Thai Migrant Workers in Southeast and East Asia: The Prospects of Thailand's Migration Policy in Light of the Regional Economic Recession

Returnees to Thailand

Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM)
Institute of Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University

Supported by

Thailand Research Fund
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Supang Chantavanich
Director
Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM)
July 2000

Executive Summary

Labor Migration Flows

Migration flows have continued to increase with a shift to the Asia-Pacific region as a destination over the past decade. In 1994, 56,165 workers migrated to this region and by 1999, this was 163,986. Taiwan and Singapore are the major labor markets, employing Thai workers in construction and manufacturing industries. Projections would suggest that the expansion will continue for at least the next few years.

The labor market in Japan has an acute need in the services sector but foreign trainees are confined to other sectors and are predominantly found in the manufacturing sector. Annually, 6,000 Thai workers are accepted as trainees by Japan, and the remainder are employed illegally. For Malaysia, the flows are spontaneous with predominantly Thai Muslim workers from the south of Thailand to labor markets mostly in the northern states of Malaysia. The ongoing scale of the largely undocumented flow of labor and the potential for absorbing more labor from Thailand is not acknowledged. Some intervention from the Thai government is needed in order to provide workers with their rightful legal status.

The main reasons for Thai workers going abroad are economic - primarily they are seeking better job opportunities and higher wages. Local unemployment (especially fishermen from the South), and social networks that facilitate their leaving, are also given as reasons for moving. Future trends of migration will see more women moving for work in the services sector. This will have an impact on the family and relationships with their spouses, making gender a significant issue in labor migration.

Recruitment System

The current system is totally market driven, with minimal input from the government bodies in regulating private recruitment agencies. Most job seekers comply with agency demands and are willing to pay high fees to get jobs. Many agencies are run by, or backed up by, politicians who use their influence to abuse the system, sometimes resulting in job seekers being cheated. There is an urgent need for the Thai government to intervene, otherwise only the recruiting agencies, and informal moneylenders who help to raise the fees for the workers, will gain any benefit from labor migration.

Between 1996-1998, more than 15,000 workers were cheated by unlicensed employment recruiting agencies and illegal brokers. This resulted in losses of $463 million, of which the Department of Labor Promotion can only draw an indemnity of $200 million to pay back to workers. The most common deceitful practice is to charge workers a fee but never find them a job.

Informal social networks also play a significant role in assisting workers to find jobs abroad. The services of such networks can be either money-oriented or gratis. Trafficking syndicates use such networks to cheat female workers. For Japan and Malaysia, networks of friends and relatives are more common than for Taiwan and Singapore. Networks in destination countries provide accommodation and meals to new arrivals and help them find jobs. In the case of trafficking networks, illegal agencies in Thailand work with illegal agencies, brokers or employers in destination countries. State-run employment recruitment services are perhaps the safest, but they are scarce and limited in their reach, unable to facilitate provincial job seekers adequately. Thus, workers are forced to depend on the private agencies.

Laws and Regulations on Migration for Employment

The Immigration Law B.E. 2522, and the Law of Employment Recruitment and the Protection of Job Seekers B.E. 2528 (amended B.E. 2537), are the two major legal instruments on the Thai side. These instruments do not prevent migration, and cannot protect job seekers when they do migrate. There are no regulations to stop travelers who are well-equipped with travel documents to emigrate. Labor control check-points may be able to stop those intending to migrate but when they are disguised as travelers or tourists, as many are, they cannot stop them. Penalties meted out for swindling job seekers or

illegal recruitment are not severe, and thus offer little protection for job seekers.

Laws and regulations in Japan, Singapore and Taiwan are more specific; they attempt to curb the number of migrant workers. They have placed various state organizations working on labor migration under one single unit to facilitate policy and administrative processes, and more efficient coordination. As for Japan, the government does not accept non-skilled migrant workers but allows trainees who receive lower wages and inadequate welfare. The government strictly controls the hiring of trainees. Thai workers who are currently employed in Japan are illegal, and are regularly apprehended and deported back to Thailand. The number of deportees was 1,465 in 1996, 1,457 in 1997, and 1,181 in 1998. Yet, official figures suggest that there are still 37,000 Thais who work illegally in Japan, mainly long stayers. Some have the tendency to settle there, especially those who have Japanese partners. The major problem for this group is the legal status of their children born in Japan.

Taiwan has the highest number of overseas Thai workers. The law allows migrant workers to do domestic work, work for the rehabilitation of Taiwan's economic and social development, and do other types of work which Taiwanese do not want to do. Since 1996, Taiwan has adopted a policy to hire migrant workers only for large businesses with huge investments, and to reduce the wage of workers in order to discourage new comers. It also introduced government-to-government negotiation procedures for recruitment processes. Although the law provides welfare to workers, 54% of Thai construction laborers in Taiwan suffer from deteriorating health through undertaking extended hours of work. A policy of deducting partial wages from workers, ostensibly to help them save, is another issue with workers complaining of not receiving those deductions before their departure.

Singapore has the strictest law on migrant workers. The state has a policy of upgrading the national labor force to the skilled level, including foreign workers. Consequently, they set a high levy for the use of unskilled labor and encourage employers to take the workers for skill tests, in order to upgrade their status and wage. Since 75% of Thai workers in Singapore are in the construction industry, skill upgrades and tests prior to departure would benefit the workers. In terms of protection, Singapore is beginning to be aware of a healthier working environment for workers. However, health problems including nocturnal sudden-death syndrome, and deteriorating health among Thai construction workers prevail, probably due to bad nutrition and occupational health.

Malaysia has no law for foreign workers but instigated cabinet decisions and ministerial decrees to administer workers and employers. Nonetheless, most Thai workers are undocumented. The recruitment needs to be regulated through bilateral negotiations. Despite their illegal status, due to religious, language and cultural similarities, the working environment in Malaysia is the friendliest for Thais.

Impact of Labor Migration for Thailand

Positive impacts

Economically, labor migration reduces local unemployment and yields a huge amount of remittances, estimated at more than $35 billion per year. Remittances are a source of income to rural populations and thereby alleviating rural poverty. For workers, higher wages means that they can have some savings after paying off debts caused by the high recruitment fees. If they manage their savings efficiently, they can have a small business and improve their living conditions. However, most workers do not have income mobility and occupational mobility after their return, and end up wanting to emigrate again.

Socially, returnees are more acknowledged by their neighbors, although only 10% of them become more active in local/community affairs, or local politics. Generally, the skills acquired while working abroad are not used when they return home, and thus there is no transference of new technologies or skills to local villagers, who are predominantly agricultural workers. Female returnees, it was found, often became more self confident and independent, sometimes leading to difficulties with their husbands.

Negative impact

The high costs associated with recruitment fees was found to be a major disadvantage to workers, with most having to work 8-12 months to break even. Some costs are paid to brokers in destination countries to obtain positions. In addition, since most Thais are unskilled workers, they receive low wages and are not welcome in some labor markets, especially Singapore and Japan. An indirect impact of this is that more workers with good skills will migrate while those with low skills will be left in local employment, resulting in lower productivity.

The social costs of migration are not always apparent, especially in the short term. Many workers experience loneliness and homesickness as a consequence of long stays abroad. Deteriorating physical and mental health (especially for undocumented female workers) is common. In regard to family life, extramarital relationships, polygamy and divorce were found to occur, especially among those who returned from Taiwan.

Thai workers are not considered to be adaptable to new working and living conditions, no doubt a result of inadequate pre-departure orientation.

Regarding comparative costs and benefits of migration, the empirical result showed that only Thai workers in Japan and Malaysia are better off since their net return becomes positive. In contrast, their counterparts in Taiwan and Singapore appear vulnerable with cost exceeding benefits. However, for benefit and cost streams analysis under some assumptions, those in Japan and Taiwan turn to receive higher economic status while the rest are unlikely to gain from their emigration.

When considering positive and negative impacts on their lives, almost half of the sample thought there were more positive impacts, thus over half perceived more negative consequences. However, this is only a short-term assessment in that most had only returned for one year.

Employment Opportunities after the Economic Crisis

Opportunities vary between the four destination countries. For Japan, semi-skilled jobs in the service sector are available (especially in caring for the elderly), but need to be negotiated. Unskilled work should be discouraged, due to the fact that workers cannot have legal status doing such jobs. The trainee channel should be broadened to cover services work.

In Malaysia, the manufacturing and service sectors still have jobs for workers, especially in the northern states of the country. Seasonal agricultural work is also available. It is possible that more workers can commute between Thailand and Malaysia, and the common Muslim culture and language shared by Thai workers and Malay employers can allow for a safety net and ample job opportunities.

Construction work in Taiwan may decline within 3-4 years and workers only hired by large manufacturing companies. The biggest labor market for Thais may be shrinking soon if there is no immediate and appropriate intervention from the Thai side. Negotiations to maintain the quota of Thai workers in Taiwan, and the possibility of workers obtaining jobs through government-to-government mediation without broker's fees are required immediately. Also, an alternative to encouraging more labor exports might be to promote greater foreign direct investment in Thailand, given the comparative advantages that Thailand has in this region. In addition, the Thai Ministry of Labor must intervene in the recruitment system to reduce the high costs of recruitment so that Taiwan can remain an attractive destination for Thai workers. More direct recruiting services, provided by the Ministry itself, without involving charges, will also assist in keeping the market viable.

Recommendations

The negative consequences of migration should deter Thailand from adopting a high priority policy on the export of labor. At the same time, those who do migrate need to be supported with protective mechanisms from the government. Simultaneously, alternatives for local employment with good wages must be provided. The following recommendations are proposed:

To the Ministry of Labor

1. Investigate the over all labor market for Thai workers in order to develop a more concrete policy, covering types of employment, level of skills, and locations of destination areas to be promoted

2. Cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to initiate government to government dialogues with destination countries in regard to the inclusion of the service sector and the trainee channel to employ workers, increase job quotas and attempts to regulate irregular migration.

3. Intervene in the present recruitment system by urgently providing, from the ministry itself, more services to job seekers; and brainstorm ideas for the establishment of an independent organization to administer labor recruitment, and if possible, collect tax from recruitment fees and allocate it to provinces/areas from where most workers originate.

4. Increase workers' skills and provide nation-wide skill tests and training so that most job seekers will be recruited as semi-skilled workers.

5. Provide reasonable accommodation in Bangkok for provincial workers who need to come for skill tests, and training or orientation, and other preparations before departure. All services should be in one-stop centers.

6. Improve the pre-departure orientation program to cover language skills, legal knowledge and cultural practices in destination countries. A manual for specific major destinations should be prepared and distributed to workers. The program should last one week instead of 2-3 hours.

7. Revise the mandate of overseas labor offices to provide protection to both regular and irregular migrant workers. Add more staff and more branches for Taiwan, establish an office in Malaysia, and activate the one in Japan. All offices should focus on protecting workers' rights and occupational health.

8. Revise the Law of Labor Recruitment to emphasize more on the mandate of protection. Special articles on female workers and trafficked persons should be added. Penalties for crime syndicates, traffickers and swindlers should be more severe.

9. Cooperate with the Ministry of Health to form a joint medical team to offer medical services to overseas Thai workers in major destinations.

10. Earmark an amount from the Assistance Fund for Job Seekers to offer low-interest-loans to workers for their recruitment fee. Also use such loans for skills promotion training.

11. Develop a database on Thai migrant workers in all destinations, including information on swindling, and blacklist all illegal recruiting agencies, disseminate such names widely.

12. Promote local labor markets as an alternative for job seekers. Mobilize Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for more local job opportunities

13. Develop and operate plans to re-integrate returnees into local socio-economic systems. Channeling workers into situations where they use their acquired skills, and transfer those skills to local low-skilled workers. Encourage the use of returnee's savings for investments to help ensure a sustainable livelihood that might prevent remigration. Explore the means to restore family life.

14. Campaign for a more productive use of remittances: using remittances for agricultural production and processing of agricultural products, and for investments with tax exemption incentives, with training for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

To the Immigration Office

1. Cooperate with the Ministry of Labor to improve labor control check points at the immigration control to prevent irregular migration for employment.

2. Consult with NGOs and embassies to develop active measures to combat female trafficking, and to screen female travelers using tourist visas, or those departing for marriage to certain destinations like Japan, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia.

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1. Instruct embassies to provide protection and assistance to both regular and irregular Thai workers and their family members. A database on overseas Thais who request assistance should be compiled for coordination and monitoring purposes at each embassy.

2. Cooperate with commercial banks to offer services to Thai workers in sending remittances or transferring savings to Thailand.

3. Cooperate with the Ministry of Labor to initiate bilateral agreements with major destination countries with regard to protecting workers' rights and expanding labor markets. Negotiate for an orderly return of deported workers so that they can pursue necessary measures before departure and that the Thai government can have enough time to prepare for sustainable reintegration

4. Cooperate with NGOs to disseminate news about Thailand to overseas workers. Offer regular recreational services, such as, print and visual media (VDO, cassettes, magazines), communal activities, sports, non-formal education, legal advice, and cultural events.

5. Seek new labor markets for semi-skilled work and work in the service sector, excluding entertainment businesses.

6. Mobilize FDI from industrial countries, especially from countries with policies to reduce labor migration, emphasizing the strategic location of Thailand with good access to markets in the Middle east, Europe and Africa, plus reasonable wages and political stability in comparison to other countries within the region.

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Introduction

Supang Chantavanich

Objective of Research

It is the general objective of this research project to investigate the existing migration systems between Thailand and four destination countries, namely Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. In this context, the labor market segments into which Thai migrants are being recruited will be identified and the factors which facilitate the migratory process will be evaluated. The research will evaluate Thailand's costs and benefits of sending workers abroad and the impact of regional economic recession on the prospects of Thai migrant workers. More specifically, the objectives of the present project can be subsumed under six headings:

1. To investigate migration flows from rural communities and urban areas to the four major destination countries. This work segment includes the documentation and analysis of a) working and living conditions on a micro-level in receiving countries and b) statistical data with regard to the migration traditions, the present size, potentials and major tendencies of migratory movements. While hard figures are available for legal migrants only, analysis is to be extended to cover also undocumented migration flows.

2. To investigate the functioning of the recruitment of Thai citizens for foreign labor markets and to delineate specifically the labor market segments where Thai migrants are being employed. The investigation will cover both the official recruitment systems and its informal ways. To study the role which family-, kinship- and community - networks play in facilitating the migratory process will be subsumed under this work segment also.

3. To investigate the legal regulations and administrative procedures which are being applied in Thailand and in the four destination countries. In this context, the question as to what chances migrants have in evading the legal procedures will also be addressed.

4. To investigate the impact which the present migration movements bear upon Thailand in general, and more specifically, upon the cost - benefit ratio of the present labor export policy.

5. To explore the prospects of Thai workers in the labor markets in destination countries as the consequence of economic trends within the Southeast Asian region.

6. To compare systematically the functioning of the recruitment process, the employment situation abroad and the impact upon the communities from which Thai migrants originate, within the scope of the four migration systems.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The project consists of two major activities. The first was a survey which collected data from six provinces of Thailand. The second was the collecting of data from various sources which include existing studies and secondary data from relevant organizations. The two activities were operated simultaneously. The results from survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics together with qualitative data obtained in the field. This was supported by secondary data collected to present clearer pictures of migration during the recession.

The Survey: Sampling Techniques

In order to select areas to undertake primary data collection for the present study, a multi-stage selection approach was adopted. The total sampling size was 461. At the regional level, the sampling data was collected from the northern, northeastern and southern parts of Thailand. The number of respondents

interviewed from the above-mentioned regions is shown in Table 1.1, accounting for 22.8%, 44.0% and 33.2% of the total of 461 respondents respectively. The collection from each region was also made according to the four main destination countries - Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, accounting for 22.9%, 12.4%, 24.5% and 34.3% respectively (Table 1.2).

Table 1.1 Percentage Distribution of Sample

Region	Migrants leaving in 1998	Sample
Northern	22.3	22.8
Northeastern	71.9	44.0
Southern	0.2	33.2
Eastern	1.1	0.0
Western	0.5	0.0
Central	3.8	0.0
	(91,364)	(461)
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.2 Percentage Distribution of Migrants leaving and Sample

Destinations	Percent of Total leaving in 1998	Migrants leaving for countries	Sample
Taiwan	73.0	91.1	22.9
Japan	0.9	1.1	12.4
Singapore	5.2	6.5	26.5
Malaysia	0.8	1.0	34.3
		(73,197)	(461)
Total	-	**100.0**	**100.0**

At the provincial level, the study uses data collected from six provinces in Thailand, namely Udon Thani, Nakornratchasima, Phayao, Chiang Rai, Satun and Pattani during February and July 1999. The number of respondents interviewed from each province and destination countries is shown in Table 1.3 below. Interviews were made mostly among migrants from northeastern provinces, especially Udon Thani, who moved to Taiwan, Singapore and Japan, accounting for 46.1%, 28.1% and 24.2% respectively.

Table 1.3 Percentage Distribution of Sample by Sending Provinces

Destinations	Northern		Northeastern		Southern		Total
	Chiang Rai	Phayao	Udon Thani	Nakornratchasima	Pattani	Satun	
Taiwan	67.0	0.0	46.1	5.3	0.0	0.0	26.9
Japan	14.3	64.3	24.2	5.3	0.0	0.0	12.4
Singapore	17.6	21.4	28.1	89.3	0.0	0.0	26.5
Malaysia	1.1	14.3	1.6	0.0	100.0	100.0	34.3
	(91)	(14)	(128)	(75)	(85)	(68)	(461)
Total	100.0	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	100.0

The selection of district, sub-district, village and households was made randomly. It is important to note here that the random selection was made together with (as well as by consulting with) officials in districts, heads of sub-districts and villages to seek their advice in the areas most affected by migration. The field team spent some days visiting these areas and talking to villagers before the final selection of communities to be surveyed was made. The selected households were located while the appointment was made for an interview. The same method was applied to select replacement households.

Institution and Personnel

In this survey, the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM), Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University undertook responsibility for all procedures of data collection and analysis. The researchers consisted of experts from various fields related to international migration such as economists, anthropologists, sociologists and demographers. Interviewers were recruited from among graduates and members of ARCM. The full time research assistants were responsible for fieldwork planning, data collection and analysis under close supervision of experts.

Fieldwork

Permission to conduct the survey was sought from the provincial governors, heads of districts, heads of sub-districts and heads of villages. The district officials were very cooperative and introduced us to heads of sub-districts and heads of villages. From this introduction, heads of villages also introduced the team to their assistants and announced our arrival throughout the village. Before the actual survey began, a pilot survey was carried out for several purposes. Firstly, it was to evaluate the level of response and cooperation that could be received from local people. Secondly, it was used to pre-test questions to see if they were understood by respondents and effective in obtaining the required information. It was also a chance to discuss the actual migratory situation with inhabitants in the villages. At the same time, the individual questionnaires were pre-tested and modified.

It became apparent once the survey began that the accuracy of the sampling frame was not as great as had been expected. It was found that many households randomly selected (including substitute households) were empty or were occupied by elderly people. This is due to the fact that many people tend to migrate seasonally during February to April when there is little or no demand for agricultural work (Chamratrithirong *et al*, 1994; 1995; Goldstein and Goldstein, 1986; Sussangkarn, 1987). In this situation the closest household to the sampled household which was vacant was selected instead. We asked the head of each village together with his/her assistants to underline households in which people were actually living at the time of the survey.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based on the ILO (International Labor Organization) Guideline (1997) with special reference to migration progress section. It was also modified to suit the case of Thailand in terms of rural context whereby people have moved abroad for over two decades. Information was collected from return migrants who returned home within 5 years. The questionnaire includes eight sections: personal information, household situation before leaving, reasons for moving, living conditions abroad, attitudes towards migration, remittances, reintegration and impacts after return. Each section was assigned to yield details on migration experiences of returnees, making sure a single question was drawn upon retrospective approach.

In each household, a returnee was interviewed in detail on his/her migration experience within the framework of 5 years after return. The respondents consist of both males (83.7%) and females (16.3%) (Table 1.4). The average length of an interview was 30 - 45 minutes. Information was written and interpreted day by day. In this study, migration information was also obtained from in-depth interviews with key informants. This was to collect more detailed information on particular issues from key informants, such as village heads or local leaders, to support the quantitative information obtained in the survey. The key informant interviews began with identification of respondents who were most highly respected and knowledgeable in the village. They could be village heads and elderly villagers. In this survey, all village heads were interviewed as well as some elderly villagers. The interviews were taped and analyzed by the researchers.

Table 1.4 Sample by Gender

Gender	Total migrants leaving	Sample
Male	87.1	83.7
Female	12.9	16.3
	(91,364)	(461)
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Coding and Editing

Once the interviews were completed, a code book was constructed. This was to guide the coding of information from the questionnaires before entering them into the computer. This task was done at the ARCM. The computer experts were assigned to code questionnaires. With facilities provided at ARCM, all the data was entered into microcomputers using a data entry package which had been programmed with consistency and range checks. A range of descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. These included frequency distributions and cross tabulations. Comparison between destination countries and sending areas was made as to individual characteristics and social and economic well-being. The analysis was undertaken by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Program.

Secondary Data

Apart from the survey, the study collected information from many existing studies. Statistics on international migration was also collected from a wide range of organizations as follows:

1. Overseas Employment Administration Office
2. National Economic and Social Development Board
3. Department of Customs
4. Passport Division
5. National Statistics Office
6. Bank of Thailand
7. Division of Immigration
8. Department of Police
9. Department of Employment
10. Private Recruiters

Thai Migrant Workers Who Returned from Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan

Samarn Laodumrongchai
Supang Chantavanich
Andreas Germershausen
Subordas Warmsingh

Historical Background of Thai Labor

At this juncture when the labor market in the Middle East is declining, some countries in the Asia region have an increasing need for foreign labor, beginning with Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan and Taiwan. These countries have many investment and national development projects. However, they lack sufficient domestic labor. This can be seen from the fact that in 1985 this group of countries needed only 7,931 Thai laborers and this figure steadily increased until 1993, when the number of Thai laborers who went for work in the Asian region was 118,600. This represented 86% of the total number of Thai migrant laborers seeking employment abroad (137,950). In contrast, those who went to work in the Middle East were only 17,019 or 12.3% and in other countries, another 2,321 workers or 1.7% (Wongse Chanthong, 1994). In the period between January to September 1999, there were 71,486 Thai workers who went to Taiwan; 3,668 to Japan; 1,781 to Singapore; and 1,322 to Malaysia (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, 2000).

Somchai Ratanakomutra (1996) who carried out research concerning Thai laborers who went to work abroad found that Thai laborers have been going abroad for the past three decades. For the most part, the migrant laborers have been from the Northeast and North. In addition, Saranya Bunnag and Sawapha Chaimusik (1985) have found that Thai migrant workers who went to work in Singapore came mostly from the Northeast and, after that, from the North, Central and South Thailand, in that order. Most of the workers going abroad are from farm backgrounds and their income is less than their expenses. Thus, they seek work in Singapore in the hope that they will earn higher incomes.

In this study, the sample group of Thai workers who went to work abroad, principally in Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, came from different geographical areas in Thailand. Of the sample group who had previously worked in Japan, the workers came from Udon Thani province (54.39%), from Chiang Rai (22.81%), and from Phayao (15.79%). As for the sample group that had previously gone to work in Taiwan, 49.19% came from Chiang Rai and 47.58% from Udon Thani. Of those who previously had worked in Malaysia, 53.8% came from Pattani and 43.04% from Satun. Regarding the sample group who had previously worked in Singapore, 54.92% came from Nakorn Srithammarat, 29.51% from Udon Thani, and 13.11% from Chiang Rai (Table 1.1).

Studies of Thai labor migration abroad and steps taken to send Thai labor abroad have found that seeking work abroad by Thai laborers has been going on for a long time, both legally and illegally (Wongse Chanthong, 1994). Research findings indicate that, based on a sample of Thai workers going to Japan, 89.47% were illegal; only 10.53% were working in Japan legally. This is despite the fact that Japan has very strict laws forbidding foreigners to work in Japan and the cost of living there is very high. However, as wages in Japan are higher than elsewhere in Asia, an endless stream of foreigners will enter illegally seeking work. Research findings show that those who enter illegally to work are 89.47%. As for Malaysia, 89.24% of a Thai worker sample worked illegally and only 10.76% worked legally. This may be because Malaysia borders on Southern Thailand and entering Malaysia is relatively convenient as one can enter by car, train or boat and the expense involved in crossing the border to seek work is very little when compared with elsewhere. As for Taiwan, 94.35% of a sample group of Thai worked legally while only 5.65% worked illegally. For Singapore, 78.69% of the Thai worked legally while 21.31% worked illegally. This is because these two countries open themselves to receive foreign workers. Thus, there are hiring contracts between Thai labor and business contractors in those countries (Table 1.2).

From research on sex and age variables in the sample group of Thais who went abroad to work, it was found that men and women were in different age groups. In the sample group of Thai men who worked abroad, 21.74% were in the range of 31 to 35 years old; next, 19.95% were in the 36- to 40-year old range; and 17.65 %were in the 26- to 30-year old range. The majority of women in the sample group

who went abroad for work were in the 21- to 25-year old range, a percentage of 28.57; in the 26- to 30-year old range, a percentage of 22.86; and in the 31- to 35-year old range, a percentage of 15.71. From these initial findings, it may be seen that for the most part, Thai labor is of working age, that is in the 21- to 40-year old range (Figure 1.1) which is consistent with the research carried out by Pongsapich on Thai laborers who returned from migration to the Middle East for work during 1983-1984. The research was based on the 10 provinces in North and Northeast Thailand with the greatest numbers of workers who went abroad to work. The majority of the workers were male, in the 31- to 40-year old range; married, with primary grade four education, from families with an average size of 5.1 people (Pongsapich, 1991).

From the present research study, it was found that 45.77%, representing the majority of the Thai migrant workers, finished primary education grades 1 to 4 and 26.03% finished primary school grades 5 to 6. It appears that the majority of Thai laborers who went to work abroad finished the first level of primary school which is set by the Ministry of Education. The laborers do not need to have much education and from the study of the relation between the education level and the four destination countries that took Thai laborers, it appears that 51.61% of the sample group in Taiwan finished the primary education grades 1 to 4, 25.81% finished primary education grade 5 to 6. For the sample group in Japan, 56.14% finished the primary education grades 1 to 4 and 12.28% finished grades 5 to 6 of the secondary school and higher than high school levels. As for the Thai laborers in Malaysia, 31.01% finished primary education grades 5 to 6 and 25.95% finished primary education grades 1 to 4. In Singapore, 60.66% of the sample group finished primary education grades 1 to 4. The next in order were 26.23% who finished the primary school grades 5 to 6 (Table 1.3).

From the study of the legal status and the educational level of the sample group of Thai migrant workers, it was found that 48.81% of the sample group of Thai laborers went to work illegally abroad. The majority, 73.33 % of the workers have an education higher than the secondary school level. Next in order were 60.22% who finished secondary school, and 44.41% finished primary school. Of the sample group, 51.19% went to work legally. Of these, 55.59% which represented the majority, finished primary school; 39.78% finished secondary school; and 26.67% finished education higher than secondary school level (Table 1.4).

An important means of education for Thai men, following the old custom in Thailand, was to be ordained as a monk, for the Thai people in the old days believed that they would receive education as a member of the Sangha or monkshood. There are families in the rural areas that would bring their children to live in the temple in order for them to study with the monks. From this research study, it was found that 40.35% (Figure 1.2) of the sample group had studied with the monks. There are workers who had studied with the monks for as little as 3 days and as long as 40 years. The average amount of time that the sample group of Thai laborers studied with the monks was 3 years.

In the area of marital status, the sample group of Thai migrant workers who went to work abroad had varied marital status. The majority of Thai laborers who were married had the responsibility to support their families. Because of the economic crisis these days, they were forced to go to work abroad in order to earn money to support their families. Of the sample group of Thai laborers who went to work in the four countries, 77.22% were married and 18.66% were single. In country comparison, 88.71% of the sample group who had worked in Taiwan were married and 5.65% were single; 85.96% of the sample group in Japan were married and 10.53% were single; 86.07% of the sample group who worked in Singapore were married and 9.02% were single; 58.23% of the sample group who worked in Malaysia were married and 39.24% were single while they were working there.

The majority of the Thai workers who went to work at the destination country were married, and taking care of their children was one of their family's burdens. Studying the number of children in each family of the sample group of Thai workers, it was found that 77.84% of the sample group had children and 15.4% had no children. Again, of the sample group who had children, 34.92% had an average of 2 children per family and 21.91% had one child. From the study, it was found that 0.22% of the sample group had as many as 9 children (Figure 1.3).

From the study of the sample group of Thai migrant workers who received vocational training in Thailand, it was found that only 14.1% were actually trained while 85.03% were not trained. In the

group that was trained, 5.42%, representing the majority of the Thai workers, were trained in construction skills. Next in order were 3.69% who were trained in skills for work in factories; 3.25% were trained in agricultural sector, and the rest were trained in service and fishery jobs (Table 1.6). The minimum duration of time for training was 1 day and the maximum time was 6 years. Besides being trained in vocational skills, some of the sample groups of Thai workers were also trained in agricultural, service, construction, and industrial sectors. However, this involved only a small number of workers.

In the area of the organizations that provided the vocational training for the sample group of Thai migrant workers, 4.56% were agencies in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, such as the Department of Skill Development and Labor, the Center of Skill and Technical Development and the Center of Vocational Development. Other government agencies formed 2.6% - these were agencies such as the Department of Livestock, District Office, the Department of Rural Development, District Agricultural Office, the Department of Land and the Red Cross Society. The Thai Royal Armed Forces cooperated in the training of the workers in 0.65% of the cases. Private companies, such as employment placement companies and garment companies, provided the training in 0.65% of cases. In the community of the sample group of Thai workers in the village, the housewives and the territorial maritime defense group provided 0.43% of the training. The education institutions such as out-of-school education centers, provincial technical colleges, agricultural colleges, and the typing schools provided 1.74% of the training (Table 1.6).

Status in Thailand

Research into the family status of the sample group of Thai workers showed that in this sample group, 52.60% were heads of households. From this, it can be seen that half of the sample groups of Thai workers who go abroad for work are heads of households who have the responsibility to care for and earn money to support the family. And next after the sample groups that state they are the heads of the households come those that answer their fathers are the heads of the households in a percentage of 25.16. Both the mother and father are joint heads the households in 6.94% of the cases (Figure 1.4).

From a survey of the number of family members in the sample groups who have an occupation so as to help earn money to support the family and who live together in Thailand, it was found that 31.67% had one family member who sought money to support the family; 36.01% had two family members who sought money; 9.76% had three family members and 10.2% had four family members (Figure 1.5). Thus, we can see that, for the most part, the families of the Thai workers had one to two family members who sought to make money to support their families. Sometimes, this is not sufficient to support the many members in the family including children and the elderly.

If one compares the status of families in the sample groups of workers with people in the village, 65.73% of the sample group replied that their status was about the same as others in the village; 24.08% believed their status to be a little better. It is worth observing that there are very few of the sample groups that replied that their condition was worse or much worse than that of fellow villagers. Thus, only 5.64% replied that their condition was worse, and only 22% replied that it was much worse.

The total income of the family is one important factor in pushing the sample group to decide to seek employment abroad. From the research, it was found that the sample group of Thai workers had a family monthly income in a range from less than 1,000 baht to more than 10,000 baht. Representing the majority, 45.52% had an income of 1,001-3,000 baht a month; next in order, 18.53% had an income of 3,001-5,000 baht a month; and 16.39% had an income of 5,001-10,000 baht a month, while 7.16% reported that they had no income except for what they produced on the farm which was just enough to support their families. Thus, the average income comes to about 5,000 baht per month.

From the research it was found that, for the most part, Thai laborers who went abroad were from the agricultural sector and were unskilled. There was a steadily decreasing wage rate in the agricultural sector at a yearly rate of 1.62% while the wage rate in other production sectors, aside from agriculture, was increasing at a rate of 3% (Thosanguan and Chalamwong, 1991). In this research, there was a study of occupations undertaken by migrant Thai workers before they went to work abroad, and it was found that 61.61%, representing the majority of the sample workers, worked in the agricultural

sector. Next in order were 11.71% working in the fishery sector. It was found that, for the majority, the occupation of the sample group of Thai workers is farming which provides the main labor force in the rural areas. Furthermore, 8.46% of the sample group were construction workers. The majority of these construction workers worked as general construction workers. Next in order were, for example, house construction workers, crane and tractor drivers. About 3.25% worked in the service sector and the majority here worked as beauticians. Besides that, there were those who worked as motorcycle drivers transporting people, and as maids. Of the sample group, 2.60% worked in the industrial sector, such as garment and furniture makers which represented the majority of the industrial workers. Only 0.43% worked as civil servants, such as teachers in the mechanic schools and the Regional Electricity Authority workers. Besides that, 4.56% worked in other jobs such as private business operators. Others were air-condition repairmen, grocery storeowners, motorcycle repairmen, and rubber tree cutters. According to our study, there were 7.38% of the workers who did not have any jobs before they went to work abroad (Figure 1.8).

When considering occupations of the sample group of Thai migrant workers according to their sex (Table 1.7) it was found that 68.41%, representing most of the Thai male workers, worked in the agricultural sector. Next in order were 13.74% who worked in the fishery sector. The same applied for female workers where the majority of them worked in the agricultural sector (54.10 %). Next in order were 6.56% who worked in the fishery sector and in the industrial factories.

From the study of Thai laborers who worked in the agricultural sector, it was found that 70.66%, representing the majority of those workers, finished primary school education, 58.97 % finished their secondary school, and 33.33 % finished education higher than secondary school. For the sample group of workers who worked in the fishery sector, 14.10 % finished secondary school and 11.36% finished primary school (Table 1.8).

This research also studied the relationship between the occupations of the Thai workers before they went to work abroad and the legal status of the Thai workers while they were working abroad. It was found that 79.82% of the workers who went to work legally worked in the agricultural sector. Next in order were 4.82% who worked in the construction sector and 4.39 % worked in the industrial sector. For the Thai laborers who went to work abroad illegally, 50.76% originally worked in the agricultural sector. Next in order were 24.37% who worked in the fishery sector; 4.06% worked in the service sector (Table 1.7).

From the study of the work places where the Thai migrant laborers used to work before they went to work abroad, it was found that 68.33% of the sample group of the workers used to work in their own households. Next in order were 12.58 % who used to work in the small business enterprises (no more than 10 persons). Only 4.56% and 6.07% worked in big enterprises (more than 100 persons) and medium enterprises (11-100 persons) respectively (Table 1.9). When considering the occupations of the Thai workers with the size of the work places where they used to work before they went to work abroad, it was found that 78.85% of the workers who worked in the agricultural sector worked in their own households. Next in order were 47.62 % of the workers who worked in big enterprises, 29.09% worked in small enterprises. Also, 43.64%, representing the majority of workers who worked in the fishery sector, used to work in small enterprises. Next in order were 32.14% who worked in medium enterprises; 6.09% worked in their own households. Representing the majority of industrial factories workers, 23.81% used to work in big enterprises while 7.14% used to work in medium enterprises. Besides that, 21.43% representing the majority of the workers in the construction sector worked in medium enterprises. Next in order were 12.73% who worked in the small enterprises, and 4.76% who worked in big enterprises (Table 1.10).

According to the study of the relation between the Thai migrant workers and work places, it was found that 62.04% had their own business. Besides that, 22.78% worked in the places where they were not related to the business owner, and 6.72% were related to the business owner. Considering the relationship between the occupations of the Thai workers with the work places, it was found that 80.50% of the workers in the agricultural sector had their own business; 41.94 % were workers who were related to the business owners; 34.95% had no relationship to the business owners. Of the fishery workers, 38.71% were related with the enterprise owners; 24.27% had no relationship with the enterprise operators; 5.32% of the workers had their own business (Table 1.11 and 1.12).

Some of the groups of Thai migrant workers worked in other jobs besides their main jobs. According to the study, it was found that besides their main jobs they also worked in sideline jobs because the income that they received from the main job was not enough to support their families. Those people who farmed rice would also go to work in other jobs after they finished the harvest . From the research data, it was found that 10.41% of the workers had agricultural sector jobs, such as farming rice, cutting the sugar cane and rubber trees for other people so as to earn supplementary wages. Next in order were 9.93% who worked in the service sector in jobs such as waiters or waitresses in restaurants, baking cakes, working in fast food restaurants, in beauty salons, and as board painters; there were also workers who worked in the construction sector as household construction workers, tractor drivers, painters and welders. Besides that, 3.90% worked in their own businesses and 0.43% worked in the industrial sector in jobs such as vehicle repairmen and lathe operators. Only 0.22% worked as apprentice workers in the private businesses (Figure 1.10).

From the study of the last income of the sample group of Thai workers before they went to work at the destination country, 36.88% representing the majority of Thai laborers, earned their last monthly income of an amount between 2,001-5,000 baht. Next in order were 34.92% who had an income lower than 2,000 baht. Besides that 7.59% of the sample group of the Thai workers had no income before they went to work abroad. Of the 381 people who answered that they earned some income before they went abroad, it was found that the average earned income was 3,700 baht per month. The lowest income that Thai workers earned was 200 baht per month and the highest was 50,000 baht per month (Figure 1.8).

Most of the Thai laborers who went to work abroad used to work in the agricultural sector. Therefore, the land that was used for farming purposes was important to them. Of the Thai laborers, 71.15% farmed on their family's land; 8.68% farmed on other people's land. Besides that, 2.17% of the Thai laborers did not work in the agricultural sector (Table 1.10).

After studying the amount of land that the sample group possessed, it was found that 30.59% of the sample group of Thai laborers possessed their parents' land. Next in order were 22.78 % who possessed their family's land; 21.69% possessed their own land, and 8.89 % possessed the land as a married couple.

Considering the amount of land that the parents of the sample group owned, it was found that 15.18% of the sample group's parents possessed 1-10 *rai* of land; 8.46% possessed 11-20 *rai*; 5.86% owned 21-50 *rai*; 0.87% owned 51-100 *rai*; 0.22% owned more than 100 *rai* of land. Some 74.19% answered that their parents did not own any land. As to the workers who owned their family's land, 9.98% of the workers owned 1-10 *rai* of land, 6.72% owned 11-20 *rai*; 5.21% owned 21-50 *rai*, 0.87% owned 50-100 *rai*. Of the sample group 57.05 % answered that they did not own any family land. For the sample group of Thai laborers who possessed their own land, 13.23% of the workers owned 1-10 *rai* of land 4.34% owned 11-20 *rai*; 4.12% owned 21-50 *rai*; 58.17% of the sample group did not own any land. According to the study of the sample group who owned the land as a married couple, 5.21% of the sample group owned 1-10 *rai* of land; 2.39% owned 11-20 *rai*; 1.08% owned 21-50 *rai*; 0.22% owned 51-100 *rai*; 70.93 % of the sample group did not own any land as a married couple.

Besides the amount of land that was mentioned above, this research also studied the amount of land owned by people other than the workers themselves, such as the wife's parents, siblings and relatives, which was represented by 5.64% of the sample. Some 2.60% owned other people's land with an area of 1-10 *rai*; 1.74% owned 11-20 *rai*;1.08% owned 21-50 *rai*; and 0.22% owned 51-100 *rai*. Some 74.19% answered that they did not own any land belonging to the household's other members (Table 1.13).

Most of the Thai laborers who used to go to work abroad would work for a designated period of time because of the set employment contract of the destination country. Representing the majority of Thai workers in Taiwan, 56.45 %, worked for 1-2 years. Next in order were 20.97% of the workers who worked no more than a year. Some 28.07%, representing the majority of Thai workers in Japan, worked from 3-5 years. Next in order were 26.32 % of the workers who worked for 2-3 years, and also 26.3 % who worked more than 5 years. About 26.00%, representing the majority of Thai workers in Malaysia

worked and lived there no more than a year. Next in order were 23.33 % of the workers who worked more than 5 years. Some 44.26 %, representing the majority of Thai workers in Singapore, worked for 1-2 years. Next in order were 24.59% of the workers who worked no more than a year (Table 1.14).

According to the above data, it can be seen that the group of Thai workers went to work in different modes. Some countries had employment contracts with a fixed working period, such as in Taiwan and Singapore where most of the employment contracts with the Thai workers were fixed for 2 years. While in Japan, most of the Thai workers there worked illegally because Japan has a very strict law against the foreign laborers who wished to go to work there. Thus, once the workers entered Japan, they tended to work and stay there for a long time, as it would be difficult for them to return back to Japan again after they had returned to Thailand. The Thai laborers who went to work in Malaysia also tended to work there for a long time as Malaysia borders Thailand, making it easier to go in and return back to visit their homes as compared to other more remote countries. Therefore, there were groups of Thai workers who went to work abroad for both long and short periods.

Reasons for Emigration

According to the study of Prachanphon and Thiranaed (1991), it was found that the Thai workers who went to work in the Middle East countries received high wages and were able to cope with the economic factor and the unemployment problem. Thus this was an important push factor attracting Thai laborers to go to work abroad. This was consistent with the studies of Peerathep Roongshivin and Suchai Piyaphan who found that because of the high cost of living and the low output of agricultural goods many Thais wished to find places to work to earn more income domestically and abroad. Also, the study found that an important motive that made Thai people go to work abroad was money. A high wage rate in foreign countries influenced them to seek work abroad because of the higher economic reward when compared to Thailand. Comparing the minimum wage rate between the countries in the Middle East such as Kuwait and the countries in the Far East such as Taiwan, it was found that the minimum wage rate for skilled laborers was equal to 80 Kuwait dinar or approximately 7,000 baht (1 Kuwait dinar was equal to 87.6285 baht). The skilled laborers would receive wages of approximately 100 Kuwait dinar and had a monthly income including overtime payments of no less than 150 Kuwait dinar or approximately 13,000 baht. In Taiwan the skilled laborers such as welders would receive wages of 16,000 Taiwan dollars or approximately 16,500 baht (1 Taiwan dollar was equal to 1.0269 baht). Wages in Taiwan for the skilled laborers would be no less than 20,000 Taiwan dollars or approximately 21,000 baht. This shows that the labor wages in Taiwan were very high and clearly higher than the labor wages in the Middle East countries and was the reason that influenced the laborers to choose to go to work in Taiwan rather than the countries in the Middle East.

From the study of the main factor that influenced the sample group of Thai laborers to go to work abroad, it was found that 74.19 % of the sample group was dissatisfied with the income that they got in Thailand and wished to earn more income than before. Next in order were 35.79 % who could not find jobs in Thailand, and 24.51% wanted to earn money to pay off their debts. Besides the above-mentioned factors, there were other reasons to go to work abroad. For example, 7.59% wanted to seek adventure and go to foreign countries, 5.64% were dissatisfied with their work environment, 4.77% and 3.04% answered that they wanted to follow or join with their friends and relatives in the destination countries. Family problems were another factor: 0.65% had divorced and wanted to move away from home. Besides the above, 0.43 % had personal problems, such as problems with their employers or other problems at their work places, 0.22% had no friends or relatives. There were also other reasons for the sample group of Thai laborers to go to work abroad. For instance, their families wanted them to go or it was easy and did not cost much to go, and they received information that the cost of living in Singapore was cheap. They wanted to have new experiences and improve the status of their families, or members of their family could not go so they went, the broker persuaded them to go; they wanted to go as they saw their friends go, and so on (Table 1.15).

Individual family members and friends have an influence on the decision of the sample group of Thai workers to seek employment overseas. From the study it was found that 17.40% of the sample group replied that they decided by themselves; next were 7.81% who replied it was their parents or father-in-law, and 6.29% who said it was a friend or friends who influenced their decision (Figure 1.12). It was

also found that the amount of time taken to make the decision to seek employment abroad is also relevant: 50.76% of the sample worker groups replied that the amount of time taken was less than one month while 26.25% replied that they spent less than half a year before deciding to seek employment abroad (Figure 1.13).

Examining to what extent the condition of the Thai economy influences the decision of the sample group to seek employment abroad indicates that as the sample group constitutes those who went abroad for work and returned to Thailand before the downturn in the economy, the condition of the economy had no influence in the past on the decision to work abroad. However, when the question is posed in the present time as to the condition of the economy as playing a part in the decision to work abroad, 21.69% of the sample group thinks that such condition is one factor in making the decision and they would remain in Thailand if the economy does not further deteriorate; 20.17% replied that the condition of the economy played only some role in pushing them to go abroad and they would stay if the economy did not worsen; 14.10% replied they were not certain and were already looking into seeking work abroad. And 13.23% said the condition of the economy had no influence on their decision as they already wanted to work abroad while 25.38% replied that they had gone abroad to work before the economic crisis hit Thailand (Figure 1.14).

From research data on work and living in the destination country, Saranya Bunnag and Sawapha Chaimusik have surveyed Thai workers in Singapore. It was found that steps taken in going to work abroad usually involved contacts or a middleman broker from a private employment agency who provided data on work and living conditions in Singapore; the contact or broker who arranges employment abroad usually is a local person whom the worker knows. Thus, for the most part, in making contact to work in Singapore the workers did not go through the Department of Labor but through individuals who gave them information (Saranya Bunnag and Sawapha Chaimusik, 1985).

In this research, source of information is one factor influencing the struggle of Thai laborers to go abroad. There are two kinds of sources of information that reach the Thai workers, direct and indirect. It was found that the most influential source came from relatives and friends in Thailand (33.84%). Next in order as a source of information were relatives and friends in the destination country at 26.25%. After that came private employment placement agencies or job brokers at 18.44%.

Another sample group of Thai workers, 2.82%, answered that their sources of information were private employment agencies and labor brokers. Next were 2.60% who received information from relatives and friends, and 1.95% from private employment agencies in Thailand. Also, 1.08% of another sample group of Thai workers answered that their sources of information were private employment placement agencies in Thailand. Next in order were 87% who answered that the sources of information were private job placement agencies and job brokers (Table 1.16).

When studying the quality of the information on work and daily living (in the destination countries) that the laborers received, it was found that 32.97% of the sample group answered that it was good data. Next in order were 22.56% who answered that it was decent enough. However, 19.09% of the sample group answered that they did not have any information regarding the work situation in the destination countries before they went there to work. For the information data about the daily living in the foreign countries, 31.45% of the sample group answered that they received decent information data; 23.9% answered that the information they had was adequate. However, 21.69% answered that they did not have any information regarding the daily living in the destination countries before they went to work there (Table 1.17).

Travel and job seeking arrangements in the destination countries were other elements that pushed the Thai laborers to go to work abroad. According to the study, it was found that 55.10% of the sample group of workers already had relatives and friends in the destination countries; 40.78% (Figure 1.15 and 1.16) of the sample group answered that their relatives and friends helped and supported them when they arrived at the destination countries for the first time. In the area of helping the Thai laborers, 30.37% of the sample group of workers answered that there were relatives and friends who helped them find the jobs; next in order were 25.38% who answered that their relatives and friends helped them find accommodation when they arrived there. Also, 19.31% of the sample group answered that they received

assistance from relatives and friends in getting food when they arrived in the destination countries while 8.24% received assistance from relatives and friends in getting household goods and money. About 0.87% answered that they were helped in negotiating with the authorities when they had problems in the destination countries, and 0.65% answered that they received assistance in translating and advice in language use.

The sample group of the Thai laborers who went to work abroad did not have many differences in their backgrounds. Most came from the work force in the agricultural sector and did not have much education, were poor, and more than half of them had an income of less than 3,000 baht per month. Nevertheless, they had enough land to work on and a fair amount of money to support their families. Most of those in the sample group of the workers were the heads of the households who had the burden to take care of their families. Some of the families had both children and elders. Some had many family members in their household. Most of the people in the sample group of the Thai workers had very little income and were just able to support their families. However, there was not enough money for other expenses, such as their children's education fees, and so on. Nevertheless, the present economic recession did not have any influence in pushing the Thai laborers to decide to go to work abroad because these people went before the economic crisis. About 27% of the sample group of the workers expressed the opinion that they wanted to go to work abroad no matter whether the economic situation got worse or not, while 42 % were expressed the opinion that they would choose to work in Thailand if the economic situation did not worsen. Before the sample group of the Thai workers went to work abroad, the main factor that made the Thai workers decide to go was that they had information about the work and living conditions abroad. Their relatives abroad assisted them by providing the information and supported them when they arrived there. Nevertheless, the main reason that pushed the Thai laborers to go to work abroad was that they wanted better financial rewards than what they would get in Thailand, so as to improve their family's status.

Table 1.1: Interview Place and Destination Countries of Thai Migrant Workers

Interview Place	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Udon Thani	54.4	47.6	1.3	29.5	27.8
Nakhonratchasima	7.0	3.2	---	54.9	16.3
Chiang Rai	22.8	49.2	0.6	13.1	19.7
Phayao	15.8	---	1.3	2.5	3.0
Pattani	---	---	53.8	---	18.4
Satun	---	---	43.0	---	14.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.2 : Legal Status and Destination Countries of Thai Migrant Workers

Legal Status	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Illegal	89.5	5.7	89.2	21.3	48.8
Legal	10.5	94.3	10.8	78.7	51.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.3: Thai Migrant Workers by Education and Destination Countries

Education Level	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Primary 1-4	56.1	51.6	26.0	60.7	45.8
Primary 5-6	12.3	25.8	31.0	26.2	26.0
Secondary 1-3	12.3	8.9	17.7	4.1	11.1
High school 4-6	7.0	12.1	14.6	---	9.1
Up to high school	12.3	1.6	2.5	1.6	3.3
Not specified	---	---	8.2	7.4	4.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.4: Legal Status and Education of Thai Migrant Workers

Legal status	Education level				Total
	Primary	Secondary	Up to high school	Not specified	
Illegal	44.4	60.2	73.3	50.0	48.8
Legal	55.6	39.8	26.7	50.0	51.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.5: Thai Migrant Workers by Marital Status and Destination Countries

Marital status	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Never married	10.5	5.7	39.3	9.0	18.7
Married	85.9	88.7	58.2	86.1	77.2
Cohabitation	---	0.8	---	1.6	0.6
Separated	1.8	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.9
Divorced	1.8	2.4	0.6	2.5	1.7
Widow/ widower	---	1.6	1.3	---	0.9
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.6 : Vocational Training in Thailand of Thai Migrant Workers and Training Organization

Vocational Training	Frequency	Percent	Organization	Frequency	Percent
Construction Skills	17	3.7	Ministry of Labor and Welfare	10	2.2
Agriculture Skills	9	2.0	Other government office	27	5.9
Manufacturing Skills	12	2.6	Thai Army	3	0.7
Service Skills	13	2.8	Profited companies/ private recruiter	3	0.7
Fisherman	2	0.4	Groups in Village	1	0.2
			School / College	5	1.1
Total	53	11.5	Total	49	10.6
No training	404	87.6	No training	404	87.6
Not specified	4	0.9	Not specified	8	1.7
Total	408	88.5	Total	412	89.4
Total	**461**	**100.0**	**Total**	**461**	**100.0**

Table 1.7: Thai Migrant Workers by Main Job before Leaving Thailand and Sex / Legal Status

Main Job	Sex		Total	Main job	Legal Status		Total
	Male	Female			Illegal	Legal	
Farming	68.4	54.1	66.4	Farming	50.8	79.8	66.4
Industry	2.2	6.6	2.8	Industry	1.0	4.4	2.8
Construction	4.7	--	4.0	Construction	3.0	4.8	4.0
Service	2.5	4.9	2.8	Service	4.1	1.8	2.8
Fisherman, Fishery	13.7	6.6	12.7	Fisherman, Fishery	24.4	2.6	12.7
Helper in a family	0.3	1.6	0.5	Helper in a family	0.5	0.4	0.5
Government servant	0.6	--	0.5	Government servant	1.0	--	0.5
Others, specified	7.7	26.2	10.3	Others, specified	15.2	6.1	10.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**Total**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.8: Thai Migrant Workers by Main Job before Leaving Thailand and Education

Main Jobs	Education				Total
	Primary	Secondary	Up to high school	Not specified	
Farming	70.6	59.0	33.3	42.9	66.4
Industry	1.9	6.4	--	4.8	2.8
Construction	5.4	--	--	--	4.0
Service	2.5	5.1	--	--	2.8
Fisherman, fishery	11.4	14.1	--	33.3	12.7
Helper in a family	0.3	1.3	--	--	0.5
Government servant	--	--	22.2	--	0.5
Others, specified	7.9	14.1	44.5	19.0	10.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.9: The Enterprise in Thailand which Thai Migrant Workers Worked for

Size of Enterprise in Thailand	Number	Percent
Large or medium enterprise (more than 100 employees)	21	4.5
Relatively small enterprise (>10, <100)	28	6.1
A very small enterprise (less than 10 employees)	58	12.6
Household business	315	68.3
Sub-Total	422	91.5
Have not worked in Thailand	39	8.5
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 1.10: Thai Migrant Workers by Main Job and Size of Enterprise before Leaving Thailand

Main Job	Size of Enterprise				Total
	Large or Medium	Relatively Small	Very Small	Household Business	
Farming	47.6	14.3	29.1	78.8	66.35
Industry	23.7	7.1	1.8	1.3	2.8
Construction	4.8	21.4	12.7	1.0	4.0
Service	4.8	3.6	1.8	2.9	2.8
Fisherman, fishery	--	32.1	43.6	6.1	12.7
Helper in a family	--	--	--	0.6	0.5
Government servant	4.8	3.6	--	--	0.5
Others, specified	14.3	17.9	10.9	9.3	10.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.11: Relationship to the Owner of Business Worked for

Relationship	Number	Percent
A relative of yours	31	6.7
Someone else, no close relative	105	22.8
It was respondent's own business	286	62.0
Have not worked in Thailand	39	8.5
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 1.12: Thai Migrant Workers by Main Job and Relationship to the Owner before leaving Thailand

Main Job	Relationship to the Owner			Total
	A relative of yours	Someone else, no close relative	Own business	
Farming	41.9	35.0	80.5	66.4
Industry	3.2	6.8	1.4	2.8
Construction	3.2	12.6	1.0	4.0
Service	3.2	3.9	2.5	2.8
Fisherman, fishery	38.7	24.3	5.3	12.7
Helper in a family	--	1.0	0.3	0.5
Government servant	--	1.9	--	0.5
Others, specified	9.7	14.6	8.9	10.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.13: Total Land of All Members of Thai Migrant Workers 's Household Collectively

Amount of Land	Status of Land					
	Family	Myself	Spouse	Parents	Other relatives	Other Persons
1-10 *rai*	10.0	13.2	5.2	15.2	2.6	2.6
11-20 *rai*	6.7	4.4	2.4	8.4	1.7	1.7
21-50 *rai*	5.2	4.1	1.1	5.9	0.7	1.1
51-100 *rai*	0.9	---	0.2	0.9	0.7	0.2
101 *rai* and more	---	---	---	0.2	---	---
Total	**22.8**	**21.7**	**8.9**	**30.6**	**5.6**	**5.6**
No	57.1	58.1	70.9	49.2	74.2	74.2
Did not work in farm	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2
Total	77.2	78.3	91.1	69.4	94.4	94.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.14: Thai Migrant Workers by Duration of Time and Destination Country

Duration of Time	Destination Country				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
1 year and less	7.0	21.0	26.0	24.6	21.9
More than 1 year to 2 years	12.3	56.5	20.0	44.3	35.5
More than 2 years to 3 years	26.3	16.9	11.4	9.8	14.3
More than 3 years to 5 years	28.1	3.2	19.3	14.7	14.8
More than 5 years	26.3	2.4	23.3	6.6	13.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.15: Reason for Leaving Thailand to Work Abroad

Reason	I could not find a job	Unsatisfactory earnings and hope for better earnings	Work conditions unsatisfactory	Had to repay debt	Personal problem with employer or others at work
No	64.2	25.8	94.4	75.5	99.6
Yes	35.8	74.2	5.6	24.5	0.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.15: Reason for Leaving Thailand to Work Abroad (continued)

Reason	Personal problems felt uncomfortable with relatives/ friends /community there	Divorce, wanted to get away	Lack of close relatives, friends in area	Adventure, wanted to go abroad	Had prospective spouse waiting abroad
No	100.0	99.3	99.8	92.4	99.6
Yes	--	0.7	0.2	7.6	0.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.15: Reason for Leaving Thailand to Work Abroad (continued)

Reason	To accompany or join spouse	To accompany or join other relative	To accompany or join friend	Other reasons
No	100.0	97.0	95.2	96.1
Yes	--	3.0	4.8	3.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 1.16: The Main Information Sources about Destination Countries

Information Sources	Main information 1		Main information 2		Main information 3	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Relatives/friends/living in Thailand	156	33.8	8	1.7	---	---
Relatives/friends living this country	121	26.3	12	2.6	1	0.2
Newspaper, magazines	7	1.5	1	0.2	2	0.4
Radio	4	0.9	3	0.7	2	0.4
Television	---	---	1	0.2	1	0.2
Labor recruiter, contractor	85	18.4	13	2.8	4	0.9
Private employment agencies in Thailand	64	13.9	9	2.0	5	1.1
Government employment agency in Thailand	7	1.5	4	0.9	5	1.1
Employer	7	1.5	2	0.4	---	---
Visited this country earlier	3	0.7	3	0.7	1	0.2
A vocational school	1	0.2	---	---	---	---
Tour agency	1	0.2	---	---	---	---
No	5	1.1	405	87.9	440	95.4
Total	**461**	**100.0**	**461**	**100.0**	**461**	**100.0**

Table 1.17: Information that Thai Migrant Workers Received about Working and Living Condition in Destination Countries

Opinion	Working Condition		Living Condition	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
I hardly knew anything	88	19.1	100	21.7
I had some impression	87	18.9	83	18.0
Okay	104	22.5	110	23.9
Good	152	33.0	145	31.4
Very good	24	5.2	16	3.5
Do not answer	6	1.3	7	1.5
Total	**461**	**100.0**	**461**	**100.0**

Table 1.18: Main Type of Assistance Received by Thai Migrant Workers Abroad

Main Assistance	Housing	Food	Other material support	Help me find a job	Help me get along with officers	Help me translate language, made suggestions
No	29.7	35.8	46.9	24.7	54.2	54.5
Yes	25.4	19.3	8.2	30.4	0.9	0.7
Does not apply, no relatives/ friends	44.9	44.9	44.9	44.9	44.9	44.9
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Figure 1.1: Cross tabulation between Present Ages and Sex of Thai Migrant Workers

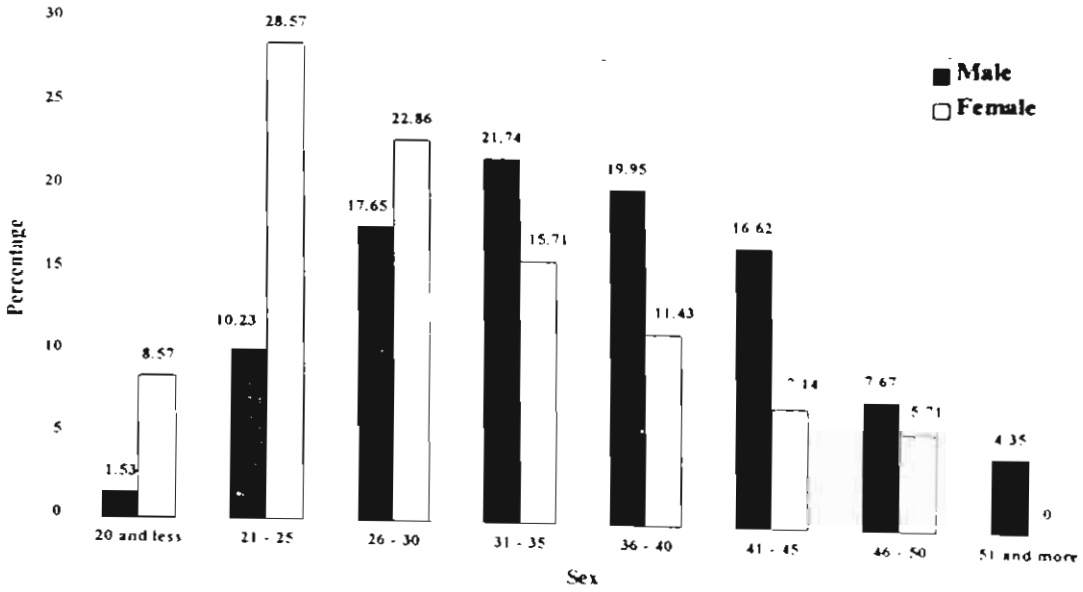


Figure 1.2: Thai Migrant Workers who received Education from Monks

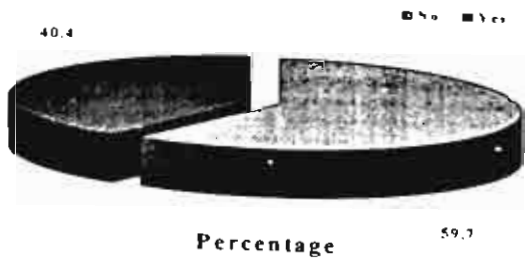


Figure 1.3: Number of Children in Household

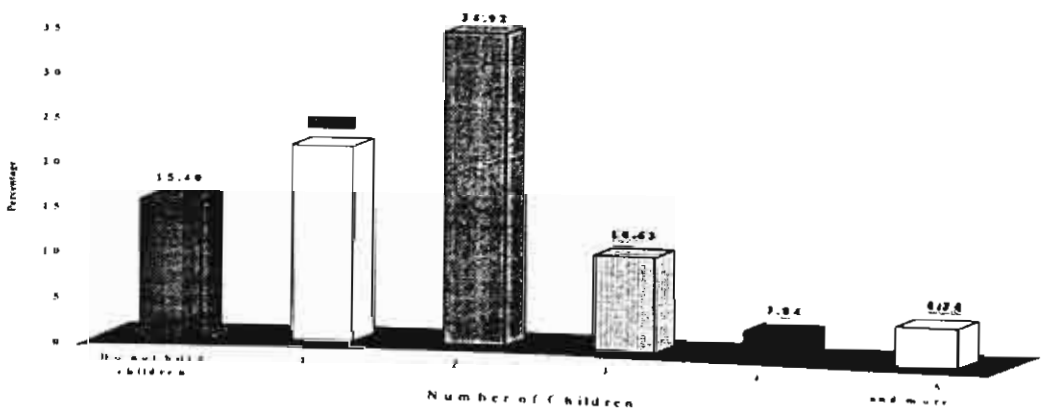


Figure 1.4 : Status in Household

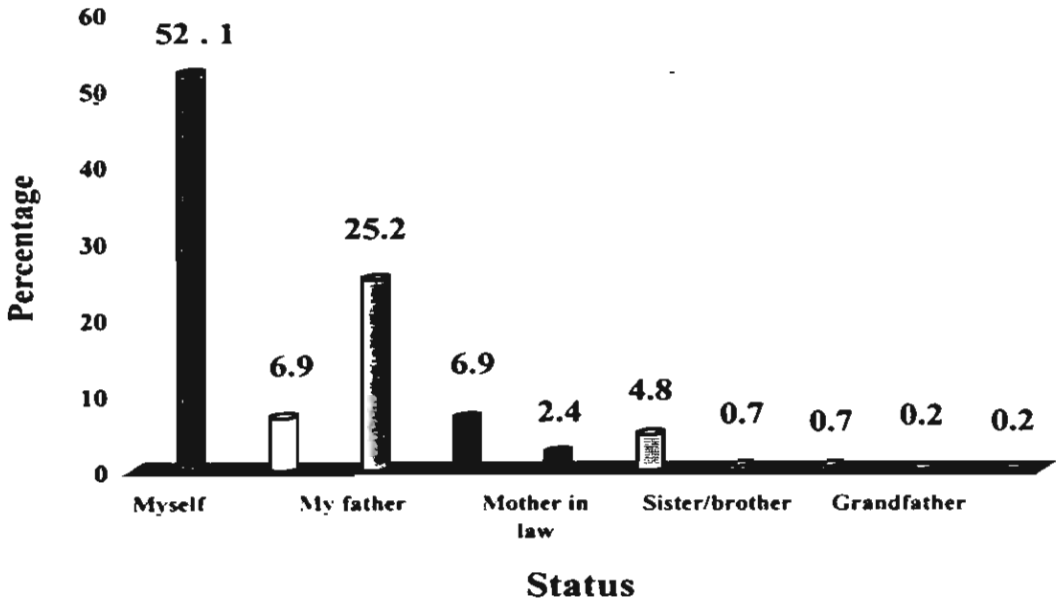


Figure 1.5: Economically Active Persons Living in the Household

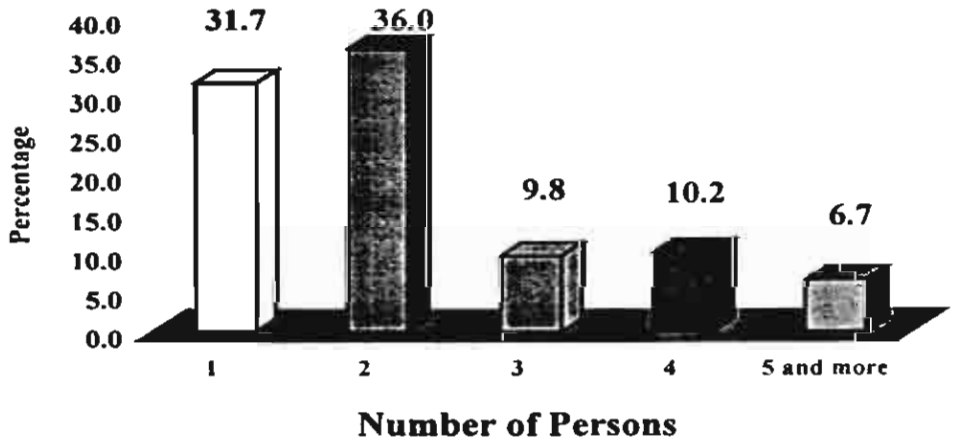


Figure 1.6: Comparison of Thai Migrant Workers' Household in Village

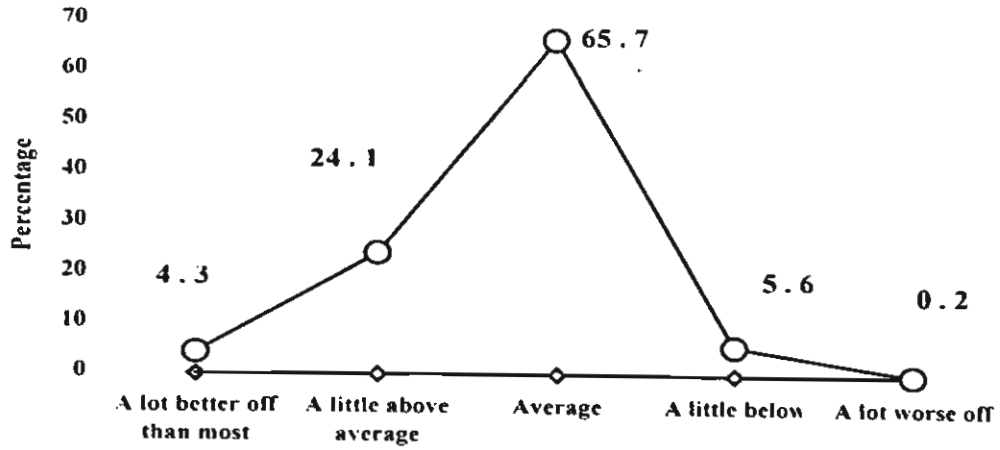


Figure 1.7: The Overall Income in Household

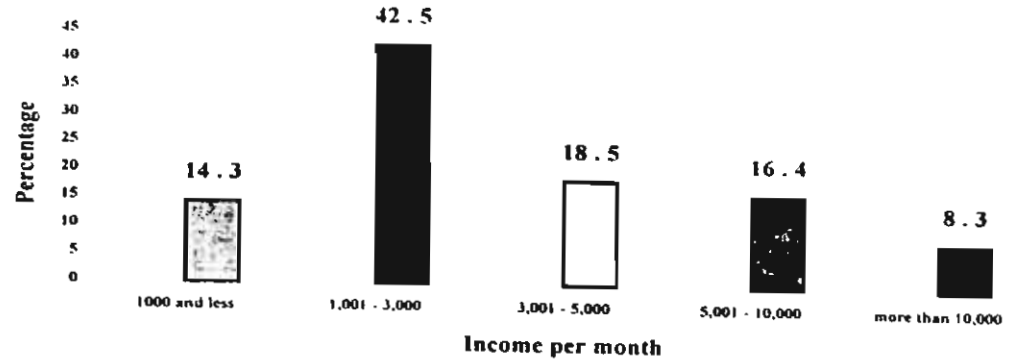


Figure 1.8: Last Income Earned in Thailand

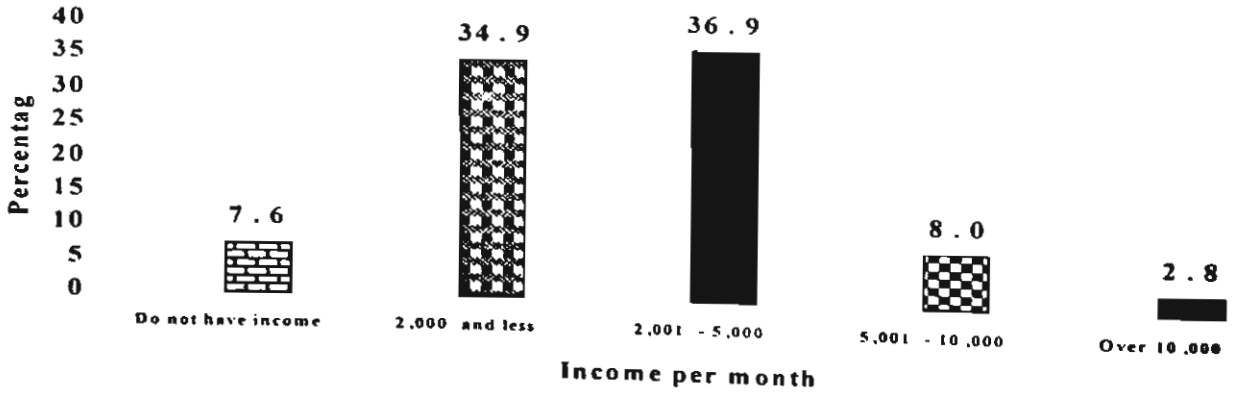


Figure 1.9: Main Jobs in Thailand before Leaving

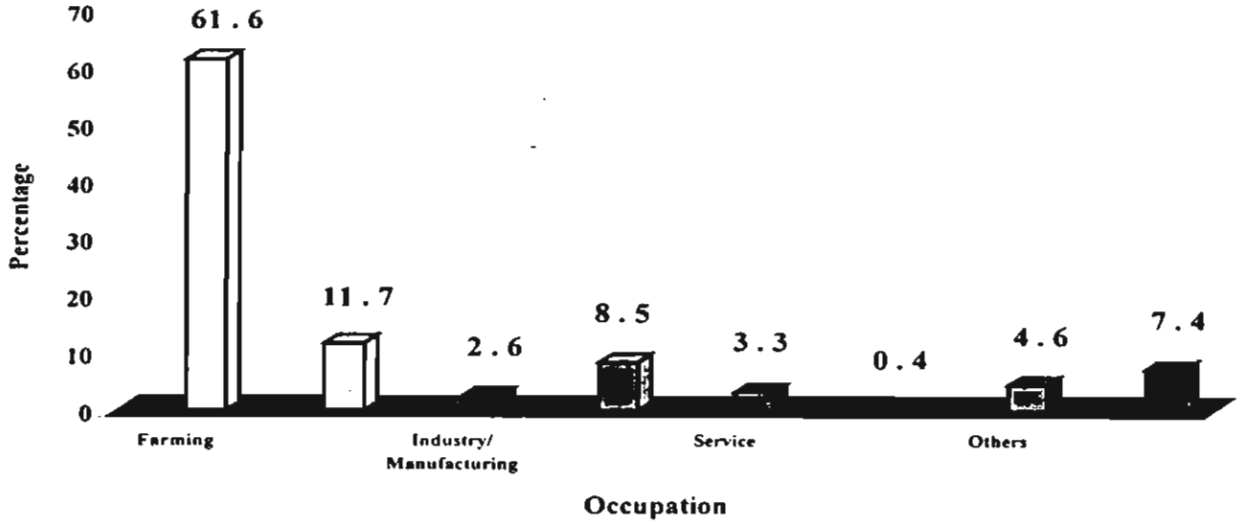


Figure 1.10: Additional Job in Thailand of Thai Migrant Workers before Leaving

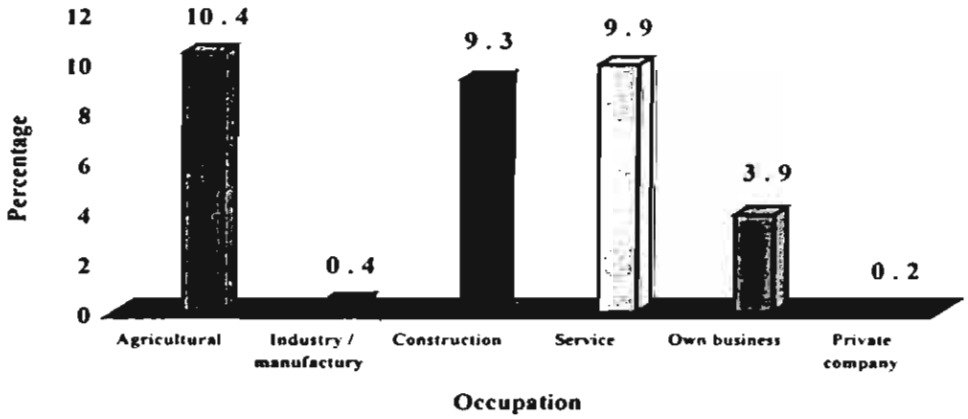


Figure 1.11: Kind of Land Worked by Thai Migrant Workers

Figure 1.12: Influence on Decision to Work in Destination Countries

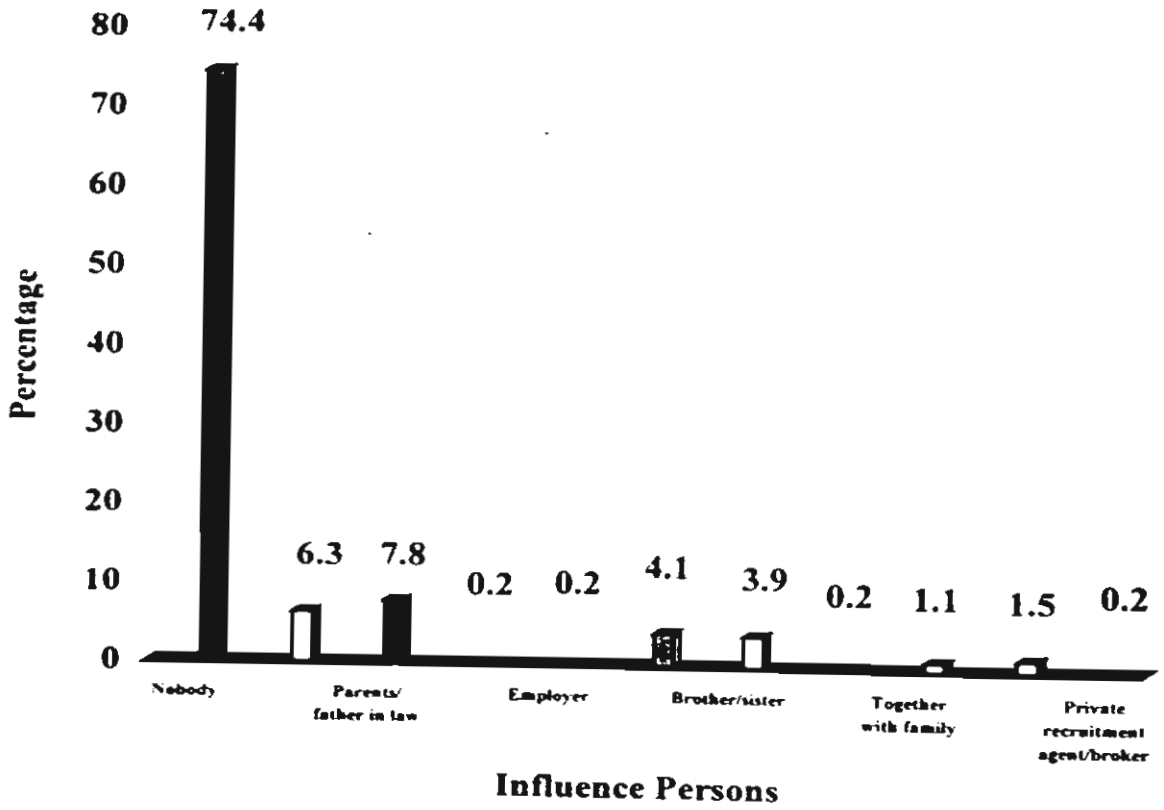


Figure 1.13: Period of Time before Making Decision to Leave Thailand

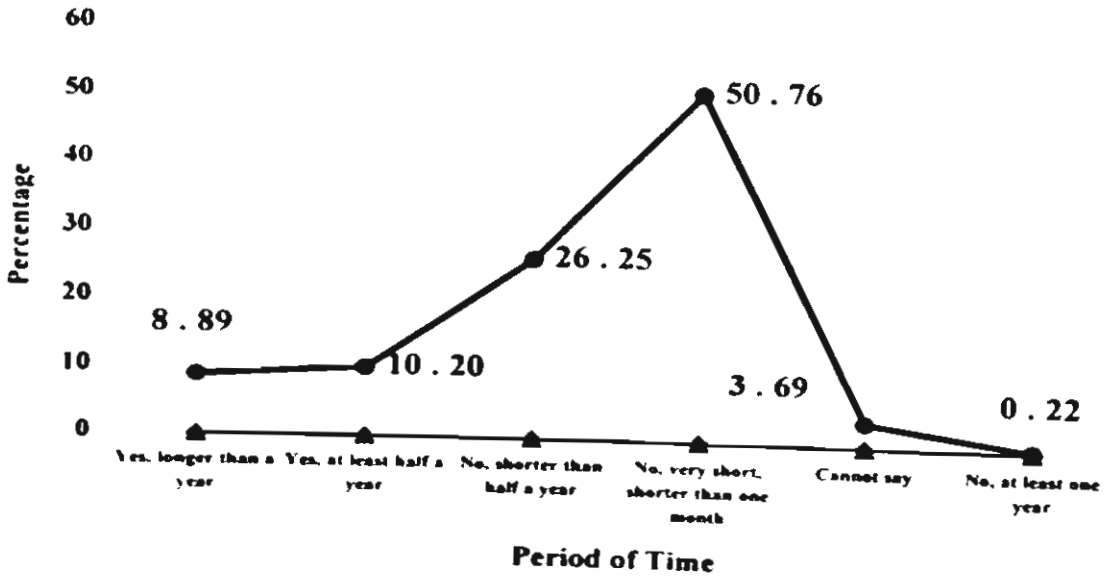


Figure 1.13: Did Thailand's Economic Crisis have an Important Impact on Decision to Leave?

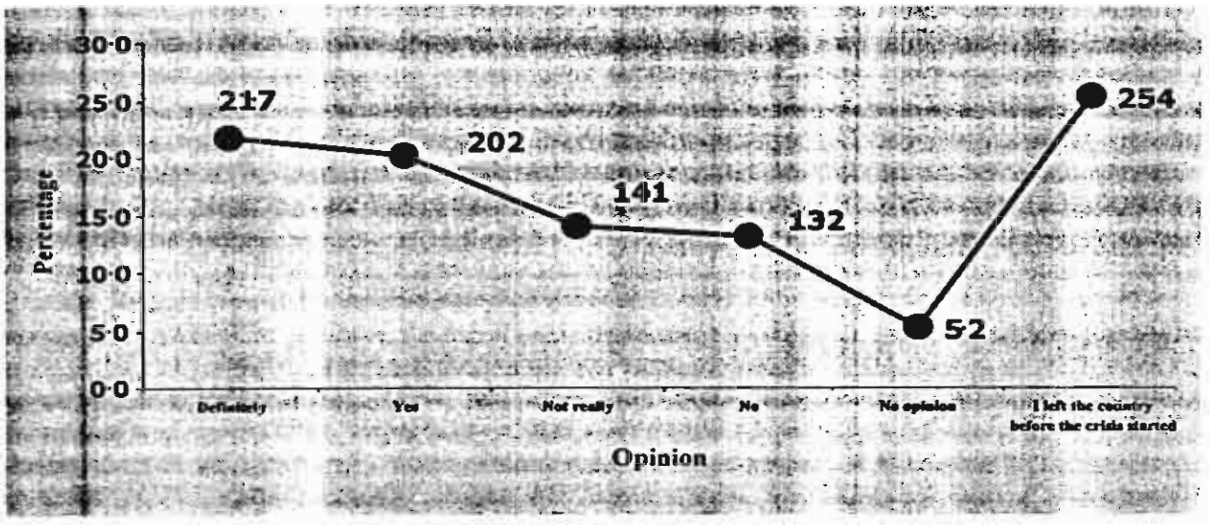


Figure 1.15: Percentage of Thai Migrant Workers Who Have Relatives / Friends in Destination Countries

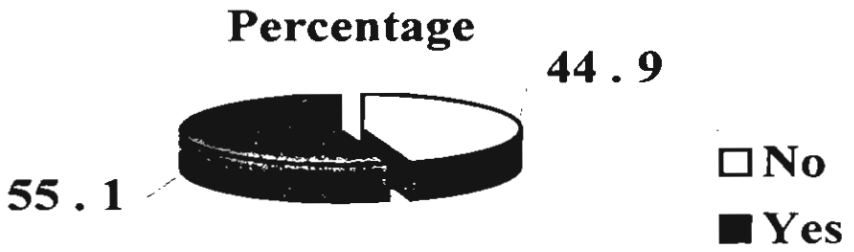
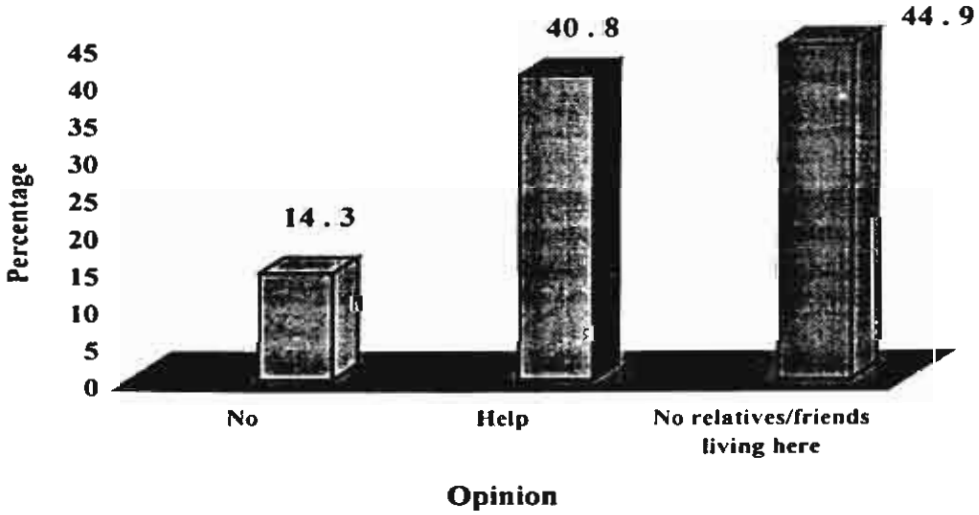


Figure 1.16: Help from Relatives or Friends on Arrival in Destination Countries



Recruitment

Background Information: Mode and Procedures of Labor Recruitment

Employment recruitment in Thailand is controlled by the Employment Recruitment Act 1985 (Revised 1994). According to the act, private recruiting agencies are allowed to offer services to job seekers and charge them a certain fee. Nonetheless, Thai workers can also find employment for themselves or use the services of the Department of Labor Recruitment. Thus, there are five major channels which Thai workers can go to work abroad.
They are:

1. Private employment recruitment agencies
2. Self arrangement
3. Services of the Ministry of Labor
4. Employment as trainee
5. Recruitment by employers

Actually, the first two channels of recruitment occupy almost 80% of all annual departures for work. Governmental services are minimal, covering not more than 5% of all departures and so are the other two channels. Trainees are only for Japan.

Since private recruiting agencies play an important role in sending workers overseas, more information will be provided about them. There are about 200 companies who operate as employment recruiting agencies. Those agencies usually contact brokers in destination countries to buy vacant positions then announce the posts to Thai job seekers. The companies have "agents" at the village level to reach young people who look for overseas job. Two or three installments of service fees will be paid to agents by job seekers through the process of recruitment. Once all the preparations and documents are done, workers will sign contract and will be brought to the Ministry of Labor for approval and pre-departure orientation which lasts a half day. Then they are ready to migrate for work. It should be noted that many companies are owned by or affiliated to politicians from various parties.

Self arrangement is another popular means of employment recruitment. Formerly, there were Thai returnees from the Middle East countries or Singapore who knew how to manage to be employed again in another destination country. They therefore arranged their own preparation, sometimes with former employers who wanted to hire them again. However, there are also new job seekers who use the services of unlicensed recruitment companies and claim that they arrange for overseas employment by themselves in order to be approved by the Ministry of Labor for their departure. This new trend has emerged during the last 2-3 years and has made the proportion of workers under the channel "self arrangement" higher than before. We do not really know how many workers really arrange employment by themselves and how many use the services of illegal recruiting agencies to facilitate them to go for overseas job.

Labor recruitment procedures cover the stages of passport and visa arrangement, medical check-up, crime record check, preparation of work contract, skill tests for technical work, and pre-departure orientation. In this chapter, data from the interviews of returned workers will give us details about the recruitment process.

How do Thai migrants go abroad? There is only one law governing the movement of Thai people overseas, that is the Employment Recruitment and Labor Protection Act 1983. The law allows private agencies to operate recruitment services to workers. But it does not prevent Thais who prefer to leave, on their own or by other means, from doing so. There are five channels that Thai workers can use to go abroad: going on one's own; through the arrangement/service of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW); going with the employers who come to Thailand to recruit them; going as trainees to countries which have set up a system of accepting trainees to work temporarily as apprentices; and going with the private recruitment agencies.

Table 2 shows the relative popularity of different recruitment agency services. In 1997, 95,128

(51.80%) workers used private recruiting services, while 15,950 (8.68 %) went on their own. The rest (which were not high in number) used other channels. It should be noticed that the utilization of the services of the MLSW was minimal, with only 0.89% of workers using this channel. The MLSW explained that it maintains the service just to offer alternatives to prospective migrants, and has no intention to compete with or to replace private agencies (Interview with MLSW, 10 June 1998). The trends of recruitment during 1995-1997 confirm this policy. In Table 2 the mode of recruitment through the five channels displays a consistent pattern that private recruiting agencies are the most popular, followed by self-arrangement, with MLSW or trainee program recruitment by employers having the lowest percentage.

Private Employment Recruitment Agencies

There were approximately 200 recruitment agencies operating in Thailand in 1997. Some agencies have existed since 1984, but some were quite recent. These agencies are widespread, both in Bangkok and up-country, especially in the northeast and the north of the country. The following page shows the list of top-twenty employment recruitment companies that sent 3,803 workers abroad within October 1997. The highest number of workers sent was 428 by Wince Placement Co., a newly established company, with its license number dating back to 1996. The second major sending company was V. Siam Interbid that sent 356 workers during the same period. The company is an older company if we consider the date of the license number which was 1984.

The major recruiting agencies for Taiwan are as follows:

1.	Sincere Supply Manpower (License no. 189/1984)	(118)
2.	Udorn E.P.A. International (License no. 218/1984)	(236)
3.	A.B. Thai Commercial (License no. 317/1984)	(115)
4.	Best Bromha International (License no. 327/1984)	(261)
5.	C.F. (License no. 405/1985)	(111)
6.	Fortunate (License no. 520/1987)	(142)
7.	Nithiroj Center Service (License no. 015/1984)	(45)
8.	S.A.P. World Business (License no. 747/1992)	(113)
9.	Sincere International (License no. 076/1984)	(106)
10.	Thaicharn (License no. 680/1990)	(220)

(*The number in brackets is the number of workers recruited in October 1997.)

The major recruiting agencies for Singapore are as follows:

1.Great Columbia (License no. 418/1985)	(30)
2.The Mass (License no. 438/1985)	(20)
3. K.C. Consultant and Manpower (License no. 443/1985)	(23)
4. P.S. 86 (License no. 466/1985)	(126)
5. Thai Empire (License no. 665/1990)	(1)
6. Sara Overseas (License no. 720/1991)	(18)
7. Big One Overseas (License no. 757/1992)	(104)
8. Big One Overseas (License no. 855/1994)	(1)
9. Ezprime (License no. 864/1995)	(10)

Unfortunately, we do not have lists of major recruiting agencies for Japan and Malaysia. Japan is an exceptional case because Japan only offers vacancies for trainees and the number of vacancies is usually given to the MLSW, not to private agencies. In 1996-97, 10 private recruitment agencies were revoked of their licenses due to malpractice. Some of the types of malpractice these agencies were charged with were that such agencies often take advantage of the workers by charging high recruitment fees and sometimes, workers who paid the fee never departed because they were cheated by the agencies. Other workers find that the jobs agencies promised them never existed. Many workers are left with heavy debt due to such exploitation. The swindling of Thai migrant workers by private recruitment agencies is

not uncommon. During the period from 9 April 1996 to 25 July 1996, 364 workers were cheated by the agencies, making a total of 26.21 million baht swindled from workers. Japan and Taiwan are the two destinations of highest swindling, followed by Laos and Brunei. But the ranking by amount of money swindled is Japan, Taiwan, Slovak Republic, Brunei, and Israel respectively.

Recruitment Arrangement

Findings from 461 Thai workers who returned from overseas employment will include the existing networks of facilitators which help workers to go abroad, characteristics of recruitment mode, signing of work contracts, workers' satisfaction regarding available information and services for them, pre-departure skills training and recruitment costs.

(1) Social Networks

Job seekers need someone to facilitate them to go abroad for employment. Very few of them could manage to find overseas jobs by themselves. Only those who had been abroad and had some knowledge of the overseas labor market could use his/her personal network to actualize his/her plan. In Table 2.1, there are only 2.8% of such cases. On the other hand, approximately 46% of the sampling depended on their informal networks, mainly relatives or acquaintances who lived in the destination country that workers were planning to go to. Those persons were the catalysts who facilitated prospective migrants to make the decision to go and enabled job seekers to make their travel possible. Friends played an important role as 24.3% of workers used this kind of network to help them to find jobs. Parents, siblings and other relatives constituted the second biggest network with 3.7% and 7.4%. It is interesting that the use of brokers (job agencies) in destination countries accounted for 5.9%, which means that unlawful recruitment services exist in destination countries and can be a pull factor to more undocumented workers. For the rest, the use of brokers in Thailand and employers in destination countries are the possible choices. As 50.5% of all workers got a job before leaving Thailand, the other half got a job after their arrival; in other words, the latter left Thailand without proper documents. Findings here reveal the many possible overseas facilitators who can help workers to find a job. These existing networks enable workers to leave as tourists or even to clandestinely enter destination countries with the hope of finding jobs there and the workers are really able to realize their hopes.

(2) Mode of Recruitment

For the sample of 461 Thai workers who had been working in Japan (57 persons), Taiwan (124 persons), Malaysia (158 persons) and Singapore 122 persons), self- arrangement and the use of private recruitment agencies or brokers were the most common mode of recruitment as 44.7% of all workers were self-arranged and 47.1% were recruited by private agencies. Only 7.8% was recruited in Thailand by employers and very few (0.4%) went through the Thai government recruitment office (Table 2.2).

If we break down the mode of recruitment by destination, we will find that Malaysia has the highest percentage of self-arrangement workers (91.8 %), while only 1.9% use private agencies. On the contrary, Japan has a high percentage of workers who use private agencies (59.7%) but also a high percent of self-arrangement (31.6%). Taiwan is the most orderly entrance destination because 81.5% of workers came through recruitment companies and only 14.5% made their own arrangement to go. Singapore follows the same pattern as Taiwan but has a lower percentage (64.8%) of workers using private agencies and a higher percentage (20.5%) of those with self-arrangement. There is a tendency that the self-arrangement channel is closely associated with being undocumented. Therefore, destination countries with a high percentage of workers using their own personal network tend to have a higher number of undocumented immigrants.

Who makes the first contact to approach workers to go? Table 2.3 demonstrates that 34.5% of respondents initiated the contact by themselves and 36.7% was approached by the recruiters. This proportion indicates that self-activated and recruiter-initiated job seekers are of almost equal number and each category constitutes one third of all respondents. For the rest, 28.2% are those who used some other modes (e.g. being informed or contacted by their own overseas informal networks) and are thus not approached by any of the recruiting agencies.

(3) Signing Work Contract

As the Employment Recruitment Act BE 2528 indicates that all Thai workers must be equipped with a work contract before they leave, it is interesting to compare the reality with the regulation. In Table 2.4, we can see that there is almost a half-half proportion between those who signed and those who did not sign contracts: 48.8% of respondents signed work contracts while 51.2% did not. There are more workers who graduated secondary school and did not sign contracts than those who signed. Therefore, education level does not determine their intention to legally sign a work contract and to protect themselves by such contracts. With regard to primary school graduates, they already constitute the majority of Thai overseas workforce. Therefore, their higher percentage in both sign and non-sign categories just reflects the higher proportion of primary school graduates in terms of education level. The percentage of workers who signed is slightly higher than that of those who did not sign for this level. The total number of respondents in Table 2.4 is not 461 because the rest of them achieved other levels of education.

Signing a work contract does not guarantee workers' security since some workers do it without full knowledge of what is contained in the contract. Setting apart the 51.0% of respondents who did not sign contracts, of the rest, only 25.6% understood completely the content of the contract, 15.2% understood only the general points in the contract, and 7.8% did not understand anything in it (Table 2.5). One may ask whether previous overseas work experience can help a worker to be more vigilant in signing a contract. Yes, this can help to a certain extent. There are fewer workers who had worked abroad and who did not sign a contract as 27.4% of experienced workers did not sign while 60.2% of inexperienced workers did not. Among the experienced ones, 39.5% completely understood the contract, 19.4% understood the general points and 13.7% still did not understand at all. For the inexperienced, the percentage of those who understood only the general points, or did not understand anything was 13.7 and 5.6% respectively.

(4) Workers' Satisfaction with Available Information and Services

The Department of Employment which is responsible for overseas employment promotion disseminates information about employment opportunities abroad. Concurrently, private recruiting agencies use their local networks to do the same thing. As we know that they are more outreaching than the government office, respondents were asked about their satisfaction toward both kinds of organizations. Although a large number of workers were self-arranged for their departure, they could use the information services provided by both agencies. The results of the satisfaction scales indicate that more workers are satisfied with the private recruitment agencies than government agencies.

For those who preferred the private agencies, reasons given for their preference were prompt services (11.9%), being able to get a job without work permit requirement (1.3%), having better access to jobs in destination countries (0.9%), having guarantee and being well-attended (0.9%), and all the three previous reasons together (0.9%). The government agency was praised for giving reliable information (8.5%), for attending to workers well (3.5%), being inexpensive or no fees charged (2.4%), all the three previous reasons (2.4%), and interestingly, being assured not to be cheated (0.2%). If we compare the reasons for workers' preference, it is quite clear that private agencies are their favorite for their promptness and their 'zigzag' (crooked?), dubious operations while the government agency is accepted for its reliability and honesty. Although workers know that the government agency does not charge them recruitment fees, the limited, passive and slow services do not attract workers adequately.

(5) Pre-Departure Skills Training

In this survey, not many workers, except for 11.9%, had been trained in their skills before leaving Thailand. The majority (88.1%) was not trained (Table 2.6). Among the four destination countries, Singapore and Taiwan had a higher number of trained workers (23 and 19 persons respectively); Japan and Malaysia had the highest percentage of workers without training, 94.7 and 93.7% respectively. Most workers were therefore unskilled laborers. Among those who had been trained, electronics, construction, welding, bricklaying and carpentry were types of skills offered.

Between workers who were self-arranged and those recruited by private agencies, the number of trained laborers was not very different: 23 among self-arrangement workers and 27 among private agency recruitment workers (Table 2.7). It should be observed that the only 2 persons who were recruited by the government services were not trained. The low number of trained workers indicates the lack of human resource development policy for Thai migrant workers, which resulted in their low competitiveness when compared with migrant workers from other countries (Chantavanich, 2000). Regarding the organization that offered available training services, data in Table 2.8 shows that Thai employers/companies are the organizations that trained the largest number of workers (15 workers), followed by the Thai government recruitment office (13 persons) and private recruitment company (10 persons).

The ambiguity in the pre-departure skills training information lies in the fact that only those migrant workers who will be employed in machinery work need to take the skills test. Other workers are not required by the law to pass the skills test. As a result, very few workers had been trained. Of those who needed the skills test (13.4% of all respondents), most of them (12.1%) passed.

Trained workers were mostly hired in construction and manufacturing industry (Table 2.9). The rest of them worked in farm, services and fishery, without prior training.

(6) Recruitment Fee and Other Expenditures

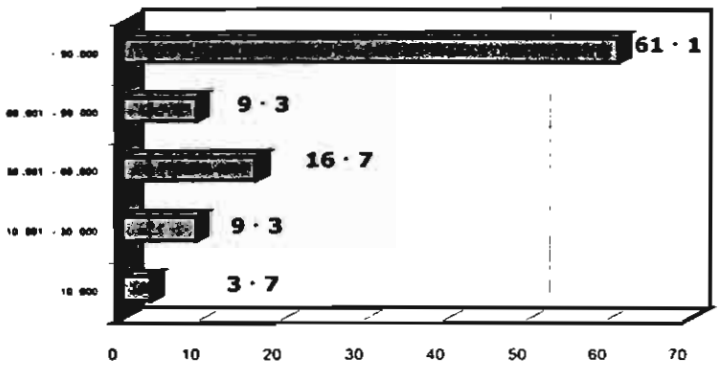
Although MLSW sets a rate for recruitment fee for each destination country, the actual amount of charges a worker had to pay in order to be recruited was usually higher than the set rate. The rates in 1999 were as follows:

Japan:	No recruitment for workers
Taiwan:	56,000 baht
Malaysia:	16,000 baht
Singapore:	16,000 baht

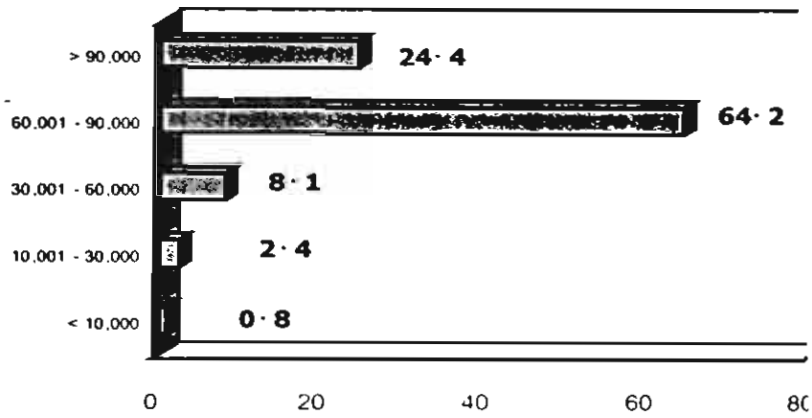
In Table 2.10, 31.1% of the sample paid less than 10,000 baht, which is the lowest rate. The majority, 24.7% and 20.9%, paid up to 30,000 - 90,000 baht, representing the normative rate of charges. However, 15.5% even paid higher than 90,000 baht for the services. When broken down by destination, Malaysia is the country where charges are the lowest, as 98.4% of workers paid not more than 10,000 baht and this is the majority of such category for all destinations. Japan has the highest rate of recruitment fee, as 61.1% of all workers to Japan spent more than 90,000 baht; followed by Taiwan where 24.4% spent the same amount. But Taiwan has lower charges than Japan since 64.2% of all Thai workers who had been working there paid 60,000 - 90,000 baht. Workers paid moderately to go to Singapore, due to the island's closeness to Thailand which makes travel cost cheaper. Therefore, its recruitment fees fall in the category of 30,000 - 60,000 baht (70.3%), followed by the lower category 10,000 - 30,000 baht (19.8%). The graphic below presents the variation in recruitment fees to different destination countries.

Migrant workers who were recruited by private agencies usually paid higher fees than those who went on their own. Since these are the two most popular modes of recruitment, a comparison in Table 2.11 indicates that self-arrangement costs a worker less than 10,000 baht (68.0%), followed by the category 30,000 - 60,000 Baht (14.3%). But private agencies can cost most workers up to 90,000 baht (33.8%) or even higher (25.0%). Only 11.6% of workers who used private agencies paid less than 30,000 baht. In terms of payment, the other 29.6% paid between 30,000 - 60,000 baht which is within the rate for going to Taiwan. The use of recruiting agencies usually costs workers higher than self-arrangement as more than half of those who used such services paid more than 60,000 baht. Some 70.7% of all workers paid such recruitment fees in a lump sum. The rest paid by installments.

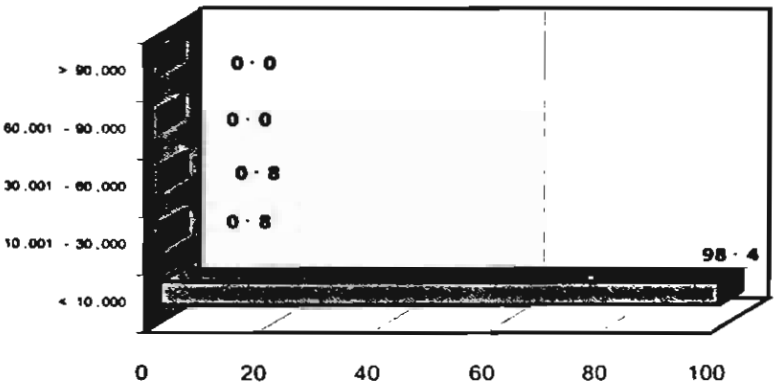
Chart 1: Recruitment Fees by Destination Countries



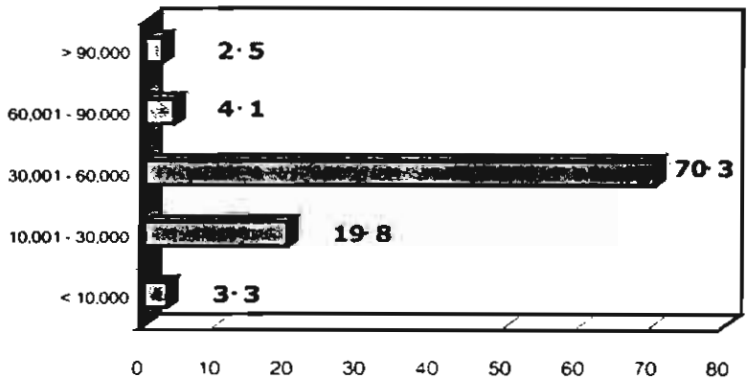
Japan



Taiwan



Malaysia



Singapore

What are the major financial sources that Thai workers used in order to pay recruitment fees? Table 2.12 shows that 36.9% of all workers responded that they could not remember whether they had borrowed money or not. But the rest (38.8%) had to borrow money. Within this group, 30,000 - 60,000 baht is the most common amount of money being lent to them (13.9%), followed by 7.6% who borrowed up to 90,000 baht, 3.7% up to 120,000 baht, and 3.3% up to more than 120,000 baht, which is very high

Breakdown analysis by destination reveals that Malaysia is the country where most workers could go without borrowing or by borrowing just a small amount of money (less than 10,000 baht). This confirms the earlier finding that most of them went through self-arrangement, thus not paying recruitment fees or paid very low charges. Japan is the contrary, with an extreme affordability, i.e. 29.8% of workers did not borrow money, but 22.8% borrowed a high amount of more than 120,000 baht to pay the recruitment fees. The former might be frequent travelers to Japan who could make good savings and returned to Japan with their own money, while the latter might be newcomers who really dared to risk incurring a high amount of debt for this specific country. For the other two destinations, it is easy to conclude that most migrants who went to Taiwan borrowed a higher amount of money (60,000 - 90,000 baht) while those who went to Singapore borrowed from 30,000 to 60,000 baht. The number of workers who could afford to go to Singapore without borrowing money was also higher than those to Taiwan.

With regard to workers' geographical origin, those from the Northeastern and Northern regions incurred debts for their recruitment amounting to 30,000 - 60,000 baht and 60,000 - 90,000 baht on average, respectively (Table 2.13). Workers from the North have a higher percentage (7.7%) of debt amounting to more than 120,000 baht than those from the Northeast (3.5%) which reflects the fact that migrants from the North paid a very high fee in order to go to difficult destinations like Japan, with the

hope that they could earn more than what they had paid.

Usually, workers borrowed money from moneylenders to pay the recruitment fees. Table 2.14 shows that for 22.7% of workers, moneylenders were their source of loans. The second highest source was parents and relatives (father-in-law, mother-in-law, siblings and other relatives) constituting 15.0% of all respondents. The third biggest source was the banks. There are two or three Thai banks that offer loans with low interest to workers who want to work overseas. This is a financial scheme recommended by the government in order to enable prospective workers to go abroad with proper credit and to reduce workers' risk of being cheated by any informal sources of loans. However, there were 3% of workers who sought loans from banks without such a scheme, which means that they paid the normal interest rate. Friends and recruiting agencies are the two last sources of loans, with only 4.1% each of respondents using such sources. Overall, moneylenders and relatives, both informal sources of loans, constitute more than one third of all sources while the banks can cover only 15.8% of all workers who need loans. This confirms that the attempt to go to work abroad depends greatly on workers' individual efforts rather than on the state's support.

Legal Status and Type of Visa

As reported in earlier, 48.8% of the sample was undocumented while 51.2% were documented migrant workers. Japan has the highest percentage (89.5%) of undocumented workers. Malaysia ranks the second (89.2%), followed by Singapore (21.3%). Taiwan hosted the lowest percentage (5.7%) of undocumented workers and the highest percentage (94.4%) of documented ones. It is not surprising to note that Japan has the lowest percentage (10.5%) of documented workers from Thailand.

Workers' status also varies according to the type of visa they obtained when they entered the destination countries. Of the 461 workers, 64.6% had proper visa to enter, 24.1% did not and 10% did not need a visa. (Malaysia and Singapore are member countries of ASEAN, and nationals of most other member countries can travel within the ASEAN region without visa requirement.) Among those who obtained visas, 40.4% had a temporary resident visa, 16.27% had tourist visas (which means that they worked illegally), while 3.5% used border passes (for Malaysia), and the rest had student, marriage and trainee visas respectively (Table 2.18). If we look at the different destinations, Taiwan has the highest percentage of workers with proper temporary resident visa (80.7%), followed by Singapore (64.75%). Malaysia and Japan both have a low percentage, 3.2 and 3.5% respectively. On the other hand, these two destination countries have the highest percentage of Thai immigrants who entered as tourists, 84.2% for Japan, and as illegal entrants, 75.3% for Malaysia (Table 2.18). This information confirms the macro statistics that indicate that undocumented migration from Thailand is more significant for Japan than for other destinations. As for Malaysia, the data yields new findings on the undocumented migratory trend to this neighboring country.

Travel to Destination Countries

Three major steps for workers to travel to destination countries are obtaining a passport, obtaining visa and passing border control. Workers need someone to help or give suggestions as to how to pass the border control safely. Table 2.15 reveals that most workers could manage to obtain a passport by themselves but needed to rely/depend on others in order to get visa, as 68.3% of them obtained passport by themselves. On the other hand, 46.9% of them obtained visas through the private recruitment agencies. As for passports, 16.5 % of workers also needed assistance from private agencies. For the rest, government agencies (0.9%), relatives or friends (1.7%), and employers (1.7%) were the other types of facilitator. However, 10.0% of workers did not use passports. Most of this group would be migrants who went to Malaysia by using border passes.

A high percentage of workers (146 persons or 31.7%) did not have or did not apply for visa. This is also the same group of workers who went to Malaysia. Our sample in this study of those who went to Malaysia totaled 158, and thus, the 146 persons without visa are very close to the 258 respondents leaving for Malaysia. (Breakdown of visa status by destination countries will tell us more about how workers entered destination countries. This will be presented later.)

Other persons who facilitated workers to obtain visas (Table 2.15) were employers (7.4%), government agencies (5.2%), and relatives and friends (1.8%). It is interesting that 3% (14 respondents) did not know who helped them to obtain a visa which means that they depended completely on their brokers.

Visa Arrangement

Table 2.16 indicates that 24.1% of all respondents did not have a proper visa, which means that they were undocumented. Another 64.6% had proper visas and 10.0% did not need visa for travel to destination countries. Roughly speaking, one fourth of the sample went without required visa.

As to whether workers had problems in getting a visa before their departure, most workers (33.0%) did not have any problem while another 33.2% did not get a visa (Table 2.17). A high percentage (28.0%) of workers who obtained visa did not know whether there was any problem in getting one because it was arranged for them. We do not know whether there were any fake visas arranged for this group of workers or not. Only a small number of workers had problems, mostly concerning the long procedures of waiting and queuing at the embassies/consulates and the cost of visa fees.

There are many kinds of visas that workers obtained to go abroad. As shown in Table 2.18, a temporary resident permit, which is the kind of visa granted to migrant workers, constitutes 40.35% and only 0.43% of workers were granted trainee visa. These are the two categories of visa that allow migrants to work overseas. For the rest, visas granted were not for the purpose of employment. They are tourist, resident, border pass, student and marriage visas. Tourist visas formed a high percentage of 16.3% while border passes was 3.5%. This means that a significant number of workers used other kinds of visa or travel documents which are not meant for workers in order to enter destination countries, then violated the law by working illegally. If we look at the breakdown by destination (Table 2.18), Japan has the highest number of such clandestine work: 48 workers (84.2%) entered Japan with a tourist visa and only 2 workers (3.5%) entered with proper visas which allowed them to work legally. Malaysia ranks the second as 14 persons (8.9%) entered as tourists and 119 persons (75.3%) admitted that they entered illegally without a visa, while only 16 persons (10.1%) used border passes. Taiwan is the most successful destination to host 80.7% of all migrant workers with proper visas. Only 4.8% entered as tourists and 12.9% indicated that they could not remember. It is very likely that this 12.9% were those who entered illegally. Singapore came second in regulating the new arrivals: 64.8% of workers had proper visas. But 18.9% admitted that they entered illegally and 4.9% could not remember.

As a visa shows whether a worker is documented or not, we can also analyze who arranged for such visa status. Table 2.19 shows how different modes of recruitment are related to visa types. When we group various visa types into two categories: legal entry with work permit and legal entry without work permit; 45.6% of all workers had the work permit and 16.7% did not. Among the documented ones, the majority are those who went by private recruitment agencies. Of all 217 persons who used these services, 64.5% had visa with work permit; 18.0% had visa but no work permit; 7.8% said they did not know about their visa status; and 9.7% admitted that they entered illegally, with no visa at all.

Self-arrangement, which covered 206 respondents in this study, had the following distribution: 24.3% had visa with work permit; 16.5% were without work permit; 3.9% did not know; and 55.3% entered illegally. It is obvious that this mode of recruitment (self-arrangement) is highly related to illegal entry while the private recruitment service is related to legal entry with work permit. This fact is complicated and requires intensive interpretation. It can be interpreted that:

1. Private recruitment agencies tend to provide workers with proper travel and employment documents, but they are also operating undocumented migration for work, as 18.0% of workers had no work permit and 9.7% still entered illegally with their assistance.

2. Self-arrangement is a means to reduce the high recruitment fee by using one's own informal network. This turns out to be a possible illegal way to go for work since 55.3% of workers who arranged for their own travel entered destination countries illegally. But the majority of this group is the workers who went to Malaysia. They just entered without proper visa and work permit. Then they stayed and

worked for a while before returning to Thailand. Among other workers who were self-arranged, 24.3% had visa with work permit and 16.5% had no work permit. Self-arrangement therefore can lead to both documented and undocumented status, but the former is higher in number and percentage. The latter is lower, but still significant because no new workers can migrate illegally without the assistance of existing informal networks. These networks can cover both relatives and friends on the one hand and illegal brokers for employment on the other. The latter can operate without license and are thus not subject to any regulations of the MLSW and the Labor Recruitment Act. This new trend of informal, illegal brokers disguised under the self-arrangement mode is rising and alarming.

Border Control

Most workers did not have problems when they passed the border control. Table 2.20 shows that 86.8% of them was in this category. Only 12.6% had problems at the immigration crossing checkpoints. Among those who had problems, their problems ranged from customs clearance (8.0%), language problem (0.7%), visa problem (0.6%) and work contract/permit problem (0.4%) (Table 2.21).

To summarize, Thai migrant workers are protected by the Employment Recruitment Act BE 2528 which requires all workers to sign work contracts and obtain work permits before they leave. The Act also controls the operation of recruitment services run by private companies. Workers who leave for machinery work will have to pass a skills test. No specific training was offered to workers before their departure. Amongst the four modes of recruitment, using private agencies was the most popular, followed by self-arrangement. The government provides minimal recruitment services to workers because it does not want to compete with private agencies, according to the law. Some foreign employers recruit their workers directly. Self-arrangement is popular among workers to Malaysia and Japan. Private recruitment services are popular for workers going to Taiwan and Singapore. Informal networks, especially relatives and friends, facilitate prospective migrants to leave. Half of all workers signed contracts before they left but the other half did not. Workers who had overseas work experience have a tendency to sign contracts because they already knew the importance of doing so.

Thai workers are slightly more satisfied with the services of the private recruitment companies. They found the services prompt, they were well attended, and there was the possibility of getting a job without a work permit. Although the state services are more reliable, inexpensive and there was no cheating, they preferred the private ones. The lack of human resource development policy for Thai workers makes these workers less competitive to workers from other countries in the overseas labor market.

The recruitment fee is the major problem for recruitment workers who paid as high as 120,000 baht or more to go to work in some destination. Malaysia is the destination where workers can go without paying any fee and Japan is the most expensive destination. For Taiwan and Singapore, workers paid 6,000-9,000 baht. One third of returned workers indicated that they borrowed 30,000-60,000 baht to pay recruitment fees. Some of the loans were from moneylenders, parents and relatives, and the commercial banks.

In traveling to destination countries, most workers could obtain passports by themselves but needed to rely on agencies in order to procure visas. A high percentage of respondents did not need visas because they went to work in Malaysia by using a border pass. One fourth of workers did not have proper visas when they traveled; 40 percent of workers had legal entry with work permit. The other 60 percent either had legal entry with no work permit, or no legal entry at all. Japan had the highest number of undocumented immigrants, followed by Malaysia. Taiwan had the highest number of documented workers. Using recruiting agencies is related to legal entry with work permit while self-arrangement is related to illegal entry. However, this does not mean that private recruiting agencies do not operate undocumented migration services. In addition, self-arrangement can also include the use of informal private brokers' services disguised as self-arrangement. However, with or without proper documents, most workers could pass the immigration control without problems.

Table A. Number of Thai Workers by Mode of Recruitment in 1997

Country	Self Arrangement	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare	Employer	Trainee	Private Recruitment Agencies	Total
Saudi Arabia	1,500	-	2	8	-	1,510
Qatar	1,333	-	23	-	31	1,387
Bahrain	208	-	2	7	20	237
United Arab Emirates	775	6	47	3	16	847
Kuwait	914	24	-	4	68	1,010
Oman	236	-	8	1	6	251
Israel	354	-	4	6	10,416	10,780
Libya	681	-	-	-	569	1,250
Others in the Middle East	108	-	14	-	27	149
Total of the Middle East Countries	**6,109**	**30**	**100**	**29**	**11,153**	**17,421**
Other Countries in Africa	128	-	73	-	-	201
Total of the African Countries	**128**	-	**73**	-	-	**201**
Malaysia	7,893	-	498	244	225	8,860
Singapore	10,144	-	1,524	300	5,802	17,770
Brunei	11,831	-	71	-	5,769	17,671
Hong Kong	3,074	-	5	37	844	3,960
Japan	5,180	92	342	4,463	22	10,099
Taiwan	29,263	1,353	116	124	70,060	100,916
Korea	145	28	159	152	971	1,455
Vietnam	80	-	200	23	2	305
Cambodia	73	26	68	4	-	171
Others in Asia	931	-	1,224	444	180	2,779
Total of the Asian Countries	**68,614**	**1,499**	**4,207**	**5,791**	**83,875**	**163,986**
United States	365	20	42	264	8	699
England	62	7	2	11	-	82
Germany	141	-	3	38	7	189
Australia	10	-	9	4	-	23
Italy	108	7	5	10	-	130
Total of the Others	1099	108	273	483	100	2063
Grand Total	**75950**	**1647**	**4653**	**6303**	**95128**	**183671**
Percent	**41.35**	**0.89**	**2.53**	**3.43**	**51.80**	**100**

Source: Overseas Employment Administration Office, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

Table 2.1: Overseas Networks of Thai Migrant Workers Which Helped to Find Jobs

Category of Persons in Network	Frequency	Percent
Nobody, I found the job by myself	13	2.8
Elder sister/elder brother/parents	17	3.7
Friends/my friend's sister	112	24.3
Relatives	34	7.4
Laos agency	3	0.7
Broker in Thailand	14	3.0
Broker in destination country	27	5.9
School in Japan	1	0.2
Employer in destination country/tour company	6	1.3
My spouse	1	0.2
I got a job before coming here	233	50.5
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.2: Thai Migrant Workers by Mode of Recruitment and Destination Country

Mode of Recruitment	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Myself, relatives or friends	31.5	14.5	91.8	20.5	44.7
Thai government recruitment office	1.8	0.8	--	--	0.4
Employer/company in Thailand	7.0	3.2	6.3	14.8	7.8
Private recruitment agent/broker	59.7	81.5	1.9	64.8	47.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.3: Persons Who Initiated Contact to Migrate

Persons	Frequency	Percent
Does not apply, respondent did not use recruitment	130	28.2
Myself	159	34.5
Recruiter	169	36.7
Parents	1	0.2
Relatives/ brother sister	2	0.4
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.4: Thai Migrant Workers Who Signed/ Did Not Sign Contracts and Level of Education

Work contract	Educational Level		Total
	Primary	Secondary	
Signed	41.8	7.1	48.8
Did not sign	36.3	14.9	51.2
Total	**78.1**	**21.9**	**100.0**

Table 2.5: Thai Migrant Workers Who Read and Understand Work Contract and Have Worked Outside Thailand

Read and understand work contract	Have ever worked outside of Thailand		Total
	No	Yes	
Understand completely	20.5	39.5	25.6
Understand only the general points, not the details	13.7	19.4	15.2
Did not understand anything in it	5.6	13.7	7.8
Did not reply, did not sign a contract	60.2	27.4	51.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.6: Thai Migrant Workers by Pre-departure Skills Training and Destination

Received training	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
No	94.7	84.7	93.7	81.2	88.1
Yes	5.3	15.3	6.3	18.8	11.9
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.7: Thai Migrant Workers by Training Opportunity and Mode of Recruitment

Training opportunity	Mode of Recruitment				Total
	Self	Thai government recruitment office	Employer/company in Thailand	Private/recruitment agent/broker	
No	88.8	100.0	86.1	87.6	88.1
Yes	11.2	--	13.9	12.4	11.9
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**00.0**

Table 2.8: Organization Offering Training

Organization	Frequency	Percent
Thai government recruitment office	13	2.8
Thai employer/company	15	3.3
Private recruitment agent/broker	10	2.1
Others	3	0.7
Cannot remember, do not know	10	2.2
Does not apply, no training received	410	88.9
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.9: Thai Migrant Workers by Skills Training and Overseas Job

Received training	Overseas Job							Total
	Farming	Industry/ manufacturing	Construction sector	Service	Domestic helper in a family	Fishery, fisherman	Others	
No	93.1	88.5	84.0	96.8	100.0	90.9	83.3	88.1
yes	6.9	11.5	16.0	3.2	-	9.1	16.7	11.9
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.10: Thai Migrant Workers by Recruitment Fee and Destination Countries

Recruitment fee (baht)	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
less than 10,000	3.7	0.8	98.4	3.3	31.1
10,001 – 30,000	9.3	2.4	0.8	19.8	7.8
30,001 – 60,000	16.7	8.1	0.8	70.3	24.7
60,001 – 90,000	9.3	64.2	-	4.1	20.9
more than 90,000	61.1	24.4	-	2.5	15.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.11: Thai Migrant Workers by Recruitment Fee and Mode of Recruitment

Recruitment fee (baht)	Mode of Recruitment				Total
	Self	Thai government recruitment office	Employer/company in Thailand	Private recruitment agent/broker	
Less than 10,000	57.8	--	22.2	2.3	28.6
10,001-30,000	4.4	--	11.1	9.2	7.2
30,001-60,000	12.1	50.0	41.7	29.5	22.8
60,001-90,000	5.3	--	13.9	33.6	19.3
More than 90,000	5.3	--	2.8	24.9	14.3
Did not reply	15.1	50.0	8.3	0.5	7.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.12: Thai Migrant Workers by Amount of Debt and Destination Country

Amount of Debt (baht)	Destination Countries				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Did not borrow	29.8	8.1	77.9	16.4	36.9
Borrowed less than 10,000	--	0.8	12.6	1.7	5.0
Borrowed 10,001 – 30,000	3.5	3.2	--	15.6	5.4
Borrowed 30,001 – 60,000	1.8	15.3	--	36.1	13.9
Borrowed 60,001 – 90,000	1.8	25.8	--	1.7	7.6
Borrowed 90,001 – 120,000	3.5	11.3	--	0.8	3.7
Borrowed more than 120,000	22.8	1.6	--	--	3.3
Cannot remember	36.8	33.9	9.5	27.9	24.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.13: Thai Migrant Workers by Amount of Debt and Place of Origin

Amount of Debt (baht)	Place of Origin				Total
	North	Northeast	South	West	
Did not borrow	19.2	13.8	79.1	100.0	36.9
Borrowed less than 10,000	1.0	1.5	12.4	--	5.0
Borrowed 10,001 – 30,000	6.7	8.9	--	--	5.4
Borrowed 30,001 – 60,000	17.3	22.7	--	--	13.9
Borrowed 60,001 – 90,000	19.2	7.4	--	--	7.6
Borrowed 90,001 – 120,000	3.9	6.4	--	--	3.7
Borrowed more than 120,000	7.7	3.5	--	--	3.3
Cannot remember	25.0	36.0	8.5	--	24.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.14: Source of Loans for Workers

Source of Loan for Workers	frequency	percent
Labor recruitment	19	4.1
Employer	2	0.4
Bank (with financial scheme for workers)	59	12.8
Bank (without financial scheme for workers)	14	3.0
Moneylender	105	22.8
Parents/brother or sister/relatives	69	15.0
Friends	19	4.1
Did not answer	3	0.7
Did not reply, I received no such financial help or loan	171	37.1
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.15: Who Helped to Get Passport and Visa?

Person /Agent	Passport		Visa	
	N	%	N	%
Myself	315	68.3	18	3.9
Private recruitment agency/broker	76	16.5	216	46.9
Government agency	4	0.9	24	5.2
Relative/friend	8	1.7	8	1.7
Employer	8	1.7	34	7.4
Others	4	0.9	1	0.2
Did not have/did not apply	46	10.0	146	31.7
Do not know	--	--	14	3.0
Total	**461**	**100.0**	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.16: Have Visa When Entering Destination Country

Have a Visa	Frequency	Percent
No	111	24.1
Yes	298	64.7
Did not need a visa to enter destination country	46	10.0
Do not know	6	1.3
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.17: Major Problems in Getting Visa

Major Problems in getting Visa	Frequency	Percent
No problem	152	33.0
Do not know because visa was arranged for me	129	28.0
Did not get visa	153	33.2
Waiting for visa	12	2.6
Long queue at embassy	4	0.9
Cost of visa fees	5	1.1
Others	6	1.3
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.18: Thai Migrant Workers by Kind of Visa and Destination Country

Kind of Visa	Destination Country				Total
	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore	
Tourist	84.2	4.8	8.9	5.7	16.3
Temporary residence permit	3.5	80.7	3.2	64.8	40.4
Resident's (immigrant)	--	0.8	--	4.1	1.3
Border pass	--	--	10.1	--	3.5
Student	1.8	--	--	--	0.2
Marriage visa	1.8	--	--	--	0.2
Trainee visa	--	--	--	1.6	0.4
Do not remember, do not know	3.5	12.9	2.5	4.9	6.1
Does not apply, illegally entered	3.5	0.8	75.3	18.9	31.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.19: Kind of Visa by Mode of Recruitment

Kind of Visa	Mode of Recruitment				Total
	Self	Thai government recruitment office	Employer/ company in Thailand	Private recruitment agent/broker	
Legal entry with work permit	24.3	-	55.5	64.5	45.5
Legal entry but no work permit	16.5	-	11.1	18.0	16.7
Do not know	3.9	100.0	2.8	7.8	6.1
Illegal entry	55.3	-	30.6	9.7	31.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.20: Had Problems Passing the Border Control

Had Problems	Frequency	Percent
No	400	86.8
Yes	58	12.6
No answer	3	0.6
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Table 2.21: Kind of Problems at Border Control

Kind of Problem	Frequency	Percent
Visa problems	3	0.7
Customs clearance	36	7.8
Health inspection	4	0.9
Work contract/permit	2	0.4
Check for drugs	2	0.4
Others	3	0.7
Did not answer	11	2.4
Does not apply, did not have problem	400	86.8
Total	**461**	**100.0**

Destination Countries

Reasons for Choosing the Particular Destination

Economic considerations predominate when Thai workers make their decision as to which destination country to go to in search of work. In this section respondents had to make a choice of only one reason, and the expectation of good earnings in the destination country appears as the single most important reason for the choice they had to make. An overall 39 % of the sample pointed at the expected higher earnings as the single decisive factor for their move. Another 7.6 % of the sample referred to other work aspects in the destination, such as the availability of jobs and good working conditions.

In addition, other economic factors were mentioned, which we can interpret as *push factors* that have triggered migration. Out of the sample, 14.5 % identified the lack of jobs in Thailand as the primary reason, and 13.2 % indicated they sought work outside of the country due to their poverty or the fact that they were in debt. Combining these factors, we can conclude that a total of around 70 % named an economic reason as having determined their decision.

It is remarkable that the higher income expectations rated as the single most important migration cause among returnees from all four countries that were included in the study - relatively independent from the different wage levels in the four destinations. For example, the higher earnings were decisive for a larger percentage of returnees from Malaysia than from Singapore. The fact that a wage difference exists between Thailand and the respective foreign country had apparently a yet greater impact than relative wage differences that prevail in such countries in absolute numbers. However, the two *pull factors* combined (expected income and working conditions) predominate especially in the case of returnees from Japan (60 %) and Taiwan (56 %) in comparison to Malaysia (44 %) and Singapore (36 %).

Two other factors would require our attention: firstly, the presence of friends and relatives in the respective destination country - 5.2 % of the sample said that had been the decisive factor for them; and secondly, the relative opportune travel and recruitment costs, which determined the choice of a similarly large group. Whereas the absolute numbers might not seem especially large, it should be borne in mind that the questionnaire allowed a single choice only. Against that background, it is remarkable that a relevant group of the sample opted for that cause. Among 8.2% of returnees from Japan that factor had a relatively higher weight.

The factor of inexpensive travel, commission and broker costs was significantly on average mentioned by returnees from Singapore, presumably in comparison to overseas destinations such as Taiwan and Japan.

Legal Status in the Destination Country: Visa, Work Permits and Work Contracts

Visa Regulations

With regard to the regulations of the respective immigration laws, close to half of our overall sample had a proper legal status when working in the destination country, while 14.3 % had entered the foreign country with a tourist visa, and 27.1 % had no visa. Also, 6.9 % said that there was no visa requirement, and another 3.9 % claimed that they would not know what kind of visa they had at the time.

It is striking how different this situation is if one looks at the four returnee groups. We can see a fairly broad observance of legal regulations among returnees from Taiwan and also from Singapore. Some 80% to 90 % of returnees from Taiwan answered that they had a temporary visa other than a tourist visa. Similarly, among returnees from Singapore, close to 64 % had a temporary visa which allowed them to work. However, among returnees from Taiwan, we observe a fairly large group (close to 10 %) who did not remember or know, and some of these might have had an improper visa. Overall, some 10% to 20 % from Taiwan and around 30 % from Singapore had worked illegally in the respective destinations.

The situation in the other two destinations has been remarkably different. More than 90% of returnees from Japan had worked there with different kinds of visas: with a tourist visa (71.9 %), without

any visa (17.5 %), or claimed not to remember their former legal status (3.5 per cent). Also, amongst returnees from Malaysia, the majority had worked without a proper visa. In this case, however, the majority said that they had no visa, while 9.5 % had entered Malaysia as tourists.

Work Permits

The findings with regard to the respective labor laws are consistent with those about the observance of visa regulations. In the overall sample we have a fairly equal distribution between returnees who had received a work permit in the destination country (54.4 %) and those who had not (43.6 %). Again, the situation becomes more revealing if one looks at the four returnee-groups. Around 87 % of returnees from both Taiwan and Singapore had a work permit, whereas 86 % of the returnees from Japan and 82 % of those from Malaysia lacked such a permit.

Work Contracts

A similar distribution like that of the legal status – both with regard to visa and work permits - could be observed with regard to work contracts. Precisely 50 % of our sample had signed a written work contract. When looking at the four destination countries, however, relevant differences are revealed: a majority of workers in Taiwan and Singapore worked with labor contracts, while those in Japan and Malaysia had, as a rule, no contract. The highest prevalence of work contracts could be found in Taiwan, nearly 95 %, while the figure for Singapore was close to 75%. On the other hand, the tendency for working without a labor contract in Malaysia and Japan is strong, around 90 % in both cases.

In the cases of Taiwan and Singapore, the majority of work contracts were signed prior to departure, though not all. Most contracts were written in Thai or included a Thai translation. However, the percentage of respondents who did not fully understand the text was still considerable.

Work in Destination Countries

Labor Market Segments

The overwhelming majority of respondents from Japan, Singapore and Taiwan had worked in either the construction or the manufacturing sector. In Singapore and Taiwan, these two sectors combined accounted for more than 90 %, and in Japan, close to 90 % of the sample. Differences prevail though: among returnees from Singapore the construction sector predominates most clearly (82 %), whereas it accounted for 52.6 % in the case of Japan. On the other hand, the largest segment from Taiwan (58.9 %) had been working in manufacturing.

Manufacturing work in Taiwan was mainly done in textile and other chemical production, in steel and metal production and electronics, whereas in Japan relatively more workers were employed in the food production industries. In the latter case, however, the sample is a small one (10.6 % out of 57 respondents).

A different distribution could be observed among returnees from Malaysia. A substantial group of respondents (18.35 %) had - similar to the other three countries - worked in construction while industry and manufacturing work was less important. In addition, workers had been employed in three sectors that were of no major importance in the three other countries: services, which was the most important employment sector in Malaysia (38.6 %); in farming, 17.1 %; and 20.9 % in fishery.

Seeking Employment

Starting to work after arriving in the destination country did not provide any serious problems to the Thai workers in our sample. It is interesting to note that that holds true also for those who had not arranged their employment before departure.

Two issues are of importance in this context. Firstly, pre-departure job arrangements were handled distinctly differently in the four migration systems. It has been the predominant procedure in the cases of Taiwan (90.3 %) and Singapore (75 %) but less often in Malaysia (35.4 %) and Japan (19.3 %).

Secondly, also in cases where recruitment occurred after arrival in the destination country, Thai workers could find a job easily. Just 3 % had to wait longer than a month before finding work; and also in Japan, the country where we observed the lowest rate of pre-departure arrangements, nearly all workers were employed immediately or within their first month of stay. The case of Japan seems to be especially interesting in that context, as the speedy employment without prior and more circumstantial arrangements reveals a high demand in foreign (Thai) labor and an apparently well-functioning recruitment system on the spot. It is also remarkable that such structures function in a surrounding that evades control by government agencies.

Networks

The importance of family networks becomes apparent when examining who had offered help in finding a job. Amongst those who had not pre-arranged their recruitment from Thailand, far more relied on help from relatives and friends than from brokers. However, the recruitment procedures differ distinctly in the four countries: family networks are especially important in Malaysia (more than 75 %) and Japan (50 %). At the same time, professional recruitment agents had played hardly any role in Malaysia, as those who did not use the help of relatives claim to have found jobs on their own. Among returnees from Japan, however, no respondent said that he or she could have found a job without the help of others. Some 23 % had relied on the services of an agent there. Also, in Singapore, brokers played a more important role than relatives.

Main Support

Consistent with the successful employment situation, workers could generally rely on their own income as the main means of support. This holds true for more than 90 % of the sample. However, some relied on initial financial reports from relatives and friends (5.4 %) or – very rarely - the broker (0.4 %). That was over average the case with returnees from Malaysia and Japan.

Working conditions

Types of enterprises

The Thai workers in our sample have been employed in various types of enterprises in the receiving countries. Large and middle-sized businesses predominated in the case of Singapore (63.9 %) and Taiwan (56.5 %), whereas small enterprises have been the rule in the two other countries. Some 82.5 % of the returnees from Japan and 88.6 % of those from Malaysia had been employed in such small businesses.

International corporations

A considerable number of respondents knew that the company they were working for had also a branch in Thailand. That was the case with around 10% of the sample in the case of returnees from the three highly developed economies, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan, while that was less often the case with respondents from Malaysia (3.2 %). Very few respondents, though, had worked before for a Thai branch of their foreign employer (1 %).

Employers' nationality

Most respondents have been employed in companies that – not surprisingly – were owned by citizens of the respective host country. That was the rule with returnees from Taiwan and Japan, and the somewhat more divers business ownership in the case of Singapore appears to be a reflection of the highly international nature of the business sector in the city-state.

It is remarkable though that in the case of Malaysia, close to 20 % (29 out of 146) had been employed by a Thai-citizen employer. A fairly large group in that segment (11 out of 29) was closely related to the employer. A number of Thai citizens themselves function apparently as employers of Thai laborers – a finding that would be important for the emergence of a Thai community and a longer term employment perspective for Thai workers in that destination.

Hazards of Work

The hazards related to work correspond with the distribution of professions in the respective receiving countries. Thus, danger due to building height was reported by returnees from all countries, exceptionally often from Singapore; hazards from chemical substances were reported from Taiwan; and the risks of storm waves from Malaysia. Such risks did result in a fairly high number of work-related injuries so that the respondents needed hospital treatment; however, such casualties were not equally distributed in the four countries. While overall, 3.14 % of respondents said that they had been hospitalized due to work-related risks, that percentage was 9.84% in Singapore, 16.94% in Taiwan, and the highest in Japan with 19.30 %. The duration of hospitalization was also longest in those last two countries.

One needs to bear in mind though that access to health had been worst in Malaysia, the lower percentage in respondents' hospitalization should not easily be identified with more secure workplaces there. To the contrary, the question would require additional attention (see below on health issues).

Daily Working Hours

With regard to the daily working hours, we observe a similar situation in the three economically most developed destinations, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan. Close to 85 % of returnees from those countries worked 8 hours per day and some 10% to 15 % had worked longer. The situation has been different in Malaysia, where longer working hours were often reported. Only around a third of the sample have been working 8 hours per day, while a much larger group, nearly 50 % had regularly worked more hours. At the same time, a fairly large group of 16.4 % had worked fewer hours.

Working Days

A different picture appears when looking at the working days per month. In that regard we have observed the most intensive employment in Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan, with some 72% to 80 % of respondents having worked 26 or more days per month. A larger group of returnees from Japan (42.9 %) than from the other three countries had to work less than 26 days.

Days Off and Holidays

Most respondents said that they had one holiday per week. In that regard, the best working conditions were reported from Japan where more than 90 % had regularly one or two days off, while overall, that has been the case with 72 % of the sample. The most intensive labor exploitation with regard to working days was reported from Singapore and Malaysia. More than a quarter of respondents said that they had worked 7 days per week in those two countries, while this was the case with 13.7 % of returnees from Taiwan and 8.8 % from Japan.

In regard to holidays that were offered, a large percentage of respondents who had returned from Singapore (29.5 %) and Malaysia (27.2 %) said that they received no annual leave. A smaller share (22.8 %) of the returnees from Japan reported the same fact, while that was yet less often the case in Taiwan (12.1 %).

In general, only short holidays were offered. Among those who had taken holidays, the shortest holiday periods has been reported from Singapore and the longest in Taiwan: 73.4 % of returnees from the latter destination were granted more than 5 days per year, while that was reported by around 63 % of returnees from Japan and Malaysia and by 46.7 % from Singapore.

It cannot be taken for granted, however, that workers received their wages during holiday periods. The situation varies considerably in that regard. Remuneration for holidays was offered least often in Malaysia (7.6 % of our sample), Japan (21.1 %) and Singapore (23.8 %). The situation was best among returnees from Taiwan where 61.3 % of the sample had paid holidays.

Labor Skills

Far from all respondents deny the difficulties of working in a foreign surrounding. Only a few respondents, overall around 30 %, and only 14 % in the case of Japan said that they were not lacking any relevant skills.

The large percentage of those who stated that getting accustomed to the foreign workplace had been very hard is especially surprising. That has been the case with 20.4% of the overall sample, and over average among returnees from Japan and Taiwan. Close to 40 % of respondents who had returned from Japan and 32.3 % from Taiwan declared that they had found it very hard to adjust to the requirements abroad.

When cross-tabulating that result with the kinds of skills, it is – with the exception of the situation in Malaysia - first of all, language competence that our respondents felt they were lacking. Other difficulties that were reported referred to the handling of machinery and other work-related tasks, such as brick laying, fishery, and so on.

A large majority of around 80 % (with minor differences between the destination groups) declared, however, that they had learned new skills in the foreign country. The predominant mechanism of skill transfer had been on-the-job-training (58 %) and learning from colleagues or supervisors (12 %). Nevertheless, a few returnees from Taiwan and Singapore (8% – 9 %) had participated in a formal training course. The benefits from participating in such courses were negligible in the case of Taiwan, whereas participants in Singapore received higher pay after completing the course. In Taiwan, such courses, when offered, were being considered as an ordinary requirement, and not an additional activity.

Acquiring new skills did not, however, have an immediate impact on improving one's job position. The very small number of workers who were promoted during their work period abroad can exemplify that. Close to 90 % of the respondents in Taiwan (88.7 %) and Singapore (86.1%) fall under that category. Correspondingly, less than 15 % of workers managed to improve their job status. It is remarkable that a somewhat larger percentage (around 20 %) of workers who had returned from Japan and Malaysia reported that they had been promoted.

Wages

In the present sample of returnees, the findings about the income that Thai workers had received are of relative weight only. That is due to the fact that the respondents had worked in the respective destinations during the 1990s. and the wage level has risen since. A similar disclaimer needs to be made with regard to the expenditures. For a closer analysis of the returnee data, we refer to the paper on costs and benefits, and to the information in the case studies in receiving countries, as the latter refer to the most recent working period.

It can be concluded, though, that returnees from Japan had by far received the highest income, where more than 75 % received a salary above 30,000 baht per month. Only 7 % (4 respondents) had earned less than 20,000 baht. Income in Taiwan was second highest with 42 % receiving wages in the range of 20,000 - 30,000 baht and 47.6 %, 10,000 - 20,000 baht.

Part of the salary was withheld and paid at the end of the contract period. That was the rule among most returnees from Taiwan (74.2 %), and the same occurred also in Singapore (38.5 %) and Japan (19.3 %).

Evaluation of Own Salary

The economic expectation that respondents identified as their major migration incentive seems to have been met in practice. The respondents have generally shown a high degree of satisfaction with their wages. That was certainly the case with returnees from Japan, of which 86 % was satisfied with their salary or felt that it had been very high. Among returnees from Taiwan, 77.5 % and from Malaysia, 74 % of the sample expressed a similar degree of satisfaction. The lowest degree of satisfaction (63 %), and correspondingly the largest group of dissatisfied (23.8 %) was found among returnees from Singapore.

Fringe Benefits: Health Care, Insurance, and other benefits

In general, the quality of health services has been evaluated as good. A problem however becomes apparent with regard to access to health services. While a majority of respondents evaluated their access as good (in Taiwan 81.45 %, Singapore and Japan above 50 %, Malaysia only 31.01 %), health services were not available in some cases. Most often that complaint was reported for Malaysia, and sometimes also for Singapore.

Respondents reported that they had encountered few health problems, aside from the usual illnesses, such as colds and headaches, and aside from accidents at work (see above, Hazards of Work). The number of workers who have reported health problems was larger among returnees from Taiwan than from other destinations. At the same time, the percentage of workers who had not used any health facilities while being away was largest among returnees from Malaysia. One would need to look into that matter again, as Thai workers might have accessed services at home, due to the proximity to Thailand that allowed for regular home visits. For the time being, a correlation can be concluded between a low usage of health services in Malaysia with a non-optimal access to such facilities there.

Payment During Times of Sickness

A great degree of social insecurity of Thai workers is revealed when looking into paid leave during times of sickness. More than 60 % of our overall sample reported that they had not received any payment when being unable to work. In that regard, the situation has been best in Taiwan and worst in Japan and Malaysia: 57.3 % of returnees from Taiwan and 36.1 % from Singapore received payment when being ill, whereas that was the case with only around 20 % among returnees from Japan and Malaysia.

Free Health Care

A similar situation refers to the granting of free health care. Close to 80 % of the returnee sample from Taiwan and 65 % from Singapore were offered free health care. That was the case only with 42.1 % among the returnees from Japan and 28.5 % among those from Malaysia. The costs of hospital treatment had been generally borne by the employers. Only in Japan was there some sharing of such costs (4 out of 11 cases) that the employees themselves had to pay.

Provision for Accident and Life Insurance

In addition, a fairly large group among returnees from Taiwan (58.9 %) and Singapore (41.8 %) were granted the benefit of free accident and life insurance, while that has been the case only rarely in Japan (14 %) and Malaysia (3.2 %).

Maternity Leave

The survey results are not informative enough in that regard due to the under-representation of women. With due limitation it can be concluded, though, that the right to maternity leave had been granted only rarely. Among 63 interviewed women, only 9 knew that they had such a right, while 40 respondents said they had no right to maternity leave, and 14 respondents were not sure.

Other benefits

Right to paid return ticket for home visits and when ending the work period abroad

Quite a large share of respondents reported that their travel costs had been reimbursed when visiting Thailand during the contract period. That was the case with nearly three quarters of returnees from Taiwan, 32.8 % among those from Singapore, 14 % from Japan and 7.6 % (12 cases) who had been working in Malaysia.

At the end of the working period, a different picture appears: 41.1 % of the respondents who had been working in Taiwan said that they had received payment for the return ticket from the employer, while another 12.9 % were not sure about that. In the other three countries workers had received such a payment only rarely: 9 % among returnees from Singapore and 7 % from Japan. In the case of Malaysia, only three returnees reported that they had received such a payment.

Bonuses and other gifts

There were a few other benefits that returnees in our sample had received. Around a quarter of our respondents had received a bonus payment. That was, on average, the case in Japan where nearly half of the respondents had obtained such payment. In Taiwan it was quite common (42.74 %) that workers received a Chinese New Year gift. That was also reported by 18.9 % of the returnees from Singapore.

Problems at the Workplace

The majority of respondents said that they personally had not experienced any problems at the workplace. Only 27.11 % declared that they had encountered any such problems. Such problems were largely mentioned by returnees from Malaysia (33.54 %). The reason mentioned most often was that the respondents got into trouble with Thai or local colleagues (9.98 % of the total sample, 17.09 % among returnees from Malaysia, 15.79 % from Japan, rarely among those from Taiwan and Singapore). It is remarkable that disagreements over payments or benefits had been less often a reason for complaint. Nevertheless the respondents were aware of ways in which disputes at the workplace would usually be solved. Respondents from all four subgroups of the sample said that generally employers and supervisors would mediate in such cases (77 %). In a few cases (5.64 %), help would be expected through mediation by recruiters and translators. Thus, conflict resolution would generally be sought on an individual, personal basis. On the contrary, little has been expected from formal bodies such as unions (2.82 %) and yet more rarely from the Thai Labor Offices (only two cases).

Reasons for Losing the Job

With regard to the perception of reasons that could lead to a termination, a fairly large share of the sample (around 30 %) denied that misbehavior, such as quarrelling with colleagues and disobedience to superiors, would lead to such a result. The awareness that such behavior might lead to losing the job was, however, more widespread among returnees from Taiwan (83 %) than from Malaysia (57 %).

The fear of losing the job due to becoming severely sick was evaluated, but was less acute, as 41.43 % answered that workers would not lose their job due to that cause. Again, returnees from Malaysia had felt less fear in that regard than their colleagues who had come back from Taiwan; 37.97 % of the respondents who had worked in Malaysia answered that they could have lost their job due to that cause, as compared to 67.74% among those from Taiwan.

There existed an awareness that becoming sick with AIDS could result in termination of their work contract. Despite the fact that some receiving countries are implementing deportations in the case of positive HIV testing, less than half of our sample were aware of or feared the possibility of losing their job in such a case.

Very few other reasons that might lead to a loss of job were mentioned; in a few cases, returnees from Taiwan named stealing, drinking, gambling, going on strike or becoming pregnant as such factors.

Treatment in Comparison with Local Workers

Overall, close to half of the interviewees were aware of the fact that they had not been treated equally with local workers. That outcome was especially high among returnees from Taiwan of whom nearly 70 % said that they had been treated differently. The reason given most often was that their wages had been lower (46 %). Another reason mentioned, less often though, was that their work had been harder.

Among returnees from Singapore and Japan, more respondents declared that they had been treated equally with local employees. However, 36.8 % of returnees from Japan and 23 % amongst those from Singapore said that they had received less pay. Returnees from Malaysia reported far fewer complaints about lower pay and harder work; 44.3 % of the returnees from that country claimed that they had been treated equally.

It is remarkable that among returnees from Malaysia a large share (28.5 %) affirmed that there were no local employees, and that therefore they could not compare their working conditions. The same fact was also reported from Japan (12.3 %) and Singapore (10.7%), while returnees from Taiwan stated only very rarely (3.2 %) that they had had no local colleagues.

Living Conditions and Social Issues

The respondents had lived in a variety of settings during their work outside of the country. The most usual form has been that of a dormitory at the workplace. That has been especially widespread in Taiwan and Singapore where 55 % of respondents had lived in such a dorm. An exceptional situation we find in Japan: here also a substantial number had lived in a dormitory (28.07 %), but a larger share (38.60 %) had been living in private apartments.

In most cases, such apartments were also offered or rented out by the employer, whereas Thai workers had rented their room or apartment from an ordinary landlord relatively rarely. More than in the other two destinations, that has been the case among returnees from Malaysia (10.13 %) and Japan (8.77 %). In those two countries a few workers had also rented their place from relatives. The vast majority of respondents had been living with colleagues or on their own. Only 11 respondents reported they had lived with a spouse, just 12 with family members or relatives.

Overall, respondents were quite content with the quality of housing they had been offered. Close to 90 % of the returnees from Japan and Taiwan evaluated their housing (on a 5-point scale) as being one of the best three categories (okay, good or very good), and also, among returnees from Malaysia the approval rate was high (81.7 %). That rate was lowest among returnees from Singapore (69.6 %) and, accordingly, over 30 % said that their housing had not been good there.

In most cases, housing was offered for free by the employers. That has been generally the case in Taiwan and Singapore, and also in Malaysia, housing had been offered to most of the respondents (77.2 %). The situation is different in Japan where less than half of the respondents lived in places that were provided by the employer: 45.6 % had their own housing and paid rent. There were also a few respondents who had lived with friends and relatives in Japan and Malaysia, while that rarely occurred in Taiwan and Singapore.

Language

In general, language has generally posed less severe problems than we had expected at the outset of the study. This holds true – in the respondents' own evaluation – for both understanding and speaking capacity, as the findings do not differ greatly in that regard among respondents.

The number of respondents who did not understand the respective language or did not understand it well range from 13.94 % among returnees from Singapore, 7.26 % from Taiwan to 3.51 % among those from Japan. It should also be borne in mind that many persons in South Thailand are familiar with Malay. Accordingly, 96.2 % of our sample answered that they could understand Malay sufficiently or even very well.

The national language had been, not surprisingly, the dominant one at the respondents' workplace: Chinese amongst 88.71 % of returnees from Taiwan; Japanese amongst 82.46% from Japan, and Malay amongst 92.41 % from Malaysia. In all countries, however, there were some cases where Thai had been used as the main language at the workplace. Some 5.7 % reported that from Malaysia and Taiwan, and close to 10 % from Japan. The striking exception is Singapore where close to 30 % of respondents had worked in a surrounding in which Thai had been either the main language (23.77 %) or used along with other tongues (5.74 %). In an additional 25.41 % of cases, English had been the main language in Singapore.

Constraints with the Local Population

The survey has not detected much information about constraints or relations with the local population. Greater insight should be gained from qualitative research conducted in the receiving countries. For the time being, it can be summarized that a large majority felt that they had gotten along okay or well. A considerable minority of 5.2 %, however, shared the reflection that they got along not so well or even very badly. Remarkably enough, some 5.7 % of the respondents who had worked in Malaysia and Singapore said that they could not say, as they had had no contact with local people.

Leisure Time

The activities that respondents had engaged in during leisure time appear to be limited in variety. Taking a rest, watching TV and reading were most often named (42.08 %). Shopping and going to a public park was another choice (20.82 %). Relatively few respondents reported sports, an activity not mentioned by respondents from Japan. Moreover, it is noteworthy that some respondents (4.56 %) said that they had no leisure time to spend. Respondents did not complain, though, about such a limited spectrum of options. This is being corroborated by the fact that respondents mentioned the same activities when being asked how they would have wished to spend their free time.

The most important difference between "spent leisure time" and their intentions in that regard refers to the work attitude of Thai workers while being abroad. Remarkably enough, 22.13 % of respondents made clear that they had no interest in leisure time activities, and that they did not want to do anything aside from work. Another 17.14 % underscored that attitude by saying that they would have wished to work more overtime or get an additional job. That was especially often indicated by returnees from Taiwan, in 32.26 % of the cases, whereas least often by respondents who had worked in Malaysia (8.23 %). Around 10% of returnees had managed to get a secondary job while working abroad.

Keeping Contact with Relatives Back Home

A remarkable difference among the four migration systems becomes apparent when we look at the home visits respondents had made while working outside of Thailand. It appears that home visits from Malaysia have been the rule (94.30 %); they have fairly often taken place from Singapore (40.16 %) and Taiwan (39.52 %); whereas they have been the exception from Japan (10.53 %). These differences are gaining in substance when the frequency of such visits is taken into account. In the vast majority of cases, home visits had taken place once per year, if at all, from Taiwan, Singapore and Japan, whereas close to 70 % of the returnees from Malaysia had made three or more home visits.

Perspectives: When to Return for Good?

Remarkable differences among returnees from the different countries are revealed when analyzing respondents' mid- and long-term perspectives, including those they had during their stay in the destination country. Returnees from Taiwan and Singapore returned generally within or after completing their contract period: 62.1 % of returnees from Taiwan and 45.1 % from Singapore had returned at the end of the contract period. A share of only 7.3 % in the case of Taiwan and 18 % among respondents from Singapore had stayed longer than 2 years in the respective country.

The comparison of answers is striking when looking at the respondents who had worked in Japan and Malaysia as more respondents had stayed for longer durations in those host countries. Nearly two thirds of the sample having returned from Japan had stayed longer than 2 years there, and for Malaysia that figure is also high at 62 %. Within the latter group are included respondents who did not intend to come back to Thailand at all (2.5 %) or those who were not sure about their intended duration of working outside of Thailand (34.8 %).

When looking into the main reasons for returning, a divers picture is being revealed. Different from returnees from Taiwan and Singapore, where the ending of the contract period had been the decisive factor, problems with the validity of the passport were mentioned fairly often as a reason for having to return among respondents who had worked in Japan. For around 20 %, feelings of homesickness or a more general attitude that respondents would not wish to live outside of Thailand was the main reason. About 15.8 % of returnees from Japan mentioned their poor health as a reason for having returned – far more than for any other country. Some 14 % of returnees from Singapore said that they had returned because they had not liked their job, in combination with having received a too-low salary. That answer was less often given among returnees from any other country.

It is remarkable that having managed to earn enough money is rarely given as a reason for having come back. That would not be a relevant observation with regard to returnees who had to comply with a fixed contract period, as in most cases in Taiwan and Singapore, since overstaying would have contradicted the arranged agreement. But also among returnees from the other two countries, only around 10% of the respondents said that they had returned for that reason.

Becoming a Citizen

Despite the divers and large spectrum of reasons for returning to Thailand, quite a large share of the sample answered affirmatively that they would like to become a citizen of the respective destination country. Around 30 % of the overall sample declared that wish. That has been over average expressed by returnees from Japan. It is remarkable that nearly 50 % of returnees from Japan affirmed that they would wish to become a Japanese citizen.

To conclude, on the basis of the data discussed in the present section, we can summarize our observations on the migration systems that have emerged between sending communities and the destination countries. While there are distinct differences between any such systems some common features become apparent for some of the situations Thai workers are being confronted with when abroad.

Generally – as we know from migration situations all over the world – illegal or irregular[1] forms of migration accompany legal ones. In the present study the most interesting feature in that regard is, however, the extent to which approaches taken up by host governments in their migration policies and the effects that such policies in receiving countries bear upon Thai workers there. Workers returning from two of the destinations studied – Singapore and Taiwan – tended to have engaged in a regular/legal working arrangement, whereas a majority of Thai workers were irregular migrants in Japan and Malaysia. That has been less a question of choice on the side of Thai citizens themselves, but rather a reflection of the respective government policies - as shown with greater clarity in the studies on legal policies.

Around 50 % of our sample had worked in an irregular migration and work situation. As a rule, a legal status with regard to immigration regulations went along with an observation of the respective labor laws. Workers with a proper visa and work permit also tended to have signed a written work contract, consequently leading to greater security than that experienced by irregular migrants.

A number of other factors went along with the legal-illegal divide. Workers with a legal status tended to comply with the work periods agreed upon in their contracts, consequently often returning to Thailand after a shorter duration than irregular workers. It can be concluded that governments that enforce legal migration policies with greater success – in this study, Singapore and Taiwan – have

[1] The concepts of "irregular migrants" and "migrants without a legal status" are being used interchangeably.

succeeded in achieving a greater extent of control over their foreign – here Thai – workforce. These governments explicitly wish to avoid the emergence of foreign workers' communities and intend to recruit foreign workers as contract laborers. The implementation of such a policy apparently requires a strict enforcement of legal regulations.

On the other hand, some developments have taken place in irregular migration situations that have been interpreted as positive by respondents in our sample. Thai workers in Japan and Malaysia apparently succeeded in accomplishing more flexible working and living surroundings than what could be observed in the stricter contract labor situations in Singapore and Taiwan. In Japan, they had often stayed for longer periods of time, and had been promoted in their jobs more often than Thai workers in other countries. Another indicator for a more flexible migration situation is that more Thai workers had lived in their own apartments. It is congruent with those observations - even though more research would be required on that issue - that returnees from Japan expressed a stronger wish of settling for good in the receiving country.

It is remarkable that a number of factors that are usually being identified with irregular migration could not be confirmed in the present study. First of all, that refers to an alleged greater exploitation of illegal labor. For example, there were only a few complaints about outstanding wages and benefits. To the contrary, appreciation for the wages received has been especially high among returnees from Japan, especially if compared with those from Singapore.

Another divide of the sample corresponds with the economic development among receiving countries. A number of corresponding features could be detected among the classical recruiting economies of Thai workers in Taiwan, Singapore and Japan. These refer to the labor market segments (construction, manufacturing), as well as attributes of the job situation, such as daily working hours, holidays, access to health service, and so on. Such characteristics apparently underscore the effects of the legal-illegal juxtaposition.

Returnees from Malaysia, a country often left out in studies on Thai labor migration, are reflecting a remarkably different situation. Thai workers there observed visa and work permit regulations less strictly than in Taiwan and Singapore, but the effects were less severe than in Japan - largely due to the proximity of the destination that allowed for regular home visits and concurrent family contacts. Different from the other situations, a greater variety of job segments has emerged in the Thai-Malaysian migration system. Another indicator for the importance of cross-border relations and an emerging Thai community is that Thai citizens function as employers of Thai workers to a greater extent than in the other countries studied.

Greater insight into such emerging trends can be expected from studies in receiving countries, rather than with returnees. With due limitation, though, the findings from research among returnees in Thailand indicates that, by and large, Thai workers still comply with the expectation expressed in receiving countries in Southeast and East Asia, namely their functioning as contract laborers, exemplifying a strong work orientation during their term in the host country.

Migration Impacts on Thai Workers and Their Families: Evidence from Survey

In recent years, the world has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of international labor migrants, and this has especially been the case in Asia. This massive movement reflects the revolution of transportation and communication systems and the relaxation of immigration regulations of many countries. As Massey (1993:431-2) states: 'Most of the world's developing countries have become diverse, multi-ethnic societies, and those that have reached this state are moving decisively in that direction. The emergence of international migration as a basic structural feature of nearly all industrialized countries testifies to the strength and coherence of the underlying forces.'

Southeast and East Asian countries are particularly interesting countries to study since they have been sending out and receiving significant numbers of international labor migrants since the 1970s. Over time, the destinations of international migrants have become more varied, illegal migration has assumed greater significance and the profile of migrants has also become more varied.

This part aims at extending our knowledge of impacts of international labor migration on migrants and their families. Based on data collected from rural Thailand from where most migrants leave for four countries - Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore, the study focuses on socio-economic impacts of migration on migrants and their families. The study uses data collected in the field survey of six provinces in Thailand, namely Udon Thani, Nakornratchasima, Phayao, Chiang Rai, Satun and Pattani during March and July 1999. Based on a random sampling approach, 461 migrant households were visited. Return migrants, heads of villages, spouses and relatives of current migrants were interviewed. Intensive interviews were also made along with observation. The analysis of this information is undertaken together with information obtained from existing studies and related organizations.

Remittances Received from Migrants

Stahl (1986) in his study of overseas workers' remittances has analyzed a large number of studies focusing on the proportion of earnings remitted. He estimates that Thais are remitting some 60 % of their earnings home. He also provides evidence that in many countries migrants remit home more than 50% of their earnings.

In Thailand, it was found that most migrants (95.4%) had remitted money to their families at least once since they had migrated (Table 3.1). The number of returnees who remit cash from Japan is relatively highest among four destination countries while the number of migrants remitting money home from Malaysia is lower than Japan. For those migrants who reported that they never remitted money back even once while abroad, these may have brought money back when they returned or were cheated so that they did not have money left for remitting.

Indeed, some migrants may have just left the country for a few months and needed to use their money during their orientation period. However, they would probably remit money later. It was reported in many studies (Warmsingh, 1996, 1998) that at the beginning of their work abroad, migrants were compelled not to send money earned because they had to reserve some for unexpected events that might occur during this period. Their salaries were spent on clothes, food and other basic necessities. Thus migrants had to save money and bring it back only upon returning. (Only in a few cases were the basic facilities provided by employers under the conditions of the contract.) Upon arriving in the host countries, Thai migrants started sending remittances fairly quickly. It is likely that short-term contract laborers were under more pressure than the longer term ones in this respect. Some might have needed more time to become established (a few months) and only then began remitting.

It was found that Thai migrants in this study tended to bring back cash on a home visit. Migrants realized that the exchange rate varies and the amount of money remitted might be less if the rate in receiving countries is overvalued. The amount of money remitted varies from country to country. Table 3.2 shows that on average returnees from Japan and Taiwan remitted more than 150,000 baht a year, accounting for 80.0% and 68.9% respectively. On the other hand, migrants who returned from Malaysia remitted less than 80,000 baht a year while abroad, numbering 34.7%. Also for returnees from Singapore, half of them remitted 80,000 to 150,000 baht a year. It was expected among these returnees that they