

Chapter 2

Cambodia's migration landscape

Migration has been a major agent in Cambodia's recent demographic and labour market change. Migration is not a new phenomenon, but it is becoming more dynamic, diverse and complex. As well as witnessing a marked increase in the number of emigrants, Cambodia is benefitting from increasing remittances from migration. This chapter gives a brief overview of migration in Cambodia: its drivers and impact, who the migrants are and where they have gone, and what the existing literature tells us about the impact of migration on those left behind. Finally, it lays out Cambodia's policy and institutional framework governing migration.

Cambodia has made significant economic progress since peace was established in the early 1990s. The institutional framework for a market economy has been set up, private investment – both domestic and foreign – has expanded, and the country has become more integrated within Southeast Asia. Successful transformation of Cambodia's economic system has fostered strong economic growth, averaging 7% between 1994 and 2015. It has also transformed itself from a primarily agrarian economy to one based on a more balanced mix of agriculture, industry and services, and lifted per capita income from USD 248 in 1994 to USD 1 159 in 2015.

Despite such impressive achievements, a number of challenges remain – especially in the context of the country's new growth strategy. The economic structure remains narrowly-based and the industrial sector is dominated by the labour-intensive, low value-added production of garments and footwear. The quality of Cambodia's human capital, measured by the Human Development Index, is one of the lowest in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region (HDI, 2015). The labour market is still dominated by poorly educated and low skilled workers; there is a serious lack of semi-skilled and skilled workers to meet changing labour market needs (CDRI, 2013). Poverty and rising inequality remain serious concerns in Cambodia, despite recent declines in the poverty headcount. Another challenge facing Cambodia is the uneven quality of its public institutions (CDRI, 2013). In the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA),¹ Cambodia scored lowest for transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector rating among the series in 2015.

This rapid development has been accompanied by the increasing outflow of a productive workforce to neighbouring countries. Many rural households have made a living out of migration (CDRI, 2009; FitzGerald and Sovannarith, 2007; IOM, 2010; Hing and Sry, forthcoming). Migration has helped households improve their housing conditions, increase the amount and quality of food they consume, access education, reduce poverty and has acted as a safety net when facing income shocks (Maltoni, 2006; CDRI, 2009; Tong, 2012; Roth et al., 2014). Migration has therefore been a major agent in Cambodia's demographic and labour market change.

A key challenge for Cambodia is how to better manage and leverage migration for development. This chapter describes Cambodia's migration landscape, setting the scene for the chapters and analysis which follow. It outlines current trends in migration, and reviews what the existing research

tells us about the key issues linked to migration in the country. It also reviews the role of migration in national development policies, the status of migration-related policies and the institutional framework for managing migration.

A brief overview of migration and remittance trends in Cambodia

Migration is not a new phenomenon, but it is becoming more dynamic, diverse and complex. As well as witnessing a marked increase in the number of emigrants – especially through the official emigration channels – Cambodia is benefitting from increasing remittances from migration. The following section looks at the trends and patterns of migration and remittance inflow.

Migration is a growing phenomenon

In 2015, Cambodia's working age population (15-64) was estimated at 10 million or 64% of the total population; 40% of the total population was in the age range of 15 to 34 (UN DESA, 2015). This demographic trend suggests that the country has a large number of young people entering the labour market. While the majority of them work in the country, more and more Cambodians are emigrating to find jobs abroad, driven by considerable wage differences and limited employment opportunities in the domestic labour market. There were an estimated 1.19 million Cambodian emigrants in 2015, around 7.6% of Cambodia's total population (Table 2.1). This marks an increase of 160% from 2000. Thailand is the most common destination country, receiving 68% of Cambodia's emigrants.

Table 2.1. Migration is a growing phenomenon in Cambodia

	2000	2015
Total population (in thousands)	12 198	15 578
Stock of emigrants	454 941	1 187 142
% of emigrants to total population	3.7%	7.6%
Destination countries (%)		
Thailand	34%	68%
USA	30%	14%
France	16%	5%
Australia	5%	3%
South Korea	0%	3%
Canada	4%	2%
Bangladesh	3%	2%
Malaysia	1%	1%

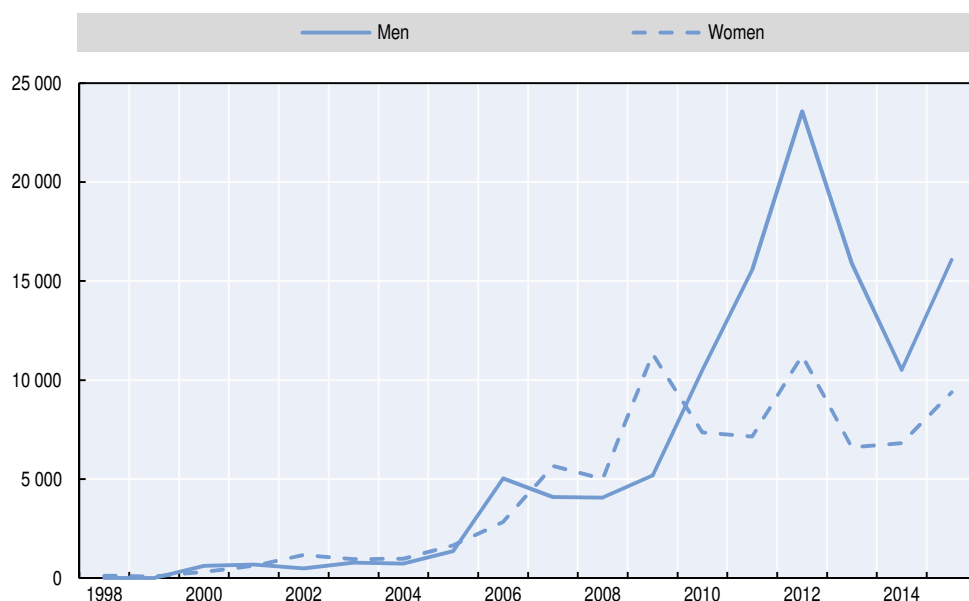
Source: UN DESA (2015), *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 Revision*, database, www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml.

Most Cambodians emigrate through irregular channels (illegal or without authorisation to work). It is estimated that fewer than 10% of Cambodians

emigrate through recognised and legal channels (Tunon and Khleang, 2013). The number of regular Cambodian migrants has increased significantly over the last decade, though they still represent a small share of the total migrant population. Between 1998 and 2015, a total of 209 804 Cambodian workers participated in state-sponsored labour migration programmes (Figure 2.1). Of these, 55% went to Thailand, 25% to Malaysia, 22% to South Korea and 1% to Japan.

Figure 2.1. State-sponsored labour migration programmes continue to be popular, 1998–2015

Number of Cambodian workers sent abroad, by sex



Source: MOLVT (2015), Statistics on Cambodian Workers Officially Sent to Work Abroad.

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Malaysia was the first country to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Cambodia, paving the way for Cambodians to work legally in that country. Cambodians began arriving in Malaysia under this programme in 1998. The recruitment process was managed by employment recruitment agencies licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT). Between 1998 and 2015, Cambodia sent a total of 52 265 workers to Malaysia, 76% of whom were women (employed as domestic workers) and 24% were men (working in construction and manufacturing; Table 2.2). Following a series of reports of abuse and exploitation, however, the Cambodian Government banned sending domestic workers to Malaysia in October 2011. A new MoU between the two countries is currently being considered in order to increase the protection of migrant workers.

Thailand has accepted legal Cambodian migrant workers following an MoU signed in May 2003. Legal Cambodian workers only started to arrive in 2006, however, when Cambodian Inter-Ministerial Working Group conducted a nationality check of irregular Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand and issued them with identity certificates. Between 2006 and 2015, Cambodia officially sent a total of 115 420 migrant workers to Thailand, the majority of whom were men employed in manufacturing and services.

South Korea has allowed Cambodian nationals to work in the country since 2003 through an industrial trainee scheme. More recently it has also created an employment permit system via the Act on Foreign Worker Employment. The placement of migrant workers in South Korea is done by the Cambodia's Manpower Training and Overseas Sending Board, a public agency for recruiting, training, sending and managing Cambodian workers overseas, and created by Sub-decree 70² in 2006. As of 2015, there were 43 920 Cambodian migrant workers employed in South Korea, mostly men working in manufacturing (65%), agriculture (34%) and fisheries (1%).

Table 2.2. Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea host most of Cambodia's official migrant workers

	Thailand (2006-2015)	Malaysia (1998-2015)	South Korea (2003-2015)
Total number of migrants	115 420	52 265	45 351
Female migrants	43 714	37 369	8 208
Male migrants	71 706	14 896	37 143

Source: MOLVT (2015)

Most Cambodian migrants choose irregular routes because they are less costly and complicated. The Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) has compared the costs and time involved in legal and irregular migration. It found that the former costs migrants around USD 700 (to Thailand) and takes three to six months to complete whole migration process, compared to USD 100 and a few days for irregular migration (CDRI, 2009). For seasonal migrants in particular, such channels are more flexible as they often have no formal employment contract and are free to change employers or return home as they wish. Their migration is usually helped by pioneer migrants or a broker (known locally as *me kchal*). The main destination for irregular migrants is Thailand. In 2009 there were an estimated 120 000 irregular Cambodian migrants in Thailand (Paitionpong and Chalamwong, 2012), mostly engaged in agriculture and construction (Table 2.3). This is probably a large underestimation, however, given that in June 2014 more than 250 000 irregular Cambodian emigrants returned home prompted by fear of arrest by Thai authorities as a result of a crackdown.

Table 2.3. **Irregular Cambodian migrants in Thailand work in a range of sectors, 2009**

Industry	People	%
Fisheries	14 969	12.0
Fisheries-related	6 020	4.8
Farming and livestock	24 085	19.3
Farming and livestock-related	7 077	5.7
Construction	32 465	26.0
Mining/quarrying	61	0.1
Wholesale and retail	4 778	3.8
Food and beverage (salespersons)	4 483	3.6
Housemaids	6 578	5.3
Others	24 245	19.4
Total	124 761	100

Source: Paitoonpong, S. and Y. Chalamwong (2012), *Managing International Labor Migration in ASEAN: A Case of Thailand*, <http://tdri.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/h117.pdf>

In 2011, with financial support from the United Nations Population Fund, the National Institute of Statistics launched the Cambodia Rural Urban Migration Project (CRUMP) with the primary objective of collecting data on the characteristics of migrants and to investigate the linkages between migration and the welfare of individuals, families and communities. Descriptive data from the CRUMP show that the gender distribution of Cambodian international migrants is fairly even, at 54% men versus 46% women (MOP, 2012). The majority of migrants are young, on average 25 years old. About 8% of migrants are children under 18, 48% are between 18 and 24, 32% are between 25 and 34 and 12% are over 34 years of age (Table 2.4). The majority of Cambodian migrants have a low level of formal education, though male migrants tend to be more educated than women. The data also suggest that the main reason for migration is to seek employment. Most adult migrants seek advice from their parents in making the decision to migrate, while some took the decision themselves.

Remittances are growing in volume

From a macroeconomic perspective, remittances are a good source of foreign exchange for Cambodia's economy. Remittances from Cambodian migrants increased in volume, steadily between 2000 and 2008, from USD 121 million to USD 188 million or 3% of GDP (Figure 2.2). They decreased slightly over 2009 but rose again to reach a record high of USD 542 million in 2015. In relation to GDP, the share of remittances is rapidly increasing since 2014 after having had a decreasing trend for a decade.

About 70% of Cambodian migrants send money back home. The amount varies according to the destination country and type of work. Migrant workers in South Korea, for example, send on average USD 623 a year, compared to USD 306

for those working in Malaysia.⁴ Housemaids in Thailand send home an average of USD 334 a year, compared to USD 322 for those working in manufacturing and USD 265 for those working in the construction sector (Chan, 2009). The amount of remittances sent back home also differs according to the length of stay in the destination country. The longer migrants stay, the more remittances they send or bring home. Workers near the border brought back between USD 30 and USD 84 each time they returned home, while those who stayed longer remitted USD 150 to USD 180 each time (CDRI, 2009). In the latest survey by the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (of 500 migrant households), seasonal migrants accounted for 5% of Cambodia's total migrant population (CDRI, 2009). On average, seasonal migrants go to work in Thailand twice a year, earning about USD 140 a month.

Table 2.4. Most Cambodian emigrants are young and low-skilled
Demographic characteristics of migrant workers, 2011 (%)

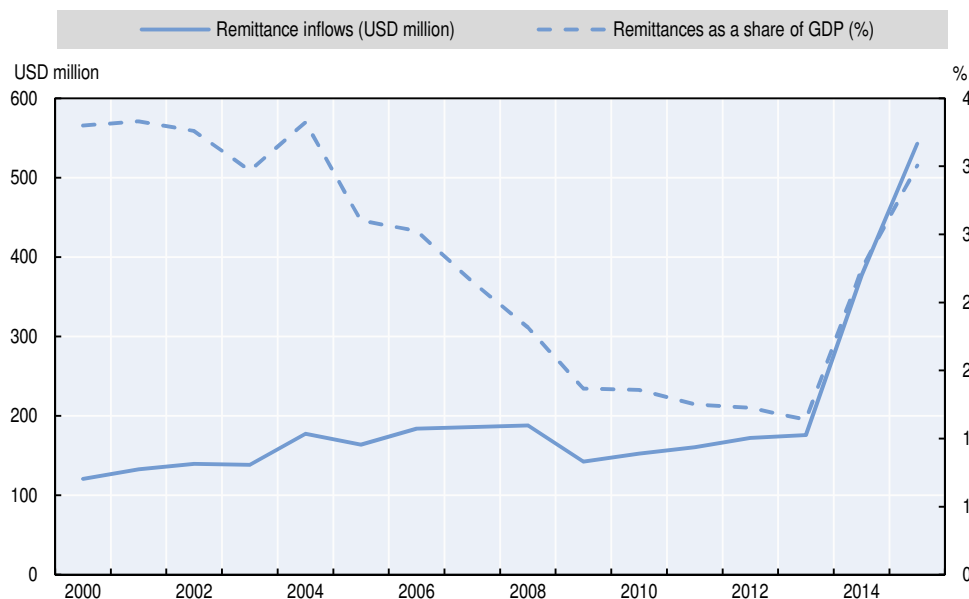
	Male	Female	Total
Gender	53.6	46.4	100
Age (mean)	25.7	25.2	25.4
Under 18	6.3	9.5	7.7
18 to 24	47.8	48.2	47.9
25 to 34	33	30.4	31.7
35+	13	11.9	12.4
Education			
None	7.3	11.3	9.15
Primary	50.2	56.9	53.3
Secondary	39.7	30.1	35.3
Higher	2.8	1.6	2.2
Reasons for migration			
Work-related	97.6	91.8	94.9
Education	1.5	1.2	1.4
Marriage	0.6	6.3	3.2
Other	0.3	0.7	0.5
Decision to migrate			
Decided alone	20.9	20.7	20.8
Encouraged by parents	70.9	72.7	71.7
Encouraged by others	8.1	6.6	7.4

Source: MOP (2012)³

There are a few ways for Cambodian migrant workers to send money home. The most popular channel for those working in Thailand is through a money transfer operator who conducts the whole process over the telephone. The service charge is around 4 to 5% of the sum transferred. Those who work along the border send money via their relatives and friends (CDRI, 2009). Around 75% of migrants working in Malaysia send remittances through middlemen who travel directly from Malaysia to Cambodia. These informal methods of sending money home are better established than the use of banks.

Figure 2.2. **Remittances to Cambodia are growing rapidly in volume, 2000-2015**

Total remittances (million USD) and share of remittances as a share of GDP (%)



Source: World Bank (2016), World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>.

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What are the key issues and knowledge gaps?

The research on Cambodian migration is spread thinly over a range of topics and methodologies. Most studies fall into three broad themes: the determinants of migration; challenges in the migration process; and the social and economic impacts of migration.

Higher wages are a key pull factor for migrants

Migration in Cambodia is largely a rural phenomenon. Several studies have attributed migration to push factors which include poverty, lack of employment and alternative sources of income, landlessness, debt and natural disasters (Maltoni, 2006; Chan, 2009; IOM, 2010). Pull factors such as wage differentials also play a role: there is a substantial wage gap between Cambodia and the migrant destination countries. The monthly minimum wage in Cambodia is USD 140, compared to nearly USD 300 in seven Thai provinces, and approximately USD 790 in Korea (Tunon and Khleang, 2013). Cambodia's monthly minimum wage is higher than in Lao PDR (USD 111) and Myanmar (USD 67), which explains why these are less attractive destination countries. In 2014 Cambodia's per capita income (measured as GDP per capita) was five times lower than Thailand's and 11 times lower than Malaysia's (World Bank, 2016).

Another pull factor comes from social networks – the relationships that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Massey et al., 1993). A majority of Cambodian migrants received help from relatives, friends, villagers or brokers for their initial migration journey; while some pioneer migrants who have good connections with employers are also involved in the migration business (Chan, 2009; IOM, 2010). The CDRI's latest survey finds that about half of migrants went to work in Thailand with the help of a broker, 29% with the help of relatives, 4% via friends, and 3% via recruitment agencies (Hing and Sry forthcoming).

Cambodian migrant workers are vulnerable to abuse

Several studies argue that Cambodian migrant workers, both regular and irregular, face multi-faceted problems at several stages of the migration process. Common problems during recruitment include the excessive extraction of payment for migration, confiscation of passports, and insufficient or false provision of information about work conditions (Lee, 2007; Neone, 2012; UNIAP, 2011). The most common abuses in the workplace include physical assault; forced labour; detention in the receiving country without salary or a reduced salary; unpaid overtime or overwork; deprivation of health care and food; and beating, torture and rape (ADHOC, 2012; Lee, 2007; Naro, 2009).

Many studies point to the lack of an effective regulatory and institutional framework for migration. The current policy and legislative framework for regulating labour migration and management in Cambodia is outdated and contains loopholes that are exploited by opportunistic recruiters and brokers (Lee, 2007). The legal framework in Cambodia is struggling to keep up with the rapid evolution of labour migration trends, leaving thousands of migrant workers without the critical protections that robust monitoring and regulation should provide (TAF, 2011). As such, people who engage in migrant-sending/facilitating business are increasingly taking advantage of the growing space in which irregular migration can be pursued with little or no risk.

The impacts of migration on households are mixed

The research on Cambodian emigration mostly uses small-scale surveys and perception questions to measure the impact of migration on household livelihoods. Only a few studies – e.g. Tong (2012), Roth et al. (2014) and Hing, Lun and Phann (2014) – analyse national survey data using econometric techniques. Most of the studies conclude that migration helps improve livelihoods in Cambodia. The most significant impact of remittances is found to be an increase in the amount and types (quality) of food consumed in the household (ADB, 2005). This includes greater food security throughout the year. Remittances are also used to satisfy basic needs or to repay debt (Maltoni, 2006). The overall

economic benefits for migrants and their families outweighed the costs (CDRI, 2009). The majority of migrants manage to earn money and send remittances home, although those who failed are in serious debt as a consequence. In several migration households and communities, migration was perceived as a critical channel for improving well-being (FitzGerald and Sovannarith, 2007).

Empirical research provides specific indications of the impacts. Using the Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2007,⁵ Tong (2012) found that international remittances account for 20% of households' total income and help reduce poverty by 7.35%. The study, however, shows that remittances have little impact on income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient. In other words, while remittances increase household income they do not do much to reduce the income gap. The findings of Roth et al. (2014), who used propensity score matching in impact estimation using CSES 2009, were more or less consistent with those of Tong (2012). Their findings suggest that international remittances reduced the headcount poverty rate by 7% points. Emigration also helped the depth and severity of poverty. However, they found that emigration generated a "dependency effect" by reducing the weekly hours worked by employed adults by 5-9%. Hing and Sry (forthcoming) found that migration reduced poverty by increasing ownership of durable goods and quality accommodation. The gender of the migrant and duration of migration are significant factors in explaining migrant households' varying ability to reduce poverty.

A recent empirical study of the impact of migration on the well-being of children left behind focuses on three different sets of outcomes: education, child labour and health (Hing, Lun and Phann, 2014). Based on CSES 2009, the study employs instrumental variable regression to estimate the coefficients, taking village-level migration networks as an instrument. Regression results found that:

- Migration has a significant negative effect on school attendance. Children in migrant families are more likely to drop out of school. The main reasons include: children have no aspiration to study, they must contribute to household chores, and they must contribute to household income. The magnitude of the estimated effect is worse for girls: 73.8% of household heads would take female children out of school if needed. This reflects customary thinking, as nearly half of household heads still believe girls are better suited to household chores than attending school and 20.3% said it is risky for girls to go far from home. Only 20.4% see girls as more in demand by the labour market.
- Migration has a positive relationship with educational attainment, though its causal effect is not statistically significant.
- Children in migrant households have a 27% higher probability of participating in economic activities than those in non-migrant households.
- Migration has no significant impact on the vaccination of children, but it does affect children's health, evidenced by an increasing number of injuries and illnesses as well as malnutrition among migration households.

- Migration is an important, but not the only, factor affecting children's well-being. Families' socio-economic status, such as household size, household labour structure and composition, education level of household head and other household members, residential area and wealth status, also influence children's well-being.

This review of literature on migration in Cambodia suggests that most research has focused on the causes, issues and impacts of migration. However, less has been done to understand the relationship between migration and other sectors, such as the labour market, agriculture, education and investment. These are key research gaps which this report aims to fill.

What role does migration play in national development strategies?

Despite its increasing social and economic importance, international migration has yet to be integrated into national development plans. Past national development plans barely mention migration. With the increasing economic opportunities and risks associated with migration, however, there has recently been a notable shift in development policy focus. In July 2013, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) issued a guideline on the management of migration requiring the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) to simplify the procedures required to emigrate, reduce recruitment fees, and improve monitoring of recruitment agencies (RGC 2013). It also requires that relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC), the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) enhance co-ordination and facilitation of all migration-related matters.

Migration is only now appearing in national development strategies

The National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 incorporates international migration to some extent. The following migration-related challenges and measures are outlined in the employment and labour market section:

- Improving institutional capacity and co-ordination for migration-related policy implementation; improving procedures for the management of Cambodian workers overseas, both legally and illegally.
- Enhancing the protection of rights, health and safety of Cambodian overseas workers; establishing a labour attaché in Cambodian embassies.
- Developing a National Employment Policy with three strategic goals: (1) to increase decent and productive employment opportunities; (2) to enhance skills and human resources development; and (3) to strengthen labour market governance. One of the strategies to achieve the third goal is to oversee and protect migrant workers in obtaining decent employment and skill recognition.

At the sectoral policy level, the MOLVT's Strategic Plans 2010-2013 and 2014-2018 view migration as an employment opportunity for the growing domestic labour force. The latest plan strives to improve the management of overseas employment services; create an employment permit system for Cambodian migrants; and protect migrant workers as a means to "promote" employment abroad.

There are few policies governing migration

The cross-border movement of labour in Cambodia has taken place for many years in the absence of any concrete migration policy. Sub-decree 57 on the Sending of Khmer Workers to Work Abroad, dated 20 July 1995, is the only primary law regulating labour migration from Cambodia. Aiming at formalising the process of cross-border labour emigration, the sub-decree gave the then Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation⁶ the competence to permit any company wishing to send Khmer labourers to work overseas through a ministerial order known as "*Prakas*".

It was not until 2010 that the first policy on labour migration for Cambodia was formulated (MOLVT, 2010) in response to the complications and dynamics of migration issues. The policy, which was prepared through a series of consultative discussions involving the relevant government agencies, workers' and employers' organisations, international agencies, non-government and civil society organisations, covers only emigrants abroad and focuses on three strategic areas: (1) improved governance of labour migration; (2) protection and empowerment of migrant workers; and (3) harnessing the potential of labour migration for Cambodia's economic development. Key measures proposed in the policy are:

- to formulate a comprehensive legal and institutional framework governing labour migration
- to mainstream the labour migration agenda within the national development agenda
- to review the effectiveness and costs of the legal labour-migration process
- to disseminate information regarding the labour migration process
- to enter into bilateral co-operation with other major labour-receiving countries to create a wider and more diversified foreign labour market for Cambodian migrant workers; and to negotiate a standard employment contract with labour-receiving countries
- to extend protection of migrant workers by posting labour attachés in major destination countries
- to establish a welfare fund or special insurance scheme for migrant workers to cope with contingencies

- to promote access to financial services by migrant workers and their families and to support the productive investment /use of remittances
- to set up systems for registration, reintegration, and skills accreditation for returning migrant workers.

Assessment of the implementation of this specific policy shows that Cambodia has made slow progress in migration management. Of the 79 activities listed in the policy, 21.5% are assessed as being on target, 34% are progressing, and 44.5% are not on target (MOLVT, 2014). Of the activities that are on target and progressing, most are undertaken with the support of donor partners and NGOs. The activities concerning harnessing labour migration for development are much further behind, with around 62% of the activities identified as not on target. Uneven policy implementation is in part due to a lack of ownership of the policy outside MOLVT, and the lack of an oversight body for monitoring and evaluation.

The second policy on labour migration for Cambodia was launched in December 2014. The overall policy objective is to protect and empower migrant workers through the complete migration cycle, ensuring that migration is a positive and profitable experience for individual workers, their families and communities. As in the previous policy, the strategic targets are on governance, protection and migration for development. To harness labour migration for development, the policy contains the following action plans:

- mainstream migration into the national social and economic development plan and strategies
- promote the effective use of the diaspora's resources (skills, and financial) for community development
- facilitate the efficient flow of worker remittances, encourage access to financial services by migrant workers, and promote the productive use of remittances for local economic development
- increase work with financial institutions to scale up remittance facilities to communes with a high migration rate and reduce the cost of remittance transfers
- provide information to migrant workers and their families regarding the management of their finances, including remittances, through standardised pre-departure training
- assist in linking migrant worker families with financial institutions to obtain loans for starting up local businesses
- promote the development of village development funds or village savings groups
- support entrepreneur training for migrant workers and their family members
- establish a skills recognition system to maximise the talents and skills acquired by returned migrant workers

- strengthen employment services in counselling, skill-matching, and job placement for returned migrant workers
- support local investment programmes, provide small-business counselling, and set up financing facilities for returned migrant workers.

What is the institutional framework governing migration?

The MOLVT is the primary body managing labour migration, in association with other relevant line ministries such as MOI, MFAIC and the Council of Ministers. The Department of Employment and Manpower of the General Directorate of Labour is the major office managing the migration of Cambodian workers abroad. Its tasks involve selecting and licensing employment agencies; monitoring and evaluating recruitment agencies; resolving disputes between migrant workers and domestic employment agencies and between migrant workers and their employers; supporting employment agencies in sending workers abroad; and preventing illegal recruitment. The department has five bureaus, responsible for labour inspections, labour disputes, employment and manpower, child labour and occupational health. The Manpower Training and Overseas Sending Board (MTOSB) was added to the structure by Sub-decree 70 in July 2006. It is a public employment agency tasked with recruiting, training, and sending workers to South Korea. It also comprises a special unit within the MOLVT facilitating government-to-government labour migration agreements.

Other ministries have limited and specific engagement. The MOI is responsible for providing passports and preventing illegal recruitment and cross-border human trafficking. The MFAIC is in charge of distributing all relevant documents and regulations, facilitating legal labour migration and managing and resolving disputes between workers and their employers in receiving countries via Cambodian embassies. The Council of Ministers participates in the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Implementation of the MoU with Thailand. There are two inter-ministerial working groups specifically dealing with migration. The group for implementing the MoU with Thailand was created on 10 January 2005 with members from the relevant ministries. Its main tasks are verifying the nationality of illegal Cambodian migrant workers and issuing them with a certificate of identity. The Inter-ministerial Taskforce for Migration was created by Prakas 012/07 in January 2007 to develop and implement policy and action plans on labour migration.

Another important institutional mechanism is the Migration Working Group established in 2012 under the Secretariat of the National Committee to Lead the Suppression of Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Labour, and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children, now called the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT). The overall purpose of the group is to promote and protect the safety, rights, and interests of migrants in a way that is gender responsive by using a multi- disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach.

MOI chairs this group, and there are number of vice-chairs, including the MOLVT, MOWA and the Ministry of Justice. Some are critical of the performance of the Working Group and they even suggest a change, especially in terms of empowerment and the leading role of MOLVT.

Like many public institutions, the MOLVT has capacity limitations which include lack of staff and resources, weak co-ordination among relevant ministries and across countries, ineffective mechanisms for monitoring and supervising recruitment agencies and mechanisms to settle grievances. There is no easy way for migrant workers to file complaints about abuse or obtain support in cases of violation of labour rights. This makes migrants vulnerable vis-à-vis recruitment agencies and employers. Cambodia does not yet have a system that can administer and manage labour migration effectively. Private agencies are profit-driven, and weak monitoring leaves room for opportunistic agencies to ignore rules and standards. There are numerous cases of private recruitment agencies extracting excessive payments from workers, confiscating workers' passports, not providing a standard employment contract and neglecting the welfare and protection of workers (Lee, 2007).

In addition, policy and institutional frameworks are seen as lacking coherence and efficiency. Even though migration is a cross-cutting issue that falls under the authority of several ministries and institutions, the issue has not received enough attention in sectoral development policy design. Consequently, information exchange, inter-ministerial consultations, and joint implementation of migration policies and programmes are weak and limited. These challenges have been firmly recognised by the policy on labour migration for Cambodia 2014. One of its three strategic targets is to improve migration governance through: strengthening the existing roles of the MOLVT and Provincial Departments of Labour and Vocational Training; reviewing the operational structures of the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce for Migration alongside the National Committee to Counter Human Trafficking labour migration working group; and strengthening the enforcement of migration laws.

Conclusions

The recent progress in mainstreaming migration within certain policy areas is encouraging as it signifies recognition of the social and economic contribution of migration and that migration is linked to a number of policy areas. Despite these positive developments, bringing migration into national and sectoral development plans and setting up a more integrated mechanism to systematically deal with the issue are the real challenges, especially for institutions which lack human and financial resources. Systematic studies to understand thoroughly the relationship between migration and public policies have been scarce and sketchy. This report aims to fill this key research gap.

Notes

1. See <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/CPIA>.
2. The Sub-decree was specifically designed to regulate the sending of workers to the Republic of Korea. It defines the guidelines for the implementation of a public recruitment system, which will coexist with the private agencies. The Manpower Training and Overseas Sending Board (MTOSB) oversees the recruitment, training, and sending of workers to South Korea.
3. The report extracts from comprehensive migration survey involving three sets of questionnaires: one for rural households, one for village chiefs and another for recently arrived migrants in Phnom Penh. Interviews with rural households were conducted in 375 villages with 1 500 non-migrant and 3 000 migrant households. The rural survey of 375 village chiefs sought to understand village characteristics and any related developments. Surveyed provinces were Oddar Meanchey, Pailin, Phnom Penh, Preah Sihanouk, Preah Vihear, Prey Veng, Pursat, Ratanakkiri, Siem Reap, Stung Treng, Svay Rieng and Takeo. The Phnom Penh survey interviewed 1 000. This data set provides rich migration information, ranging from personal characteristics of migrants and migrants' contact and behaviour towards their families to perceived impacts of migration on household livelihoods and village labour markets.
4. Author's calculation based on data from MOP (2012).
5. The CSES 2007 was managed by the National Institute of Statistics during July and September. The survey is nationally representative, consisting of 3 593 households, of which 2 228 are rural.
6. Now the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT).

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