

# Remittance and Migrant Workers in Thailand: A Case Study of Parents in Sangke District of Battambang Province, Cambodia

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## សង្ខេប

ការធ្វើចំណាកស្រុកដើម្បីស្វែងរកការងារធ្វើគឺជាបាតុភូតពិភពលោក ដែលបានក្លាយជាគ្នាសំខាន់ក្នុងការផ្តល់ប្រាក់បញ្ញើសម្រាប់ប្រជាជនកម្ពុជា។ អត្ថបទនេះស្វែងយល់អំពីការយល់ឃើញរបស់មាតាបិតាដែលមានកូនធ្វើចំណាកស្រុកដើម្បីស្វែងរកការងារធ្វើនៅក្នុងប្រទេសថៃ។ ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះក៏ពិនិត្យផងដែរថា តើការធ្វើប្រាក់ជូនមាតាបិតានៅឯស្រុកបានរួមចំណែកក្នុងការកែលម្អសេដ្ឋកិច្ចសង្គមដូចម្តេចខ្លះ ដោយផ្ដោតការយកចិត្តទុកដាក់ជាពិសេសលើ៖ (1) ហេតុផលនៃការធ្វើចំណាកស្រុកទៅប្រទេសថៃ, (2) វិស័យការងារដែលពលករចំណាកស្រុកបានទៅបំពេញ, និង (3) ការធ្វើប្រាក់ពីប្រទេសថៃនិងការប្រើប្រាស់ប្រាក់បញ្ញើនៅកម្ពុជា។ ការសិក្សាបង្ហាញថា ការផ្ទេរប្រាក់ដែលបានមកពីការធ្វើចំណាកស្រុកទៅប្រទេសថៃមានសារៈសំខាន់ណាស់សម្រាប់ស្ថានភាពរស់នៅរបស់មាតាបិតានៅឯប្រទេសកម្ពុជា។ ពលករ ភាគច្រើន ធ្វើចំណាកស្រុកទៅប្រទេសថៃដោយសារ៖ (1) ខ្វះខាតការងារក្នុងស្រុក (93.5%), (2) ស្វែងរកប្រាក់ចំណូលខ្ពស់បានសមរម្យ (85.5%), និង (3) ជីវភាពក្រីក្រក្នុងគ្រួសារ (62.3%)។ នៅប្រទេសថៃ ពលករចំណាកស្រុកមានការងារធ្វើក្នុងវិស័យសំណង់ (30.5%), អាហារ/ភេសជ្ជៈ (30.7%), សេវាកម្ម (18.0%), និង ឧស្សាហកម្ម (13.8%)។ ពួកគេត្រូវបានជួលឱ្យបម្រើការដែលមិនប្រើជំនាញ ដែលធ្វើឱ្យពួកគេងាយរងការកេងប្រវ័ញ្ច និងការជួញដូរ។ ប៉ុន្តែទោះជាយ៉ាងណាក៏ដោយ ការធ្វើប្រាក់មកស្រុកតិចបំផុតគឺត្រឹម 95.47 ដុល្លារអាមេរិកក្នុងមួយខែ។ ប្រាក់បញ្ញើបានជួយសម្រាលយ៉ាងសម្បើមដល់ជីវភាពរស់នៅរបស់អាណាព្យាបាលរបស់ពួកគេនៅឯស្រុក។ ការសិក្សានេះបានបង្ហាញជាពិសេសអំពីទំនាក់ទំនងជិតស្និទ្ធជាមួយការផ្ទេរប្រាក់និងក្រុមគ្រួសារដែលមានប័ណ្ណក្រីក្រ។ ប្រការនេះមានន័យច្បាស់ណាស់ថា គ្រួសារដែលមានប័ណ្ណក្រីក្រពឹងផ្អែកយ៉ាងខ្លាំងទៅលើប្រាក់បញ្ញើ។ មាតាបិតារបស់ពលករ

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ចំណាកស្រុកទាំងនោះបានប្រើប្រាស់ប្រាក់ដែលទទួលបានសម្រាប់ម្ហូបអាហារ (35.98 ដុល្លារ អាមេរិក), ការអប់រំកុមារ (22.05 ដុល្លារអាមេរិក), និងការថែទាំសុខភាព (8.45 ដុល្លារអាមេរិក)។ អត្ថបទនេះក៏បានជួយបំពេញផងដែរនូវចន្លោះខ្វះខាតនៃអត្ថបទស្រាវជ្រាវនានា ដែលទាក់ទងនឹងការធ្វើចំណាកស្រុកដើម្បីលក់ពលកម្ម និងការផ្ញើប្រាក់មកស្រុករបស់ពលករចំណាកស្រុកកម្ពុជា។

**A B S T R A C T**

Labour migration is a world phenomenon, and it has also become vital to Cambodian people in terms of remittances. This article examines the perception of parents whose children have migrated to Thailand. The paper examines the contribution of remittances on parents' socio-economic improvement, with special attention to (a) reasons for migration to Thailand, (b) sectors of employment of migrant workers, and (c) remittances from Thailand and their usage in Cambodia. The study reveals that remittances from labour migration to Thailand are significant for living conditions of parents in Cambodia. The majority of workers migrated to Thailand due to lack of local job opportunities (93.5%), followed by those migrating in search of a decent income or salary (85.5%). There were also other reasons for migration, including household poverty (62.3%). In Thailand, migrant workers are employed in construction (35.5%), food/beverages (30.7%), services (18.0%), and industry (13.8%). They are hired in non-skilled positions, which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. The monthly average remittance was as small as 95.47 US dollars, and it is mostly used to contribute to parents' living condition. In particular, there is a close relationship between remittances and holding an ID Poor status. It is clear parents with ID Poor status are highly dependent upon remittances. Parents of migrant workers used remittances for food consumption (35.98 US dollars), children's education (22.05 US dollars), and healthcare (8.45 US dollars). This paper contributes to filling gaps in the literature regarding labor migration, remittances, and the impact on the parents of migrant workers in Cambodia.

**1. Introduction**

Migration has become an important aspect of labour movement in Asia. Developed countries, including South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, are attracting low-skilled migrant workers from other Asian countries to respond to local labour shortages (Rathod et al., 2021). Local workers in developed countries generally wish to work in decent service industry conditions (Hein, 2004) for higher pay (Narayanan & Lai, 2005). In contrast, migrant workers from developing countries accept all types of jobs and conditions, including dirty, dangerous, and difficult (or 3D jobs) (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal 2012; Lee, 2018), and they receive low-paid jobs (Borjas, 2006). Since the late 1980s, Thailand has become the most popular destination for labour migration in the Mekong region because of better wages (Hatsukano 2019; Tipayalai 2020). Comparatively, the Thai economy has performed better than its neighbors, attracting almost four million migrants to work in the country, with most coming from Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar (Harkins, 2019).

Thailand is a favorite destination for Cambodian migrants because it has a high demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour (Orbeta, 2013). Cambodians have migrated to work in Thailand in specific sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. Work in Thailand provides good daily wage rates, almost double the rate provided in Cambodia (MoLVT & ILO, 2014). The latest data from the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLV) in early 2022 revealed that 1.3 million Cambodians had migrated for work. Out of the total, 1.2 million labour migrants were working in Thailand (MoLVT, 2022). Cambodian migrant workers stood as the second largest group of migrants to Thailand, after workers from Myanmar. The majority of migrants to Thailand are employed at locations concentrated in the eastern half of

Thailand and in central Bangkok. Almost all of them are temporary migrants who leave home for a time period ranging from several months to several years and often return annually for festivals, celebrations, or the harvest (Sciortino & Punpuing, 2009).

Cambodians first started to migrate to Thailand because it was easy to cross the border. For the most part, they entered Thailand illegally (Thongpakde & Paitoonpong, 1999). Sok (2019) reveals that labour migration from Cambodia started in the 1990s through the migration of Cambodian workers independently entering Thailand. Migrant workers from Cambodia are influenced by the push and pull of swings in labour market demand for unskilled, low-paid jobs. In addition, labour migrants struggle with poor working conditions, trafficking, exploitation, and emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Jampaklay et al., 2022). During the civil war (1970-1975), Khmer Rouge autocracy (1975-1979), and Vietnamese intervention (1979-1989), Cambodians escaped to Thailand as refugees to seek resettlement in the United States, France, and Australia (Sok, 2017). Between the 1990s and 2000s, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) cooperated with the governments of many countries to send Cambodian workers, including Thailand, South Korea, and Malaysia (Sok & Yang, 2021).

The Royal Governments of Cambodia (RGoC) and Thailand signed an MoU or Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation related to workers in May 2003. The MoU called for the legal and organized deployment of Cambodian workers to Thailand. Moreover, this document also aimed to establish a bilateral administrative process that provides for a well-structured employment procedure, a mechanism for the return or repatriation of migrant workers, guidelines for labour

protection, and a means for the prevention of and intervention against irregular migration (MoLVT, 2010). In December 2015, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and agreement on labour cooperation was signed between Thailand and Cambodia (ILO, 2016). This paper explores the insights and perceptions of parents with children who have migrated to work in Thailand. The purpose is to examine the contribution of remittances to the socioeconomic improvement of parents in Cambodia. The paper covers three main issues: (1) reasons for migration to Thailand; (2) employment sectors of Cambodian migrants to Thailand; and (3) remittances from Thailand and their use in Cambodia.

## 2. Re-visiting labour migration from Cambodia to Thailand

The most influential factors that compel or ‘push’ labour migration are poverty, food insecurity, low wages, and insufficient employment opportunities in home countries (CLEC, 2013). Migrants may be induced or ‘pulled’ to return home to their countries when they fail to get better employment abroad (Cassarino, 2004). Bryceson (2019) notes the importance of the push and pull of Thai-Cambodian cross-border migration for undocumented migrant workers. In the migration process, families’ decisions on whether a husband, wife, son, or daughter should migrate and when migration should occur are shaped by gender-related issues within society and the organization of families (Cooke, 2008). Some farming families in Cambodia living proximate to the Thai border commonly expect their young family members to migrate periodically to increase household income. They know this entails risks of arrest and physical dangers; a consideration rarely incorporated in theoretical migration models (Nurick & Hak, 2019).

Labour migration is also driven by landlessness, development-induced displacement, a growing youth population, unemployment, environmental pressure, and rural indebtedness, each of which occurs in the context of increasing inequality and fast-paced economic growth (Bylander, 2014a). Hing et al. (2011) suggest that the inability to access markets, materialism, debts, droughts, and floods also causes labour migration. In addition, insufficient skills make it difficult for people to find jobs in Cambodia, so they migrate temporarily or long-term to work in Thailand (Dickson & Koenig, 2006). Escaping lower income for better livelihoods is a basic reason for migration. The migration pattern in Cambodia confirms that the most important push factor for migration among Cambodians is the lack of jobs in their communities and low wages (Sopha, 2009).

Historically, migration theory has depended on neo-classical economic optimization assumptions. Individuals seek to maximize their income by migrating from labour-surplus rural areas to urban destinations for more remunerative wage employment (Todaro, 1969). In recent years, the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) by Stark (1984) has been increasingly used to stress household risk management as a component of overall livelihood strategy. Stark (1984) asserts that labour migration is associated with family decision-making

rather than that of individuals. The main purpose of labour migration is to access higher income, and migrants seek opportunities for higher wages.

Migrant workers send remittances back to their families for the purposes of food consumption, health care, and children’s education (Maltoni, 2010). Migrant remittances compensate for household losses and are expected to provide investment capital to obtain productive assets. When targets have been accomplished, migrant workers head back home (De Haas, 2010). Moreover, remittances confer a higher status in the family for the female migrant, as the money is perceived as a bonus for the family and as boosting the household’s quality of life (Jampaklay et al., 2022).

## 3. Research Methodology

Descriptive types were employed to examine the research questions. The research design utilized surveys to collect quantitative data, and personal communication with households through interviews was used to collect qualitative data. The paper was written based on fieldwork conducted by Mr. THOU Punleu for his undergraduate thesis, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Development Studies in Economic Development. The fieldwork was conducted in the Sangke district of Battambang province (Fig. 1). Battambang is a province located in the far northwest of Cambodia, and it borders Pursat to the east and south, Banteay Meanchey to the north, Siem Reap to the northeast, and Pailin to the west. The province shares an international border in the northern and southern extremes of its western boundaries. The total population of the province was 997,169 people in 2019, making it the fifth most populous province in Cambodia.



Fig. 1. Map of Battambang Province highlighting Sangke district.

Battambang has 13 districts, and Sangke district was selected for the study. The district has a total population of 111,118 people. The sample for interviews included 355 households. A snowball sampling technique was utilized to conduct the survey. The technique is useful when investigating hard-to-reach groups or when little is known about the studied population. During the survey, Mr. THOU Punleu spent two months in Sangke district to meet with the parents of migrants who were working in Thailand. Additional fieldwork was conducted through face-to-face interviews using structured questionnaires. Field observations were also made to assess the living situation of the parents of migrant workers. The researchers did not have an opportunity to interview migrant workers, and only the insights and views of their parents were obtained.

The quantitative data was analyzed using statistical analysis, including calculating frequency and percentage and Chi-square testing. We utilized an applied Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to enter, clean, and analyze the data. A Chi-square test was used to explore (1) the relationship between debt and having ID-poor status and (2) the relationship between sending remittances and having ID-poor status. We also used existing publications and research for a literature review, which informed the analysis and explanation of the qualitative data we collected from the survey. This section describes some socio-economic characteristics of the households interviewed. Such characteristics included age, education level, number of household members, and number of dependents. On average, parents of migrant workers were 64.9 years old and had completed 1.6 years of education. The average number of household members was 4, with 2.7 dependents.

The survey also found that 59.2% of the household members interviewed were married, 39.4% were widows or widowers, and 1.4% were divorced. Overall, nearly half of them (40.6%) were elderly, and a small amount engaged in animal husbandry (16.1%), rice farming (14.1%), and self-owned business (12.1%). Some of them were also employed as fishermen, gardeners, self-employed workers, and employed workers (Fig. 2). The Chi-square Test was employed to test whether there was a relationship between having ID Poor status and the debt level of the household (Table 1). The analysis shows a close relationship between having ID Poor status and debt. Almost half of the households interviewed during the fieldwork expressed concerns about debt.

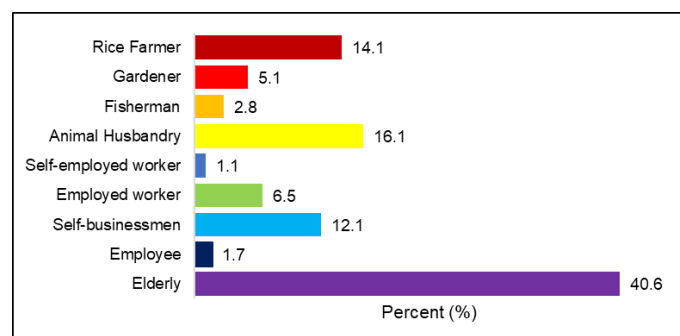


Fig. 2. Percentage of primary jobs for interviewed households.

There were two scenarios: the household was in debt, and then a member migrated to Thailand to earn money to pay the debt, or the household took loans to pay for the cost of migrating. In either case, migrant workers had to earn money and send remittances to pay the debt. During the interview, it was found that households were struggling to make payments for the debt because of high-interest rates.

Table 1. A relationship between debt and having ID Poor status.

| Attribute                |       | ID Poor Household |     |     | $\chi^2$                | P-value     |
|--------------------------|-------|-------------------|-----|-----|-------------------------|-------------|
|                          |       | N                 | Yes | No  |                         |             |
| Household Taking loan(s) | Yes   | 134               | 100 | 34  | 12.8<br>53 <sup>a</sup> | 0.000<br>** |
|                          | No    | 221               | 123 | 98  |                         |             |
|                          | Total | 355               | 223 | 132 |                         |             |

#### 4. Results and Findings

##### 4.1 Reasons for migration to Thailand

Fig. 3 describes different reasons why people migrate and leave their elderly parents behind. The majority of migrants, around 93.5%, mentioned a lack of local job opportunities as their primary motive for leaving. Approximately 88.5% of migrants stated that they migrated in search of better income or salary. Another significant factor contributing to migration was household poverty, with 62.3% of migrants leaving due to economic hardships. The influence of neighbors, friends, or relatives also played a role in the decision to migrate, with 55.2% of migrants citing this as a contributing factor. Other reasons for migration included the need to settle debts, a lack of non-agricultural land, and an increase in household members. These factors, combined with the desire for economic betterment and improved job opportunities, influenced the decision to migrate and leave elderly parents behind.

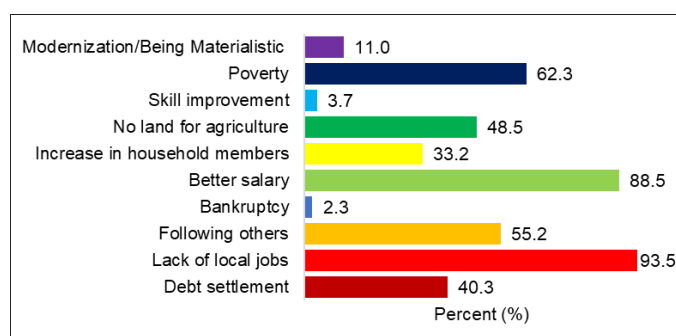


Fig. 3. Reasons for labour migration to Thailand.

The survey also revealed that the decision to migrate and leave elderly parents behind is driven by a combination of economic factors, such as a lack of local job opportunities and household poverty, as well as social influences and personal circumstances. The desire for economic betterment is a key motivator, prompting individuals to pursue migration to achieve a better life for themselves and their families. It is worth noting that many rural areas in Cambodia lack job opportunities, particularly in non-agricultural sectors. This limited availability of employment options can result in



economic hardships for families and individuals, leading them to seek better prospects elsewhere through migration. Migrant workers mostly returned to visit their home countries during the Khmer New Year and the Pchum Ben Festival period. Most Cambodians are Buddhist, believing that every year, the souls of their ancestors who passed away are released for 15 days. During this time, migrant workers returned to gather with their parents and families. They also brought food to the monks at the pagoda to generate merit that would benefit the dead. Thailand and Cambodia share a similar New Year period in April, so migrant workers also have a holiday. Khmer New Year is particularly important for Cambodians to gather with family members, friends, and their community.

#### 4.2 Sectors of jobs employed by migrant workers

Migrant workers employed in Thailand through the MoU were recruited through private agencies that are accredited by the Ministry of Labour of Thailand and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training of Cambodia. Those who were already employed in Thailand and not yet registered were allowed to register through a 'one-stop service center' involving nationality verification. Before the MoU was signed between the Royal Government of Cambodia and Thailand in 2003, Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand were illegally employed (MoLVT, 2014). In general, the living conditions of Cambodian immigrant workers in Thailand were not documented, while quantitative assessments of migrant flows and economic impacts have taken center stage (Seng, 2007). In mid-2011, Thai authorities commenced the registration of migrant workers, and Thai and Cambodian authorities together started NV (Nationality Verification) processes to support the registration of workers who had migrated through irregular channels or whose regular migrant status had lapsed (MoLVT, 2014). The media began to report on the arrest and deportation of Cambodian migrant workers. In June 2014, the number of Cambodian migrants who were being repatriated or leaving Thailand quickly increased. Migrants who are not registered are considered illegal according to the law, and immigration police made regular sweeps, which intensified before registration periods, resulting in arrests and deportation of unregistered migrants (Martin, 2003).

Unfortunately, the registration programs further complicated the procedure for obtaining legitimate work permission and have thus fueled illegal migration. If they went through the official registration program, opportunities for deportation were actually increased due to high registration fees, which seriously compromised these policies' ability to attract registrants (Seng, 2007). Moreover, work permits required a mandatory health checkup (implemented in 2002). The health test checked for seven health risks, stipulating that any individual who was found to be positive for any of the ailments faced immediate deportation (Awatsaya et al., 2004). Labour migration has played a very important role in community development in rural Cambodia, presenting both challenges and opportunities that have had an impact on the country's economy, society, and politics. To determine the sectors in which migrants were employed, a descriptive

analysis was conducted. The results indicate that construction was the most popular job sector among migrants, accounting for 35.5% of employment (Fig. 4). The food and beverage sector followed this with 30.7% and then the service sector with 18.0%. Labour workers in the industry represented 13.8% of migrants employed. The analysis revealed further that the majority of the jobs held by migrant workers were non-skilled positions, which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation if Cambodia's or Thailand's laws and regulations regarding migrant work are not properly enforced. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that these workers are protected by the country's labour laws to ensure their safety and well-being.

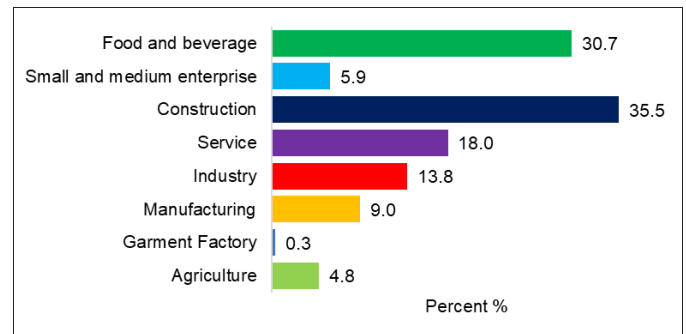


Fig. 4. Types of employment of migrant workers.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) report also revealed that most Cambodian migrant workers are employed in low-skilled jobs, particularly in construction, manufacturing, and agriculture (Chan, 2009). These jobs often offer low wages and poor working conditions, making migrant workers susceptible to exploitation and abuse. To address these issues, the Cambodian government has implemented policies to regulate labour migration and safeguard the rights of migrant workers. For example, the MoLVT has established a system to register and monitor recruitment agencies that facilitate worker migration. Additionally, the government has entered into bilateral agreements with other countries to protect the rights of Cambodian migrant workers and ensure they are not subjected to abuse or exploitation.

In personal communication, an NGO staff member said, "Despite efforts to regulate labour migration, many migrant workers continue to face exploitation and abuse. This includes being paid below the minimum wage, working long hours without overtime pay, and being subjected to dangerous working conditions. In some cases, migrant workers have been subjected to forced labour and human trafficking".

#### 4.3 Remittances from Thailand and their use in Cambodia

The expectation made evident in interviews with household members was that remittances would be sent by migrant workers from Thailand and used to cover the costs of daily food consumption, children's education, health care of elderly family members, and other expenses. On average, a household received 95.47 US dollars per month. The money was used for food consumption (35.98 US dollars), children's education (22.05 US dollars), and healthcare (8.45 US dollars).

The household also used the funds to pay for other expenses (28.38 US dollars), such as social events (Fig. 5). Many households considered that remittances were the main sources of their income because they were elderly, and most of them could not earn money. However, some of them were still involved in economic activities, but the resulting incomes were insufficient. If migrant workers could not send remittances, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, households faced difficulties acquiring enough food for daily consumption.

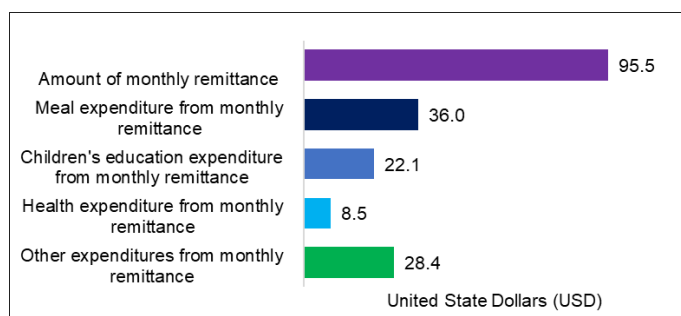


Fig. 5. Amount of monthly remittance and spending by category.

Respondents also described how remittances were transferred from migrant workers in Thailand. In recent years, banking systems such as WING Bank and True Money have played an important role in facilitating transactions. At the same time, social media such as Facebook and Telegram were popular among households in Cambodia and migrant workers in Thailand to maintain regular communication. Free calls and voice messaging were available with Facebook and Telegram, which have increased the transaction of remittances as family members better exchange information about the need for money, food, healthcare, and children’s education. While some migrant workers went to Thailand as couples, almost all migrants had children or parents in Cambodia. These parents and children were highly dependent on remittances from the migrant workers in Thailand.

The amounts of money in the remittances sent from Thailand were small, so households mainly used the funds for daily expenses. Remittances did not provide them with enough funding to invest or buy property. As a result, parents of migrant workers were mainly worried about what would happen when they returned to Cambodia. They do not have sufficient agricultural land if they wish to continue as farmers. In the meantime, interviews showed that many of those who had migrated would return home within the next five to ten years. As such, migrant workers only went to Thailand to earn and save money and not to resettle. The Chi-square Test revealed that remittance and having an ID Poor status were associated (Table 2). It is clear that, based on those interviewed, households with poor ID status were more deeply dependent upon remittances. The impacts of migration could be positive or negative, depending on the nature of the migration, the type of jobs, the location, and the legal status of the migrant workers. In rural communities, the majority of family members of migrants to Thailand heavily depend on

remittances, given that they receive at least some money from migrant worker household members.

Table 2. Relationship between ID Poor and receiving monthly remittance.

| Attribute                      | ID Poor Household |     |     | X <sup>2</sup>     | P-value |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|--------------------|---------|
|                                | n                 | Yes | No  |                    |         |
| Receiving a monthly remittance | Yes               | 314 | 190 | 6.197 <sub>a</sub> | 0.015*  |
|                                | No                | 41  | 33  |                    |         |
|                                | Total             | 355 | 223 |                    |         |

\*\* . Chi-square Test is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 5. Conclusion

The research concludes that remittances from labour migration from Cambodia to Thailand are significant for parents’ living conditions in Cambodia. The survey clearly shows that most migrant workers from Cambodia left for Thailand due to a lack of local job opportunities (93.5%), respondents indicated slightly less that they migrated in search of better income or salary (85.5%). Labour migration also significantly reflected the experience of household poverty (62.3%), as migrants left home due to economic hardships. More than half of them (55.2%) also claimed that the influence of neighbors, friends, or relatives played a role in their decision to migrate. There were also other reasons behind labour migration, including debt, a lack of non-agricultural land, and increased household members. The study also reveals that construction is the most popular job sector, as more than one-third (35.5%) of migrants worked in this sector. Migrant workers were employed in the food and beverages sector (30.7%) and services (18.0%). Out of the total, 13.8% of migrants worked in industry. The majority of the jobs of migrant workers were non-skilled positions, which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation if laws and regulations regarding migrant work are not properly enforced. There is no doubt that remittances are crucial to parents of migrant workers. However, the average amount was only 95.47 US dollars per month. In addition, remittances and holding ID Poor status were associated. Households interviewed with ID-poor status were more highly dependent upon remittances. Parents of migrant workers divided remittance funds into spending on food consumption (35.98 US dollars), children’s education (22.05 US dollars), and health care (8.45 US dollars). The households were also found to use the funds for other expenses, such as social events (28.38 US dollars).

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### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests. All authors have read and approved the final, published version of the manuscript.

### Credit authorship contribution statement

**THOU Punleu:** Experimental design, data collection, writing-original draft, reviewing and editing. **THAU Sokkalyan:** Reviewing and editing. **THOEU Leakhena:** Reviewing and editing.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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