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Vulnerability and Migration in Cambodia

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May 2019

World Food Programme
Cambodia Country Office

Contents

List of boxes, figures, and tables	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Executive summary	v
1. Introduction.....	1
2. The survey, limitations and the analysis.....	2
2.1 The survey	2
2.2 The limitations	3
2.3 The analysis	4
3. The context.....	4
3.1. Migration landscape in Cambodia.....	4
3.2. Impact of migration.....	5
3.3. Relevant policies	6
4. Findings	8
4.1. Migration pattern and trends	8
4.2. Characteristics of the migrants and migrant households.....	10
4.3. Drivers of migration	18
4.4. Impacts of migration.....	20
5. Discussion and future research	25
5.1. Patterns, trends and drivers	25
5.2. Impacts on migrants (and those brought along).....	26
5.3. Impacts on left behind families.....	28
5.4. Suggested topics for future research.....	30

List of boxes, figures, and tables

Boxes

Box 1: Definitions of migration, migrants and migrant-households	1
Box 2: Survey modules.....	2

Figures

Figure 1: Map of the ecological zones in Cambodia	3
Figure 2: Percentage of households with at least one migrant (for the period of	8
Figure 3: Share of migration by destination.....	9
Figure 4: Percentage of men/women who migrate by duration of migration.....	10
Figure 5: Percentage of households who reported remittances sent back home	13
Figure 6: Methods of sending remittances back home	13
Figure 7: Percentage of migrants who experienced safety issues among different	14
Figure 8: Percentage of migrant households in each income quintile.....	15
Figure 9: Average land size by migration status and region.....	16
Figure 10: Average income and expenditure per capita per year (in KHR).....	16
Figure 11: Who is the caregiver of the children of migrant households	23

Tables

Table 1: Number of sampled households by ecological zone	2
Table 2: Migration destination by duration of migration.....	9
Table 3: Migration destination by place of origin	9
Table 4: Type of migrant by duration of migration (2010-2016).....	11
Table 5: Gender and migration destination.....	11
Table 6: Gender of migrant and types of work	11
Table 7: Types of work by destination	12
Table 8: Types of work before and after migration among migrants aged 13-18 years .	12
Table 9: Types of income activities of migrant and non-migrant households	15
Table 10: Income (excluding remittances) and expenditure of migrant and	16
Table 11: Debts	17
Table 12: Purposes of loans	17
Table 13: Loan sources	18
Table 14: Income and expenditure per capita per year and debt among migrant	18
Table 15: Stated main reasons for migrating	19
Table 16: Source of information for migration work opportunity	19
Table 17: Average remittances as reported in household income (in KHR).....	21
Table 18: Household perceptions about the impact of remittances on household	21
Table 19: Food security situation by IDPoor status and gender of household head	22
Table 20: Food security status among migrant households by region.....	23
Table 21: Health status of children under five	24

Acknowledgement

Following the drought associated with the 2015/2016 El Niño event, the World Food Programme (WFP), together with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and in collaboration with the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) conducted a national household survey in May 2016 to better understand how households are impacted by and recover from shocks, their risks and vulnerabilities, and how their resilience can be built. A subsequent round of the national household survey was conducted in December 2016. This report is based mainly on the December 2016 survey (and to a lesser extent, the May 2016 survey) together with secondary data.

This report was prepared by Kimchoeun Pak, an independent researcher, based on analysis by Sodany Saing, an independent analyst. Additional analysis, inputs and review were provided by World Food Programme staff, namely Yav Long, Chanvibol Choeur, Jonathan Rivers, Kurt Burja, Indira Bose and Francesca Erdelmann. The report was designed by Chamroeun Chim and Ratanak Leng. Data collection was done by SBK Research and Development. Technical review was provided by Brett Dickson from the International Organization for Migration.

Funding was provided by the United Nations Development Group (Asia-Pacific) under the project, “The pathways of poverty, vulnerability and resilience in Cambodia: A UN joint research and advocacy project”, which was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, WFP, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Executive summary

With a young population and fast economic growth, Cambodia has experienced a big and rising wave of migration, both within and to outside the country. This report provides new data and analysis to generate a better and updated understanding on the trends, drivers and impacts that migration has created so far, with a focus on rural vulnerability. The findings presented by the report also contribute to the future strategy on food security and nutrition in Cambodia. The findings are based on a household survey which was conducted in December 2016 with a total of 2,341 rural households in all 24 provinces (160 villages) in the country.

For the period of 2010-2016, the data shows about 35 percent of the households in rural areas report having at least 1 member migrating. Plateau areas, however, have the lowest percentage of households with a migrant (17 percent). The duration of migration varied: 33 percent of migrant households report that migration is short-term/seasonal (6 months or shorter), 43 percent report it is long term (6 months to 3 years) and 24 percent report it is permanent (longer than 3 years). In terms of destination, rural-rural migration accounts for 13 percent, rural-urban 57 percent and cross border (mostly Thailand) for 31 percent, of total migration. Phnom Penh is the most preferred option for both permanent and long-term migrants, while migration to Thailand has been high not only for long-term but also seasonal and permanent migration.

Four out of five (79 percent) migrants are aged between 17 to 35 years old. More than 50 percent of them are men (mostly, sons of the household heads). However, for households that have more than 1 migrant, the chance that the second and third migrants are women (mostly the daughters of the household heads) become higher. The gender of the migrants did not make any difference to the duration of migration. The preferred destination among all migrants, regardless of gender, is Phnom Penh. However, the proportion of women migrants going to Phnom Penh is higher than the proportion of men, while the proportion of men going to Thailand is higher than the proportion of women. Men migrants are about five times more likely than women migrants to work as construction workers, while women migrants are about four times more likely than men migrants to work as factory workers. Only women are reported to have engaged in domestic work. Other types of work, however, do not display substantial gender differences.

The type of work differs by destination. 30 percent of those going to Thailand are reported to be working as construction workers and 23 percent as agricultural workers, while the largest proportion of migrants to Phnom Penh work as factory workers and in construction. There is no strong correlation between migrants' work and/or what they did before migrating and what they do at the destination. About 78 percent of households having one or more migrants reported that their migrated members send back remittances.

About 6 percent of the migrants are reported to have faced some safety issues. Migrant and non-migrant households are similar in terms of family size (on average 5 people), number of income earners (on average 2), and number and types of income generation activities. However, they differ on two important economic aspects: (i) migrant households have 1.7 ha of land on average compared to 3.5 ha for non-migrant households. This difference is more pronounced for the Tonle Sap and Plain areas; and (ii) the annual income of migrant households accounts for 61 percent of their annual expenditure per capita, while it is 87 percent for non-migrant households. This indicates that a proportion of the expenditure of migrant households are likely to be covered by remittances. About 55 percent of both migrant and non-migrant households report having debts.

As to what drives migration, the data suggests that poverty (exacerbated by natural disasters) might have pushed people to out-migrate, especially when those migrant households have insufficient land to engage in farming and high expenditures that cannot be covered by their income. The data, however, also suggests that, at least over time, poverty might have become less a factor compared to a combination of key pull and facilitating factors, such as the prospect of higher income generation opportunities, better connectivity, mobility, and youth's overall aspiration to live a life outside of their villages.

The impacts of migration are varied. On one hand, migration has helped young people get higher paying jobs in the cities and abroad to support themselves and, in most cases, their families back in the provinces. Migrants, through mobile phones and other forms of communication, have been able to regularly contact their families back home. However, a few key concerns are worth noting. The first, as indicated in other studies, is the limited impact that migration has made on skill development of the migrants. The second is migration potentially leading to school drop-out and its negative impact on children brought along. The third is the safety and vulnerability status of the migrants, both those coming to the cities and to other countries.

For the families left behind, the impacts identified have been mixed. About 80 percent of migrant households report receiving remittances from those who migrated. The remittances have been reportedly used to cover part of the families' daily needs. However, there is no noticeable difference between migrant and non-migrants households in terms of food consumption, food sources, and coping strategies. Overall, inadequate dietary diversity and hunger are still problems for both groups and across regions. The data offers limited insights into the relationship between remittances (and, by extension, migration) and household indebtedness. Other studies have suggested there is a strong positive correlation (or even two-way causation) relationship between migration and loans from micro-finance institutions (MFIs).

According to the data, almost 40 percent of migrant households report that children under five years were placed in the care of grandparents. The impact upon the children left behind in terms of nutrition and psychological well-being requires further research. The impact of migration on left-behind spouses and the elderly is also little researched.



1. Introduction

Cambodia has achieved significant growth since the mid-1990s, becoming a low middle-income country in 2016. About 14 percent of the population is estimated to be poor (in 2014), yet a significant portion of the population remains 'near poor', i.e., living just above the poverty line and thus economically vulnerable.¹ At the same time, with a young population and fast economic growth, the country has experienced a big and rising wave of migration, both within and to outside the country. Migration, global experiences show, presents both opportunities and challenges, depending on how well it is managed. Similar observations have been made in the case of Cambodia. Various studies have been done on the subject, but the changes have been fast, complicated and wide in scope, and thus require new data and analysis to generate a better and updated understanding on the trends, drivers and impacts that migration has created so far.

The World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) and the Provincial Committees for Disaster Management (PCDMs), conducted a nationwide household resilience survey in May 2016. A subsequent round of the national household survey was conducted in December 2016. Migration is one of the focus areas in the household surveys and this present report is based primarily on data collected in December 2016.

Migration refers to the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification². In this report, migration is divided into short-term/seasonal (6 months or shorter), long term (6 months to 3 years) and permanent (longer than 3 years).

Migrant is defined as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

Migrant households in this study refers to those with one or more family members who have migrated out either on a short-term/seasonal, long-term or permanent basis.

Box 1: Definitions of migration, migrants and migrant-households

¹ World Bank (2017) Cambodia: systematic country diagnostic

² <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>

The report makes the following contributions:

- » It provides empirical evidence on migration which can be used to inform the review of key strategies in Cambodia relating to food security and nutrition, the development of the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), as well as development partners’ country strategies and plans.
- » The additional data on migration is a direct contribution to dialogue on the ongoing localization process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in which migration is a central cross-cutting theme,³
- » The study provides statistical inputs to inform the formulation of new and implementation of existing policies, including the Labour Migration Policy (2014) and Social Protection Policy Framework (2017), and
- » The findings from the study are a contribution to the growing body of literature about migration in Cambodia.

In the following, the report presents the survey design, the context of migration in Cambodia, the findings of the household survey,⁴ and a list of suggested questions for future research.

2. The survey, limitations and the analysis

2.1 The survey

The household survey was conducted from 11-26 December 2016 with a total of 2,341 rural households in 160 villages in 24 provinces in the country. The number of households was stratified by four ecological zones, namely the Plains, Tonle Sap, Plateau, and Coastal. The survey uses a stratified two-stage cluster design with probability proportional to size sampling. Data collection involved 11 enumeration teams. Data collection was conducted via mobile devices, using the Kobo ToolBox mobile data collection application. Box 2 includes the survey modules.

Ecological zones	Number of villages	Number of households
Plain	40	585
Tonle Sap	40	584
Plateau	40	591
Coastal	40	581
Total	160	2,341

Table 1: Number of sampled households by ecological zone

- » Household demographics
- » Water and sanitation
- » Household income and expenditures
- » Household indebtedness
- » Household agricultural and fishery
- » Livestock ownership and health
- » Household food security
- » Child health and diets
- » Migration patterns
- » Protection and gender

Box 2: Survey modules

3 See for instance, ODI (2017) Social protection, migration and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development

4 This report is based primarily on a national household survey conducted in December 2016. Where relevant reference is also made to a national household survey conducted in May 2016.

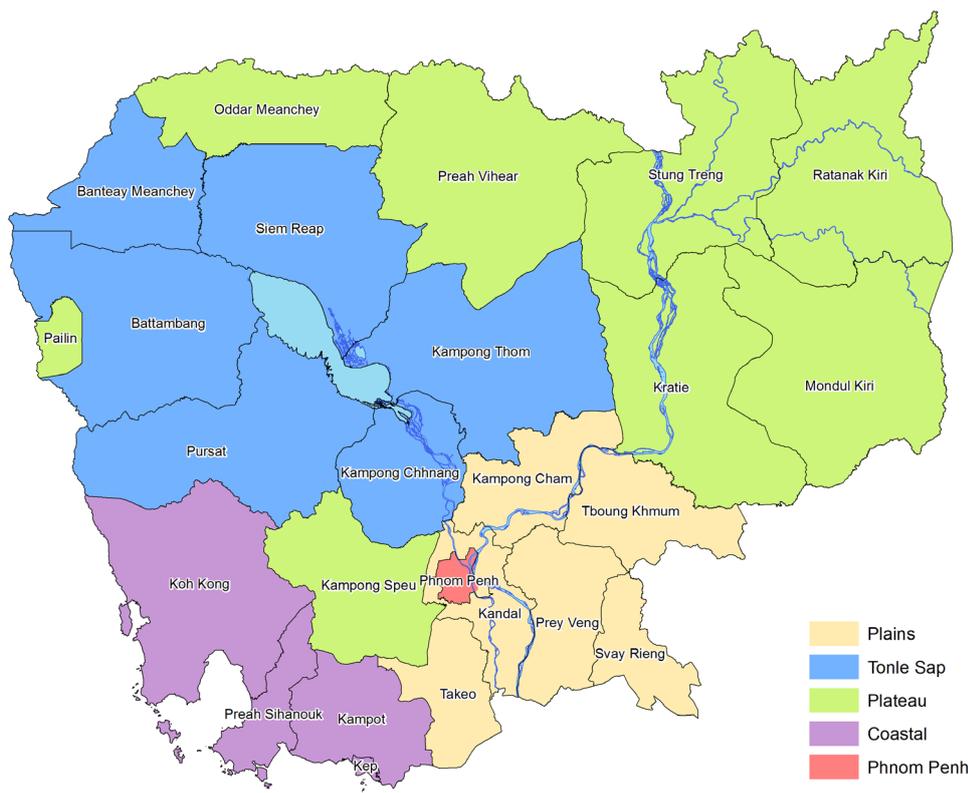


Figure 1: Map of the ecological zones in Cambodia

2.2 The limitations

While the survey used standard questionnaire modules, the analysis is challenged by the following limitations:

- » The data on income, expenditure, and remittances is difficult to collect and the findings in this report should be used with caution, mindful of issues with completeness and reliability.
- » While trying to assess the situation of migrants, this survey is based on the interviews with their households (i.e., left behind member) and not the migrants themselves. This also means that the survey focuses on the situation of the migrant households after migration, so when comparing migrant households to non-migrant households there is no baseline data to understand how the migrant households changed as a result of migration but questions were asked to try to understand the impact.
- » Some questions about the impact of migration are perception-based which, while useful, need to be interpreted as such.
- » The statistical significance of differences in the findings between groups (e.g., migrant and non-migrant households) and sub-groups (e.g., IDPoor households) that are presented in the text and tables in the report was not calculated; thus, any differences are observed and should be interpreted with caution.

2.3 The analysis

To make the most use of the December 2016 household survey data and to offset the mentioned limitations, the analysis of this report uses the following approaches:

- » Undertaking an analysis and interpretation of the survey data to highlight key findings,
- » Reviewing secondary data and published reports to determine the extent to which the findings from this report triangulate with/or differ from other related research, and
- » Identifying specific research gaps that need to be filled in order to have a more complete picture of migration trends, drivers and impacts in Cambodia.

The overall figures presented in the report are population weighted averages.⁵

3. The context

Based mainly on existing literature, this section provides a contextual background in which to situate the quantitative findings and analysis in the subsequent sections. It presents a migration landscape in Cambodia, what is already known about migration, and the key policies most relevant to the issue.

3.1. Migration landscape in Cambodia

Migration has become a key development issue, not just in Cambodia, but regionally and globally. The issue is also considered as a central theme within the 2030 Agenda.⁶ Migration is a common development phenomenon in the current connected and mobile world, and it can bring about both positive and negative impacts on migrants, their families and the countries involved (both origin and destination, in the case of international migration). In Cambodia, existing studies, news reports and everyday observations indicate that migration has become important, yet a lot more needs to be understood and updated.

According to the Ministry of Planning, by 2013, about 25 percent of the Cambodian population (or 3.7 million) migrated. Of the total internal migration, rural-rural accounts for 58.4 percent, rural-urban for 24.5 percent (mostly to Phnom Penh), and urban-urban for 12 percent. Men were found to dominate rural-rural migration (60 percent), women dominated rural-urban migration. However, as presented later, this study suggests that some of these percentages may have since changed. A large percentage of men migrants were engaged in construction while 58.5 percent of women migrants migrated to Phnom Penh for work in garment factories (32.2

5 The weights were derived from the 2013 population figures: Plains (not including Phnom Penh) -5,531,680; Tonle Sap-4,719,967; Coastal- 1,022,701; Plateau and Mountain-1,714,200

6 OECD (2017) Interrelations between public policies, migration and development; World Bank (2017) Migrating to opportunity: Overcoming barriers to labor mobility in Southeast Asia.

percent), small business (23.4 percent), domestic work (11.1 percent), and the service/entertainment sector (10.3 percent).⁷

In 2015, according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDEAS) (2015), Cambodia's working age population (15-64) was estimated at 10 million or 64 percent of the total population; 40 percent of the total population was in the age range of 15 to 34.⁸ The Global Migration Data Analysis Centre suggests that between 2000 and 2017, the number of Cambodian migrants working abroad increased by about 140 percent, from almost half a million to 1.1 million people.⁹ Today, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, about 10 percent of Cambodians over the age of 15 plan to emigrate. Despite the country's steady economic growth, labour market demand has not been sufficient to meet the increase in the working population, and poverty remains significant, despite encouraging signs. Many households choose migration as a strategy for improving their livelihoods.¹⁰

3.2. Impact of migration

One of the positive economic contributions of migration is remittances. At the macro-level, remittances from Cambodian migrants increased in volume, steadily between 2000 and 2008, from USD 121 million to USD 188 million, or 3 percent of GDP. 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 percent of Cambodian migrants send money back home. The amount varies according to the destination country and type of work. Migrant workers in Malaysia, for example, send on average USD 1,644 a year, compared to USD 1,956 a year for those working in Thailand.¹¹

Some interesting findings are found in the existing literature about the impact of migration. Using the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) in 2007, for instance, Tong (2012) found that international remittances account for 20 percent of households' total income and help reduce poverty by 7.35 percent. The study, however, shows that remittances have little impact on income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient. Other studies found that migration also generated a "dependency effect" by reducing the weekly hours worked by employed adults by 5-9 percent.¹²

7 Ministry of Planning (2013) A Crump series study: Women and migration.

8 UN DESA (2015), World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York.

9 IOM (2019), Migration Data Portal: https://migrationdataportal.org/data?cm49=116&focus=profile+&i=stock_abs_origin&t=2017

10 OECD (2016) Interrelations between public policies, migration and development in Cambodia

11 ILO and IOM (2017), "Risks and Rewards: Outcomes of Labour Migration in South-East Asia"

12 Tong, K. (2012), "Migration, remittance and poverty reduction: evidence from Cambodia", Cambodia Development Review, 15 (4), 7-12.

Another study by Hing et al (2014) using CSES data found that migration has a significant negative effect on school attendance and that children in migrant families are more likely to drop out of school, especially girls. The study found that 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 children in migrant households.¹³

3.3. Relevant policies

There are many national policies, both cross-cutting and sectoral, that relate to migration. However, a few are most relevant and mentioned here. The first is the National Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018) which incorporates international migration to some extent. The Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia 2019-2023 provides a framework for development of sustainable, effective, and rights-based governance system for labour migration in Cambodia with focus on recognizing skills, decreasing migration related cost for migrant workers, strengthening support and reintegration services, promoting accessibility of social protection programmes and improving the opportunities for women to formal migration networks.¹⁴

There are a number of ministries working on migration issues, including the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MoLVT), Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These ministries focus mainly on cross-border rather than internal migration. The OECD report (2016) suggests there has been a lack of coherence and efficiency. Even though migration is a cross-cutting issue that falls under the authority of several ministries and institutions, the report argues that the issue has not received enough attention in sectoral policy design. Consequently, information exchange, inter-ministerial consultations, and joint implementation of migration policies and programs are weak and limited.¹⁵

Another important policy is the 2017 Social Protection Policy Framework (SPPF) for 2016-2025. The SPPF is relevant here because it is a policy that seeks to provide a safety net and empower vulnerable groups of different types, one of which is migrants and their families. The SPPF is a long-term roadmap focusing on two main pillars: social assistance and social insurance. Social assistance has four components: (i) emergency responses, (ii) human capital development, (iii) vocational training, and (iv) social welfare for vulnerable people. Social insurance has five components: (1) pension, (2) health insurance, (3) employment injury, (4) unemployment, and (5) disability. It seeks to harmonize, concentrate and strengthen existing schemes or programs in order to increase the effectiveness, transparency and consistency of the whole social protection system.¹⁶

13 Hing, v., P. Iun and D. Phann (2014), *The Impacts of Adult Migration on Children's Well-being: The Case of Cambodia*, Cambodia Development Resource Institute, Phnom Penh

14 ILO (2018), *ILO supports Cambodia's new policy and guidelines for enhanced labour migration governance and access to justice*: https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_654639/lang--en/index.htm

15 OECD (2016) *Interrelations between public policies, migration and development in Cambodia*

16 RGC (2017) *Social Protection Policy Framework (SPPF)*

On the social assistance front, the SPPF seeks to ensure better protection for the poor and vulnerable through: (i) nutrition support program for pregnant women and children in response to malnutrition problems, (ii) scholarship programs in primary and secondary schools, (iii) vocational training programs, specifically for youth from poor and vulnerable households, (iv) the implementation of cash transfers for people with disability, and (v) the possibility of implementing social protection mechanisms for the elderly.

On the social insurance front, the SPPF seeks to expand the coverage of the existing schemes to ensure better protection for all citizens through: (i) the development of pension and health insurance schemes to achieve universal coverage as a way to protect all citizens, both in the formal and informal sector, and (ii) the promotion of the welfare of the people with disability and the study on the possibility of implementing an unemployment insurance scheme.

Another supportive policy is the National Ageing Policy 2017 – 2030 which addressing the issues faced by older persons since there are increasing demands for assistance, support and care from families, especially younger members, including migrants. The policy aims to enhance and improve the quality of elderly population's life by ensuring younger and older population with freedom, dignity and knowledge to fully contribute to social, economic, religious and political activities. The policy has identified nine main priorities to support older populations by (1) ensuring financial security, (2) promoting health facilities and services and well-being, (3) providing living arrangements services, (4) enabling living environmental settings, (5) supporting the creation of older people's association and active ageing, (6) enabling opportunities for intergenerational relations, (7) protecting and preventing from elder abuse and violence, (8) enhancing integrated rescue and rehabilitation from emergency situations and (9) preparing the younger population for ageing.¹⁷

17 RGC (2017), National Ageing Policy 2017 - 2030

4. Findings

Within the above context, this section presents the quantitative findings from the national household survey in December 2016.

4.1. Migration pattern and trends

Migration is a significant and fast-accelerating phenomenon, which affects both poor and non-poor households in Cambodia. For the period of 2010-2016, about 35 percent of the households in rural areas report having at least 1 member migrating as shown in Figure 2. Plateau areas, however, have the lowest percentage of their households migrating (17 percent), possibly as it is the zone that is the furthest away from other cities (especially Phnom Penh) and the Thai border. Among all migrant households 22.6 percent of them have an IDPoor card, compared with 18.8 percent of non-migrant households.

About 33 percent of migration is reported to be for a short-term period/seasonal (6 months or shorter), 43 percent is for a long-term period (6 months to 3 years) and 24 percent is permanent (longer than 3 years). As permanent migration is defined as those migrating for more than 3 years, it could also be explained that those classified as long-term migrants in this period could become permanent migrants in the future (due to the timing of the study).

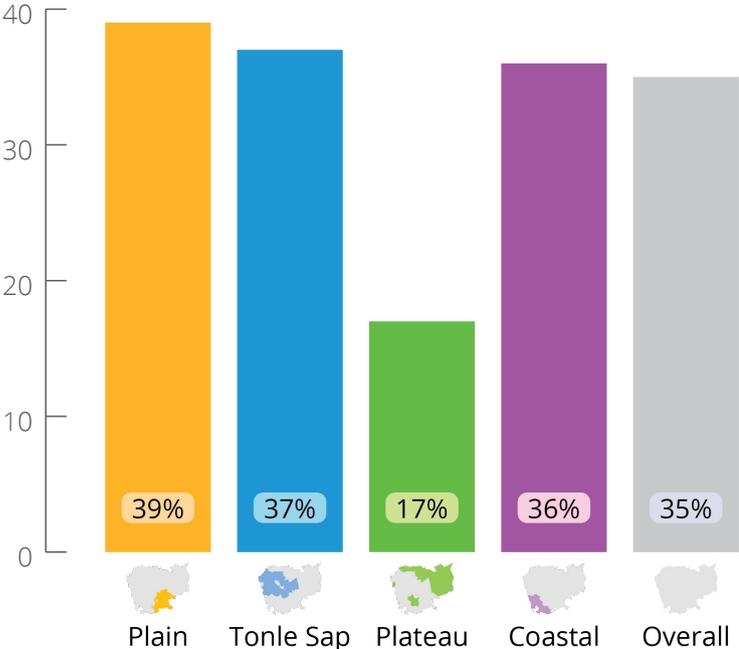


Figure 2: Percentage of households with at least one migrant (for the period of 2010-2016)

In terms of destination, rural-rural migration accounts for 13 percent, rural-urban 57 percent and cross border (mostly Thailand) for 31 percent (see Figure 3). There are also a few other patterns worth noting, as shown in Table 2: (i) over the 2010-2016 period, regardless of the duration of migration, most migrants (almost 90 percent) seek to move out not only of their village but their province altogether; (ii) Phnom Penh is the most preferred option for both permanent and long-term migrants, and (iii) migration to Thailand is high for all forms of migrants (including seasonal).

Distance plays a key role in determining the destination of migration. Those from provinces in the Tonle Sap zone tend to migrate more to Thailand, while those in other zones tend to migrate to Phnom Penh and other provincial towns (see Table 3).

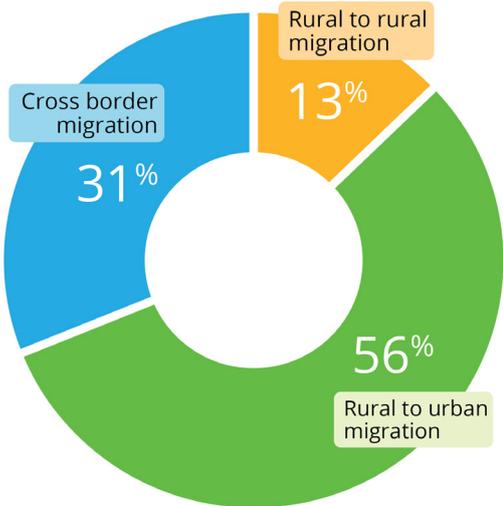


Figure 3: Share of migration by destination

Destination and duration of migration	Seasonal	Long-term	Permanent	Overall
Provincial town (same province)	7%	2%	6%	5%
Other villages (same province)	5%	4%	4%	4%
Provincial town (other provinces)	13%	11%	11%	12%
Village (other provinces)	13%	6%	5%	9%
Phnom Penh	33%	44%	51%	39%
Thailand	27%	27%	19%	27%
Other	1%	4%	4%	3%

Table 2: Migration destination by duration of migration

Destination and place of origin	Plains	Tonle Sap	Plateau	Coastal	Overall
Provincial town (same province)	3%	8%	3%	4%	5%
Other village (same province)	4%	3%	7%	10%	4%
Provincial town (other provinces)	11%	12%	14%	12%	12%
Village (other provinces)	8%	7%	13%	16%	9%
Phnom Penh	53%	22%	34%	43%	39%
Thailand	15%	46%	27%	12%	27%
Other countries	6%	4%	3%	2%	3%

Table 3: Migration destination by place of origin

4.2. Characteristics of the migrants and migrant households

4.2.1. The migrants

Four out of five (79 percent) migrants are aged between 17 to 35 years old. More than 50 percent of them are men (mostly sons of the household heads). However, for households that have more than one migrant, the chance that the second and third migrants are women (mostly the daughters of the household heads) become higher. The gender of migrants did not make much difference to whether the duration of migration was long term or permanent (see Figure 4).

The gender of the migrants did not make any difference to the duration of migration. The preferred destination among all migrants, regardless of gender, is Phnom Penh. However, the proportion of women migrants going to Phnom Penh is higher than the proportion of men, while the proportion of men going to Thailand is higher than the proportion of women (see Table 5). Men migrants are about five times more likely than women migrants to work as construction workers (33 percent vs. 6 percent), while women migrants are about four times more likely than men migrants to work as factory workers (37 percent vs 9 percent). Only women are reported to engaged in domestic work. Other types of work, however, do not display substantial gender differences (see Table 6).

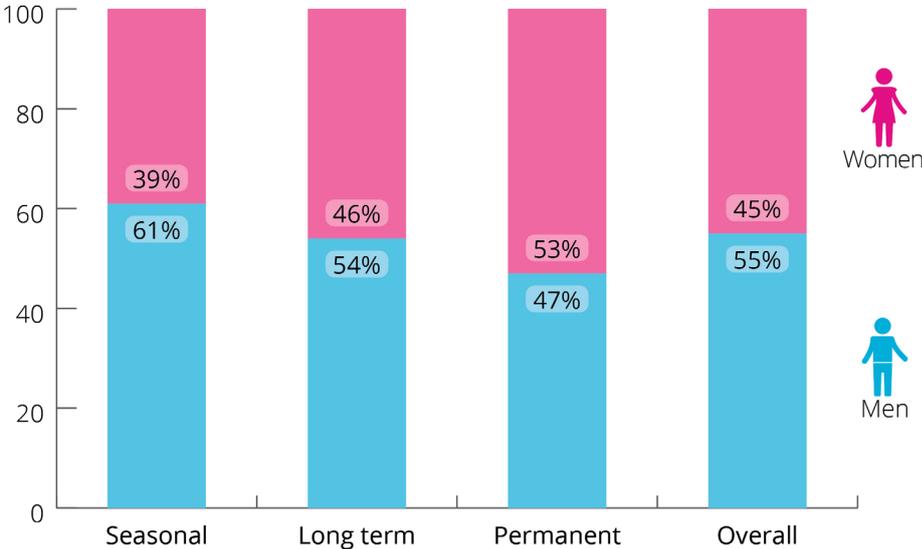


Figure 4: Percentage of men/women who migrate by duration of migration

Type	Seasonal	Long term	Permanent	Overall
Spouse	29%	14%	9%	18%
Son	27%	32%	35%	31%
Daughter	26%	39%	45%	35%
Son in law	6%	8%	5%	7%
Daughter in law	2%	2%	2%	2%
Head of households	4%	1%	0%	2%
Other	5%	4%	3%	5%

Table 4: Type of migrant by duration of migration (2010-2016)

Destinations	Men	Women	Overall
Provincial town (same province)	8%	5%	3%
Other villages (same province)	3%	5%	5%
Provincial town (other provinces)	16%	11%	9%
Village (other provinces)	12%	4%	8%
Phnom Penh	34%	50%	39%
Thailand	26%	18%	34%
Other countries	1%	6%	2%

Table 5: Gender and migration destination

Types of work	Men	Women	Overall
Construction	33%	6%	21%
Factory work	9%	37%	23%
Domestic work	0%	10%	3%
Agriculture & fishing	16%	10%	21%
Hotel / restaurant / service industry	12%	11%	8%
Handicraft production or sales	8%	5%	9%
Education (studying)	11%	8%	8%
Other	11%	13%	7%

Table 6: Gender of migrant and types of work

The types of work differ by destination, as shown in Table 7. About 30 percent of those going to Thailand are said to be working as construction workers and 23 percent as agricultural workers, while many of those in Phnom Penh work as factory and construction workers (26 percent and 18 percent, respectively). Those who migrate within their provinces or to another province besides Phnom Penh tend to work more in agriculture (23 percent) and construction (16 percent).

Types of work	Rural-Rural	Phnom Penh	Thailand
Construction	16%	18%	30%
Factory work	7%	26%	16%
Domestic work	3%	4%	4%
Agriculture & fishing	26%	10%	25%
Hotel / restaurant / service industry	9%	11%	8%
Handicraft production or sales	11%	7%	8%
Education (studying)	12%	12%	3%
Other	16%	12%	6%

Table 7: Types of work by destination

There is no strong correlation between migrants' work and/or what they did before migrating and what they do at the destination. However, it is noted that, based on the households' responses (see Table 8), more than 50 percent of the migrants who are reported as studying ("Education") as what they did at home were not reported as studying ("Education") as their primary occupation at the destination; this percentage is even higher for those aged 13-18 years old: 63 percent report studying ("Education") as what they did at home while only 7 percent report that at the destination. This suggests a high likelihood of school dropout as a result of migration among this age group.

Types of work	Before migrating / At home	After migrating / At destination
Construction	1%	12%
Factory work	0%	8%
Domestic work	0%	4%
Agriculture & fishing	27%	56%
Hotel / restaurant / service industry	0%	3%
Handicraft production or sales	4%	5%
Education (studying)	63%	7%
Other	2%	4%

Table 8: Types of work before and after migration among migrants aged 13-18 years

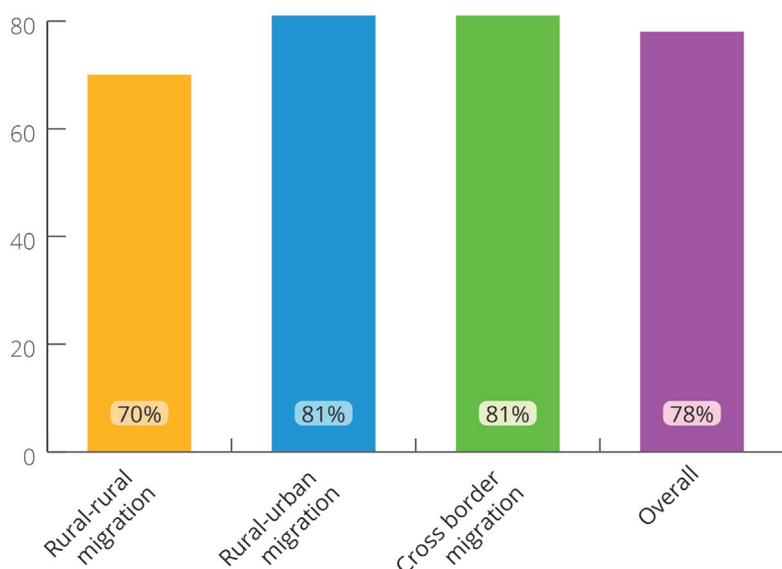


Figure 5: Percentage of households who reported remittances sent back home among different types of migration

About 78 percent of households having one or more migrants reported their migrated members sent back remittances, as shown in Figure 5. A majority of them (70 percent) sent back the remittances through micro-finance institutions/mobile banking services and 16 percent in person (see Figure 6). This finding does not differ much between men and women. However, those working in Phnom Penh and Thailand are more likely to send back remittances, and that those working as domestic workers are less likely to send remittances back home compared to other types of work. Yet, more than 95 percent of the migrants are said to have kept contact with their families.

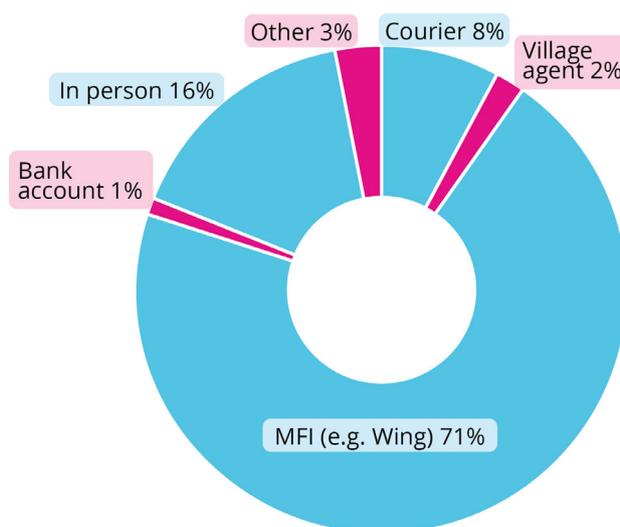


Figure 6: Methods of sending remittances back home

According to the household respondents, about 6 percent of the migrants have faced some safety issues, as shown in Figure 7. The percentage is higher (roughly 13 percent) for those migrating to Thailand and other countries. The most commonly reported safety issues in Phnom Penh are physical abuse and robbery, while the most commonly reported safety issues in Thailand are regarding deception related to types or locations of work. About 10 percent of those working in Thailand are also said to have experienced their agents/brokers/employers withholding their travel documents.

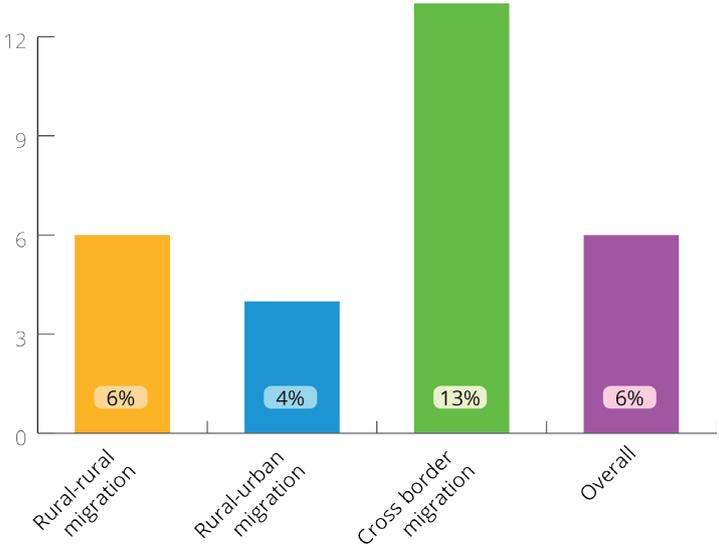


Figure 7: Percentage of migrants who experienced safety issues among different types of migration

4.2.2. The migrant households

About 23 percent of migrant households have an IDPoor card (compared to 19 percent for non-migrant households) and 27 percent of migrant households are female-headed (compared to 20 percent for non-migrant households.) Slightly more migrant households (compared to the non-migrant ones) belong to the bottom 2 income quintiles¹⁸ (which together account for 47 percent) of the overall rural population (see Figure 8).

Migrant and non-migrant households are similar in terms of family size (on average 5 people),¹⁹ number of income earners (on average 2), and number and types of their income generation activities (see Table 9). This similarity with relation to income activities is also true even among households with an IDPoor card.

¹⁸ It should be noted that income excludes remittances

¹⁹ It should be noted that the mean household size for a migrant household is 4.62 while for a non-migrant household it is 4.87. The difference is statistically significant, but the size of the migrant household does not include the migrant if they have been away for 6 months or longer.

However, migrant and non-migrant households differ on two important economic aspects:

- » Land size (see Figure 9): Migrant households have 1.7 ha of land on average, compared to 3.5 ha for non-migrant households. This difference is more pronounced for the Tonle Sap and Plain areas; and
- » Their income/expenditure ratio: The annual income (excluding remittances) of migrant households accounts for 61 percent of their annual expenditure per capita, while it is 87 percent for non-migrant households (see Figure 10). This difference in the income/expenditure ratio is still true when the median is used (see Table 10). This indicates that a proportion of the expenditure of migrant households are likely to be covered by remittances.

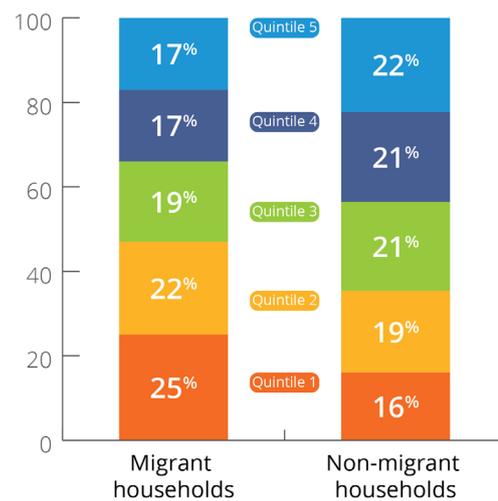


Figure 8: Percentage of migrant households in each income quintile

Types of income activities	Migrant households	Non-migrant households	Overall
Rice/crops sale	26%	24%	24%
Livestock sale (cow, buffalo, pig, horse, goat)	8%	6%	7%
Poultry sale (chicken, duck)	7%	6%	6%
Fishing activities	4%	3%	3%
Agricultural labour	12%	12%	12%
Non-agricultural labour (construction)	12%	10%	11%
Tailor/potter/blacksmith	3%	4%	4%
Government officer	1%	2%	2%
Private sector employee	2%	3%	3%
Handicrafts	1%	1%	1%
Petty trader/business/shops	9%	11%	10%
Factory workers	5%	7%	6%
Other	9%	11%	11%

Table 9: Types of income activities of migrant and non-migrant households

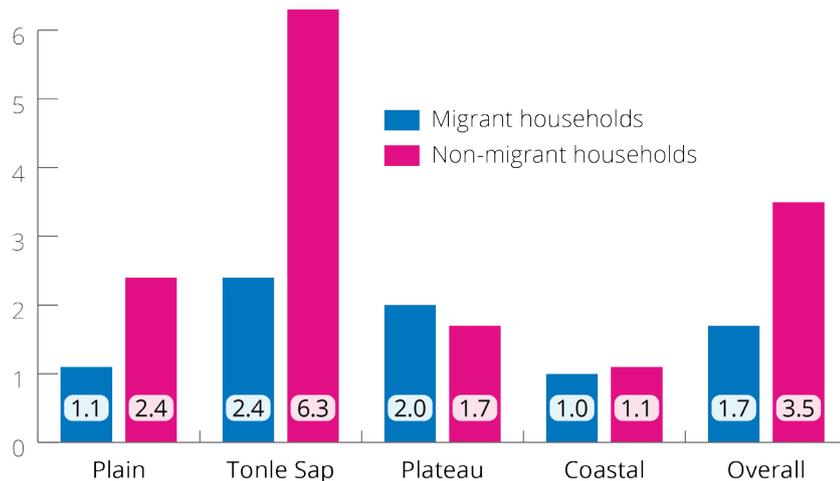


Figure 9: Average land size by migration status and region

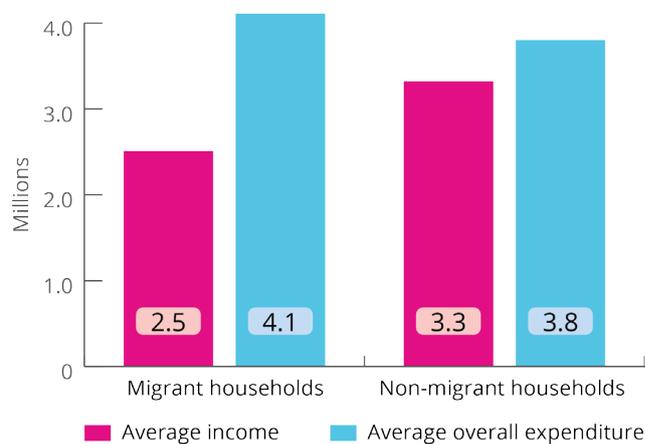


Figure 10: Average income and expenditure per capita per year (in KHR)

		Migrant households	Non-migrant households	Overall
Average income per capita per year	Mean	2,509,343	3,323,640	3,041,543
	Median	1,609,300	1,998,800	1,823,750
Total expenditure per capita per year	Mean	4,109,014	3,803,956	3,911,832
	Median	3,086,869	2,834,693	2,919,333
Food expenditure per capita per year	Mean	1,737,290	1,718,983	1,725,457
	Median	1,560,000	1,519,758	1,540,500
Non-food expenditure per capita per year	Mean	2,371,724	2,084,973	2,186,376
	Median	1,304,703	1,228,811	1,251,986

Table 10: Income (excluding remittances) and expenditure of migrant and non-migrant households (in KHR)

As displayed in Table 11, about 55 percent of both migrant and non-migrant households have debts. Both groups are also similar in terms of number of loans, loan size, loan duration, and loan purposes (see Table 12). Both report the main purpose of the loan is for agricultural activities (28 percent for both groups), for household consumption (15 percent and 21 percent, respectively) and for improvement of their dwelling (around 16 and 14 percent respectively). In terms of loan sources (see Table 13), both groups report using micro-finance institutions (69 percent and 76 percent, respectively).

Table 14 shows the comparison among the migrant households between the household surveys in May 2016 and December 2016, does not produce any noticeable difference in terms of mean income and expenditure, although there is a slight increase in the percentage of households taking debts and their debt amount.

	Migrant households	Non-migrant households	Overall
Percentage of households taking loans			
Overall - all zones	58%	54%	55%
Plains	57%	51%	53%
Tonle Sap	61%	60%	60%
Plateau	55%	48%	49%
Coastal	54%	53%	53%
Amount borrowed (KHR)			
Mean	8,688,342	9,249,127	9,041,155
Median	4,800,000	4,000,000	4,000,000
Average loan duration (months)	28	26	27
Households taking at least 1 loan	88%	93%	91%

Table 11: Debts

Purposes	Migrant households	Non-migrant households	Overall
Agricultural activities	28%	28%	28%
Non-agricultural activities	5%	6%	6%
Household consumption needs	15%	21%	18%
Illness, injury, accident	10%	11%	11%
Purchase/improvement of dwelling	16%	14%	15%
Purchase of consumer durables	13%	11%	12%
Servicing and existing debts	6%	2%	4%
Others	7%	6%	6%

Table 12: Purposes of loans

Sources	Migrant households	Non-migrant households	Overall
Relatives in Cambodia	8%	7%	8%
Friends/neighbour	6%	6%	6%
Moneylender	8%	4%	6%
Trader	3%	1%	2%
Bank/micro-finance	69%	76%	72%
NGO	4%	3%	4%
Saving group	2%	2%	2%

Table 13: Loan sources

	May 2016	December 2016
Income per capita per year	2,683,792	2,509,343
Expenditure per capita per year	4,342,666	4,109,014
Food expenditure per capita per year	1,801,991	1,737,290
Non-food expenditure per capita per year	2,540,675	2,371,724
Debt amount	6,572,146	8,688,342
Percentage of migrant households in debt	51%	58%

Table 14: Income and expenditure per capita per year and debt among migrant households, May and December 2016 (mean) (KHR)

4.3. Drivers of migration

4.3.1. Push factors

Poverty can be a push factor in migration, hypothetically driven further by small agricultural land size and high income-expenditure gaps (i.e., the annual income of migrant households accounts for 61 percent of their annual expenditure per capita, while it is 87 percent for non-migrant households). However, as with land size, it is important to note that very few households report “Do not own agricultural land to work here / don’t have enough land” as their main reason for migrating (see the Table 15 below). Also, this data is collected from these households post-migration so we cannot ascertain for certain if there was not enough land previously and this was the push factor for migration.

Drought could be a potential push factor for migration, as migrant households report a slightly higher percentage of crop loss (44 percent as compared to 37 percent for non-migrant households). Given the high levels of long term migration in 2013-2014, well before the 2015/2016 El Niño event, the drought may not have been a key factor in long term migration.

Regardless of their economic situation, a majority of migrants report search for work (73 percent) and education (8 percent) as their main reasons for migrating. The reasons given do not differ much by the duration and destination of the migration. However, it is noted that education is more of a reason for permanent migrants, as compared to long and short-term migration. Other studies found that debt was the primary driver for migration, but this could be captured under the search for employment due to the framing of the question in this study.

	IDPoor migrant household	Seasonal migration	Long term migration	Permanent migration	Cross border migration	Overall
Education	5%	5%	9%	14%	2%	8%
Search for work	76%	77%	74%	69%	82%	73%
Job transfer/ job opportunity	8%	8%	9%	10%	12%	9%
Debt	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Marriage	2%	0%	1%	3%	0%	1%
Family problems	6%	4%	5%	2%	1%	5%
Moved to join other family members	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Do not own agricultural land to work here / don't have enough land	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 15: Stated main reasons for migrating

4.3.2. Pull and facilitating factors

The prospect of making more money in urban areas and in other countries is likely a much stronger factor pulling people to migrate out of their villages and provinces. Other studies and anecdotal evidence suggests that, compared to rural areas, income in Phnom Penh and provincial towns can be twice as much and at least three times as much in Thailand.²⁰

With better mobile phone and internet access, people in rural areas are likely better informed about such income earning opportunities: 78 percent of the migrants get their sources of work opportunities from friends, family members and word of mouth and about 18 percent from agents/brokers (see Table 16). This might also

Agent / broker (known to household member)	11%
Agent / broker (unknown to household member)	7%
Friends	21%
Family members	34%
Neighbours / word of mouth	23%
Other	5%

Table 16: Source of information for migration work opportunity

20 IOM (2016); WFP (2019) Urban Vulnerability in Phnom Penh

explain the surge in long-term migration starting in 2013/2014, around the time at which mobile phone and internet penetration began a steep rise.

Better road networks across provinces and to the border with Thailand are also a key facilitating factor.

4.3.3. Indebtedness and migration

From the data collected, it is difficult to establish a clear relationship between migration and indebtedness. On average, migrant and non-migrant households are similar in terms of indebtedness: 58.1 percent of migrant households take loans compared to 53.9 percent for the non-migrant ones. Indebtedness is not found to be correlated with certain migration destinations, its duration, year of migrating, or types of works at the migration destination either.

However, other recent studies suggest that there might be a two-way causation between migration and indebtedness: a household sees an opportunity to migrate and make money, they then borrow money to fund their family members to migrate; when those family members find work and can earn money at the places of destination, people at home are more likely to borrow money, expecting that they will use remittances to pay off the debts.²¹ Because of the significance of migration and indebtedness in Cambodia, more studies are needed to better understand the correlation and causation between the two phenomena.

4.4. Impacts of migration

4.4.1. Remittances

The finding suggests that the amount of reported remittances varies significantly (i.e., large standard deviation) even for the same groups of migrants (i.e., by types of work, destination, duration). There are two types of data on remittances in the household survey. First, based on households' reported income, the annual remittances from migrants working in-country is around KHR 2.7 million, which is about 60 percent of what those working in other countries send (estimated at KHR 4.7 million per year, as shown in Table 17). The estimated remittance amount for both groups is reduced by half if the median is used instead of the mean, which demonstrates the wide variation in remittances received and that a few households received extraordinarily large remittances distorting the mean.

21 IOM (2016); Bylander M (2015) Loans and leaving: Migration and the expansion of microcredit in Cambodia, Population Research and Policy Review, October 2015.

	Remittances within home country	Remittances from foreign country	Overall remittances
Mean	2,782,506	4,675,801	3,557,978
Median	1,100,000	2,500,460	1,500,000

Table 17: Average remittances as reported in household income (in KHR)

Second, based on the reported amount from the migration section of the questionnaire, the study finds that, by destination, remittance amount (median) sent by migrants working in-country is around \$100 per migrant, and about \$180 for those working in Thailand. The remittance amount is even higher (at least \$300) for those working in other countries. The main limitation of this data point, however, is that it is not known how frequently each migrant sends back a remittance. Given the importance of remittances, it is important that research be conducted to better determine the exact amount and sending-frequency of remittances from migrants, disaggregated by sex, destination, type of work, etc.

4.4.2. Impact of remittances on household finance

Migrant households report a positive impact of remittances on their finances, as shown in Table 18. About 23 percent of them said it has created more disposable income, greater ability to afford food (54 percent), and greater ability to afford medical care (42 percent). About 75 percent of them, however, said their disposable income remains the same, 45 percent said similar things about their ability to afford food; and 58 percent about their ability to afford medical care. However, hypothetically, it is possible that even the ‘remain the same’ answers could be interpreted as a positive impact of remittances simply because the situation might have been worse if there are no remittances, given the big income-expenditure gaps mentioned earlier (i.e., income covers only 61 percent of expenditure for migrant households).

Areas of finance	Increased after remittances received	Stayed the same after remittances received
Disposable income	23%	75%
Ability to afford food	54%	45%
Ability to afford medical care	42%	58%

Table 18: Household perceptions about the impact of remittances on household finance (% of households)

4.4.3. Migration and food security

According to the household survey, there is no observed difference in terms of food consumption and food sources of migrants and non-migrant households, even among IDPoor households and female headed households²² (see Table 19). However, it is important to note that inadequate dietary diversity is still a problem overall (around one quarter of rural households) and for both groups and across regions; perceptions of hunger and more severe food-based coping strategies, though, are less prevalent²³ (see Table 20).

	IDPoor households			Female Headed Households		
	Non-migrant	Migrant	Overall	Non-migrant	Migrant	Overall
Inadequate dietary diversity	31%	27%	29%	28%	29%	28%
Hunger	10%	6%	8%	10%	7%	9%
Using any food-based coping strategy	12%	10%	11%	9%	12%	10%
Specific food-based coping strategies						
Relied on less preferred and less expensive food	29%	29%	29%	24%	28%	26%
Borrowed food from others	15%	15%	15%	13%	13%	13%
Reduced number of meals eaten per day	8%	4%	6%	8%	6%	7%
Reduced portion size of meals	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Reduction in the quantities consumed by adults for young children	9%	6%	8%	6%	9%	7%

Table 19: Food security situation by IDPoor status and gender of household head

²² Data not shown in the report. See the forthcoming WFP and TANGO International resilience study.

²³ Three measures of food security are included in this report: (1) dietary diversity score, an indicator that measures the number of food groups consumed by a household in the past seven days, where inadequate dietary diversity is defined as consuming less than four food groups in this time period, (2) household hunger scale, an indicator consisting of three questions that measures perceptions of hunger in the past 30 days, and (3) food-based coping strategies, an indicator consisting of five questions that measures whether a household used a specific behavior in response to a food stress in the past seven days.

	Plains	Tonle Sap	Plateau	Coastal	Overall
Inadequate dietary diversity	31%	19%	21%	28%	26%
Hunger	2%	6%	6%	6%	4%
Using any food-based coping strategy	3%	12%	6%	10%	7%
Specific food-based coping strategies					
Relied on less preferred and less expensive food	10%	38%	28%	21%	23%
Borrowed food from others	4%	17%	4%	15%	10%
Reduced number of meals eaten per day	2%	7%	6%	6%	4%
Reduced portion size of meals	2%	10%	10%	9%	6%
Reduction in the quantities consumed by adults for young children	3%	7%	6%	9%	5%

Table 20: Food security status among migrant households by region

4.4.4. Impact on child education and health

About 17 percent of migrant households report having children under 5 years old. Figure 11 shows who is the caregiver of these children: 26 percent report that the migrants brought their children along, 35 percent report that the child was left with the other parent, and 37 percent report that the child was under the care of grandparents.

Existing studies²⁴ suggest that children left behind to live with grandparents might have worse health outcomes in some areas. The data, however, is not clear on this question, and further research is required to understand the impact on the health of those left behind.

Among the migrant households, 28 percent report remittances have helped the children attend school more often. Although another 56 percent said that remittances did not make any difference to children’s school attendance, it is hypothesized here that for these kids, the attendance might have been worse without remittances.

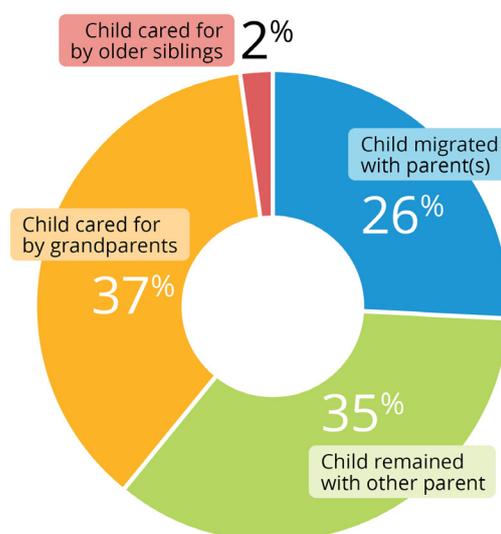


Figure 11: Who is the caregiver of the children of migrant households

²⁴ See for instance, Emerging Market (2016) The impact of migration on children in Capital and targeted provinces in Cambodia, UNICEF

However, this needs more data for further validation. About 37 percent of migrant households also agree that remittances help children stay longer in schools (i.e., helping prevent drop-out).

In terms of recent child health status, there is not much reported difference between migrant and non-migrant households, once their IDPoor status or the gender of the household head is taken into consideration (see Table 21). A high proportion of children under five were found to have been sick in the last two weeks (above 70 percent) for migrant and non-migrant households with IDPoor status or a female household head.

	IDPoor household			Female-headed household		
	Non-migrant	Migrant	Overall	Non-migrant	Migrant	Overall
Inadequate dietary diversity for child <23 months	57%	54%	56%	56%	44%	50%
Child is sick in the past 2 weeks	82%	70%	77%	80%	81%	81%
Child has diarrhea in the past 2 weeks	34%	38%	35%	39%	30%	34%
Child has a fever in the past 2 weeks	71%	64%	68%	68%	73%	70%
Child has an ARI in the past 2 weeks	40%	41%	40%	34%	48%	41%

Table 21: Health status of children under five

5. Discussion and future research

Building on the findings presented above, this section presents an overall picture of migration in Cambodia, with a focus on its impact on migrants, those brought along and their families that stayed behind. Finally, this section recommends a list of specific questions for future research.

5.1. Patterns, trends and drivers

The household survey in December 2016 shows that migration in Cambodia, especially rural-urban and cross-border, has increased, especially since 2013. This trend, this report argues, will likely continue into the foreseeable future. Migration happens in all regions, although the rate is the lowest in the Plateau area. Although the survey cannot determine a migrant-to-total population ratio, the trend suggests that: (i) the percentage of Cambodian people who are migrants is larger than 25 percent (3.7 million) as indicated by the Ministry of Planning's 2013 migration report; that the proportion of rural-urban migrants is larger than 24.5 percent (<1 million), and that of the cross-border migrants is larger than 2.5 percent (<0.1 million).²⁵

The study shows that Phnom Penh is the most popular migration destination, followed by Thailand, and other provincial towns. This means migration will increasingly become a key factor in shaping the pace and nature of urbanization in Phnom Penh, as well as in other growing secondary cities. This raises the question of whether urban development in the capital and other urban places has been planned and managed well enough to keep up with these rising demographic and other pressures.

The high percentage of short-term, long-term and even permanent migration to Thailand represents an interesting finding and trend. The data from December 2016, together with other reports,²⁶ suggests that cross-border migration, especially to Thailand, will continue to rise, hypothetically even at a faster rate than that of the rural-urban migration. The expected increase will happen on top of the 1.2 million of migrants who are already working in Thailand. The pace and size of the cross-border migration are important factors to consider in current and future policy and programs.

Most migrants are young people (aged 17-35 years), divided almost equally between men and women. Young adults and adolescents aged 13 to 18 years also migrate. About 25 percent of children under five of migrant parents are also brought along. These findings strongly suggest that migration directly affects the issues of youth development, gender empowerment, and even child development. It is therefore important that migration be accounted for when considering human resource development challenges and trends in the country.

²⁵ Ministry of Planning (2013) A CRUMP series report: women and migration in Cambodia

²⁶ See for instance Emerging Market Consulting (2016). Economic targeting for employment: A study on the drivers behind international migration from Cambodia and the domestic labor market. Phnom Penh, USAID.

As to what factors have driven migration, the report offers some answers, but also raises some questions. On the one hand, although the causality cannot be determined in this report, the data suggests that poverty (partly caused by natural disasters) might have pushed people to out-migrate, especially when those migrant households have too little land to do farming on and high expenditures that cannot be covered by their income. The data, however, also suggests that at least over time poverty might have become less a factor compared to a combination of key pull and facilitating factors, such as the prospect of higher income generation opportunities, better connectivity, mobility, and youth's overall aspiration to live a life outside of their villages.

5.2. Impacts on migrants (and those brought along)

Migration creates different kinds of impacts on migrants and the families they leave behind. This section focuses on those affecting the migrants themselves. For example, the remittance data from the household survey in December 2016, together with other sources of information²⁷, suggest that migration has helped young people get higher paying jobs in the cities and abroad to support themselves and, in most cases, their families back in the provinces. However, for rural-urban migrants, the cost of living in the city, especially Phnom Penh, is also a lot higher.²⁸

Migrants, through mobile phones and other means of communication, have been able to regularly contact their families back-home. Based on this finding, this study hypothesizes that migration has allowed and encouraged migrants and their families to use more mobile phones and the internet and therefore expose themselves to new information. The use of mobile-banking services to send remittances is also quite common among migrants. These technologies have helped keep migrants and their families connected and facilitate economic transactions between them.

Besides these impacts, there are a number of challenges faced by migrants, some of which are documented in this report and others which would require more research. The first is the skill level of migrant workers. The data shows that a majority of the workers end up working in non-skilled jobs and that there is very little correlation between what they did before and after migrating. In other words, migrants are often unskilled people, ending up doing unskilled work. Even more concerning, as suggested by other studies²⁹, is that most of those workers (including those in the garment factories) have not really built and upgraded their skills through the work they have been doing. This situation can create a low-skilled and low paying-job trap for the migrants.

27 According to a recent news article, the 1 million plus Cambodian migrants send back about USD 3,800 million every year. Please see <https://www.business-cambodia.com/cambodia-worker/>

28 WFP (2019) Urban Vulnerability in Phnom Penh

29 See for instance Open Institute (2016) Internal Migration Patterns and Practices of Low-Skilled and Unskilled Workers in Cambodia.

Another skill-related concern is the impact of migration on school drop-out and what might have happened to small children brought along. The data shows that a high percentage of young adults (aged 13 to 18 years) who were at school before migrating, no longer go to school after they migrate. It is likely that they end up working as unskilled labourers. The high percentage of children brought along also raises the question as to child care practices and their health.³⁰

Migrant workers, depending on where they go and what they do in those places, might have faced other risks and vulnerabilities which are not captured in this report. Other studies suggest that migrants working in the cities (especially Phnom Penh) are reported to have faced physical and health safety risks which come from their working conditions, their place of living, and their routes of commuting. Although garment factory workers are the best known migrant group in the formal domestic labour market, new groups of migrants that work in construction sites and as street vendors, motor-taxi drivers, *tuk-tuk* drivers, domestic workers and entertainment workers are also at risk because they are still largely informal, and thus may be missed by established legal frameworks and social protection schemes.³¹

For those migrating to Thailand and other countries, existing studies and news-reports suggest that their main risks come from them being illegal migrants in those countries. These include the risks of being cheated by brokers (as this report also shows), exploited, and forced deportation. Adding to this risk is job-related hazards and being left out from legal and social protection in that country. Physical abuse also happens to women sent to other countries, notably Malaysia. It is expected that, with ongoing efforts by the Government, especially the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MLVT) to legalize and support Cambodian migrants in Thailand, their situation will be improved.³²

Lastly, not all those migrating to the cities and other countries (especially Thailand) do find a job and earn enough to live in a house (mostly rented). Most people living on the street in the cities are migrants, news reports and anecdotes suggest. Although precise population estimates are unknown, anecdotal evidence suggests that the number is increasing as migration and urbanization grow. Their lives might be much harder and more vulnerable than other types of migrants discussed earlier but this is hypothetical since they have not been well captured by past and current research, including this report.

30 See for instance Emerging Market (2016) The impact of migration on children in Capital and targeted provinces in Cambodia, UNICEF

31 CARE (2015); USAID (2016); CPS (2017); UN-Women (2015)

32 <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/government-studying-migrant-issues>;
<http://www.freshnewsasia.com/index.php/en/localnews/69070-2017-10-31-02-18-14.html>

5.3. Impacts on left behind families

The findings in this report suggest that households with migrants tend to be slightly poorer than the non-migrant ones, have smaller land size and have a lower household income³³/expenditure ratio. Besides these, the two groups are similar in different ways, i.e., in terms of family size, number of income earners, number and types of income generating activities and even indebtedness. This similarity persists even when accounting for poverty status. Among migrant households, the data also shows that there was no noticeable difference between the household surveys in May 2016 and December 2016 in terms of their income and expenditure, although there is a slight increase in the percentage of households taking debts and the average amount of those debts.

The main difference between migrant and non-migrant households is that the former (about 80 percent of them) reportedly receive remittances from their migrating members. The remittances have been reportedly used to cover part of the families' daily food consumption, sending children to school, paying for medical care, upgrading their house, and in some cases, investing in income-generating activities, including in the agricultural sector. Remittances (or the prospect of receiving it), as found in other studies, might have also been a factor helping the left-behind families to access more funds/loans (mostly from micro-finance institutions, MFIs) which can then be used to support themselves in various ways.

On food security, the findings in this report show no noticeable difference between migrant and non-migrants in terms of food consumption, food sources, and food-based coping strategies. Overall, however, it found that inadequate dietary diversity and hunger are still problems for both groups and across regions. The comparison among migrant households surveyed in May and again in December 2016 also suggests no noticeable difference in terms of their food security status.

Remittances are a key impact factor of migration. However, the remittance data collected does not allow robust analysis into the impact of remittances on households that were left behind besides the perceptions provided by the respondents. Even those reported perception-based impacts are mixed, with some saying remittances have helped, for instance, with their food consumption, medical care, and children's schooling, but some say it has not made much difference on these same matters. A new study conducted by IOM provides further information on this.³⁴

This descriptive analysis offers limited insights into the relationship between remittances (and, by extension, migration) and household indebtedness. Other studies have suggested there is a strong positive correlation (or even two-way causation) relationship between migration and loans from MFIs. This study is unable to validate this finding.

A conclusion still cannot be made with regard to whether and to what extent migration has affected the welfare of children left behind. Perception-based findings suggest that

33 Not including remittances

34 IOM (2019), Migration Impact on Children and Families Left Behind in Cambodia

remittances have helped keep children in schools, yet as indicated earlier, many children aged 13-18 years have also dropped out of school and migrated. Some interviewed households claim that remittances have helped provide better medical care for children, yet the data shows no significant difference in terms of child health conditions between migrant and non-migrant households.

The difficulty of correlating and attributing remittances to key aspects of a household's situation shows that, for such analysis to work, not only is good data on the remittance amount needed, but also solid and tested conceptual pathways that link remittances to the household economic structure, the decision-making process and specific indicators of well-being.

According to the data, almost 40 percent of migrant households reported that children under five years were placed in the care of grandparents, which can be seen as positive for at least they still live in a family setting rather than being sent to residential care institutions. But there have also been concerns that those grandparents might not provide adequate care for the children, especially in terms of nutrition.³⁵ Also unknown is the psychological impact of migration on those small children who live without their parental care.

The impact of migration on left-behind wives and the elderly is also little researched. Such impact needs to be studied not only in terms of their economic situation, but also their exposure to violence, their family-life conditions and relations, and how they are viewed by other people in the village. The roles of the elderly in migration also needs more attention. Thus far, beyond a common knowledge that grandparents play important roles in taking care of small grand-children, not much is known.

³⁵ See for instance, Emerging Market (2016) The impact of migration on children in Capital and targeted provinces in Cambodia, UNICEF

5.4. Suggested topics for future research

Migration, as this report suggests, is and will continue to be an important phenomenon for Cambodia - socially, economically, and politically. With this in mind, the following research questions are suggested for the future.

On trends, patterns, and drivers

- » Based on the available data, what is the revised proportion of total migrants compared to the total population? What is the proportion of rural-rural, rural-urban, and cross-border migrants?
- » What is the relationship between rural-urban and cross-country migration? Do they represent two stages of migration in search of higher income generation opportunities?
- » How has the significance of specific push and pull factors changed over time in driving and shaping the pattern of migration? How have those factors interacted among themselves?
- » What are the roles of mobile phones and social media in driving and shaping the trends and patterns of migration by groups, destination, and types of work?
- » What have been the impacts of the Government's policies and other related development interventions in driving and shaping the trends and patterns of migration by groups, destination, and types of work?
- » What are the drivers behind the rural-rural migration and migration to other urban cities besides Phnom Penh?
- » What are the policy priorities that need to be addressed under the umbrella of urban planning and management to take into account the rising rural-urban migration?
- » What are the policy priorities that need to be addressed under the umbrella of regional labor movement and integration to reflect the fast-rising trend of cross-border migration?

On impacts on migrants (and those brought along)

- » What are the opportunities of migration that have been lost because of the current chronic issues of low skills among Cambodian migrants?
- » What can be the negative impacts – economic, social, and political – of not addressing the current low-skill issues among Cambodian migrant workers? What can we learn from other countries in foreseeing these different future scenarios?

- » What have the Government and development partners done to mitigate the risks? Are they effective and urgent enough compared to the challenges looming ahead?
- » What are the situations of rural-urban migrants (both in Phnom Penh and other secondary cities) especially for construction workers, domestic workers, street vendors, and other informal sectors?
- » What is the situation of adolescent and young adult migrants (aged 13-18 years old) and small children brought along by their parents?
- » What is the situation of migrants who end up living on the street in the cities?
- » What is the situation of migrants working in Thailand, for seasonal, long-term and permanent employment?
- » How has information technology (mobile phones and the Internet) changed the lives of migrants and also their interaction with their families back home?

On impacts on left behind families

- » What are the most important factors within a household that drive and shape the decisions and pattern of migration?
- » What is a more reliable estimated amount of remittances sent back by migrants by destination, type of work, etc., and how has that amount changed over time? Why?
- » What are the roles of remittances in shaping the economic structure and decision-making process within a left behind household? And within this framework, how and to what extent have remittances shaped household consumption, medical spending, schooling, etc.?
- » How do the relationships between migration and indebtedness work? What are the positive and negative impacts of such relationships on the migrants and the households, both in the short and long term?
- » What is the impact of migration on children left behind (by age-groups) in terms of physical, mental and psychological development?
- » What is the impact of migration on left behind wives, both in monetary and non-monetary terms?
- » What is the impact of migration on left behind elderly household members, both in monetary and non-monetary terms?



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