

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

by
Supang Chantavanich

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



Supported by

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Supang Chantavanich
Director
Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM)
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Executive Summary

The Research Project title is "Thai Migrant Workers in East and Southeast Asia: the Prospects of Thailand's Migration Policy in the Light of the Regional Economic Recession". The project has the objective to examine the flows of Thai migrant labor to four specific destinations, namely Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. The key areas of investigation are: the reasons for leaving; the recruitment system, and relevant employment laws and regulations; the impact of labor migration on Thailand; and Thai workers' employment opportunities in the labor markets of the four destinations during the economic crisis. The project involves fieldwork in receiving countries, where there were 535 interviews with workers plus key informants, as well as in Thailand, where there were 461 interviews with returnees plus key informants. These interviews were conducted in Chiang Rai, Phayao, Udonthani, Nakhon Rachasima, Satul and Pattani. Additional information was gained through literature searches and analysis of relevant documents, plus examining employment laws and regulations in both Thailand and the destination countries.

The findings of the study are as follows:

1. **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 this expansion will continue for at least the next 2-3 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 trainees are accepted to Japan, the remainder is 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.

2. **Recruitment system.** The current system is totally market driven, with minimal input from governmental 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 the 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 both 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.

3. Laws and regulations on migration for employment. The Immigration Law BE 2522, and the Law of Employment Recruitment and the Protection of Job Seekers BE 2528 (amended BE 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 checkpoints 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 numbers 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 the country.

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 other 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 newcomers. 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 poor 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 most friendly for Thais.

4. 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 alleviate rural poverty. For workers, higher wages means that they can have some savings after paying 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 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.

5. 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, 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 may only be 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:

For the Ministry of Labor

1. Investigate the overall 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 attempt 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 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 SMEs.

To the Immigration Office

1. Cooperate with the Ministry of Labor to improve labor control checkpoints 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 (videos, 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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Research Team

Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Methodology

This project addresses the situation of Thai labor migrants in four East and Southeast Asian countries. Within the project, individual studies shall be undertaken both in the receiving and sending countries, namely in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. The four foreign countries were selected, since they have become the major destination countries for Thai workers in recent years. With regard to both the studies in Thailand and the destination regions, the focus of the research will be laid for one, upon recruitment structures into foreign labor markets and secondly, on the social networks, which bridge international borders and facilitate cross border migration of Thai citizens. At the same time, the project will not be limited to legal migration phenomena, but will also cover undocumented migration processes.

Furthermore, the research addresses the costs and benefits, which arise for Thailand from sending workers abroad. In this context fall the analysis of the migrants' expected incomes, their expenses for job placement and living abroad, their remittances, and, generally speaking, the impact of labor exportation on Thai economy. This appears to be especially urgent in the light of the present economic crisis, which bears a severe impact upon the costs and benefits of Thai migration. On the one hand, it has to be expected that migrants' economic prospects abroad are being diminished as the economy is slowing down. On the other hand, the Thai government is interested in sending more Thai workers abroad. A parallel growing interest of Thai workers can be expected as employment in Thailand is being reduced.

The research approach is comparative and interdisciplinary: comparative, due to the focus upon four countries; interdisciplinary, as in the case studies empirical research and analysis will be undertaken by social scientists and legal experts. The legal experts will focus upon laws and regulations relevant to incorporating migrant labor into the respective societies, while the social scientists will concentrate on the social networks and linkages between the home and destination regions and on the labor recruitment systems. The project's interdisciplinary approach will enhance again the comparative potentials of the research, as it will allow more specific comparisons on the political, social and the legal level between any of the named countries.

A research consortium has been formed comprising teams in the individual countries and a research team at the applying institution, which will conduct the study on Thailand and co-ordinate the work. The project has been designed ambitiously in comprising a large set of cases and partners. The outlook for a successful realization of the work is positive, though, as the project can build up on communal research experience with most of the teams from co-operation in a prior project.

The project thus can build up upon preliminary studies on out-migration of Thai workers (ARCM: forthcoming), which had been done in preparation of a workshop held in 1996 (Chomchai/Gukun on Brunei, Hong/Lee on Hong Kong, Kang on South Korea, Nagayama on Japan, Tsay on Taiwan, Wong on Singapore, Chantavanich/Risser on migration theories and regional developments, all 1996). The conference papers provide in part a valuable basis for the present project as they allow a first insight into current tendencies of Thai migration. However, some limitations of the preparatory work have to be stated, as the discussion in 1996 was less focused than what is being planned for the future comparative analysis, and, due to lack of funds, not all of the earlier papers were based on empirical field studies. In the present project, these limitations have been reflected upon, and high emphasis is being laid upon a homogeneous methodological approach. While all accessible quantitative data will be evaluated in the project, the main empirical research will be done by qualitative field studies. A number of reasons can be given for this methodological decision, not the least important is that a major part of the present migration processes is undocumented, which can best be analyzed with a qualitative approach.

Although employment of Thai workers abroad has been an important issue for Thailand during the last three decades, information is lacking both on the structure of Thai migration and on their situation in the destination countries. It is expected that the outcome of this research will bear an impact to practitioners and decision-makers in the political field.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Transnational Migration becomes a factor in political and economic development

Migration certainly belongs to the key phenomena, which characterize the present social and political developments on the globe. At the same time, it is one of the core problems in need for better international solutions. On the one hand, international migration movements can be viewed as normal and in no way extraordinary developments. In taking a historical example, the North American and Australian continents would obviously look different today if international migration had not taken place. The same, though, can be said about any other region of the globe, as none of today's metropolises would have developed without major internal and cross-border migration. The argument can be stressed yet further in stating that economic restructuring and modernization processes apparently presuppose major population changes, which we subsume under the migration term. Accordingly, the present century has been referred to as the age of migration (Castles/Miller: 1993).

On the other hand, the emergence of major migration movements can create problems, which national governments around the globe find difficult to cope with. Among the problems most often named are the sometimes catastrophic appearance of migration and refugee flows and the difficulty of controlling such movements. Countries, which have incorporated migrants into the labor market as cheap labor, often developed a negative or at least hesitant approach regarding their long-term social integration. Furthermore, a number of countries find it difficult to widen their concept of sovereignty and grant the right of citizenship to foreigners more easily. Accordingly, Western industrialized countries were criticized severely by many scholars for not averting racism and creating a form of global apartheid¹ (Richmond: 1994).

An unwillingness to develop a more appropriate migration policy and to address the issue with a broader perspective – aside from acute political crises – has also been diagnosed for inter-state bodies like the European Union and the ASEAN association. There are, however, some examples, in which national governments have introduced a more appropriate approach to their immigrant populations, and which might serve as models for a more appropriate international migration policy.

Thailand is embedded into international migration flows

The Southeast and East Asian countries have been incorporated into the global changes in many ways, and accordingly, Thailand has also developed a tradition of both accepting immigrant populations and sending Thai migrants abroad. Over the past centuries, only relatively small groups of people moved out of the country permanently while population groups from different ethnic origin came into what is now Thailand, among them groups of Shan-, Karen-, and Mon-origin. Migration from China and Vietnam was often caused by political turmoil and war in these countries. There are also large migrant communities from the Indian subcontinent (Paul: 1997, 10). At present, Thailand's labor migration situation has become more complex as Thailand shifted from a former labor-supplying country into the position of a both labor-receiving and sending country.

Significant movements out of the country started during the 1950s and 1960s when growing numbers of Thais went abroad to study, particularly in the United States. The 1970s and 1980s brought a new type of migration as thousands of Thais sought employment abroad, often in the Gulf region. Since the late 1980's, a shift away from the Middle East labor markets into other Asian-Pacific countries with rapidly growing economies was to be observed, most importantly into Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Brunei (see Annex 3, also Chantavanich: 1997, 171; Stern: 1998, 5-6, 37-38)

Thai migration within Southeast and East Asia seems to go back partly to an improving working quality for the indigenous labor force with a corresponding demand arising in less attractive job segments,

¹ At the same time it should be borne in mind that migration does not necessarily mean 'cheap labor', for example note the better-than-average education of immigrants in the US during the larger part of its history; or the function of Chinese immigrants in Thailand's business sector.

which is supplied by foreign labor from countries with less developed industries. The structure of labor demand and supply relations within the region under study is most complex as it comprises a large number of small labor market segments with demands, which can be supplied only by making use of international social networks. To analyze this structure will be one of the main objectives of the present project.

Furthermore, it can be expected that the present research will allow more profound insight into the tendencies of undocumented migration which, according to all estimations, is continuously gaining importance (with regard to undocumented migrants in East and Southeast Asia, see Hugo: 1995, 397-401). According to prior research of the applying consortium, in all of the four cases which are to be studied, legal migration arrangement is paralleled by undocumented ones. As has been pointed out many times, undocumented migrants are regularly being exposed to severe insecurities. Thailand, while as a receiving country is facing problems due to undocumented entries, should at the same time and for several reasons have an interest in regulating her citizens' undocumented status.

Migration policy in times of economic recession

One of the most important objects of the present research project is to analyze, in what way Thailand's migration picture is being influenced by the present economic crisis. As has been shown many times, incorporation into a foreign labor market is a two-way process, which is not only defined by the demand side. Looking from the Thai laborers' perspective, they have accomplished access to specific segments of foreign labor markets and developed cross border networks on that course. Against that background, it will be of utmost importance to investigate their present economic opportunities on foreign labor markets. While it can be envisaged that the *pull* will be reduced with less well-paid jobs being offered to them abroad, Thailand's economic downturn will add a further *push* to emigration.

This is being reflected by a recent change in the Thai government's migration policy. Encouragement of working abroad had been formulated as a policy goal in the 5th Development Plan (1982-1986). In the following decade, no comparable active policy had been pursued. At present, though, the Ministry of Labor is again offering new emigration incentives in the light of rising unemployment figures. The policy change occurred in October when the government announced an endowment of 1,000 million baht from Social Welfare Funds, which are being directed to support Thai migrants who wish to work abroad. Under this scheme, loans will be granted at 12 % interest for expenses which arise for travel and other preparation costs. It is expected by the Thai government that some 30,000 to 50,000 workers will go abroad within six months (Manager: 8.10.1997).

In the present project, the success of this policy will be analyzed. In this context, the costs and benefits of actively encouraging out-migration will be taken into account. According to some critics, the cost-benefit ratio of out-migration could turn out to be negative in the long run. However, such criticism stands against the government's strategy, which was developed in the light of macro-economic and labor market developments, and it stands against the interests of Thai workers who wage their chances abroad.

The need for transnational migration policies

Even though in the present research, migration will be understood as a normal phenomenon which is necessarily taking place along the path of economic restructuring and modernization, there are limitations to the concept of 'normality'. First of all, these refer to the political sphere, where we are confronted with severe deficits, if not a lack, of what could be called a political management of migration flows. The root cause of this deficit seems to be connected with the very heart of the contemporary organization of politics with its still prevalent orientation on the concept of the nation state, and with the importance, which national boundaries bear within that concept.

The generally weak position of migrants seems to be intrinsically webbed into the prevalent structure of international political organization being based on the nation state concept, as foreign migrants are by definition under the authority of a foreign state, and their 'own' governments tend to intervene for their support only in rare or extreme situations. Accordingly, migration movements have usually been perceived as generating *problems* – either for the country of origin, and here mainly if out-

migration is producing a shortage of labor or political unrest, or for the country of destination, and here for a wide range of integration problems. Often, migration has been interpreted in a context of a threat to national security or sovereignty while only seldom it is being viewed in a broader context in the political sphere.

This gave ground to a wide range of criticism against national governments, which can be subsumed under two major headings: for one, government policies were criticized for coming after the event and were labeled as 'muddling through'-policies along that line. The emergence of social problems was then understood as a consequence of not deciding on the scale and character of the labor migration in advance. The second main criticism refers to the recruitment of migrants for the difficult, dirty and dangerous jobs, the so-called 3-D jobs. Treatment of migrants then was called subhuman, which could, along with complementary factors, lead to the emergence of human rights violations against them.

In concluding the analysis, migration researchers would often turn towards provisions of international law and postulate a reform of the institutions, which are central in what has been labeled the international migration regime², in order to achieve a more efficient global management of international employment structures. The main argument here is that the important organizations, which have a say in regard to international migration, were founded shortly after World War II or, like the International Labor Office (ILO), even in the aftermath of World War I, that their mandates and enforcement potentials were relatively weak from the outset, and that new migration structures developed since, which increasingly evade the provisions of international law.

In the present research this criticism will be acknowledged for we will also include the main counter arguments: with regard to the 'muddling through' criticism, it was argued that modern society evades strict planning, while on the contrary, modern economy is characterized by its ever increasing flexibility. This refers especially to migrants and the sectors into which they are being recruited. The migrants' very advantage on the labor market is, besides the fact that they might ask for less pay, that they are more flexible than the indigenous population. This argument is being corroborated by the indicator that the classical immigration countries quite regularly run into difficulties with the size of the immigrant population and have to adjust their immigration quotas. Therefore, rather than criticizing governments for muddling through, it might be more realistic to postulate a higher degree of flexibility on the governments' part also, which would match the flexibility needs of the labor markets and could support a better integration of migrants. Obviously, this postulate would presuppose a more active and supporting attitude than what usually is provided by the governments in destination countries.

The central argument countering the 3-D jobs criticism follows analogous lines with regard to economic realities and employment offers. By way of looking at the main actors within the immigration process, it has to be maintained that very few are opposed to employment in the referred job situations – neither the businesses in such sectors, nor the migrants themselves. The labor market segments into which Thai workers are being recruited were scrutinized in the prior study. In the majority, male workers were recruited into construction and manufacturing works while female workers became domestic helpers in receiving countries.

There have been examples to the contrary, though; notably the labor unions' position. For example, the Northern European countries in the 1960's and 1970's, which followed a double strategy: for one, by trying to minimize the size of the foreign workforce; two, pushing for equal payment and better working conditions of the migrant workers – both in order to reduce competition for the national workforce. Such a policy, which did not generally support migrants' interests, and which was accordingly often referred to as the unions' anti-foreigners policies, would in the long run strengthen the position of those migrant workers who had achieved employment. However, the unions are in a weaker position in most of the Western industrialized countries at present. Furthermore, in East Asia an equal-payment-approach toward Thai migrants is rarely proposed. Hence, the project will contribute to the

² The concept of international regimes refers to a broad sphere of activities – here related to the core international agencies and institutions with a mandate in migration politics –, which are guided by the same principles, norms, rules and decision-making processes (Krasner ed. 1983). For a history of international labor law, see Piender 1988, with regard to the international refugee regime, see Zolberg et al. 1989, p. 258-282, see also Blaschke/Germershausen/Schwarz 1992.

discussion about the quality of migrants' labor situations, by describing and analyzing the labor markets in the four countries, taking into account the discernible interests of the migrants themselves, and, on that ground, in formulating steps which could bear a practical impact.

A similar approach will be taken up with regard to expectations that a better protection of migrants' rights could be reached via a change in international labor laws. Again, the analysis will focus upon the present political realities and the interests in play. By doing so, the results of the project should strengthen Thailand's position in supporting her citizens who work abroad.

1.2 Project objectives

General research objectives

Following from the statement of the problem in the *rationale*, it is the general objective of this research project to investigate the existing migration systems between Thailand and four destination countries. 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.

Specific research objectives

1. To investigate migration flows from rural communities and urban areas to four major destination countries. This work segment includes the documentation and analysis of 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 undocumented migration flows as well.
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 will also be addressed as to what chances migrants have to evade the legal procedures.
4. To investigate the impact which the present migration movements have upon Thailand in general, and more specifically upon the cost-benefit of labor export policy.
5. To explore the prospects of Thai workers in the labor markets in destination countries as the consequence of economic recession in the Southeast Asian region.
6. To compare systematically the functioning of the recruitment, the employment situation abroad and the impact upon the communities from which Thai migrants originate within the scope of four migration systems.

1.3 Scope of the research

Regional scope

Research was undertaken in Thailand and in four foreign countries, namely in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Thus, the research design reflects the major shift of Thai migration which could be observed during the last decade and in which Southeast and East Asian countries became the major destination countries for Thai foreign workers (see Annex 3). Another reason for choosing these countries is the severe lack of research on these migratory movements as compared to the Middle East, which had been the most important destination region earlier. Research in Thailand will focus on the Northern and Northeastern provinces from where most Thai migrants originate. Additionally, research

will be done in a province in Southern Thailand from where most Thai migrants in Malaysia originate.

Time scope

Research concentrates on Thai migration trends in the 1990's.

Targeted Individuals

The research study covers both legal and illegal migrant workers. For Japan, the study concentrates on trainees and women in the service sector, and in Malaysia we focus on agricultural jobs.

1.4 Conceptual frame for the research project

Review of literature

A number of issues have been dealt with in the international literature on migration processes, which bear relevance to the questions that were being raised in the present project. While the bibliographical sources are diverse and of varying quality, the literature which had to be taken account of can be subsumed under four headings:

- a) Studies on earlier emigration phases of Thai workers;
- b) Studies on migration policies in the destination countries and regional overviews;
- c) Studies on the impact on Thailand;
- d) Studies on theoretical matters; and
- e) Ongoing studies and recent literature.

Additionally, a variety of issues have been dealt with, which bear relevance to individual aspects of the research topic, namely with regard to refugee, gender and business activities, including sex business. At the same time, a number of deficiencies had to be stated, which could hopefully be filled in by the activities which were being applied in the present proposal.

a) Literature regarding Thai out-migration

The major part of the literature on the migration of Thai workers refers to the migration into Middle Eastern countries; most of it is in article form (Chiengkul: 1986; Pitayanon: 1986, and Gardezi: 1991). Relatively early analyses of demographic tendencies can be found in Goldstein/ Goldstein (1980 and 1985). Moreover, the economic consequences of migration to the Middle East have often been addressed in the earlier studies (Roongshirvi: 1984, 1986), among them the question of the migration's development benefits for Thailand and, more generally, for sending countries (Amjad ed.: 1989; Tingsabadh: 1989).

A substantial part of the literature on the migration to the Middle East has been contributed by experts from international organizations, among them Böhning and Abella for the ILO. Among the topics which are addressed in such papers and studies, are the instruments of international organizations in reacting and supporting these migration flows (Böhning: 1982), demographic changes (Abella: 1990; Sarmiento: 1990), the way migration influences and is itself reflects the region's social and economic changes (Abella: 1991). Furthermore, the needs to react in specific political crises are being pointed out, for example during the Gulf War (ILO: 1990).

Only relatively few studies, however, took up a comparative perspective; among such studies the book edited by Abella and Afal (1986) can be named; it covers a number of destination and origin countries, among them Thailand (see also Gunatilleke ed.: 1986). A comparative approach with regard to Thai migrants can be found in a number of conference papers (Phuaphongsakorn: 1982; Tingsabadh: 1990, and 1991; Richter: 1991).

The out-migration of Thai workers was also the subject of a number of Thai university theses. Chaichan's (1986) thesis on migration into the Middle East does not only address political attitudes of emigrants, but contains also information on the economics of migration. Roongshirvi and Piyapanth (1992) similarly reported on the economic situation at home as a major migration cause.

More recent theses have discussed the migration into East Asian countries. Thiranet's thesis (1991) compared the economic benefits in Taiwan with the Middle East income. The book of Bunnag and Chaimusic (1995) analyzes a strong labor demand in Singapore that attracted Thai workers into that country. They also describe the usual recruitment procedure (a more complete information on the literature in Thai can be found in Laodumrongchai: 1997).

The literature on the earlier migration seems to be useful for the present project mainly in three ways: firstly, with regard to the development of so-called migration cycles in relative early phases of migration into a destination country; secondly, regarding the migration experience of Thai workers and the development of cross border networking; and thirdly, regarding the benefits to the Thai economy and the general impact on Thai communities.

b) Literature on migration policies in the destination countries and regional overviews

Very few studies have been published that focus upon the migration of Thai workers into the destination countries which will be addressed in the present project. Mostly, the literature on the migration of Thai workers within Southeast and East Asia is restricted to a number of articles. The project can, however, make use of regional overviews and studies on the migration policy of the individual receiving countries. This literature has partly been evaluated in the prior project of the research consortium. This preparatory work is itself a major source, especially the studies of Chomchai/Gukun on Brunei, Hong/Lee on Hong Kong, Tsay on Taiwan, and Wong on Singapore (ARCM: forthcoming).

However, the literature on migration policies within the different countries varies substantially in both volume and quality. While the project can refer to a number of studies on migration policies in Singapore (see Wong: 1996 and most recently Hui, Weng-Tat: 1997), Taiwan (Tsay: 1996; see also Selya: 1992; Tsay: 1992) and Japan (Miki: 1995; Clammer: 1993; Matzuda: 1993; Sekine: 1991), less has been published on Hong Kong and very little on Brunei (Mani, A.: 1991). On Malaysia, which has not been covered in the preparatory project, some articles addressed the migration of Filipino workers into that country (for example, N.N.: 1994, in *Asian Migrant*). At the partner institute which will conduct the case study on Malaysia (Assoc. Professor Dr. Khadija Muhamed, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya) master theses on all major population groups which immigrated into the country were produced in the last five years.

The diversity with regard to the state of literature is somewhat leveled out due to a number of overviews on the migration scene in the Southeast and East Asian region: all of them articles, many were written for conferences, often from within the main institutions of the *International Migration Regime* (Martin: 1991, Stahl/ Appleyard: 1992; Prasai: 1993; Stahl: 1990, 1991; Tirasawat: 1985; for statistical data see Gullaprawit et al.: 1995).

c) Migration's impact on Thailand

Within the context of the preparatory project, the importance of remittances and the subsequent support of out-migration by the Thai government were discussed (Ratanakomut: 1996). The consequences of overseas migration on rural labor market in Udon Thani were analyzed by Hongfa/Phuaphongsakorn (1989). The topic was again taken up by Warm Singh in his PhD thesis (forthcoming, see also Warm Singh: 1996, 1997). Experiences of returning migrants were analyzed in Gunatilleke (1991).

A comparative view on the impact of migration issues in the region can be found in a collective volume edited by Gunatilleke (1992). This book focuses upon the impact of labor migration on households, a perspective which gained importance in recent years. The book includes an article on Thailand which was provided by the Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University.

Again, most valuable information is provided in the Thai literature. Treethipkun (1995) analyzes both the economic and social impact on two villages in Udon Thani. He also evaluates the different factors with regard to a positive and adverting impact. Similarly, the impact on Thai communities was discussed by Tosurat and Uiytrakul (1984) and Chatong (1994). A number of the theses also addressed

the Thai government's migration policy. A thorough overview was given by Promphunthorn (1992; see the literature in Thai by Laodumrongchai: 1997).

d) Literature regarding theoretical matters

There is a most voluminous theoretical literature which bears relevance for the planned study. In the preparatory project this literature was systematized by Chantavanich/ Risser (1996). The article includes an overview on the history of migration theories, and the theoretical debate will be followed up in the present project. Some of the most important issues which will be taken up in the project are listed below in Section 6.2.

Trying to explain why migration occurs in the first place has been a core issue throughout the history of migration research. This holds true for the economic theories with their varying approaches, and it holds true for the present debates. The main perspective, however, has changed substantially over time. During the last two decades, research especially in the United States, but also in Europe, has somewhat taken account of a diminishing interest and a more restrictive political discourse with regard to new foreign labor. In this context, a relatively broad debate on how to prevent migration came up, which at some instances was also discussed within a developmental context (for a comprehensive discussion, see Skeldon: 1997).

In part, the change of the general political picture is reflected by studies on social and economic networks. However, as Massey et al (1994) show in a thorough analysis of the research history on migration into the United States, the cross border networks between the sending countries and the US are so densely knitted and stable that a reduction of migration by political intervention would be difficult to achieve. He states, though, that communities in the sending countries can benefit from being embedded into such cross border networks, and that the sending communities might attract their former emigrants in a long time-perspective. A most valuable study on social networks of Thai workers has been provided by Singhanetra-Renard (1992).

The overall state of literature encourages ARCM to proceed with the present project. While it will contribute to the international debate on cross border networks, it will try to fill some of the deficits that were mentioned by Massey et al. Despite an immense amount of literature, they conclude, only a small number of studies give an insight into the factors which trigger migration in the countries of origin. Such studies have mainly reflected upon migration from Mexico, and most of these studies were not comparative (Massey et al: *ibid*). At the same time, the project will take up a more open approach in analyzing the benefits, and possibly the negative impacts, which can be induced by migration.

e) Ongoing studies and recent literature

Ongoing research of colleagues will certainly be reflected on in the course of the project. Gladly, there exists good co-operation among researchers who deal with migration problems in Thailand. This holds true, especially for academic institutions in Bangkok, but ARCM is also working together with colleagues in other regions of Thailand. Moreover, ARCM is well-incorporated into international academic networks with institutions that work on cross border migration problems. Ongoing scientific discussions will be reflected upon, according to the publication of articles in major journals (*International Migration, Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, Asian Migrant, Asia Pacific Population Journal* and others), the discussion of conference papers and by following up the information of research centers in the Internet. A preliminary overview over present studies can be given by way of reporting on the presentation of such research at recent scientific conferences and discussions at political seminars.

In January 1998, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore held a conference on migration problems in the Southeast Asian and East Asian region. At that conference, the paper on migration from and to Thailand was given by Supang Chantavanich (Chantavanich: 1998a). In February 1998, a larger conference was held by the Asia Pacific Migration Research Network (APMRN) at the University of Hong Kong. ARCM's present research on cross border migration from Thailand was discussed by Supang Chantavanich (Stern and Chantavanich: 1998), Andreas Germershausen (Germershausen: 1998a) and Subordas Warm Singh (Warm Singh: 1998a). In May 1998, the Institute for Population and Social Research ((IPSR) of Mahidol University held a conference on migration and

development in Southeast Asia (IPSR: 1998). Papers on Thailand were presented by Kritaya Archavanitkul, (Archavanitkul: 1998), Kanchana Patarachoke (Patarachoke: 1998) and Liwa Pardthaisong (Pardthaisong: 1998). Also in May 1998, the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila organized a conference on the impact of the economic crisis on migration in Asia. The paper on Thailand was presented by Yongyuth Chalamwong. The International Labor Organization (ILO) presented a study on the social impact of the Asian crisis at this conference (International Labor Organization: 1998). In August 1998, ARCM held a conference on Thai migrant workers in East and Southeast Asia in Bangkok, the first workshop of the present project. Papers on Thailand were presented by Phuntip Kanchanachittra Saisoonthorn (Saisoonthorn: 1998), Supang Chantavanich (Chantavanich: 1998b) and Andreas Germershausen (Germershausen: 1998b). A paper on the scientific literature on the subject was presented by Subordas Warmsingh (Warmsingh et al.: 1998).

Furthermore, interesting conferences of international organizations took place recently, which did not address a scientific audience, but touched issues relevant to the topic. First of all, this holds true for meetings which were organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in June and September 1998, the latter addressing the issue of undocumented migration and trafficking.

A number of studies were being finalized recently that touch issues that are relevant in part to the present project, even though they have a different focus. A number of studies, done at Mahidol University addressed migration to Thailand. Kritaya Archavanitkul did a study on trafficking in women, while another study on trafficking in women and children by Therese Caouette for the UN was published in February 1998. Subordas Warmsingh's dissertation (unpublished) covers the impact of the earlier migration phase on communities in Udon Thani.

Research of colleagues will be reflected on in the course of the project. This holds true, certainly, also for work that is being done by the JIL, the OECD and other major bodies. However most studies being done by such institutions address general labor issues in the respective countries. Information from such studies on the inclusion of foreign labor in the national labor markets will be taken account in the present study.

A general problem has to be stated with regard to statistics. Comparative work in that field was done in the mid-90s (ILO-UNDP: 1993, International Migration 1996, 4; APMJ). Comparative statistics like those of SOPEMI, UNPDP, EUROSTAT and other institutions are not very conclusive for the East and Southeast Asian region. APEC made a recent effort, the study for Thailand having been prepared at ARCM (Stern: 1998). The statistics that are available at the national level follow differing criteria. In part though, they are most relevant and will be analyzed comparatively in the project. A first effort has been made at the first workshop of this project.

A number of ongoing discussions and studies are being undertaken at present, which are relevant to issues to be tackled in the project. However, the present labor migration from Thailand is not being addressed systematically by other scholars. Preliminary studies that were prepared at ARCM and presented at recent international conferences found a strong collegial interest.

1.5 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 concerned organizations. The two activities were operated coincidentally. The results from the 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 sample was collected from northern, northeastern and southern parts of Thailand. The number of respondents interviewed from the northern, northeastern and southern region is shown in Table 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 four main destination countries -Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, accounting for 22.9%, 12.4%, 24.5% and 34.3% (Table 2).

Table 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 2 Percentage distribution of Migrants leaving abroad and sample

Destinations	Percent of Total leaving in 1998	Migrants leaving for countries survey	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, Payao, Chiang Rai, Satun and Pattani during February and July 1999. The number of respondents interviewed from each province and destination country is shown in Table 3 below. Interviews were made mostly among migrants from northeastern province, especially Udon Thani, who moved to Taiwan, Singapore and Japan, accounting for 46.1%, 28.1% and 24.2% respectively.

Table 3 Percentage distribution of sample by sending provinces

Destinations Countries	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 consulting with officials in districts, heads of sub-districts and villages to seek their advice in the areas most effected 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 takes responsibility for all procedures of data collection and analysis. Researchers consist of experts from various fields related to international migration, such as economists, anthropologists, sociologists and demographers. Interviewers were recruited from graduate students 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 co-operative 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 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 five years. This 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, using a single question with a 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 consisted of both males (83.7%) and females (16.3%) (Table 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 4 Sample by Gender:

Gender	Total migrants leaving	Sample
Male	87.1	83.7
Female	12.9	16.3
	(91364)	(461)
Total	100.0	100.0

Coding and Editing

Once the interviews were completed, a codebook 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 data were entered into microcomputers using a data entry package which had been programed 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 countries and sending areas were 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 a 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. Division of Pass Ports
5. National Statistics Office
6. Bank of Thailand
7. Division of Immigration
8. Department of Police
9. Department of Employment
10. Private Recruiters

Chapter 2: Thai Migrant Workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan

The data in this chapter is based on a field research study in four countries. The data was collected both quantitatively by structured interviews with the Thai migrant workers (see the details in the appendices) and the collection of qualitative data from the study of documents and interviews with informants who gave important information in each country. Also, there were interviews of illegal migrant workers. For details of the research, there are English versions of the research for each country.

2.1 Thai migrant workers in Japan

Travel by Thai migrant workers to go to work in Japan only started in the 1980's due to the economic growth of Japan which made Thais wish to go to work there. However, the Japanese government had a policy not to accept unskilled laborers to come to work. This resulted in most of the people going illegally to work there by using a tourist visa. Many who went were Thai women who went to work in the sex and entertainment business.

Between the years 1988 to 1995, there were about 40,000-60,000 Thai who went to Japan every year. In 1991 which was the peak of the influx, there were as many as 105,666 Thai going Japan. Nevertheless, this number of people was only 3% or 4% out of a total number of two million Asians who went to Japan (1988). Most of the people went there had to live illegally. In 1988, the Japanese immigration department estimated that there were 37,046 Thai who lived in Japan illegally. Thai people were scattered in many cities of Japan. The cities where many Thais lived were Nagano, Chiba, Ibaraki and Shizuoka. Thais who went to work in Japan can be divided into two categories; people who were migrant workers and people who went to work as trainees. Information on these two groups is described in the following sections.

Thai migrant workers in Japan

The data from the survey and interviews from June to July 1999 of 97 Thai migrant workers (57% male and 43% female) in Japan who were not trainees showed that 38% were legal migrants. However, some of the persons who entered Japan legally came in as tourists and overstayed their visa. Their status now would be illegal migrant workers.

These laborers were scattered throughout the areas of Tokyo, Shizuoka, Aichi, Mie, Chiba and Osaka. Some of the areas where they stayed were not where the majority of Thai workers lived because this sample group of laborers were recommended to the researchers by other Thai workers who knew them and guaranteed the safety of the interviewees. In this type of snowball sampling, the majority of the people who were interviewed were illegal migrant workers who did not want to reveal themselves.

Background in Thailand: The majority of the people who answered the questions (45%) were in the age group 30-39 years; next in order were 28% in the age group 20-29 years and the third group consisted of 24% in the age group 40-49 years. Most of them came to Japan at the age of 20. The people who came in before 1993 were 73% of the Thai migrant workers in Japan; only 3% went to Japan from 1997-1998. The hometowns of these workers were mostly in the Central region (43%) from Bangkok, Chonburi, Nonthaburi, Nakhonayok and so on. Next were from the Northern region (30%) such as Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Lampang, Phayao, and Prae and from the Northeastern region (23%) such as Khonkaen, Nakhonratchasima, Udonthani, etc. Some 4% of the workers came from the Southern region such as Trang, Phatthalung, Songkla, and Nakhonsirithammarat. Overall, there were Thai migrant workers from all regions who went to work in Japan. However, 58% of the workers lived in the Central region before they went to work in Japan and 44% of the above group departed from Bangkok. This shows that these Thai migrant workers moved from their hometowns to live in the Central region and in Bangkok for some time before they departed to Japan.

About 50.5% of the Thai migrant workers were married, 31% were single and 13% were divorced or separated or widows or widowers. The majority of workers who were married had only 1-2 children. Some 18.5% were workers who were married in Japan and 35% did not answer the questions. This shows that the marital status of these people was vague. There were 26% who stayed with their

spouses in Japan. Usually, the chance that these workers would bring their spouse to live with them in Japan was rare or non-existent. To stay with their spouse or partner meant that they lived with the Japanese in most cases.

The educational level of these Thai migrant workers in Japan was on average higher than those who went to other destination countries. 35% of the workers graduated from high school; 21.6% graduated from the upper level vocational school; 7.2% had a bachelor degree. The rest graduated from secondary school (17.5%) and 10.3% graduated from primary school. The highly educated workers tended to be working legally. Their previous occupations in Thailand were mostly from the service and entertainment sectors, working in bars, nightclubs, as singers, in hotels (20.6%). Next were those from the agricultural sector (14.4%); another 14.4% worked as helpers in the house or in offices; 13.4% worked in other service jobs (salesmen, taxi drivers, jewelry sellers, and service to customers); 9.3% worked in factories; 7.2% were civil servants (teachers, those working in the government banks or state-owned companies); 6.2% worked as businessmen; and 6% as bicycle repairmen, boxing trainers, and construction workers. Overall, the occupational backgrounds of the Thai workers in Japan were different from others because they were not farmers but workers in the service sector. For the ones who used to be farmers, they hired other people to work for them rather than to work themselves.

When considering the income of these workers before they went to Japan, 24.7% had an income of more than 20,000 baht per month. 35% had an income of between 10,000-20,000 baht. Only 11% had an income lower than 5,000 baht. This showed that the majority of the workers who went to Japan had a high income and were not desperate for money but wanted to earn a higher income. Some of the workers (21.6%) had experience in working in other countries. The data concerning the reasons that they decided to go to Japan confirmed this fact. The majority of the workers who went to Japan gave the reason that they wanted to earn higher wages (some had debts to pay). Some wanted to gain experience and married in Japan or wanted to join with relatives or friends in Japan. The majority of the ones who had high wages between 10,000-20,000 baht or more than 20,000 baht still thought that their families were inferior to others or the same as others (but not better). Therefore, they decided to go to Japan.

The social networks such as relatives and friends in Japan and Thailand were important information sources which Thai people used in going to Japan (86%). Only 4% received information from brokers or the job placement agencies, and the majority of the workers knew beforehand what job they were going to do in Japan.

The procedures of traveling and job placement: The majority of Thai migrant workers (27.8%) traveled to Japan by themselves. About 20.6% used the services of job placement agencies or brokers. 29% of the workers received assistance from relatives, friends or spouses. The rest consisting of 12.7% were helped by their employers or companies in Japan. This shows that most of the Thai migrant workers went by themselves or were assisted by relatives or friends, not by the arrangements of brokers as expected. The travelers had sufficient information to travel by themselves. However, the majority (42%) of the workers needed the job placement agencies or brokers in Thailand to help get the visas to enter Japan as they were very hard to get. Next were 12% who got their visas by themselves. 11% had their visas arranged by their Japanese employers. 55.7% of the visas were tourist visas. However, there were people who traveled by student visas (10%) and temporary residence visas (16.5%). When arriving in Japan and passing through immigration, there were only 11% of the sample group of workers who had problems. This shows that the travelers knew the way to pass through immigration without problems through various means, the details of which can be seen under the heading of illegal migrant workers in Japan.

After arrival in Japan, the majority of the sample group (80%) got jobs instantly. This shows that there were prior arrangements made by friends or relatives both in Japan and Thailand. 80% of the sample group of workers had relatives or friends who had been to Japan. Even though they traveled by themselves to Japan or with the assistance of relatives or friends, it did not mean that they did not have any expenses to pay. 34% of the sample group had expenses in an amount of no more than 50,000 baht; 21.6% paid 50,000 -200,000 baht; and 16.4% had expenses reaching 200,000-400,000 baht. This shows that the expenses were much higher for Japan than in traveling to other destination countries. Workers had to pay on average, approximately 140,000 baht per person. When considering the years that most

migrant workers went, which was before 1993 (73%), the amount of money that they had to spend was very high. The ones who did not have assets would not be able to pay that much money. ¼ of the workers who traveled there had to pay more than 200,000 baht.

Work conditions in Japan: Half of the sample group of workers (56.7%) had been staying in Japan for 7 years (departed in 1992 and were interviewed in 1999), 10.3% of these workers had been living in Japan for 9-11 years. This shows the trend that the workers would stay for a long time and did not wish to come back to Thailand. The rest consisting of 16.5% had been living for 6 years, 4.12% had been living for 5 years, and 14.4% had been living for 4 years. The reasons that they did not wish to return back to Thailand was because they thought that they could not find jobs in Thailand or had problems due to being illegal migrants in Japan. Some (especially women migrants) married or had Japanese or Thai partners in Japan, so they chose to resettle in Japan. As for occupations, 36% of the sample group had jobs in the service sector as cooks, language and Thai boxing teachers, Thai food sellers, workers in hotels and restaurants, and so on. 22.6% worked in the entertainment sector (singers, dancers). 28.9% worked in factories such as food products, plastic, fish, and bakery factories, etc. 8.2% worked as construction workers. From the information acquired from further intensive interviews, it was found that some of the people who came to work in the sex service sector tried to change their jobs to work in factories due to lack of sufficient labor force in medium and small factories. However, these workers were illegal migrant workers because 74% of them did not have employment contracts with their employers. Therefore, their work status did not meet standard working conditions. Most of them worked more than 8 hours a day. Nevertheless, their working days in a month were not definite. Only 26.8 received a bonus from their employer. Most of them did not get any welfare. About 33% of them received wages in the range of 50,000-75,000 baht, which was the medium wage rate. 28.7% received wages lower than 50,000 baht, and 28.9% received wages higher than 75,000 baht but no more than 100,000 baht. A minority of them (4%) received wages of more than 100,000 baht per month. This income was definitely higher than what they could get in Thailand. Sometimes, it was higher than what the Japanese received when they did the same jobs because the Thais did a lot of overtime work in order to receive more income. Due to a high income, the majority of the workers (79%) were satisfied with their income.

Half of the sample group complained that they were homesick (53.6%). Other problems included fear of being arrested by the police as they were illegal migrants; feeling insecure as they were foreigners; low wages, bad housing, problems with their work foreman or other workers; no friends at their workplace. 35% thought that they were not treated the same as Japanese workers and did not get promoted (79%). However, the majority (87.6%) thought that they did learn new work skills.

The Thai migrant workers who were in the sample groups always spent their money economically and intended to save their money. It was found that their expenses per month were no more than 40,000 baht (73%). The rest of them used more than 40,000 baht but no more than 60,000 baht. When looking at the income of the majority of the workers who received income of no less than 50,000 baht and even reached 75,000 baht per month, they could certainly save some money even though the cost of living in Japan was very high.

The impact of labor migration on Thailand and Japan

The sample group of Thai migrant workers had a different way of life from the Japanese society because they were illegal migrant workers. Also, the Japanese society is not an open society for foreigners. Some of Thai migrant workers (24%) wanted to do more in their free time (but they could not do it) and, thus, only went shopping or sightseeing. Even though 91% of the interviewees understood the Japanese language well or very well because they had been living in Japan for a long time, they could not integrate themselves into Japanese society. Compared with other foreign migrant workers, Thai migrant workers understood the Japanese language less. 86% of the Thai workers answered that they were lonely, 78% phoned back home to Thailand 1-4 times a month. 39% of the sample group had new partners in Japan and 68% lived with their spouse, family, relatives or their co-workers. Therefore, loneliness occurred even though they were not living alone, perhaps because they felt that they were not part of Japanese society. (When asked whether they would like to go to foreign countries again or not, only 35% answered that they would go again, and only 4% in that group thought that they would back go to Japan. About 66% did not think that they would like to naturalized and take up Japanese nationality.)

As for the relationship with families in Thailand, the majority of the interviewees (65%) thought that relationships with their families were still the same. About 27.8% answered that it was better than before, but some (6%) said that their relationship with their families had worsened. Even though you could see the negative side of going to work in Japan, 67% of the interviewees thought they would support their friends and relatives to go to Japan. 26% would not give such support, 2% of the group who would not support their friends to go to Japan would warn their friends not to go.

About 90% of the interviewees sent money back home; 43% every month; 29% every 2-3 months; 2% every 6 months, 15.4% sent money back home irregularly. Only 10.3% did not send any money or their families were already in Japan. The largest amount of money that was sent in one time was 120,000 baht; 24% of the interviewees sent money no more than 30,000 baht a time; 31% sent 30,000-60,000 baht; 16.5% sent 60,000-90,000 baht; 4.1% sent 90,000-120,000 baht; and 7.2% sent more than 120,000 baht. In an average year, workers would send money back home as follows:

Less than 100,000 baht	8.25%
100,000-500,000 baht	17.53%
500,000-1,000,000 baht	27.84%
1,000,000-2,000,000 baht	15.46%
Over 2,000,000 baht	10.31%

This shows that large sums of money were sent back home; 27 senders alone sent 500,000-1,000,000 baht back home, an average of 750,000 baht per person. This would reach 20 million baht. If we average all the money ranges and the number of senders in each range, only 97 workers of the sample group would send at least 97.35 million baht back home, at an average of 700,000 baht per person. As there were 50,000 Thai in Japan, the amount of money that was sent back home would be about 35,000 million baht per year at the very least. This data has an important impact on Thailand which perhaps not many people were sufficiently interested in, especially during the time of the economic downturn.

Most of the money was sent back to fathers, mothers, and children; only 14% sent money to their spouses. Money was sent back both in and out of the banking system. 16% of the Thai migrant workers sent money outside the banking system. Most of the money that was sent back was used to buy land and houses (34%); savings (27%), paying off debts (14%). Only 4% used money to invest in business, and 1% used money to support younger siblings or children in their education. It was of interest that only 14% used their money to pay their debts even though there were high expenses incurred in going to Japan. This shows that the interviewees had already paid their debts (especially during the earlier years after they arrived in Japan), or workers did not have to borrow money from other people as they had enough assets to pay for their traveling expenses. Whatever the means, Thais in Japan had more of a chance to save large sums of money or to use their money for other useful purposes compared to other workers who went to other countries. Besides that, it was found that 23% of the families of Thai workers in Japan also received money from other members of their family who went to work in other countries. This shows that almost ¼ of the sample group's families were 'migration families' as they sent more than one of their family members to work abroad and money that was sent home was from more than one country. Unfortunately, such money was not used productively enough to increase worth or assets. 13% of the people used their money to buy houses worth more than 1 million baht, one person out of this 13% bought a house for 7 million baht, and 2 persons bought houses for 12 million baht.

Conflicts and Problems of Thai Migrant Workers

About 56% of Thai migrant workers had problems at their work place even though they had a good relationship with their Thai friends and Japanese co-workers. Data from interviews with experts indicated that some of the Thai migrant workers were deceived by their Japanese employers. The kinds of problems that were found were that the workers had a high levy deducted from their wages; they did not get paid on time; were laid off without reason and not informed ahead of time. This was because some of the employers thought that the migrant workers could not defend themselves. Besides that, Thai workers did not have sufficient correct data to know whether they were deceived or not. Some workers did not even know the names and addresses of their employers or the company that they worked for. When they

had problems, they could not give full information when they complained to the authorities. Also, the handbooks that the private development agencies made to provide the fundamental data concerning the rights of the workers still were unable to assist workers to help themselves sufficiently.

Some 55% of the interviewees specified that they did not receive any medical and health insurance benefits; 22% specified that they had welfare benefits but these were difficult to access because they were illegal migrant workers. The women migrants from Thailand had even more problems than the male migrants especially relating to the relationship between men and women; marital problems; divorce; violence in the family; having children, and requesting to legally reside in the country. Private development agencies and the Japanese authorities specified that problems of Thai female migrant workers were not known to the Japanese as Thais tried to hide themselves to avoid being arrested by the Japanese police. Some of the workers who had been rescued fled and hid away.

Sickness condition: Some Thai women in Japan had AIDS and were HIV- positive; some had psychological problems or psychological sickness. Besides that, the death rate of infants whose mothers were Thai was as high as 10%.

Even though Thai migrant workers in Japan had problems in many aspects, there were few people who went to ask for help at the Thai embassy. Some 67% of the interviewees said that they had never contacted the embassy and 23% specified that they went to the embassy to request important documents but never asked for assistance. Thai migrant workers wanted the embassy to assist them by notifying them of their rights; to solve problems that they had in Japan; to assist them to challenge Japanese authorities who harassed them; to help Thai workers to get a better legal status; and to arrange meetings among Thai migrant workers. The Office of Labor Affairs in Japan did not consider Thai illegal migrant workers to be under their care. Therefore, they did not provide any protection or service to these illegal workers.

Thai trainees in Japan

Regarding the trainees in Japan, the system of accepting trainees was through JITCO (Japan International Training Co-operation Organization), and the Japanese government through various organizations such as JITCA (Japan International Co-operation Agency), AOTS (Association of Overseas Training Scholarship), JAVADA (Japan Vocational Ability Development Association), and the ILO (International Labor Organization) along with the trainees who were directly passed through the Japanese Immigration Department. All of the Thais who went to be trainees in Japan only went through the following organizations: JITCO, AITS SICA, and JAVADA.

JITCO: JITCO accepted Thai workers to be trainees from 1990 until the present, approximately 3,000-5,000 persons a year. The training session had both general training and technical training (TITP or Technical intern Training Program). Persons who attended the training session had to pass a skills test. There were 49 types of tests such as skill in machine work, mechanics, electrical lighting, knitting, sewing, woodcraft, printing etc. Data from the study of one of companies that arranged for people from Thailand to be trainees in Japan found that the trainees from Thailand applied for training through the Job Placement Department and the company in question. It was found that the factories in Japan that accepted the trainees had to pay 10,000-15,000 baht (1999) to this company and the company would pay for the trainees' travel costs. However, some of the trainees specified that they had to pay 160,000 baht per head (1996) without knowing to whom. The trainees would receive allowances in the amount of 30,000 baht (including food allowance) or 33,000 baht (without food allowance) per month. The factories would pay for their housing, and the trainees who were trained in the technical program would receive allowances of more than 40,000 baht per month. The company that procured the trainees would arrange for Japanese officials to take care of them, co-ordinate and also teach Japanese language to the Thai trainees. The trainees who were in this study were able to send 27,000 baht back to Thailand a month. The main problems that the company found were that the trainees left their jobs to work in other jobs illegally because they earned more income. There were problems with the broker fees in Thailand as broker companies would charge higher and higher broker fees and also problems between co- trainees. However, this training program of JITCO helped the small Japanese entrepreneurs to produce many products, as Japanese people did not want to do these kinds of jobs.

For Thai trainees who were trained in technical programs, they were trained at painting companies, sea products factories, leisure boat factories. Most of them had higher income than the trainees who were trained in general programs, and they received increased allowances each year.

AOTS: Thai workers who were trained by AOTS had a shorter program of training than JITCO, about a 6 months program. The trainees were sent to be trained at the factories or companies, 1-2 months a place. The trainees had an income that reached 50,000 baht per month. Most of the Thai trainees had a bachelor degree, and could speak English. However, there were only 600-700 Thais who came to train in Japan through AOTS

JAVADA: Training with JAVADA concentrated on vocational and industrial factories training. 11 Thai workers from the MITSUBISHI branch company in Thailand were trained in the MITSUBISHI air conditioner factory. Usually, since 1991, there were about 15 workers who came to be trained a year. The main obstacle was knowledge of the Japanese language. Besides that, there were small problems such as adjustment, food, and housing problems.

JICA gave training grants to 137 countries and to 3,958 persons. For Thailand, only 15-20 persons received funds. The persons who wished to go to train had to be civil servants with at least bachelor degrees. In 1999, there were only three Thai trainees from the Ministry of Industry, Office of Prime Minister, and Ministry of University Affairs.

In the future, the Japanese government will tend to accept people to be trained in newer jobs especially in caring for the elderly, agricultural work, sea products work, hotel work, and others jobs that need cheap labor.

Illegal Thai Migrant Workers

The Japanese government had a policy of limiting migrant workers to come to work in Japan and switched to a policy of accepting unskilled laborers as trainees. This made most of Thai migrant workers illegal. To go to work in Japan as an illegal migrant worker had been a phenomenon for years and did not just happen. It was pointed out in Table 2.1 that in 1994, there were 2,865 Thais who were arrested for entering Japan illegally. Besides that, it was found in the same year that there were 46,973 Thais who entered Japan earlier and had overstayed their visas.

Broker system and transnational human smuggling network: Going to Japan at first depended heavily on the broker system. After 1995, workers started going by themselves. However, they still needed brokers to help them acquire visas. The group of brokers that assisted Thais to go to Japan operated illegally. The Japanese government did not allow any unskilled migrant laborers to come to work in Japan and had strict immigration regulations. These brokers therefore had to use special methods to bring people into Japan. There were only 7 brokers who were arrested on the charge of assisting people to enter Japan illegally, in 1994 and 1995. Most of the brokers continued operating illegally and charged 4 million yen per person (40,000 US\$). One of the ways of entering Japan illegally might be by pretending to be a married couple who was going on a honeymoon in Japan. However, lately, the role of the broker system had been reduced because the workers now go by themselves as they had been to Japan before. They knew the way to go by themselves, and the ones who decided to go now were not lured to go as in the 1990's.

Means of entering Japan illegally might involve using new routes such as traveling through Malaysia, Shanghai, or Latin American countries in order not to be checked strictly as would be the case if they came directly from Thailand.

Table 2.1 Compiled data reflecting problems resulting from Thai illegal migrants in Japan.

Year	Persons who overstayed their visas.	Persons who were not permitted to enter the country.	Persons who entered the country illegally.(by plane)	Persons who had problems and came to ask for assistance at the embassy.
1993	53,845	2,735	NA	4,089
1994	46,973	747	2,865	3,763
1995	43,014	1,388	1,811	NA
1996	41,280	1,061	1,465	NA
1997	39,513	564	1,457	NA
1998	37,046	358	1,181	NA

Year	Japanese employers who hired illegal Thai migrant workers and were arrested.	Persons who violated the law and were arrested.	Thai women who were prostitutes and were arrested.	Number of Thai women who were HIV-positive. *	Number of children who had Thai mothers in Japan. **
1993	1,235	387	1,849	12	220
1994	700	328	1,407	NA	383
1995	320	697	571	NA	NA
1996	282	276	316	NA	NA
1997	375	186	425	NA	NA
1998	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Resource: Ito, 1999, Research Paper: Interviews with key informants on Thai Migrant workers in Japan, ARCM, Chulalongkorn University.

* There were 46 Thai women who were HIV-positive from 1989 to 1992. This data was from only a group of women who came to take blood tests at Ibaraki area.

** There were 264 children who were born with Thai mothers from 1987 to 1992

The transnational human smuggling network that arranged for Thais to go to Japan involved co-operation between brokers in Thailand and Japan. They operated with the Yakuza gang behind the scene. Most of the ones who went to Japan by depending on this network were women who went to work in the entertainment business and sex service jobs. They had expenses in the amount of 100,000 baht according to the data from the sample group. Some were lured to go, some went voluntarily. Lately, there were not as many who were lured to go as mentioned above. However, one could not say that they really volunteered to go as some of the ones who volunteered to go did not know that they would be forced to be in the sex trade without any remuneration for a long time. They also were locked away and controlled by an influential group. Due to entering and working illegally in Japan, Thai migrant workers in Japan were in a less favorable condition when compared to Thai migrant workers in other countries. This problem has to be solved quickly.

According to data compiled in Table 2.1 reflecting problems caused by Thai illegal migrants in Japan, serious problems consisted of the following;

1) There were 30,000-40,000 Thais who entered Japan and overstayed their visas each year. Even though the Japanese Immigration Department and the Japanese embassy in Thailand were very strict on immigration procedure, there continued to be a high number of people who intended to enter Japan and overstay their visas.

2) There were some Thais who tried to enter Japan but were refused entry (refused landing) at the airport due to incorrect or insufficient documents. These people were the ones who tried to go to work illegally in Japan but got caught.

3) There were over 1,000 Thais who tried to enter Japan illegally by plane each year and were detained by the Japanese Immigration officials.

4) Some 3,000-4,000 Thais who stayed in Japan illegally came to request assistance from the Thai embassy during 1993-1994 when Thai officials at the embassy collected data and provided assistance to them. Nevertheless, it was impossible to know how many people came to ask for assistance as the embassy did not continually collect data and provide assistance to those people. Information from the field shows that most of Thais did not wish to come to ask for assistance but only to contact the embassy for documentation purposes.

5) As for the employers who illegally hired Thai workers, they were arrested and charged continually during the period 1993-1997. In 1993, there were 1,235 employers who were arrested. Afterwards, the number of employers who were arrested decreased to only 200-300 a year. This might be either because there were fewer employees being hired, or the employers had more devious ways to hire them which made it difficult to be legally charged. In construction work jobs, the construction companies would hire small companies to work for them. Then, these small construction companies would bring the migrant workers to work and finish the job for the big company.

6) Problems of illegal acts and being arrested in criminal cases occurred among Thais who stayed illegally in Japan. Thais were arrested on criminal charges continually every year even though the number did not reach 1,000. In 1997, 186 Thais were arrested; in 1995, as many as 697 Thais were arrested. These people were sentenced by the court to be imprisoned in Japan.

7) It was known that many Thai women entered Japan to work as prostitutes. Thais also were continually arrested on charges of working as prostitutes every year. During 1993-1994, 1,400-1,800 persons were arrested. From 1995 to 1997, the number was reduced to 300-500 persons. There were still many Thais who worked as prostitutes but had not yet been arrested.

8) Being in the sex service business was another reason for contracting HIV and AIDS among Thai women. Only in Ibaraki, 58 of Thai women who came for blood tests during 1990-1993 were found to be HIV-positive. Some died in Japan and some came back to die in their hometowns.

9) The number of Thai women who had children with Japanese men increased rapidly. Some children were accepted by their Japanese fathers, some were not accepted. The Japanese government had a policy to encourage Thais to come to apply for Thai citizenship for their children. In 1993, there were 220 children whose mothers were Thais, and in 1994, this number increased to 383 children. Some of the children were old enough to attend school and had attended school in Japan. They tended to have psychological conflicts both with their Thai mothers and their Japanese friends at school.

Impact From Economic Downturn

As for the opportunity to work during the time of economic downturn, data from Japan could not clearly answer this question as Thai workers went to work there before the economic crisis and did not decide to go due to the economic crisis at home. Aside from that, the work in Japan was illegal and some of the Thai women were in the sex service business which was not relevant to the general labor market. Another thing was that Japan did not have an economic crisis in 1997. The economic downturn happened in Japan in the early 1990's. Therefore, it could not be concluded that the labor market in Japan was still open for Thais to go to work as before, more than before, or less than before after there was an economic crisis in Thailand. However, because of the economic downturn in Thailand, Thai workers did not want to return to home and decided to continue working in Japan as there were jobs to do and at a higher income. As to the negative impact, the economic downturn in Japan that occurred since 1992 had a greater impact on Thai workers according to Japanese informants. Besides that there was a tendency that the labor market in Japan needed people who wanted to work in service jobs as trainees with legal status especially in jobs such as caring for the elderly, hotel jobs, agricultural work, and as sea products workers.

For Thais who were illegal workers in Japan, the majority of them did not want to return back to Thailand due to the economic downturn which made it difficult to find jobs, and also it was very hard to go back to Japan again. Therefore, workers who already were in Japan had to struggle to continue staying there without being arrested and deported back to Thailand. The ones who were already in Japan tried to get some status by going to apply for migrant resident permits with the local authorities such as at Chiba where there were 3,330 Thais who went to register to be migrant residents. For the ones who wanted to go now, the strict immigration regulations of Japan were not an obstacle. They just had to pay large sums of money to enter Japan.

2.2 Thai migrant workers in Malaysia

Data from the field study in four areas in Malaysia consists of the sample group from Kuala Lumpur (13.6%), Kedah (36.4%), and Kelantan (36.4%). Most of them were from the northern states of Malaysia that bordered on Thailand. After interviews with 110 Thai migrant workers, it could be concluded as follows;

Background in Thailand. Most of Thai migrant workers came from the Southern region of Thailand, 42.7% came from Pattani, 17.3% came from Songkhla, 16.4% came from Yala, and 10% from Narathiwat. There were migrant workers from other regions such as from Sakonnakon and Chiang Rai but only in small numbers (2%). The sample group was composed of 62% male laborers and 38% female laborers and the majority was 21-30 years old (52.7%). 37% were under 20 years old and some were older than 30 years old. The number of Thai workers who had children and no children was almost even; the same applied to the marital status. 56.4% graduated from primary school, 26.4% graduated from secondary school. Most of workers were young, so they were not the heads of families in Thailand. 50% of the workers who came to work thought that their families were in the middle class when compared to others, 23.6% thought that they were little lower in status than others. Families had an average income of less than 5,000 baht (48%); the rest had an income of around 5,000-20,000 baht (44%). 22.7% of the migrant workers were previously farmers, 15% were unemployed, 9% were businessmen, 11% were fishermen. Even though most of them were not farmers, they had 1-20 *rai* of family land to work on.

Travel procedures and work in Malaysia: 40% of Thai migrant workers said that the reason that they came to work in Malaysia was because they could not find jobs in Thailand; 47% were not satisfied with their low income in Thailand. Most of them had information about Malaysia from their relatives or friends in Thailand. 65% already had relatives working in Malaysia. These relatives had an important role in assisting workers to go to Malaysia (35%); the rest had their travel arranged by their employers (32%), and 20% went by themselves. Only 10% of the migrant workers in Malaysia used the service of job placement agencies or brokers in Thailand to arrange their travel. Therefore, job placement agencies or brokers played a small role in arranging for workers to go to Malaysia. Most of the workers spent only 100-200 ringgit for traveling costs (57%); the rest of the workers (18%) did not have any traveling costs because their employers paid for them, and only 15% paid 200-300 ringgit. Most of the expenses were for traveling costs, for these workers did not have any debts concerning preparation to go to Malaysia.

Most of the migrant workers entered Malaysia by using border passes and temporary working passes or were without any documents, for it was usual for Thai Muslims to pass through the Thai – Malaysian border. Malaysians and Thais who lived near the border shared similar language and culture and had kinship ties for a long time. Therefore, 94% of Thai migrant workers could pass through the border with or without travel documents; only 6% had problems. The main reason that Thais went to work in Malaysia was economic: 30% wanted to have working experience; 16.4% wanted to find better working opportunities, some followed their relatives or spouses, some went because it was nearby, some went because they used the same language, and some went because employers persuaded them to go. Thai workers went there to work informally; 93% of them did not have an employment contract; only 6.4% had employment contracts. Most of them got the jobs that they expected (94.5%). 38% of the workers had been working less than a year, 25.5% had worked 1-3 years, and 17.3% had worked there 4-6 years. There were a large number of workers who had worked more than 1 year.

Work conditions: 42% of Thai migrant workers worked in restaurants, 16.4% worked in the agricultural sector, 10% worked as factory workers, 7.3% did fishery jobs. The rest were scattered working in different jobs such as rubber tree-tappers, construction workers, food vendors, housework, barbers, and massagers. It was found that there were Thai migrant workers working scattered in restaurants in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Kedah, and Kelantan. Workers in agricultural jobs only worked in Kedah state, and there were Thai workers who worked in other jobs both in Kedah and Kelantan. In terms of gender, women did not do jobs such as fishing, barbering, as coolies, as vendors and as masseuses.

When comparing their original jobs in Thailand and jobs in Malaysia, it was found that the workers who used to be farmers could go to work in almost any kind of job excluding jobs that needed skills to work in such as barbers, as masseurs, as bricklayers. Most of the workers who used to do fishing jobs would go to work in the same jobs as before. The persons who used to be rubber tappers and seamstresses would go to work in other jobs such as restaurant workers. Those who used to work as barbers or masseurs would go to work in the same jobs as before. Most of workers who used to be businessmen or hired drivers would work in restaurants. It was of interest that the majority of persons who did not have any jobs before would go to work in restaurants and in the agricultural sector. Most of them went to work in restaurants.

Most of Thai workers worked without holidays as they did not sign any employment contracts (53%). As for the income aspect, workers received income per day (12%), per week (15.5%), per month (58%). 70% of Thai migrant workers, which was the majority, had an average income of 400-800 ringgit per month. Also, 70% had a higher income when they worked in Malaysia. Besides their income, there were no other welfare benefits as they worked without any employment contract. Only workers who were brought in by their employers received welfare benefits. It was this group (23%) that would receive welfare benefits according to Malaysian labor law. 90% of workers did not have problems due to cultural differences or at their workplace as they were Thai Muslims.

Living Conditions: 44% of Thai migrant workers lived in a compound with other co-workers, 16% lived together in rented houses, 23.6% lived alone. It was of interest that 23.6% stayed with their spouses, 12.7% lived with their families in Malaysia. When combining these two groups, there were 36.4% who stayed with their families which was a considerable number. This was different from the case of Thai migrant workers in other destination countries as Thai workers elsewhere had no right to bring their spouses or families to live with them.

Cultural Similarity: 75.5% of Thai workers were able to understand the Malaysian language. 56% had new spouses in Malaysia. This is important data because this marital status had an influence on their staying in Malaysia. It was found that 73% of Thai migrant workers were not sure whether they would return back to Thailand or not. Only 21% answered that they would return to Thailand when their contracts ended, and only 3.6% would return in 1-2 years. This shows the trend of Thai workers towards remaining in Malaysia for a long time or maybe permanently. When asked whether they intended to apply for Malaysian nationality, 38% replied that they so intended.

Impact of the migration on Thailand and Malaysia: 74.5% of Thai migrant workers in Malaysia sent money home, 25.5% did not send any. The reason that there were less workers who sent money back home than workers who went to work elsewhere was because workers could go back and forth between Malaysia and Thailand as Malaysia bordered on Thailand. Workers who used a border pass that was valid for 14 days had to return back to Thailand and then went to Malaysia again; these workers could bring money back by themselves without sending back money through any system. The frequency of sending money back home was not the issue. Some sent money back home every month, some two times a year. In the group which sent money back home, it was found that on an average 100-300 ringgit a month was sent (35%), the rest sent no more than 500 ringgit back (15%), and 15% sent money back reaching 600-2000 ringgit. 16.4% sent money to their parents, 47.3% sent money to their children. Only 9% sent money to their spouses as some of workers' spouses stayed with them in Malaysia and some workers were single. It was found that workers who sent the largest amount of money back home had an income of 400-600 ringgit per month and the majority of them worked in restaurants.

Thai migrant workers in Malaysia mostly worked in Kelantan and Kedah states (36.4%) which was more than 2/3 of the sample group. These workers did not have problems adjusting themselves in cultural or language aspects. When asked whether they would support other people to come to work in Malaysia, 63% replied that they would, 17% would strongly support, 16% were indifferent, and 4% would not support other people to come. This data showed the positive attitude of Thai migrant workers to work in Malaysia. For the Muslim community, the role of women who went to work in Malaysia was of interest. 64% of interviewees answered that they supported women to migrate to work to earn income for their families, only 7.3% specified that they could only go if they were permitted to do so by their husbands. The next important reasons were that they would support women to go to Malaysia if their husbands were sick, deceased, or they did not live with husbands. 85% of Thai migrant workers felt that Malaysians were friendly to them, 15% felt indifferent, and only one person felt that Malaysians were not friendly. To the contrary, only 13.6% thought that Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare officials were friendly to them, 63.6% had no opinion or felt indifferent, 8.2% felt that they were not friendly and did not assist them at all. When asked about their wages, everyone replied that they were very high (88%), and their families were in better condition after they decided to come to work in Malaysia (81%). No one thought that their families' condition had gotten worse.

2.3 Thai migrant workers in Singapore

Thai migrant workers started going to work in Singapore in 1978 when 500 workers were sent to work in the electrical and textile factories. Later on in the 1980's, when construction industries in Singapore expanded rapidly, many of the Thai migrant workers went to do construction work there. In 1999, it was estimated that there were 65,000 Thai migrant workers in Singapore; half of these workers probably worked illegally there.

Thai migrant workers both used the services of job placement agencies and went by themselves to work in Singapore in about even numbers. To use the services of job placement agencies, workers had to spend much more money than going by themselves as job placement agencies had to pay commission to Singapore employers to acquire a quota of work positions that Singapore government gave to companies. Workers had to pay approximately 50,000 baht to job placement agencies instead of paying 22,500 baht according to the rate set by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Background in Thailand: According to survey data from 148 Thai migrant workers where the majority were men from June to July 1999, 89% were farmers from the Northeast and Northern regions and had graduated from primary schools. The trend was for new workers to come more from the Northern region. Their average age was higher than before (from 27 years to 34 years). Most of these workers who were older had families and an average of 1-2 children. Even though most of these workers had their own farmland, income from being farmers was not sufficient to support their families so they had to find other jobs to do. However, it was difficult to find jobs in Thailand during the economic downturn, so these workers had to go to work abroad even though they did not wish to go. The state of the economy was the main factor that pushed people to go to work abroad. 18% of the interviewees replied that there were no jobs in Thailand, 50% had insufficient income. 25% of sample group answered that the state of the economy influenced them to decide to go to work abroad. 72% decided by themselves to go. Spouses or parents helped a few workers to make the decision to go. 40% of the workers had worked abroad before and as many as 58% had relatives and friends working in Singapore before they went. These relatives and friends assisted newly arrived workers to find jobs, housing, etc. The ones who entered Singapore illegally relied on the assistance of this social network to help them to be able to come to work in Singapore.

Procedures of travel and employment recruitment: These involved services by employment recruitment agencies, traveling by themselves, and arrangements of employers in Singapore. Workers who came to work illegally entered Singapore posing as tourists from Hat Yai and were assisted by brokers from Yaho. A majority of Thai workers had never been trained in working skills. Only 39% passed the skills test. However, workers who passed the tests did not work in the same type of jobs using the skills they knew.

A majority of Thai migrant workers (75%) were construction workers; the group of Thai migrant construction workers represented the largest number of migrant workers in Singapore. Usually, workers received wages in the amount of 800-1,200 Singapore dollars (approximately 19,000-28,600 baht). Data from the sample group indicated that the majority of Thai migrant workers were construction workers (68%), next were workers at shipyards (23%), service jobs (7%), and others (2%). 53% were workers who just came to work after the economic crisis (July 1997). This showed that the economic crisis influenced more Thai workers to seek jobs in Singapore. The number of workers who came after the economic crisis increased 100% from the previous number of Thai migrant workers who had been in Singapore. This included the ones who illegally entered Singapore.

Thai migrant workers had to pay an average of 47,000 baht per person to come to work in Singapore. The reason that expenses were high was because they had to pay to get job positions as mentioned before. Workers who came by themselves would pay less money. Ten years ago (1989), Thai workers who entered Singapore illegally had to pay only 12,260 baht. The majority of workers (60%) borrowed money to pay for these expenses; 33.8% borrowed from private moneylenders and 26.8% borrowed from job placement brokers.

Employment contracts and work permits: 84% of the sample group had employment contracts which most of them signed before they left Thailand. Some employment contracts were in English, some were in Thai. Most of contracts were in Thai. Workers only knew the important issues in the contracts. 32% of Thai migrant workers understood all details in their contracts, 13.8% did not understand anything in the contracts. Some workers were not sure whether they had signed employment contracts or not as they signed so many documents. However, they did not know any details in those documents. In Singapore, 84% of sample group who had employment contracts were the ones who had work permits. Female workers who came to work as maids in houses did not sign any employment contracts or have work permits.

Work conditions: The majority of Thai migrant workers (54.7%) worked in companies or medium size factories (51-100 workers) and big factories (over 100 workers). The rest worked in the service sector and housework jobs. 71% of the sample group were satisfied with their jobs, 42.9% thought that their wages were too low. Thai workers were able to use the Thai language when they worked as their supervisors most likely could speak Thai. 61% of workers intended to return to Thailand when their work contracts ended or in 1-2 years. The majority of workers (84%) had no intention to naturalize and take Singaporean citizenship. Thai migrant workers usually worked overtime to increase their income, and they were satisfied with the wages they received per month, an average of 738 Singaporean dollars.

While they were in Singapore, workers had expenses (for food, traveling costs, recreation costs) of approximately 300 Singapore dollars a month. Many Thai male workers used money to buy liquor, cigarettes, and for sex services. Other benefits besides wages that the workers received were health insurance and medical care (for cases of sickness during work).

Impact of migration on Thailand and Singapore: Thai workers were able to send money back home on an average of 538.5 Singaporean dollars (12,800 baht) per month or 6,462 Singaporean dollars per year. If we calculate the number of Thai migrant workers at 65,000 persons, we can roughly determine that there were as much as 430 million Singapore dollars (10,255 million baht) being sent back to Thailand each year. Most of money was used to pay debts, for family expenses, and savings. The majority of Thai workers thought that there was no impact on their marriage relationship when they came to work in Singapore. Only 4.6% thought that their relationship got worse as their spouses had new partners. However, some of Thai male workers had new Filipino girlfriends too.

Thai workers had mixed feelings as to whether to go to work in Singapore or not. About 1/3 of them did not support others to go, 1/3 wanted to support others to go, 1/3 of them felt indifferent. The ones who supported others to go thought that if someone went to work in Singapore, they could save some money, improve their family's status, could own their own homes, be able to purchase household goods, and be able to support their children to have higher education. As for the ones who did not support others to go, they specified that they had emotional problems such as homesickness, not getting jobs as

expected, low income even though doing hard and difficult work, and being dissatisfied with their work foreman and the characteristics of their employment.

As for labor relations, Thai workers were not likely to have problems with co-workers or employers. There was no getting organized together to protect their rights. Workers were not likely to be involved with the Thai embassy and Office of Labor Affairs in Singapore. The ones who did contact with the embassy were the ones who had problems with their employment. It was of interest that workers did not expect to receive assistance from the embassy or the Labor Administration Office for their employment problems. They went for other reasons, such as they wanted the embassy to arrange recreation activities among Thais in Singapore, for example, social meetings (21%); they wanted help in legalizing their status and protecting their rights in Singapore (18%); and they wanted to be provided with information related to Thailand (6.5%). Some wanted help in solving problems relating to amphetamines and prostitution among Thai construction workers; some wanted the Thai government to find jobs for them instead of the job placement agencies, as some of the job placement agencies cheated workers and then changed their companies' names and continued their business.

Thai illegal migrant workers

It was estimated that there were approximately 10,000 illegal workers in Singapore. Some of them had illegal status as they intended to enter Singapore illegally to work; some entered Singapore as tourists and then went to work illegally. Some were lured and deceived by Thai and Singaporean brokers.

The ones who were deceived were told by brokers to notify Singaporean immigration officials that they were tourists. After they had entered, brokers would find jobs in small construction companies that hired workers only for a short period without any welfare benefits. Some companies gave workers false work permits. Thereafter, brokers fled with the workers' passports leaving them at a loss as what to do. Workers, therefore, went to ask for assistance from the Thai embassy to issue them a CI paper and send them back home.

For the ones who intended to come to work illegally in Singapore, they would work for almost 3 months. Then they went to the Office of Labor Affairs (OLA) to seek assistance by claiming that they were lured to come to Singapore illegally. They did this as the penalty for staying illegally in Singapore less than 3 months was only to be fined and not caned. Some people even sold their passports for 500 Singapore dollars and notified the embassy that their passports were lost.

Problems of crime in construction work sites consisted of stealing, personal assault, and homicide.

Employer companies who hired Thai illegal migrant workers usually were construction companies that had been sub-contracted to work for big companies. Some companies had at the end of their names, words such as Builders, Building, General Contractor or Civil Engineering, which made them look like construction companies. The truth was that these companies were employment recruitment companies or construction companies that had sub-contracted with big construction companies and brought quotas of jobs positions which they acquired to sell to Thai brokers.

Singapore Policy on Labor and Impact on Thai migrant workers

The overall labor policy

1. Wanted to develop the country based on investment and business. Therefore, there had to be manpower which could compete and has high capability.
2. Competition at present stressed a knowledge-based skilled work force. The manpower development plan must lead to an ability to compete. Therefore, the demand for a work force of both sufficient quantity and quality required planning, development, and co-ordination and must be responsive to economic needs which are constantly changing. Therefore, Singapore set a policy to have a globally competitive workforce.

Policy on migrant workers

1. Singapore stressed higher value added occupations, not labor intensive but capital driven manufacturing and knowledge-based industries. Therefore, they allowed labor intensive migrant workers to come to work in only a 1:5 ratio to the Singaporean work force.
2. All migrant workers, no matter what their nationality, had to follow the law, especially Immigration Law and regulations as to duration of stay.
3. The Singapore government favored the hiring of skilled rather than unskilled laborers. All of migrant workers had to pass a Skill Evaluation Test (SET). The test would be conducted both in the countries of origin and in Singapore by Singaporean officials.
4. During the time of economic downturn, Singapore had a policy to reduce the impact of the economic recession by supporting big construction projects such as housing projects, schools and subways. This would enable migrant workers to continue working and the government would benefit from cheaper than usual construction costs.
5. Even though the Singapore government accepted the need to use migrant workers, they tried to reduce this dependency by improving their domestic industries to be more technologically oriented with improved standard of work. This improvement would encourage Singaporeans to work in such jobs and reduce the number of migrant workers.

The Trend of Foreign Workers Employment Policy

1. Upgrade the skill level

The construction industry in Singapore was considered to be low in efficiency and production in comparison to Japan and Korea. Production of Singaporean workers was 2-3 times lower. Therefore, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) started to supervise and test the skills of construction workers. Besides that, there were evaluations of the technological improvement in the construction industry by also examining the number of workers. This evaluation would result in hiring fewer unskilled laborers.

After conducting skills tests of 27,766 Japanese and other foreign workers in 1998, there were 16,835 workers who passed the test. More foreign workers passed the test than Singaporean workers. The proportion of foreign workers who passed the test was higher than in the previous year (59%). This showed a trend of more skilled than unskilled foreign workers coming to work. For Thai workers, the previous proportion of skilled to unskilled workers was 1: 9. At present, the proportion has been reversed to 9: 1. The levy cost was very high for unskilled workers. This made the employers turn to encouraging or ordering their workers to go and take the skills test. This was done in order to upgrade their level to be skilled workers which resulted in employers paying less levy. Nevertheless, production in construction industries in Singapore still was lower than other developing countries which pressured the Singapore government to hire more skilled workers. In the future, foreign workers who will come to work in Singapore will have to be mostly skilled workers.

2. Trend towards Integrated Manpower Planning

In the past, employing foreign workers involved many organizations such as the Immigration Office, Organization of Construction and Building, the Economic Development Board (EDB) and the Ministry of Manpower. This made it difficult to achieve co-ordination. Therefore, the government gave all the responsibility to the Ministry of Manpower. From September 1998, the Ministry of Manpower stipulated three kinds of passes such as P, Q, and R. The P pass and the Q pass were passes for professionals who had income of more than 2,000 Singapore dollars. The R pass was for workers who had income of less than 200 Singapore dollars, most of them being semi-skilled and unskilled workers. This new processing made it possible for the Ministry of Manpower to co-ordinate the foreign workers

employment plan with the manpower development plan. The Ministry was able to respond to the demand and supply of the labor force in the industrial sector and was able to control the number of alien workers both entering and leaving Singapore.

The Ministry of Manpower also divided alien workers into three categories according to countries of origin, such as former sources of labor (Malaysia), new sources (India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and others.), and North Asia. This categorization was for the purpose of sending back workers after their work permit ended or was cancelled and employers had to send workers back home immediately. In the cases where the employers could not send workers back, the government would do it. As for workers from Malaysia, the process of sending them back home was not complicated or expensive as Malaysia was near by. Besides that, the Malaysian immigration authorities understood the problem very well. The process of sending workers from other countries back home was more difficult as the countries involved were far away, expenses were high, and negotiations with other governments lasted for a long time as the Singapore government did not want to disturb relations with these countries. This whole process was the responsibility of the Ministry of Manpower, which made for better co-ordination.

3. The Improvement of Environmental Conditions for Alien Workers

This was a new trend that the Singapore government just became aware of and started to consider it important to create a better working environment for alien workers. The National Trade Union Congress which is a government agency started arranging activities for alien workers, such as sightseeing at the Jurong Bird Park or arranging parties for workers on Labor Day.

Impact of Singapore Labor Policy on Thai Migrant Workers

1. **Wages:** As the Singapore government had a policy of testing workers' skills, employers pressed Thai migrant workers to take a test. However, even though Thai migrant workers passed the skills test, employers did not need to raise wages from 17 or 20 to 25 Singapore dollars which was the rate for semi-skilled workers. This was because the original employment contract that the workers signed was for unskilled labor, and there was no clear regulation to force employers to raise wages. However, employers would pay lower levy as their workers passed the test and officially were upgraded to be semi-skilled workers. Therefore, Thai workers must take the skills test in Thailand and sign employment contracts as semi-skilled workers before they leave Thailand in order to receive a wage rate of 25 Singapore dollars.
2. **Contract extension:** Migrant workers who had an income of less than 2,000 Singapore dollars would be given a 2-year employment contract and could extend it once but not for more than 2 years. However, if they passed the skills test, they could extend their working period 5 times and work as long as 10 years. Thai migrant workers who passed the skills test could work in Singapore for 10 years.
3. **Welfare benefits:** There would not be an increase in welfare benefits, even though Thai migrant workers passed the skills test.
4. **Upgrade the skill level:** Even though there was a modern skills training project that was useful, Thai migrant workers could not attend the training as they had hard jobs to do, and long working hours. Therefore, Thai migrant workers should attend a training program and get a diploma / certificate in skills training before they went to work in Singapore. A more active role on the part of the Skill Development Department in this issue could help Thai workers to have a better opportunity in their work in Singapore.

The Ability of Thai Migrant Workers in Singapore to Compete

There has been an increasing number of migrant workers from other countries going to work in Singapore with testing of work and skills certificates. Consequently, this made it more difficult for Thai workers to compete. If other foreign workers accepted lower wages (Singapore did not have a minimum wage rate), fewer Thai workers would be hired. At present, the Contractors Association of Singapore

proposed to the Thai government to set a wage rate of 22 Singapore dollars a day for Thai workers which they thought was high enough during the economic downturn when employers wanted to reduce wage expenses. Also, the Association was interested in hiring migrant workers from other countries because their wages were lower than for Thais. This situation would force Thai workers to accept lower wages than before, which was not a positive outcome for Thai workers. In the meantime, the Thai government still had not increased its ability to send more semi-skilled workers who had passed a skills test in Thailand to go to work in Singapore. Thai migrant workers, therefore, were in a difficult situation. Even though Singapore employers preferred to hire Thai workers rather than workers from other countries, as Thai workers endured hardship better, were meticulous in their work and took orders easily, they nevertheless wanted to pay lower wages to Thais, claiming as a bargaining tool, that they could hire other migrant workers. This was a crucial issue, and the Thai government has to quickly do two things to deal with the above situation. They have to negotiate for Thai workers who were already hired to receive the same wage rate as before and at the same time they have to encourage Thai migrant workers in the Singapore labor market to become semi-skilled workers. This could be done by quickly training and arranging skill tests for Thai workers with as many as possible passing the test.

2.4 Thai migrant workers in Taiwan

Thais started going to work in Taiwan from the late 1980's, and the number of Thai workers going there continually increased. In 1992, there were approximately 500,000 Thai workers working abroad and 30% of them, which was approximately 166,000, worked in Taiwan. In 1999, there were overall 140,000 Thai workers working in Taiwan which was half of the entire number of migrant workers there. 70% of Thai workers worked in industrial factories and 30% in the construction sector.

Background in Thailand: According to a survey of 183 Thai workers who were scattered throughout the northern, central, and southern region of Taiwan island, it was found that 78% of the workers were male and only 22% female. All of Thai female migrant workers worked in industrial factories. The majority of the workers were between 25-29 (44%) and 21-24 years old (29%). The proportion of workers who were single and married was almost equal. There were a few more married workers. 70% of interviewees had only 6 years of education, 22% had 9 years of education. Almost all of them did not receive any vocational training. The ones who had 9 years of education worked in factories rather than in the construction sector. Working in Taiwan did not have any effect on the marriages of the workers, and for single workers in Taiwan there were no new marriages.

Reasons for workers deciding to go to work abroad: The main reason was economic. They wanted higher income. It was found that 58% of workers had a household income of less than 10,000 baht before they went to work in Taiwan; 20% had an income of no more than 20,000 baht; and 11% had an income of less than 30,000 baht. Overall, most of Thai workers, especially construction workers, came from families who did not have a high income. Therefore, they chose to go to work abroad. Besides that, 72% of the workers were previously farmers; only 16% used to work in the industrial sector. This showed that most of the Thai migrant workers came from rural areas and worked in the agricultural sector where they did not work full time and had a high unemployment rate. When considering the income of workers before they went to Taiwan, it was found that 2/3 of the interviewees had an income of only 2,000-6,000 baht a month. 99 of the interviewees could not specify the amount of income they had. The amount of income that was specified showed that in each household there was income from several people.

Most of the Thai workers in Taiwan had never worked abroad; only 15% had worked abroad. 78% of the Thai workers came to work in Taiwan for no more than a year; the rest came to work for no more than 2 years; and very few (4%) stayed more than 2 years. This was because most of the employment contracts were for 2 years. When asked whether if the Thai economy were good they would work in Thailand or would they go to work abroad, 44% replied that they would stay in Thailand, and 52% said they would go abroad. It could be concluded that the state of economic downturn was not an important cause of workers deciding to go to work abroad. Thai workers in Taiwan were well informed regarding lifestyle and the type of work that they would do in Taiwan.

Procedures of traveling abroad and employment recruitment: Thai workers who went to work in Taiwan had few relatives or those whom they knew in Taiwan. It could be stated that social

networks did not play an important role in arranging for workers to go to work there. 97% of the interviewees responded that employment recruitment agencies in Thailand, employers in Thailand and Thai government (Employment Recruitment Department) arranged for their travel and in finding jobs for them. Only 1% arranged their own travel and 90% of this 1% was approached by job placement brokers; 2% went to contact the brokers. It was of interest that the majority of those responding (80%) had no comments on the information provided to them by the Job Placement Department. This reflects the dissatisfaction with the services provided by the government on the part of those who responded to the questions. The majority of workers (80%) passed pre-departure orientation especially construction workers.

Travel and employment costs were very high. 43% paid 80,000-140,000 baht to go to work in Taiwan; another 23% paid as high as 160,000 baht; 25% paid higher than that. Workers who came to work as construction workers had to pay more than the ones who came to work in factories. The majority of workers (90%) had to borrow money to pay for these costs. Important lending sources were private money lenders (63%); others borrowed from relatives (17%); borrowed from employment recruitment brokers (7.7%); a few borrowed from banks (only 3.3%). Borrowing money outside the banking system was the type of borrowing most used by workers. The main reason that workers could not borrow money through the banking system was that workers might not have sufficient collateral to mortgage with the bank. Consequently, interest was very high from borrowing outside the banking system; however, there might be some positive aspect to using this irregular system as all of the workers were able to acquire visas to enter Taiwan legally. The brokers or employment recruitment agencies provided convenience in acquiring visas mostly without any problems (94.5%).

Work conditions: 183 workers who went to work in Taiwan legally signed employment contracts before they left Thailand except for only one worker. However, 64% of the workers only understood part of the contracts and 6.6% did not understand the contracts at all. This might be because they did not have much education and lacked experience in working abroad. Besides that, this showed that job placement agencies did not try to provide sufficient knowledge or pre-departure orientation to workers. 2/3 of the workers was satisfied with their jobs as they received higher wages than in Thailand. Nevertheless, 1/3 of them was dissatisfied. Workers in industrial factories were more satisfied with their jobs than construction workers even though construction workers received higher wages. All of the workers had visas but 4 of them had visas which had expired. 88% of the workers had their work permits arranged by brokers; the majority of them (61%) worked in companies /medium and large size factories. 1/3 worked in companies/ small size factories. Only 10% of the employers had a business branch in Thailand; 86% did not have any. This showed that the majority of employers did not have any business relationship with Thailand, so it was left to brokers or employment recruitment agencies to find workers and provide assistance to them. 76% of the workers, the majority of whom were construction workers, reported that their work conditions were very hard. This data explained why construction workers were dissatisfied with their work even though they had high income.

Wages and remuneration: More than ¾ of the workers received wages of no more than 30,000 Taiwan dollars (approximately 40,000 baht) a month. Everyone received wages of no less than the minimum wage rate of 15,840 Taiwan dollars. Most of the workers received wages ranging from 20,000, 25,000 and 30,000 Taiwan dollars. Only 22% of the workers received more than 30,000 Taiwan dollars. It was clear that construction workers received higher wages; one reason was because they did more overtime work than those in other kinds of jobs. As for other remuneration, 41% of workers received wages when they were sick, and 30% did not. The rest did not know whether they had this right or not. As for the right to receive wages when they were sick, workers in factories had more rights than other workers as 60% of them received this benefit while only 3% of the construction workers did. As for health insurance, 55.7% of the construction workers had health insurance. Another 41% were not sure whether they had insurance or not while 89% of the factory workers had health insurance.

Impact of Migration on Thailand and Taiwan

Conflicts, health problem, and other problems: 40% of Thai migrant workers specified that they had problems at their work place. Construction workers had more problems than factory workers, but none joined the labor union. As for the health aspect, 52% of the workers specified that they had health

problems, especially construction workers. 75% of the workers in the sample group felt that their health was the same as before. 54% of the construction workers felt that their health had deteriorated.

42% of the workers used the Thai language at their workplace, and 53.6% used Chinese. It was found that most of the workers in factories (73%) had to use Chinese at their workplace while most of the construction workers (85%) used Thai. These two groups of workers had equally good relations with Taiwanese. As for the relationship with their spouses in Thailand, there was almost no change except for 10 workers who had new partners. Most of the workers specified that they missed home.

Taiwan was the major destination for Thai workers as 1/3 of all Thai overseas workers worked in Taiwan. Nevertheless, Thai workers had to work no less than half a year just to pay off their debts incurred in traveling to work in Taiwan as travel costs to go to Taiwan were very high. Besides that, the lending sources for most of the Thai workers were outside the banking system and charged very high interest. As a result, travel costs were higher than usual. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare should consider helping workers by guaranteeing the loans to workers from banks. As a result, workers would pay interest at the regular rate which would make expenses lower. Overall, going to work in Taiwan had a satisfactory outcome for the Thai workers even though there were some problems for workers as to their type of work, workplace and the environment. Employers, employment recruitment agencies, government agencies of both sides and Thai workers themselves should try to find solutions to solve problems together. For Taiwan, even though the government accepted that Thai migrant workers were the largest group of migrant workers in Taiwan, nevertheless, it had a policy to reduce the total number of migrant workers and those migrant workers permitted in would be spread among many countries of origin. This policy would have an impact on the opportunity of Thai migrant workers in the future.

Illegal Thai Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Because all of the sample of Thai workers in Taiwan for this survey were legal migrant workers, the research group therefore collected more qualitative data regarding illegal workers to show the overall picture. There were few Thai workers who worked illegally, one part of them being workers who overstayed visas and surreptitiously continued to stay on. Another part did not return home even though their employment contracts had terminated or had fled from their workplace to go to work in other jobs. The number of Thai illegal migrant workers was indefinite, but the number of Thai people from a total of 7,674 persons who were arrested on charges of illegal entry from 1992 to 1997 was 3,681 (2,910 were male and 771 were female). The number of Thai people who were arrested was higher than people from all other the nationalities. Next to the Thais were the Filipinos (2,485 persons).

Thai workers who worked illegally usually entered Taiwan legally, then worked for a while and changed their jobs. They might change their jobs because employers switched them to work in other workplaces. Later on, when policemen came to inspect the workplaces, they were caught not working in jobs according to their employment contracts. The Taiwan government had a policy to solve the problem of illegal alien workers by expanding the number of alien workers who were allowed to work legally during the period when the migrant workers policy was relaxed from 1985-1992. This policy resulted in a sizeable decrease in the number of illegal workers. The Taiwanese government used a policy of expanding construction work in public utilities such as skytrains, public housing of the National Housing Authorities and using migrant workers to work in these projects as in Singapore. It was different from Singapore as Singapore used this policy because they had more need for public utilities. On the contrary, Taiwan had other reasons for this policy as they wanted to respond to the needs of the private sector, especially entrepreneurs with large projects who wanted migrant workers to work in their industrial factories and construction work. Simultaneously, Taiwan wanted to have a good relationship with the countries of origin of these migrant workers. However, from 1996 until the present, Taiwan started limiting the number of alien workers as the unemployment rate in Taiwan was extremely high. The big companies which had invested large sums of money still had the right to employ alien workers as the Taiwanese government thought that these companies would create income for the country. The government started to discourage foreign workers by reducing the wage rate of such workers and also increasingly negotiating to import migrant workers on a government-to-government basis. They also expanded the number of origin countries that sent workers to work in Taiwan.

Even though illegal female migrant workers from Thailand in Taiwan were fewer than male workers, they were in a worrisome situation as some of them were lured to work in the sex service trade. For example, some were lured to go to marry Taiwanese men with all expenses being paid or lured to go to work and then locked up and forced to provide sex services. End Child Prostitution Association of Taiwan (ECPAT) which was a non-government organization that provided assistance to children and Thai women who were brought in to provide sex services, found that Thai women who were arrested and were then assisted by this agency had been lured by a women trafficking racket. Beside Thais, there were women from Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, and Myanmar. This women trafficking racket would bring women into Taiwan or Japan through Singapore or go first to Malaysia and then to Singapore, Philippines, and then to Taiwan. Of 457 foreign women who were lured into providing sex service in Taiwan and were arrested from 1995 to 1998, there were as many as 377 Thai women, only 42 Filipinos, and the rest were from Indonesia and Malaysia. The women in the largest group were 20-30 years old (264 women). 200 of them had entered Taiwan legally.

Agencies which provided assistance and supervised illegal migrant workers consisted of Office of Supervision and Protection of Thai Workers of the Thai Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Taiwan Foreign Worker's Consultation Center, Alien Detention Center, Taiwan National Police Department, and non-government organizations.

The Thai Office of Supervision and Protection of Thai Workers was located in Taipei and Kaohsiung; only two officials were stationed in each place. Therefore, there were insufficient officials to operate efficiently as there were more than 100,000 Thai workers in Taiwan but only 4 officials of the Office of Supervision and Protection of Thai Workers overall. Data from Thai migrant workers specified that workers had never come to ask for assistance from this Office at all and if they came to ask for help, they were not receiving any according to their needs.

Taoyuan Foreign Workers' Consultation Center was a center under the local government of Taoyuan which was a major industrial zone of Taiwan. There were many foreign workers, but some of them fled to other workplaces due to the strict supervision of workers by both policemen and the business operators. The Alien Detention Center, and the National Police Administration were responsible for detaining foreign workers who were arrested and awaiting deportation by judicial process.

A Taiwanese non-government organization call Hope Workers' Center assisted foreign workers and was an organization of the Catholic Board. This organization consulted these workers both by phone and directly. As for ECPAT, it focused on helping women who were lured to provide sex services there.

2.5 Conclusion

The sample group of Thai migrant workers which went to work in these four destination countries, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan, had varied characteristics. In Japan, most of the Thai migrant workers, excluding trainees, were illegal migrant workers. There were a large number of women and the occupational backgrounds were from the service sector not the agricultural sector. They went to work paying high expenses on an average of 140,000 baht per person. Nevertheless, they had high income, approximately 50,000-75,000 baht a month. Most workers went to work in the service sector, both in general service and in entertainment / sex services. The ones who stayed for a long period in Japan, some as long as 10 years, married Japanese or Thais there and thus, there was a trend towards living in Japan permanently. However, they were under much pressure in their way of life there; many had a serious problem due to their illegal status. As for the trainees, they had a better status but had lower income. Their duration of work in Japan was too short and was not sufficient to meet their needs. Besides that, they had to pay service fees to broker companies who were middlemen between Japanese organizations and employment recruitment agencies of Thailand.

Thai migrant workers in Malaysia were predominantly Thai Muslims from the south of Thailand, and there were more male than female workers. They went to work in Malaysia without any problem in passing through the border. There were both legal and illegal workers, but illegal workers did not have as many problems as the ones who worked in Japan. They were under no pressure in their way of life in Malaysia. Most of workers traveled back and forth across the border all the time and many of