is considered as an income source for aging parents who have no other means to earn money. Lastly, remittances are sent for the education and the cost of raising their children. They send money or buy luxuries like motorbikes to encourage their children to have good results at school. For small children, the migrants pay for the expenses like milk powder and diapers.

On the community level, the migrants' non-kinfolk and local businessmen are also able to condition the flow of remittances. They re-direct the remittances through various routes, such as setting-up informal banking systems, offering installment payment and loans, or acting as an informal real estate intermediary.

The first system is through an unregulated investment vehicle or traditional saving practice better known as tontine or *tong ting*[12]. The appeal of the tontine lies in its democratic character as it directs the flow of benefits towards individual investors or subscribers, rather than annuity institutions like banks and life insurance companies. It is an extra-legal practice that takes place in a closed socio-cultural system and within groups familiar to the subscribers (McKeever, 2010). Liev (2008, p. 189) also reckons that "the tontine is a stepping-stone to financial freedom" as his research found that it helps overseas Cambodian refugees to cope with livelihood needs, accessing alternative resources to finance household needs, flight tickets and businesses. In sum, the tontine is in both the national and transnational context, a highly localized financial tool that goes beyond legalism.

According to Chaya, the leader of a tong ting savings group in Kandal, everyone can join the group; however, they must be financially stable and

12 The origin of the word tontine can be traced back to the 17th century when most governments, particularly France and the Great Britain, were in critical need of resources to finance their costly wars. An Italian financier Lorenzo de Tonti therefore proposed the tontine as a means by which the French government could raise (borrow) revenue from the public to fuel military actions in the Thirty Years' War and against rebellions (McKeever, 2010, pp. 492-493). However, a similar system already existed much longer in Asia. Historical evidence indicated that the Chinese discovered the Hui, a mutual financial association, in the mid Tang dynasty (618-906 A.D.), and the Japanese started with a saving group called Kou in 1275 A.D (McKeever, 2010, pp. 516-517). It is not sure when and by whom the system was introduced in Cambodia, but it existed before the introduction of the Western-based constitutional law in Cambodia (Marx & Chhim, 2015, p. 17).

trustworthy in order to secure the money flow. Because of its informality, there is no written contract; the members just depend on a verbal agreement. All members agree to make a monthly deposit into a pool of funds, managed by the leader or custodian of the savings group. The duration of the savings group depends on the number of members. For example, if there are five members, the saving groups will last for five months. Every month, except the first month, the members have the opportunity to withdraw money from the pool. The first month, the custodian has the sole right to withdraw money, and the following months, the other members can withdraw money through a bidding system.

Table 3.3 shows an example of a tontine of five subscribers who agree to put a monthly deposit of $100. The first month, there is no bid as the custodian has the right to withdraw the deposited money from the other members. This implies that the custodian receives $400 that month (=4x$100). The second month, Subscriber Two wins the right to withdraw money through a bid of $20. This means that the other members (except the custodian) only have to deposit $80 that month (=$100-$20). As the custodian has used the right to withdraw money already, he/she has to deposit $100. Subscriber Two thus collects all the deposited money from that month, totalling $340. This also means that Subscriber Two will lose money at the end of the savings groups because he/she withdrew money early on. Subscriber Two got $340 out of the pool of funds, but will eventually have to contribute $400 to the pool.

The third month, Subscriber Three wins with a bid of $10. The custodian and Subscriber Two have to put $100, and the remaining subscribers have to deposit $90 (=$100-$10). Subscriber Three thus collects $380 that month. The fourth month, Subscriber Four wins with a bid of $5. The custodian, Subscriber Two and Three have to deposit $100, and Subscriber Five only $95 (=$100-$5). Subscriber Five did not do any bid during the duration of the savings group, so the last month Subscriber Five collects the deposited money and the others have to pay a full deposit of $100. This implies that Subscriber Five collects $400, even though he/she has only put $370 into the fund.

Table 3.1. sample structure of a tontine (Values in USD)

Subscribers	Deposited Money/Month					Total paid/ Subscriber	Total received/ Subscriber
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th		
Sub. 1 (custodian)	0	100	100	100	100	400	400
Sub. 2	100	0	100	100	100	400	340
Sub. 3	100	80	0	100	100	380	380
Sub. 4	100	80	90	0	100	370	395
Sub. 5	100	80	90	95	0	365	400
Total Deposited / Month	400	340	380	395	400	1,915	1,915

In most cases, non-kinship of migrants (ie local businessmen) prefer to withdraw their money early on because they need fast-flowing capital to invest in their daily economic activities like their retail supply chains. The money lost in the tontine is less than the interest they would have to pay if they had taken a bank loan. On the other hand, migrants' kinship (ie aging parents) prefer to save because they do not have many daily economic transactions, as a result they are able to gain interests for their deposited money when the savings group ends. Chaya prefers that migrants' parents join the group because remittances from Thailand secure the money flow in the group better. In short, this kind of savings practices facilitate the re-direction of remittances from the households of the migrants' kinship towards the non-kinship households.

Besides this system, local suppliers of construction materials offer "installment sales" as a response to the housing modernization trend among migrants' households. It incentivizes households to buy their products as it allows for the partial deferral of payment. The buyers have to make monthly payments or installments, including an interest rate of at least 20%. The households mostly use this method because they trust in the regularity of the remittances from their children. In this way, the businesses can maximize their income in the long-term. I therefore argue that not only the migrants' parents, but also the local businessmen pave the way to attract remittances by offering these easier financial systems such as installments. However, they have to be careful for payment defaults. The following two cases provide more insight.

In 2009, Navuth opened a shop selling construction supplies near Kandal. He chose this business because of the housing modernization trend in Poy Samrong and Kandal; one house could cost up to 1,000,000 THB ($33,300). Eighty percent of his customers are house owners, while 20% are building contractors. He estimated that most buyers could afford at most 70% of the total cost of the purchased materials, leaving the remaining 30% to be repaid in monthly installments with a 20% interest. His business has grown from daily revenue of 6,000 THB ($200) in 2009 to 20,000 THB ($666) in 2012; and up to 80,000 THB ($2,666) now with a profit margin of 36% after expenses (30,000 THB or $1,000).

Bunna began his building supplies' business in 2014. Initially, he had problems to manage his business' finances because of, among others, payment defaults. He offered installment payments to migrant households which they could repay with their monthly remittances. The installment debt of each household was estimated to be between 20,000 to 30,000 THB ($666 to $1,000). Unfortunately, they broke the contract and left to Thailand without paying back. From that experience, he became more cautious with offering installment payments to migrant households. After this, his business recovered and expanded through offering money transmissions and selling farming supplies. He now earns about $5,000 per month. Approximately 90% of the total revenue comes from the construction of houses by migrant households.

In addition to the monthly installment system, some local businessmen offer the "post-paid mechanism" which enables migrants to defer the payment of their expenses made during occasions like Khmer New Year to a more convenient time. The post-paid system differs from the monthly installment in that it is limited to consumer goods, such as food and drinks, which accounts for smaller amounts of money. Common post-paid businesses are grocery and liquor stores. Testimonies from both migrants and local drink sellers indicate that the stability of remittances is a motive to enter into this post-paid deal.

Thirdly, regular remittances encourage non-migrants to loan money to remittance-receiving households, but also in a more "predatory" manner. On the one hand, there are the local money lenders who concentrate on giving loans to smaller remittance-receiving households, after they have assessed that the remittances are stable and obligated. On the other hand, there are migrants' relatives who have the security of a surplus of income because they receive larger remittances. Hence, they can provide loans to other households that

receive smaller remittances. The following case indicates that non-migrant money lenders absorb more fruition from the remittances compared to the migrants' households.

Phanny's son and his wife are working in Thailand, leaving three children in her care. The monthly remittances that Phanny receives is not enough to cover her daily expenses, so she had to ask for a loan from the villagers. Phanny indicated that loan givers in the village prefer migrant households because they value the regularity and reciprocity of remittances. She said, "We took the loan [20,000THB/$666] from others. We just work to pay off the interest. If [we] hadn't migrated to Thailand, they wouldn't have given us the loan. If we would take a loan for doing business in our country, they would not grant it."

In addition, when migrant households reach a certain level of material modernization, such as acquiring a modern house, new motorbike or jewelry, their rich neighbors will acknowledge their prestigious status. The interaction between these two groups will then become more active and vibrant so that loans are granted more easily. The following cases explain why material improvement makes borrowing money more possible.

Saren had five children in her care. Being a widow with many children and living in a helpless condition, Saren experienced that her neighbors avoided social interaction with her. Her situation changed after her children grew up and migrated to Thailand. She could build a new house and buy assets like land, gold and a motorbike. When asked whether she notices a difference in the social interactions now, Saren says,

> Since my children have migrated, I have become better off. Life is different now. They [neighbors] get to know me. They invite me to weddings and other celebrations, unlike in the past, when people discriminated against me. They did not like that I was poor and sick. When I needed a loan, no one gave it to me. Today, no matter how much I want, they will grant it to me. I can get money from everyone, including from the chen [Khmer expression for ethnic-Chinese businessman] in Chub Vary [a nearby town]. Indeed, they wait for me to take a loan.

Vanny was able to significantly enlarge her old house through the remittances from her children. She has also bought and upgraded new

motorbikes, and wears nice clothes and gold jewelry. With such material improvements, she feels more comfortable to interact with richer villagers, especially to ask for financial relief from them such as interest-free loans. I noticed that her interactions with Kandal villagers, especially those who have a higher social status, were closer and more vibrant compared to the pre-migration conditions she shared with me.

Fourthly, findings in Poy Samrong have indicated that the role of the village headman has been extended to facilitate purchases of assets, such as land and gold. His facilitation can be in various forms, including investment consultancy services and paperwork support. For example, the headman looks for buyable plots of land and then informs either the migrants in Thailand or the parents at home. Several households have followed the headman's advice to buy land. Ry, for instance, used the remitted money from her children to buy a plot of land (38×40 meters) which costed 350,000 THB ($11,666). The value of the land is now estimated at 450,000 THB ($15,000) because the headman proposed to the district government to build a country road that connects Ry's land to other farmland areas and the main road. Additionally, when some households want to borrow money from the bank to buy land, the headman helps to issue a certification letter to get a loan approval. He then helps the loan takers to manage their monthly repayments, by making sure that the remittances are sent regularly.

Sociocultural Aspects of the Economic Remittance Flow

Sociocultural practices and norms also play a crucial role to connect the sending households and community with the migrants and their money. The differences in the amount and frequency of the received remittances depend on various cultural norms and narratives that circulate between households in Kandal or Poy Samrong, and the migrants in Thailand. These cultural norms and practices, and their circulation will be further illustrated through examples at the household level, followed by the community level.

Migrant-son households enjoy less benefits from the remittances, compared to migrant-daughter households because of the matriarchal society. It is the norm that sons relocate to live with their wife's family after marriage which means that the migrant-daughter households will have more labor forces at their disposal after marriage. Also, when a couple has children, they tend to

keep their children with the wife's family, resulting in more remittances for the family to cover the costs of childcare. At the same time, migrant-son households complain that they receive less or no benefits because they have to keep the remitted money to pay for the dowry when their sons marry. Some households use remittances to buy land when their sons are still single because once they marry, they will have to take care of their new family.

Chanty, for example, has two daughters who sell vegetables in a Thai market. Both daughters are now married and have left their children with Chanty. Including the two sons-in-law, Chanty has four children working in Thailand. Her family now receives about 10,000 THB ($333) per month to cover the expenses of childcare supplies and debt relief. Her neighbors appreciate Chanty for having helpful daughters and sons-in-law who are very reliable and ensure she has enough money.

Besides these matriarchal marriage norms, there is the cultural norm of reciprocity. It implies that children have to take care of their parents when they age, because the parents have dedicated themselves to raising them. Parents and siblings at home remind the migrants to reciprocate the care of the parents. Migrants are thus encouraged to save and send money to support their aging parents. If they fail to do so, they will have to endure the moral sanction of being regarded as bad children by their family and society as a whole.

For instance, there are four children in Sitha's family who work in Thailand. When the family at home heard that they had bought a new smart phone, the eldest daughter called to admonish her brothers in Bangkok. She told them to resist their impulse to make modern purchases. Sitha repeated his daughter's words:

> Do not be so obsessed with buying new smartphones. Do not just think of your own pleasure. Please think of mom and dad. They have no one to count on. They only have you. You have to work hard. Do not loosen your purse strings.

Sitha also teaches his migrant children about the Buddhist gratitude principles *katannu* and *katavedi*, which prescribe the moral obligation of children to remit money whenever the parents are in need. The first principle, *katannu,* means that children need to be aware that they owe great gratitude to their parents for giving birth to them and raising them. The second principle, *katavedi*, means

that children have to pay back for the parents' dedication to their well-being. Interestingly, Sitha intentionally combines these two principles together as he expects his children not only to be aware of, but also to pay back for his and his wife's dedication. He reminds his children of their obligation when they come home on big occasions like Pchum Ben or other blessing rituals.

On the community level, the local religious institutions also play a crucial role in developing ways of being and belonging for the migrants in order to benefit from the remittance flow. Through what I call "transnational merit-making", they instigate the migrants in different ways to donate money to the local temple.

The local monks, for example, sustain the Buddhist faith among transnational migrants so they will continue to donate merit-making money to the temple. When asked how to keep migrants spiritually connected to their home villages, the abbot in the local temple highlighted three Buddhist teachings in Pali – gratitude or obligation [*kataññu*], patience or forbearance [*khanti*], and trust or faith [*saddha*]. The first teaching means that children always have to owe gratitude to their parents and have to give offerings to them when they are in need. The second teaching implicates that migrants have to work hard and with patience in order to save money; otherwise, they will not find a job or be able to save money to send back home. The third teaching is specifically for husbands and wives who live separately because of migration. The husbands and wives have to keep faith in order to stay true to each other so their long-distance relationship would remain solid, regardless of the spatial disconnection. The local monks always preach these three teachings either when migrants and their parents go to the temple on occasions like Pchum Ben, or when they invite the monks to do a blessing ceremony at their house.

Secondly, the temple committees call for merit-making donations through circulating copies of invitation letters to the villagers. When migrants' parents receive the invitation letter, they ask their children in Thailand whether they want to make merit. Sometimes, the informed migrants gather their peers in the same worksite and raise donations to make merit. For instance, Phanny informed her son in Thailand about the Kak-Then ritual in the village. Her son spread the information to other migrants and could collect 1,000 THB ($33) which he has sent to make merit in the local temple. The raised money was used for the general development of the temple and the village. For the temple,

it includes the construction of entrance gates, crematoriums, restrooms, or common houses for monks; while for the village, the money is used to build roads and support needy villagers. According to the local abbot, it is necessary to translate merit-making donations into development projects because it ensures the accountability and philanthropy of the temple, which will eventually sustain the Buddhist faith in the people, especially the migrants. Even when villagers experience a crop crisis, the amount of merit-making donation does not decrease because the migrants and their parents continue to make merit. Their names appear in public in order to acknowledge their contributions for the development of the temple and community (see Figure 3.3).

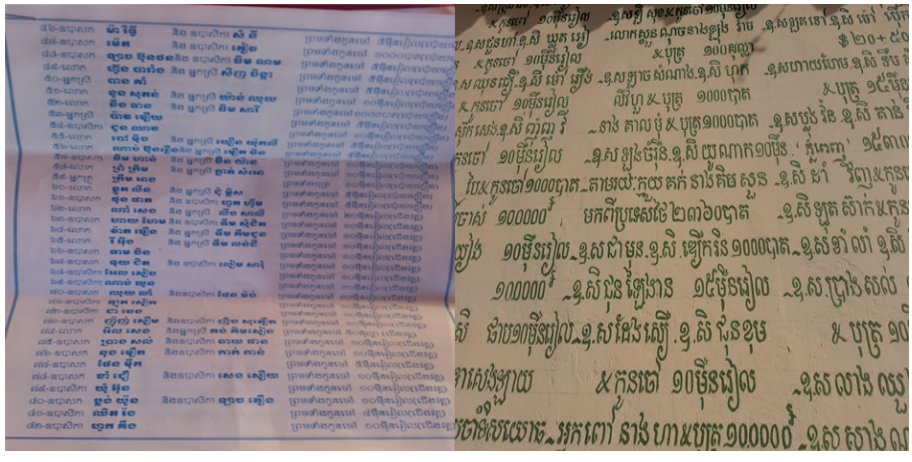


Figure 3.3: Names of merit makers *Source: Author*

Thirdly, transnational merit-making appears to be more collective and on a larger scale. It does not only involve the migrant households, but a broad range of actors in the community like local governments and religious institutions. In Poy Samrong, for instance, there is a "resting house" or better known as a *sala-chor-tien*. The house serves as a public space where the senior citizens gather on religious occasions, instead of travelling to the local temple which is quite far from the village. This house not only accommodates senior citizens, it also facilitates merit-making donations from migrants in Thailand. The donations can be contributed in different ways and involve an active role of the local governor and the migrants' kinship at home. For example, migrants can donate to a fundraising project by directly remitting money to the local authorities or temple committees who are the organizers of the fundraising

events. Local authorities even reach out to the migrants by sending an announcement letter calling for merit-making donations which the migrants can spread further to gather more donations. Sometimes, it is also the village headman who informs the migrants about merit-making events, so they can transfer money to contribute. For instance, for the Kak-Then festival during which Buddhist followers offer money to the local temple, Tin imprinted copies of the Kak-Then agenda. He distributed these copies to visiting migrants who later delivered the message to other migrants in Thailand so that they could also remit money for merit-making.

The Flow of Social Remittances: Contact, Visits, and Return

Besides the economic remittances, there are also social remittances which flow from the migrants into the sending households and community. As discussed in the first chapter, these social remittances can be transmitted through three mechanisms: contact, visits, and return.

International phone calls used to be very costly, however, nowadays communication is much cheaper due to the increased use of smartphones with internet access, resulting in more frequent contact between the migrants and their family. About 50% of the households in the survey use both Facebook video calls and normal phone calls (audio), while the other 50% of the households use only normal phone calls. Furthermore, migrants and their families can easily exchange information and ideas through Facebook. The advanced and affordable communication devices broaden opportunities to export images of prosperity in Thailand, such as advanced infrastructure, lifestyle of the Thai people, and economic behaviors. So, even though parents and other family members have not yet been to Thailand, they are still able to absorb these images of Thai-model development.

On the other hand, the virtual information exchanged via Facebook can be both negative and positive, leading to agreements and disagreements with the existing literature on transnational communities which is mainly focused on the European context. This study agrees that migrants tend to go further and stay longer in foreign countries because they can maintain virtual contact with their families and a broad range of networks (Dekker et al., 2016; Komito, 2011). Migrants' kinfolk at home are also more relaxed about, and accepting of the long distance and the duration of the migration because they are well

informed about the migrants' well-being. However, this study also wants to point out that when seeing sad images on the migrants' Facebook page or during video calls, the migrants' kinfolk, especially the parents, sometimes become less relaxed and accepting. For instance, two mothers testified that they were broken-hearted after seeing unfortunate images of their sons working hard and eating poor quality meals. Despite having virtual contact with the migrants, those mothers preferred to use non-visual phone calls or not to use Facebook, to avoid seeing their sons' difficulties. It is therefore important to take into account that virtual contact through platforms like Facebook can create both feelings of acceptance and disapproval in transnational relations.

Secondly, mutual visits between migrants in Thailand and their relatives in Cambodia are also tools to enhance the flow of social remittances. This study discovered that migrants' parents find it easier to visit their children in Thailand because the local taxis have become more convenient and cheaper. Also, the road infrastructure has improved, as well as the legal proceedings to obtain a visa. Many parents visit their migrant children at least two times and stay at least two weeks. They are financially supported by the migrants, and encouraged by the migrants' employers to come to Thailand. The migrants want their aging parents to relax and have fun by going to places like Bangkok and Pattaya. They also ask their parents to bring their children along so they can have a family reunion. During the visit, their family can capture inspiring images and ideas about development in Thailand, such as convenient transportation, education, and infrastructure. For instance, some migrants' mothers revealed that they were enthralled by the modern highway system in Bangkok, as well as the affordable and tidy transportation. It made them want to have the same modern infrastructure in Cambodia.

Visits can also be in the migrant-to-home direction, whereby migrants play an active role in introducing new ideas and lifestyles. In Poy Samrong, for instance, the headman observed that migrants wear modern clothes and ride brand new motorbikes when they visit their home. Some migrant women wear shorts and tight-fitting attires, while the men have tattoos. On the one hand, they have a modern look, but on the other hand, it is considered inappropriate, especially among the conservative elders. In addition, several non-migrants commonly agree that the behavior of return migrants have become more self-centric in the way that they do not bother showing subornation or subservience to the elders in the village.

Besides transmitting ideas and cultural practices, visits also serve as a powerful instrument to "transmit" social networks from Thailand to Cambodia. In line with Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011) who contend that migrants can transmit social networks to their family members and other non-migrants at the sending end, the results of this study reveal that migrants in Thailand transmit their social network, consisting of their friends and employers, to their family in Cambodia through the visit mechanism. These visits can be done in both directions, namely from the migrant-to-home and home-to-migrant direction. For instance, some migrants build social relations with their Thai employers and then introduce them to their family at home. They invite their Thai employers to their home village, especially during occasions like New Year or wedding ceremonies. Moreover, the Thai employers sometimes encourage the migrants to bring their relatives to visit them in Thailand. Under the condition that the casual relationship between migrants and their Thai employers is very close, the employers also support a part of the travel fee of their family.

Lastly, when migrants return, they tend to share their migratory experiences with their relatives and other people in the community. The stories are mostly about the better governance in Thailand, such as the Thai traffic and immigration laws, which migrants and non-migrants believe to be stricter than in Cambodia. Sambath, a return migrant, explains what he was impressed about:

> In Thailand, people obey the law. Everyone is treated equally. The car drivers stop if there are children or even animals crossing the road. If the traffic lights turn red, they stop. Also, the immigration law is strict. By March 31, 2018, any employer who recruits illegal migrants will be fined 400,000THB [$13,333], so, migrant workers have to hold passports from now onwards… *Som-nanh-cha-babb*[13] (the net of law) in Thailand is so tight that people cannot escape.

In a similar way, Sambath also criticizes the way traffic is organized in Cambodia. When sitting at his father's house, next to an intersection on a busy main road (see Figure 3.4), he complains that there are no traffic lights or signs

13 Khmer speakers commonly liken the implementation of the law to a fishing net; if the net is loose or has wide holes, the fish can escape through the net. Likewise, if the law is not strict enough, justice will never be served as the fish can escape.

at the intersection, resulting in a lot of accidents, especially at night. All of his ideas to better organize the intersection originated from his firsthand experiences with traffic situations in Bangkok. So, the return of migrants plays a significant role in channeling the flow of new ideas they have learned in Thailand, into Cambodia.

Figure 3.4: The intersection viewed from a noodle shop *Source: Author*

To end, it should be noted that the return mechanism potentially provides the opportunity to transfer skills from the return migrants to non-migrants. However, empirical data has shown that this opportunity has not yet been used. For example, return migrants have often gained a decent knowledge of the Thai language, but this knowledge is not passed on to the non-migrants in the sending households or community.

Chapter 4

Impacts of Economic and Social Remittances

Introduction

This chapter will analyze the impacts of remittances on the migrant's and non-migrant's households in Kandal and Poy Samrong. First, the economic and non-economic impacts of economic remittances will be addressed through analyzing changes in religious norms and practices, family relations, roles of local authorities, language, social interactions, schooling practices and marriage norms. Secondly, the economic and non-economic impacts of social remittances will be discussed through having a look at the migrants' and sending households' aspirations for progress, their extended social relations, and their reflections on social issues and the governance of state bodies. It will become clear that these remittances not only generate impacts on the economic, but also on the social, cultural and political domain.

Impacts of Economic Remittances

It is necessary to holistically look at the impact of economic remittances because, as discussed previously, both migrants' kinship (parents) and non-kinship (local businessmen and authorities) reach out to the migrants' remittances. Moreover, while remitted money appears to be material in its essence, its impact is not limited to material impacts because people use non-material (abstract)

reasons to condition the flow of remittances. For example, if migrants remit money for spiritual reasons like merit making, it makes sense to also have a look at the non-material impacts of economic remittances on religious practices. This section will thus mainly focus on the influence of material improvements on the non-material domain, as a result of economic remittances.

Changes in religious practices

As demonstrated earlier, religious institutions in the home community also actively reach out to the migrants in order to donate money to make merit. The impact of these economic remittances on local practices and norms in Buddhism will be further explained through an analysis of the management and roles of a local Buddhist institution.

For Poy Samrong villagers, the local Buddhist temple is no longer the only place where Buddhist rituals are conducted. In 2000, Help Age International sponsored the construction of a wooden house (*sala-chor-tien)* in Poy Samrong to serve as a communal space where elderly people could gather on religious occasions, to avoid having to go to the far away temple in Kandal and to conduct help-seeking activities like fundraisers. When the house was in need of renovation, the village and temple committees[14] launched a fundraising campaign to build a new concrete building (see Figure 4.1). According to Tin, who helped organize the fundraising campaign, over 50% of the funds came from remittances sent by migrants in Thailand.

14 There are two committees: the village and temple committee. The former consists of local authorities like the village headmen and deputy; while the latter includes religious figures, excluding monks, such as Buddhist clerics and other charismatic elders.

Figure 4.1: Gathering on Sila Day *Source: Author*

The new building hosts various communal celebrations, including "life-prolonging rituals"[15] and religious rituals like Sila Day[16], whereby monks are invited to preach about the Buddhist moral principles. During those occasions, the temple committee always asks for merit-making donations to raise money for needy villagers; to buy modern facilities, such as microphones or tables; or to improve the interior, such as a huge Buddha statue to make it look more like a small pagoda (Figure 4.2). Nowadays, the building is not only regarded as a senior persons' center, but also as a small Buddhist temple open to everyone; whereas in the past, people only celebrated in the main Buddhist temple.

15 The life-prolonging ritual (*bon-sang-ka-tien* in Khmer) is for any elderly person who becomes sick or needs help (e.g. financial). It can be initiated by the elderly person's relatives or neighbors.

16 Sila Day is a weekly ritual during which Buddhists gather in a temple for the purpose of promoting the basic principles of Buddhism, i.e. killing, stealing, adultery, lies and alcoholism (Mahidol University, n.d.).

Figure 4.2: Temple-like interior design in the *sala-chor-tien* *Source: Author*

The management of the *sala-chor-tien* is distinguishable from the local Buddhist temple since there is a particular group of committee members to take care of the budget and general operations, especially fundraising campaigns. According to Tin, two development projects have arisen from these fundraising campaigns: the restoration of a local reservoir, and the construction of a dirt road connecting Poy Samrong to the main road. In every campaign, it is the money from the migrants that takes the lion's share of the raised funds. Because of its participation in developing local infrastructure, the provincial governor recognized the house as the "Poy Samrong Union" (Figure 4.3). From then onwards, whenever there has been a plan to construct a new infrastructure, the house has hosted a fundraising campaign under the name of "merit-making contributions." A recent example was the campaign organized by the village and temple committees to build a staircase to a Buddhist temple located on a nearby mountain.

Figure 4.3: Certificate of honor given to the Poy Samrong Union *Source: Author*

This does not mean that Buddhist institutions were not involved in local development projects before they received economic remittances. Rather, the role of Buddhist institutions in development projects has been "visibilized", so they can serve as a transnational space through which non-migrants in the home community can reach out to the migrants and their remittances.

The above only describes a change in the management of the Buddhist space. Empirical evidence from interviews and observations suggests that economic remittances also impact transnational merit-making practices. As discussed in the previous chapter, kinship and non-kinship in the home village and community reach out to the migrants to ask for merit-making donations, which indicated that the way of making merit has been adjusted in order to enhance merit-making donations. However, merit-making practices have not only changed in terms of transmitting channels, but also in terms of merit-making characteristics. Chapter 2 mentioned that poor households, mainly in Poy Samrong, became remarkably wealthy by local standards as a result of the remittances. Observations during this research revealed that these households tend to make merits to exhibit their social status. This echoes earlier findings on Theravada Buddhism in Thailand that merit-making practices are not only for

"harmony begging" or *som sekdey sok* [17], but also to legitimize social prestige—to acquire virtue in the eyes of others (Burr, 1978; Keyes, 1983; Tambiah, 1968).

This study contends that this kind of merit-making characteristic is more obvious in the context of remittance-receiving households. For instance, Sothea from Poy Samrong recalls that she used to be very poor until her family migrated in 1992 to work in Thailand. In the past, she did not dare to go to the temple because she was afraid to face other villagers as she did not have enough money to make merit like the others did. In lieu of making merit with money, she made merit by carrying water to a Buddhist temple on top of a mountain. Now that she has become better-off through the stable and large remittances from her migrant children, there has been a change in her means of merit-making as she appears to make more monetary merits.

A month after my talk with Sothea there was the annual religious festival, called Meak-Bochea, dedicated to the Lord Buddha and his teachings. People from different villages joined the event to make monetary donations for merit-making purposes (Figure 4.4). Two Buddhist temples hosted the event; one was located in Kandal, and the other on top of the Preah Netre Preah mountain. I climbed up the mountain in order to participate in the festival and observed how much money was donated by the Kandal and Poy Samrong villagers. The donations from Poy Samrong, totaling one million KHR ($250), doubled those of Kandal. From a conversation with a group of older Poy Samrong women, including Sothea and Kim, I learned that they previously made merit by carrying water to the temple on the mountain. They nostalgically talked among themselves about a common narrative on their poverty before the migration trend. Nevertheless, they are grateful they are now able to make monetary donations because of the remittances from their children in Thailand.

17 *Som sekdey sok* means to seek a bless. It is a local Khmer term that can be literally translated as "harmony begging" (*som* = beg; *sekdey sok* = happiness or harmony).

Figure 4.4: Meak Bochea Festival at the temple on the mountain *Source: Author*

Remittances and family relationships

Traditional family relationships, long been valued for the giving of affection and care, have been changed into non-traditional relationships determined by remittances. These latter relationships can be likened to the Marxian "alienation of family relationships" in which interactions among family members are dominated and objectified by a self-enforced material power, namely remittances (Coser, 1971, pp. 50-53). Likewise, empirical data from this study has revealed that there can be two impacts from the remittances on family relationships: (1) family harmony or (2) family frustration. Whether and to what extent a family is happy or frustrated depends on the "stability" and "ownership" of the assets purchased with the remittances.

Remittances can harmonize relationships between the migrants and non-migrating family members because the remittances can be used to enhance the family's economy through upgrading and purchasing lucrative assets. Not all relatives are able to upgrade their economy; only parents who have multiple migrant children, working as entrepreneurs or self-employed sellers, can secure more stability and larger remittances, which in its turn, reduces the possibility of family tensions. Besides this, family harmony is only possible if the parents and migrants reach a mutual consent on the ownership of the assets bought

with the remittances. If the migrant children are still single, some parents will register their names as the owners of the assets because jointly owned assets will have to be split with the new family after marriage, and the cultural norm prescribes that single children have to help their needy parents before settling down. If the migrant children are already married and they are willing to send money to meet certain needs, such as children's education and farm land acquisition (see Chaney, 1979, pp. 209), parents will register the acquired assets in the name of their migrant children. It enables the migrants to appropriate assets which enhances their income opportunities for when they come back.

Contrarily, some remittance-receiving households might suffer from a family relationship breakdown. Relationships can get upset due to instability or interruption of the remittance flow caused by, for example, job cuts in Thailand. The parents become frustrated if they are not able to pay for everyday expenses due to burdens left behind by the migrants, such as child care supplies and the children's education. Thun, for example, is taking care of her two grandchildren. When asked about how much money she receives, she resented to say that she had to sell off her gold and land to bring up her grandchildren, because their parents could not afford to send enough remittances:

> [I] sold 2 *dom-leong* of my gold (*dom-leong* is an old measurement unit for gold which is equal to 37.5 gram) just after he [grandchild] was born. [I] also sold my rice field. I am angry because I have looked after their children for three years without receiving even one baht. When they are sick, [when] they eat, it's all my money. Everything I had earned so far is all gone. I am speechless.

Before departing to Thailand, some migrants even urge their parents to take a loan to buy a motorbike or build a new house under the promise that they will send remittances to pay off the loan; however, some of these migrants cannot keep their promise. It forces their parents to default on the loan, which causes foreclosure or repossession of their assets—a situation in which the parents have to sell the collateral at a price lower than the actual standard in order to pay off the loan. Eventually, tensions in the family are inevitable.

Four years ago, the eldest son of a Poy Samrong family with three children working in Thailand, earned a stable income and sent regular remittances. The

overconfidence of his earning capabilities made him ask his parents to take a bank loan, with a plot of farm land as collateral, to buy a motorcycle he could use for when he comes on a visit. Unexpectedly, he ceased sending regular remittances because of job instability and his conspicuous consumption in Thailand. To clear the loan, the parents had to sell their farm land and the motorcycle, thereby being forced to accept a much lower price – the motorbike which originally costed 80,000 THB ($2,666), was now sold for only 30,000 THB ($1,000).

The interruption of the remittance flow explains only half of the existing family tensions. The controversy over ownership registration of assets bought with remittances is another main cause of problems. Five years ago, there was a land dispute between a migrant and his non-migrant brother in Poy Samrong. The non-migrant brother persuaded his brother to purchase a plot of residential land (20x25 m) for 4,500 THB ($150) to which he agreed and sent the money. Under the veil of brotherhood trust, the non-migrant brother insisted to list his name on the title deed. Years later, the non-migrant brother was in urgent need of money and wanted to take a loan from the bank by putting the land as collateral. His migrant brother found out about his plan and immediately returned to the village to refuse permission to put up the land as collateral. Since that day, the relationship between the two brothers, who used to trust each other, has been replaced by resentment and distrust.

Local authorities as brokers of remittances

In the wake of neoliberalism, Southeast Asian countries have reached a high level of commoditization, whereby both living and non-living resources have been converted into economic values. Human beings and their labor are thereby considered as living commodities (Nevins & Peluso, 2008). In the context of international migration, migrant-sending countries, like the Philippines, have been cited as creating a new kind of commodity by turning "migrant sacrifices" into an economic value through stimulating investments in their hometown. This commoditizing process includes policy deregulation and national-hero narratives which encourages overseas migrants to send their remittances to invest in their motherland (Weekley, 2006; Alcid, 2003).

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has not yet launched explicit mechanisms to transform migrant workers into overseas investors. However,

as mentioned earlier, the local authorities go beyond their official role by facilitating and channeling migrants' remittances into real estate investments. On the condition that they can legitimately issue land certificates and have vital information about available real estate, these local authorities play an important role in helping migrants and their families to purchase real estate, such as land and apartments. To understand further details, it is crucial to first take a glimpse into two important elements related to (1) land ownership and (2) the prescribed roles of local authorities in a general context.

In 2001, the RGC issued the Land Law to provide a framework for Cambodians to register their land with the national government in order to obtain official land ownership. However, land registration became a wicked problem because there is no uniform land titling process. This has led to two types of land titles which are registered at different authority levels. The first type is called the "soft title" and only provides possessory status—not ownership status. This title is registered with local governments, including the commune (*Sangkat*) or district level. The second type or the most secure certification, is called the "hard title". It recognizes the ownership status of the land at the national ministerial level under the mandate of the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, and in coordination with the Phnom Penh City Hall. Notwithstanding the availability of hard titles, people commonly hold soft titles due to administrative inexperience to register their land titles at the national level, insufficient documents for registration, and the time-consuming and costly process to register land at the national level (CBRE Cambodia, 2012). This research learned that people mostly hold soft titles for land bought with remittances because they prefer to register with the local governor, who is helping them with their purchase.

According to the law, a village headman is not allowed to ask for extra payment for paperwork service related to asset acquisition and other buy-and-sell certifications. However, in the context of local villagers who mainly depend on remittances, the role of the village headman appears to be ambiguous, in that he plays extra roles in addition to those of local governor in order to capitalize on the remittances through local investment. The following cases provide an empirical explanation.

In Poy Samrong, I observed that the village headman became more "magnetic" in the sense that he provides advisory assistance to migrants and

their families so the remittances would be used in economically beneficial ways. The main role of the village headman is to help villagers obtain certificates of asset possession and land ownership (soft title) at the commune or district levels. However, since the flow of remittances has become so significant in Poy Samrong, the village headman also plays an active role as a real estate broker through "mediating" the transactions between the migrants in Thailand and available land in or outside the village.

This process involves different steps. The headman first informs the migrants or their family about available land. If they agree to buy a plot of land, the migrants remit money to their parents or the headman in case their parents are too old to be in charge of the payment. In some cases, the parents already possess a plot of land but do not have a legal land title paper, the headman helps to issue a certificate letter so the parents can put that land as collateral for a bank loan. The parents then use the loan to buy the new plot of land for their migrant children, who promise to send monthly remittances to pay for the mortgage. Lastly, the headman helps the migrants or their parents with issuing the necessary documents, like a possession letter, needed for the registration of the soft title.

What the headman gets in return, is an "implicit commission" for his efforts. It is considered informal and implicit because it has much to do with the normative logic of reciprocity or gift-giving (Gouldner, 1960; Mauss, 1950). The headman does not ask directly for the commission, but the migrants are culturally obliged to pay some money in return for his services, which is gifted when all proceedings are finalized. Sometimes, the seller also gives a gift to the headman for his help in mediating the sales contract. When a migrant acts on the recommendation of the headman to purchase a plot of land, but fails to follow this reciprocity norm, their social relationship will turn sour.

The headman, however, does not see himself as an investment mediator. As an authority figure, he considers it his duty to help his villagers secure their future assets. He reasons that if he lets the migrant's family consume the remittances conspicuously through buying a new car or gambling, their migrant children would have nothing upon their return. As a return migrant himself, Tin knows how hard it is to earn money in Thailand, leading him to encourage migrants' relatives to take good care of the remittances. Also, the people who have bought land upon his advice acknowledge the crucial role of the headman

to secure their wealth, because land will unlikely lose its value, rather it increases in economic value. Furthermore, it enables the migrants to have land to legally settle on when they return.

Viewed from the functionalist notions of gift-giving and reciprocity, the headman's practice can be seen as having a business purpose because it involves an exchange of value between the migrants and the headman (cf. Gouldner, 1960; Mauss, 1950). The headman provides advisory and administrative benefits to the migrants, who are then morally obligated to give a gift (commission) in return of his help. This echoes contemporary business practices where payments must be made in return for service. In all, whether the headman's role as a broker is solely for the sake of people's prosperity or also has a business purpose, is not clear. Likely, it is a mixture of both.

The aforesaid reciprocal relations also have a lot in common with traditional patron-client relations, whereby local authorities use their resources and power to provide tangible benefits and protection to their clients (i.e. voters), who then reciprocate with other forms of support and assistance (Scott, 1972). In the context of migration, however, researchers found that rural migrants in Phnom Penh are clients to their landlords and construction foremen, instead of the local authorities. These patrons, due to their proximity to migrants, provide tangible benefits and protection, such as water, electricity and security, in exchange of migrants' reciprocal returns (Parsons, Lawreniuk & Pilgrim, 2014). Migrants even tend to stay at distance from the local authorities because the destination area (i.e. Phnom Penh) is considered to be an "alien environment"[18], causing them to have little trust in those authorities.

From the perspective of the sending community, the patron-client relations between the migrants and local authorities remain unchanged, but they are not limited to the provision of political protection or favors, as claimed by political scholars like Scott (1972). Upon the rising significance of remittances, the patron-client relations weigh more towards the economic realm. Local authorities, like Tin, provide economic benefits to the migrants who then reciprocate with commission money under the name of gift giving. Hence, patron-client relations in the case of sending communities do not

18 Alien environment refers to destination localities where migrants face great demands to adapt and assimilate through building social ties and networks with the people in the destination area (Dauvergne, 2016).

resonate with those of destination ends like in Parsons et al. (2014) findings, because in the sending communities, the local authorities play a key role in securing investment networks and administrative benefits for the sake of the migrants' economic growth.

Correlated linguistic terms

Another impact of economic remittances is on everyday language, thereby distinguishing the migrant-sending community from other parts of Cambodia. During my field research, I unexpectedly encountered some confusion when I was buying goods at the market. The sellers referred to "Baht" instead of "Riel", even though the sellers were aware that I was using Khmer Riel banknotes to pay. It would be normal if the seller would say "Baht" or "Riel" to express the actual bank notes the customer is holding in their hands. Moreover, as an outsider coming from a different geographical background where U.S. Dollar is more frequently used than Thai Baht, I was often confused. Through my observations in a grocery shop, I gained some understanding behind the use of the word "Baht" instead of "Riel". When they said "one Baht", they actually meant "100 Riel", or "100 Baht" meant "10,000 Riel".

People communicate within a socially-agreed system of *signification* in which the meanings of words stem from the arbitrary relation between two semiotic terms: (1) a "signified" (i.e. concept) and (2) a *signifier* (i.e. acoustic image). Barthes (1957) explicated that a signified is like a "close and silent" existence of a message, or what one has in mind to deliver; while a signifier relates to the acoustic expression of the message, which is open to "appropriation by society, or chosen by society" (pp. 107-114). If a linguistic signifier is open and chosen by a society as a whole, the question can be asked to what extent a signifier can be changed, because societies go through various social and economic transformations over time. In a remittance-receiving society like Cambodia, there must be a certain level of change to how Cambodian people use language to signify the concept of "Khmer Riel". This study discovered that the local villagers from the research site have begun to use the signifier "Baht" to express to the signified "Riel", unlike the past when the signifier and signified were identical (i.e. "Riel"). The fact that non-migrants in Kandal and Poy Samrong are widely exposed to remitted Thai Baht bank notes has created a change in the linguistic correlation—from a traditional correlation whereby

Riel was used as both signifier and signified, into a new correlation in which Baht becomes the new acoustic expression for the concept Riel.

This phenomenon already existed before the migration trend. Through the international trade of agricultural products between Thai and Khmer merchants, people were exposed to Thai Baht in their everyday life. That time, the exposure was still moderate because it was only among high-profile farmers and brokers involved in the trading with Thai counterparts. This study contends that in the wake of the import of Thai Baht through remittances, the change in linguistic terms has become more obvious because the exposure has been extended to a wider range of groups in society. It has instigated local villagers to normalize the acoustic expression "Baht" in lieu of "Riel". The following instances from a return migrant and non-migrant provide deeper insight into this change.

Eang (Thavy's husband) worked in Bangkok for many years before his return in 2015. Today, Eang runs a grocery store in Kandal. Even though other villagers might say that the verbal use of "Baht" began before the migration trend, he is adamant that the migration trend from the 1990s was the main reason more people began to say "Baht" instead of "Riel". Having to use "Baht" during his work as a street vendor in Bangkok, the term has become more convenient than "Riel" since it entails less digits. All agree that 1 or 100 Baht, means 100 or 10,000 Riel. In so doing, calculations during daily economic exchanges among small business owners becomes easier. That is why Eang, like other return migrants, prefer to keep using the verbal expression "Baht" in his daily routines, even though the Khmer Riel is the national currency.

Sitha, a non-migrant father, also shared how the verbal use of "Baht" has become a new trend since migrants began to remit Thai Baht to their family in the village. For the migrants' parents, the verbal expression "Baht" gives them a sense of emancipation and prestige because the actual economic value of the Thai Baht is higher than that of Khmer Riel:

> It is a bit unfair for the Khmer Riel since people may say "Please give me one Baht", but they are actually holding Khmer Riel in their hands. It seemingly depreciates our currency [Khmer Riel]. [It happened when] the Thai Baht started to flow into the village in large amounts. Children remitted money to their parents in Thai Baht, and then the parents used the Thai Baht which has a higher value than the Khmer Riel. So, they also

> changed what they said, seemingly giving more value to the Baht. When they say "one Riel", it sounds so small; if they say "one Baht", it sounds more valued, even though they are actually using Riel. It is easier to say "Baht" because there are not as many zeros [digits]. Whether they are actually holding Thai Baht or Khmer Riel, they only say "Baht". Now, all of Banteay Meanchey province has become *srok-prak-bat* [a province of Baht currency].

In summary, the impact of the inflow of foreign currency through remittances, like the Thai Baht, is not only limited to the economic environment. In fact, its impact can be extended to the sociocultural domain of people's daily practices, such as language. It involves a complex Khmer-Thai fusion, which may not exist in other parts of Cambodia where international migration and remittances are not so common.

Material improvements and social interactions

As discussed earlier, parents of migrants tend to use remittances to make material improvements, which is considered the primary impact of economic remittances. This section will focus on the secondary impact of material improvements, or changes in social interactions of remittance-receiving households, after they have made certain material improvements. As a comparison, remittance-receiving households that did not get any material improvements and have vibrant social interactions will also be included in the analysis.

The vibrancy of social interactions will thus be the key concept in this section, which indicates the extent to which remittance-receiving households are able to make sturdy relationships and establish social networks with a wide range of people, so they can depend on each other in times of need. The impact of economic remittances on the socialization of remittance-receiving households differs depending on the amount of money that is remitted. It is striking that regular remittances not only contribute to the material improvement of the households, but also amplify social interactions and connectedness with a wider range of social groups. To some extent, those groups include non-migrant businessmen who used to have a higher social status than the migrant households. On the other hand, households that receive irregular and lower amounts of remittances depict another story. Those households tend to be less connected with their neighbors.

It is necessary to take a brief look at the social interactions between poor migrant households and rich non-migrant households before remittances became a trend. Interviews indicated that one reason poor migrant households have less vibrant social interactions with their rich neighbors is because of a "self-imposed prophecy" (Adler, Rosenfeld & Proctor II, 2018). This is a cognitive behavior which occurs "when [one's] own expectations influence [one's] behavior" (Adler et al., 2018, para. I.C.). In the context of this research, it implies that differences in socioeconomic background and material outlook cause poorer households to expect that their richer neighbors will be irritated or judgmental about their poor living conditions. Because of such expectations, the poor tend not to engage in public events and avoid interacting with richer peers. Chanty, for example, recalls her experience of interacting with her richer neighbors before she became better-off through the remittances. During wedding parties, she noticed that her peers wore beautiful dresses and lavish jewelry, so she intentionally avoided them through taking a seat far away. The reason was not because those rich peers rejected her to join them, but because she was disappointed in herself for having a lower material standard of living, which made her feel isolated from her peers.

However, things have changed because of the migration trend. Relationships between migrant and non-migrant households became more interactive as they improved their houses and bought modern luxuries, such as motorbikes and jewelry. These material improvements resulted in positive changes in the self-imposed prophecy of the migrants' parents; they became more confident to expose themselves to richer groups and other people in different villages. Since their lifestyle has improved, the migrants' parents no longer feel ashamed of their unsophisticated material standard of living, instead, they became confident to talk and make new friends. They are also confident to ask for financial reliefs from their neighbors, for their material improvements serve as a guarantee they will be able to repay. The following cases explain the vibrant interactions between migrant households and non-migrant peers.

Kim is a 67-year old Poy Samrong villager who has worked in Thailand as a self-employed seller in the market for a long time:

> In earlier days, people there [Kandal village] associated less with us and vice versa. They were rich; we were poor. Not many people associated with us; only a few. [Yet] today, people seem

> to talk to each other. Now we are 'equal'. Before, they were above us; they did not know us. These days, we start to know and depend on each other to a large extent. These days I talk to everyone, even though I do not know them. I talk to everyone.

Other migrants' parents in Kandal also noticed that more people in the village began to know them after they had a new house and other luxuries. The new houses are designed with convenient spaces to host visitors and organize gatherings for the neighbors. For instance, Sitha, a remittance-receiving father, used to have an old one-storey house before his wife and children migrated. They have sent him money to build a new, modern two-storey house (see Figure 4.5). His family often invited me over for meals or to visit them, even though they did not know me very well. Often during my fieldwork, I took a rest at his house after a long day of interviews. During informal conversations, I learned a lot about his family life. When it came down to the topic about the house, he said that he would not dare to invite me to his house if he was still living in the old house. He was not confident to host any guests or neighbors because his old house was dirty and filled with livestock waste. Nowadays his family is more confident to welcome visitors because of the modern concrete house. Every afternoon, his new house became a hangout spot for his neighbors.

Figure 4.5: Sitha's new house at the back and the neighbor's old rice storehouse at the front *Source: Author*

On the other hand, social interactions do not increase when households receive irregular and small remittances as illustrated by Rithy's case. Even though he and his family had migrated to Thailand in the 1990s, they still remain poor. With no house of their own, Rithy and his family live with his sister-in-law in Kandal. There are a couple of reasons why his family cannot afford to build a house. First, they used to work as wage laborers in Thailand, and their two sons, who migrated only recently, do not get a full salary yet because they are under 18 years of age. Second, his wife has a chronic mental illness that requires expensive medical care. Third, his dormitory in Thailand burned down, destroying all his saved money. Seeing his neighbors' material standard of living, Rithy feels disappointed and unwilling to hang out with friends during special occasions like weddings. He is ashamed of himself that he did not get rich, despite having migrated in the 1990s. Rithy's sister-in-law, who cared for Rithy's sons while the family was working in Thailand, added that the boys are also less exposed to their peers because they do not have new motorbikes to travel around during occasions like Khmer New Year.

Unlike Sitha's house, Rithy's house was always quiet with no visitors or any sort of gathering. Therefore, it makes sense to say that stable and large remittances improve the material standard of households, which then leads to an increase in social interactions. These households enjoy a sense of pride, leading to an active engagement with a broader range of people. Households that receive irregular or low remittances hold a self-perception of shame which negatively influences their behavior of interacting with people, leading to less social interactions.

Reconfiguration of marriage practices

The previous section has identified the impact of remittances on social interactions in general, but the impact on particular elements of social interaction can also be questioned, such as marriage. As discussed in Chapter 2, marriage norms in Kandal and Poy Samrong used to be discriminative in the sense that migrants and their family were considered as inferior marriage partners and the non-migrant counterparts as superior. Nowadays, the migrants can marry freely as a result of their economic contributions to their family. Marriage to a migrant is even viewed as a potential means to generate economic growth for the household, under the condition that the income from the remittances is higher than the home-based income. The reason why migrants have become preferred

marriage partners rests into the functionalist notion that marriage is an exchange of resources and through forming an alliance, economic growth and trading activities can be secured (McGee & Warms, 2000).

Remittances have led to different marriage reconfigurations for migrant men and women. Migrant men can earn a higher income than non-migrant men, which enables them to pay the dowry for a woman of higher status. For instance, Ravy, whose sons are all working in Thailand, revealed that nowadays there is no more concern whether a migrant man will be chosen for marriage or not. What matters most now is how much a migrant man can earn because the more they can pay for their dowry, the more likely they can marry, even if the woman in question is not a migrant. Today, the minimum rate for a dowry is 100,000 THB ($3,333). Non-migrant men are less able to save such an amount of money, while migrant men can often pay such a dowry or even more. Ravy's eldest son worked in Thailand for many years and could save up to 150,000 THB ($5,000) to marry a girl from a nearby town. Her son has now returned and established a business with his wife. As such, economic remittances have an impact on the means to marry because migrant men can potentially accumulate wealth which then broadens their possibility to marry women from better socioeconomic backgrounds.

The impact for migrant women seems to be less profound than for migrant men. When it comes down to marriage, Cambodia is well known as a patriarchal society in the sense that men are supposed to choose their mates, while women are to be chosen. If a man is capable to take care of his future family, the parents tend to encourage, sometimes even force[19] their daughters to marry that man. Since becoming the economic backbone of their family, migrant women have become more preferred in terms of spouse selection. For instance, Sothea, from Poy Samrong, migrated to Thailand in the 1990s and returned back home in the early 2000s. Later, her daughters migrated to work in Thailand. When asked about marriage between migrants and non-migrants, she recalls her experience:

19 Forced marriage is a common but controversial Cambodian tradition tradition, especially in rural communities. Although it is fading in cities like Phnom Penh, parental power is still decisive in the daughters' spouse selection. It is also proved by various Khmer classics like "Tum Tiev", better known as the Cambodian Romeo and Juliet (See Chigas, 2005).

> Even though the children loved each other, the parents in Kandal did not allow them to marry people from this village [Poy Samrong]. Villagers here were thought to be too poor. Now it has changed [laugh]. They [Kandal villagers] come to ask to marry my [migrant] daughter. I refused. I will never let my daughter marry those with a rich background. But today, they are poorer [than me]. Previously, a man in Kandal loved and wanted to marry me, but his mother refused and said that I was too poor. So, I told my daughter that she could marry any man except those from [Kandal].

Sothea's case illustrates that migrant women are now a target for spouse selection because their income from remittances is more attractive than the income of non-migrant women. To some extent, this phenomenon resonates with the case in Vietnam where migrant women's value increased because of their contributions (Belanger, 2016; Belanger & Tran, 2011). However, it disagrees in the sense that Cambodian women, unlike Vietnamese women, cannot decide whom they marry. The decision still remains in the hands of their parents, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Changes in schooling practices of migrants' children

Another change due to economic remittances can be found in the schooling practices of the migrants' children. Even though remittances have increased the investment in the education of migrants' children, a study in Cambodia has pinpointed a paradoxical relationship between remittances and education. The study reported that children, in the absence of their migrant parents, have to do more household, farm and other work. These extra burdens lead to a higher rate of school dropouts among migrants' children, even though a large portion of the remittances is spent on their education (OECD/CDRI, 2017, pp. 85-87). Hence, the parents do not see a satisfactory return of their investment. A similar unsatisfactory return has been found in Poy Samrong and Kandal. However, the identified cause was not extra burdens, but behavioral changes in the schooling practices of migrants' children and their school environment, instigated by the economic remittances.

Not every student who goes to school, does so to develop skills. A study on American university students suggested that going to college sometimes

becomes a means to party and develop a social network, instead of developing skills (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Even though the research depicts the context of American university students, it can be applied to the context of high school and primary school students because the key features of the entertainment purpose also exist at below-university levels. Through observations and interviews it became clear that students from remittance-receiving households also mainly attend school for social purposes. It is indicative of the problematic consequences of remittances as the children's usage of these remittances does not reflect the parents' aim to provide quality education; instead, they use up the money at school in response to their own impulse, for example, to enjoy social activities and entertainment. This will be further illustrated through the following examples of two groups of migrants' children who are studying at a primary school (grade 1-6) and high school (grade 6-12).

For the first group, my observations of several grandmothers who are looking after migrants' children, found that their age constraints are correlated with the children's uncontrolled behavior in the use of pocket money at school. The grandmothers had more difficulties to discipline the children because they lack power and energy due to their age. They give money more easily when the children want to buy toys and snacks at school. If the children have more money at their disposal, they prefer to go to school earlier and stay longer, so they can spend more time with their peers to play instead of studying. This extra time spent at school also allows the grandmothers more time to rest. The grandmothers also tend not to argue with the children and give the money as they wish because the expenses are more than covered by the parents' remittances. Hence, sending high remittances to cover school expenses does not necessarily help the children to achieve high outcomes as their behaviors change in accordance to the abundance of available money. Their behaviors are not oriented to meet their parents' goals, but rather to satisfy their own immediate desires.

Another reason why migrants' children become impulsive consumerists at school relates to the drawback of long-distance family relations. Migrant parents miss their children so much that they often send whatever amount of money necessary for their children's consumption. During an interview with Thavy, a return migrant who decided to stay home to look after her two daughters, she recalled her memory of living separately from her daughters. She used to send money to her daughters so they could spend it on whatever they wanted at school. In her context, sending money was a compensation for the lack of warmth and

direct care that children from other parents usually enjoy. It also explains why migrant parents continue to buy luxuries for their children in the expectation that they will study hard at school. Contrarily, non-migrant children are more restricted in spending their pocket money. With parents allowing a smaller amount of daily expenses, the children's consumption levels are not as extreme as that of migrants' children. Also, staying closer to their parents, they barely appear to twist their parents' arm for more pocket money like migrant's children do with their grandmothers. The non-migrant parents apply strict punishment for bad behavior, which is less likely applied by grandmothers.

The second group, or migrants' children who study at high school, showed similar dissatisfactory outcomes caused not only by their consumption patterns, but also their disinterest in self-fulfillment. These behaviors have emerged after the family received greater amounts of remittances from the migrant parents, contributing to greater material improvement. In terms of consumption, observations and informal talks with various teachers indicated that migrants' children in lower secondary school (grades 7-9) are more exposed to luxuries since their family receives remittances as the main source of income. Similar to what happens with primary school students, the migrant parents inject a lot of money into the education of their children as long as they promise to study hard and attend class regularly. They buy brand new motorbikes and smartphones to lure their children to go to school. My observations, however, found that the possession of smartphones and motorbikes among migrants' children is retarding their concentration and participation in class, and leads to lower grades compared to their peers.

In terms of the second aspect, an interview with Kham, a grade 12 teacher, provided insight into the behavioral change of migrants' children in upper high school (grade 10-12). The change resides in the fact that they go to school just for the sake of completing it, not for the pursuit of going to university. Few migrants' children progress further than grade 12 because they neither have the strong competences nor the motivation to pursue tertiary education. From his experience with migrants' children, Kham learned that the amount of remittances correlates with the students' decision to leave school at grade 9, instead of continuing until grade 12. The students become discouraged because some university graduates in the village earn less money than their migrant parents in Thailand. They do not see the value of going to university as obtaining a degree only gives them a slightly better outlook than being a migrant.

According to Kham, most migrants' children only attend school to bridge the time until they reach the age of 18, so they can obtain their ID card which is needed for the legal registration to go work in Thailand.

It needs to be noted, though, that not all migrants' children perform poorly at school. For instance, a grade 7 teacher explained that a migrant's child was getting good grades and attended school regularly because of the consistent and good supervision by his grandmother who is a former director at Preah Netre Preah Primary School. In this way, the occupational origin of the custodian (i.e. former school director) does matter in shaping the degree of supervision which determines the education outcome.

Impacts of Social Remittances

This section will examine the impact of social remittances through the emergence of new forms of social and cultural capital among migrant and non-migrant households in Kandal and Poy Samrong. Social capital covers all new forms of social networks and social relations; whereas cultural capital refers to emerging new ideas and worldviews that drive people to reflect on the existing under-development within their home communities. The focus will thus be on non-material aspects or abstract properties such as the ideas, practices, skills and social capital as a result of transnational migration. It will become clear that in some instances social remittances also have economic impacts. These impacts will be further elaborated in the next chapter on social mobility.

To note, findings about non-material changes may also be related to other factors beyond this study, such as the use of social media. For this reason, any general conclusions from these findings should be considered with caution.

Modernity, social network, and language

Through migration and contact, return, and visit mechanisms, both migrants and non-migrants are exposed to and absorb new ideas of modernity. Interviews with migrants' parents and return migrants revealed a commonly held admiration of being highly educated, which instigates the return migrants and their family members to support their children to reach better educational outcomes. Vanny, a grandmother looking after three grandchildren, explained that her children make Facebook video calls with the grandchildren at least

once every three days. They always ask her to keep a close track on the grandchildren's educational progress. Through the video calls, they are able to virtually observe their children doing homework and reading texts. When asked what motivates her to keep close track on her grandchildren's education, Vanny revealed that her migrant daughters were impressed by the high educational outcomes among Thai children. They noticed how well Thai children spoke English with their parents. From this experience, her daughters started to think about their own children, because they wanted them to be smart and able to speak English like Thai children.

Furthermore, the desire to own a Thai-modelled business emerged among return migrants in Kandal. Interviews with a return migrant and a father whose children are working in Thailand disclosed similar responses. Sitha told me that before his son-in-law migrated, he grew crops on a small scale because of the lack of technology. He has now learned from Thai farmers how to raise chickens and grow crops following an agro-business model. He enthusiastically discusses this newly gained knowledge with Sitha in order to make a business plan for when he will return. Thavy also told about her aspirations upon her return. When she was selling ice-cream around Thai schools, she got inspired by Thai food vendors who were selling *laab* (a kind of Northeastern Thai cuisine), *kai yang* (Thai word for roasted chicken), and Thai papaya salad. When she returned to the village, she set up a food shop that sold this kind of Thai food. However, her business failed because of a lack of customers, and she could not find the same ingredients as in Thailand.

Secondly, migrants' relatives make friends and establish relationships with Thai acquaintances from the migrants, which can potentially bring about economic benefits. Through the visit and contact mechanisms, these relationships sometimes become so intimate that they consider each other as family. For instance, Saren's family has become acquainted with a Thai engineer through her migrant son. This relationship has helped her family considerably as the engineer enabled her second son to graduate with an engineer's degree from a university in Phnom Penh. Now that her son is working as an engineer, they are still exchanging engineering techniques and marketing tactics, which helps him to become a successful engineer in Phnom Penh. Moreover, her younger daughters have also obtained good jobs in Bangkok because of the Thai engineer's recommendations.

Similarly, other migrant-sending families sometimes have intimate relationships with the Thai employers of the migrants. They send gifts such as salted fish; in return, the employers send Thai food or make greeting calls. Sometimes, the Thai employers urge the migrants to bring their parents to visit Thailand. For example, Chanty has two daughters who work in Thai fresh food markets. As their relationship with their Thai employer became closer, they started to exchange personal information about their family. Being impressed by the stories about Chanty, who is a widow and took care of her two daughters alone, the Thai employers gave money to let her come over to Rong Klueu market to meet her. This has happened a couple of times, so they are now as close as family.

The used language can be an indicator whether or not a relationship is considered intimate. Even though it is not common, some migrants refer to their Thai acquaintances or employers with the unique Khmer suffix *thor,* meaning "dharma" in Pali, or "baptized, immersed" in English. For instance, if someone calls another person *bong* [brother] *thor*, it means that they have immersed themselves informally and socially as brothers, despite being biologically unrelated. I noticed a return migrant referring to his former employer, who is expected to give his job back if he goes back to Thailand, as *bong thor* or "immersed brother."

Thirdly, similar to the way remitted money caused a change in the meaning of the terms Baht and Riel, a parallel finding was discovered in how Khmer locals use some linguistic terms that correlate with Thai terms. However, here it has nothing to do with remitted money, but with the communication of ideas and practices that migrants adopt in Thailand. Due to advanced technology to stay in touch, non-migrant parents and other villagers are able to absorb Thai terms more easily, which are then used in everyday life and adopted by the whole community. For example, during my interview with a migrant's mother, I was surprised by her use of the word *moo-ka-tha* (a Thai word for barbecued pork). She picked up the term through taking with her migrant children via Facebook video calls. Having very little free time, they often call with her during their meal times. As she can see them during the video call, they explained what they were eating by referring to the Thai word *moo-ka-tha.* Now she sometimes uses the term in her village.

In addition to Facebook calls, visits are another important channel through which migrants transmit certain Thai terms to their non-migrant family members.

The migrants, who are accustomed to use Thai terms for their work tend to subconsciously communicate with their parents in the language they use in Thailand. To overcome misunderstandings, the migrants tend to explain these Thai words to their family members. For instance, Sitha, who has no migration experience, began to learn and use some Thai words like *yaay* [move, change] and *kon-ngan* [workers, employees] since migrants explained the meanings of these Thai words during their visits. For these reasons, both migrant and non-migrant family members are able to understand the linguistic codes in Thai terms.

Reflections on discrimination, moral codes of conduct, and public governance

The perceptions of Thai civilization, which migrants have internalized and transmit to their non-migrant family members, are also used as a standard to interpret the conditions in their home community and Cambodia as a whole. As a result, migrants and their family members express their disapproval of certain social and cultural issues, such as discrimination and moral codes of conduct within Khmer society. In other words, the absorbed ideas and norms serve as a lens through which migrants and non-migrants reflect upon actual issues happening in their home village as shown in the following examples.

When asked about her impressions of Thailand after she visited her migrant daughters twice, Sophy explained she noticed a difference in segregation between the part of Thai society she was exposed to during her visits, and Khmer society. She appreciated the warmer hospitality and inclusiveness among the Thai people she got to know. At the same time, she condemned the discrimination she experienced in Khmer society as culturally backwards. By backwards, she meant that the moral codes of conduct among Khmer people were not as high as that of Thai people. When attending her nephew's wedding in Phnom Penh, she felt discriminated and humiliated by a man who jokingly imitated her *ro-dern* accent[20]. She further expressed her unpleasant experience of wearing flip-flops, "If we wear flip-flops, we are considered as *nek-sa-re* or farmers, so no one wants to talk to us."

20 *ro-dern* is an accent commonly spoken among Khmer ethnics in Surin province, Thailand, and Khmers in northwestern Cambodia. It has Thai-like qualities of pronunciation. People with a *ro-dern* accent are perceived as poor rural farmers or Thai food vendors selling exotic food like *laab*, roasted chicken (*kai yang*), and Thai papaya salad.

Similar to Sophy's appreciation for the codes of conduct in Thai society, return migrants and migrants' parents tend to agree that Thai people, especially the youth, behave in morally superior ways because they *som-peh* [a Khmer term for *wai* in Thai] to older people when they meet. They believe that even though young Thai people dress improperly or like gangsters (*nak-leng*), they still *som-peh* and respect elders with a higher standard of moral codes than Khmer youth, who not *som-peh* or pay respect to others, especially the elders. These kinds of beliefs led to a greater reflection on the perceived problems of morality and improper behaviors among the younger generation in Cambodia. This does not necessarily mean that there is no civilization in Cambodian society and that there is no discrimination in Thai society. Instead, it indicates that the worldview migrants' parents and migrants have appropriated through their migratory experience, serves as a lens to reflect on the current issues in their home areas.

Besides this, ideas that migrants pick up during their migratory experience also impact their reflections on public governance. My research complements Levitt and Lamba-Nieves' (2011) findings that social remittances have various impacts on the organizational and political domain in the home communities. Particularly, remitted ideas were found to impact on people's reflections on public institutions like schools and the immigration police. It is not to deny that the increase in such reflections can be related to other factors, such as social media[21], but rather that the ideas and norms acquired during work in and visits to Thailand enhanced their critical reflections on the aforesaid public institutions.

In terms of state schools, interviews and observations in Kandal and Poy Samrong learned that migrants and their parents, who have witnessed better schooling practices in Thailand, appear to put less trust in local schools. They also tend to compare their image of Thai children with their own children, who are attending a state school with lower standards and quality of administration than Thai schools. Most grandparents from migrant households believe that the unorganized administration of local state schools leads to poorer performance and lower competence levels. For instance, Vanny shared her frustration about the local state school through making a comparison with her experience of seeing Thai children during her visits to Thailand:

21 Nowadays it is common to see Cambodian netizens post social issues such as ill manners of school teachers or police on Facebook which sometimes sparks out public criticism about the concerned bodies (i.e. police and state schools).

> Snack selling in the school has gone crazy […] When I think about the state school here, I would prefer my grandchildren not to study here. The school makes the students study less, but spend more. Teachers never care about teaching; they only care about selling [snacks]. I have been thinking about my grandchildren. Nowadays, teachers are not educating [poor] students, so we have to give extra [help] in addition to the state [school]. If we do not bother finding extra classes, they would learn nothing. Schools in the past were more effective [because] students could learn enough from going to school [without extra classes]. Nowadays it is very different. The school is so careless that students can skip classes and play outside, they become spoiled. [I] saw that Thai kids are knowledgeable and polite, just by the way they talked. Thai kids are so well-mannered, they say *sawadee* very gently. I saw this because I visited [Thailand] twice. I visited Pattaya, the temples and other places. I wished my kids could be like them [Thai kids].

Return migrants also highlighted the bad performance of immigration police at the Poi Pet international checkpoint. They decried the Khmer immigration police after experiencing being forced to pay about 100 THB ($3.3) for permission to cross the border; otherwise, they would be beaten and detained by immigration police. Noticeably, affected migrants tend to compare their bad treatment by Khmer immigration police with better treatment by the Thai police. According to them, Thai police do not beat Khmer migrants. "You should be afraid of Khmer police rather than Thai police" was a sentence I often heard from return migrants who had bad experiences with Khmer immigration police at Poi Pet. They even raised the hypothetical question about where they belong, as they were treated badly by immigration police in their home country.

These findings do not aim to provide a general interpretation of the performance of Khmer or Thai immigration police. They rather lend validity to the conclusion that migrants and non-migrants in Kandal and Poy Samrong use their perceived good practices of Thai immigration authorities to judge the performances of the Cambodian immigration police. It is therefore necessary for all government levels to clearly understand the impact of migratory experiences on migrant and non-migrant perceptions, because these perceptions can impact their demand for better governance.

Chapter 5

Remittances and Social Mobility

Introduction

This chapter will elaborate on five dimensions of social mobility that correlate with the impacts of social and economic remittances. First, the social mobility of migrant households in terms of income differentials will be examined. Next, the visual evidence of the uneven modernization among households within and across Kandal and Poy Samrong will be analyzed. Thereafter, the impact of social networks on social mobility will be demonstrated. The following section will then reveal how the interrelationship of education and material outcomes causes different trajectories in the social mobility of households in Kandal and Poy Samrong. To end, it will be illustrated how intermarriages between migrants and non-migrants influence social mobility through the exchange of resources necessary for economic growth. While the first two dimensions uncover the material aspects of social mobility, the last three dimensions focus on the non-material aspects of social mobility.

It needs to be noted that dealing with social mobility is a nuanced task concerning complex life trajectories, so there are many variables interrelated with one another. For this reason, agreeing with Chetty et al. (2015) on how to analyze data on social mobility, I would like to caution that even though the findings in this study show a "correlation", they cannot be interpreted as a "causal effect".

Income Differentials

The empirical analysis elaborated in Chapter 3 revealed that not only the migrants' family, but also non-family members are able to obtain a certain amount of the remittances. It therefore makes sense to evaluate the income differentials from both migrant and non-migrant households in order to understand how remittances influence the rate of social mobility. Three variables – time, geography and group variation – will be used to analyze the income differentials. The first variable explores the subjective impressions of parents about their income profile at two points of time – before and after they received remittances. The second variable provides insight into the likelihood that households could move from their home village to another neighborhood with greater economic opportunities. The third variable then compares the income profiles between the households that are kinship (i.e. parents) and non-kinship (i.e. local businessmen) with migrants.

In terms of the first variable, findings suggest that migrants' parents have different perceptions about their income profiles. While the majority of the households consider themselves to be better-off after they began to receive remittances; other households consider themselves to be poorer, despite receiving remittances. These differences in perception are attributable to the characteristics of the dependency on the remittances of the migrants' family members.

The first case group are households where both parents and children have migration experience. Generally, the parents are in their 50s, while the children are between their late teens and 30s. The parents had migrated in the late 1990s and returned in the early 2000s. Subsequently, their children migrated to work in Thailand. The parents only earned about 150 to 200 THB per day, while their children can now earn at least 300 THB per day as a wage worker. In earlier times, these parents considered themselves very poor because they earned small salaries and had to send money to bring up their children. However, they view themselves as better-off now because they can live from the stable remittances sent by their migrant children. Every month, they can get at least 1,000 to 5,000 THB from their children, plus extra money when there are occasional needs like for weddings and merit-making donations. If parents are taking over certain responsibilities from the migrants, like childcare, they can get an income up to 10,000 and 20,000 THB. In summary, according to their subjective impressions, these parents consider themselves to be upwardly mobile on their social ladder due to the stable and large amount of remittances from their children.

The second case group depicts a different story. This group consists of parents in their 50s and 60s who never migrated, but receive remittances from their migrant children. These parents used to be mostly farmers who earned a considerable income from rice cultivation. Due to natural disasters and crop price fluctuations their farming business became economically unviable, forcing their children to work in Thailand. They are too old to carry out rice farming work, so they just keep their house and rent out their farmland to other villagers. The income of these households therefore depends on a combination of remittances and rental earnings. The remittance-based income is lower than the income they used to earn prior to their children's migration. Sophy and Phanny, who fall into this category, shared that in their current situation they consider themselves to be poorer. Hence, the social mobility among these households is downward, because their income before migration was higher than their current income through remittances.

The third case group differs slightly from the second in that their subjective impression of their remittances' income is positive. While some parents revealed that they are better-off, other parents shared that their income has remained stable. The better-off households could increase their income because they use the remittances for farming intensification which contributes to a higher income. For example, the households from Ry and Sony have bought more farmland as well as modern farming machineries. However, some households revealed that their income has remained stable because the remittances only relieve immediate stresses such as debts, but does not enhance wealth in the long run. For instance, Narin who has three children working in Thailand, uses his remittances to pay off the debt he has made due to natural disasters and price drop crises. To note, Narin's migrant children are single, so their remittances tend to go to Narin only. In summary, what makes the households of this third type different from those of the second type, is the capacity of the parents to make lucrative use of the remittances – to buy more assets or to pay off debts.

In terms of the second variable, geography, the findings of this study resonate with literature about social mobility in America, namely that poor people who move out of their neighborhood to a new place with greater economic opportunities, have a higher likelihood to move upwards on the social mobility ladder (Chetty et al, 2014; 2015). In Kandal and Poy Samrong certain migrants could also climb higher up by moving out from their home

village to other towns that are economically more viable. Not only economic remittances, but also social remittances, like social networks built in Thailand, can help return migrants to move out from their village to a bigger town with greater economic opportunities, leading to a high-income career.

An older woman who was rumored to be the richest person among the surrounding households, explained that while most of her children are working in Thailand, one is running a business selling nutrition products in Battambang, a town with great economic potential. She told me that her son-in-law used to be a migrant worker in Thailand. One day he discovered a company in Thailand that sold nutrition products. He worked with the company as a volunteer until he got to know more Thai people. After that, he decided to return and open a shop selling the same nutrition products in Battambang. The business has now expanded with two more branches in Phnom Penh.

The migrant children of Sophy and Chanty are still in the planning stage to move out from Kandal in order to establish a new business in a town named Chob Veari. It is a busy town along the National Road 6, with a central market which attracts people from different villages. Sophy's eldest son and his wife are working as waged laborers at a construction site in Thailand. They send her remittances to buy a plot of land in Chob Veari. Sophy told me that it would be easy for her son and his family to open a business when they return because it is an economically more viable town than Kandal. Similarly, Chanty's eldest daughter migrated to Thailand with her husband after their motorbike garage went bankrupt. Now they are saving the money earned in Thailand to open a new garage in Chob Veari. They have asked Chanty to keep an eye out for a suitable plot of land along the National Road 6, where they could establish their new garage, expecting to earn more than before. Hence, the likelihood that migrants move out in order to move up on their social mobility ladder is dependent on the help of their left-behind parents in finding land outside their home village. This finding is in line with an argument by Lawreniuk and Parsons (2017) that elder and non-working members in migrant households play a key altruistic role in maximizing the economic potentials of their migrant children.

In terms of the third variable, a huge difference in income can be noticed between different groups, or more specifically, between kinship and non-kinship with migrants. While the remittances received by migrants' parents average between 1,000 to 20,000 THB ($333 to $666) per month, the local businessmen can obtain a much bigger amount. As detailed in Chapter 3, the rising demand

for new houses has enabled a construction supply seller to gradually increase his sales revenue up to 80,000 THB ($266) per month, thereby making a profit of 30,000 THB ($1,000). Another dealer estimates to earn about $5,000 per month, 90% of which comes from house supplies bought by the migrants' household. The reason for this high remittances' income is because businessmen gain their money in a collective in manner. In one migrant household, the parents can get remittances from just two or three migrant children. However, local businessmen attract remittances from many households at the same time because more than two or three households tend to build a new house or buy farming supplies at the same time.

Modernization

This section will discuss the impact of the increase in modern spaces and luxury goods on social mobility as a result of remittances, thereby aiming to provide a visual and holistic overview of the transformations that have taken place in Kandal and Poy Samrong. The results show that there are uneven levels of modernization within and across the two villages. These uneven levels not only appear among different households in each village, but also between Kandal and Poy Samrong village. It reflects the various impacts of remittances on material modernity at both the household and community level.

Empirical evidence based upon spatial variations suggests that individual households in Kandal and Poy Samrong have different degrees of urbanization as seen in the increasing number of new houses. In Kandal, the peripheral zone in the south of the village (blue circle in Figure 5.1) used to be poorer than the people in the core zone (green circle in Figure 5.1). Due to its location, they have a disadvantaged access to economic infrastructures, such as the market and main road. Hence, people in this zone have the least chance to access economic opportunities such as establishing a grocery shop at the market or getting to know a broad range of people through public spaces like the local Buddhist temple, compared to their neighbors in the core zone. Located near the main road and market, the core zone is mostly resided by non-migrant households, such as local businessmen who were perceived to be richer than the households in the peripheral zone.

As a consequence of the migration trend, the households within the peripheral zone enjoyed upward progress, which helped them to catch up and

sometimes overtake the households located in the core zone. They caught up in the sense that their new houses and modern lifestyles are comparable to their neighbors. They overtook them in the way that remittance-receiving households do not face income deprivation like non-migrant households such as crop losses and plunges in crop prices (see Chapter 2). Also, the area of the blue circle used to be a swamp which often flooded in the past. Nowadays, the area no longer floods since the residents could afford to raise the soil level. So, through regular remittances the migrant households were able to upgrade their material standards of living.

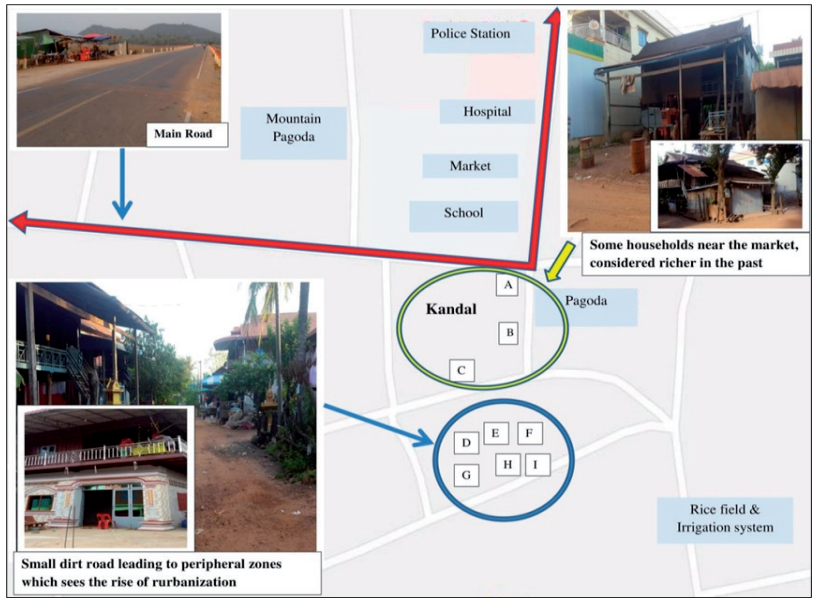


Figure 5.1: Urban map of Kandal *Adapted from Google (n.d.)*

A slightly different result can be noticed when analyzing the urbanization of the households in Poy Samrong. When I was driving with a motorbike around Poy Samrong, I noticed only a few modern houses in the south-east part of Poy Samrong. In the western part, on the other hand, many new and modern houses were erected, some had even been renovated twice to look newer and larger. Moreover, remittance-receiving households in the western area possessed more new cars, motorbikes and other luxuries, compared to those in the south-eastern part (Figure 5.2). The reasons behind this uneven modernity are related to the migrant's job type and the time of migration.

Interviews with the elders and observations revealed that people in the south-eastern part migrated later than those in the west, who began their migration between the 1990s and early 2000s. The south-eastern people only migrated after experiencing crop losses and price fluctuations. Therefore, most of them ended up being wage workers in construction sites, unlike many of their western counterparts who work as self-employed sellers in Thai fresh food markets.

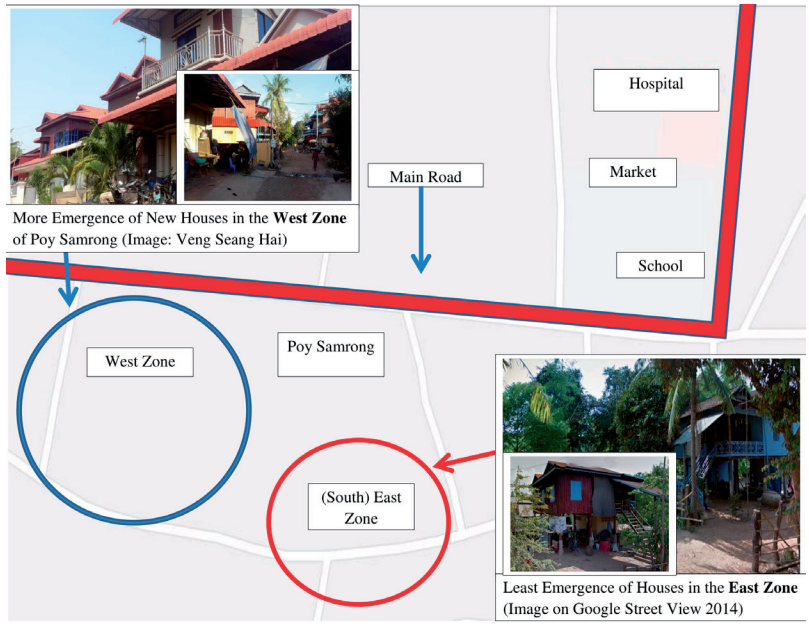


Figure 5.2: Urban map of Poy Samrong *Adapted from Google (n.d.)*

The inter-village comparison between Kandal and Poy Samrong suggests that even though both villages are receiving remittances, Poy Samrong has enjoyed greater material modernization in terms of modern housing. Most villagers and the headmen in both villages agree that Poy Samrong has a higher residential density and modernity level compared to Kandal as a result of the remittances. A common suggestion from the villagers was to go up the mountain to count the red roofed houses which is a common local practice to see how much a village has progressed. Viewed from the top of the Preah Netre Preah mountain, Poy Samrong has a dense cluster of red-roofed houses – even though some of them are not yet completed (see Figure 5.3). Looking in the other direction, houses in Kandal are hidden by the trees, while only some houses have been built with red

rooftops (see Figure 5.4). This landscape thus also indicates that Poy Samrong has a higher rate of urbanization compared to Kandal, because the villagers tend to improve their houses once they receive remittances.

Figure 5.3: Poy Samrong, viewed from the mountain Top *Source: Author*

Figure 5.4: Kandal, viewed from the mountain Top *Source: Author*

The increase in modern houses only tells one aspect of the material improvements in Poy Samrong. The increase in modern agricultural tools, such as tractors and ploughing machines are also noticeable among the migrant

households. Unlike the past, when only a few people in Kandal had modern machinery to grow rice, households in Poy Samrong are now able to upgrade their farming machineries as well. Besides this, they buy cars and brand-new motorbikes for their parents, or for them to use when they visit their village. Some households even possess two cars which are only used on special occasions, like Pchum Ben. Having a car or new motorbike is considered as a prestige symbol, it shows that one has earned a lot in Thailand.

As explained in Chapter 2, Poy Samrong villagers had greater intrinsic motivation to migrate to work in Thailand because they were poorer than people in Kandal. Their earlier migration has led to many advantages, such as the type of job they hold or the networks they could establish, which eventually results in larger remittances. These uneven amounts in income have caused uneven levels of material progression and thus socioeconomic status.

Strength of Social Networks and Economic Opportunities

As touched upon before, big social networks facilitate cooperation for mutual economic benefits as they encompass more people who can potentially provide economic benefits (Bourdieu, as cited in Swartz, 1997). People who lack social networks are at risk of what is called *social de-capitalization*, or the situation where they miss out on economic opportunities (Putnam, 1995). American scholars later merged the notion of social networks with social mobility. They argued that the "strength of social networks" is correlated with the rate of social mobility, in the sense that the more friends that individuals make, the higher they can climb up the economic ladder since they have more access to economic opportunities, which gives them high returns (Chetty et al., 2014; 2015).

Building further on this theoretical discussion, the impact of changes in social relations on the social mobility of remittance-receiving households will be examined. The aim is to measure how much households can climb up the economic ladder through changes in their social interactions as a result of economic and social remittances. The analysis will cover the social relations on the intra- and inter-village level, or among households within each village and between the two villages.

In Chapter 4 it was revealed that larger remittances' receiving households in Kandal are more engaged with a broader range of people in their neighborhood.

Through this higher social engagement, those households have a better chance to obtain economic advantages such as loans as they are able to rely more on their neighbors when they need financial support. They also have greater access to important job information. As discussed earlier, Sitha's new house enables him to host more guests. Through casual conversations with his guests, he can gain information about jobs in Cambodia and Thailand which gives him the confidence that he can find a job for his sons when they return from Thailand.

A different story is seen with households that receive small remittances. In Chapter 4 it was explained that remittance-receiving households with poorer economic outcomes are not confident to engage with richer neighbors due to their inferior level of material comfort. This then leads to economic disadvantages because these households have less access to financial support or job information from their neighbors. Phanny, for example, has four family members working as wage laborers in a construction site in Bangkok. For many years, her migrant children and grandchildren earned so little money that they were unable to send enough remittances to modernize their current house. Phanny's house looks smaller and has no wide space to host visitors compared to her neighbors. While Sitha regularly invited me to his house to rest and have informal conversations, Phanny never did. One day, when I stopped at her house to talk with her, I realized that her inferior material living standards made her hesitant to invite me. Her house stood so low that I had to bow my head to go through. Also, her higher age constrained her from keeping the house as tidy as she wanted it to be (Figure 5.5). Having to bow my head to enter the homes of other poor households and being seated in their old wooden chairs, I could feel similar hesitancies as Phanny had.

The difference between Sitha and Phanny reflects an *interpenetration* of social networks and economic outcomes, or the extent to which economic outcomes depend on non-economic actions (Granovetter, 2005, p.35). As Sitha is broadening his social networks, he increases his economic outcomes like access to job information and financial support which enhances his social mobility. On the other hand, as Phanny is shunning contact due to her lack of material comfort, she is less likely to have access to the same opportunities.

Figure 5.5: House of Phanny, a low-income migrant household *Source: Author*

Furthermore, social remittances in the form of exposure to friends made in Thailand also contribute to the social mobility of the households. Thai friends not only lead migrants to resources with high economic value as found in the research of Rabibhadana and Hayami (2013) on Burmese migrants in Thailand; they can also lead the migrants' family to these resources, thereby enabling them to climb higher on their economic ladder. The example in Chapter 4 about Saren's second son who has become an engineer and her two daughters who obtained a good job in Bangkok through the support of a Thai acquaintance from her migrant son, indicates the important role social networks of migrants can play for the left-behinds in the home community.

In terms of the inter-village level, the findings of this study suggest that the opportunities of exposure to social networks within a village determines the social mobility rate of the households in that village. When Poy Samrong began to receive remittances as one of its main income sources, the villagers were able to raise money to renovate their *sala-chor-tien*. While this common meeting house has many advantages for Poy Samrong villagers, it leads to social disengagement between the elders of Poy Samrong and Kandal which eventually causes an economic disadvantage for some of the Kandal elders. During my

interview with 80-year-old Phanny from Kandal, I realized that her interactions with her peers from Poy Samrong had decreased due to the establishment of the *sala-chor-tien* as Poy Samrong villagers do not go to the temple in Kandal anymore. Moreover, Kandal elders miss out on the common practice to exchange resources during religious rituals. On Sila Day I noticed that after the ritual was finished, an old woman handed some money to her peer as if it was a repayment. Buddhist clerics also announced the amount of merit-making donations that would be used for helping needy villagers. Phanny, a needy older woman, missed the chance to get help from the local religious committee because she was unable to attend the religious gathering at the resting house. At that time, she needed financial help because her migrant children had to spend a lot of money to prepare their migration documents and were unable to send her regular remittances. In the end, Phanny had no other choice but to take a loan from her neighbors.

In conclusion, the strength of social networks has an impact on the social mobility of the households in Kandal and Poy Samrong. On the one hand, households in Poy Samrong are making their way to the higher economic rungs of the ladder due to their increased access to economic opportunities as a result of their higher social connectedness. On the other hand, households in Kandal face social de-capitalization as they have less access to economic advantages resulting from a lesser exposure to social networks.

Roles of Education in Intergenerational (Im)mobility

Previous research has argued that the chance of getting a decent job depends on the extent to which parents have invested in the development of their children's capacities (Becker & Tomes, 1994). This theory draws upon three components: the parents, their children and the job destination of the children. These components are interrelated because how high children can climb up on the job ladder depends on the extent to which their social and economic origins incentivize their education.

Based on this logic, Goldthorpe (2013) created an OED Triangle to indicate intergenerational mobility. He pointed out that there is an association between "Origin" (O), such as parental incentives; "Education" (E) outcomes; and the eventual "Destination" (D) in the children's future career. It is argued that if the O-to-E association is weak (i.e. children's Origin is not strongly

related to their Education outcomes); and the E-to-D association is strong (i.e. children's Education outcomes strongly determine their Destination or career); than the O-to-D association is weak (see Figure 5.6). For that reason, a society based on this model is considered to be meritocratic because individuals are socially mobile regardless of their economic and social backgrounds or origins (Goldthorpe, 2013, p. 5).

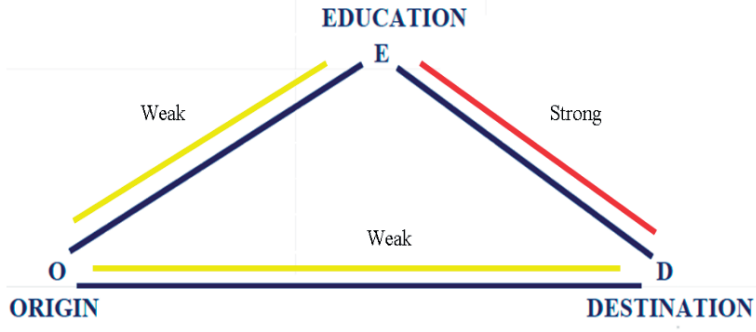


Figure 5.6: Ideal OED triangle for upward social mobility
Source: Goldthorpe (2013, p. 5)

In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that migrants' children do not respond well to the monetary incentives given by their parents, leading to uneven educational outcomes between children of migrants and non-migrants. These uneven education outcomes eventually lead to uneven job destinations because being uneducated in Cambodia often leads to jobs with lower status. Moreover, as indicated earlier, many migrants' children are not interested to study as they want to follow in their parents' footsteps and become migrants as well. Hence, applying the theory of the OED triangle to the migrant-sending communities of Kandal and Poy Samrong, it becomes clear that these communities are not meritocratic because the social and economic origin of the children strongly determines the job destination of the children (see Figure 5.7). It is the complete opposite of the ideal OED Triangle represented in Figure 5.6.

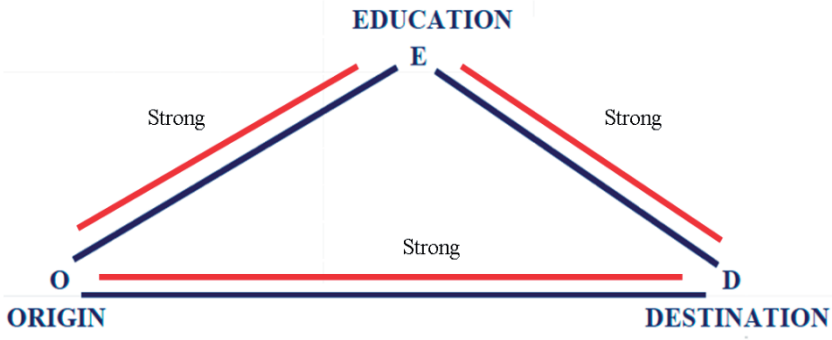


Figure 5.7: OED triangle in Kandal and Poy Samrong
Source: adapted from Goldthorpe (2013, p. 5)

The fact that Origin strongly determines Destination is due to the strong association of Origin with Education. A comparative analysis of migrants' children with non-migrant children in Kandal and Poy Samrong will provide deeper insight into the parental incentives that play a role in the educational outcomes of their children. These incentives can be internal or going directly from the parents to the children such as money, or the desire for upward social mobility and higher educational outcomes; but they can also be external or indirect, coming from a wide range of social networks that provide the parents with the necessary resources, like information about good schools.

As for the internal incentives, it was revealed in the previous chapter that the direct investment of migrants in their children's education tends to lead to unsatisfactory returns no matter how much money they are putting in. This was mainly caused by the lack of proper supervision over how the remittances are used, however, it was pointed out that the supervision by grandparents could overturn this negative correlation between remittances and educational outcomes. For the non-migrant children, interviews with teachers revealed that they usually dominate the top ten grades as they are under the direct guidance of their parents, in addition to appropriate financial incentives. Even though some parents cannot help their children with homework, they can remind and encourage the children to read and do their homework. For parents with a high educational background, they can even teach their children at home. My experience with a girl whose parents have a grocery store in Kandal, learned that she was strictly controlled to do homework

every day and not skip classes. In other words, non-migrant parents are able to translate their incentives into high grades, which is in contrast to migrants' children who just meet their own immediate desires instead of meeting their parents' intentions.

The external incentives are linked with the exposure to social networks and relatives who could provide the necessary resources for higher education outcomes. Several teachers observed that the productivity of their students is related to whom they are exposed to at school – that is, the extent to which the children interact with peers who could lead them to higher grades through peer teaching. Migrants' children tend to only associate with the clique of students living without their parents. When the class is finished, this clique of migrants' children prefers to stay back and play with their phones and motorbikes at the school campus; while the non-migrant children return home right away, otherwise, they would be punished by their parents. Also, the migrants' children have the reputation of being bad students, so non-migrant parents do not to let their children associate with them. They are concerned about possible peer pressure causing their children to get lower results at school. They prefer their children to associate with the top ten students.

For instance, I have talked with a non-migrant family in Kandal whose main income is generated from selling construction and farming supplies. The family has two children: a daughter and a son. The mother who finished medical school, states that in Kandal there are a lot of "bad" students from Poy Samrong. According to her, those bad students are children of migrants who are working in Thailand. She complained that they would encourage her son to play with them after school instead of coming home. One day, she caught her son playing with his peers at a crocodile farm in Poy Samrong, so she took him home and forbade him to play with them again. Since then, she keeps a strict eye on her son. This social disconnection between unproductive students (perceived to be migrants' children) and productive students (perceived to be non-migrant children) even widens the gap in their education outcomes. Without those close relations, the migrants' students are less likely to organize activities with non-migrant students, such as peer teaching.

The problems are not limited to the social disconnection between the students. The lack of social networks and blood ties in some migrant households can also cause problems. Even though migrant households can increase their

social networks through receiving high economic remittances, the findings indicate that they still tend to have smaller networks than non-migrant households, like friends or neighbors who can help to provide information about good schools and possible future jobs after graduation. In some cases, this lack of social network and ties drives migrant households to be pessimistic about their children's education outcomes, so they do not have a strong desire to support their children to pursue a higher education. Tracing the education outcomes in a migrant and non-migrant household, I noticed a difference between these households in terms of school selection. The non-migrant household had more chances to send their children to a better school in other townships, like Siem Reap and Battambang.

The mother of a non-migrant household in Kandal whose main source of income comes from growing rice and organizing weddings, has a sister who was an outstanding student and now works as a nurse in a hospital in Siem Reap. The parents decided to send their two sons to Siem Reap to get a better education because they believe there are troublesome students, mainly migrants' children, in their home village. The sons are now studying under the supervision of the sister at the public school recommended by her. Having more options to learn English, the younger son studies English for free with an NGO school named Angkor Tree; while the older son studies English in a private international school. Their father noticed that his sons now have higher grades and a better proficiency in English, compared to when they were in Kandal. When asked about possible future jobs for their sons, the parents disclosed they were thinking to shape them into doctors because they already have a relative working as a nurse. They expect that the sister will provide the necessary resources, like social networks and information so their sons could go to medical school.

Furthermore, tracing down the family backgrounds of some migrant households revealed that relatives of the students often had gone to the same poor school in the same village and ended up being a migrant worker and/or a farmer. The absence of a good familial background limits the migrant parents' knowledge about where to send their children for a high-quality education. Whilst non-migrants have the networks and ties that enable them to send their children to better schools, some of which even have free tuition; some migrant households have enough money to send their children to better schools, but lack the knowledge to do so because of their limited educational background and access to information.

Ry has three children working in Thailand. She is illiterate and none of her children completed high school. They all hope that the grandchildren will attain better educational outcomes. The migrant children remit a lot of money in order to enroll them at a private English school that costs $20 per month, which is expensive for local standards. Being concerned about her grandchildren's education, Ry explains, "[I] totally depend on the teachers for outside [help]. I do not have the skills to home-teach my grandchildren at all … their parents want them to get a higher education." Her neighbor also said that she did not know what to do with her youngest son as he will finish Grade 9 soon. She wants her youngest son to continue studying because none of his brothers, nor the rest of the family continued their studies after Grade 9. Even though she has enough money (mainly from remittances) to support her youngest son's education, she is still uncertain about where and what he can study after finishing Grade 9 because she has no relatives or other support networks to consult with.

Moreover, the problem is not always that migrants do not have the social networks or blood ties. Some migrant parents decide not to support their children to go to university in spite of having enough social networks. In that context, they tend to fall victim to what I call "outcome bias", meaning that they judge a university pursuit as a waste of time and money because some university graduates in the village could not earn as much as migrant workers.

For example, the daughter of the village headman of Poy Samrong graduated from the Royal University of Phnom Penh with a degree in Chemistry. Now, she tutors children at home and provides visa services for migrants. Her income is less stable compared to some migrant households. Her story is similar to other university graduates in nearby villages and is used as a proof that the economic outcomes of university graduates are lower than those of migrants. Becoming a migrant consumes less time and provides greater financial outcomes. Hence, many pay no heed to the advice of the headman to pursue a university education in Phnom Penh because of the example of his daughter. Instead, he gets mocked by the migrant parents who respond by saying, "If going to university is a good choice, how come your daughter cannot make a lot of money?"

To summarize, two new OED Triangles (Figure 5.8 and 5.9) were designed to depict how Origin influences the Education outcomes in the situation of Kandal and Poy Samrong. As demonstrated above, migrant households seem to have more trouble to realize the educational incentives

offered to their children compared to non-migrant households, or they do not have the same access to incentives. These uneven education outcomes among migrants' and non-migrant children lead to uneven job destinations, and eventually influences their social mobility. It gives rise to a paradoxical situation where on the one hand, some migrant households are climbing up on the economic ladder through economic remittances; while on the other hand, they are facing an intergenerational immobility in their education outcomes, causing their (grand)children to be stuck or going down on the occupational ladder.

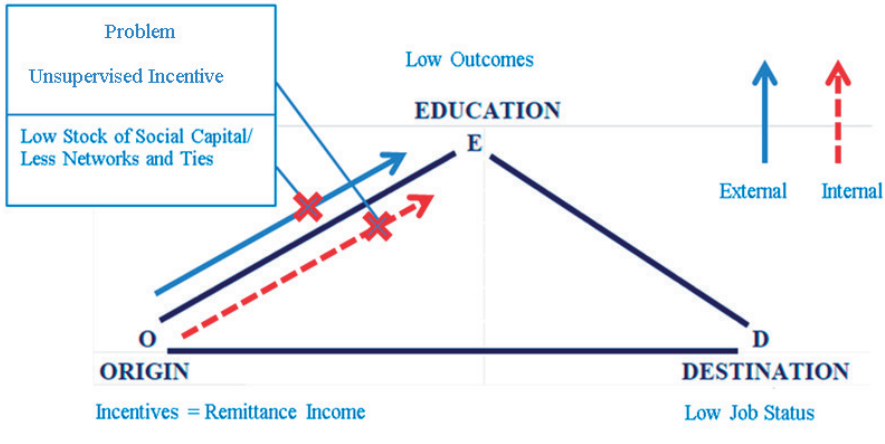


Figure 5.8: OED Triangle for migrants' children
Source: Adapted from Goldthorpe (2013, p.5)

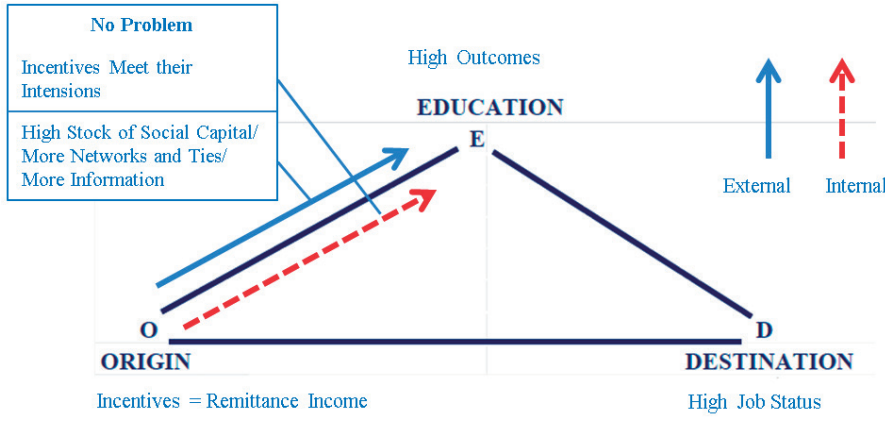


Figure 5.9: OED Triangle for non-migrants children

Source: Adapted from Goldthorpe (2013, p. 5)

However, despite the fact that the research findings have indicated a negative correlation between economic remittances and education outcomes for migrant households, social remittances show a completely different story. Some migrant households were able to experience a high rate of upward social mobility because their children could move up on the educational and occupational ladder due to incentives provided through social remittances. As mentioned before, Saren's family had become acquainted with a Thai engineer through their migrant son. When their second son dropped out of university due to financial constraints, he went to stay with his older brother in Thailand so he could earn enough money to resume his studies. The Thai engineer, with whom the first son was acquainted, got to know more about the second son. Impressed by his strong will to study at the university despite his financial constraints, the engineer encouraged him to pick up his studies again with the promise to help pay for his expenses. Now, the second son is a successful engineer based in Phnom Penh.

The social networks migrants are exposed to during their stay in Thailand therefore play a key role in instigating migrants' kinfolk at home to achieve higher education outcomes, which can then lead to higher occupational positions – sometimes, even higher than the non-migrant households (see Figure 5.10). In this context, it makes sense to argue that the extent of social mobility a migrant household can reach does not only depend on remitted money, but also on the social networks and experience migrants build up in Thailand, which are then transmitted to their family members at home.

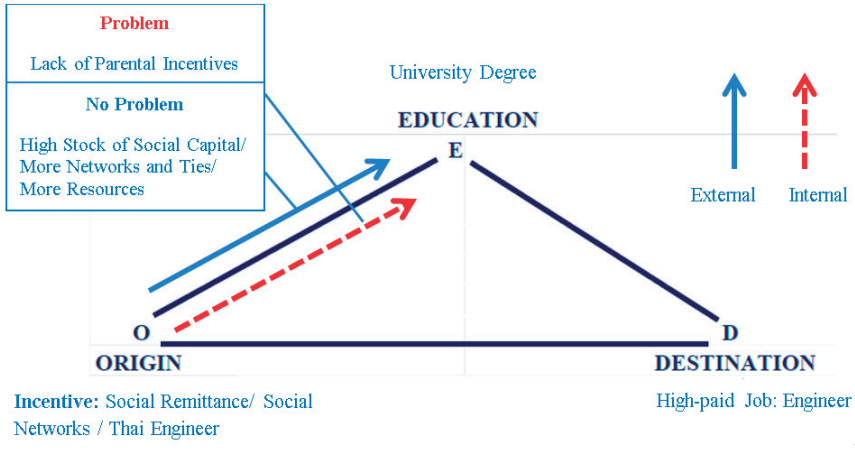


Figure 5.10: OED Triangle depicting upward social mobility of a migrant's child
Source: Adapted from Goldthorpe (2013, p.5)

Role of Intermarriage in Social Mobility

Even though Kandal villagers did not allow their children to marry Poy Samrong villagers due to negative view on migrants in earlier times, the findings in Chapter 4 indicated that marriage norms now have changed due to the impact of remittances. This phenomenon triggers a reconsideration of the social mobility rate through intermarriage between migrants and non-migrants. Clark (2014) argues that people from low social backgrounds can enhance their social mobility through intermarriage because of the exchange of resources such as wealth and social networks. These exchanged resources potentially generate economic growth for the couple, especially for the spouse from the poorer background who can improve his or her socioeconomic status through various mechanisms like job status (McGee & Warms, 2000). This section will therefore elaborate further on the process through which migrant households who marry with non-migrant households exchange the necessary resources in order to enhance their socioeconomic status. These resources are related to opportunities for migrants to have a non-migrant job, or for non-migrants to become migrants in Thailand after marriage.

Single men often go work in Thailand to save enough money for their future marriage dowry. The dowry allows them to marry a non-migrant spouse from a higher economic status. For instance, Ravy's family in Poy Samrong counts six children. Before migration, the family earned their living from subsistence farming and fishing. When their children grew up, their income could not meet their basic expenses, let alone the marriage dowry for their adult sons. For this reason, their children migrated to Thailand. The eldest son had sent money to his parents to save for his future marriage dowry of 150,000 THB ($5,000), which eventuated in his marriage to a woman in Chob Veari, a nearby town with greater economic establishments. This amount is high compared to local standards, but for the groom's parents it is reasonable because of the resources that will be provided by the bride's family after marriage. These resources, such as money, land and a potential job, serve as crucial capital for the new couple to establish their own life and build a successful career. The eldest son has now moved back to Cambodia and is earning a good living as a pork seller in Chob Veari market. His mother recounts the story of his family:

> I have many sons. If everything had depended on me alone, I would have not been able to let all of them marry [because] the dowry rate is high now, about 100,000 THB ($3,333) averagely. My son married to his wife who was a pork seller [in Chob Veari] and had to pay 150,000 THB ($5,000). Anyways, his parents-in-law are richer than us, so we are not worried about allocating [more wealth] to help[22] them settle after marriage. Today, they are better off and economically stable.

Furthermore, some migrants are high-income earners because they can sell vegetables in Thai fresh food markets, especially migrants from Poy Samrong. These high-income migrant households are attractive to non-migrants in the village. Non-migrant men reason that if they marry migrant women, they could become a high-income migrant too. For instance, Sothea from Poy Samrong whose story was explained before, was not allowed to marry a Kandal

22 It is common marriage practice in Cambodia that the families of the groom and bride are responsible for providing the new couple with the necessary resources to settle down after marriage. Normally, if the bride's family demands a high dowry, it means they will provide a lot of resources to the couple after they are married. The groom's family believes that the dowry, no matter the cost, will increase their son's economic opportunities.

man because his parents did not like her poor background. Since her family became rich due to the remittances from her daughters, several families from Kandal came to propose marriage to her daughter who sells vegetables in Thailand. During the proposal negotiations it became clear that the groom's parents wanted their sons to work with her daughter in the Thai markets so they could earn a higher income after marriage.

Hence, intermarriages have been reshaped by remittances. These remittances are the key to change the social mobility rate. On the one hand, they enable migrant men to accumulate enough money for their marriage dowry so they have a greater chance to marry a non-migrant spouse who is already in a stable financial position and has networks in the village. Therefore, these men no longer have to migrate to Thailand after marriage as they can earn their living through a non-migrant business, which provides greater economic outcomes. Secondly, remittance-induced prosperity contributed by migrant women draws attention from non-migrants in the community. These non-migrant men, who have a smaller income, are interested to marry the migrant women in an attempt to increase their economic outcomes. On the other hand, Poy Samrong women get a higher social status as they are now also attractive to Kandal men who used to look down on them because they were poor.

Chapter 6

Theoretical and Policy Implications

Introduction

This study has addressed the relationship between transnational linkages, remittance flows and social mobility in two migrant-sending villages in Cambodia. The migrants' and non-migrants' transnational living patterns, how they condition the flow of economic and non-economic remittances, and the eventual impact on their social mobility were thereby examined. In this concluding chapter, the theoretical and policy-making implications of the key findings will be discussed.

Theoretical Implications

Transnational migration, remittances and social mobility were the key concepts in this study; however, several theoretical limitations and gaps with regard to these three concepts have been identified.

Transnationalism from the sending community's perspective

The conceptualization of transnationalism came after scholars had mainly focused on the assimilation problems of migrants in advanced continents like Northern America and Europe (see Catron, 2016; Fox & Guglielmo, 2012; Negroni, 2011; Menjívar, 2006; Platt, 2005; Kloosterman, Van Der Leun & Rath, 2001; Wilpert, 1998). Looking at migration within an assimilation framework

is not enough because migration also has a lot to do with interconnectedness between migrants and non-migrants (Basch et. al, 1994; Glick Schiller et al., 1992). This framework of interconnectedness has influenced later studies that focus on how migrants forge transnational relations to channel the flow of capital. However, the migration process is a rational choice made not only by the migrants, but also a wide range of non-migrants in the sending communities (i.e. migrants' kinship and non-kinship). In that context, the non-migrants reserve the right to profit from the benefits from migration in return for their facilitation and support of the migration (Stark and Bloom, 1985). This study argues that the amount of benefits non-migrants gain is determined by the extent to which the non-migrants keep up with migrants in Thailand. In so doing, the existing knowledge gap on transnational relations from the perspective of non-migrants has been addressed. The contribution of this research to the transnationalism theory thus lies in the disclosure that not only migrants in their place of settlement, but also non-migrants living in the sending communities play a key role in co-producing multi-stranded relations with migrants in Thailand.

In this way, it would make sense to rethink the role of the central government in trying to benefit from the remittances for domestic development by reaching out to the migrants as highlighted by several studies in India, Armenia and the Philippines (Alcid, 2003; Lall, 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Panossian, 2003). However, this research lends support to the idea that the influence of the state does not explain the whole story of remittance flows and development. In fact, the migrant kinship and non-kinship at the community level play a more important role in reaching out to the migrants' capital. They use different methods to forge and sustain relations with migrants in Thailand which indicates the many different possibilities to receive remittances. It is therefore worthwhile to further consider what remittances mean from the perspective of the migrant-sending communities.

Complexity of the remittances: to whom and how does it flows?

Remittances can be transmitted in material form (money) and non-material form (ideas, norms, lifestyle, skills and social networks). Besides identifying what is being remitted, it is also important to examine to whom and in what ways remittances flow. The empirical evidence discussed in Chapter 3 demonstrated that besides the migrants' families, several other social entities

receive remittances, including local businessmen and the local temple and village committees. They have their own mechanisms to divert the remittances to themselves based on certain socioeconomic and sociocultural practices.

For instance, some individuals run a construction and agricultural supplies business in Preah Netre Preah commune. They ease up on financing options for the migrants' parents by offering installment payment which encourages the migrant children to save and pay off the debt. Likewise, the local temple committee indirectly or directly conditions the migrants and their parents to contribute money to the temple in the name of merit-making and local development. For this reason, the aforesaid social entities accumulate a greater amount of remittances because the remittances from multiple households go to the same businessmen and committees (see Figure 6.1).

Hence, traditional migration scholarship can gain from paying more attention to a wider range of non-migrant entities who have social, cultural and economic relations with the migrants and their kinfolk. A better understanding of these non-migrant entities will help to identify the power relations and hidden structures behind the remittances' circulation and to find out who else should be engaged in migration-based development policies.

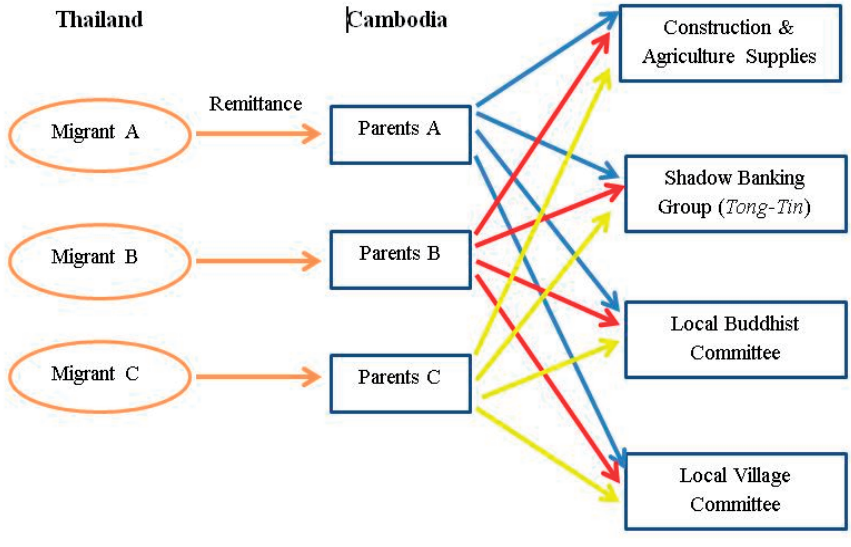


Figure 6.1: Multiplicity of remittances' receivers

Questions of growth

Usually, the word "rich" connotes advanced material prosperity like possessing money and houses which indicates someone's affluent status. Likewise, literature on the developmental impact of migration claims that migration enriches the poor because it provides them with stable and large amounts of remittances, thereby reducing poverty in each household in the countries of origin (Vathana & Tiberti, 2016; World Bank, 2016). However, the accumulation of material properties through monetary remittances is not a sufficient indicator of the real progress made by each household.

To support this view, a justification based upon the ambiguity of the term "household progress" will be used. As discussed in Chapter 5, most migrant households that have migrated for generations claim that they can earn enough money in Thailand to get rich by only attaining Grade 9 or 12 in school. They do not see the value of sending their children to university because some university graduates do not have a high-paid job like they have in Thailand. For them, the conception of progress is limited to their material improvements in the present time. Contrarily, some migrant and non-migrant households have a different conception of progress. They are keen on having their children pursuing a higher education, even if having a university degree would economically be less profitable than migration. Their rationale is that children with university degrees would have many opportunities to climb up on the occupational ladder – from one job to another. Similarly, some migrant households put strong value on having a university degree because to them it brings a sense of mobility that their children have managed to attain a higher status than they did. The parents finished only primary or barely secondary school, whereas their children could obtain a university degree.

Hence, if the progress of migrant or non-migrant households is just based on material property, it fails to provide a complete picture of the actual progress made. Since the flow of remittances and its receivers have become more complex and multidimensional, it makes sense to look at how those different receivers have been mobile on their socioeconomic ladder since remittances became an essential part of their income. Identifying who are the "winners" and "losers" in migration-induced development, and what they win and lose provides greater insights into the notion of social (in)equality in migration literature. Development scholars and agencies should therefore

expand their conceptualization of the developmental impact of migration through including the concept of social mobility which will enable understanding of the interwoven relationship of material and non-material aspects of progress.

Policy Implications

In 2014, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training of Cambodia (MLVT), in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO), have designed the *Labor Migration Policy for Cambodia 2015-2018* with the main objective to "Harness Labor Migration for Development" (MLVT, 2014). To achieve this objective, the MLVT has discerned three areas of implementation: (1) migration in the national development agenda, (2) migrants' remittances and investments, and (3) return and reintegration (see Appendix). As the policy aims to govern labor migration to enhance development, it was deemed relevant to this research. The following two sections will each address a set of limitations regarding the objective of harnessing labor migration for development. To end, some general key implications of social mobility in Cambodia will be addressed.

Transnationalism in policy

Policy 14 of the Labor Migration Policy stipulates that the first area of implementation is to integrate migration into the national development agenda: "Labor migration continues to be included within national development and sectorial plans to recognize and maximize the development potential of migration for Cambodia, and ensure coherent development planning" (see Appendix). The policy underestimates the migration component because it jumps right into the discourse of how to integrate migration into the development agenda. More important questions should be asked first – for instance, what are the characteristics of transnational relations between migrants, their family and the community? And, what are these relations made up of (see Rittel & Weber, 1973, p. 156-157)?

Through placing the focus on these questions, policymakers will have to consider the notion of transnationalism which will provide a clearer overview of the multi-stranded relations between migrants in Thailand and their community in Cambodia. Moreover, through the notions of ways of being and belonging, policymakers could also understand why some migrants choose

not to send money to their community. Based on the concept of transnationalism, a probable explanation could be that in their home village, there are no Buddhist and/or village committees initiating development projects like road constructing; or the migrants have no more faith in Buddhism anymore because the local monks are rumored to violate the Buddhist rules. From a socioeconomic logic, migrants perhaps do not send money home because there are no financial payment systems offered by local businessmen such as installment plans or informal banking groups.

The labor policy would therefore benefit from a re-conceptualization of the concept migration through situating it into a transnationalism analytical framework which provides a more realistic view of the relationship between migration and development. This can help to identify whether and to what extent the home base and migrants are connected; and to what extent the transnational connections serve as a channel to determine the flow of capital. Through this, the government of Cambodia, a major migrant-sending country, could gain further benefits from the migrants' remittances.

Reconsidering migrants' investments

Policies 15 and 16 focus on the migrants' remittances and investments, and migrants' return and repatriation. Policy 15, in particular, states that the government aims to "work with financial institutions in Cambodia and destination countries to enable access to safe, efficient and cheaper remittances' transfers and financial services for migrant workers. The impact of remittances on development [will be] enhanced through support services provided to migrants and their families, […] and dialogue and tools for diaspora engagement" (see Appendix).

If the aim is to encourage cheaper remittances' transfers through transparent and competitive financial institutions, the characteristics of informal remittance transfer networks should be understood. As highlighted before, those informal networks are already based on cheap and reliable channels operated by villagers from the same community, and are built on formal services provided by banks and other money transfer agencies.

Besides this, the policy aims to encourage diaspora engagement in village development through the "establishment of village funds and village savings groups" (see Appendix). As discussed before, the migrants' families and local

villagers already use various local tools to invest (e.g. buying land) and save capital (e.g. tontine system) which also allows the community to be resilient in case of crisis or emergency. Hence, policymakers should combine new formal channels with local people's existing practices, and should learn from local knowledge in order to develop an action plan for diaspora engagement in investment and development. Moreover, policymakers should acknowledge the multi-dimensional flows of remittances as depicted in Figure 6.1, because policy areas that aim to link migrants with domestic development should include a broad range of agents, beyond the migrants' kinship. Hence, a deeper understanding of the community-based characteristics of multiple receivers of the remittances is necessary.

Furthermore, policy 16 aims to strengthen the service provision in order to ensure productive "return and reintegration" through providing "employment services, skills development and recognition, enterprise development training, and investment programmes" (see Appendix). Even though this policy is good, it is still limited to the "return and reintegration" of migrants, suggesting that migrants can only contribute to Cambodia's development after they come back and re-renter into the Cambodian society. The reality is that migrants are already investing in their home community before they return. The notion of a transnational social field, as discussed in Chapter 1 and 3, suggests that the migrant society is broader than return and repatriated migrants. It is a flexible and transnational society whereby migrants communicate back and forth with each other, and transfer capital to their home base. For instance, migrants in Thailand invest in their home community by purchasing land, and putting money into village savings groups through the assistance of their families. Based on this point of view, Cambodian policymakers are advised to create a modern investment and development platform that allows for transnational investments instead of waiting for the migrants to return or be repatriated.

Social mobility and development: fulfill the unfulfilled

Chapter 2 has revealed that the reasons Cambodian people migrate or send their children to Thailand are because of their disadvantageous situation and losses borne in material properties, like a decrease in income and loss of land. Over time, migration has increased their income and has brought about certain material reliefs, like modern houses and luxuries. However, as pointed

out earlier, the understanding that economic remittances are the final answer to poverty alleviation is problematic.

Firstly, being rich and being socially mobile are slightly different. The situation where migrant families become rich through receiving large remittances, but still face problems to improve their (grand)children's education clearly indicates a bottleneck. The OED Triangle discussed in Chapter 5 identified that even though migrants have a lot of internal incentives (money) to invest in their children's education, they have limited external incentives (information about good schools and jobs, or advisory assistance for migrants' children in the absence of their parents). It is therefore suggested that policy makers should consider how to increase the possibilities of migrants and their families to be socially mobile and not just to be rich, because social mobility encompasses various elements of progress, including material and non-material aspects.

Secondly, more attention should be paid to the implicit problems brought about by economic remittances. They are related to certain practices or beliefs that shape people's behaviors and result in reduced access to resources. For instance, not every migrant household receives the same amount of remittances. Some households cannot upgrade to modern houses or buy luxuries due to the low amount of received remittances. Those people then tend to avoid interaction with richer groups because of a self-perception of shame due to their poor material profile, which makes them more isolated and further restricts their access to other benefits, such as loans or information about good jobs. Similarly, it has been demonstrated that remittances-induced material improvements of religious buildings in one place, have caused people in lesser fortunate places to be unable to participate in social events like Sila Day, during which aging and needy people can get financial help from the local temple committee and other community members. It is therefore important for policy designers to consider how to increase the social capital stock of the poor and elderly in order to improve their situation, such as establishing formal social institutions to provide the help these people need.

Finally, based on the paradoxical social mobility of migrant-sending households where they are simultaneous going up and down on different socioeconomic ladders, three general recommendations are suggested for other areas of development to guarantee real equality is achieved. They are in accordance with the arguments of social justice, economic efficiency and social

stability (see Heath & Ridge, 1983). First, since Cambodia has a liberal democratic system, the government should take human rights into account. People, regardless of their social stratifications, deserve equal rights to get equal opportunities in all areas of life. Secondly, Cambodia's post-war economy could progress faster and better by also taking into account people in the margins of society, as they could help push the economy forward together with people who possess well-equipped capacities. Thirdly, it is suggested not to ignore the "losers" in this modern capitalist system that is in favor of the "winners". According to the perspective of national stability, social resentment and conflicts could happen as a consequence of the ruling government's indifference to inequality problems. In the context of Cambodia, this argument has been proven by the history of the Khmer Rouge, a farmer-class revolution which was a by-product of a too-wide gap between the "winners" and the "losers".

Limitations and Further Research

To conclude, this final section will briefly touch upon the limitations of this research in terms of time, scope and analytical framework, and will make some suggestions for further research.

In order to examine how social remittances are transmitted to the sending households and community, three transmitting mechanisms were used (contact, visit and return). Even though there was no problem to get data from return migrants, the research faced challenges to get broader information about social remittances received through the contact and visit mechanisms due to time limitations. During my three-months fieldwork, I was only able to observe migrants' visits during the occasion of Khmer New Year. Further research should be done over a longer timeframe, thereby covering more occasions when migrants visit their home in order to enrich the findings on social remittances' circulation.

Furthermore, this research required to delve into very personal information like income and housing expenses. Even though the received information is sufficient to ensure a holistic income profile, a more wide-ranging quantitative method to get more detailed data about the household income profiles would allow for a better understanding of the social mobility trajectories of the households. This could also be useful for researchers from other

disciplines, like economics, in order to develop a Social Capital Index and Social Mobility Index in Cambodia.

This research also examined how social remittances are transmitted from Thailand to Cambodia. Migrants and their families internalize images of development and material progress in Thailand (e.g. modern infrastructure and good governance of Thai authorities) through working in or visiting the country. These images of Thai-modeled development then serve as a catalyst to reflect on existing conditions at home – for example, about migrant governance and moral codes of conduct. Hence, future research could further explore these impacts of social remittances in order to go beyond the tangible impacts of economic remittances.

Finally, all findings about the challenges to go upward on the socioeconomic ladder should not be exclusively applied to the context of migrant-sending communities, but should be extended to other groups of people. This could help to identify whether a development policy will really increase the mobility and bring beneficial outcomes on the long-term. Moreover, in addition to the five dimensions of social mobility[23] addressed in this study, there are still other dimensions that need further investigation. It is therefore hoped that future research will seek to address those other dimensions and conceptualize social mobility within a correlational framework rather than a causality framework.

23 The five elements include (1) income differentials, (2) urbanization, (3) social relations, (4) education outcomes, and (5) intermarriage.

Bibliography

Acharya, S. (2003). *Migration patterns in Cambodia: Causes and consequences*. Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Migration and Development, Bangkok, Thailand Aug 27-29.

Adler, R.B., Rosenfeld, L.B., & Proctor II, R.F. (2018). *Interplay. The Process of Interpersonal Communication.* Retrieved from the Oxford University Press website http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199827428/student/chapt3/outline/

Alcid, M.L.L. (2003). Overseas Filipino workers: Sacrificial lambs at the altar of deregulation. In E. Østergaard-Nielsen (Ed.), *International migration and sending countries: Perceptions, policies, and transnational relations* (pp. 99-118). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Alexandru, M. (2012). Stories of upward social mobility and migration in one Romanian commune. On the emergence of "rurban" spaces in migrant-sending communities. *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, 3(2), 141-160.

Amporn, J. (2008). "Pirated" transnational broadcasting: The consumption of Thai soap operas among Shan communities in Burma. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia,* 23, 30–62.

Amporn, J. (2017). Forever transnational: The ambivalence of return and cross-border activities of the Shan across the Thailand-Myanmar border. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 23(1), 75-89.

Armstrong, E.A., & Hamilton, L.A. (2013). *Paying for the party: How college maintains inequality*. Cambridge, England: Harvard University Press.

Asian Development Bank. (2006). *Workers' remittance flows in Southeast Asia.* Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.

Asian Development Bank. (2016). Here comes Cambodia: Asia's new tiger economy. Retrieved from https://www.adb.org/news/features/here-comes-cambodia-asia-s-new-tiger-economy

Association of South East Asian Nations. (2015). *ASEAN economic community blueprint 2025.* Jakarta, Indonesia: ASEAN.

Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (2007). *Ethnography principles in practices*. London: Routledge.

Barthes, R. (1957). *Mythologies.* New York, NY: The Noonday Press.

Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton-Blanc, C. (1994). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states.* Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach.

Beck, U. (2000). The cosmopolitan perspective: Sociology of the second age of modernity. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(1), 79-105.

Becker, G.S. & Tomes, N. (1994). Human capital and the rise and fall of families. In G.S. Becker (Eds.), *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3rd ed., pp. 257 - 298). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Belanger, D. (2016). Marriage migration, single men, and social reproduction in migrants' communities of origin in Vietnam. *Critical Asian Studies*, 48(4), 494–510.

Belanger, D., & Tran, G. L. (2011). The impact of transnational migration on gender and marriage in sending communities of Vietnam. *Current Sociology*, 59(1), 59-77.

Burr, A. (1978). Merit-making and ritual reciprocity. Tambiah's theory examined. *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 102-108.

Bylander, M. (2013). Depending on the sky: Environmental distress, migration, and coping in rural Cambodia. *International Migration*, 53(5), 135-147.

Catron, P. (2016) Made in America? Immigrant occupational mobility in the first half of the twentieth century. *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(2), 325-378.

CBRE Cambodia (2012). Understanding land ownership in Cambodia. *The Phnom Penh Post*. Retrieved from https://www.phnompenhpost.com/real-estate/understanding-land-ownership-cambodia

Chan, S., & Sovannarith, S. (1999). *Cambodian labour migration to Thailand: A preliminary assessment* (Working Paper 11). Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Cambodia Development Resource Institute.

Chaney, E.M. (1979). Foreword: The world economy and contemporary. *The International Migration Review***,** 13(2), 204-212.

Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E. (2014) Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobilities in the United States. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics,* 129(4), 1553-1623.

Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E. (2015). Economic Mobility. In D. Grusky. C. Varner & M. Mattingly (Eds.), *The Poverty and Inequalities Report 2015* (pp. 55-61). California, CA: Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Chigas, G. (2005). *Tum Teav: A Translation and Analysis of a Cambodian Literary Classic*. Phnom Penh: DC-CAM.

Clark, G. (2014). *The son also rises: Surnames and the history of social mobility.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Coser, L. A. (1971). *Masters of sociological thought: Ideas in historical and social context*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Dauvergne, C. (2016). *The new politics of immigration and the end of settler societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., & Faber, M. (2016). The use of online media in migration networks. *Populations, Space and Place,* 22, 539-551.

Eversole, R., & Johnson, M. (2014). Migration remittances and household development: An anthropological analysis. *Development Studies Research,* 1, 1-15.

Filippi, J.-M. (2010). Cambodia: The swing of the pendulum. *Phnom Penh Post*. Retrieved from https://www.phnompenhpost.com/post-plus/cambodia-swing-pendulum

Fortunati, L., & Taipale, S. (2017). A different glimpse into mobilities: On the interrelations between daily spatial mobility and social mobility. *The Information Society*, 33(5), 261-270.

Fox, C., & Guglielmo, T.A. (2012). Defining America's racial boundaries: Blacks, Mexicans, and European immigrants. *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(2), 327-379.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A new analytical framework for understanding migration. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 645, 1-24.

Glick Schiller, N., & Fouron, G. E. (1999). Terrains of blood and nation: Haitian transnational social fields. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 22(2), 340-366.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2013). *The role of education in intergenerational social mobility: Problems from empirical research in sociology and some theoretical pointers from economics* (Working Paper 13-02). Retrieved from University of Oxford, Department of Social Policy and Intervention https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/PDF/Barnett_Paper_13-02.pdf

Google. (n.d.). [Google Maps about Kandal and Poy Samrong village, Cambodia]. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/maps/place/Cambodia/@13.5936853,103.1759293,16z/

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement. *American Sociological Review*, 2, 161-178.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. (2005). The impact of social structure on economic outcomes. *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 19(1), 33-50.

Greenstone, M., Looney, A., Patashnik, J., & Yu, M. (2013). *Thirteen economic facts about social mobility and the role of education*. The Hamilton project.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Heath, A., & Ridge, J. (1983). Social mobility of ethnic minorities. *Biosocial Aspects of Ethnic Minorities, 15*(8), 169-184.

Henn, M. H., Weinstein, M., & Foard, N. (2006). *A short introduction to social research*. London, England: Sage Publications.

Hing, V., Pide, L., & Dalis, P. (2011). Irregular migration from Cambodia: Characteristics, challenges, and regulatory approach. *Philippine Journal of Development, 38*(70), 2-58.

Hughes, C. (2011). Soldiers, monks, borders: Violence and contestation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 41*(2), 181-205.

International Monetary Fund. (2009). Balance of payments and international investment position manual (6th Edition). Washington, WA: International Monetary Fund.

Johnson, E. (2014). Corruption and Cambodia's governance system national integrity: The need for reform. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Transparency International Cambodia

Kaonn, V. (2012). សុបិននិងការពិត (ភាគ១) [Dream and Realities (Part 1)]. Paris, France: Association Cambodge-Asie France.

Keyes, C. F. (1983). Merit-transference in the karmic theory of popular Theravada Buddhism. In C.F. Keyes (Ed.), Karma: An anthropological inquiry (pp. 261-286). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Khamboly, D. (2007). A history of democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979). Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Khamboly, D., & Dearing, C. (2014). *A history of the Anlong Veng community: The final stronghold of the Khmer Rouge movement.* Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Kloosterman, R., Van der Leun, J., & Rath, J. (2001). Across the border: Immigrants' economic opportunities, social capital, and informal business activities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24(2), 249-268.

Komito, L. (2011). Social media and migration: Virtual community 2.0. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(6), 1075-1086.

Kusakabe, K., & Oo Zin Mar. (2007). Relational places of ethnic Burma women migrants in the borderland town of Tachilek, Myanmar. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography,* 28(3), 300-313.

Lall, M. (2003). Mother India's forgotten children. In E. Østergaard-Nielsen (Ed.), *International migration and sending countries: Perceptions, policies, and transnational relations* (pp. 121-139). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lawreniuk, S., & Parsons, L. (2017). Mother, grandmother, migrant: Elder translocality and the renegotiation of household roles in Cambodia. *Environment and Planning A,* 49(7), 1664-1683.

Lee, E. H. (2005). *Poverty, livelihoods, social capital, and migration: A case study of two villages in Northwest Cambodia* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Sussex, England.

Levitt, P. (1998). Social remittances: Migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. *The International Migration Review*, 32(4), 926-948.

Levitt, P. (2001). *The transnational villagers.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Levitt, P., & Glick Schiller, N. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1002–1039.

Levitt, P., & Lamba-Nieves, D. (2011). Social remittances revisited. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(1), 1-22.

Liev, M. H. (2008). *Adaptation of Cambodians in New Zealand: Achievement, cultural identity and community development* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Auckland.

McGee, J. R., &. Warms, R. L. (2000). Structuralism. In J. R. McGee (Ed.), *Anthropological theory: An introductory history (2nd Edition)* (pp. 330-347). London: Mayfield.

McKeever, K. (2009). A short history of Tontines. *Fordham Corporate and Financial Law Review*, 15, 491-521.

Mahidol University. (n.d.). *Sila – Moral Conduct*. Retrieved from https://www.mahidol.ac.th/budsir/sila-moral.htm

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*. 19(3), 431-466.

Marx, M. & Chhim, V.V. (2015*). Community-based finance in Cambodia: A comparative study of savings and credit models for community development*. Phnom Penh: FOA

Mauss, M. (1950). *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies* (I. Cunnision, Trans.). London: Cohen & West.

Mekong Migration Network. (2014). The precarious status of migrants in Thailand: Reflections on the exodus of Cambodian migrants and lesson learnt. Retrieved from http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/FINAL-REPORT-The-precarious-status-of-migrants-in-Thailand.pdf

Menjívar, C. (2006). Liminal legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants' lives in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology,* 111(4), 999-1037.

Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT]) (2014). *Policy on labour migration for Cambodia 2015-2018.* Retrieved from the UN-ACT website http://unact.org/publication/view/policy-on-labour-migration-for-cambodia/

Mintier, T., Raedler, J., & Reuters. (1997, July 10). Hun Sen claims no coup in Cambodia. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9707/10/cambodia/

National Institute of Statistics. (2010). *Labour and social trends in Cambodia 2010.* Retrieved from the ILO website http://www.oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---robangkok/documents/publication/wcms_158511.pdf

National Institute of Statistics. (2013). *Economic census of Cambodia 2011* (Provincial Report, 17 Siem Reap Province). Retrieved from the Statistics Bureau of Japan website http://www.stat.go.jp/info/meetings/cambodia/pdf/ec_pr17.pdf

Negroni, L. K. (2011). Remaking citizenship: Latina immigrants and new American politics (Book Review). *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 38(3), 181-184.

Nevins, J., & Peluso, N. L. (2008). Introduction: Commoditization in Southeast Asia. In J. Nevins (Ed.), *Taking Southeast Asia to market: Commodities, nature, and people in the neoliberal age* (pp. 1-24). London, England: Cornell University Press.

OECD/CDRI (2017). *Interrelations between public policies, migration and development in Cambodia.* Paris, France: OECD publishing.

Østergaard-Nielsen, E. (2003). *International migration and sending countries: Perceptions, policies, and transnational relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Panossian, R. (2003). Courting a diaspora: Armenia-diaspora relations since 1998. In E. Østergaard-Nielsen (Ed.), *International migration and sending countries: Perceptions, policies, and transnational relations* (pp. 121-139). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Parsons, L., Lawreniuk, S., & Pilgrim, J. (2014). Wheels within wheels: Poverty, power and patronage in the Cambodian migration system. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 50(10), 1362-1379.

Platt, L. (2005). New destinations? Assessing the post-migration social mobility of minority ethnic groups in England and Wales. *Social Policy & Administration*, 39(6), 697-721.

Punch, K. F. (2014). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches (3rd Edition).* London, England: Sage Publications.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), 65–78.

Rabibhadana, N., & Hayami, Y. (2013). Seeking heaven and seeking jobs: Migrant workers' networks in two Thai Locales. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 2(2), 243-283.

Rittel, H. W. J., & Webber, M. W. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences,* 4(2), 155-169.

Sassen, S. (1991). The informal economy. In J. H. Mollenkopf. & M. Castells (Eds.), *Dual city* (pp. 79-101). New York, NY: Russell Sage.

Sassen, S. (2000a). Territory and territoriality in the global economy. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 372-393.

Sassen, S. (2000b). Informalization: Imported through immigration or a feature of advanced economy? *Working USA,* 3(6), 6-26.

Sciortino, R., & Punpuning, S. (2009). *International migration in Thailand 2009.* Bangkok, Thailand: International Organization for Migration.

Scott, J. C. (1972). Patron-client politics and political change in Southeast Asia. *The American Political Science Review*, 66 (1), 91-113.

Stark, O., & Bloom, D. E. (1985). The new economics of labour migration. *The American Economic Review, 75*(2), 173-179.

Sumalee, C. (2015). Life and community of Cambodian migrant workers in Thai Society. *Journal of Population and Social Studies*, 23(1), 1-16.

Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and habitus: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tambiah, S. J. (1968). The ideology of merit and the social correlates of Buddhism in a Thai village. In E. R. Leach (Ed.). *Dialectic in practical religion* (pp. 41-121). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Üllenberg, A. (2009). *Foreign direct investment (FDI) in land in Cambodia*. Eschborn: GTZ.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2000). Flight from Indochina. In UNHCR (ed.) *The state of the world's refugees 2000: Fifty years of humanitarian action* (pp. 79-104). New York: Oxford University Press.

Vathana, R., & Tiberti, L. (2016). Economic effects of migration on the left-behind in Cambodia. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 53(11), 1787-1805.

Verver, M. (2010, November 26). Amazing story of survival, success. *The Phnom Penh Post*. Retrieved from https://www.phnompenhpost.com/post-plus/amazing-story-survival-success

Vianello, F. A. (2013). Ukrainian migrant women's social remittances: Contents and effects on families left behind. *Migration Letters*, 10(1), 91-100.

Walsh, J. C., & Ty, M. (2011). Cambodian migrants in Thailand: Working conditions and issues. *Asian Journal of Social Science,* 7(1), 23-30.

Weekley, K. (2006). From wage labourers to investors? Filipina migrant domestic workers and popular capitalism. In K. Hewison & K. Young (eds.) *Transnational Migration and Work in Asia* (pp. 193-212). New York: Routledge.

Wilpert, C. (1998). Migration and informal work in the new Berlin: New forms of work or new sources of labour?. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24(2), 269-294.

Woon, W. C. M. (2016). *The ASEAN charter: A commentary.* Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

World Bank. (n.d.). *GDP growth (annual %) - Cambodia*. Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=KH

World Bank. (2016). *Migration and remittances factbook 2016 (3rd edition)*. Washington, WA: The World Bank.

Appendix

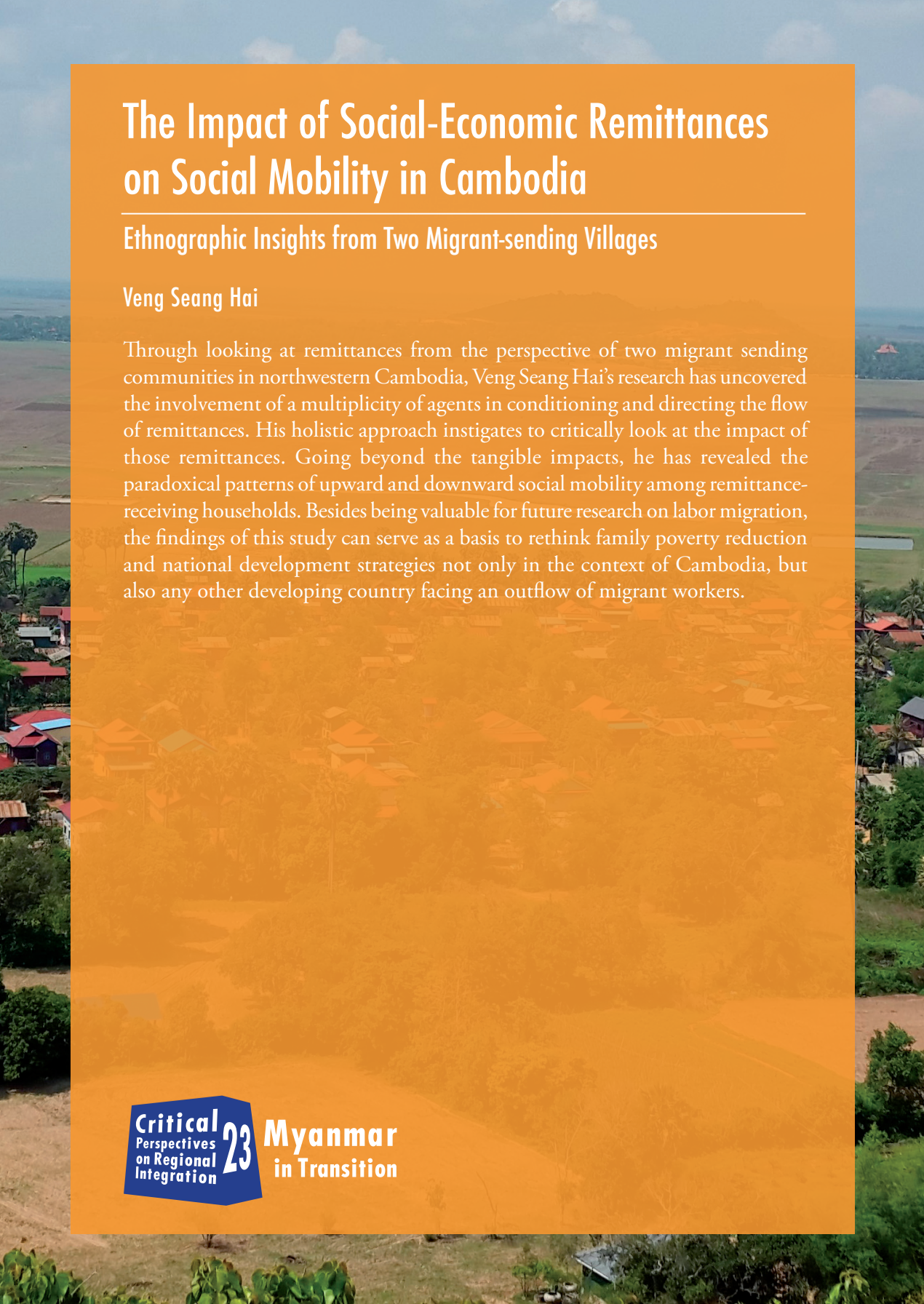
Implementation areas	Policy goals	
Harnessing labour migration for social and economic development		
Migration in the National Development Agenda	14. Labour migration continues to be included within national development and sectorial plans to recognize and maximise the development potential of migration for Cambodia, and ensure coherent development planning.	
Migrants' remittances and investments	15. The Government works with financial institutions in Cambodia and destination countries to enable access to safe, efficient and cheaper remittance and financial services for migrant workers. The impact of remittances on development is enhanced through support services provided to migrants and their families, including gender-sensitive financial literacy training, a broader range of financial services and products, and dialogue and tools for diaspora engagement.	

	Action points
	14.1 Streamline labour migration into Cambodian national policies […] and national budget. 14.2 The Sub-Committee on Labour Migration will facilitate an inter- ministerial scoping exercise to streamline labour migration into sectorial development policies [...]. 14.3 Integrate labour migration issues […].
	15.1 Monitor PRAs assistance to migrant workers in establishing bank accounts, accessing financial services in destination countries […]. 15.2 ensuring that workers receive their wages and other payments as stated in their employment contract, and arranging a savings and transfer system […]. 15.2 Encourage financial institutions to facilitate safe and low-cost remittance transfer from destination countries […]. 15.3 Negotiate with labour-receiving countries to facilitate migrant worker access to financial services, and encourage employers to deposit salaries into bank accounts, instead of paying cash […]. 15.4 Monitor and enforce the remittance sending information and financial literacy section of the standardised pre- departure training curriculum. 15.5 Assist in linking migrant worker families and financial institutions to obtain loans with low interest rates that cater to the needs of migrant workers. 15.6 Provide financial literacy training and counselling services to migrant workers and their families on productive uses of remittances. 15.7 Promote the establishment of village development funds or village savings groups. 15.8 Support entrepreneur training for migrant workers and their family members. 15.9 Study international commitments and practices on remittances […] to enhance the knowledge base on remittance services and costs in migration key corridors. 15.10 Identify diaspora groups in destination countries and returned migrant communities and promote the effective use of returned migrants' resources (skills and finances) […].

Implementation areas	Policy goals	
Return and reintegration	16. Productive return and reintegration of women and men migrant workers is enabled through evidence- based policy, and strengthened service provision for social and economic reintegration, including employment services, skills development and recognition, enterprise development training, and investment programmes.	

	Action points
	16.1 […] ensure that PRAs assist in preparing all necessary arrangements so that workers can successfully repatriate […]. Ensure that PRAs arrange a MOLVT certificate of recognition for work completed and improvement in skills once returned to Cambodia.
	16.2 Negotiate with destination countries to provide gender-sensitive exit medical check-ups for returned migrant workers to ensure that they are physically and psychologically able to reintegrate to their home community.
	16.3 Link returned migrant workers to National Employment Agencies' for gender-sensitive counseling, skill matching and job placement.
	16.11 Facilitate increased communication between families and workers abroad, either through more visits home during the working period or facilitating contact in Migrant Worker Resource Centres.

Index



The Impact of Social-Economic Remittances on Social Mobility in Cambodia

Ethnographic Insights from Two Migrant-sending Villages

Veng Seang Hai

Through looking at remittances from the perspective of two migrant sending communities in northwestern Cambodia, Veng Seang Hai's research has uncovered the involvement of a multiplicity of agents in conditioning and directing the flow of remittances. His holistic approach instigates to critically look at the impact of those remittances. Going beyond the tangible impacts, he has revealed the paradoxical patterns of upward and downward social mobility among remittance-receiving households. Besides being valuable for future research on labor migration, the findings of this study can serve as a basis to rethink family poverty reduction and national development strategies not only in the context of Cambodia, but also any other developing country facing an outflow of migrant workers.

Critical Perspectives on Regional Integration 23
Myanmar in Transition