



Research Report

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ABSTRACT

Cambodia provides a unique setting in which internal and cross-border migration in search of employment has become an increasing reality inescapably linked to the processes of development and globalization occurring throughout Southeast Asia. In Cambodia most of this migration emanates from rural to urban areas within the country as well as to rural and urban destinations outside of the country, especially in Thailand. Yet little research has been conducted to examine the consequences of such migration for the families involved.

Our paper examines migration at the family level with a focus on the variable effects of internal and cross-border migration for rural older-age parents who remain in the areas of origin. The analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative data from a study conducted in June and July 2010 in two communes of Battambang Province. One commune is located relatively near the Thai border while the other is off a national highway that connects the province to the capital Phnom Penh. The quantitative data comes from a survey of 265 respondents aged 60 to 70 with information they provided about themselves and their 1,268 children. The findings from the survey are richly supplemented by qualitative data from 30 open-ended follow-up interviews conducted with a sub-sample of the elderly respondents. The research findings include analysis about exchanges of material support, contact between migrants and parents, and associations of internal and cross-border migration with the material and psychological well-being of parents. The modest contrasts associated with internal and international migrations for families found in our study sites underscore that such findings are very much conditioned by specific settings thus making unqualified generalizations difficult.

INTRODUCTION

The movement of people from rural areas in developing countries to cities and across borders, primarily in search of employment, is an inescapable consequence of development and the globalization process. Labor migration has become a persistent and accelerating reality in many developing countries, including Cambodia. How this impacts on family members including intergenerational solidarity is a matter of considerable debate (Knodel et al, 2007). Moreover, the impacts of internal and cross-border migration are rarely considered together. This study examines consequences of migration at the family level with a focus on the variable effects of internal and cross-border migration for rural older-age parents who remain in the areas of origin. Of main concern is to examine the extent to which material and social support to rural older-age parents from internal and cross-border migration of adult children differs as well as to compare associations between these two types of migration with various aspects of parents' well-being. The study also addresses several related questions: What is the prevalence of internal and cross-border migration? What are the destinations of the internal and cross-border migrants? What are the reasons why children migrate from the study sites? What are the risks associated with migration? The data on which our study is based permit us to describe actual experiences associated with internal and cross-border migration. However, the analyses are descriptive and not suitable for establishing relationships of causality.

Cambodia experienced nationwide demographic movements during the Khmer Rouge and post-Khmer Rouge eras, which resulted in the resettlement of large groups of people in both urban and rural areas. These migrations culminated in the 1990s with the repatriation of thousands of Cambodian refugees from the Thai border and the government takeover of the final Khmer Rouge strongholds. As the conflict-induced migrations subsided, economic and social change provided impetus to market-driven migration out of rural areas into cities, principally Phnom Penh, and across international borders, mainly Thailand. In the 1990s Cambodia's transition to an open market economy spurred the rapid rise of the garment industry, growth in tourism and construction and further integration with regional and world markets. These developments generated large-scale labor demand facilitated by expanding communication and infrastructure networks. Meanwhile several factors encouraged young adults to migrate out of their parents' homes in search of work. These included high population growth, low productivity in agriculture, successive crop failures from droughts and floods during 2000/05, rapid decline of natural resources, loss of traditional access to natural resources, and the lack of rural industry (Murshid, 2007; FitzGerald et al, 2007; Analyzing Development Issues, 2005; Ang et al, 2007; Ballard, 2007; Lim, 2008).

Internal and cross-border migration from rural areas in Cambodia is characterized by diverse patterns. With respect to internal migration, agricultural laborers travel to other provinces to transplant and harvest rice, work in plantations, grow cash crops, or raise poultry and livestock. Domestic migration to Phnom Penh provides higher paying jobs for young women in the garment factories and for the men in construction work. With regard to cross-border migration, agricultural laborers work seasonally at the Cambodia-Thailand border transplanting rice, picking cotton, and harvesting cash crops such as corn, sweet potatoes, sugar cane and pineapples. Some Cambodian migrants venture further into Thailand to work in construction, transport services or work on Thai fishing boats. More recently Cambodia international migrants

have found work in Malaysia and South Korea (Murshid, 2007; FitzGerald et al, 2007; Chan, 2009).

The migration process involves networks that include relatives, neighbors and friends with migration experience, and informal and formal recruitment agents. Domestic migrants rely on relatives and experienced migrant workers to help them find jobs. Often they make arrangements with informal agents and subcontractors who come into the village. Cross-border migration is decidedly more risky. Labor migration to Thailand is largely illegal and when using informal agents the costs may be high and the outcomes typically uncertain. Undocumented workers encounter problems in the payment of wages, loss of savings, police harassment and arrest (Murshid 2007; LSCW, 2007; Chan 2009).

Migrating across international borders through formal recruitment agencies is becoming increasingly more common and is generally considered to reduce risk. However a recent Asia Foundation report finds that the domestic and regional legal framework for labor migration is underdeveloped, that recruitment agencies are able to work with little regulation, and that victims of exploitation experience difficulties in prosecuting perpetrators (Holliday, 2011). A more damning report by Human Rights Watch (2011) details a wide range of abuses of Cambodian women working as maids in Malaysia, including debt bondage, underage recruitment and forced confinement by recruitment agencies, collusion between police and agencies, and physical and sexual abuse by Malaysian employers.¹

Cross-border migrants into Thailand tend to be men, while garment factory and domestic service workers in Phnom Penh are virtually all young single women. The majority of migrants to Malaysia are women employed as domestic helpers, while most of the migrants to South Korea are men working in factories. Parents worry about the health and security of both their migrant daughters and sons. They worry about their daughters eating and sleeping properly and falling into bad company. They worry about their sons joining gangs, being tempted to use drugs, or becoming infected with HIV (Murshid, 2007; Chan, 2009).

A Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) study funded by the World Bank entitled *Moving Out of Poverty?* identifies migration for employment as a critical channel for improving the well-being of households and communities. At the same time the study cautions that migration is not a quick solution to poverty reduction as its impact is variable and often short term (FitzGerald et al, 2007). This observation is consistent with findings in the international literature: de Haas (2007) maintains that notwithstanding their often considerable benefit for individuals, households and communities, migration and remittances are no panacea for solving more structural development problems. Some authors find evidence of selection bias in the migration process. For example, if households with more education or income are more likely to produce migrants, then it is impossible to identify the effects of migration by simply comparing the characteristics of migrant and non-migrant households (McKenzie and Sasin, 2007). Examining the impact of international remittances on poverty, education and health in Latin America, Acosta et al, (2007) found that households with a lower propensity to migrate also have

¹ On 14 October 2011 Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered recruitment agencies to indefinitely stop sending Cambodian domestic workers to Malaysia following repeated reports of abuse and illegal activity. See Kuch Naren, "Gov't Suspends Sending Maids to Malaysia," *The Cambodia Daily*, 15-16 October 2011.

higher per capita incomes. Results from their counterfactual income estimates suggest that the impact of remittances on poverty is positive but modest.

A Social Science Research Council (SSRC) literature review on migrant remittances and development indicates a dearth of comparative studies on internal and international remittances. This has sparked much debate about how the effects of internal remittances – on poverty, inequality, gender and social stratification – differ from international remittances (Adams et al, 2009). One study in Mali found that international migrants are more likely to remit, and to remit more money, than internal migrants (Gubert, 2002). Results from another study in Morocco suggest that the incomes and living standards of internal migrant households are similar to non-migrant households. By comparison, international migrant households receive a major boost to their incomes from remittances, and tend to invest in housing and agriculture (de Haas, 2006).

The CDRI *Moving Out of Poverty?* study offers several reasons why migration does not easily translate into poverty reduction. Most internal labor migration in Cambodia is poorly paid and unskilled. Moreover it is largely seasonal, working conditions are often poor, and the prospect of ongoing work is uncertain. While garment factory workers receive higher pay these jobs are not for life, and young women typically return home, where they have limited prospects, or move into more vulnerable occupations in urban areas. In the study areas, tourism had limited impact except for opportunities in construction, where work was usually seasonal and often dangerous. Cross-border migrants can earn more in Thailand but undocumented workers risk losing their earnings when they return to Cambodia (FitzGerald et al, 2007).

Research undertaken as part of CDRI's *Participatory Poverty Assessment of the Tonle Sap* indicates that the effects of migration on household welfare are mixed. The study acknowledges that garment workers are generally able to send regular and substantial amounts of money back home. However, the flow of remittances from other domestic and cross-border migrants is characterized as volatile and unpredictable. While some migrants enjoy success others return home worse off having to work or sell land to pay off debt (Murshid, 2007).

Chan's cross-country labor migration study (2009) concludes that economic benefits from labor migration outweigh the costs. The majority of migrants are able to earn money and send remittances home. Notably, the earnings of those working deep inside Thailand or Malaysia are more substantial than those working on farms just over the Thai border. However, quite a few migrants who chose to go into Thailand illegally incurred losses and fell into serious debt. The study found that legal migrants had noticeably higher earnings than illegal migrants.

The Analyzing Development Issues' study *Impact of the Garment Industry on Rural Livelihoods* (2005) illustrates the importance of garment factory work in the lives of rice farming households in Prey Veng Province as they struggle to sustain their livelihoods amid rising agricultural input costs, declining rice productivity due to successive floods and droughts, and the fragmentation of family farms resulting from the marriage of children. The remittances flowing into the rural area allowed the disaster stricken households to purchase rice and other food, settle health expenses, invest in rice production, and pay off debts. Generally, remittances were spent to support recurrent costs of subsistence rather than to start small businesses. Rural livelihoods were thus sustained, although not transformed, by the garment industry.

A CDRI study based on the nationally representative 2007 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey indicates that both internal and international remittances reduce the level, depth and severity of poverty. Moreover the study finds that remittances from international migrants are more effective at reducing poverty than those from internal migrants. The study concludes that remittances have a greater impact on reducing the severity of poverty than on reducing the proportion of people living in poverty (Tong, 2010).

The *Moving Out of Poverty?* study notes that households with increasing wealth and the comfortably rich had more family members migrating along the Thai-Cambodian border or into Thailand for work than other households. This suggests the importance of having income or savings to invest in migration and its contribution to upward mobility. The better off households had access to networks, were typically better educated, and had some capital to cover the costs of migration. Upwardly mobile households were also able to send their daughter to work in garment factories in Phnom Penh. Poorer households were more likely to sell their labor within their own communities (FitzGerald et al, 2007). By contrast, research undertaken in the *Participatory Poverty Assessment of the Tonle Sap* presents a slightly different assessment. These results suggest that successful migrants tend to be from poor or medium-income households with access to some capital and some education. The study maintains that the rich rarely if ever migrate, while the destitute migrate in small numbers and work in the lowest paying jobs (Murshid, 2007). Chan (2009) concluded that households with and without cross-border migrants were not substantially different in food consumption, which was considered a core element of welfare.

With respect to the effects of migration on older-age parents left behind in Cambodia, an article based on the same data set as our present paper finds that migration but not desertion characterizes the older age households surveyed. A high percentage of the elderly households reported having a migrant child. Yet an even higher percentage stated that they had a child living at home. This may be explained by the high fertility rate of this cohort of parents. On average, the respondents had 4.8 living children. This allowed some children to migrate and others to remain behind in the homes or villages of their parents (Hak et al, 2011). Our present paper examines specifically the variable effects of internal and cross-border migration on the older-age parents surveyed with supplementary data from qualitative interviews.

Research Methods

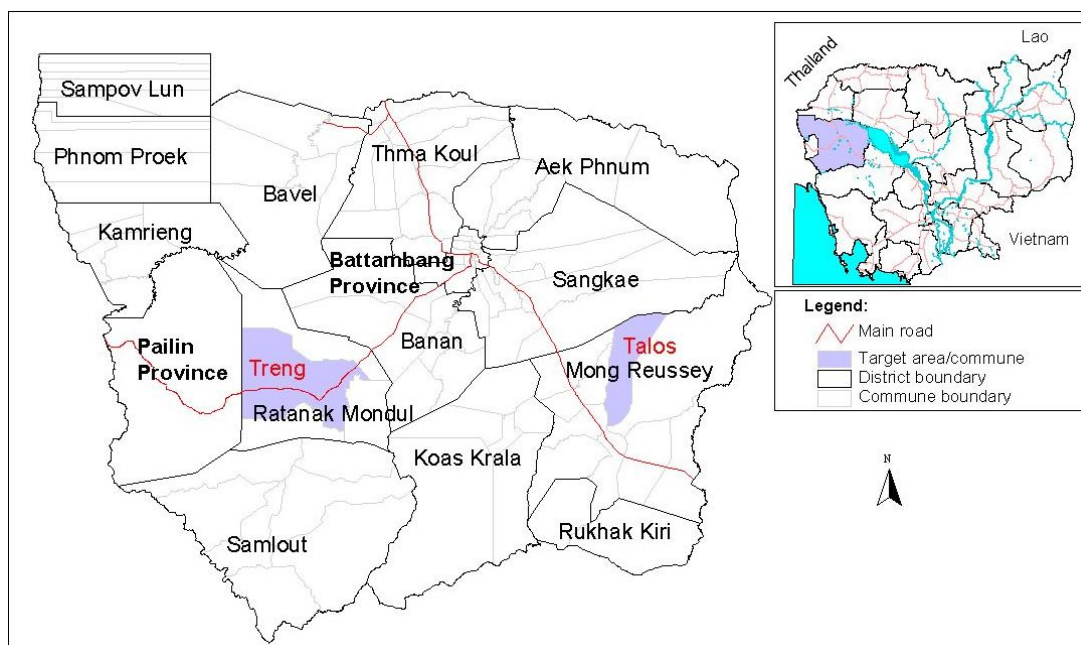
The study was conducted in two communes of Battambang Province in June and July 2010 using quantitative and qualitative methods. Battambang is bordered to the west by Thailand and Pailin Province and known to provide many laborers to Thailand and other Cambodian provinces, especially since the late 1990s. The quantitative data comes from a purposive survey of 265 respondents aged 60 to 70 and their 1,268 children. The information from the survey is supplemented by qualitative data from 30 open-ended follow-up interviews conducted with a sub-sample of the elderly respondents.

Cambodian provinces are administratively divided into districts which are in turn separated into communes. Battambang has thirteen districts and the study took place in two communes within two of these districts. The first study commune was Treng, one of four within the district of Ratanak Mondol. This commune lies on the western side of the province, near but not along the border of Thailand. Highway 67, a main road that connects the provincial capital of Battambang

and the provincial capital of Pailin Province, runs through the commune. At the time of the 2008 Census Treng had a population of 12,410 living in 2,534 households. The second study commune was Talos, one of eleven within the district of Mong Ruessey. This commune is situated on the south-eastern side of the province and is near Highway 5, a main highway that runs north to south across the province and connects the provincial capital of Battambang to the national capital of Phnom Penh. Talos is also near the province of Pursat. At the time of the 2008 Census the commune consisted of 1,765 households and had a population of 8,509 (Figure 1).

Communes are further divided into villages; the unit within which the sample was selected. Villages were selected purposively based on a combination of accessibility during the rainy season, when the interviewing took place, the ease of which a sampling frame could be accessed, and for some geographic spacing between villages. The sampling frames came in the form of household registers kept in the commune police office. These registers contain the name, sex, date of birth, and marital status of all people in all households within villages. The commune of Treng has eight villages, five of which were selected for study. Talos has nine villages, and again, five were selected for study. Two additional villages in Talos were used in the study pre-test.

Figure 1. Map of Study Site, Battambang Province



The current study selected households that contained an individual born between 1940 and 1950 from the registers and sought to interview one person from each household that contained such an individual. The list of people born within this time period was verified by the village chiefs of their respective village and those who had moved away or died were eliminated from the list. Village chiefs also added new residents not on the list. During the verification process with the village chiefs, spot maps were made that identified the specific households in which the potential respondents lived. Interviewers then visited the villages and were dispersed to eligible households to conduct the interviews. When there was more than one eligible respondent a

random selection was made of whom to interview. The survey interviews were completed within five days in June 2010. The 265 respondents interviewed were almost equally divided between the two study sites with 131 from Treng and 134 from Talos.

In July 2010 the researchers returned to Treng and Talos communes to conduct open-ended interviews. In all, successful interviews were completed with a subset of 30 respondents and 2 commune officials. Each interview lasted an average of an hour. The purpose of the interviews was to allow respondents to relate in their own words narratives about their relationships with both their migrant (internal and cross-border) and non-migrant children. The open-ended nature of the interviews provides important complementary information to the data obtained through the survey questionnaires. As such, the combined analysis of these two data sources permits a mixed-method approach that goes beyond what is possible by relying on the quantitative data alone. Selected literal quotations have been drawn from the transcripts and incorporated into the analysis to facilitate interpretation of specific quantitative findings. The qualitative interviews thus illustrate how various specific survey findings fit together to provide a holistic picture grounded in the reality as viewed by the research subjects.

Structure of the Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire used to interview parents not only has extensive questions about the respondent and spouse (if living) but also solicits extensive information about their living children. One set of questions asks specifically about children who ever moved from their parent's district for either a continuous period of at least one year or who made multiple shorter term moves that added up to at least one year. This constituted our initial definition of migration with the caveat that children who remained in the original districts of their parents after their parents had migrated to the study sites were not considered as migrants. An additional set of questions asks about "return migrants" i.e. those who met this definition of migration but had returned and were currently living in the parental district. Such detailed sets of questions were not asked, however, about children who had recently moved out of the district but who had not yet been away continuously or cumulatively for at least a year.

Another set of questions asks about every living child of the respondent including their current location and exchanges with parents during the previous year regardless of migration status or duration. Thus, the groups of children that are compared with each other differ somewhat in the following analyses depending on which set of questions provides the relevant information for a particular dependent variable. Some analyses compare children solely in terms of their current location. In these analyses, a small number of children who live outside their parents' district are not strictly migrants since it was the parents who actually moved rather than the child. Other analyses compare migrant children who were gone for at least one year (continuously or cumulatively) with respect to their destination (i.e. within Cambodia vs cross-border) but exclude those children who recently left the parental district and have not yet been away for a year.

Research Findings

The findings of our study indicate that migration characterizes most of the households surveyed. Over two-thirds (68 percent) of the elderly households reported having an ever migrant child and almost as many (64 percent) have a current migrant child. With respect to destination, 56 percent of the elders have a current internal migrant child including 14 percent with a child in Phnom

Penh. By comparison, 24 percent have a current international migrant child most of whom are in Thailand including 18 percent with children beyond the Thai border area. Although a high percentage of the elderly households reported having a current migrant child, an even higher percentage stated that they had a child living at home. In total, 80 percent of the elders had a co-resident child and 91 percent had a child living in the same village. This may be explained by the high fertility rate of this cohort of parents aged 60 to 70. On average, the respondents had 4.8 living children. This allowed some children to migrate while others remained behind in the homes or villages of their parents (Table 1).

Table 1. Percent of respondents in relation to migration status of children by commune, sex and marital status

Percent of respondents with at least one child	Total	Commune		Sex		Currently married(a)	
		Treng	Talos	Men	Women	No	Yes
In the household	80.0	80.2	79.9	82.1	78.6	78.1	81.3
In the village (b)	91.3	92.4	90.3	95.3	88.7	87.6	93.8
Ever migrated	67.9	58.8	76.9**	67.9	67.9	62.9	71.3
Migrated but returned	15.8	12.2	19.4	13.2	17.6	15.2	16.3
Currently migrated internally	55.8	52.7	59.0	57.5	54.7	51.4	58.8
Currently migrated to Phnom Penh	14.3	12.2	15.7	17.9	11.3	11.4	16.3
Currently migrated out of country	23.8	18.3	29.1*	20.8	25.8	21.0	25.6
Currently migrated to Thailand near border	6.4	1.5	11.2***	3.8	8.2	5.7	6.9
Currently migrated beyond Thai border	17.7	16.8	18.7	17.0	18.2	15.2	19.4
Base number of cases	265	131	134	106	159	105	160

Significance levels: *=.05 level; **=.01 level; ***=.001 level.

Notes: This table includes children who recently left the parental district but have not yet been away for a year as migrants.

(a) Married includes those who are currently married but not living with spouse.

(b) Includes those who have children in the household.

Among the 265 respondents 60 percent were female. A majority of the respondents (60 percent) were married with most of the remainder widowed (35 per cent). Overall, there were no statistically significant differences between the elderly respondents based on sex and current marital status with respect to living arrangements with their children. However, a significantly higher percentage of elderly households in Talos commune had ever migrant children compared to those in Treng commune. Although Treng is geographically nearer the Thai border than Talos, the higher ratios of Talos elders with migrant children is particularly pronounced with respect to migrants who go to Thailand but remain near the border. This difference might reflect stronger and more developed social networks that foster such migration in Talos than Treng, which in turn are traceable to differences in their settlement histories, dwelling arrangements, and particular locations. Treng is a more recently settled area where the modal duration of the respondents' residence is only 14 years. In contrast almost four-fifths of the Talos respondents have lived in Talos since the end of Khmer Rouge period 30 years ago. In addition dwellings in Treng are strung out along the national highway and thus more dispersed than in Talos. To take

advantage of the nearness to the Thai border Treng residents must go through adjacent Pailin Province which until the late 1990s was controlled by a faction of the Khmer Rouge and prone to sporadic fighting.

Reasons Children Migrate

Although the survey questionnaire did not directly probe into the underlying reasons for migration, relevant comments were made in the open-ended interviews. The Talos commune chief's observations succinctly sum up prevailing situations:

First they migrate because they have no land for cultivation. Second some people migrate to the border to find work after they have completed their farm work. Some of them also do business at the border areas. Some households do not have land for cultivation and migrate more than others. Other households have farmland but they migrate during the seasons when they are free.... During corn harvest season they migrate to the border to pick corn. Some even cross the border into Thailand to find work. Some people send their children to work at the garment factories in Phnom Penh. Some go to Malaysia.

Some respondents view migration as a response to the lack of jobs available in Cambodia. A 61 year old father from Talos commune with four of seven children working in Thailand laments:

I do not want my children to go to another country if there are jobs in our country. I want them to make a living [here].... But there are no jobs. We need to go where work is available. We cannot do otherwise. We cannot just stay [here] where there is no employment. We need to go and make a living all of the time. If we did not go then we would always be poor.

Other respondents mentioned that recent droughts had diminished rice yields and forced people into debt leading their children to migrate. A 61 year old widow from Talos commune who relies on the earnings of her son-in-law in Thailand comments:

A lot of people have left [the village] because they could not get any yields from their rice farms.... Some people had already transplanted but... there was no rain and it all dried out.... Others borrowed money to do rice farming, but they fell into debt when there was no rain and the farm did not produce any crop.... If they did not go to work outside, they would not be able to afford to feed their families.

Migration of Children to Internal and Cross-Border Destinations

The respondents in both communes combined had in total 1,268 living children. Of these 33 percent had ever migrated, 21 percent were current internal migrants including 5 percent who went to Phnom Penh. By contrast, 8 percent were current international migrants including 6 percent migrating beyond the Thai border. Of note, 32 percent of the children co-resided with their parents while 59 percent lived in the same village as their parents (Table 2). Somewhat in contrast with the respondents, there were significant differences among the respondents' children with regard to living arrangements with their parents based on their sex, age and marital status.

Significantly higher percentages of non-married children and those aged less than 30 both co-resided and lived in the same village as their parents than did percentages of married children and those aged 30 or older. These differences reflect the life stages of the children with younger and non-married children more likely to live with or nearby their parents. Moreover, significantly higher percentages of female than male children also lived in the same village as their parents.

Table 2. Percent of children in relation to living arrangements and migration status by sex, age and marital status

Percent of children who are	Total	Sex		Age		Currently married (a)	
		Male	Female	<30	30+	No	Yes
In parental household	31.7	29.7	33.8	49.2	16.5***	64.6	11.2***
In the village (b)	59.0	56.0	62.0*	63.5	55.1***	69.8	52.2***
In the district (c)	68.9	68.3	69.7	71.0	67.2	71.1	67.4
Ever migrants	32.6	33.0	32.2	32.6	32.7	31.8	33.5
Returned migrants	4.4	4.1	4.7	4.9	4.0	4.3	4.7
Current internal migrants	20.7	19.8	21.4	21.1	20.3	19.9	21.5
Current migrants to Phnom Penh	4.6	3.5	5.6*	6.3	3.1**	7.9	2.9***
Current migrants out of country	7.6	9.1	6.1*	6.6	8.4	7.7	7.3
Current migrants in Thailand near border	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.2	2.4	1.6	2.0
Current migrants beyond Thai border (d)	5.8	7.3	4.2*	5.4	6.0	6.1	5.2
Base number of cases	1268	627	640	589	679	443	785

Significance levels: *=.05 level; **=.01 level; ***=.001 level.

Note: References to migrants in this table include those who recently left but are away for less than one year (continuously or cumulatively).

- (a) Excludes 29 cases below age 15 and 11 cases who are monks or of unknown marital status. Married includes those who are currently married but not living with spouse.
- (b) Includes children in the household.
- (c) Includes children in the household and village.
- (d) Includes migrants in other countries as well as Thailand.

Taken together there were no significant differences among current internal migrants based on sex, age and marital status. However, taken separately current internal migrants to Phnom Penh were significantly more likely to be single females under the age of 30, reflecting the preference of the Phnom Penh garment factories for this demographic of workers. Among cross-border migrants, the only statistically significant differences were with respect to gender. Considered both as an entire group and separately as those going beyond the Thai border region, cross-border migrants were more likely to be men than women. This perhaps reflects greater concerns about the perceived risks of international migration faced by women.

Risks Associated with Migration

The open-ended interviews illuminate that older age parents are acutely aware of the risks associated with migration and express concern about the welfare of their migrant children. Most

parents appear to be reluctant for their children to leave although many see no alternative. A 64 year old widow from Talos commune with internal and cross-border migrant children voiced these sentiments:

I do not know what may happen to my children who earn their living far away. If they stayed here and could afford [to buy] food it would be all right. But they are poor.... I do not have anything so [some of] my children went away to earn their living and I stayed back with my daughter. If I were rich I would not let my children go away. But I am poor and getting old.... If I [tried to] stop them I would not be able to feed them. So I had to let them go.... I have to bear the hardship with my children.

Parents take what measures they can to protect their migrant children. A 64 year old man from Treng commune makes clear that he allowed his daughter to work in a Phnom Penh garment factory only because she stayed with a relative:

[My daughter] called a relative in Phnom Penh. The relative found her a job [in the garment factory] when she got there. I let her go because I have relatives there. Otherwise I would not have let her go.... I am happy because she earns money. If she stayed here, she would not be able to find anything.... [But] if she had to live outside, I would not let her go.

Parents also worry that their migrant children will fall into bad company. A 69 year old woman from Treng commune long separated from her husband and living with her recently returned migrant daughter from Thailand, spoke about her concern for her single son working in Kratie Province:

If the children are nearby, it is better. No matter what mistake my son makes I can give him guidance. But now that he is far away, I am worried that he will follow others and become bad.

The 60 year old village chief of Chisang in Treng commune who has children living in Battambang town expresses the conflicting feelings experienced by many parents:

The people in this village do not want their children to go away. It is because the parents are poor that the children have gone away.... Circumstances forced them to let their children go far away. The children did not want to go away from their parents either. They want to live close to their parents. But they ... had to go out to make money. For daughters to leave their parents, it is not ordinary.... Because their parents were facing such a hard time they had to migrate.... They had to look for money to help pay off their parents' debt. Their parents did not want their daughters to go but they could not help it.... When the parents ... have paid their debts, the children will come back.

Parents are particularly concerned about their daughters working abroad in other countries. Having guarantees from company recruitment agencies, and more importantly witnessing the positive experience of former migrants, helps to mitigate but not erase these concerns. A 61 year old father from Treng commune explained why he and his wife allowed his 18 year old daughter to work in Malaysia:

[My daughter] is training in Phnom Penh to work abroad in Malaysia.... She will work abroad through a company and will be able to come back home after two years.... She will serve other people cleaning the house, doing the laundry, taking care of the elderly.... My nieces have gone there and some have already come back... I let [my daughter] go because I saw other people who had gone and had earned money.... She has gone through a company which has guaranteed that nothing would happen [to her]..... [My wife and I] agreed to let her go because my nieces have gone there.

Migrating abroad through companies is generally considered to be the safer option, although unscrupulous companies have been known to take advantage of prospective migrants. The commune chief of Talos recognizes the need to be vigilant:

People go to Malaysia to work through companies. So far as a member of the authority I have been careful because I am concerned about trafficking in women and children. I have invited the companies that export labor to come and meet with the authority. Then I send them over to meet with the district governor who is responsible for women's affairs so that he can ask questions and check the documents to see if they are legitimate.

Clearly cross-border migration is more risky than internal migration. Some respondents described instances in which their undocumented migrant children were arrested and imprisoned in Thailand before being sent back to Cambodia. A 62 year old widow from Treng commune recounted this experience of a daughter who had migrated to Thailand:

[My other] daughter has also gone to Thailand, but after she was arrested and imprisoned, she never went back.... She worked at a construction site. The Thai [boss] did not pay her and when she talked to him, he informed the police and they arrested her.... She was then sent back to Cambodia.

The most heartrending stories came from two elderly women in Treng commune. Each spoke of their migrant sons who had apparently gone to sea on Thai fishing boats but whom had not been heard from again. One woman who resided in Kilo village said this about her son:

The elder son ... went to Koh Kong [Province].... We have never heard from him [since].... I heard he worked on boats.... I hope he is still alive. I am worried he might have been killed and thrown into the sea.

Another woman from Chisang village shared this story:

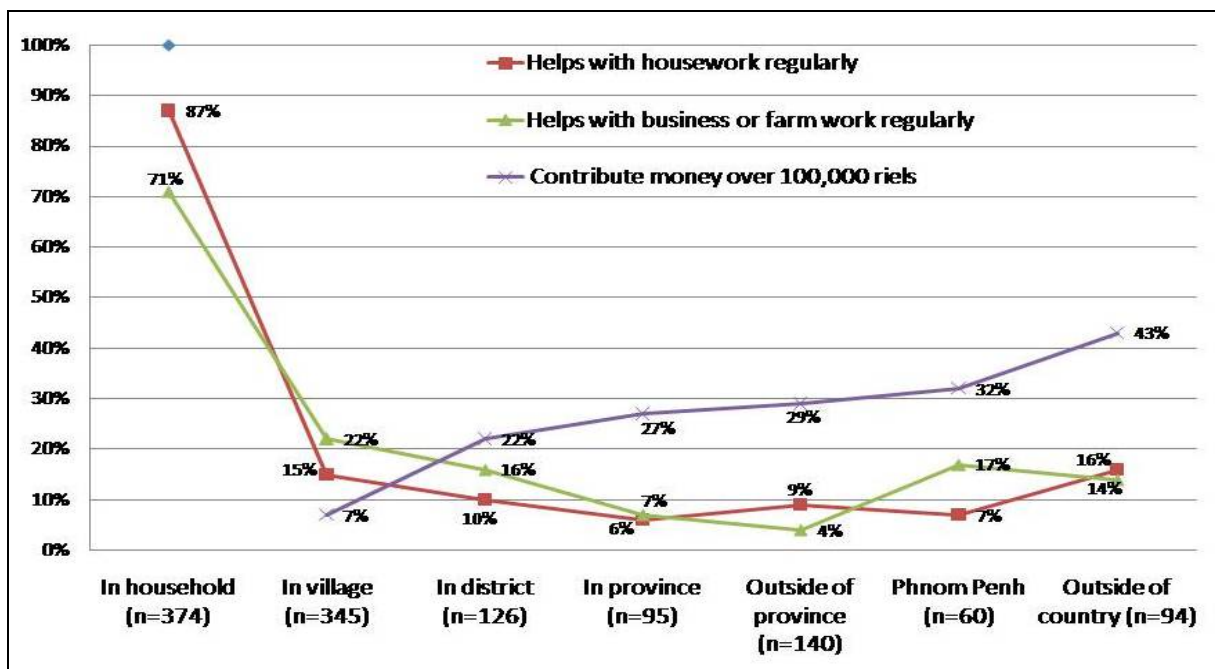
My son has gone to Thailand for six years now, and I have not heard from him. He has never sent me money or news. I do not know whether he is alive or dead.... He went to Thailand abruptly... He did not inform me.... Those who went with him have now come back already.... I asked his friends and they have not heard from him since then either. They only knew he worked on a boat.... I have no more hope for him.

Exchanges of Support

Migration of adult children from rural areas has been said to leave elderly parents behind to work on their farms with no one to help (Murshid, 2007). This observation maintains that children who continue to live with their parents make greater contributions to them. Our study addresses this issue by correlating children's contributions to parents with respect to regular help with housework, business or farm work and to monetary contributions. The findings show that while children who live with or near their parents provide more regular help with housework, business or farm work, children who live further away contribute more money.

Not surprisingly, co-resident children are by far the most likely to regularly help parents with housework (87 percent) and with business or farm work (71 percent). Those who live in the same village but in a different household are far less likely to do so but still more likely than other children who live further away. Given that the large majority of parents have a child in the household, this evidence contradicts the view that high rates of migration among their children leave parents behind to with no one to help. At the same time, 43 percent of the children living outside of the country contributed more than 100,000 riels (US\$ 25) in the past year to their parents. By comparison, only 7 percent of children living in the same village contributed this much (Figure 2).²

Figure 2. Children's contributions to parents by child's location of residence



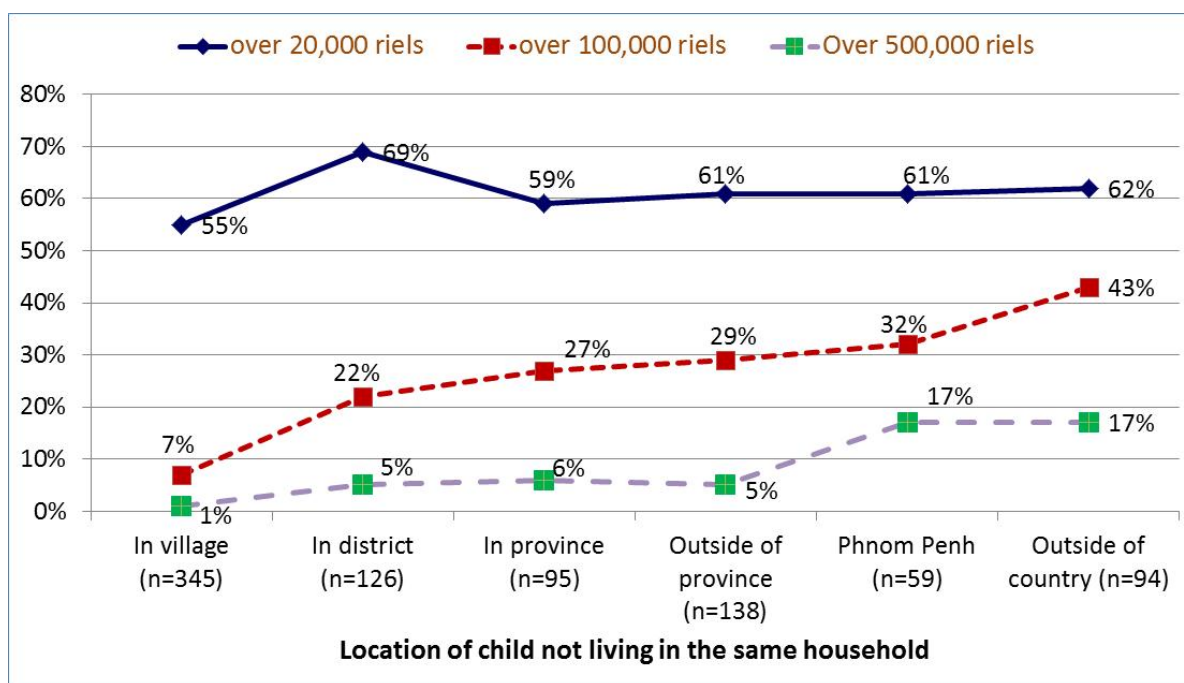
Note: The high percentages of children in Phnom Penh and outside the country helping with business or farm work regularly in the past year were due to the fact that they were recent migrants, away for less than one year.

² Monetary contributions from coresident children are not considered due to difficulties in interpretation as presumably many households have a common budget and money received from a coresident child might likely be used for household expenses that directly benefit the child who made the contribution.

These findings suggest that children make different and complementary types of contributions to their parents depending on their location of residence. Children who continue to live with their parents are available to make valuable contributions by providing regular help with business and farm work and it is crucial not to underestimate this support. At the same time children working outside of the district within Cambodia and outside of the country, while obviously not available to provide regular help with business and farm work, frequently contribute important monetary support.

Of note, the percentages of non-coresident children contributing over 500,000 riel (US\$ 125) to their parents in the past year noticeably increases for those children living in Phnom Penh and those outside Cambodia (Figure 3). This suggests that these destinations provide higher-paying work for migrant children. Meanwhile a majority of non-coresident children irrespective of their locations contributed over 20,000 riel (US\$ 5) to their parents in the past year. These relatively small contributions had important symbolic value bonding children to parents especially during the culturally important Khmer New Year and P'Chum Ben festivals as well as providing parents with small amounts of money to make donations at the pagoda.

Figure 3. Children sending money to parents in past year by location of child



Exchanges of support and services between parents and children can flow in either direction or be entirely absent. Not only do migrant children contribute monetary support to their parents. Parents often provide material support to migrant children, especially in financing costs incurred at the early stages of the migration process. Among the 344 ever migrant children away for at least one year, 48 percent received help from their parents to pay migration expenses. While international ever migrant children were more likely to receive this support than internal ever

migrant children, the difference was not statistically significant even when adjusted by logistic regression for age, sex, marital status and return migrant status (Table 3).

In total 56 percent of the respondents' 344 ever migrant children away for at least one year provided their parents with regular financial support as migrants. This reveals the strong concern of the migrants for the well-being of their parents. While international ever migrant children were more likely than internal ever migrant children to provide this support, the difference was not statistically significant.

Overall, 55 percent of the ever migrant children away for at least one year contributed to the medical expenses of their parents who incurred them. International ever migrant children were more likely than internal ever migrant children to make these contributions but the difference was not significantly different. By contrast, 32 percent of the ever migrant children away for at least one year had returned to help their parents when they were ill. Perhaps not surprisingly, internal ever migrant children were significantly more likely to return to help their parents during illness than international ever migrant children.

Table 3. Support exchanges during period of absence between parents and ever-migrant children away for at least one year by whether migration was internal or international.

	Percent of migrants			Adjusted odds ratio (internal migrants as reference) (a)
	All migrant children	Internal migrant children	International migrant children	
Whose parents helped to pay expenses to migrate	48.4	46.7	53.5	1.116
Whose parents provided rice or food on a regular basis	17.6	19.6	11.6	.527
Who provided parents with regular financial support	56.1	54.7	60.5	1.389
In which net material gain was in favor of parents(b)	42.4	40.5	48.2	1.484
In which net material gain was in favor of children(b)	33.0	37.0	21.2**	.451**
Who contributed to medical expenses of parents who had expenses (c)	55.1	52.7	63.6	1.471
Who returned to help during illness among parents who had an illness (d)	32.0	35.5	18.2*	.387*
Base number of cases	344	258	86	344

Significance levels: *=.05 level; **=.01 level; ***=.001 level.

(a) adjusted by logistic regression for age, sex, marital status and return migrant status with age entered as a continuous variable.

(b) denominator includes cases where equal or no material support was exchanged.

(c) excluding 87 cases who had no medical expenses.

(d) excluding 91 cases who had no illness.

During the entire time that the ever migrant children away for at least a year were gone, a higher proportion (42 percent) were said to have contributed more to their parent's material support (food, money, assets) than their parents (33 percent) contributed to theirs. These findings clearly indicate that there is considerable variation with respect to who benefits more. Still, this underscores the predominance of a net positive flow in the direction of the parents. At the same time, in cases where the net material gain was in favor of children, internal ever migrant children were significantly more likely than international ever migrant children to be the beneficiaries.

Support Received from Migrant Children

The open-ended interviews make clear that some respondents benefit substantially from the remittances sent back from their migrant children. A 66 year old disabled man from Treng commune with two sons working in Thailand expresses his gratitude for the financial support received from his eldest son:

My eldest son ... has married a Thai wife.... He left a cell phone for us to call him. I told him that I was in debt... about three million Riels. I [intended] to sell the farm land and move to Battambang town to live with my daughter. He said he would not let me sell the farm.... After about eleven months he sent me the money to pay off all the debt.... He said that I was old and did not have to borrow money from others anymore.... He started to give me 2,000 Baht a month.... Now I am a bit better off because of my son's support.... He told me to call him immediately when I did not have rice to eat.... My son said that he would pay gratitude to me for having taken care of him since he was small.

Similarly a 61 year old widow from Talos commune relies on support from her son-in-law who works as a welder in Bangkok. At the same time another son who works just inside the Thai border borrows money from her for travel expenses:

I live here with my daughter. Before she lived [near the Thai border] with her mother-in-law. She stayed there until she gave birth. Then I took her to live here in this village. Her husband works as a welder in Bangkok. He sends her 1,500 Baht per month.... This daughter has money. She gives me some money to buy some [small grocery] goods to sell to make some profit.... The daughter I live with is supportive. [The other children] ... give me money only during P'Chum Ben and [Khmer] New Year. This is because they are also poor.

While remittances received from cross border migrants can be crucial for older age parents so too can remittances received from internal migrant children. A 64 year old man from Treng commune acknowledges his thankfulness for the financial support he receives from his garment worker daughter in Phnom Penh:

I can rely on my elder daughter [who works in garment factory in Phnom Penh] as she earns money. She gives me money. I would have died already when I was sick if I had not received money from her.

A 64 year old woman from Treng commune with five living children relies on her son working as a laborer in the border town of Poipet to support her. She has had no news from her elder son who apparently went to sea on a Thai fishing boat last year:

If [my son in Poipet] did not support us, then we would have to go hungry. Last month I owed someone 50,000 Riels and he gave me 100,000 Riels to pay back the money.... My neighbors say I will not go hungry because my son supports me.

In Talos commune a 67 year old man relies on two daughters working as housemaids in Battambang town to support himself and his wife and his youngest child who is a mute. In addition, the two daughters support the four children of their elder sister who were left with their grandparents when their elder sister went back to the Thai border with a second husband. Previously another daughter, now recently married, also worked as a housemaid in Battambang town and provided support:

I have four grandchildren [living with me] plus one of my own children who is a mute. So all in all there are five. Before three daughters helped support me but one got married and now only two support me. But they cannot support me with all the money because we have to pay off our debts.... They are paying off debts and supporting me.... I feel sorry for them because they have no future. With the money they earn, they support me.

But while some older age parents receive important financial support from cross border and internal migrant children, others do not. Some elderly parents receive little or nothing from their migrant children. A 69 year old woman from Treng commune with five children recounts the net loss she incurred from the migrant experience of her son in Thailand:

When my youngest son was in Thailand he used to send me money, about four times. In total the money was about 3,000 to 4,000 Baht. The money was my son's sweat and blood so I did not spend it. Instead I saved the money and bought one Chi of gold and kept it for him.... Then I heard that he was seriously sick and sent to [Banteay Meanchey provincial town]. I had to sell the gold to pay for his treatment. I had to spend more money than the money he sent to me.... I cannot rely on my children. They are all poor.... How can I demand from them when they are even poorer than me?

A 60 year old widow from Treng commune takes care of the three grandchildren of her deceased daughter. She received no support from her only living child, an internal migrant son who lives in the town of Pailin:

[My son] never sends me any money. He came once during the funeral of his sister.... When he went back he did not have any money for the bus fare. I borrowed 15,000 Riels for him to pay for the bus fare to go back. I still owe this money.... I said to my son, "Son ... I am poor now all by myself. Can you come back to live with me? If I do not feel well at times, I can rely on you." He said that he could not come back because he had his upland farm. If he talks like this, how can I rely on him?

Social Contact of Children with Parents

Social contact between parents and adult children is valued in Cambodia. The migration of children away from their parents reduces opportunities for sustained day-to-day interaction and thus threatens to undermine this value. While migration may contribute positively to the economic well-being of migrant families, it may also erode social relationships between parents and children. In the past long distances separating parents and children prohibited regular monthly visits and phone connections were not available. Now the advent and wide use of mobile phones greatly facilitates the ability of parents and migrant children to communicate over long distances separating them.

Not surprisingly, our findings reveal that frequent visiting is clearly related to the location of the migrant child. Children living in the same province but in a different district are far more likely to see the parents at least monthly compared to those in another province including Phnom Penh. Virtually no children living outside the country are able to visit their parents monthly (Table 4). These differences are all statistically significant even after adjustment by logistic regression for age, sex and marital status. Still, only 31 percent of the children living in the same province as their parents had monthly visits. In contrast, the majority of children living outside the districts of their parents irrespective of location talked on the phone with the parents at least monthly. While children outside the country were somewhat less likely to have monthly phone contact, presumably because the cost is higher, the difference between those inside and outside the country as well as between children living in other provinces and in Phnom Penh are not statistically significant even when adjusted by logistic regression. Thus regardless of whether living inside or outside Cambodia, migrant children relied on phone calls rather than visits to maintain contact with their parents.

Table 4. Contact between parents and children living outside the district by location of child: percent and odds ratio adjusted for age, sex and marital status

	Visit at least monthly		Talk on phone at least monthly		Visit or talk on phone	
	percent	adjusted odds ratio	percent	adjusted odds ratio	Percent	adjusted odds ratio
<i>Among children in and outside country</i>						
in Cambodia (reference category)	17.8	--	60.9	--	62.9	--
outside country	1.1	.048***	52.1	.720	51.6	.629
<i>Among children in Cambodia only</i>						
in province (reference category)	30.9	--	64.8	--	67.0	--
in other province(a)	11.8	.286***	56.5	.669	58.4	.644
in Phnom Penh	10.2	.210**	65.0	.782	66.7	.791

Significance levels: *=.05 level; **=.01 level; ***=.001.

Note: Significance levels not shown for percent columns.

Odds ratio adjusted by logistic regression with age entered as a continuous variable.

Base number of cases in: province (97); other province (136); Phnom Penh (59); out of country (95).

(a) excluding Phnom Penh

When discussing social contact between parents and children it is important to keep in mind that very few parents interviewed have no children nearby. Only 9 percent of the elderly respondents have no child in the village, only 6 percent have no child in district, only 4 percent have no child in the province and only 1 percent has no child in Cambodia. The three cases in the last group represent migrant children in Thailand near the border. Thus in the study sites it is extremely rare for all children of elderly parents to leave the country and even quite rare for all children to leave their parents' province.

The open-ended interviews indicate that older age parents in Treng and Talos communes appreciate the ease of phone contact with their children. The 60 year old village chief of Chisang in Treng commune, who has children living outside the district in Battambang town, expresses relief that he can call them when he is sick:

It is good if the children live close by because when I am sick they can serve us in time. For the children who live far away, it takes time for them to come.... At this time, as you know, we can make phone calls. No matter how far away they are, we can contact them. If I tell them I am sick, they would come right away.

Even older persons without mobile phones are often able to use those belonging to a relative or neighbor. Access to a neighbor's mobile phone enables a 61 year old widow from Talos commune to talk with her son, an agricultural laborer working inside the Thai border:

Sometimes [my son working at the Thai border] calls someone here and says he wants to talk with me. So the person brings me the phone. If I call him now, I can talk with him right away. Sometimes I call him once a month or every two weeks ... when I have something to say to him. But when I do not, I just want to ask him if he has found work.

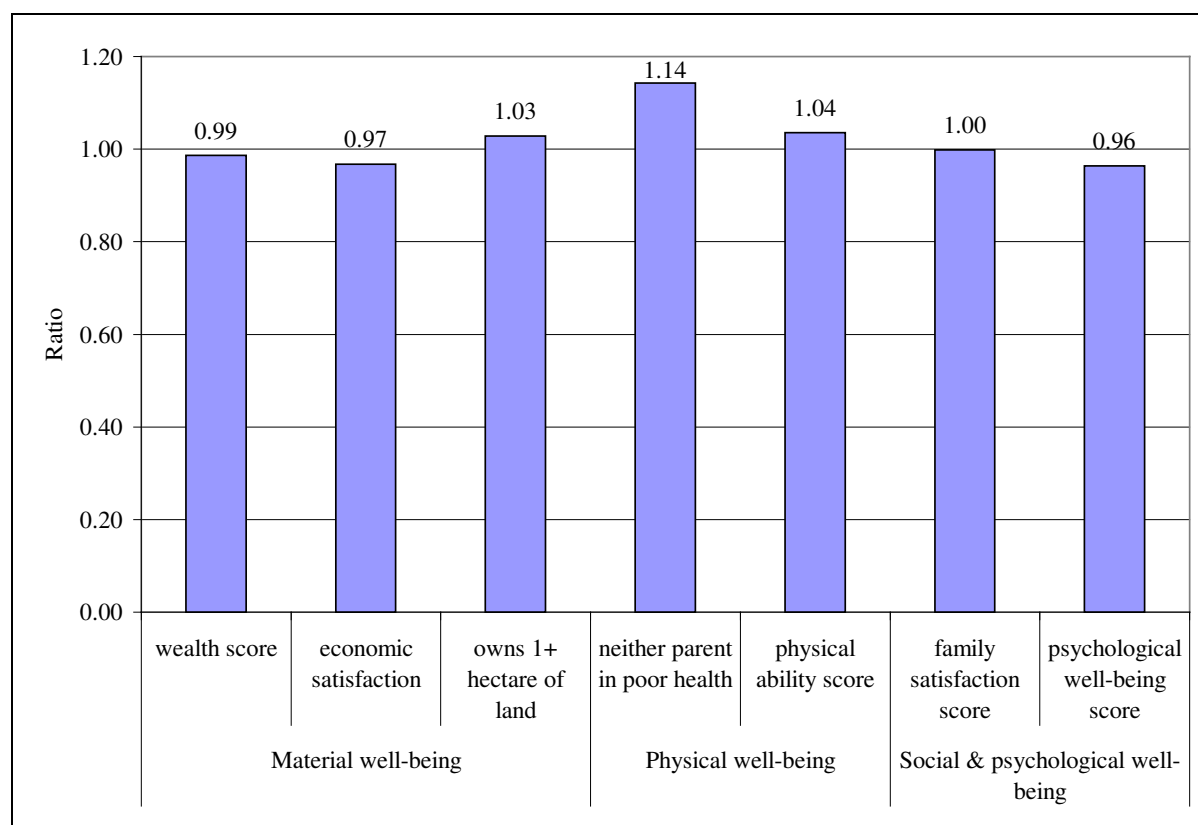
Association with Parents' Well-Being

In general, the well-being of elderly parents with only internal migrant children and those with international migrant children in the sample sites are comparable as indicated by the ratios of a series of measures intended to assess the well-being of parents (Figure 4). These measures cover material, physical, and social and psychological aspects of well-being. None of the differences in these measures between parents with only internal migrant children and those with any international migrant children (with or without an internal migrant child) were statistically significant. This lack of difference may in part reflect that irrespective of whether they have an internal or cross-border migrant, the vast majority have a co-resident child, a situation that may contribute importantly to their well-being on a number of the measures.

The open-ended interviews suggest that sometimes parents' well-being is an important issue for parents and adult children alike in making decisions to migrate or to return. A 62 year old man from Treng commune relies on the support of his elder daughter who works in a Phnom Penh garment factory. At the same time he refuses to let her younger sister leave home to join her:

I will not let [my younger daughter] go. I want her to stay home with her mother to keep her company. Only the elder sister [has permission] to go. If [my younger daughter] goes there [with her sister] then her mother will be alone when I go out [to work]. My wife is scared to stay home alone.

Figure 4. Ratio of well being indicators of parents with international migrant children to those for parents with only internal migrant children



Note: 108 respondents have only internal migrant children and 63 have international migrant children (including 23 who also have an internal migrant child). None of the differences between these two groups of respondents on any of the measures shown is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Wealth score is measured as sum of thirteen household items plus two housing characteristics.

Economic satisfaction ranges from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied)

Poor health refers to self assessed health stated as poor or very poor for either respondent or spouse.

Physical ability score is based on respondent's perceived ability to walk 200 meters, to lift a 5 kilogram bag of rice, and to maintain the house without help from others. Score can range from 0 to 6.

Family satisfaction score is based on respondent's perception of how family gets along and depends on each other and how children are doing with their lives. Scores can range from 3 to 9.

Psychological well-being score is based on six items. Scores can range from 6-18.

A 60 year old divorced woman from Talos commune has five children, four of whom are returned cross-border migrants from Thailand now living with her. The decision of her returned migrant children to remain with her clearly pleases her:

My children wanted to go to Thailand to work packaging cakes. All my children wanted to go but they were concerned that I might become sick. So they would not go. I allowed them to go but they said, "Ma, we are not going because you would be living alone. If something happens to you, and you call us, we would not be able to come back right away." Therefore, they decided to stay back, and work nearby. We have managed to get by until now.

Like decisions not to migrate, decisions to return often consider the well being of older age parents. A 61 year old woman from Treng commune living alone with her nine year old granddaughter asked her daughter working in Thailand to return home to be with her and the child:

[My daughter in Thailand] could not send money home because she did not have any. She could only earn enough money to feed herself.... I asked her to come back because at least we could live together. We can try to find something. Despite hunger, we can stay together.... We never know about our [health]. We may get sick today or tomorrow.... Who is going to look after us? If the children are nearby, it is better.

Children not living in the districts of their elderly parents may likewise visit temporarily to assist their parents in times of illness. The 60 year old chief of Chisang village in Treng commune was deeply moved when his older children came from Battambang town to be with him during an illness:

When I was sick [my three older children] came to see me.... I spent one week at the commune health center. They were worried that I might die. They came both day and night.... They paid for everything; medical bill, medicine, and other costs. I did not have to worry about anything. I had some money but they told me not to pay for anything and to keep the money to buy food when I returned home.... I am really grateful to them. It means that they care about their father.

Similarly a 64 year old father from Treng commune appreciated that his elder daughter left her job in a Phnom Penh garment factory temporarily to care for him while he was sick even though his wife and younger daughter lived at home with him:

[My daughter] was working. Someone called her and asked her to come back from Phnom Penh. She came back to look after me.... When I was sick she took care of me.

In contrast there are cases where older age parents have had little or no contact with their migrant children. For elders who have no other children living nearby this may have severe consequences. The account of an elderly woman from Treng commune who lives alone with her husband poignantly illustrates this circumstance. The woman has two sons both of whom are migrants. One son went to Thailand seven years ago while the other migrated internally in the past year. Neither son has been in contact with their mother since they migrated. Being left behind in this way has obviously taken its toll on her:

I am concerned that being old I cannot earn a living. There is not much work in this area. I cannot rely on my husband's work either because he is also old now. He can only look after other people's cows. He cannot cut wood or collect bamboo shoots for sale.... I only stay at home. Sometimes, I can cook but some other times I cannot.... I am really miserable.... I became sick when my sons left me.... Since they have gone without any news, my illness has gotten worse. I have been thinking about them so much that I could not eat anything.

Older age persons who find solace in their Buddhist beliefs appear to have achieved a sense of well-being as they approach death. A 60 year old *archar* or Buddhist lay leader from Talos commune who has cross-border and internal migrant children narrates how he is preparing for the next life:

I have been an *achar* for five to six years now.... Today I try to seek the benefits for the next life. I am not interested much in the current life. This is because [life] is very short so I am seeking things that are beneficial for the future. We cannot depend on [our] children.... Parents will have to depend on themselves once the children are married.... This is life. Therefore we have to do what we can do now.... We cannot just wait for the children's help.... We should prepare our own place now. This is the life of Cambodians who are Buddhists.

A 70 year old widower from Talos commune has eight children and sufficient land so that only one son migrated out of the district to Phnom Penh. While proud of being able to provide for his family, he regrets that he was unable to conduct a *katrin* or Buddhist gift giving ceremony to the monks:

I am old already, it is normal if I die.... If I die, so be it.... When my wife was alive, I thought about her and the children. But now the children are all married, my wife has died, and I live alone by myself.... When they were here ... I had to earn money. That is why I could not save money to conduct a *katrin*. I could only support my family.... When my wife and children were around, I wanted to have farms and property for my wife and children. But now, I no longer want these. What I want now is good deeds for the next life. When I have a little money, I do a good deed.... With some money, on Buddhist precept day I go to the pagoda.

Conclusions

The findings of our study document clearly that migration of adult children is common in households with older persons in rural Cambodia. Over half of the older persons interviewed in the two study communes have at least one current internal migrant child and almost a fourth have a current international migrant child most of whom are in Thailand. In some cases international migration involves only short distances to areas near the Cambodian border for agricultural work but most that go to Thailand go deeper into the country. The main demographic distinctions among migrants are that the international migrants who go beyond the border region are predominantly males while the internal migrants who go to Phnom Penh tend to be young, female and unmarried.

Migration of adult children from rural areas is often portrayed as leaving elderly parents behind to work on their farms with no one to help. This is not the case in our study sites. Fully four-fifths of respondents had a child living with them and over 90 percent had a child living at least in the same village. This reflects the large family sizes of most currently older persons in Cambodia that allow some children to migrate while others remain with parents. The children who live with or near their parents often help regularly with housework as well as with business or farm work while children who migrated often contribute important monetary support through

remittances. Thus children make different and complementary contributions to their parents, depending on their place of residence.

Despite a general lack of studies worldwide that compare remittances from internal and international migrants, it is generally assumed that international migrants earn more and thus remit larger amounts than do internal migrants (Adams et al, 2009). A CDRI study based on data from the nationally representative 2007 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey suggests too that remittances from international migrants are more effective at reducing poverty than those from internal migrants (Tong, 2010). Our study likewise finds that international migrants are considerably more likely than internal migrants to provide greater financial assistance through remittances, although with an important caveat. Remittances from internal migrants who go to Phnom Penh are comparable to those from cross-border migrants. Still the low monetary values of the remittances in both of these cases supports the findings of other research that remittances in Cambodia are generally spent on recurrent costs of subsistence (Analyzing Development Issues, 2005; Tong, 2010).

That migrants to Phnom Penh do not differ much from international migrants with respect to remitting more money to their parents underscores a central point of our study: differences between internal and international migration and their effects on families are specific to the settings in which they occur. Migrants from our two study sites typically have very modest educations, averaging only between 5-6 years of schooling, with little difference between those who stay within the country and those who cross an international border. Thus even though cross-border migrants can often earn more in less skilled work abroad than at home, they lack employment opportunities for higher paying jobs that are open to well educated and highly skilled migrants from more developed settings.

Parents sometimes provide financial support to migrant children especially for costs incurred at the early stages of the migration process. This was the case for almost half of the migrant children of our survey respondents and modestly more common for children who migrated internationally than for those migrating within Cambodia. At the same time, respondents also were more likely to report that they received more material support from a migrant child than the child received from them over the entire period that the child was gone. Moreover net benefits to parents were more frequently mentioned with respect to international than internal migrant children even though parents were more likely to help pay the costs involved for cross border migration.

Differences are also apparent in the type of social contact maintained with parents. Not surprisingly, internal migrants are able to visit more frequently than those who go abroad and thus can provide face-to-face social support to parents. Still only a modest minority of domestic migrants see their parents at least every few months. Moreover, there is little difference between cross-border and domestic migrants in terms of keeping in contact through phone calls. Internal migrant children are also more likely than international migrants to return to help their parents during illness but international migrants were somewhat more likely than internal migrants to contribute to the medical expenses of their parents.

More generally, parents who have international migrants differ little from those who have only internal migrants on a range of measures of material, physical, social and psychological well-

being. Given the cross-sectional nature of our survey data and our inability to adequately control for the influence of differential selection factors that may characterize migrants and their households of origin, these associations are merely descriptive. Nevertheless, given the particular context within which the migration takes place in the study sites, e.g. the low skill levels of both types of migrants, the ability for parents to keep in contact by phone almost regardless of the migrants location, and the common presence of at least one co-resident child even for parents with migrant children, it is plausible that for older age parents the impacts of internal versus international migration of their children do not differ greatly.

The qualitative interviews with the parents also underscore several commonalities. All parents are concerned about the welfare of their children, both female and male, and appreciate the risks involved in migration, with cross border migration risks recognized as more serious than those associated with internal migration. Parents thus prefer that their cross-border migrant children use formal rather than informal recruitment agents, although some local authorities now recognize the need to scrutinize formal recruitment agencies. While some parents are reluctant to let children migrate, especially daughters, crop failures and growing debt force them to put aside such concerns in hope of receiving potential benefits from remittances. Parents appreciate the access and ease of phone contact with both internal and cross-border migrant children, which allay their fears of not being able to call on children in times of illness. Having some children at home or nearby is also seen as important or even more important for parents' sense of security as having either internal or cross-border migrant children.

The experience of the older age parents with respect to migration reflects its diverse nature in Cambodia. Internal migration is often seasonal and low paid but having a daughter working in a Phnom Penh garment factory can be considerably more beneficial financially. Similarly having migrant children working as agricultural labor migrants just across the Thai border may not generate much financial return but other children may find more lucrative work inside Thailand. As a result, individual experiences of older age migrant households vary considerably. Having migrant children, whether internal, a cross-border or both can be advantageous for some and disadvantageous for others. What accounts for these individual differences? Clearly the type of internal or cross-border work has much to do with the prospects of success. Migrating through formal rather than informal channels may also help to ensure success. But the stories of our elderly respondents point in other directions as well to explain their overall material and psychological well-being. These include the character of their children, having other children living as co-residents or nearby, having sufficient numbers of children to ensure different types of support, having a living spouse, having good health, having land and independent means of subsistence, and having a sense of the spiritual as they approach death.

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