FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS: INSIGHTS INTO THE PROFILES AND VULNERABILITIES OF CAMBODIAN MIGRANTS TO THAILAND
ROUND ONE

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Executive Summary

Labour migration is a key demographic trend influencing and shaping the growth of many countries in Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand. Thailand's steady economic growth in recent decades has sparked an increase in labour demand, resulting in a continued influx of low-skilled foreign workers from neighboring Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. By 2017, a total of 723,911 Cambodian nationals had received documentation status for residing in Thailand. Due to different economic and social reasons for Cambodian nationals, especially the younger generations consider migration to be a viable option. Although migration from Cambodia to Thailand has a long-standing history, migrants still face several challenges. Due to the precarity of jobs acquired (predominantly low-skilled without proper legal status and limited in-country support networks) migrants are often exposed to heightened risks and vulnerabilities compared to local populations.

In order to gain a better understanding of the migration patterns and the nature of flows from Cambodia to Thailand – with a particular focus on possible vulnerabilities – IOM Thailand's Migrant Assistance and Counter-Trafficking Unit initiated a survey exercise in March 2019 in the provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, utilizing the Flow Monitoring component of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Flow Monitoring is a tool designed to track movement flows, and the overall situation at key points of origin, transit and destination; it is an optimal tool to provide a more detailed understanding of the migration situation at the Thai-Cambodian border. With special consideration to the experience of migrant workers, IOM Thailand aimed to find out more about migrants' profiles, drivers of migration, level of preparedness for migration, as well as associated vulnerabilities and return intentions. This research activity is part of a larger regional activity, collecting DTM data across various countries. This exercise builds upon the pre-established Flow Monitoring Registry and Flow Monitoring Survey activities along the Thai-Myanmar border in Tak province, Thailand, from June 2018 until May 2019. The activity is being further implemented at the Thai-Lao border in Vientiane city from July 2019 until August 2019.

From mid-March until end-May 2019, a total of 3,127 Cambodian nationals were surveyed in the provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, of whom 3,122 were identified as migrant workers. The 3,122 migrant workers were categorized in two different migrant groups. The first group was comprised of outgoing migrants, leaving Cambodia for employment in Thailand (n=2,499) and the second group of incoming migrants, returning from employment (n=623) in Thailand. Two different survey tools were designed to capture the most accurate information possible for both target groups. The findings serve to identify migration patterns as well as identify common challenges and vulnerabilities and can be used to better inform policy and programming for the protection and assistance of migrant workers.

The results indicate that migration between Cambodia and Thailand is cyclical; many migrants that had previously worked in Thailand are compelled to return to Thailand for further employment. The main findings of the report show that the information levels and expectations of incoming migrants are for the most part in line with the work experiences and impressions of outgoing migrants. The brief summaries per thematic area below provides a distillation of findings from the data collected:

Migrant Profiles

The average individual within the group of Cambodian migrants is a married, 29-year-old male with primary level education. Male migrants were overrepresented in the sample at 54 per cent. Furthermore, migrants tend to be married rather than single when they migrate from Cambodia to Thailand. The largest share had completed primary education as their highest and only form of education (almost two third of the sample).

The most common provinces of origin were the border provinces where the data collection took place, i.e. Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the patterns of origin locations depending on the data collection points. Migrants transiting through Poi Pet originated from all over Cambodia while migrants interviewed around Kamrieng district (around Doung international border) and Phnom Preuk district (close to local checkpoints) seemed predominately to be originating from Battambang. Migrants preferred to stay in Thailand for periods over one year especially in the border provinces of Chanthaburi, Sa Kaeo as well as Bangkok and Chon Buri.

Drivers and Decision-Making Process

Prior to migration the majority of respondents were privately employed, predominately in the agriculture and forestry sectors. The pre-departure unemployment rate was higher for female than for male respondents and for younger Cambodian nationals (age group between 16 and 30). The main reasons for leaving were associated with finding employment, facing family problems or the payment of debts and problems related to landownership. Migration from Cambodia to Thailand presents as cyclical given over three quarter of the sample had previously migrated at least once already. In line with the network theory, migrants heavily relied on family and friends for their information about life and jobs in Thailand.

Pre-migration Arrangements and Preparations

With few exceptions, almost all respondents reported to have already arranged employment prior to their departure, mainly with the support from family and friends in Thailand. The jobs were predominately secured in the agriculture/forestry employment sector as well as in construction and manufacturing. On average returning migrants had paid USD 276 for the migration process. Costs related to journeys to neighbouring provinces such as Chanthaburi and Sa Kaeo were on average cheaper than to Bangkok and Chon Buri. Also, migrants with travel documents for oversea migrant workers and non-immigrant visas (visas related to the MoU process) paid on average the highest amounts. Next to savings, migrants commonly reported to have borrowed money from their employers as well as they had organized wage deductions with employers.

Migrants' vulnerabilities

Migrants used a variety of documentation to enter Thailand. The majority of respondents used either border passes, their passports with different visas or a travel document for overseas migrant workers to enter Thailand. The largest share of undocumented workers were employed in the agriculture sector. Return migrants had on average earned wages of THB 432 per day. Looking at the different provinces, in the border province Chanthaburi migrants most often reported to have received wages below the provincial minimum wage. The data found that most migrants working in Chanthaburi are employed in the agriculture sector and it was further revealed that the agriculture sector appears to be responsible for paying wages below the median minimum wage more frequently. Wholesale/retail and manufacturing are identified as the sectors where migrants reported higher wages on average. The data also shows that migrants in general tend to send remittances home. Migrants who had left children living in Cambodia tended to be more likely to send remittances than those who did not. Migrants did not commonly experience problems en route to Thailand, whereas it was reported that problems arose and were faced by migrants during their employment in Thailand. Common problems were related to detention and deportations as well as wages being withheld or being paid irregularly. When asked if migrants knew of support mechanisms, less than half of the migrants reported to be aware of such mechanisms. Of those that knew of available support, their understanding of "mechanisms" mainly referred to familial or friend networks in Thailand as well as the Thai police.

Return

Most respondents returned temporarily with the intention of visiting family or friends. Those who returned for an unknown duration reported reasons including: family obligations and expectations to return, deportation by authorities or their work permit/visa ending. When asked if they expected to face challenges less than half believed that they will encounter problems. Common problems were related to not finding a job or regarding their health. Confirming the circular migration patterns, two third of the sample had already made plans to migrate again to Thailand. The majority reported that they would resume their previous jobs in Thailand. Upon return, migrants generally reported that both their savings as well as their general financial position had improved as a result of the migration experience.

Picture 2 - Cambodian migrants at the government office near to Doung international border

Introduction and Background

Labour migration has never featured more prominently within Southeast Asia than it does today, particularly between Thailand and its neighbouring countries (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). For a number of reasons, including its continuous economic growth over the past few decades and the consequent need for labour, Thailand has sustained a steady flow of low-skilled workers from neighbouring countries (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017; IOM, 2013). The World Bank claims that Thailand is the fastest growing destination country in ASEAN, with an increase in intra-ASEAN migrant stock of 3 million between 1995 and 2015. As the United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (UNTWGM) (2019) reports, the actual number of migrants residing in Thailand is difficult to determine given many have entered Thailand irregularly and have joined informal sectors of employment, resulting in a continued lack of reliable official data and records that can be applied for the development of evidence-based policy and programming.

With over 700,000 Cambodian migrants residing in Thailand, Cambodia is one of the main migrant sending countries to Thailand (UNDESA, 2018). Migration has been a major driver of Cambodia's recent demographic and labour market changes. Although migration is not a new phenomenon for Cambodia, it is becoming more dynamic, diverse and complex. Cambodia has made significant economic progress since the early 1990s when peace was re-established. The institutional framework for a market economy has been set up, private investment (domestic and foreign) has expanded further integrating and connecting the country among its Southeast Asian neighbours. Moreover, the country is slowly transforming from a primarily agrarian economy to one based on a more balanced mix of agriculture, industry and services. Despite these clear signs of productive development, several challenges remain. The labour market continues to be saturated by poorly educated and low-skilled workers coupled with enduring poverty and rising inequality. As a result, many Cambodian nationals are compelled to migrate and work abroad, the main destination country being neighbouring Thailand (OECD, 2017).

In light of the continuous cross-border movements between Thailand and its neighbours, a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on labour migration have been signed between ASEAN countries and beyond, and various measures and amnesties have been introduced to support the regularization of migrants. Nevertheless, the associated costs and lengthy processes required to take part in regular migration channels continue to drive migrants to resort to means of irregular migration channels (Chantavanich, Middleton, & Ito, 2013). Migrants in general from Cambodia are usually able to enter Thailand without much difficulty. In some areas along the Thai-Cambodian border, migrants can easily obtain border passes allowing them to stay on the Thai side of the border for a short, fixed duration of time. Cambodian migrants are also able to enter Thailand without a visa on their passports for a period of up to two weeks.

As already indicated, although migration between Thailand and Cambodia is by no means a new phenomenon, there continues to be a dearth of reliable data that can be used for the development of evidence-based policy and programming. To fill some of the current information gaps, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) established a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring data collection exercise under the Asia Regional Migration Program funded by the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The data collection tools and strategy implemented are based on the DTM global methodology, and the Flow Monitoring component was adapted to the migration context of the two countries. The data will not only help to better understand the flows of migrants coming from Cambodia to Thailand, but also to understand migrants' vulnerabilities during their journey, as well as upon arrival. The information collected contributes to the provision of a more comprehensive profile of the migrant population coming from Cambodia to Thailand, which can be used by IOM, governments and other humanitarian actors for improved advocacy and protection of this population, as well as for the delivery of more targeted assistance.

The Flow Monitoring survey data collection is accompanied by the Flow Monitoring Registry exercise where DTM was able to establish Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) at key border crossings around Battambang province in Cambodia. The data collected at these FMPs together with the official immigration data at key international border crossing (Poi Pet and Doung) provided the baseline for the Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS) by counting the daily flows at various border crossing points. The FMS was designed to collect information on five diverse thematic areas, including: Cambodian migrants' profiles, drivers of migration, pre-migration preparations and arrangements, vulnerabilities en route and upon arrival, as well as reasons for return and associated challenges. Following a brief explanation of the activity's methodology and the data collection phase, this report will follow the same structure as the FMS by providing a short literature review for each of the five key thematic areas before analyzing the primary data collected by thematic area.

Methodology

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a set of tools and methodologies, which enable systematic and regular primary data collection, analysis and dissemination of population movements, human mobility and forced migration (both internal and cross-border). DTM was first conceptualized in 2004, and has since been adapted for implementation in over 70 countries, including many in Asia, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Mongolia. In 2018 alone, DTM tracked over 40 million individuals (internally displaced persons, returnees and migrants) across a broad range of contexts. DTM operations are collaborative exercises. IOM engages with national authorities and humanitarian partners to ensure wide coverage and access, as well as to enhance the usefulness and relevance of data and trust in the results. Although originally designed to serve the humanitarian community during crises, DTM has been increasingly implemented in non-crisis situations. Similar to the labour migration context at the Thailand-Cambodia border, DTM has in some cases, been used not only as a tool to track the movements of a displaced population, but also to receive better and more detailed information on the said population. The activity that is being implemented at the Thai-Cambodian border in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province is referred to as Flow Monitoring. The Flow Monitoring module was designed to track movement flows and the overall situation at key points of origin, transit and destination. The activities at the Thai-Cambodian border build upon the already established Flow Monitoring Activities at the Thai-Myanmar border in Tak province, Thailand, since June 2018.

Geographical Location

Cambodia and Thailand share a border of approximately 800km. The country of Cambodia distinguishes between three types of border crossings connecting itself and its neighbours: international, bilateral and local[1]. Due to its geographical location and the international Thai-Cambodian border crossing, Poi Pet city in Banteay Meanchey province is known to be one of the largest and busiest border crossing points for people traveling from Cambodia to Thailand for employment, daily business or to purchase goods and services. UNODC in 2017 highlighted the most common routes taken by Cambodian migrants travelling to Thailand being between Prey Veng to Battambang as well as Poi Pet in Cambodia crossing to Aranyaprathet Province in Thailand. As indicated in the Verité (2019) report, the formal border points are guarded and there is a formal process of checking documents, with hundreds of locals and tourists entering and exiting daily via the extremely busy crossings. The Poi Pet border is especially busy due to the nearby casinos and Chinese visitors who cross over to Thailand for shopping. The Aranyaprathet-Poi Pet international border checkpoint is also well known because the Poi Pet side is the most utilized site for receiving returned Cambodian deportees (Baker, 2015).

It is for this reason that DTM Flow Monitoring activities were rolled out in and around Poi Pet city. Activities were also implemented in the neighbouring province Battambang, more specifically in Kamrieng and Phnom Peuk districts due to the prevalence of labour migration in the district particularly in relation to the agricultural sector. As already stated, there are several routes and crossing points between Cambodia and Thailand.

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1   International Border Crossing Points: International travelers (tourist, business) and Cambodian Nationals (tourist, business, migrant workers); Documents used are Passports, local border residents using border passes
    Bilateral Border Crossing Points: Cambodian Nationals (from any province) and Nationals of neighboring countries (Thai, Lao or Vietnamese); travelers use Passports, Border passes and ID cards
    Local Border Crossing Points: Local border residents from the local district only, no official document, sometimes ID card.

Due to limited resources as well as the volume of the migration movements between the two countries, IOM Flow Monitoring activities do not aim to capture the whole migrant population crossing the border between the two countries but takes a representative sample of this population using the crossing points in the specified areas.

Figure 1 - Geographical Location in Poi Pet City and Kamrieng/Phnom Preuk District
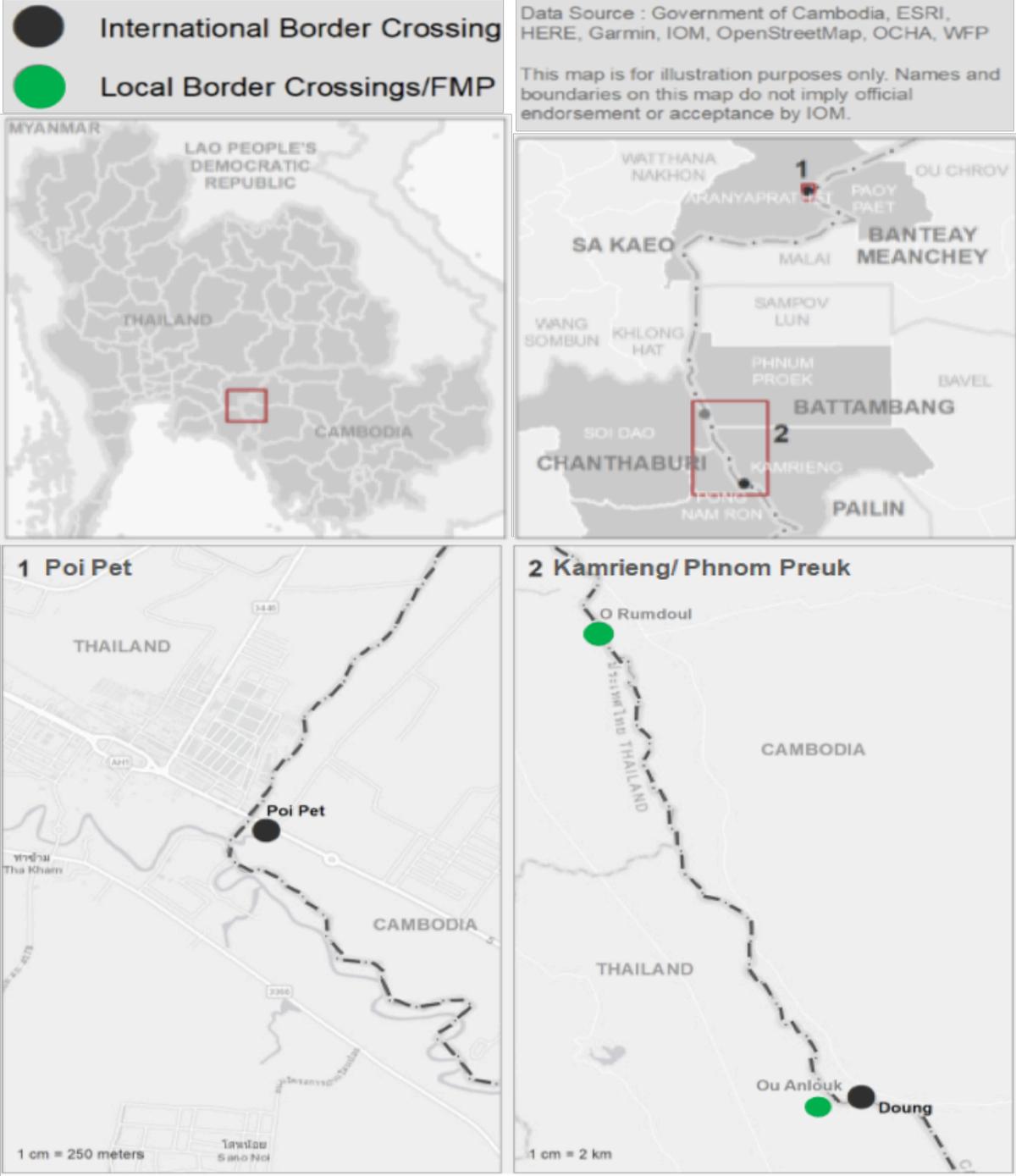
Project Implementation

DTM activities at the Thai-Cambodian border in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province evolved in two main phases. Table 1 elaborates on each phase, its objective and the operational set-up.

Table 1 - DTM Activities

Phase	Objectives	Set-up

1. Flow Monitoring Registry (Head count) methodology	• This tool is used in contexts where transit through FMPs is done either individually, or in small groups and at a relatively slow pace. It consists of counting each person transiting through the FMP during a pre-determined period
	
	• Count flows of Cambodian nationals into Thailand and flows of Cambodian nationals back to Cambodia
	
	• Collect information on the volume, transportation mode, direction, gender and purpose of groups /individuals passing through the FMPs
	
	• Establish sample size for the FMS, based on the numbers registered
		• Used to establish baseline data for the FMS activities
		
		• Data collected at 2 local crossing points in Kamrieng and Phnom Preuk district:
		
		  - Ou Anlouk
		
		  - O Romdol

2. Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS)	• Collect data using FMS on five thematic areas (profiles, drivers, pre-migration preparations, vulnerabilities and return intentions)	• Data collected at 6 locations (2 in Poi Pet City, 4 in Kamrieng and Phnom Preuk District):
		
		• Locations were chosen because of their strategic importance:
		
		  - Two international border crossings points (Poi Pet & Doung)
		
		  - The government office where migrants need to register their border pass to receive an electronic bar code
		
		  - Two local border crossing points
		
		  - Migration Reception Center
		
		• Two survey tools were used:
		
		  - Tool 1 is designed for outflows to Thailand
		
		  - Tool 2 is designed for inflows/returns to Cambodia

Flow Monitoring Survey Set-up

While the counting activities at the established FMPs helps to gain a better overview of the daily flows between Thailand and Cambodia, the FMS enhances the overall understanding of current migration flows and trends between Thailand and Cambodia, the underlying root causes of these movements and the vulnerabilities experienced during the process. The Flow Monitoring Surveys at the selected border crossing points are designed to collect and compile structured data to answer the following questions:

Figure 2 - Research Questions

1) What are the socio-demographic profiles of Cambodian migrants going to and returning from Thailand?

2) What personal factors drive Cambodian nationals to migrate to Thailand?

3) Which factors attract Cambodian nationals to migrate to Thailand?

4) How is the journey from Cambodian and stay in Thailand organized/arranged?

5) What expectations/knowledge do Cambodian migrants have about life/work in Thailand?

6) How do Cambodian migrants finance their journeys?

7) What challenges and vulnerabilities do Cambodian nationals face during their journey to Thailand, as well as once they arrive in the country?

8) What are Cambodian nationals' levels of knowledge about their rights and obligations as migrants in Thailand?

9) What kind of support networks do Cambodian workers know about or have access to in Thailand?

10) What are the reasons for return and do Cambodian migrants expect to face challenges upon return? (Tool 2)

The ten questions correspond to five thematic areas that were used as the foundation to design the survey. The literature review and data analysis in the second and third part of this report will follow the structure of these five thematic areas.

Figure 3 - Thematic Areas

1	2	3	4	5
Migrant profiles (demographics + socio-economic)	Drivers of migration	Pre-migration arrangements/ preparations	Vulnerabilities en route and upon arrival in Thailand	Reasons for return and challenges upon return

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection was conducted using two different survey tools designed to capture the most accurate information possible about two different target groups, namely the incoming and returning Cambodian migrant workers (see Table 2).

Table 2 - DTM Survey Tools

Tool	Target Population	Definition
FMS Tool 1	Cambodian migrants that are crossing the border from Cambodia into Thailand	Cambodian nationals that are leaving Cambodia with the intention to work, irrespective of whether they go to Thailand for daily work or intend to stay longer. Work is defined as taking up employment from an employer, i.e. self-employment is not considered working in this survey.
FMS Tool 2	Cambodian migrants that are returning from Thailand to Cambodia	Cambodian nationals that are going back/ returning to Cambodia after having worked for at least one day in Thailand. Work is defined as taking up employment from an employer, i.e. self-employment is not considered working in this survey.

The study consists of a quantitative, close-ended survey of Cambodian migrants crossing the border into Thailand for employment purposes or returning to Cambodia following their labour migration experience. The DTM methodology was designed with the support of IOM's Global DTM Support team in Geneva, as well as with support from IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. The survey was developed jointly by IOM Thailand's Migrant Assistance and Counter-Trafficking Unit and DTM colleagues in IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Additional inputs were provided by IOM's Migrant Protection and Assistance Division in Geneva as well as the IOM Cambodia country mission.

All data is collected by enumerators, recruited by IOM Cambodia. In order to establish a positive relationship and sense of trust with the local population, as well as to avoid difficulties due to language barriers between respondents and interviewers, IOM only recruited local border residents who know both the area and the target population well. All enumerators are Cambodian nationals.

All enumerators were trained for two days on the survey content and set-up procedure. The survey data was collected using the KoboCollect application installed on tablets. The KoboCollect application is connected to the DTM server in Geneva, and it automatically uploads completed surveys to the system. This allows an efficient process whereby daily data entries and target compliances can be monitored in real time.

The first-round cutoff point was after 11 weeks of initial surveying. Afterwards the data was translated (when necessary) and cleaned accordingly. The data was analyzed using both the SPSS statistics program and Microsoft Excel. The results are primarily based on cross-tabulations, in addition to some t-/chi-tests.

Sample Size

As outlined in the previous section, the study focuses on two target populations: Cambodian migrant workers crossing the border into Thailand for employment purposes (outflows), and Cambodian migrant workers returning to Cambodia after finishing an employment assignment (inflows/returns). Since many of the FMS data collection points evolve around the international border crossings, the baseline data is drawn from the monthly crossings at Poi Pet and Doung international border. Being provided with the official monthly statistics from January to March 2019, DTM Cambodia was able to estimate the sample size needed for the different rounds of data collection. The data collection period is split into two rounds, each round comprising of 11 weeks.

In order to estimate the sample size, the estimated average number of crossings for two months (February and March 2019) was used as the baseline. The average was calculated by adding together the crossing data at the two international Thai-Cambodian border checkpoints. For the baseline data, only those crossings related to national passports and border passes were included in the calculation. The range was then applied to a 5 and 3 per cent confidence interval, using a 95 per cent confidence level on the baseline population per Round 1 duration.

Table 3 - Sample Size Overview

	Baseline Data (average crossings per day) Summation of two months official statistics – /60	Baseline Data (average crossings per week – *7)	Baseline Data (average crossings for round 1 duration - 11 weeks – *11)	Total estimated target for round 1 (5 and 3% confidence interval)	Actual number of respondents during Round 1
Inflows	6,268	43,876	482,641	384 – 1,065	2,501
Outflows	6,162	43,134	474,474	384 – 1,065	626
Total	**12,430**	**87,010**	**957,155**	**384 – 1,066**	**3,127**

Data Limitations

With regard to data collected using Tool 2 (Returning Cambodian migrants) the sample size is rather small (n=626). Especially when referring to sub-samples of this population the sample sizes can become relatively small. The report will point out this potential bias whenever relevant to the interpretation of data findings. For numeric variables such as remittances, wages and the cost of migration, large outliers were removed from the analysis to avoid skewing results. In some cases, this might lead to slight inaccuracies in the results, especially when taking the mean of these numeric variables. In order to keep this bias to a minimum, we present different range brackets for remittances, wages and journey costs. The data collected should be not be regarded as representative of all Cambodian migrants leaving to Thailand or returning to Cambodia as the data collection activity only provides information on those Cambodian nationals that enter or exit through select crossing points in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province. With regard to migrants using other entry and exit locations in Cambodia this data cannot provide any information.

Picture 3 - DTM interview with a Cambodian migrant close to the international border in Poi Pet

Literature Review

Before analyzing the data collected during DTM activities in the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, existing literature on the key thematic areas targeted by the study will be explored and summarized. In order to identify existing data gaps, it is important to first review the literature and research that has been undertaken to date on the topic of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand. Firstly, a brief overview will be provided on the history of migration of Cambodian nationals to Thailand, as well as associated policies, before summarizing existing research on the profile of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand structured by thematic area. The drivers of migration, as well as the preparation and arrangements migrants make before leaving Cambodia will be explored in sub sections two and three. The last two sub sections will investigate research that has been conducted on the vulnerabilities migrant workers face in Thailand and throughout their employment experience, as well as their return intentions and challenges associated with return to Cambodia. Finally, the review will conclude with a short section on data gaps and how the DTM FMS-data hopes to address these gaps.

History and Current Trends of Labor Migration from Cambodia to Thailand

For more than two and a half decades, Thailand has been the recipient of large-scale migration movements from its neighbouring countries (UNTWGM 2019; Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012) being the key destination country for labour migrants from Cambodia (Baker, 2015). Since 1993, the demand in Thailand for low-skilled foreign labor has increased, across a range of industries and sectors because of different reasons. Higher levels of economic development and a thriving labour market coupled with a rapidly aging population and fewer births resulting in a declining proportion of people at working age has attracted migrants from neighboring countries to seek employment in Thailand (IOM, 2019). Meanwhile, the distinct lack of opportunities in Cambodia has been a root cause for the increasing mobility among Cambodians opting for employment in Thailand (Chaisuparaku, 2015). Furthermore, with improved education, the Thai population has come to adopt greater relative job expectations often not willing to engage in 3D (dangerous, dirty and difficult) occupations, such as those in the fishing or construction industries, leaving many jobs to be filled by low-skilled migrants from neighboring countries (ibid).

On the Cambodian side, the country has a comparably younger population with 34 per cent of its population being under the age of 15 (Baker, 2015). In 2015, Cambodia's working age population (15-64) was estimated at approximately 10 million which is roughly 65 per cent of its total population (OECD, 2017). Consequently, the large number of young Cambodians entering the domestic labour market face limited opportunities in their own country and therefore are considering international migration to pursue the more attractive wages offered abroad (Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training & ILO, 2016).

The Thailand Migration Report of 2019 states that the number of non-Thai residents within the country has increased from an estimated 3.7 million in 2014 to 4.9 million in 2018. Of the almost 5 million migrants, approximately 3.9 million migrant workers come from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. The numbers suggest that migrants currently constitute over 10 per cent of Thailand's total labour force (UNTWGM, 2019). Each of the sending countries (Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR) have an operational Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Thailand (Verité Inc, 2019). The official numbers do however not account for the number of undocumented migrants residing and working in Thailand.

Only in the 2000s did Thailand launch a long-term policy aimed at formally recruiting migrants and legalizing the stay of migrant workers holding temporary work permits (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012). Until

2003 no comprehensive migration policy existed allowing low-skilled migrant workers to enter Thailand legally. Since then a series of MoUs have been signed and a regularization system was introduced in 2006 for migrants from Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Asian Development Bank, 2009; Chantavanich, Middleton, & Ito, 2013). Although the number of undocumented migrants is still estimated to be relatively large, with the new Royal Ordinance on the Management of Foreign Workers Employment B.E. 2560 that came into force on 30 June 2018 over 1.2 million previously undocumented migrants from the neighboring countries have been regularized under the registration and nationality verification process (UNTWGM, 2019). As the UNTWGM (2019) cites "prior to recent legislative developments in 2017–18, including the development and introduction of the new Royal Ordinance on the Management of Foreign Workers Employment B.E. 2560, the [Thai] Government had struggled to formulate a long-term migration policy, instead relying heavily on periodic regularizations of irregular migrants and a nationality verification process (p.27)". While the Thailand Migration Report of 2019 does indicate some changes caused by the Royal Ordinance, the policy is too recent and no actual evidence is available yet about its effect on irregular migration patterns.

While it would be interesting to see the effect that the Royal Ordinance has on the migration patterns and how the enforcement might lead to changes in migration behavior in the long run, there is no literature/research available yet that can provide detailed information on the effect and implications. Therefore, the literature review largely focuses on research that has been conducted before the implementation. The report however does not neglect the possibility that some of the statements might need revising after assessing the impact of the Royal Ordinance.

Thematic Area 1 – Migrants' Profiles

Cambodian nationals have been categorized as "highly mobile" people based on the young demography as well as frequent internal migration movements, especially from rural to urban areas (Chaisuparakul, 2015). Almost 30 per cent of Cambodia's overall migration movements is however international in nature, specifically to the destination countries of Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea. Looking at official statistics from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the data shows that in 2017 over one million Cambodian nationals were living abroad, the largest share with almost 65 per cent in Thailand.

Table 4 - Cambodia Migration Statistics 2017

Total Stock of Emigrants (2017)	1,064,840
To High Income Countries	344,673
To Middle Income Countries	720,159
To other South-East Asian countries	699,738
Thailand	680,686
Malaysia	14,409
Lao PDR	3,568
Other	1,075
To Southern Asia	20,109
Bangladesh	20,109
To Eastern Asia	17,118
Republic of Korea	13,600
Japan	3,518
To Northern America	206,189
To Europe	76,274
France	64,306
Other	11,968
To Oceania	45,220
To Latin America and the Caribbean	184
To Africa	8

UNDESA, International Migrant Stock 2017

Although these figures do not account for irregular migrants, they confirm the role that Thailand plays as a main country of destination for most migrants from Cambodia. The 2018 UNDESA report states that the gender ratio for the estimated 681,000 Cambodian migrants residing in Thailand is 53.5 per cent female to 46.5 per cent male. According to reports specifically targeting labour migration from Cambodia towards Thailand, the gender distribution is usually slightly skewed towards a larger share of male migrants. For example, OECD (2017) reported a distribution of 54 per cent men versus 46 per cent females in a sample of migrant workers. Not much literature exists that exclusively targets the topic of feminization of migration from Cambodia. However, some reports that evolve around female migration in the ASEAN region, stress that the growth in female migration can be ascribed to a combination of economic, social and political factors. Identified factors include: aspirations for a better life, lack of employment opportunities and income disparities back home, as well as the need for women to find work and contribute to the family income, and a high labour demand in countries of destination for employment sectors where women are perceived to have an advantage (also known as feminized sectors of labour) (Sijapati, 2015; ILO & UN Women, 2015).

The average age of Cambodian labour migration is often reported to be around 25 or 26 years old (Baker, 2015; OECD, 2017; Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). Looking at the different age brackets, Baker (2015) reports that during three rounds of data collection the largest share of migrants were between the age of 18 and 29 (66-80%[2]). Regarding the education level of Cambodian migrants seeking employment in

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2   Simon Baker conducted on behalf of UNDP and UN-ACT three rounds of data collection about the migration experiences of Cambodian workers deported from Thailand in 2009, 2010 & 2012

Thailand, the literature suggests that a relatively large share of Cambodian nationals migrating to Thailand do not have any form of formal education. In the UN-ACT and UNDP research conducted by Baker on Cambodian deportees, the share of people with no formal education was at 20 per cent in 2009 and at 12 per cent in 2010 and 2012. Additionally, a report from OECD (2017) investigating Cambodia's migration landscape, also reported that on average women tend to have a lower education level than men (Baker, 2015; OECD, 2017).

Previous research identified that Cambodian migrants originated from Banteay Meanchey province, followed by the provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap, Kampong Cham and Prey Veng (Baker, 2015) and largely concentrated in the eastern half of Thailand and in the central Bangkok area (Verité Inc, 2019). Many migrants appear to be temporary in nature, leaving home for periods ranging from a few months to several years. Some of them return to Cambodia annually for festivals, celebrations, or harvest, while other workers commute across the border daily (ibid). In the Risk and Reward Study conducted by IOM and ILO in 2017, the data showed that in comparison to other countries in the region Cambodia had the lowest median length of stay of roughly one year (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). The average time identified in the UNDP and UN-ACT study, however, averaged roughly six months. This could be attributed to the fact that this study only looked at migrants that were deported back to Cambodia (Baker, 2015). Most literature also identifies the same most popular employment sectors amongst Cambodian migrant workers namely farming, construction, domestic, factory, fishing boats and the service industry (Baker, 2015; Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

Thematic Area 2 – Migration Drivers and Decision-Making Process

The most common reasons cited for migration from Cambodia to Thailand include a mix of economic and social factors. While many sources still speak of push- and pull factors, this theory has largely been disputed as it does not consider the complex nature of migration. The reasons why people migrate are diverse, multifaceted and often interrelated. As such, Chantavanich, Middleton and Ito (2013) suggest that it is important to look at migration as a continuum, rather than viewing the phenomenon as an either-or decision. Furthermore, it is equally important to keep in mind that the so-called push and pull factors are multilayered on micro, meso and macro levels, impacting the individual, family and community as well as linking into national and regional circumstances. The decision to migrate therefore more than likely results from a combination of discerning factors and is certainly influenced by external factors rather than being made in isolation (Chantavanich, Middleton, & Ito, 2013).

For migration from Cambodia to Thailand, the most cited reasons are "poverty, lack of employment, debt, landlessness and lack of choices" on the Cambodian side and "higher wages and high demand for labor" on the Thai side (Chaisuparaku, 2015; Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training & ILO, 2016; OECD, 2017). As identified by IOM in a 2010 report, decades of debilitating war in Cambodia have slowed the socio-economic development compared to other countries in the region and as a result most of the population is still working in the agriculture sector.

Chaisuparakul (2015) also refers to the increasing culture of migration among the younger population who often experience their family's financial difficulties resulting in a strong motivation to take action to improve the financial situation of their households. It was reported that even school-aged children think consider dropping out to find work to help their parents. As wages in Thailand are higher, many naturally consider migrating. Most potential migrants are also exposed to migration and the cross-border travel from a young age owing to existing social networks that work abroad and send remittances. The positive outcomes of Cambodian of migration have created a culture of migration among Cambodian youth from lower-income families, despite the reality that not all migrant workers prosper and succeed in their goals (Chaisuparaku, 2015). In this sense, the decision to migrate is often not formed in isolation, but as a joint family strategy. Parents are usually consulted, even in the case of adult migrants. Furthermore, Cambodian migrants are known to have strong ties of kinship and communities within Thailand. Many Cambodian migrants commonly report to have received help from relatives, friends, villagers or brokers for their initial migration both from the Thai and Cambodian side (IOM, 2010; OECD, 2017).

Research by Maryann Bylander further identifies environmental changes and the effect debts as drivers for migration or migration patterns. In 2016, Bylander published a study exploring the relationship between migration and the environment in Cambodia. Rural areas in Cambodia routinely experience environmental stress and shocks. Environmental changes are known to be able to alter livelihood strategies, influence social norms and value systems, or impact different economic, sociopolitical or demographic contexts, all of which can motivate changes in migration dynamics (Bylander, 2016). Similarly, a study conducted for IOM in 2018 explored financial debt and indebtedness as a driver for migration among Cambodian migrants. Although using migration as a coping strategy to deal with financial debt is not new, different forms of debt have appeared alongside new forms of credit established across the region in recent decades that have broadly expanded access to finance in rural areas. Bylander (2019) assigns this transformation to the aggressive growth of microfinance institutions (MFIs), which aim to provide financial services to low-income populations.

Thematic Area 3 – Pre-migration Arrangements and Preparations

Several aspects and indicators fall under this thematic area such as understanding how well-prepared migrants are before their departure, if they have jobs lined up pre-migration, if they received support in acquiring those jobs, how they finance their migration, and how they access information on life in Thailand. These aspects will ultimately shed light on migrants' vulnerability and their success during the migration journey. Some research studies have aimed at addressing this topic. The Risk and Reward study (2017) reported that only one in six (17%) had sought information about their journey prior to embarking on their migration journey. Migrants mostly relied on word of mouth from friends and family or information from brokers because they are trusted sources even if they were not authoritative (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

The intended destination for the migrant workers is often pre-determined by an invitation to join a relative or friend in Thailand who has previously migrated. Others are recruited by employment agencies or brokers who help arrange travel and documentation, which can be for both, regular or irregular migration. When choosing regular migration channels, the process involves going through Thai Immigration at an official border-crossing and then registration by the migrant worker's employer. In the case of irregular migrant workers, there are numerous ways to cross the land and sea borders between Thailand and Cambodia (Chaisuparaku, 2015). The choice to go by regular or irregular channels is often dependent on the time and resources since legal channels are known to be more expensive and more time consuming (Baker, 2015). The report "Thailand Bound: An Exploration of Labor Migration Infrastructures in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR" published in 2019 by Verité finds that agencies' practices connected to regular channels such as MoU can make the process a significant expense. Cambodian recruitment agencies are the gatekeepers of the formal migration process as the government has fully outsourced this function to them. While officially this is not a requirement of the MoU, a jobseeker is unlikely to be able to apply for a job through the MoU process without the help of a recruitment agency (Verité Inc, 2019).

In 2015, Baker conducted three rounds of data collection on returning labour migrants where roughly 60 per cent of each round reported to have used a broker to reach the border. The Thailand Migration report (2019) reported that while Cambodian and Myanmar workers primarily migrated with assistance from friends and family or independently, the majority of Lao migrants (64 per cent) were directly recruited by employers

When it comes to the recruitment process in Chaisuparaku's report (2015) three systems of recruitment are identified: direct recruitment of work teams for fixed assignments, recruitment for fixed assignments by a broker and individual hires by the employer. The 2019 Verité report also highlights similar recruitment procedures as illustrated in the below excerpt:

> *"Cambodian jobseekers typically enter into employment in Thailand through the following mechanisms: (a) they are referred by family and friends to Thai employers and directed to recruitment agencies to begin the MOU process; (b) they are referred by family and friends to Thai employers and directed to known informal brokers who can secure them documents adequate for legal entry into Thailand on a temporary pass; or (c) they are repeat irregular workers who can navigate the system on their own because they already have migrants' and/or employers' communities in Thailand" (p.18)*

Costs vary depending which option the migrants choose. Bylander reported in her 2019 study that Cambodian migrants paid on average USD 254 if they chose irregular channels and on average USD 425 more if they moved through regular channels, i.e. close to USD 700 (Bylander, 2019). The estimated costs for irregular channels were supported by Baker's three rounds of data collection as well as IOM's and ILO's Risk and Reward study of 2017. In general, migrants paid these costs by utilizing a variety of means including: with savings, selling or pawning assets, taking out loans, opting for a wage deduction payment scheme, or some combination of these (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). Bylander (2019) also found that for Cambodian nationals, both loans and wage deductions were equally common options for those using regular channels. However, Cambodian migrants moving irregularly rarely opted for wage deductions, but routinely

took out loans. Cambodian migrants also relied more commonly on money lenders than other nationals in the region (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

A study by OECD (2017) reported that 70 per cent of Cambodian migrants send money back home to Cambodia. The most popular channel for those Cambodian migrants working in Thailand is through a money transfer operator who conducts the whole process over the telephone. The service charges around 4 to 5 per cent of the amount transferred (ibid). Those who work along the border tend to carry money home themselves or send money via their relatives and friends. The primary reasons for Cambodian migrants using informal channels are based on greater trust, ease of use, flexibility and accessibility. Formal channels, such as banking institutions, are often discouraged because they require official identification documents and large amounts of paperwork. These barriers to financial inclusion are assumed to not only impede economic sustainable development but also negatively influence the ability of migrants to fully leverage their remittances for the long-term benefit of their households (UNTWGM, 2019).

Picture 4 - DTM interviews at the Migrant Reception Center (MRC) in Poi Pet city

Thematic Area 4 – Migrant Vulnerabilities

Looking at Cambodian migrants' vulnerabilities in their countries of destination, there are several indicators and indirect proxies that can be used to identify potential risks. The OECD report (2017) cites several studies that claim Cambodian migrant workers, both regular and irregular, face multi-faceted problems at several stages of the migration experience. Problems related to the journey or the recruitment process often relate to high payments, confiscation of passports as well as misinformation about working conditions. Problems related to the workplace in Thailand most often evolve around salary deductions, forced labour, physical assault as well as deprivation of health care and food.

For Cambodian migrants working in Thailand the language barrier is considered a potential vulnerability because the inability to speak Thai can create certain risk factors, for instance not being able to communicate with individuals and institutions in their host communities or challenges consulting with local NGO staff when seeking assistance. Chaisuparakul (2015) states that after three to six months, many of the migrant workers said they can speak and understand Thai; however, it takes them about one to two years to become functionally literate. A notable problem specific to Cambodian migrants is also the relatively high percentage of people who are entirely pre-literate. According to Verité (2019) low literacy rates mean there is low reliance of jobseekers on written contracts compared to their strong reliance on friends and relatives to verbally describe the job's terms and conditions to them.

Migrant's documentation and legal status is another indicator of potential vulnerabilities. Many migrants that are in Thailand irregularly cannot access certain rights or voice their complaints to authorities without the fear of deportation. Baker (2015) found in his research that the non-deportees experienced significantly better working conditions and less exploitation in Thailand compared to those who reported their deportation. Few Cambodian workers enter Thailand through the MoU or other regular procedures due to its complicated, bureaucratic, and expensive nature. As a result, accountability of actors, monitoring, and meaningful regulatory protections are absent for most migrant workers (Verité Inc, 2019; Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). Furthermore, it should be noted that legal status is far from static for migrant workers in Thailand. Migrants may initially migrate via regular channels and possess all the required documents to work but become irregular later due to overstaying the period granted by the documents or changes in employment status (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

Having an irregular status as a migrant worker in Thailand can have further implications on labor protection rights for instance being properly paid and compensated. Baker's research highlighted that wages were consistently relatively low for Cambodian migrants who had been deported from Thailand, many of which were irregular. In 2009, research showed the average monthly salary was only THB 2,973 (≈ USD 89[3]), THB 5,599 (≈USD186[4]) in 2010 and THB 3,344 (≈USD 109[5]) in 2012 (Baker, 2015). Although the minimum wage in Thailand varies per province and had been adjusted over the course of recent years, the average salaries for the three time periods indicated above sit below all provincial minimum wages. The same research also identified that on average Cambodian migrants working in the agriculture sector were earning the least. The Risk and Reward study of ILO and IOM (2017) reported wages of USD 250 for women and USD 286 for men.[6] The study also confirms that the agriculture sector appears to be paying the least to their workers whereas the domestic work sector appeared to be paying the highest wages (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

Another indicator for labour protection rights is the average working time of the migrants. Harkins et al (2017) report that migrants from all countries were working on average 9 to 11-hour days for six to seven days per week, which is beyond the legal limit in both Thailand and Malaysia. Similar results were observed in Baker's (2015) research in which migrants, especially in the fishing industries and in the domestic work sector tend to work 12 hours or more.

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3   Based and calculated with the USD-THB exchange rate on 31 Dec 2009 (1 USD = 33.36 THB)
4   Based and calculated with the USD-THB exchange rate on 31 Dec 2010 (1 USD = 30.025 THB)
5   Based and calculated with the USD-THB exchange rate on 31 Dec 2012 (1 USD = 30.59 THB)
6   these figures include different origin county nationalities as well as Thailand and Malaysia as country of destination

As already identified, many of the Cambodian migrants working in Thailand do so without proper documentation. Although written employment contracts do not appear to be a norm in the labour migration context between Thailand and Cambodia, it is even less so if migrants do not hold a legal status. The ILO and IOM (2017) study reports that those migrants who worked with a regular legal status received a written agreement 45 per cent of the cases, compared to only 6 per cent for migrant workers with an irregular status (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). As already explained above, the report published by Verité (2019) further explains that because of the often-prevalent low literacy rates of the Cambodian migrant workers there is low reliance on written contracts but rather jobseekers' reliance on friends and relatives to describe the job's terms and conditions to them. Migrant workers also appear not to ascribe much importance to seeing a written employment contract before their departure. Factors like salary/earnings, the level of overtime, wage deductions, and level of difficulty of the job were the migrants' main concerns which information they usually gained from family/friends or the brokers/recruiters (Verité Inc, 2019).

As identified by the Thailand Migration Report of 2019, despite some improvements in recent years substantial gaps continue to exist in fundamental labour rights protection. Persistent labour abuses against women and men migrant workers continue, including indicators of forced labour such as deceptive recruitment practices and withholding of wages (UNTWGM, 2019). Moreover, in the Risk and Reward study common problems reported were lack of proper documentation or documents being taken away, not being adequately informed about procedures, wages being withheld or being paid below the minimum wage. Regarding employment conditions and labour rights, more than half of all migrant workers surveyed (59 per cent) experienced labour rights abuses during their employment in Thailand and Malaysia. Cambodian migrants (80%) were among the migrant groups that were most likely to experience rights abuses (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

In terms of support mechanisms, the Verité (2019) study found that migrants placed a higher value on their social networks than humanitarian networks. This is supported by the findings from the DTM Flow Monitoring activities at the Thai-Myanmar border. Myanmar migrant workers more commonly made use of family/friends, and to a lesser extent referred to official support mechanisms such as authorities or humanitarian actors (IOM, 2018a; IOM, 2018b). Formally there are three types of organizations, Cambodian migrants can turn to:

> *"(a) those that share information about safe migration; (b) those that receive and process complaints from, and provide legal support to, migrant workers on problems related to recruitment agencies and employment; and (c) those who rescue distressed, abused, or deported workers, including trafficked workers" (Verité Inc, 2019, p. 33).*

Although these mechanisms exist, many Cambodian migrants are not aware that they do or know how to make use of them. Similar results were found in the IOM and ILO study (2017). Although not exclusively focusing on Cambodian migrants, overall, not many migrant workers sought assistance (29%) when they encountered problems. Among those who did seek support, most commonly friends and family were mentioned as source of aid in all countries of origin. Of those migrants who experienced problems (n=803), the large majority (90%) stated that their problems were not resolved (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). Only a few migrant workers reported to have sought assistance from government agencies because they feel that they usually do not have adequate information about where to go or are not sure how to approach them for support. As a result, migrant workers are more likely to contact family or friends for help when they need assistance (ibid).

Thematic Area 5 – Return

All studies reviewed which cover the topic of return appear to collectively agree that return is often associated with some degree of challenge. Studies usually report that although life might not have been easy in Thailand it was often still viewed more favorably than the life in Cambodia (Baker, 2015). Many migrants return to Cambodia because of personal, family and circumstantial reasons such as family obligations or being homesick (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017). Bylander (2019) highlights in her study that returning migrants often face a range of economic, social and psychological challenges such as boredom, anxiety or depression. This applies to those migrants that return to the same contexts that motivated their migration in the first place – this can include economic or environmental insecurity, threats to personal safety or well-being as well as social and/or economic exclusion. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that especially in the cases of failed migration leading to involuntary return, returning migrants may be in a worse economic position than when they left. According to Bylander (2019) this worsened economic situation is often connected to debt and economic post-migration challenges like finding a job or having insufficient earnings. In comparison to other nationalities, Cambodian migrants most commonly reported to being burdened with indebtedness after their return (35%) and were most likely to report a lack of financial savings (57%) (Bylander, 2019). The IOM and ILO Risk and Reward study (2017) also identified that three quarter of the sample had already made up their minds on whether they would migrate again within the next two years. Overall, more respondents indicated that they would not return to working abroad (46%) while 29 per cent reported they would. Looking only on Cambodian nationals nearly half (49%) reported that they intended to migrate again (Harkins, Lindgren, & Suravoranon, 2017).

Data Gaps

The literature review indicates that there have been efforts to paint a better picture of migration from Cambodia to Thailand and the patterns associated with it. While the academic sector largely focuses on ethnographic dimensions of Cambodian nationals residing in Thailand, the international humanitarian community has tried to deepen its understanding of the nature of migration in the region, the associated risks, the decision-making process and the long-term effects. Although there has been an increase in the number of studies concerning Cambodian migrants in Thailand, overall the research remains limited. Many studies only discuss Cambodia as one of the many migrant sending countries in the ASEAN region, which leads to reports that don't include in-depth research specific to Cambodian migration patterns. Furthermore, the data that has been collected often consists of small sample sizes, which makes it difficult to generalize the results for a wider population. Furthermore, the proposed thematic areas in the IOM DTM study, have, in most cases, never been studied extensively, but have often only been part of much broader research.

The data collection exercise in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province aims to inform and provide a more comprehensive picture of the information presented in each thematic area. The use of the two tools, before and after migration, will enable a unique and original comparison, which will help to understand migrants' journeys from two points in time (before migration and before return). Receiving information at the pre-departure point and upon return will fill the gap in information on how well migrants are prepared for their journeys, what expectations they held and how these expectations were met or not. Furthermore, the focus on only two provinces in Cambodia with a high intensity of labour migrants (instead of several sites) will enable IOM Cambodia to collect a larger sample size and so provide more in-depth and representative results. Unlike other datasets, this study will not only focus on long-term migration, but will also include daily-workers going to Thailand, establishing a complete picture of the Cambodian migrant worker population leaving and returning through Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province.
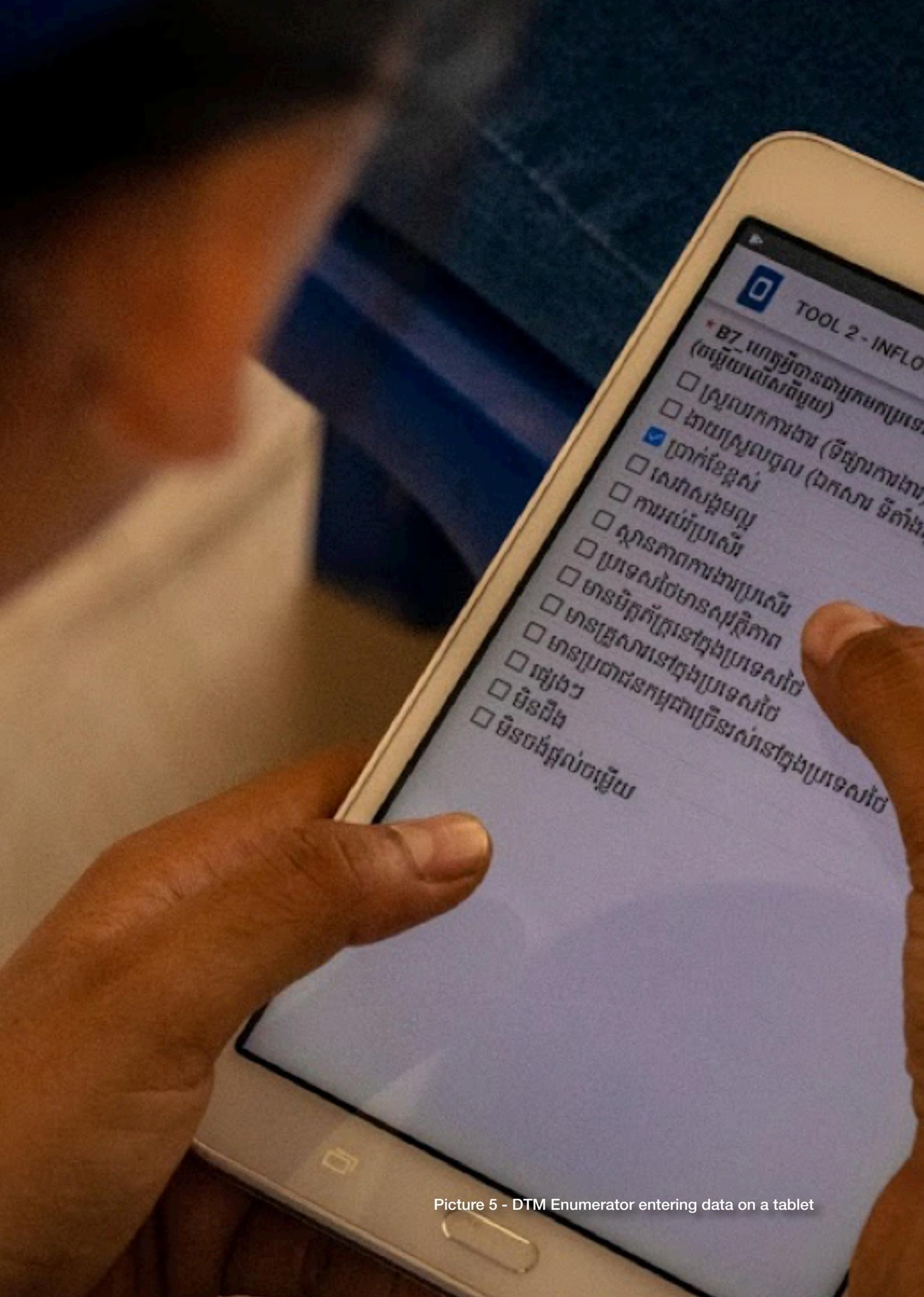
Picture 5 - DTM Enumerator entering data on a tablet

Data Analysis

Between 11 March and 25 May 2019 (11 weeks) IOM Cambodia collected a total of 3,127 surveys using two questionnaire tools designed using the DTM Flow Monitoring component and adapted to fit the context in Banteay Meanchey and Battambang province. To only capture the migrant population traveling from Cambodia to Thailand, at the beginning of the Tool 1 survey migrants were asked if they intended to stay in Thailand or if they had plans to travel further. The results show that all migrants surveyed under Tool 1 reported that they intend to stay in Thailand.

A total of 1,419 surveys were collected in Banteay Meanchey province, more precisely in Poi Pet city, and 1,708 surveys were collected in Battambang province, in the districts of Kamrieng and Phnom Preuk. Looking at the two survey tools, 2,501 surveys were collected with Tool 1 (Outgoing Cambodian nationals) and 626 surveys with Tool 2 (Returning Cambodian nationals). The analysis section below follows the same structure as the literature review, and provides an analysis of data by thematic area. Whenever possible the study also establishes relationships and cross tabulations between the different thematic areas.

Thematic Area 1 – Migrant Profiles

Socio-demographic Profiles

The study is only interested in capturing the movement of Cambodian nationals migrating to and from Thailand, therefore the survey included a question ensuring that only migrants from Cambodian origin were included in the sample. The gender distribution of the sample consists of 1,433 female respondents (46%) and 1,694 male respondents (54%). This breakdown does not correspond with the number of the UNDESA 2017 international migrant stock data, where females were overrepresented by 56 per cent, however the breakdown does comply with findings from other studies focusing on labor migration from Cambodia to Thailand. The share between the two sample populations were slightly different, with an increased share of female respondents for returning migrants (49%) in comparison to outgoing migrants (45%). The sample of returning migrants is slightly older with an average age of 30 years in comparison to an average age of 29 for the outgoing sample. For both groups, many of the respondents are between the ages of 16 and 30 (62.6% for outgoing migrants and 53.2% for returning migrants). Comparing the sample population with previous research on labor migrants from Cambodia the average age of this research appears to be slightly older.

Figure 4 - Overall Age Breakdown (n=3,061)

- 16 - 30 years: 60.5%
- 31 - 45 years: 34.5%
- 46 - 60 years: 4.5%
- more than 60 years: 0.5%
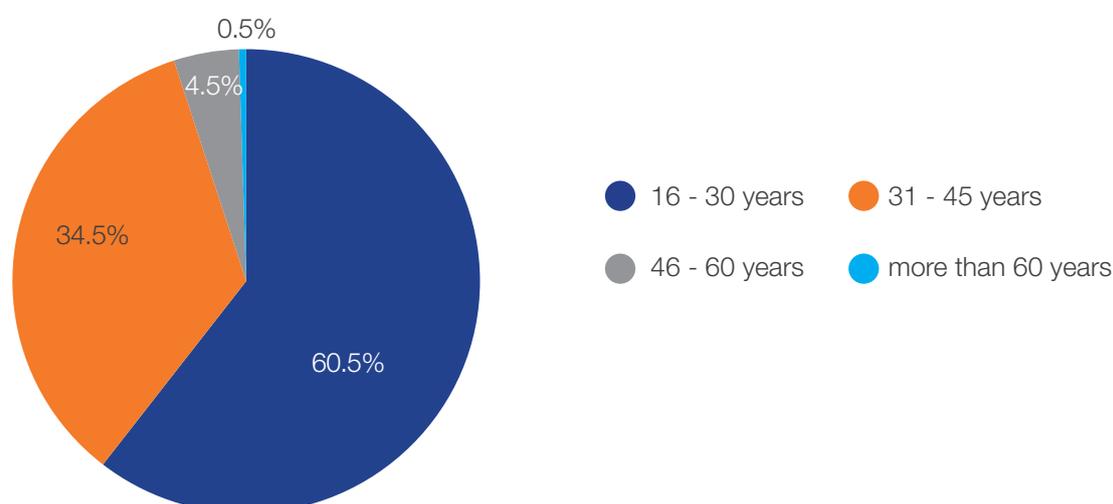
The same applies to the findings regarding the marital status. While it is commonly reported in previous studies that Cambodian labour migrants tend to be single, the data shows that the clear majority in both samples reported to be married (69% for outgoing migrants and 73% for returning migrants). Respectively 28 per cent of the outgoing sample and 24 per cent of the return sample indicated to be single. The remaining 3 per cent of the outgoing as well as returning migrants were either divorced, widowed or engaged. It was found that females were more likely to be married than their male counterparts (74.5% vs. 66%).

As expected with the high percentage of married respondents, most migrants also reported having children (64%). The large majority (almost 80%) reported that at least one of their children was still living in Cambodia. Another 25 per cent also reported that at least one of their children was travelling with them to or from Thailand. Only 6 per cent reported that their children were either already in Thailand before the parent arrived (outgoing migrants) or remained in Thailand (returning migrants) after their parent returned to Cambodia.

Figure 5 - Location of Children (n=1,998)
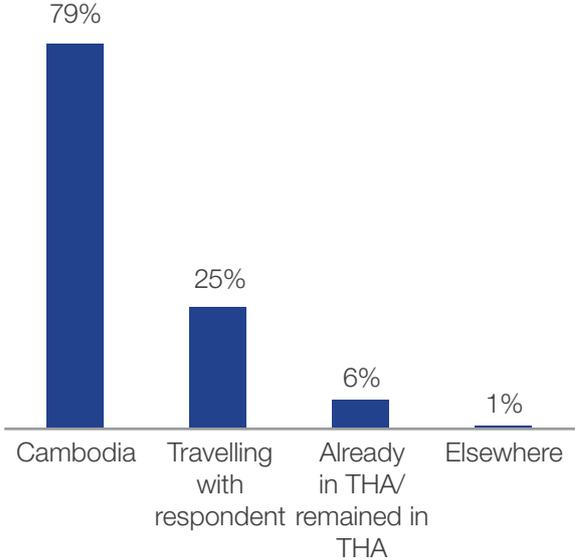
Figure 6 - Overall Level of Education (n=3,127)

- ● No Education
- ● Primary
- ● Seconday
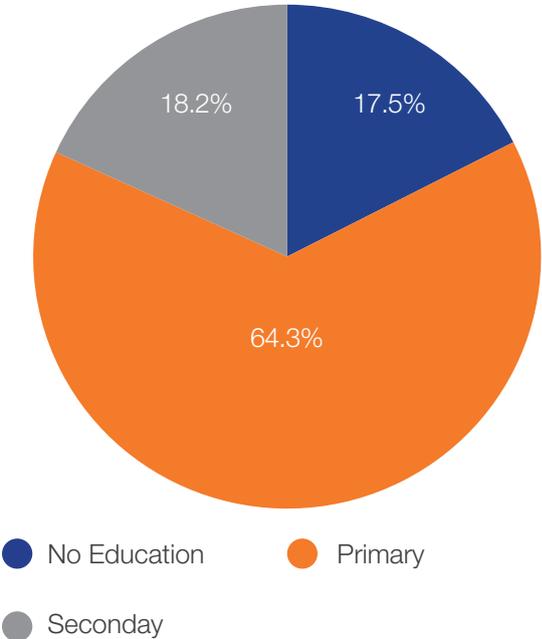
The data shows a similar education level for both sample populations. The largest share reported to have completed primary education (64%), followed by respondents reporting having completed secondary education (18%) and another 17.5 per cent reported to not have completed any formal education form. The number of respondents that reported not having completed any kind of education largely corresponds to previous research on labour migrants from Cambodia. Looking at the gender distribution, the data shows that the male sample had a slightly larger share of uneducated respondents (19% versus 15.5%) and a higher share of respondents having completed secondary education (20.5% versus 16%).

Places of Origin

Almost 100 per cent of the respondents cited Cambodia as their last place of residence prior to their migration, only 1 returning respondent named Malaysia as their last place of residence. Looking at the provinces of origin, Battambang (39%), Banteay Meanchey (18%) and Siem Reap (10%) were named as the three provinces with the largest proportions of transiting migrant workers. Data was collected at locations both in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province. Those migrants interviewed in and around Poi Pet (Banteay Meanchey province) originated largely from Banteay Meanchey (29%), Battambang (22%), Siem Reap (13%), Kampong Thom (9%) and Prey Veng (5%). Looking at the respondents that were interviewed around the Doung international border crossings and some local check points in Kamrieng and Phnom Preuk districts (Battambang province), the majority also originated from Battambang province (53%), followed by Banteay Meanchey (9%). These results were not unexpected. Although Doung is also an international check point it is more commonly known to be used by border pass holders, while Poi Pet is the busiest international check point in Cambodia and many people from different parts of Cambodia travel there to cross the border to Thailand.

Table 5 - Locations of Origin by Point of Entry

| Origin Location – Respondents in Banteay Meanchey Province (n=1,418)			Origin Location – Respondents in Battambang Province (n=1,707)			Origin Location – Total (n=3,125)		
Province	**#**	**%**	**Province**	**#**	**%**	**Province**	**#**	**%**
1. Banteay Meanchey	412	29.06%	1. Battambang	893	52.31%	1. Battambang	1207	38.62%
2. Battambang	314	22.14%	2. Banteay Meanchey	151	8.85%	2. Banteay Meanchey	563	18.02%
3. Siem Reap	188	13.26%	3. Siem Reap	135	7.91%	3. Siem Reap	323	10.34%
4. Kampong Thom	130	9.17%	4. Kampong Cham	89	5.21%	4. Kampong Thom	155	4.96%
5. Prey Veng	72	5.08%	5. Pursat	85	4.98%	5. Prey Veng	149	4.77%
6. Pursat	50	3.53%	6. Prey Veng	77	4.51%	6. Kampong Cham	138	4.42%
7. Kampong Cham	49	3.46%	7. Pailin	43	2.52%	7. Pursat	135	4.32%
8. Kampong Chhnang	42	2.96%	8. Kampot	42	2.46%	8. Kampong Chhnang	65	2.08%
Other	161	11.34%	Other	192	11.25%	Other	390	12.47%

Almost the complete sample identified themselves as being of Khmer ethnicity. Not even a full per cent identified themselves as either Khmer Chinese or Khmer Vietnamese.

Map 1 - Places of Origin in Cambodia

SA KAEO
SVAY CHEK
MALAI
SAMPOV LUN
HNUM PROEL
BAVEL
SOI DAO
KAMRIENG
BATTAMBANG
CHANTHABURI
PAILIN
BANAN
PAILIN

● Border Crossing Point

THAILAND

ODDAR MEANCHEY

BANTEAY MEANCHEY

SIEMREAP

PREAH VIHEAR

STUNG TRENG

RATANAK KIRI

BATTAMBANG

PAILIN

KAMPONG THOM

KRATIE

MONDUL KIRI

CAMBODIA

PURSAT

KAMPONG CHHNANG

KAMPONG CHAM

TBOUNG KHMUM

KANDAL

KOH KONG

KAMPONG SPEU

PHNOM PENH

PREY VENG

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

SVAY RIENG

PREAH SIHANOUK

KAMPOT

TAKEO

KEP

VIET NAM

CAMBODIA

LAST STATE OF RESIDENCE

PROPORTION OF MIGRANTS SURVEYED

	< 1%
	1% - 2%
	2% - 5%
	5% - 20%
	> 20%

Data Source : Government of Thailand, GISTA, ESRI, HERE, Garmin, IOM, MIMU, OpenStreetMap

Disclaimer : This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

0   20   40   80
Kilometers

Places of Destination

To establish a comprehensive profile of Cambodian nationals migrating to Thailand, it is also important to identify the intended provinces of destination within Thailand. The destinations can provide valuable information on migration patterns, as well as living and working conditions, ultimately allowing for more targeted programmatic interventions. While outgoing migrants were asked about their intended destination province in Thailand (single-answer), returning migrants were asked which provinces they had lived in during their last migration experience (multiple-answer). Although, for both samples many of the respondents reported Chanthaburi as their province of destination, in Thailand the distribution looks very different. In the case of outgoing migrants, exactly half of the respondents (50%) reported to be going to Chanthaburi while only 18 per cent of the migrants returned from Chanthaburi. Bangkok and Chonburi are the second and third most popular destination province for both samples (see Table 6).

Table 6 - Provinces of Destination by Population Group

Intended Province of Destination – Outgoing Migrants (n=2,501)			Province of Destination – Returning Migrants (n=626)		
Province	#	%	Province	#	%
1. Chanthaburi	1251	50.02%	1. Chanthaburi	113	18.05%
2. Bangkok	399	15.95%	2. Chon Buri	96	15.34%
3. Chon Buri	268	10.72%	3. Bangkok	85	13.58%
4. Sa Kaeo	68	2.72%	4. Sa Kaeo	50	7.99%
5. Unknown	67	2.68%	5. Unknown	44	7.03%
6. Chachaoengsao	58	2.32%	6. Pathum Thani	32	5.11%
7. Pathum Thani	53	2.12%	7. Rayong	30	4.79%
8. Samut Prakan	48	1.92%	8. Samut Prakan	18	2.88%
9. Saraburi	37	1.48%	9. Samut Sakhon	13	2.08%
Other	152	10.08%	Other	145	22.91%

As already visible for the question regarding the province of origin, the different data collection points show varying provinces of intended destination. Poi Pet, as the busiest international border point known to be used by migrants from all over Cambodia, it is important to note that the data collected at this crossing point indicates that migrants intend to travel specifically to Bangkok (28.5%), Chonburi (21%) as well as Sa Kaeo (8%). However, for migrants going through Doung or the local checkpoints of Ou Anlouk and O Romdul, the most common destination is the neighbouring province of Chanthaburi (80%) and only 5 per cent wanting to go onward to Bangkok. The exact reason cannot be identified in this research, however, as anecdotal knowledge suggests, the area around Doung international border is used especially for border region migration (i.e. through utilization of the border pass).

Map 2 - Intended Provinces of Destination (Outgoing Migrants)

Duration of Stay

Incoming migrants were asked about their intended duration of stay in Thailand while returning migrants were asked to specify how long they stayed in Thailand. Knowing the duration of stay can help to understand migration patterns. Short or longer-term migration can have different impacts on the migration experiences. Looking at the results for the question how long migrants intend to stay (outgoing migrants) or actually stayed (returning migrants) the data shows that longer-term migration seems to be preferred by both samples. Of the outgoing migrants, 39 per cent reported wanting to stay in Thailand for more than a year. This corresponds with the results of the return data where 52 per cent reported to have left Cambodia more than a year ago (see Figure 7). While daily labour does not seem to be common within both samples, especially for the outgoing migrants, a relatively large share of 18.5 per cent reported that they only intend to stay for one week (the amount of time that can be spend on a border pass). This will be further explored in section four covering the different documentation statuses. Returning migrants were asked the additional question whether the time they stayed in Thailand was also the time they had expected to stay away. Two thirds of the sample (66.5%) confirmed that the intended time of stay and actual time of stay in Thailand matched. Another 28 per cent reported that they did not know the length of their stay and for 5 per cent, the time did not correspond with their expectations. The largest share had expected to stay longer than they had stayed.

Figure 7 - Expected Time to Stay in Thailand (Outgoing Migrants) vs Actual Time Spend in Thailand (Returning Migrants) n=3,127
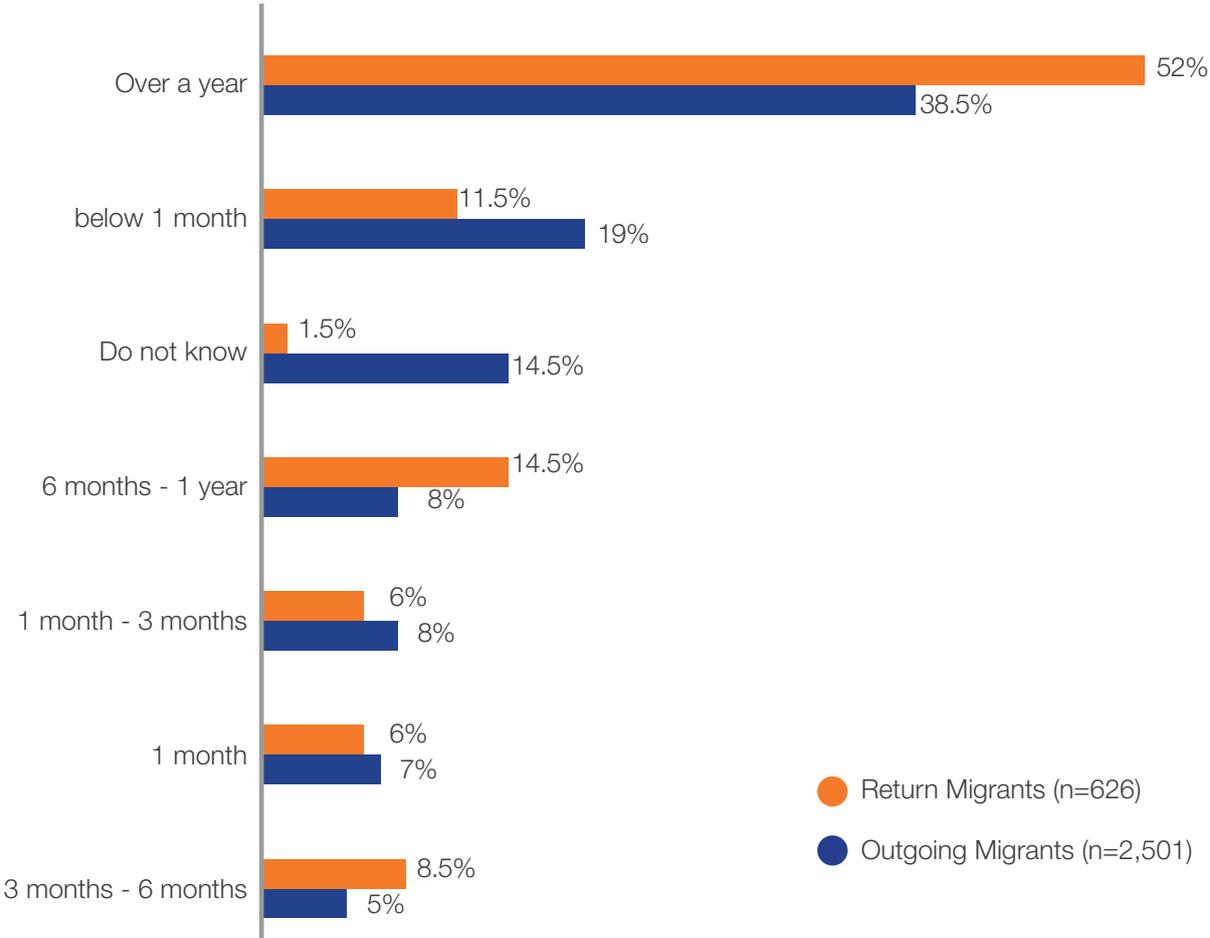
Thematic Area 2 – Drivers of Migration & the Decision-Making Process

Although the literature often discusses the purported 'push and pull factors' for migration from Cambodia, this analysis takes a more holistic approach to the process, to provide a deeper understanding on why Cambodian migrants choose Thailand as their main destination over other countries in the region. Before turning to drivers, the socio-economic characteristics of migrants are analyzed to understand their conditions prior to departure.

Socio-Economic Profiles

The data reveals that the most common forms of previous employment in Cambodia for both populations were private employment (79% of outgoing and 65% of returning migrants), followed by unemployment (14.5% of outgoing and 19.5% of returning migrants). Looking at the gender distribution the data shows that the female proportion of those unemployed is twice as large as for the male sample (20.5% vs 11%) (see figure 10). The unemployment rate was also specifically high for respondents for youth between the age range of 16 and 30 years (see Figure 9).

Prior to their migration, respondents were most commonly employed in the agriculture/ forestry/ fishing sectors or in construction (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8 - Overall Sectors of Employment before Migration (n=3,108)**
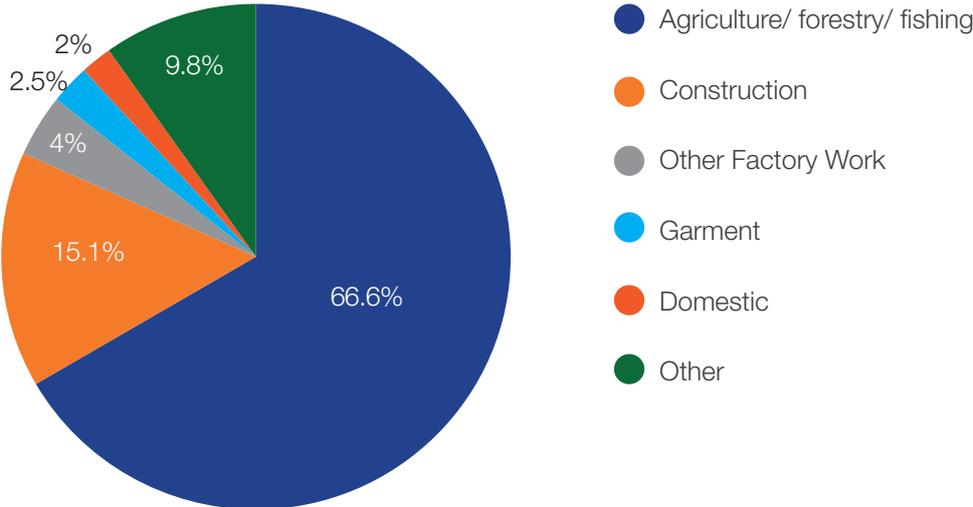
Figure 9 - Overall Status of Employment before Migration by Age Group (n=3,127)
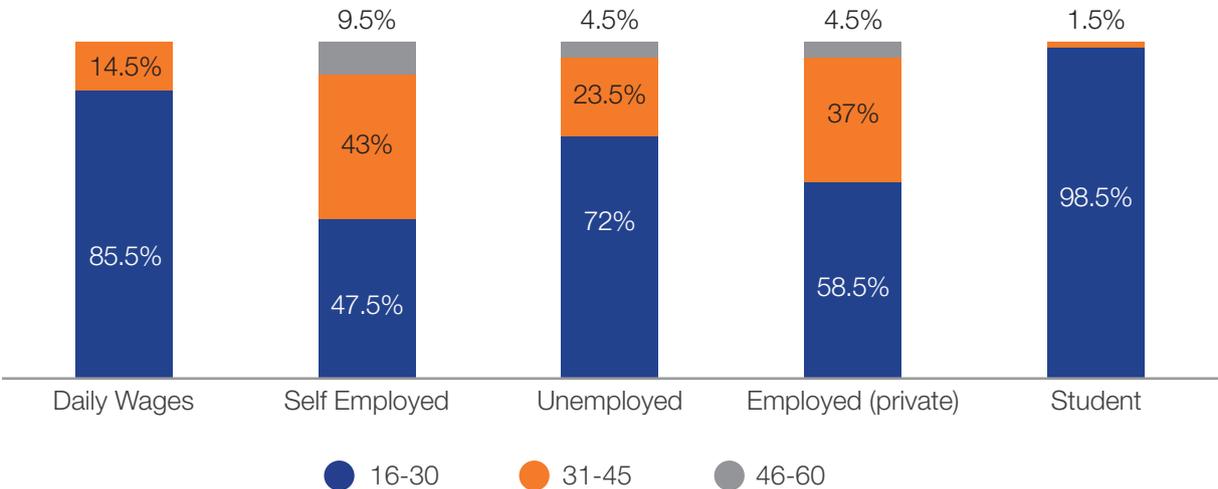
Figure 10 – Status of Employment before Migration by Gender

Legend: Daily wages · Student · Self-employed · Unemployed · Employed (private)

Male: 0.5% | 6% | 11% | 81%
Female: 1.5% / 0.5% | 3% | 6.5% | 20.5% | 69.5%
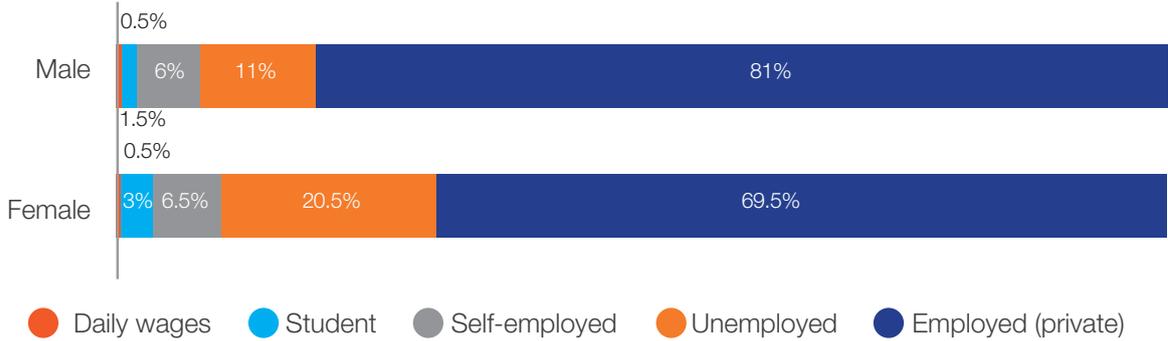
Reasons for Leaving Cambodia

Knowing the reasons for leaving combined with factors influencing the decision-making process can provide crucial information on migration patterns. Some respondents reported multiple reasons for leaving Cambodia and migrating to Thailand. The most common reasons were to seek employment for themselves (32%), family problems (29.5%), the payment of debts (27.5%), as well as problems related to landownership such as having poor quality land (18%) or not owning land (14.5%). Another 7.5 per cent also reported joining their spouse that found employment in Thailand. Looking at this reason in a bit more detail, the data shows that females appear to be slightly more likely to follow their husbands than vice versa (10.5% versus 5%). The broader reasons for leaving related to economic conditions, family problems as well as land ownership were generally aligned with previous findings in other literature.

Of the 68 per cent that did not explicitly cite economic reasons or employment for leaving Cambodia, they were asked if they either planned to work in Thailand during their stay (outgoing migrants) or if they had worked during their stay in Thailand (returning migrants). For both samples almost the entire respondents group confirmed that they plan to work (99.9%) or that they did work (99.5%) during their stay in Thailand. In total, five respondents reported not to have an intention to work or were not working during their stay and were as a result excluded from the sample as the subsequent questions mainly related to work experiences and expectations in Thailand. The new sample size from this question forward is therefore n=3,122.

Figure 11 - First Time Coming to Thailand for Employment by Population Group

Returning Migrants: 20% (Yes) | 80% (No)
Outgoing Migrants: 28% (Yes) | 72% (No)

Legend: Yes · No
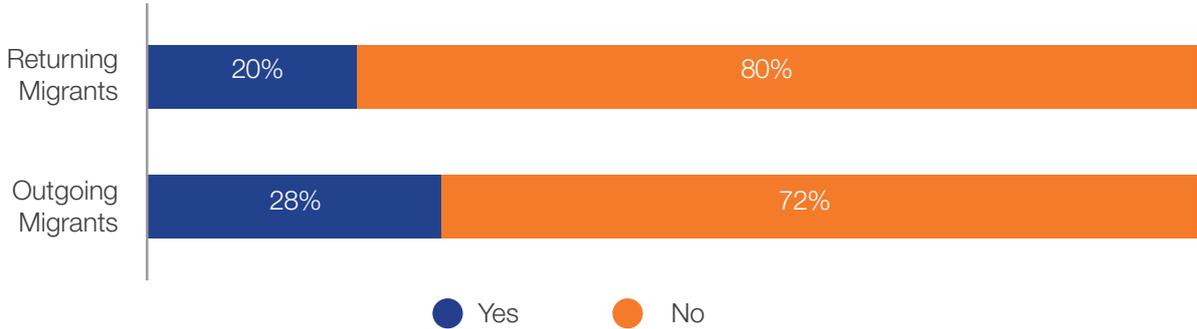
To understand the migration patterns of the sample population, the respondents were asked if this was their first experience working in Thailand. Of the outflow sample, 72 per cent reported that they had previously migrated and worked and 80 per cent of the returnee sample reported they had migrated and worked in Thailand previously. For those that had previously worked in Thailand, the main sectors of employment were agriculture/forestry (44%), followed by construction (33.5%) and manufacturing (15.5%).

When asked why they preferred to migrate to Thailand over another country in the region, the most common reasons included higher incomes (62%), easy access to the job market (48.5%), close proximity and easy access (geographically) to Thailand (40.5%), better working conditions (9%) as well as having family and/or existing connections in Thailand (8.5%).

To better understand the drivers of migration, respondents were also asked how they obtained their information about life in Thailand. In terms of sources of information, the majority (66%) cited family and friends in Thailand, followed by other migrants that had previously lived in Thailand (16%) previous migration experiences (6%) or from recruitment agencies (6%). Looking at the gender distribution the data shows that male respondents were slightly more likely to cite recruitment agencies and family/friends in Thailand as their sources of information. Females were more likely to gain information from people that had previously migrated and their own experiences. It is worth noting that only 6 per cent identified their own previous experience as their source, although over two thirds had in an earlier question answered that they had already worked in Thailand previously. The importance of family and friends in Thailand supports the established network theory that migrants often rely on family/friends that have already set up roots in the country of destination and a significant amount of trust is placed in the experiences of their family/friends in their own migration journey.

Picture 6 - Cambodian migrants at the MRC in Poi Pet

Thematic Area 3 – Pre-migration Arrangements and Preparations

Employment Arrangements

Understanding migrants' preparations and arrangements prior to migration is crucial to identify potential vulnerabilities that could emerge from the lack of informed decision making. Respondents were asked if they had a job in place before they started their journey to Thailand. For both population groups, the overwhelming majority reported to have a job already lined up before leaving Cambodia (99.3% for outgoing migrants and 99.4% for returning migrants). This result might be slightly biased because some of the outgoing respondents reported that they returned to Cambodia only for a short-period and at the time of surveying were on their way back to Thailand with the intention to reassume their old job. When asked how they were able to secure the job, the majority of both samples (roughly 80% each) responded with "family and friends in Thailand" (see Figure 12).

Figure 12 - How Employment was Obtained by Population Group (n=3,108)
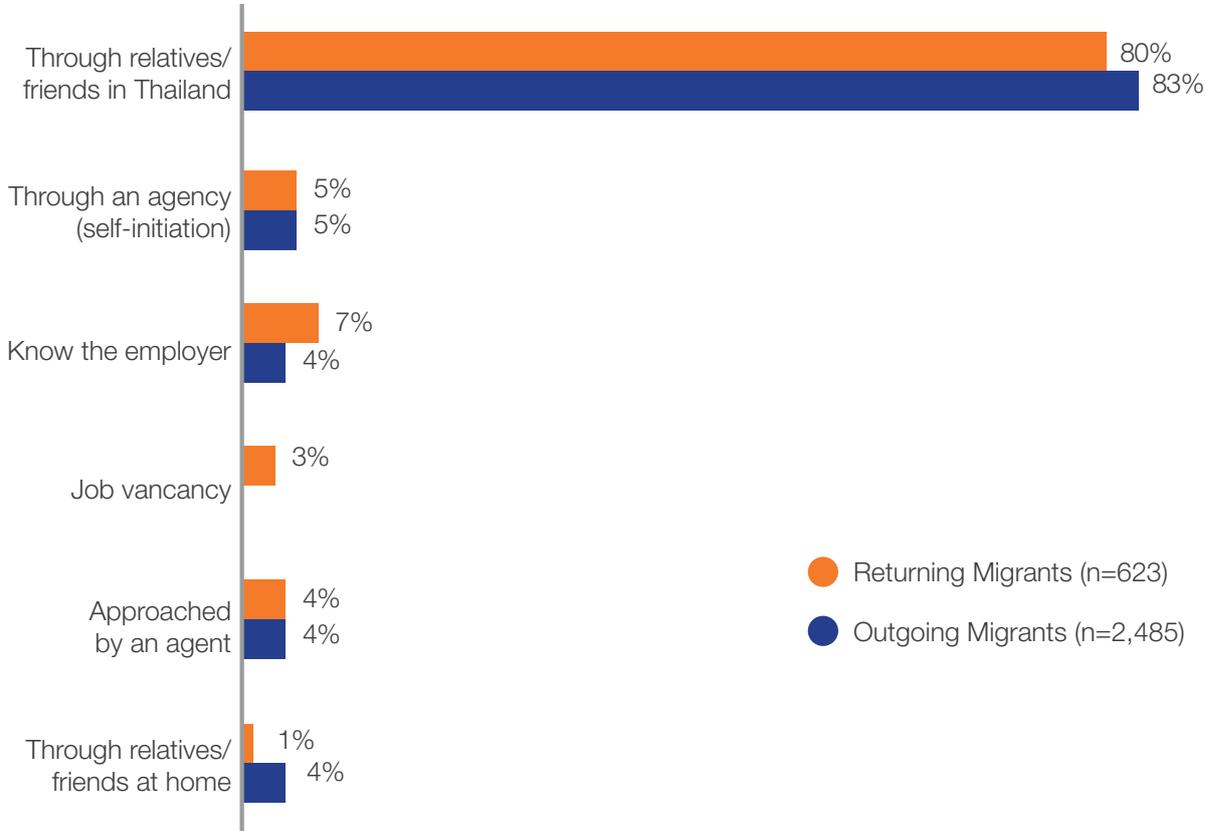
The respondents were further asked about the sector of employment they are working in at the destination in Thailand. For both samples, the three main employment sectors are agriculture/forestry, construction as well as manufacturing, however the sectors are ordered differently (see Table 7). Almost half of the outflow sample (45%) reported to be working in agriculture/forestry, while one third of the return sample (33%) worked in construction and an equal share (32%) in the agriculture/forestry sector. The difference in the data collection points is worth noting. The data confirms anecdotal knowledge that around the border points in Battambang movements are mostly related to agriculture work. Of those migrants crossing between Thailand and Cambodia, at the border points in Battambang, over 70 per cent reported that their work is related to the agriculture/forestry industry, while those migrants crossing in Banteay Meanchey Province (specifically in Poi Pet city) reported most commonly to be working in construction (46%), manufacturing (29%) with only in 8 per cent of the cases reporting they are employed in the agriculture sector.

Table 7 - Main Sectors of Employment in Thailand by Population Group

Tool 1 – Outgoing Migrants (n=2,485)			Tool2 – Returning Migrants (n=623)		
Sector	#	%	Sector	#	%
1. Agriculture/ forestry	1120	45.07%	1. Construction	208	33.39%
2. Construction	708	28.49%	2. Agriculture/ forestry	202	32.42%
3. Manufacturing	456	18.35%	3. Manufacturing	97	15.57%
4. Hotels/ accommodation/ food services	49	1.97%	4. Hotels/ accommodation/ food services	30	4.82%
5. Fishing	29	1.17%	5. Wholesale retail/ trade	24	3.85%
6. Other	75	3.02%	6. Other	62	9.95%

In terms of intended provinces of destination, certain patterns can also be recognized. Chanthaburi is clearly the main destination for the agriculture sector while Bangkok seems to be quite popular for construction and manufacturing as well as Chon Buri.

Figure 13 - Top 3 Sectors of Employment by Intended Province of Destination (n=3,122)

Legend:
- Chanthaburi
- Sa Kaeo
- Chon Buri
- Bangkok
- Chachoengsao
- Samut Prakan
- Pathum Thani
- Saraburi
- Remaining provinces

Agriculture/ Forestry: 85%, 4%, 1.5%, 9.5%

Construction: 11%, 3%, 23.5%, 26.5%, 5%, 4%, 3.5%, 22.5%, 1%

Manufacturing: 14.5%, 18%, 27%, 2%, 2.5%, 6%, 5%, 25%
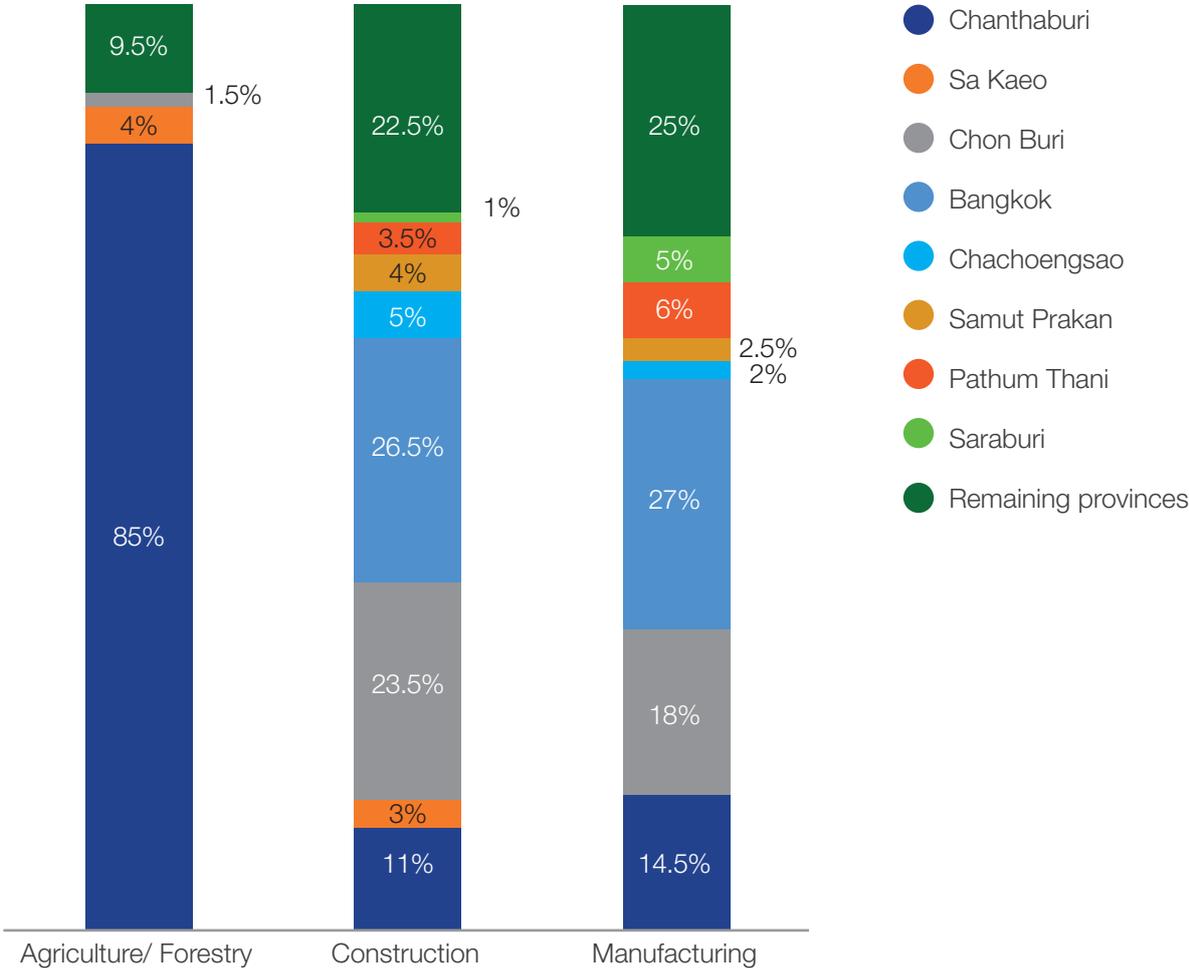
Migration Costs

Migrants were also asked about the cost of their journeys and sources of financing migration. On average, returning migrants paid USD 30 more than incoming migrants. On average outgoing migrants reported that they paid up to this point around USD 245 while returning migrants indicated that they had in total paid USD 276. Breaking the costs into different cost brackets, the data shows that the largest shares of both samples (67.5% of outgoing and 59% of returning migrants) reported costs between USD 1 and 149. Interestingly, the second largest share, also for both population groups (12.5% for outgoing and 12% for returning migrants) was the largest cost bracket of USD > 750 (see figure 14).

Figure 14 - Migration Costs by Population Group (n=2,980)

The average costs identified for this research is lower than numbers often reported in previous research studies. To shed more light on the different types of costs, different variables are considered to have an impact on the costs. Migrants going through regular channels are known to pay higher migration costs. Furthermore, migrants that only travel to neighbouring provinces are known to pay less than migrants that travel to provinces further into Thailand. Looking at the relationship between those variables and the migration costs, the data shows that returning migrants going to provinces further into Thailand also indicated higher costs (see Figure 15). Migration to Chanthaburi and Sa Kaeo, which are the provinces in Thailand that border the locations of the data collection, is associated with lower costs than to Bangkok and/or Chon buri (see Figure 15).

In terms of documentation status, those migrants travelling on a "travel document for overseas migrant workers"[7] (connected to the MOU) were most likely to be paying costs over USD 600. Migrants travelling on border passes and migrants with no documents made up over 90 per cent of those who paid in the lowest cost bracket (USD 1-149). This data also supports previous research that shows legal processes such as the MoU process is especially costly.

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7   A travel document is issued by the Royal Government of Cambodia for Cambodian migrant workers to work abroad, which is valid for 5 years.

Figure 15 - Overall Migration Cost by Province of Destination (Returning Migrants) n=623

Legend:
- USD 1-149
- USD 150-299
- USD 300-449
- USD 450 - 599
- USD 600 - 749
- USD > 750

Bangkok: 50%, 2%, 10.5%, 18%, 9%, 10.5%
Chon Buri: 49%, 9%, 2%, 9%, 11%, 20%
Chanthaburi: 86%, 4%, 2%, 5%, 3%
Sa Kaeo: 96%, 2%, 2%
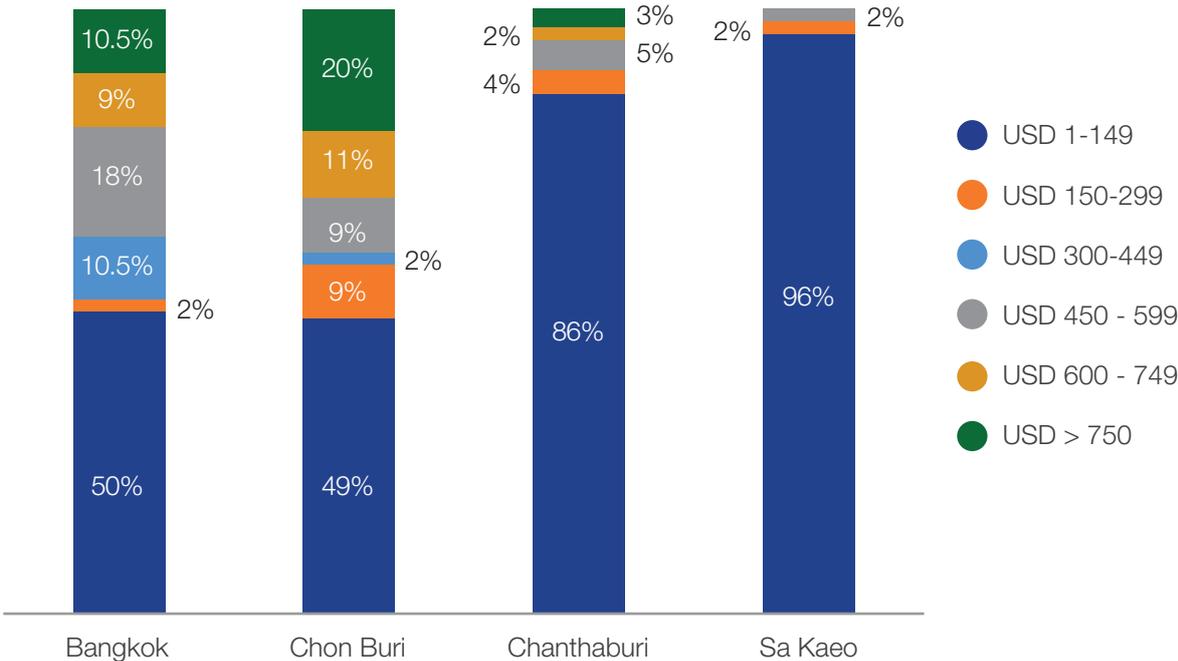
The costs of migration can indicate notions whether migrants will be vulnerable in the long run – the act of taking out a loan can especially increase the risk of vulnerabilities. Therefore, migrants were asked how they were able to finance their journeys. For both samples, the most common source of funding migratory journeys were financial savings, however other migrants also reported to have borrowed money from their employers or organized wage deductions with employers.

Figure 16 - Main Sources to Finance the Migration Journey by Population Group (n=3,122)

Savings: 61.5% / 49.5%
Borrowed from employer: 18% / 22%
Through wage deductions: 15% / 19%
Income/Wage: 8% / 15%
Borrowed from family/ friends (Cambodia): 8.5% / 6%
Borrowed from unoffical money lender: 3.5% / 5.5%
Borrowed from family/ friends (Thailand): 1.5% / 5.5%
Borrowed from micro-finance institute: 2% / 1.5%

- Outgoing Migrants
- Returning Migrants
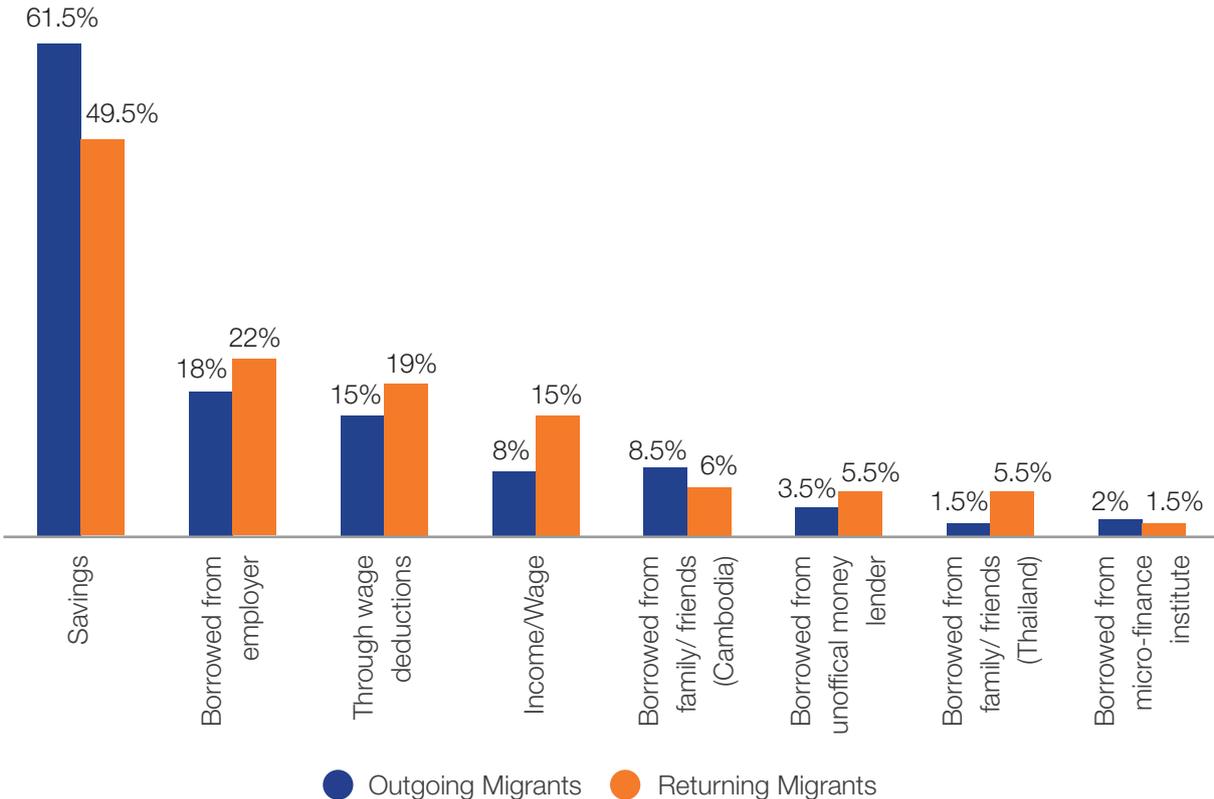
Support Mechanisms

Beyond financial support, respondents were asked about available support for their journey, and, if they received it, who helped them and how. This question can elucidate some valuable insights into migration dynamics especially if brokers were involved, if migrants largely made their own arrangements or if family/ friends were used as support networks. For both samples, the majority reported to have received some form of support (80% for outgoing migrants and 66% for returning migrants).

Figure 17 - Support Received in Migration Preparations by Population Group (n=3,122)
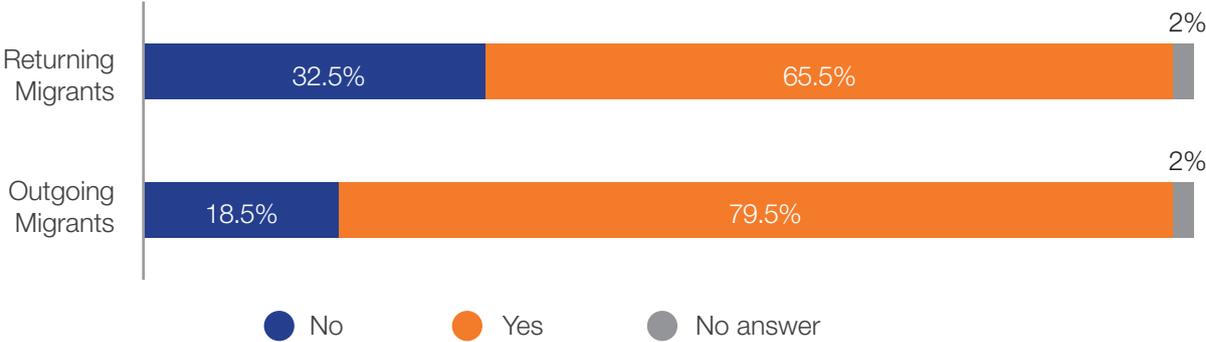
The actors involved were similar for both population groups. Overall, the majority reported to have foremost received support from their employer in Thailand (58%), followed by family and friends in Thailand (26%) and recruitment agencies (9%). Roughly four per cent received support from family and friends at home in Cambodia and three per cent relied on unlicensed brokers. Looking at the gender distribution no significant differences can be identified. Support was mainly provided in form of documents (81%), accommodation (33%), employment (31%) as well as transportation (19%) and orientation information (17%). Migrants that reported to have received assistance were also asked if a second actor was involved and if so what the person had arranged for them. Roughly 40 per cent of migrants that received support indicated that they had only relied on one actor in their migration preparations. Of the others, the majority named family and friends at home (31%) to have supported them. The employer in Thailand (16%) as well was family and friends (11%) are also important actors. Different to the first support mechanisms, as second arrangements the majority received support with transportation (69%), followed by accommodation (26%) employment (23%) and documents (20%). Looking at the different types of support and associated actors, the data shows that transportation was commonly arranged by family/friends in Thailand, employment by an employer in Thailand as well as family and friends in Thailand and documentation also mainly by the employer in Thailand followed by recruitment agencies. Accommodation is almost exclusively arranged by the employer, not through family/friends in Thailand.

The Journey

In terms of migration journeys, respondents were also asked with whom they travelled to Thailand as well as how they crossed the border between Thailand and Cambodia. The majority of respondents travelled with one or more persons. Only 11 per cent of the overall sample reported to have travelled by themselves. There is so significant difference between male and female respondents travelling alone. The respondents commonly travelled with their spouse (38%), other relatives (35%), friends (23%), their children (11.5%) or a group of other workers (15%). Only 3 per cent reported to have travelled with a broker.

Figure 18 - Travelling Alone or with Company (n=3,122)
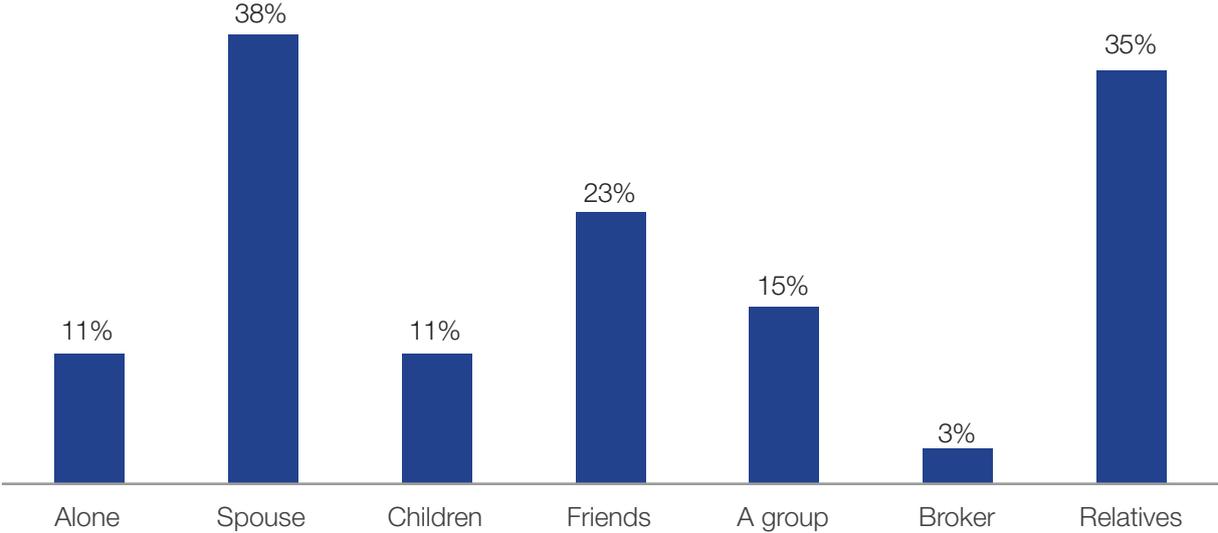
When asked how they entered Thailand, the clear majority indicated an international border crossing point (92%), followed by local check points (6%) and unofficial points (2%). Looking at the different types of documents the two per cent that reported to have crossed at an unofficial point were either holding a border pass (7-day validity) or no documents[8].

8   This shall not be taken as a representation of the overall migrant population going to Thailand. Since the data collection points were mainly around international and local check-points the results will be skewed in that direction

Picture 7 - DTM interview at Doung international border

Thematic Area 4 - Migrants' Vulnerabilities

Migrants can become vulnerable at different points of their migration experience for a variety of reasons and circumstances. This study uses several proxies and indicators to explore in more detail about Cambodian migrant workers' vulnerabilities. One of the indicators considered is language, and in this case, the ability for Cambodian migrants to communicate in Thai. Respondents were asked to rank their ability to speak, understand and read Thai from a scale of 1 to 5[9]. Analyzing the two sample populations, the data results are relatively similar. Overall, the largest share ranked their ability on level 2 for both speaking and understanding (38% and 41%). For reading the largest share placed themselves on the lowest level (1) namely in 81 per cent of the cases (see Figure 19). The subsample of returning migrants were also asked if their Thai language skills had improved during their stay. Results show that 77 per cent of the return sample reported that their Thai has improved "a bit", while 13 per cent reported "a lot" and for 11 per cent their Thai language skills have not improved at all. Comparing the duration of stay in Thailand with the language skills of returning migrants no definite pattern can be recognized.

Figure 19 - Thai Speaking/Understanding/Reading Levels (n=3,122)
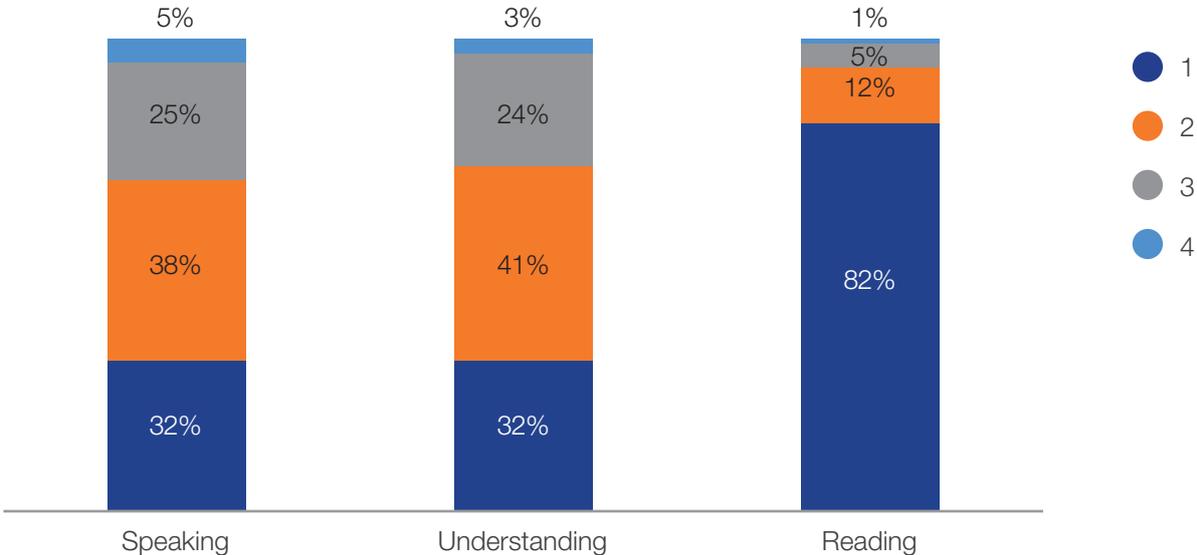
A second indicator used in the survey to assess Cambodian workers' vulnerability is access to legal status in Thailand. Outgoing migrants most often reported to be entering on a border pass (valid for 7 days) (48%) as well as on travel documents for oversea migrant workers[10] (24%) while returning migrants most commonly initially entered Thailand on Non-Immigrant visas[11](24%) or travel documents for oversea migrant workers (21%). Returning migrants also more often reported to have initially entered Thailand without documents. Looking at the data collection point, the proportion that did not have documents for their entry to Thailand was 60 per cent of the cases interviewed at the Migrant Reception Center (MRC) after their deportation to Cambodia.

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9   5 being the highest level of ability

10   Travel documents for oversea migrant workers are often issued in connection to the MoU process

11   Migrants receiving a work permit on a MoU are often issued Non-Immigrant visas

Figure 20 - Document Status by Population Group (n=3,122)

- Outgoing Migrants
- Returning Migrants

| Document Type	Outgoing	Returning
Border Pass (7 days)	48.3%	15.6%
Travel Document	23.6%	21.1%
Passport (non-immigrant visa)	16.3%	24.1%
Passport (tourist visa)	6.3%	9.5%
Border Pass (20 days)	3.5%	6.8%
None	0.5%	16.5%
Other	1.5%	6.4%
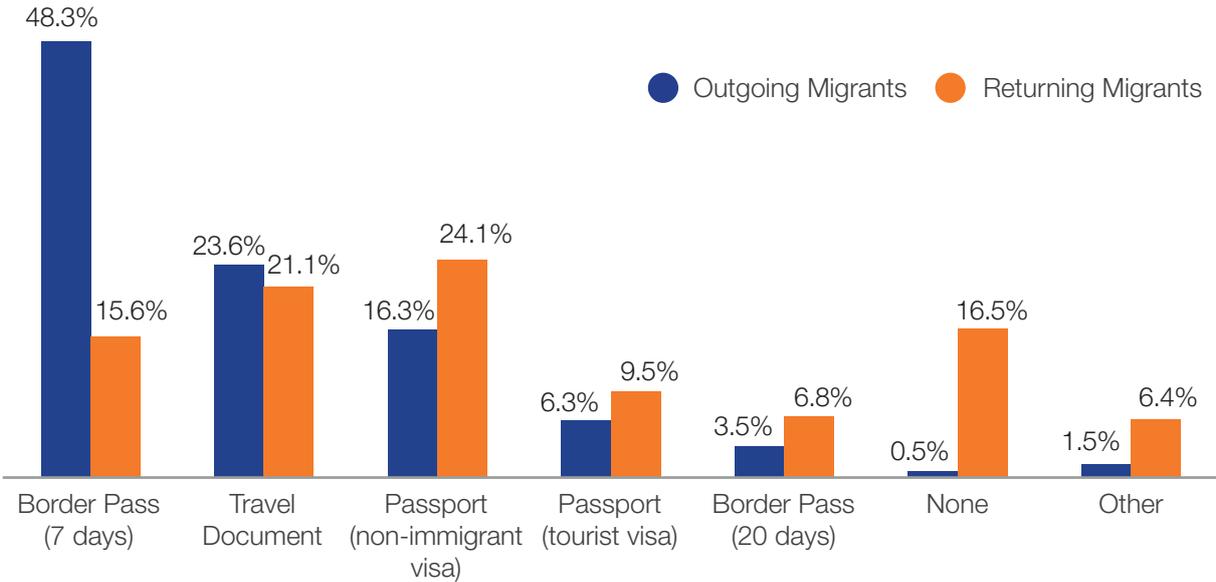
The data also shows that depending on the employment sectors the documentation type varies. Migrants working in agriculture most commonly used border passes (mostly the ones valid for 7 days) while those employed in construction and the manufacturing industry usually used the travel document for oversea migrant workers or a non-immigrant visa.

Figure 21 - Documentation Status by Employment Sector

- Border Days (7days)
- Travel Document
- Non-Immigrant Visa
- Tourist Visa
- Border Pass (20days)
- None
- Other

	Manufacturing	Construction	Agriculture/Forestry	Hotels/Accommodation/Restaurants
Border Days (7days)	10.5%	10%	78%	21%
Travel Document	51.5%	38%	2%	19.5%
Non-Immigrant Visa	21%	34%	5%	36%
Tourist Visa	10.0%	8%	2.5%	10%
Border Pass (20days)	3.5%	1.5%	2.5%	2.5%
None	2%	5%	2.5%	6.5%
Other	1.5%	3.5%	2%	4%
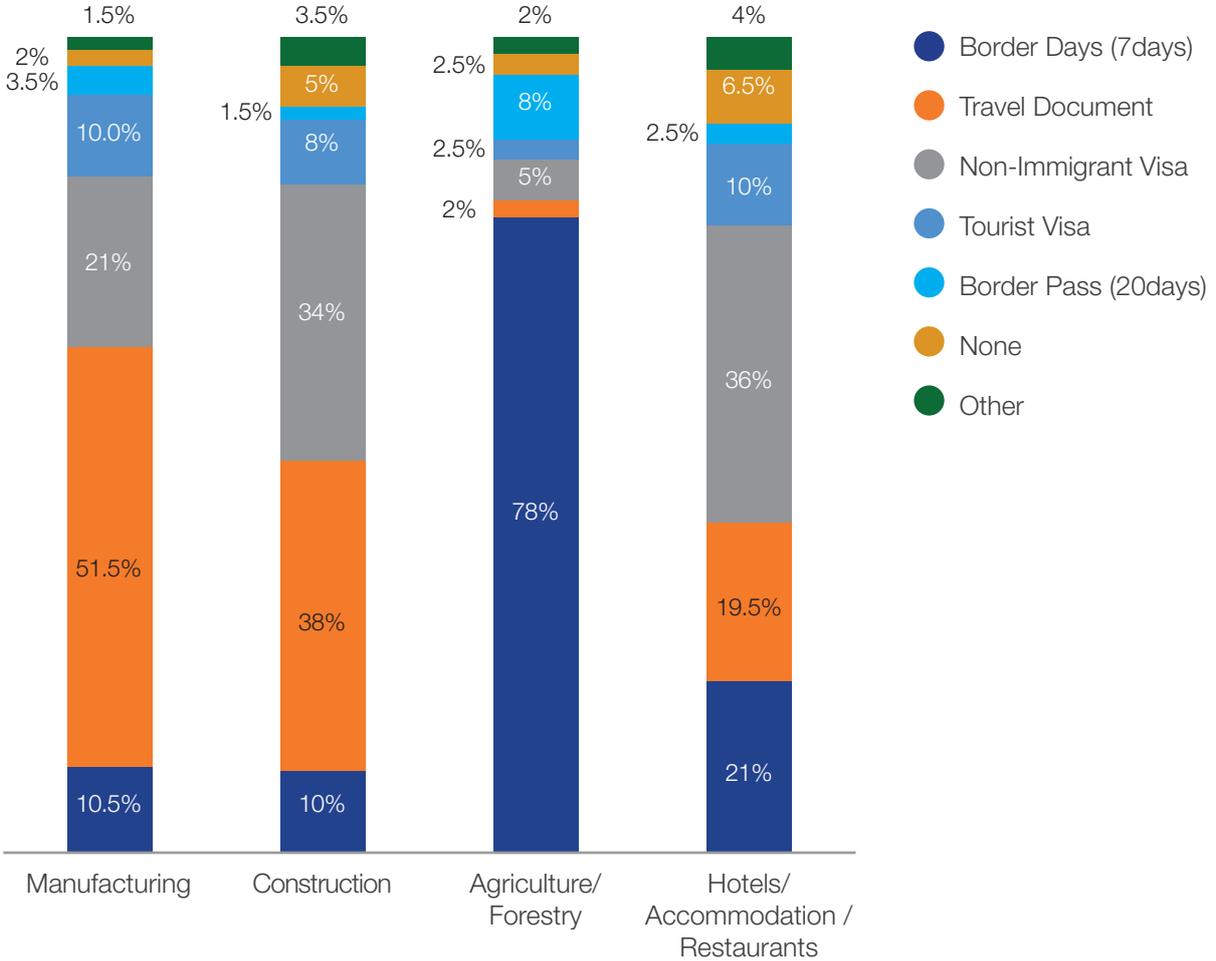
Migrants were further asked if they had a contract of employment, of those respondents, 83 per cent reported not having a contract, of the remaining 17 per cent, 15.5 per cent had an MoU contract and 1.5 contract had a contract but not in connection with the MoU.

The 17 per cent (521 respondents) holding a contract were asked whether they had seen their contracts, 87 per cent answered affirmatively while 13 per cent indicated that they did not see their contract. Almost 99 per cent also reported that they signed their contract themselves and 87 per cent reported that they signed the contract in a language that they understood.

Wages

Working conditions and contract conditions can also be used as indicators for potential vulnerabilities in the workplace. Respondents were asked if they knew their daily wage before starting employment. Most of both the sample populations (86% of outgoing an 92% of returning migrants) reported that they knew their wages prior to migration. The data shows that on average, outgoing migrants expected to be paid THB 392 and returning migrants had on average been paid THB 432. The average calculation does not provide too much discerning information since wages have to be considered in relation with other factors and variables to gain any deeper insight or draw any significant conclusions. Looking at the main provinces of return migrants and the provincial minimum wage, the results show that especially migrants returning from Bangkok and Chon Buri reported wages above the provincial minimum wage while 80 per cent of respondents returning from Chanthaburi reported that they received wages below the provincial minimum wage of THB 318.

Figure 22 - Daily Wages by Provincial Minimum Wage (Returning Migrants) n=623
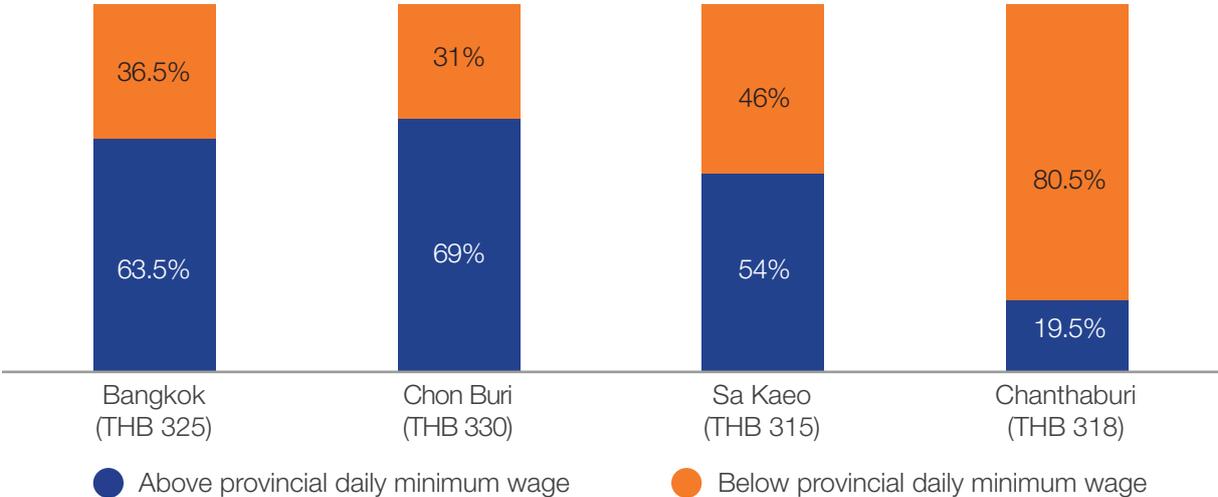
Looking at wage distribution by employment sector for returning migrants, the data shows that migrants employed in the agriculture/forestry industry were the least likely to be paid the minimum median wage[12]. Wholesale and retails as well as manufacturing appear to be the sectors were migrants most often reported wages above the median minimum wage (see Figure 23).

12 Since there are several minimum wages in Thailand, depending on the province of employment, the study will use the median minimum wage of THB of 318 whenever making comparisons across different provinces

Figure 23 - Median Minimum Wage by Employment Sector (Returning Migrants) n=623

	Construction	Agriculture/ Forestry	Manufacturing	Hotels/ Accommodation/ Food_services	Wholesale/ Retail trade
≥ THB 318	67.5%	26.5%	71%	52%	84%
< THB 318	33.5%	73.5%	29%	48%	13%

● < THB 318   ● ≥ THB 318
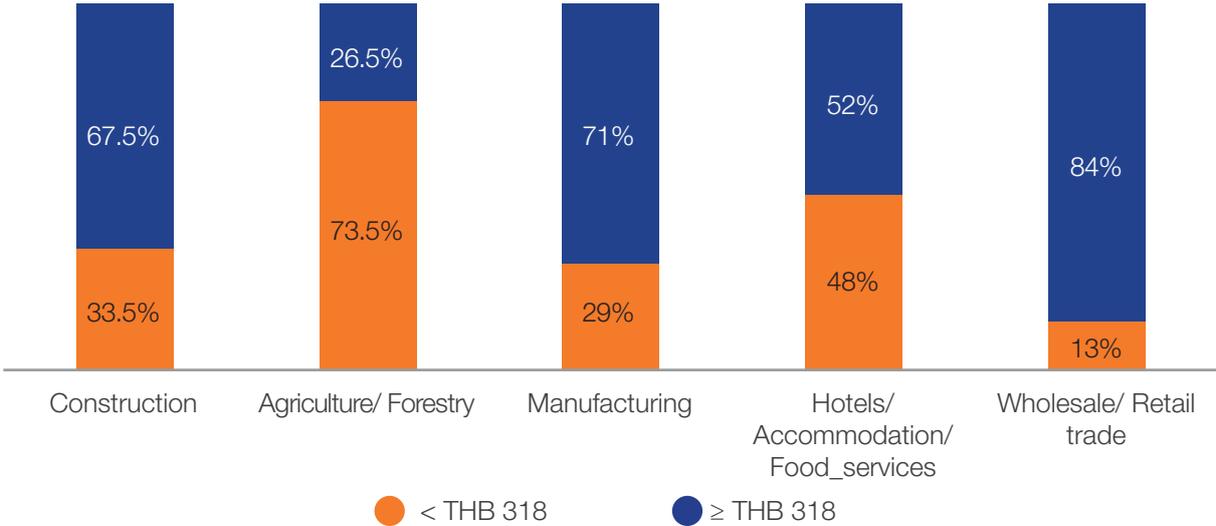
The return sample was also asked about wage expectations, whereby notably 96 per cent reported that their expected wage and the actual wage matches. Two per cent stated that the actual wage was lower, and two per cent said it was higher. In terms of daily working hours, return migrants worked on average eight hours a day. Looking at the different brackets, the largest share of 96 per cent were working between 8 and 12 hours a day. Each respondent was also asked whether they had contact with their employer before starting the job. Overall, 73 per cent of all respondents reported that they had have contact with their employer before their employment started.

Remittances

With regards to remittances, 63 per cent of outgoing migrants reported that they have the intention to send remittances and 70 per cent of the return sample indicated to have done so. The average amounts show that outgoing migrants expected to remit around USD 200 while returning migrants reportedly remitted roughly USD 230 per month. There also appears to be a positive relationship between sending remittances home and having children in Cambodia. Only 50 per cent of those not having children remitted money home during their stay in Thailand, while 78 per cent of the sample that had children in Cambodia reported that they regularly sent money home. However, looking at whether there is a relationship between sending money home (returning migrants) and having borrowed money (from different sources) it is evident there is no distinct connection. In fact, the share of those sending remittances home was roughly 70 per cent for both samples (having borrowed and having not).

Figure 24 - Remittance Sending by Population Group (n=3,122)

	No	Yes	Do not know yet (T1)
Outgoing Migrants	18%	63%	19%
Returning Migrants	30%	70%	

● No   ● Yes   ● Do not know yet (T1)
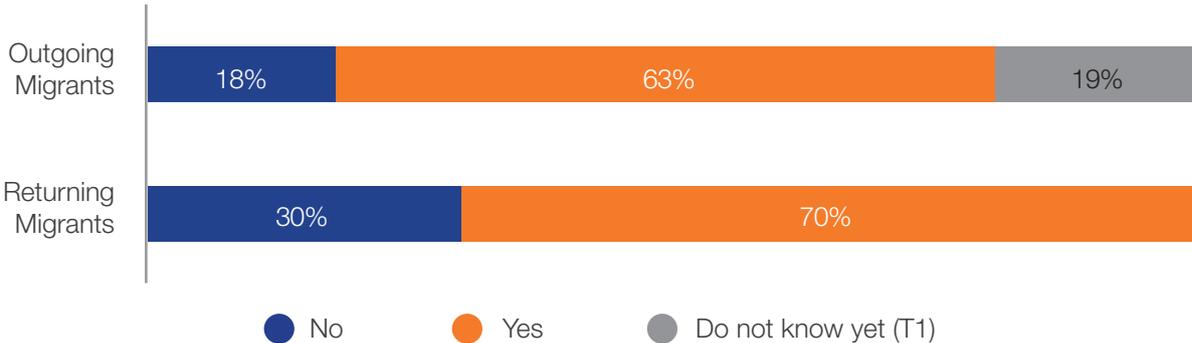
Only 400 return migrants specified the amount they send home. Since this sub sample is relatively small the current report will refrain from looking at further specific variables comparing different remittance sending behaviour such as documentation status, wages or employment sectors. With a larger sample size in Round Two, further analysis can hoefully be conducted.

Problems Encountered en Route and in Thailand

To better understand migrant workers' vulnerabilities, the respondents were asked if they had faced any problems during their journey to Thailand (or journey so far, for outgoing migrants) and/or problems at the workplace. Outgoing migrants were asked about their expectations of problems at the workplace. The data shows that most respondents in both samples did not face any challenges during their journey. Only 0.5 per cent (9 respondents) of outgoing migrants reported problems. The proportion of returning migrants is also relatively small with only 3.5 per cent (21 respondents).

Although numbers are still relatively low, more problems in the workplace were experienced than initially anticipated by migrants. Four per cent of outgoing migrants expected to face problems upon their arrival in Thailand and 14.5 per cent of returning migrants reported that they experienced challenges at their workplace. Returning migrants had especially faced problems related to detention (46%), wages being withheld (38%) as well as deportation (19%). Outgoing migrants expected problems to occur in particular regard to irregular or unreliable payments (29%) and wages being withheld (13%).

Figure 25 - Expected versus Experienced Problems at the Workplace in Thailand
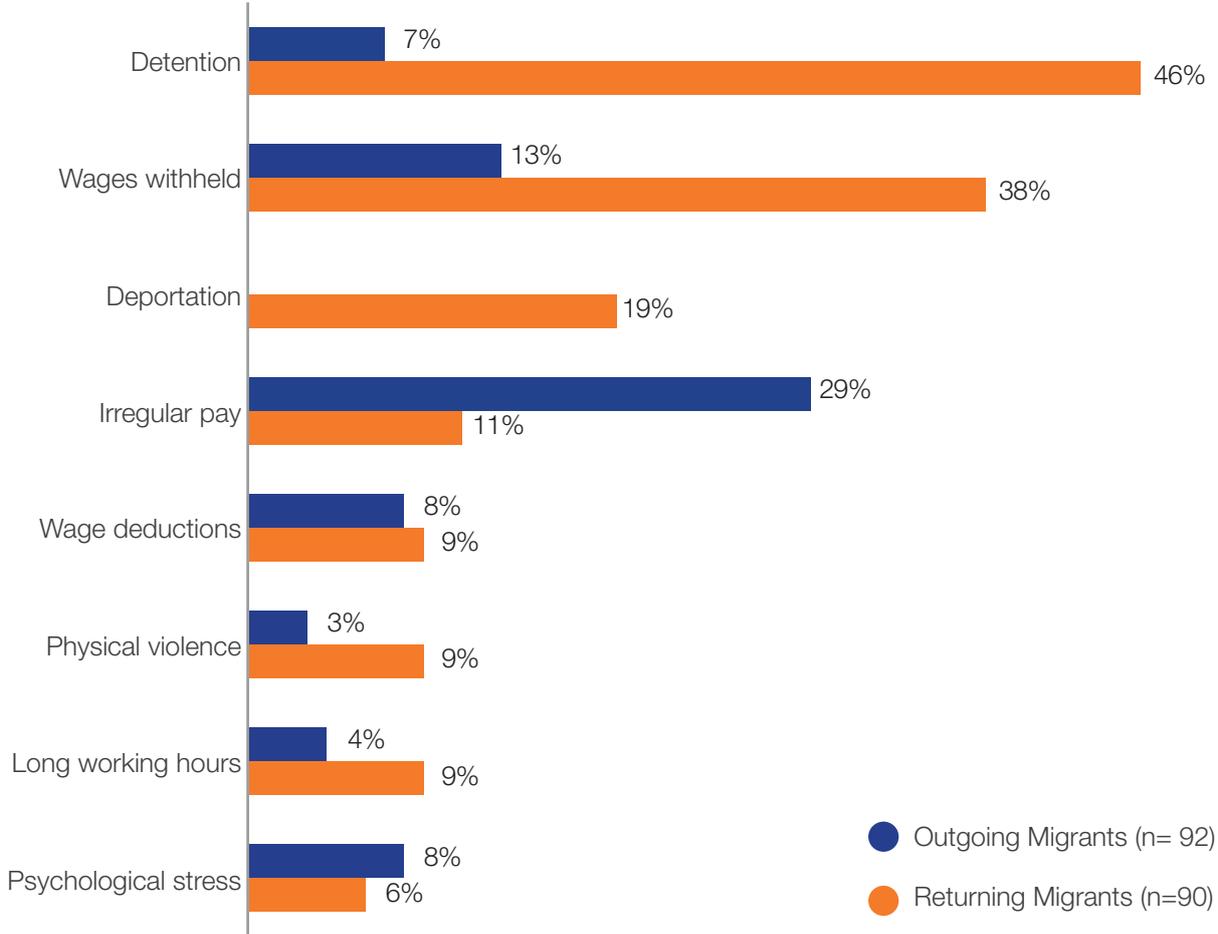
The data indicates that a positive relationship seems to exist between lack of documents and problems at the workplace. Of all migrants that reported to face problems, more than half reported not to have documents. While of all migrants that did not report experiencing problems in the workplace, only 10 per cent did not have proper documentation.

To overcome these challenges, a proper and comprehensive support system needs to be in place. Migrants were asked if they knew of any support mechanisms in case of problems in Thailand. For outgoing migrants, roughly half indicated that they knew mechanisms that they could turn to for advice, while of the return sample, only 37 per cent said they knew how to seek assistance in case of problems. Of the outgoing migrants, 18 per cent and 19 per cent of the returning migrants reported that they had not considered seeking help. Looking at the gender breakdown, no difference is visible in knowledge of support mechanisms or not. When asked about the actors they know that could provide them with support the largest share named the Thai police or family/friends in Thailand (see Figure 26). The 37 per cent of the return sample that were aware of support mechanisms were asked if they had actually made use of the support mechanism. Roughly 35 per cent confirmed that they had received the support they needed, 23 per cent indicated "no" and a share of 41 per cent said "partially".

Figure 26 - Main Known Support Mechanism in Thailand by Population Group
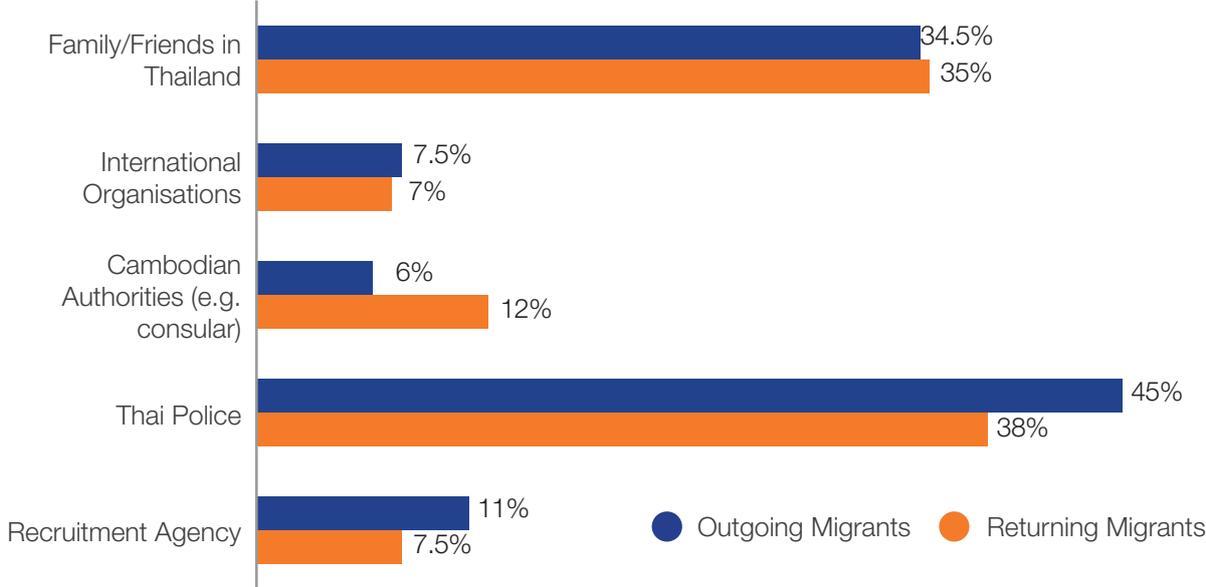
Thematic Area 5 – Return

Questions for thematic area five were only included in the survey tool for returning migrants as it centers on the topic of return. In terms of reasons for migrants to be making returns to Cambodia, the most common cited reason was just to "visit family and friends in Cambodia" (63%). Those just wanting to visit family and friends expressed their intention to return for a short period of time. The remaining 37 per cent that intended to return for a longer period; a reality indicated by the reasons provided for their return, such as: deportation, end of work permit/ visa, or family pressure, were asked if they expect to face any challenges upon return. Of this group, 52 per cent reported that they do not believe they will encounter problems, 29 per cent were concerned about jobs, 11 per cent worried about debts, 8 per cent cited psychological health and 5 per cent named physical health problems as a possible challenge.

Figure 27 - Reasons for Return

- Just to visit
- Family wants me to return
- Deportation
- End of visa/work permit

As the data has shown, many migrants do not only migrate to Thailand once but several times throughout their lives. The migrant workers were therefore asked if they intended to migrate again and, if so, would Thailand be the destination country. The data shows that 66 per cent have the intention to migrate again. Without exception this group of migrants wanted to return to Thailand, with 90 per cent naming the reason for return was to assume working in their old jobs.

As previous research has shown, migrants can incur debt during their migration experience, often by failing to properly anticipate certain costs or by expecting to earn more money than they end up being able to. The survey therefore included a few simple questions on the respondents' financial situation upon return. In answer to the question of whether the respondents had higher or lower savings than prior to their departure, 83 per cent reported that their savings had increased. For 9.5 per cent, their savings had largely remained the same while 7.5 noted a decrease. At the same time, 86 per cent also reported that their general financial situation improved through the migration, for 6 per cent it remained the same and for 7 per cent their general financial situation had worsened. This was commonly because they were not able to make enough money with their job in Thailand or because they had accumulated debts.

There does not seem to be a correlation between borrowing money and the likelihood of having savings and/ or an improved or worsened financial situation (see Figure 28). In general, the proportion of respondents that did not borrow money was larger for those that improved both their savings and general financial situation as well as for those that reported to have the same amount of savings/financial situation (see figure 28).
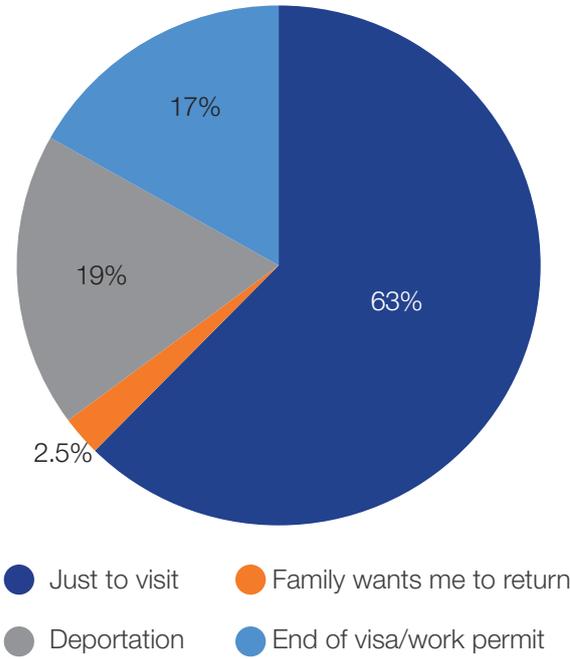
Figure 28 - Status of Savings and Financial Situation After Borrowing Money for the Migration Journey

	Fewer savings	More savings	Same savings	Worse financial situation	Improved financial situation	Same financial situation
Did not borrow money for journey	52%	60%	68%	49%	61%	69%
Borrowed money for journey	48%	40%	32%	51%	39%	31%

● Borrowed money for journey   ● Did not borrow money for journey
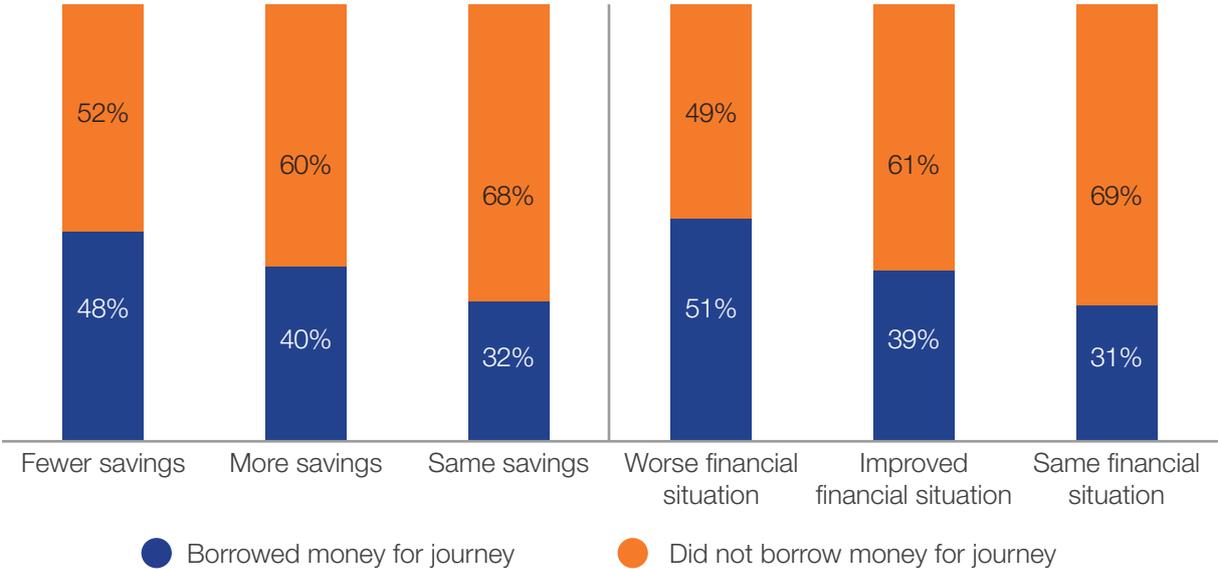
Picture 8 - DTM interview at the government office in Kamrieng district, Battambang

Conclusion

The results of this study are useful in providing empirical data to confirm or challenge anecdotal knowledge or preconceptions about cross border movements and labour migration between Thailand and Cambodia.

The data collection activity in Banteay Meanchey and Battambang province took place in Poi Pet city and Kamrieng/Phnom Preuk districts within a timeframe of 11 weeks. A total of 3,127 Cambodian migrants were surveyed, of whom 3,122 were identified as Cambodian migrant workers. Of all surveys collected, 2,499 interviews were conducted with outgoing migrant workers and 623 with returning migrants after having worked in Thailand.

This section will briefly summarize the main findings of each thematic area.

Migrants' Profiles

The average Cambodian migrants is a married, 29-year-old male with primary education. Male migrants were overrepresented in the sample at 54 per cent. A finding that debunks the common assumption, was that migrants tend to be married rather than single when they migrate from Cambodia to Thailand. The largest share had completed primary education as their highest and only form of education (almost two third of the sample). The most common provinces of origin were the border provinces where the data collection took place, i.e. Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the patterns of origin locations depending on the data collection points. Migrants transiting through Poi Pet originated from all over Cambodia while migrants interviewed around Kamrieng district (around Doung international border) and Phnom Preuk district (close to local checkpoints) appeared to be predominately originating from Battambang. Migrants preferred to stay in Thailand for periods of over one year especially in the border provinces of Chanthaburi, Sa Kaeo as well as Bangkok and Chon Buri.

Drivers and Decision-Making Process

Prior to embarking on their migration journey, the majority of respondents were privately employed, predominately in the agriculture/forestry/ fishing sector. The unemployment rate (pre-departure) was higher for female than for male respondents and for younger Cambodian nationals (age group between 16 and 30). Migrants commonly reported more than one reason for coming to Thailand, and these reasons were primarily associated with finding employment, having family problems or the pressure to make repayments on loans and problems related to landownership. This research also confirms that migration from Cambodia to Thailand seems to be cyclical in nature, as over three quarters of the sample had previously migrated to Thailand at least once. In line with the network theory, migrants heavily relied on family and friends to obtain trusted information about life and jobs in Thailand.

Pre-migration Arrangements and Preparations

With a few exceptions, almost all respondents reported to already have arranged employment prior to their departure, mainly with the support from family and friends in Thailand. The jobs were predominately secured in the agriculture/forestry employment sector as well as construction and manufacturing. Migrants using the crossings in Battambang province mainly reported to be working in the agriculture sector. Chanthaburi province in Thailand was reportedly popular for migrants working in agriculture while construction and manufacturing was more common for the provinces of Bangkok and Chon Buri. On average returning migrants had paid USD 276 for their journey. Costs related to journeys to neighbouring provinces such as Chanthaburi and Sa Kaeo were on average cheaper than to Bangkok and Chon Buri. Moreover, migrants with travel documents for overseas migrant workers and non-immigrant visas (visas related to the MoU) process paid the highest amounts on average. Next to financial savings, migrants commonly reported to have borrowed money from their employers as well as organizing wage deductions with employers to order to finance their migration journeys. Migrants also often (roughly three quarters) received support for their migration preparations especially from the employer in Thailand as well as family/friends in Thailand. Support was mainly given for documents, accommodation, employment and transportation.

Migrant Vulnerabilities

Looking at migrants' ability to communicate in Thai, over two third of the sample ranked their speaking and understanding abilities at the lowest two level (1 and 2). For reading skills, over 80 per cent ranked their skills at the lowest level (1). Migrants mostly used border passes, their passports with different visas to enter Thailand or the travel document for overseas migrant workers. The largest share of undocumented workers was employed in the agriculture sector, whereby not even one quarter of the sample reported to have an employment contract. Of those that did, the majority signed their contract themselves and were also able to understand the language of the conditions. Returning migrants had on average earned wages of THB 432 per day. Looking at the different provinces, in the border province Chanthaburi migrants most often reported to have received wages below the provincial minimum wage, which accurately corresponds with the data that indicated most migrants working in Chanthaburi are employed in the agriculture sector. The data further revealed that the agriculture sector appears to be the sector that is most often paying wages below the median minimum wage. Wholesale/retail and manufacturing are identified as the sectors where migrants reported receiving higher wages on average. The data also shows that migrants tend to send remittances home. Migrants that still had children living in Cambodia tended to be more likely to send remittances than those that did not. Migrants did not commonly experience problems en route to Thailand, however, more migrants reported problems during their employment in Thailand. Common problems were related to detention, wages being withheld or paid irregularly and deportations. When asked if migrants knew of support mechanisms, less than half of the migrants reported to be aware of any such support mechanisms. Of those that knew of support, their concept of mechanisms mainly referred to family/friends in Thailand as well as the Thai police.

Return

When asked why they are returning to Cambodia, the majority of respondents indicated that they were just returning temporarily to visit family or friends. Those that returned for an unknown duration reported a variety of reasons including: their family wanting them to return, deportation or end of their work permit/visa. When asked if they expected to face challenges less than half believed that they will encounter problems. Those who did expect challenges were concerns with finding a job upon return or experiencing difficulties with their health. Confirming the circular migration patterns, two third of the sample had already made plans to migrate to Thailand again. The majority reported that they would return in order to resume their previous jobs in Thailand. Upon return migrants generally reported that both their savings as well as general financial situation had improved through the migration.

Next Steps

The findings presented in this report were part of a first round of data collection under the FMS activities in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey province. There will be one more rounds of data collection lasting until mid-August 2019. Having two rounds of data collection will help to verify current findings and control for robustness of results.

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