

Labor Markets and Migrants in Southeast Asia

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Migrant labor has been a major factor during the last two centuries in Southeast Asia as it was being incorporated into the world economy. In the aftermath of the post-war period, it appeared for some decades that labor migration had come to an end as the new states in Southeast Asia tried to implement nation-building processes to incorporate both the migrants and indigenes as citizens of their respective states. In Myanmar, Indonesia and Malaysia, serious efforts have been made in the past to classify Chinese and Indians as citizens or foreigners, while tightening their borders to other Southeast Asians. This was quickly ended as state after state began to welcome labor migrants as inadequate manpower supplies at home required the import of both skilled and unskilled labor. Except for Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar (CLVM), all other Southeast Asian countries became dependent on labor migrants. All of these countries experienced massive internal sectoral migration of labor followed by differing degrees of trans-border labor migration.

As this paper is concerned largely with cross-border labor migration, the focus will be on transnational migration of labor. Although developments in transport technology and the globalization of national economies have tended to make the world smaller and more uniform, at the same time the rise of the modern state has made Southeast Asia more compartmentalized and politically divided. In this process, the state in Southeast Asia has become the dominant organization of modern times, interfering in an ever-growing number of aspects of daily life, including people's movements. This has led to a particular view on migration that can be summarized as follows (Hans van Amerfoot, 1998: 9-10):

- a. Migration becomes a different and specific phenomenon when people cross borders. Researchers have come to accept the differentiation between internal and international migration as an essential one. The whole statistical apparatus – which determines to a great extent the way researchers look at things – reflects this state-oriented classification.
- b. As a result, the idea has become accepted that states have the right (if not the duty) to regulate migration according to their needs and /or political principles.
- c. The state does not act in isolation. States form systems, and migration regulation has become partly subjected to rules agreed upon within systems of states, or particular subsystems. For example, there is an internationally accepted definition of the term “refugee” and there is regulation of migration of citizens of the member states within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The “modern phase of international labor migration” can be said to have begun in the mid-1960s in Southeast Asia (Athukorala, 1983). This was characterized by a significant rise in labor migration and the development of new patterns. This modern phase involved the following:

- The migration of high level labor (professionals) for permanent settlement in the industrial countries since the mid-1960s.
- The migration of workers mostly on fixed-term work contracts (contract labor migration) to oil-rich countries in the Middle East since the mid-1970s.
- Intra-Asian labor migration arising from the labor shortage in high-growth countries in the Southeast Asian region and Northeast Asia since the 1980s.

It is the third aspect of this modern phase which is of interest to this paper. As such, it is important that we examine the changing directions of flows of migrant workers in Southeast Asia.

The shift in the modern flow of migrant labor appears to have started in the 1970s, when Southeast Asian workers were part of the large-scale migration to the oil-exporting countries of the Gulf States in response to the economic boom in that region as a result of the sharp rise in oil prices. At the same time, many Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines needed foreign exchange and hence actively promoted temporary labor migration to the Gulf States.

As the massive infrastructure construction works ended in the Gulf States, coupled with declining oil prices, the excess migrant workers chose destinations closer to home. Brunei Darussalam, Japan and the high-growth economies of Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand began to attract labor migrants. These high growth economies began to employ an increasing number of foreign workers from all over Southeast Asia as well as from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The almost infinite supply of cheap labor from the labor-exporting countries of Southeast and South Asia was directed to alleviate labor shortage problems, maintain production targets and stimulate economic growth.

As the migration of workers to the high-growth economies in Southeast Asian countries was unexpected, the arrival of migrant workers in such large numbers highlighted to the governments the lack of policies pertaining to the regulation and control of these workers. The consequences of this phenomenon made governments struggle to provide supporting infrastructure such as housing, social security and legal protection for the migrant workers. As all the Southeast Asian states were involved in nationalizing their post-war populations, the labor-receiving countries had to deal politically with “citizen/foreigner” or “insider/outsider” issues with reference to migrant workers. This was the case in Malaysia and Singapore, where ethnic labels (Malays, Chinese, Indians and Others) used already in building the nation-state became questioned when lines demarcating citizens and migrants often tended to become blurred owing to ethnic and kinship factors.

The paper is structured into a number of sections to reflect the contemporary situation of labor migration in Southeast Asia. The first section comments on the movement of labor in Southeast Asia. The second section examines the policies pursued by the sending and receiving nations in Southeast Asia. The concluding section

comments on the possible conceptual frameworks that may help integrate the Southeast Asian labor migration into the global economy.

1. Labor migration

The stock of foreign labor in Asia has already reached 6.2 million, of which around 4.2 million workers are concentrated in the industrialized countries of East Asia, while two million workers are distributed over the rest of Asia (IOM 2003: 196-197). In most of the labor receiving countries, employment is being created faster and wage levels are higher. This has made them seek for labor from outside, resulting in the emergence of temporary labor migration.

Table 1: Inter- and intraregional economic dependence in terms of trade in goods, 2001 [Figures in parentheses indicate 1995 figures]

<u>Origin of Exports</u>	<u>Destination of Exports</u>							<u>World Total</u>
	<u>North America</u>	<u>Latin America</u>	<u>West Europe</u>	<u>Central & Eastern Europe</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Middle East</u>	<u>Asia</u>	
North America	39.5 [36.9]	16.5 [14.9]	19.0 [18.9]	0.7 [0.8]	1.3 [1.5]	2.1 [2.6]	20.9 [25.2]	100.0
Latin America	60.8	17.0	12.1	0.9	1.2	1.2	6.3	100.0
West Europe	10.3 [8.2]	2.3 [2.5]	67.5 [68.1]	5.9 [4.2]	2.5 [2.8]	2.6 [3.0]	7.8 [9.5]	100.0
Central & Eastern Europe	4.2	2.1	55.2	26.6	1.0	2.8	6.6	100.0
Africa	17.7	3.5	51.8	0.7	7.8	2.1	14.9	100.0
Middle East	16.5	1.3	16.5	0.8	3.8	7.6	47.3	100.0
Asia	25.1 [25.9]	2.7 [2.5]	16.8 [16.3]	1.1 [1.0]	1.6 [1.3]	3.0 [2.5]	48.2 [48.5]	100.0
World Total	21.9	5.6	40.6	4.2	2.1	2.7	21.7	100.0

Source: WTO, 1995 and 2001.

One important aspect of East Asian labor migration is that it is conducted on the basis of market principles with active participation from private intermediaries. The governments do not usually conclude bilateral agreements and the matching of demand and supply has been left to such intermediaries.

The European Community achieved its single European market in 1993, and established the European Union. United States, Canada and Mexico concluded the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. Asia, however, does not have such

comprehensive institutional regional integration other than ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement (AFTA).

In 2001, the world's total value of trade in goods amounted to US\$5,984 billion. Asia's exports in goods amounted to US\$1,460 billion. This was equivalent to 23.4 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). Sales of multinational enterprises reached US\$18,500 billion, with their exports amounting to US\$2,600 billion, and their employment of personnel stood at 53,581 (WTO 2002; UNCTAD 2002).

Table 2
Changes in GDP per capita in national and
Foreign currencies in the 1990s

	GDP per capita In local currencies		Change in Exchange rate Vis-à-vis \$US		GDP per capita in US\$		Income differences in US\$	
	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000
Japan[1,000 Yen]	3,582	3,992	144.88	107.79	24,724	37,034	100	100
Korea[1,000 Won]	5,001	11,104	707.76	1,130.96	7,066	9,818	28	27
China	1,829	7,084	5.32	8.28	344	856	1	2
Hong Kong	103,010	193,299	7.77	7.79	13,256	24,811	54	67
Taiwan[NT\$1,000]	235	437	27.11	31.40	8,669	7,184	35	20
Singapore[\$S]	23,794	39,251	1.73	1.72	13,773	26,954	56	73
Malaysia[Ringgit]	7,285	14,563	2.75	3.80	2,649	3,833	11	10
Thailand[Baht]	39,104	75,026	25.58	40.11	1,532	1,870	6	5
Indonesia[Rupiah]	1,175,534	6,132,505	1,950.3	8,421.8	603	728	2	2
Philippines[Peso]	19,595	43,687	27.48	44.19	713	989	3	3
Vietnam[Don]	1,140,760	5,688,749	10,037	15,280	114	373	0.5	1

Source: Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund,
and Bank of Japan, 2001.

The Asian monetary crisis in 1997 did heavy damage to the intra-regional trade in Asia. If the figures for 1995 and 2001 are compared (Table 1), it is evident that the ratio of intra-regional trade in goods declined and dependence on the North American

market increased. Furthermore, the Asian monetary crisis also had a great impact on intra-regional income disparities. Although the East Asian economies tried to achieve high economic growth in the first half of the 1990s, intra-regional income disparities in terms of GDP per capita in US dollar did not improve substantially owing to the devaluation of currencies after the crisis (Table 2).

It is evident from Table 2 that, irrespective of rapid economic growth, intra-regional income differences have not improved substantially. We can thus assume that the potential for migration has been maintained or even grown in Southeast Asia. During the recovery period since the monetary crisis in 1997, the performance of Southeast Asian economies has been more diversified. The accession of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001 appears to have accelerated such tendencies.

Table 3
Real GDP Growth in East Asia [%]

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 *	2004+
Japan	-1.1	0.7	2.6	-0.3	0.3	2.0	1.4
Korea	-6.7	10.9	9.3	3.1	6.3	2.5	4.7
China	7.1	7.8	8.0	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.5
Hong Kong	-5.0	3.4	10.2	0.6	2.3	1.5	2.8
Taiwan	4.6	5.4	5.9	-2.2	3.5	2.7	3.8
Singapore	-0.9	6.4	9.4	-2.4	2.2	0.5	4.2
Malaysia	-7.4	6.1	8.3	0.4	4.2	4.2	5.3
Thailand	-10.5	4.4	4.6	1.9	5.2	5.0	5.1
Indonesia	-13.1	0.8	4.9	3.4	3.7	3.5	4.0
Philippines	5.8	3.4	6.0	3.0	4.4	4.0	4.0
Vietnam	5.8	4.8	6.8	6.9	7.0	6.0	7.0

Source: Asian Development Bank (2003) Estimates / Projections;
IMF (September 2000)

Notes: * Estimated; + Projected.

China and Vietnam achieved high real GDP growth with Korea experiencing rapid expansion utilizing trade linkages with China (Table 3). Indonesia and the Philippines could not recover smoothly owing to political instability and weak competitive advantage as locations of production. Singapore and Malaysia could not overcome cost disadvantages after the collapse of information technology boom. Hong

Kong and Taiwan suffered much from deflationary pressures from China's economy. Thailand, however, attracted investments in automobile and electronics industries and experienced successful recovery. Japan continued to experience deflation and eventually showed signs of recovery.

The discussion, thus far, shows growing disparities in the labor market situation in East Asia. Unemployment rate declined clearly in Korea and Thailand, while unemployment in Indonesia and the Philippines remained high. Hong Kong and Taiwan experienced rising unemployment rates. The unemployment rate stabilised after worsening since the monetary crisis in Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. In China and Vietnam, unemployment as well as underemployment has been rising because of trade liberalization and the restructuring of trade sectors. Such unemployment trends between 1997 and 2002, as shown in Table 4, had the effect of increasing pressures on labor-sending countries to expect lower incomes for their citizens while the receiving countries could always use their increasing unemployment situation to depress the salaries of foreign workers.

Table 4
Unemployment in East Asia [%]

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Japan	3.4	4.1	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.4
Korea	2.6	6.8	6.3	4.1	3.7	3.1
China	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.6	4.0
Hong Kong	2.2	4.7	6.3	4.9	5.1	7.3
Taiwan	2.6	2.7	2.9	3.0	4.6	5.2
Singapore	1.8	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.3	4.3
Malaysia	2.2	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.6	3.5
Thailand	1.5	4.4	4.2	3.6	3.4	1.8
Indonesia	4.7	5.5	6.4	6.1	8.1	9.1
Philippines	8.7	10.1	9.8	11.2	11.1	10.2
Vietnam	6.4	6.9	7.4	6.4	6.3	6.0

Source: Asian Development Bank (2002); APEC (2002); and National Data.

Note: Figures for China and Vietnam refer to urban areas, and exclude rural unemployment.

Thus, currency values, GDP and unemployment figures for Southeast Asia suggest that the potential for migration is not about to be reduced in the near future. The

intra-regional discrepancies will further fuel the migration potential of unskilled and semiskilled workers.

2. Transnational migration in Southeast Asia

The majority of the labor migrants in the region are unskilled and tend to move from developing to developed countries. In the case of highly skilled workers, which include intra-corporate transferees, the movement tends to be in both directions. Each country and economy has become both a sending and receiving country (See Table 5).

Table 5
Transnational Migration in Southeast Asia

	Labor Force	Workers from other countries ['000]	Nationals working abroad ['000]
Japan	67,420	740	61
Korea	21,417	325	56
China	753,600	65	N.A.
Hong Kong	3,430	235	50
Taiwan	9,832	293	120
Singapore	2,129	612	15
Malaysia	9,892	880	200
Thailand	34,482	1,103	550
Indonesia	98,812	33	1,600
Philippines	33,354	29	4,940
Vietnam	40,800	N.A.	300

Source: National Statistics.

In general, foreign labor in Southeast Asia is seen as complementary to the employment of national workers. A number of methods are used to keep the majority of migrant labor as complementary, on the assumption that as the structure of the economy changes or becomes unpredictable, theoretically at least, almost all workers are expected to be repatriated to their home countries. First, the acceptance of foreign workers is temporary and they are not allowed to change their status. Second,

foreigners are allowed to work where nationals do not want to work. Third, the rotation system by which workers are required to return home after completion of their contracts does not encourage permanency in the host countries. Fourth, the wages of foreign workers are kept low in comparison to national workers.

Table 6
Foreign Workers in Southeast Asia
(‘000)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Japan	610.0	630.0	660.0	670.0	710.0	740.0
Korea	210.5	245.4	157.7	217.4	285.5	330.2
China	80.0	82.0	83.0	85.0	-	60.0
Hong Kong	164.3	171.0	180.6	193.7	213.1	235.2
Taiwan	-	245.7	255.6	278.9	320.8	293.9
Singapore	-	-	-	530.0	612.2	590.0
Malaysia	745.2	1,471.6	1,127.7	818.7	799.7	805.6
Thailand	1,033.9	1,125.8	1,103.5	1,089.7	1,102.0	1,055.3
Indonesia	48.7	35.2	33.3	21.3	14.8	20.0
Philippines	4.3	6.1	5.3	6.0	5.6	6.1

Source: National Statistics

Note: Figures for Japan includes overstayers; figures for Korea include overstayers and trainees; figures for Hong Kong indicate only domestic maids.

When we observe the stock of migrants in Southeast Asia, with the exception of the years of the financial crisis and SARS, there appears to be a tendency for the numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers to grow. In the case of newly industrialized countries (NIE’s) like Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and to a certain extent Malaysia, feminization of labor migrants can be observed. As these countries require higher labor force participation of their female citizens, more housemaids have flowed into these countries. The medical care services implemented by Taiwan have also attracted females from Southeast Asian countries.

The rest of this section will analyse the labor migrants in terms of the sending and receiving countries within Southeast Asia. Only a select number of countries are used to highlight the characteristics of migrant labor senders and receivers. Indonesia and the Philippines have largely become sending countries, while Malaysia and Singapore are receiving countries. Thailand, on the other hand, has emerged both as a sending and receiving country.

Table 7: Indonesian Labor Migration, 1994 – 2002 [Percentages of females are in parentheses]

Destination	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Asia Pacific	64,806 (56.07)	68,436 (57.47)	95,070 (68.98)	375,317 (42.31)	196,344 (70.63)	267,768 (61.06)	304,186 (58.95)	217,555 (74.25)	238,324 (58.90)
Australia	251	345	97	39	55	72	-	-	-
Brunei	2,170 (81.71)	832 (88.94)	2,130 (81.22)	2,426 (78.03)	5,349 (73.32)	6,477 (74.90)	4,370 (74.65)	5,773 (72.60)	8,502 (63.68)
Hong Kong	3,156 (84.71)	4,205 (98.84)	2,870 (98.07)	2,019 (98.07)	15,969 (92.13)	12,762 (99.67)	21,709 (99.97)	23,929 (99.99)	20,431 (99.99)
Japan	1,309 (12.09)	1,438 (4.94)	2,538 (3.43)	3,245 (0.83)	3,256 (1.14)	3,388 (1.02)	3,411 (1.52)	1,543 (0.45)	444 (0.68)
South Korea	2,702 (15.58)	6,732 (13.95)	10,718 (13.58)	8,390 (18.64)	7,230 (19.26)	11,078 (16.30)	6,689 (82.63)	3,391 (17.02)	4,273 (16.24)
Malaysia	35,293 (62.19)	29,712 (62.71)	38,652 (86.83)	317,685 (38.87)	108,775 (58.10)	169,177 (52.64)	191,700 (44.36)	110,490 (59.94)	152,680 (42.65)
New Zealand	7	-	44	60	165	187	11	-	-
Philippines	-	-	-	-	14	49	1	-	-
China	-	-	-	-	265	315	36	-	-
Singapore	16,225 (53.21)	20,975 (67.42)	29,065 (82.36)	31,928 (85.17)	39,656 (95.32)	34,829 (90.80)	25,707 (89.41)	34,295 (90.09)	16,071 (99.50)
Taiwan	3,592 (20.49)	4,106 (15.73)	8,888 (22.27)	9,445 (27.99)	15,509 (56.54)	29,372 (80.18)	50,508 (89.33)	38,119 (93.66)	35,922 (91.15)
Thailand	23	9	23	44	51	41	12	6	1
Vietnam	-	-	-	-	7	-	6	-	-
Others	78	82	45	36	41	21	26	9	-
North America	4,293 (0.40)	3,483 (0.34)	1,761 (-)	736 (-)	2,191 (0.08)	3,519 (0.43)	1,509 (0.07)	228 (1.32)	40 (17.50)
Europe	1,673 (0.42)	1,166 (1.20)	768 (3.65)	596 (0.17)	1,114 (1.07)	1,696 (3.43)	359 (21.74)	29 (52.14)	68 (48.53)
Middle East	106,581 (91.45)	47,518 (88.43)	122,563 (93.92)	126,328 (93.07)	167,574 (92.24)	154,636 (89.94)	129,165 (91.28)	121,180 (91.51)	241,961 (92.24)
Total	177,353 (75.46)	120,603 (67.47)	220,162 (82.09)	502,977 (54.94)	367,526 (78.87)	427,619 (79.81)	435,219 (68.30)	338,992 (80.36)	480,393 (92.06)

Source: Adapted from Soeprobo, Tara Bakti (2003).

Sending countries

Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines are the largest labor senders in Southeast Asia. In all three countries, domestic economic conditions and the labor markets have combined to encourage millions of citizens to leave for cross-border employment.

In Indonesia, migrant workers are fondly described as *Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* (TKI meaning Indonesia's Labor Force). The domestic conditions that have encouraged cross-border labor outflow are the problems associated with a bad banking system, unbalanced government budget, and lack of foreign investment flows. Even before the financial crisis, Indonesia had become a net exporter of labor. Out of those who went abroad, a greater part of them had been female workers with the Gulf States and Malaysia as destination countries. Most of them worked in social service sectors like domestic help and had low levels of education. As a result, they were highly exposed to bad treatments before leaving Indonesia, while working abroad as well as after returning to Indonesia. The vast majority of them were subjected to underpayment, violence, sexual harassment and bribery while providing foreign exchange for the cash-strapped Indonesian economy through their cash remittances. Indonesia views the TKI as one of the logical solutions to managing rising unemployment.

It is evident from Table 7 that Indonesian labor is largely bound for countries in the Asia Pacific and the Middle East. Within the Asia Pacific, Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia received most of the migrant labor. Of those who went to the Middle East, the largest number of workers went to Saudi Arabia followed by the Arab Emirates. More than half the migrant workers in any year during the period 1994 to 2002 were females bound for domestic work in the various countries. The Asian financial crisis of the 1990s appears not to have had much effect in reducing the out-flow of migrant workers to East Asian countries. It is possible that domestic workers salaries in East Asia could have been significantly reduced to absorb more Indonesian female workers. There is an argument that the needs of Muslim households in Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Saudi Arabia for Muslim female workers could explain the predominant numbers of females migrating to those countries for domestic work. This argument, however, may not fully explain the predominance of female workers among Indonesian labor bound for other East Asian destination countries. It is possible that Indonesian domestic labor migrants may be preferred as a cheaper alternative as compared to well networked and vocal Filipino female domestic workers. The data, however, does not provide a fuller description of the Indonesian workers in each of the East Asian countries. Many stay on after their visas end and choose to become illegal workers. The number of Indonesians exiting from and returning to Indonesia indicate that more Indonesians stayed abroad than returned in most years between 1995 and 2002 (Table 8). It is evident that, except for 1997 and 1998, the years when the Asian financial crisis peaked, more Indonesians have left for work outside Indonesia.

Table 8
Number of Indonesians
Leaving and Returning to Indonesia, 1995 – 2002.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Returning</u>	<u>Leaving</u>
1995	1,782,330	1,943,164
1996	1,900,471	1,959,186
1997	2,747,996	2,047,996
1998	2,018,715	1,894,796
1999	1,390,525	1,509,159
2000	2,023,639	2,102,896
2001	2,556,753	2,505,098
2002	1,691,969	2,369,447

Source: Unpublished data from Director of Immigration, Jakarta.

The major cause for the transnational movement of Indonesian labor is the unemployment situation in the country. As indicated in Table 9, the unemployment rate of 9.13 million people, as of 2002, is a factor causing the move outside Indonesia even if wages kept falling in destination countries. The total unemployment, including the underemployed (that is those working less than 30 hours per week) had reached 45 million in 2003, up from 40.2 million in 2002. The failing industrial sector of Indonesia also pushed workers from the secondary sector to the primary sector. The industrial sector employed 17.5 percent of the workforce in 2000 and 2001, but then decreased to 13.2 percent in 2002. This meant millions of workers moved from the formal to the informal sector to the urban areas, and from the secondary sector to the agricultural sector.

Indonesia benefits immensely from the remittances sent by Indonesian workers abroad. The total remittances from abroad rose from US\$372,584 in 1994 to US\$2,179,784 in 2002, a rise of 585% within a decade. Much of this rise came from contributions of Indonesian workers working in Asia Pacific countries. While the remittances from the Middle Eastern countries have declined over the years, the remittances from Asia Pacific countries to Indonesia have increased a thousand fold (Table 10). As indicated in Table 10, Taiwan followed by Malaysia show the largest remittances by workers to Indonesia. Other Asia Pacific destinations include Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong and Singapore, but these are on a reducing scale in terms of the quantum of remittances. The Asian financial crisis years did have an impact on the amount of monies transmitted from 1998 to 2001. Despite the steadily increasing remittances since 2000, the total remitted sums have yet to return to their peak levels

before the Asian financial crisis. The increase in the total quantum is as a result of the high volume of money remitted from Taiwan. Thus, between 1994 and 2002, the countries receiving Indonesian labor have undergone a transformation. Newer destinations like Taiwan have become more important for Indonesian labor migrants.

Table 9
Population and Labor in Indonesia.

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Population [million]	192.22	194.76	198.32	201.35	204.39	206.52	206.30	212.70	215.85
Labor Force [million]	81.45	86.36	90.11	91.32	92.73	94.85	95.65	98.81	100.78
Employment [million]	79.20	80.11	85.70	87.05	87.67	88.82	89.84	90.81	91.65
Unemployment [million]	2.25	6.25	4.41	4.28	5.06	6.03	5.81	5.33	9.13
Rate of Unemployment[%]	2.76	7.24	4.89	4.68	5.46	3.36	6.08	5.39	9.06
Number of Layoff[%]	31.41	27.73	38.87	41.72	127.74	107.92	70.09	124.83	154.45
Employment by industry									
Agriculture [% of total]	50.60	43.98	44.02	41.18	44.96	43.21	45.28	43.88	44.34
Industry [% of total]	15.68	18.42	18.09	19.01	16.28	17.84	17.43	17.54	13.21
Services [% of total]	33.72	37.60	37.89	39.81	38.76	38.95	37.29	38.58	42.45

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Year Book of Indonesia* (Various Years).

* The number of Layoff only covers the workers filing complaints to the Ministry of Manpower.

Thailand, in comparison to Indonesia, has shifted from being a sending country to becoming both a sending as well as labor receiving country. Since the ascendance of Thaksin Sinawatra as Prime Minister, the Thai economy has continued to perform better than many other labor sending countries in the Asia Pacific.

The number of legal migrant workers coming into Thailand increased to 98,243 persons in 2003, as compared to 12,655 in 2002. Most of these legal migrants to Thailand were professionals and skilled workers. The major increase was in temporary work permit holders as a consequence of the overall improvement in the economy driven partly by increased foreign direct investment and improved production capacity.

Table 10
Remittances sent by Indonesian Workers Abroad, 1994-2003 (Thousand US\$)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
ASIA PACIFIC									
<i>Australia</i>	1,881.6	243,328.4	591,656.0	821,462.4	743,791.9	737,056.8	883,847.7	1,782,354.0	1,794,412.3
<i>Brunei Darussalam</i>	-	2,064.9	1,618.5	1,524.8	672.7	607.9	395.2	-	-
<i>Hong Kong</i>	-	4,055.8	2,928.1	14,185.4	30,641.8	31,935.0	17,740.8	11,704.1	9,124.2
<i>Japan</i>	178.9	22,839.8	19,055.4	22,229.1	82,260.4	94,525.9	157,413.5	84,246.2	71,930.9
<i>Rep. of Korea</i>	-	15,411.8	12,508.9	45,703.3	29,407.7	31,756.2	34,264.0	13,097.6	3,768.9
<i>Malaysia</i>	401.2	68,221.8	26,934.5	56,209.8	45,093.5	44,507.4	51,229.9	8,836.2	11,182.5
<i>Philippines</i>	-	44.9	170,271.9	514,262.7	334,332.0	298,719.8	325,162.9	10,746.3	146,254.8
<i>Rep of China</i>	-	275.2	47.5	38.3	30.5	143.5	263.2	-	-
<i>Singapore</i>	1,301.6	86,971.9	212.3	359.0	905.0	2,202.7	1,878.9	-	-
<i>Taiwan</i>	-	20,233.7	70,326.1	111,124.3	162,134.6	133,346.3	85,695.2	48,963.6	25,451.1
<i>Thailand</i>	-	158.5	287,570.7	54,889.7	56,894.3	97,073.8	208,175.1	1,604,750.8	1,526,699.0
<i>Vietnam</i>	-	-	88.3	355.0	273.2	372.3	257.8	0.9	0.9
<i>Others</i>	-	16,572.3	93.7	53.6	31.8	20.8	41.9	-	-
AMERICAS	961.0	30,558.8	18,335.8	19,341.6	13,524.1	21,776.4	22,722.0	1,532.2	221.8
EUROPE	-	12,133.8	6,186.0	8,013.7	6,866.6	10,431.4	9,791.1	461.8	721.9
MID. EAST & AFR.	369,741.5	267,920.0	228,062.0	411,681.1	486,971.1	524,471.9	395,179.4	189,471.2	384,428.7

Source: Unpublished data from the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration. Adapted from Soeprobo, T.K. (2003)

Table 11
Stock of legal immigrant workers classified by occupation
in Thailand

Unit: person [Figures in parentheses are percentages]

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>July 2003</i>	<i>September 2003</i>
1. Lawyer	38,368 (48.7)	39,791 (49.7)
2. Professional	12,510 (15.4)	12,986 (16.2)
3. Technician	4,766 (6.1)	4,876 (6.1)
4. Clerk	787 (1.0)	804 (1.0)
5. Service personnel	3,027 (3.8)	3,109 (3.9)
6. Agricultural skilled personnel	11,467 (1.9)	1,337 (1.6)
7. Other Skilled personnel	2,253 (2.9)	2,168 (2.7)
8. Factory personnel	869 (1.1)	850 (1.1)
9. Basic Occupation	9,355 (11.9)	8,981 (11.2)
10. Others	5,355 (6.8)	5,236 (6.5)
Total	78,691 (100.0)	80,141 (100.0)

Source: Office of Overseas Employment, Department of Labor, MOL

Table 11 illustrates the number of legal immigrant workers in Thailand for the months of July and September 2003. It is evident that the demand for lawyers and professionals is increasing as the Thai economy improves. It is most important to note that lawyers from abroad form almost 50 percent of the legal migrant workers. The open economy of Thailand requires the skills of lawyers who can understand international laws and regulations, and Thailand does not have enough professional experts in this area. As of September 2003, the government granted the largest share of work permits to this field of almost 40,000. These immigrants came from all nationalities. Table 12 shows the major nationalities of these talented immigrant workers. From a lower figure in 1997, the year of the Asian financial crisis, the number of foreign workers entering Thailand on temporary and investment related work permits has been steadily increasing. Japanese, British, Americans, Chinese, Indians, Filipinos and Australians are the major nationalities investing in Thailand. It is in the "Others" category of foreign workers that there is a clear pattern of decline in numbers. Otherwise, all the major players in the world economy appear to be seriously investing in Thailand.

The number of migrant workers from neighboring countries like Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia increased in 2003 to around 1.0 or 1.2 million. These workers were often undocumented (illegal) workers. In late September 2003, for instance, the Thai government extended the work permits of 428,468 workers from neighboring countries after their work permits expired. The renewal of work-permits did not augur well as only 288,780 undocumented workers showed up for the government exercise. The common ethnic identities that undocumented workers share with local people have enabled large sections of them being able to melt away into Thai society. Combined

with higher registration fees, government policies have often encouraged undocumented workers to avoid contacts with government agencies.

Table 12
Number of foreign workers in Thailand
by their nationality, 1997 to 2003.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003*
Total	63,582	69,751	73,613	76,796	59,978	58,597	68,734
Japanese	10,224	11,368	13,608	13,355	14,144	13,675	16,373
British	7,903	8,934	6,144	5,694	5,166	5,148	6,072
American	7,128	8,023	6,090	4,683	4,185	4,099	4,711
Indian	6,237	6,937	6,506	5,083	5,555	5,135	5,842
Chinese [Taiwan, Hong Kong China]	5,964	6,648	5,656	5,890	5,458	4,607	5,501
Australian	2,480	2,764	2,093	2,106	1,916	2,089	2,369
Filipino	2,117	2,397	3,135	2,725	2,777	2,337	2,714
Others	21,529	22,680	30,381	37,260	20,777	23,596	25,152

Source: Ministry of Labor (various years).

* Figures in 2003 show from January to November only.

Table 13 is indicative of the documentation and bureaucratic problems associated with labor flow from Myanmar, Laos and Kampuchea into Thailand. As Thailand's borders are porous and as many migrants share the ethnic identities of Thai citizens in border areas, labor migration from neighboring countries is often underestimated in terms of its true size and magnitude. These labor migrants, however, have come to play a significant role in the informal sectors of Thailand's economy.

As Thailand's Ministry of Labor sets targets both for sending workers abroad as well as receiving their remittances, the government has been consistent in encouraging overseas labor placement agencies in finding new destinations for overseas bound labor. In terms of real numbers, the workers sent abroad in 2002 numbered 157,624 persons as compared to 160,252 in 2001. It appears as if Thai labor going abroad may taper off and in fact decline as Thailand continues to improve her economic performance.

Table 13 Undocumented (illegal) foreign workers in Thailand, 1996 – 2003.

Category	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 *
Total	717,689	961,467	986,889	663,776	n.a.	968,249	n.a.	1,000,000
-Non-registered	423,358	667,815	896,486	563,780	n.a.	405,722	n.a.	711,220
-Registered	293,652	293,652	90,403	99,996	99,656	562,527	428,468	288,780
-Burmese	256,492	256,492	78,904	89,336	90,724	448,988	348,779	247,791
-Laotians	11,594	11,594	1,231	1,164	1,011	58,411	42,089	21,314
Cambodians	25,566	25,566	10,268	9,496	7,921	55,128	37,600	19,675

Source: National Statistical Office, Report of the Labor Force Survey (Various years).

* Figures for 2003 up to January – November.

Table 14 Thai labor migrants and their destinations, 1994 to 2003.

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 *
Total	185,436	183,689	191,735	202,416	193,041	160,252	157,624	137,179
-Male (%)	84.7	88.1	83.9	81.8	80.6	85.0	84.7	83.4
-Female (%)	15.3	11.9	16.1	18.2	19.4	15.0	15.3	16.6
Middle East & Africa	22,607	17,662	18,128	19,250	14,443	100,550	21,744	17,151
East Asia	110,516	114,976	122,327	124,713	117,369	100,550	87,722	78,955
Japan	10,118	10,106	10,790	5,278	4,767	4,972	4,453	4,793
Taiwan	96,097	100,910	106,828	115,096	107,572	90,358	78,365	70,331
Hong Kong	4,301	3,960	4,709	4,339	5,030	5,220	4,908	3,331
ASEAN	50,425	49,011	45,671	54,394	56,684	36,337	38,992	34,911
Singapore	17,601	17,770	17,069	24,525	22,989	21,351	16,251	11,747
Malaysia	9,363	8,860	9,031	17,716	20,541	3,457	13,220	7,214
Brunei	20,714	17,671	15,246	7,657	7,821	8,074	7,226	5,685
Others	2,747	4,710	4,325	4,496	5,333	3,355	2,295	10,265
USA, Europe & Australia	1,663	2,040	5,609	4,059	4,545	4,741	5,161	6,162

Source: National Statistical Office, Report of the Labor Force Survey (Various years).

* Figures for 2003 up to January – November.

The emigration policy for Thai workers going abroad has continued to maintain the existing destinations, while encouraging placement agencies and workers to find new markets abroad (Chalamwong, 2002). As is evident from Table 14, the three areas that seen most of the reduction in migrant workers are Taiwan, Israel and Singapore.

This is due mainly to strong competition from emerging low cost countries and higher unemployment rates in the prospective receiving countries. The excessive costs imposed on intending labor migrants by recruiting agencies have also been shunned by new emigrants. In 2004, the Thai government has given a high priority to problems related to regulating the unscrupulous placement agencies and its enforcement. Proposals to improve overseas workers' security have also been put forward to give better protection for Thai emigrant workers.

Compared with Indonesia, a majority of the Thai labor migrants are males, indicating that most of them are recruited for construction and labor intensive industries in the destination countries. Of the total Thai labor migrants, a majority of about 62 percent in 1994 were bound for East Asia (See Table 14). A decade later, in 2002, despite the effects of the Asian financial crisis, the percentage had only reduced to 56 percent. Within East Asia, Taiwan had been the major destination for most of the Thai workers between the years 1994 and 2003. Within ASEAN, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore are receiving countries for Thai labor migrants. As Malaysia and Singapore are committed to having diverse sources for their labor supply, they have maintained a cap on the total number of Thai workers in their labor force.

In the Middle East, Israel is the largest recipient of Thai labor migrants. Security issues related to religious extremism have resulted in a preference for Buddhist Thai migrants as favoured foreign labor in Israel.

Society and government in the Philippines are well organized for the overseas migration of labor as compared to Indonesia and Thailand. Table 15 illustrates the total outflow of Filipinos by destination region. In the decade from 1993, there has been a steady increase in the number of Filipinos leaving their country. Three types of transnational migration have been observed among Filipinos, namely land-based, sea-based and permanent emigration. While Canada, Australia and Japan have been added as destinations for Filipino migration, the United States still remains the main destination. Sea-based labor migration for work on cargo and other types of sea-vessels has been steadily increasing and their numbers are around a third of those of land-based labor migrants.

Land-based and sea-based migrant labor go to different countries. Among the land-based migrant workers, almost eighty percent of the Filipinos go to two regions, namely East Asia and the Middle East. Both regions attract equal numbers of workers, and these appears to be increasing despite the political and economic upheavals experienced in both regions. Table 16 elaborates on the East Asian destinations that attract Filipino migrant workers. As most Filipinos migrate to benefit from the higher currency exchange rates vis-à-vis the Philippines Peso, it is evident that Japan and Hong Kong attract slightly more than sixty percent of the migrant labor.

Taiwan is the third most popular country to attract an annual increase of Filipino workers. Within Southeast Asia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam attract a total of 15 percent of the annual movement of Filipino labor. The financial crisis experienced by Korea and Malaysia has tended to dissuade large numbers of Filipinos to work in those countries.

Filipino migrant labor is skewed in favour of females. As shown in Table 17, for the first three years of this century, females dominated the labor migrant flow. Most males are confined to the "Production, Transport & Related Works" category and are largely involved in construction-related industries. Filipino females are predominantly

employed as entertainers and domestic workers. While sending Filipinas as nurses is being proposed to alter the predominance of females in the above two categories, the recruitment of new hires for 2001 to 2003 shows that the change is not imminent. Thus, most of the migrant labor consists of females and they tend to be recruited either as “entertainers” or “domestic helpers.” The overseas Filipino workers’ remittances in the decade since 1993 have consistently been increasing annually. Their contribution, in some years, has been as much as one third of the export earnings of the national economy (see Table 18). Overseas workers remittances also form an important part of the country’s GNP.

Receiving Countries

Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam are the major labor receiving countries in Southeast Asia. Malaysia was seriously affected by the Asian financial crisis but made a remarkable recovery later. While Brunei Darussalam lost much its foreign reserves owing to investment miscalculations during the late nineties (Mani, 2003), Singapore owing to its prudent financial policies survived the financial crisis except for the decline in jobs that were largely depended on trade with Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. Despite the financial woes of Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, both continued as major importers of migrant labor.

Any study of migrant workers in Malaysia will be quick to point out that the situations in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak call for separate analysis due to the characteristics of each region. The management of migrants in each of the regions is handled differently, and the characteristics of migrant inflow are conditioned by differing social, political, historical and economic factors. As a consequence, research has to account for the geographical variations in labor migration in Malaysia.

Migrant worker movement in Malaysia has three broad trends within it. The structural changes that took place in the 1970s resulted in higher incomes as a result of foreign direct investments. This resulted in intersectoral migration in which rural youths quickly moved to the fast growing manufacturing sector in urban areas. Beginning with the plantation sector, large numbers of Indonesian migrants from Sumatra were recruited to work in the rural sector. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, this trend had spread to the construction sector and later to the informal manufacturing and services sectors. As Malaysia was also advocating the entry of more ethnic Malay workers from Indonesian Sumatra to increase Malay dominance compared with Chinese and Indians, there was inadequate policy attention to restricting and regulating their entry and employment. This problem was to continue until Malaysia repatriated almost a million undocumented Indonesian workers in 2004, leading to angry reactions from Indonesia.

Table 15
Migration outflows of Filipinos by regions,
1993 – 2002

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	696,630	719,602	654,022	660,122	747,696	831,643	837,020	841,628	866,590	945,421
Land-Based*	550,872	565,226	488,621	484,653	559,227	638,343	640,331	643,304	661,639	678,108
Africa (%)	0.44	0.58	0.74	0.51	0.63	0.87	0.77	0.67	0.75	1.02
Americas (%)	2.22	2.23	2.76	1.73	1.26	1.43	1.41	1.19	1.61	1.70
Asia (%)	30.53	34.34	34.13	35.97	42.05	48.13	46.78	45.40	43.08	42.54
Europe (%)	2.44	2.04	2.10	2.35	2.26	4.14	4.80	5.02	6.50	6.69
Middle East (%)	55.00	50.67	47.95	45.65	39.53	43.83	44.83	44.04	44.97	45.26
Oceania (%)	0.25	0.23	0.29	0.33	0.35	0.40	0.38	0.37	0.31	0.28
Trust Territories (%)	1.61	1.50	1.44	1.00	0.94	1.20	1.03	1.15	1.03	0.90
Unreported (%)	7.51	8.41	10.50	12.46	12.98	0.00	0.0	2.16	1.75	1.61
Sea-Based	145,758	154,376	165,401	175,469	188,469	193,300	196,689	198,324	204,088	209,593
Emigrants +	66,413	40,519	56,016	60,913	54,059	24,886	40,507	51,031	52,054	57,720

Source: * Data from 1993-1997 refer to deployed overseas Filipino workers based on statistics on departing workers from the Balik-Manggagawa (Returning / Visiting Workers) processing unit of POEA. Data from 1998-2000 refer to deployed overseas Filipino workers based on statistics on departing workers from the Labor Assistance Center (LAC) of POEA on actual departure of OFWs at the international airports. Source of raw data: Philippines Overseas Employment Administration.

Table 16
East Asian destinations of Filipino migrant workers,
1993 to 2002 (in percentage)

Destination	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	168,205	194,120	166,774	174,308	235,129	307,261	99,521	292,067	285,051	288,481
Brunei	6.52	5.01	4.08	4.39	4.08	5.29	4.33	4.67	4.58	4.01
Hong Kong	37.21	32.02	31.00	25.16	33.39	39.82	38.32	41.69	39.85	36.41
Indonesia	1.72	1.38	1.51	1.04	0.29	0.73	0.52	0.92	0.49	0.37
Japan	24.71	28.27	15.01	11.58	14.13	12.67	15.64	21.58	26.00	27.00
Korea	0.42	2.60	2.64	1.70	1.55	0.76	1.44	1.62	0.90	1.25
Malaysia	7.30	6.01	6.97	7.08	5.78	2.32	2.00	1.87	2.18	1.98
Singapore	6.88	5.83	6.44	8.66	6.83	7.54	7.28	7.83	9.23	9.58
Taiwan	13.69	17.71	30.30	37.56	30.93	28.43	28.11	17.51	13.44	16.07
Others	1.55	1.17	2.05	2.83	3.02	2.44	2.36	2.31	3.33	3.33

Source: * Data from 1993-1997 refer to deployed overseas Filipino workers based on statistics on departing workers from the Balik-Manggagawa (Returning / Visiting Workers) processing unit of POEA. Data from 1998-2000 refer to deployed overseas Filipino workers based on statistics on departing workers from the Labor Assistance Center (LAC) of POEA on actual departure of OFWs at the international airports. Source of raw data: Philippines Overseas Employment Administration.

Table 17
Overseas Filipino Workers by skill and gender
Among new hires, 2001 – 2003 (Percentage distribution)

Skill	2001			2002			2003		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Administrative & Managerial	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2
Agriculture	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
Clerical & Related Workers	1.9	1.1	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.5	2.7	1.3	1.7
Production, Transport & Related Workers	61.1	7.4	22.2	63.2	10.3	25.3	64.1	11.3	25.5
Professional, Technical & Related Workers	20.5	44.8	38.1	19.1	43.0	36.2	17.5	40.4	32.7
Nurses	3.2	6.1	5.3	2.1	5.2	4.3	1.5	4.7	3.7
Entertainers	3.9	36.6	27.6	4.4	5.6	26.8	4.1	33.7	24.3
Engineers	3.6	0.1	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.7	0.7
Sales Workers	2.0	1.0	1.2	2.0	0.7	1.1	1.6	0.8	1.0
Service Workers	11.9	45.3	36.1	11.9	44.6	35.4	11.6	45.9	34.9
Care givers & Care takers	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.7	2.4	2.0	0.9	11.0	7.8
Domestic helpers	1.9	37.8	27.9	1.1	31.7	23.0	1.0	27.6	19.3
Others	1.5	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Not Stated	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.2	1.4	0.1	3.9
Total	100.0 (70,358)	100.0 (185,221)	100.0 (255,580)	100.0 (77,850)	100.0 (197,441)	100.0 (275,291)	100.0 (65,685)	100.0 (164,338)	100.0 (238,200)

Source: Philippines Overseas Employment Program.

Table 18
Remittances as Percentage of Export Earnings
and Gross National Product (GNP), 1993 – 2002

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Remittance (US\$'000)</i>	<i>Export Earnings (US\$'000)</i>	<i>Ratio Earning (%)</i>	
			<i>Export Earning</i>	<i>GNP</i>
1993	2,230	11,375	19.6	3.9
1994	2,940	13,483	21.8	4.4
1995	4,878	17,447	28.0	6.4
1996	4,307	20,542	21.0	5.0
1997	5,742	25,228	22.8	6.6
1998	4,925	29,496	16.7	7.1
1999	6,794	35,038	19.4	8.7
2000	6,050	8,078	15.9	7.5
2001	6,031	35,052	1.2	7.8
2002	7,189	38,094	18.9	8.6

Source: Central Bank of the Philippines (various years);
Foreign Exchange Department, Bangko Sentral
ng Philipinas, December 2003.

The second trend in labor migration coincided with sustained high growth since the late 1980s. As the Malaysian economy experienced both labor and skill shortages, workers from Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and the Philippines were attracted by rising wages. Foreign labor, despite the earlier restrictions, was also allowed to work in the more formal manufacturing and service sectors. Malaysia attempted to evolve a comprehensive institutional and legal framework for managing the mass movement of migrant labor, but failed as a result of corruption and inadequate enforcement. Official estimates of migrant workers prior to the 1997 financial melt-down stood at a peak of around 2 million or 1.2 million documented and 800,000 undocumented workers. Critics of the government's mismanagement of migrant workers were of the opinion that the unofficial figures were much higher.

The third trend dates from the post-1997 years when Malaysia attempted to stabilise migrant worker inflow to meet the demands of the economy. Malaysia has followed Singapore in bringing in stringent laws and enforcement to flush out illegal workers. The harsh penalties against illegal workers and their employers introduced since August 2002 and the amnesty programmes to encourage undocumented migrant workers to return to their home countries have brought down the number of migrant workers to between 800,000 and 1.2 million. The estimate in 2003, however, was that Peninsular Malaysia still had about 300,000 to 400,000 undocumented workers.

Malaysia continued with its amnesty program in 2004, and was able to repatriate more undocumented workers to Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Table 19
Documented Migrant Workers in West Malaysia, 2003
(N=1,163,194)

Nationality	Percentage
Indonesia	60.0
Bangladesh	25.0
Philippines	7.0
Others	8.0
Total	100.0

Source: **Sunday Star**, 18 January 2003.

Table 20
Documented Migrant Workers by Nationality and Sector
For Sabah (2001) and Sarawak (2003)
[Figures in parentheses are percentages]

	Domestic maids	Construction	Manufacturing	Services	Agriculture	Total
Sabah	8,026 (5.44)	1,773 (1.20)	18,094 (12.27)	6,205 (4.21)	113,345 (76.87)	147,447 (100.0)
Bangladesh	-	-	5	-	-	5
Indonesia	7,319	976	16,528	4,331	108,163	137,317 (93.13)
Philippines	707	797	1,566	1,869	5,183	10,122 (6.87)
Others	-	-	-	-	3	3
Sarawak	14,028 (13.14)	4,267 (4.00)	53,389 (50.01)	2,031 (1.91)	3,306 (30.94)	106,748 (100.0)
Bangladesh	-	90	180	37	13	320 (0.30)
Indonesia	14,028	4,011	52,761	1,818	32,976	105,594 (98.92)
Philippines	-	83	210	26	27	346 (0.32)
Thailand	7	-	4	13	9	33
Vietnam	-	-	74	127	1	74
Others	-	51	151	127	1	330 (0.31)

Source: Adapted from Vijayakumari Kanapathy (2004).

Tables 19 and 20 provide insights into the inflow of migrant workers by their number, origins, and their location in the labor force. Migrant labor from Indonesia

dominates the social landscape in Malaysia. The Indonesians form about 60 percent, followed by Bangladeshis forming 25 percent of the migrant labor force. The lower wage levels accepted by migrant workers from the two countries, and the alternative choices available to Filipinos in other countries have led to the present distribution of migrant labor in Malaysia. Similarities in language, culture and religion combined with proximity together with the preference of the Malay-dominated Malaysian government for ethnic Malays have all contributed to the dominance of Indonesian labor migrants in the West Malaysian economy. In Sabah and Sarawak, Indonesian migrant laborers form almost 93 and 99 percent respectively of the labor force. It is also evident that Indonesian labor migrants are predominantly found in agriculture, manufacturing and household work.

Table 21 provides a summary of how Malaysia manages its foreign labor migrants. Foreign workers to Malaysia have been classified by their skill level, age and monthly income. The “visit pass” for temporary employment is given to those who are unskilled and semi-skilled and between the ages of 18 to 45 years. These workers are able to renew their passes annually for up to five years for work in the plantation sector and for up to three years for work in the manufacturing sector. Besides the plantation and manufacturing sectors, they also can work in the construction, services and households sectors. The government collects a levy from the employers of 840 Malaysian Ringgit for unskilled workers and 1,200 Malaysian Ringgit for semi-skilled workers. These levies are meant to discourage employers from over-dependence on foreign workers and to encourage the employment of citizens. Workers permitted in the plantation, manufacturing and construction sectors are from Bangladesh, Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan and Thailand. In practice, there are also workers from other countries. Similarly, the preferred countries of origins of domestic workers are the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. There are also a fair number of workers from Sri Lanka working as maids in Malaysia. In the employment of foreign domestic workers, an attempt has been made to pair up the worker’s country of origin to their potential employer’s monthly household income. Household with a monthly income of Malaysian Ringgit 2,000 to 4,000 may only employ workers from Indonesia and Thailand, while those with more than Malaysian Ringgit 4,000 may employ Filipino maids. As foreign domestic workers are intended to relieve Malaysian women entering the labor force, households are allowed tax deductions for the levy they pay the government.

As Malaysia started to participate in the electronics and computer related industries, a “visit pass” for such professionals to work became crucial. Many of these professionals are engineers and computer technology experts who are brought largely from India to work in Kuala Lumpur. These “visit passes” are employer- and job-specific and are valid for one year in duration. Malaysia borrowed these practices from the United States and Australia, but without allowing the workers the right to bring their families and dependents. Such professional workers work anywhere from a few weeks to a few months before returning to their parent companies in their home countries. As these professional are important to Malaysia’s efforts to becoming a techno-savvy nation, no levies are imposed for their employment.

The “employment pass” is used to bring skilled workers who need to remain in Malaysia for a longer period, as long as they are paid RM1,200 per month. Such workers are allowed to work for an initial two year period with possible extensions up

to five years. They can be employed in the manufacturing as well as in other sectors. A progressive levy is charged for their employment in order to encourage the training and employment of citizens. For those recruited to work as technicians, an annual levy of RM 2,400 is charged to their employers. For middle-management and upper level management employees, the levies amount to RM 3,600 and RM 4,800 respectively. Their dependents are allowed to live in Malaysia. The number of "employment pass" holders in a company is highly dependent on the foreign paid-up capital of the investing company. Malaysian society at large has accepted the contributions of migrant workers as positive. Migrant workers are viewed as contributing to the GDP and export revenue and help to moderate wage increases. Without their presence, Malaysia may not have been able to keep the prices of exported goods at internationally competitive levels. The media and the public in Malaysia, however, have been critical of migrant labor as contributing to the deteriorating public safety and security situation in the country. There is the popular perception that foreigners commit more violent crimes than locals. Published evidence from 1993 to 2002, however, shows that such accusations may be misplaced. As indicated in Table 22, the number of violent crimes by foreigners is low when compared with national statistics. The lack of adequate law enforcement appears to be the problem rather than the migrant workers. Migrant workers become the scapegoats for blame by the media and public, given that criticisms of police corruption the law enforcement agencies may result in other problems with the bureaucracy.

By late 2003, Singapore's migrant labor force had more than 500,000 work-permit and 70,000 employment pass holders. The former included more than 140,000 foreign domestic workers. Work permits are granted to those with at least one certified skill relevant to their job and unskilled workers earning below a monthly salary of less than S\$2,500. They are admitted to Singapore under the Employment of Foreign Workers Act, and are subjected to many restrictions. These restrictions include those on bringing their dependents and applying for permanent residency in Singapore. They also cannot switch employers. Females cannot contract marriages nor become pregnant while in employment. Violations of restrictions entail automatic deportation with little chance of returning to work in Singapore. Individuals with acceptable degrees, professional skills or specialist skills and commanding a salary of more than S\$2,500 a month are qualified to apply for Employment Passes. The holders of employment passes are not subject to the same punitive restrictions as work-permit holders, and can bring their dependents to Singapore to live with them. They can also apply to become permanent residents and eventually citizens of Singapore.

Table 21
Malaysian Foreign Labor Management System of Passes

Type of permit	Type of worker	Duration	Sector	Levy (annual)	Nationalities allowed	Remarks
Visit Pass- Temporary Employment	Unskilled and semi-skilled workers, age 18-45 years.	Up to 1 year. Renewable up to 5 yrs. in Plantation Sector. 3 yrs. in Manufacturing, and Services.	Manu- facturing	Unskilled: RM 840; Semi-skilled: RM 1,200; Skilled: RM 1,800.	Bangladesh, Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand.	Visit Pass is employer- and job-specific; dependents not allowed to settle in Malaysia.
			Construction	Yes	Philippines Indonesia Thailand	
			Plantations	Yes		
			Services	Yes		
Visit Pass- Professional Employment	Professional Workers on Short-term Contracts with any agency.	Up to 1 year.	Domestic Workers	Yes		Minimum income requirements for employers of domestic help (RM2,000/month to employ Indonesian or Thai maids, M4,000/month to employ Filipino maids); levy payments are tax deductible.
						Pass is employer- and job-specific; No resettlement of families into Malaysia.
Employment Pass	Skilled workers with a minimum salary of RM1,200 per month.	At least 2 years, renewable for 5 years.	Manu- facturing	Technical: RM2,499; Professional & middle management: RM3,600; Upper Management: RM4,800		Can obtain visas for Dependents; number of key posts Allowed depends on foreign Paid-up capital.

Source: Adapted from Elizabeth Ruppert (1999:9)

Table 22
Violent and Property related Crimes
by Foreigners in Malaysia, 1993 – 2000.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Violent Crimes</i>		<i>Property Related Crimes</i>	
	<i>Foreigners</i>	<i>As % of Total</i>	<i>Foreigners</i>	<i>As % of Total</i>
1993	564	5.1	1,182	1.7
1994	312	3.0	445	0.7
1995	643	6.1	1,528	2.2
1996	693	5.6	1,326	1.8
1997	470	2.8	1,129	1.1
1998	748	3.8	1,637	1.2
1999	1,715	8.1	2,255	1.5
2000	1,659	7.7	1,829	1.3
2001	1,490	7.3	1,874	1.4
2002	1,656	7.9	1,457	1.1

Source: Royal Police Department Annual Reports, Malaysia.

Note: Violent crimes include murder, robbery, rapes etc.

Property crimes include house-breaking, vehicle thefts etc.

India, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and West Malaysia are the source countries for Singapore's employment pass holders. More than half of the foreign professionals in Singapore companies come from India, with China and Malaysia trailing closely behind. Most are brought to fill in information technology or engineering positions. The biomedical field is another area heavily reliant on foreign talent.

Table 23 provides a summary of all the features of Singapore's migrant labor management as at September 1998. Since then, the major features have been retained with minor adjustments to the size of levy depending on the economic situation and the need for different categories of labor.

It is important to note the use of the concept of "non-traditional source (NTS) countries" to control the origins of labor for specific sectors of the economy. Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Myanmar have been declared non-traditional source countries for labor, even though they have been source countries for migrants in the past. This has brought about the predominance or absence of nationals from selected countries in certain categories of occupations. Thus at the level of skilled and unskilled work permit holders, NTS criteria are used to allow Malaysians (largely ethnic Chinese) into the manufacturing and construction sectors. The NTS category is used in the construction sector to allow the predominance of workers from India, Bangladesh and Thailand. As permit holders, they are only allowed unskilled work. Five foreign workers are allowed for every Singaporean worker in the unskilled category of the construction sector. The same NTS workers are avoided in the skilled worker category for work permits in the construction sector. As a result, whatever the number of migrant workers from the NTS countries, they will not be

entitled to permanent residence. This has the consequence of not upsetting the ethnic composition of Singapore, with Chinese always as the majority population.

PRC females are listed as a prohibited category as domestic workers so as not to allow the influx of females from mainland China and indirectly contribute to the breakdown of ethnic Chinese households in Singapore. In the foreign domestic workers category, females from Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines are seen as less threatening to the social fabric of Singapore's households as they can be easily deported for infringing any of the stringent rules applied to them. Racial restrictions are not applied to migrants at the employment pass level. As for skilled workers with professional or tertiary qualification, Singapore, like other developed nations, is committed to attracting talented people from all over the world.

Malaysia and Singapore are both similar and different in their policies towards migrant workers. Malaysia has encouraged ethnic Malays from Indonesian Sumatra to come as unskilled labor while Singapore has used a similar practice to attract ethnic Chinese labor. The difference between them is in the integration of migrant labor into their societies. Malaysia has tended to give permanent residency and citizenship to professionals seen as close to local "bumiputera" (sons of the soil), thus allowing qualified Indonesians and ethnic Malays from elsewhere to settle in the country. Singapore, on the other hand, has sought to incorporate skilled and professional migrants into its permanent labor force while keeping in focus the aim of maintaining Singapore as a nation with an ethnic Chinese majority. Despite criticisms that it has neglected the welfare of citizens in being overtly supportive of skilled and highly qualified migrants, the government has pursued its policy of attracting talented workers to Singapore who will make it their home.

Most of the male work-permit holders come from India, Bangladesh and Thailand and work in the construction industry. Foreign domestic workers come from the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. As the incidence of suicides rose among Indonesian female workers, the government has required all first time employers to undergo an orientation course so as to ensure employer fulfill their responsibility towards foreign domestic workers. All recruiting agencies, since 2003, have been made to obtain accreditation to bring in foreign domestic workers. The Indonesian Embassy has also initiated an accreditation scheme for employment agencies recruiting Indonesian females for work. Indonesia has required all its Singapore bound domestic workers to depart from Batam so that training, health checks and other tests can be easily conducted before departure for work in Singapore. The Indonesian Embassy has also required Singapore employers to enter into an agreement with their Indonesian domestic workers guaranteeing them monthly pay, a rest day in a week, twelve days annual leave, the return fare home, and three daily meals. They are not allowed to clean window exteriors or hang out clothes from high rise buildings.

Table 24
Singapore's Foreign Labor Management System of Permits and Passes

Type of permit	Type of worker	Duration	Sector	Levy (monthly)	Dependency ratio (foreign: Local)	Nationalities prohibited	Security bond	Remarks
Visit Pass-temporary employment	Unskilled and Semi-skilled workers aged 18-45 years.	Up to 2 years renewable annually for a total of up to 4 years	Manufacturing	S\$330 (40% depend.); S\$400 (between 40% and 50% depend.)	1:1	NTS	S\$5,000	Limited Rights: No family reunions, marriage or pregnancy; deportation within 7 days of permit expiration; not eligible for permanent residence.
			Construction	S\$470	5:1			
			Marine	S\$385	3:1	NTS		
			Service	S\$330	1:3			
			Harbour Craft	\$330	9:1			
			Domestic worker	S\$330	NA	PRC		
Work Permit -Skilled	Skilled workers with maximum salary of S\$2000 per month.	Up to 3 years renewable for a total of up to 10 years.	Construction	S\$100	5:1	NTS	S\$5,000	Eligible for permanent residence; 3-year permit holders exempt from levy.
			Marine	S\$200	3:1			
			Harbour Craft	S\$200	9:1			

Exchange rate averaged over January-September, 1998: 1.68S\$/US\$.

NTS denotes non-traditional sources countries: Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Myanmar.

PRC denotes workers from the People's Republic of China.

Table 24 [Continued] Singapore's Foreign Labor Management System of Permits and Passes

Type of permit	Type of worker	Duration	Sector	Levy (monthly)	Dependency ratio (foreign: Local)	Nationalities prohibited	Security bond	Remarks
Employment Pass	Skilled workers with professional or tertiary qualification with a minimum salary of S\$2000 per month.	Up to 5 years, renewable.	NA	None	NA		S\$5,000	Eligible for permanent residence after at least 6 month.
Entry/ Re-entry Permit	Permanent residence or those eligible with skilled work permit or employment pass; skilled and Professional staff of firms re-located to Singapore; firms meeting minimum capital criteria.	Renewable every 5 Years.	NA	None	NA		None	Incentive mechanisms to integrate and assimilate into permanent labor force; permanent residents may apply for citizenship after 2-10 years.

Source: Adapted from Elizabeth Ruppert (1999:9)

3. Integrating Southeast Asian migrant labor into the global economy.

In a climate of increasing economic integration and globalization, the exchange of goods and services has played a central role in Southeast Asia with respect to the growth of economies, at both the international and regional levels. Labor migration has been an important component of the integration of Southeast Asian people and their lives into the global economy. The emerging economies of Southeast Asia, in terms of labor migration, have undergone labor exchange not only amongst themselves but also with Northeast Asia and the Middle East. Labor inflows and outflows have occurred both intra-regionally and across regions, facilitated by advances in communication, transportation and technology exchange, and are driven by increasingly competitive international markets.

In Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, rapid development has resulted in robust economic growth, infrastructure development and the expansion of public goods provision. This pattern was especially strong after the mid-1970s. The rising aggregate demand with steadily increasing incomes led to excess labor demand that could not be met by domestic labor resources. To resolve this imbalance, foreign workers were “imported” to fill the gaps.

The experiences of receiving countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea provide examples of situations where interaction between immigration and macroeconomic policies were mutually reinforcing. Policy makers have managed foreign labor resources in conjunction with the performance of the macro-economy, easing permit requirements to attract particular skills, or alternatively tightening requirements to shed labor during economic downturns, thereby using foreign labor as a buffer against economy-wide shocks. Sending countries like Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines have in turn become well organized, with ministries in-charge of overseas migrant labor, and have made labor a part of their bi-lateral relations with the receiving countries.

There is a growing linkage between intra-regional discrepancies and migration potential in Southeast Asia. As Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand begin to surpass their neighbors in managing their economies, they will tend to attract more migrants from other countries. The expectation that the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) or the newly emerging free trade agreements between Japan and ASEAN or China and ASEAN would have decrease the number of labor migrants from the Philippines and Indonesia has not been borne out by results. With the passing years, the labor sending countries of Southeast Asia appear to have incorporated labor migration into strategies for their economic well-being, as an important source of foreign currency remittances. National governments are coordinating movements of labor overseas as a kind of trade commodity.

Free movement of labor will be difficult to achieve in Southeast Asia under the ASEAN aegis within the foreseeable future, given that intra-regional income disparities remain large and that some countries still have an excess labor force. There is a need in the future for policies based on long term perspectives. Both the sending and receiving countries need to take responsibility for the maximization of the benefits of migration, including establishing a dialogue to remove any obstacles preventing transnational labor movements. It is highly unlikely that regional partnerships in Southeast or East Asia will become comparable to those Europe because of the existing income

disparities. Even if income disparities were to be ignored, there is generally a lack of political will to achieve a consensus on labor migration within the region.

As the current Southeast Asian or East Asian integration is more market-oriented, development strategies including those for creating domestic employment are essential for sending countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Conclusion

Kenneth Boulding (1985), among others, has described the world as a “total system.” The physical and biological dimensions of this system cannot be separated from the political, economic, social and cultural aspects, which in turn are linked to processes of communication. However, one of the major contradictions inherent in the current process of global change is that money, goods and information flow relatively freely across borders but people do not. There is a growing contradiction between economic forces, which tend toward the removal of walls between states, and the sociopolitical pressures leading to increased nationalism and exclusion.

Transnational labor migrants in Southeast Asia today fall somewhere on a continuum between “proactive” and “reactive” according to the degree of autonomy in decision making and action shown by those involved (Richmond, 1995:31). Proactive migrants exercise some degree of rational choice in their decision to move. Reactive migrants are at the opposite extreme and have little power or control over their situation. The majority of the labor migrants are somewhere in-between the two extremes. The world system simultaneously helps as well as constrains their movements. Modern technologies and social networks have accelerated the possibilities of transnational labor migrants, but both sending and receiving states are placing greater restrictions on their movements.

It is evident from the data provided by the labor sending countries that transnational migration is a feature of economies facing risks (Oded Stark, 1993). The high risks faced by rural families in these countries have caused their shift to urban centres and often beyond their national borders. In all these countries, families appear to be valuing the migration of girls to reduce familial risks and smooth consumption. Daughters and wives appear to be playing a specialist role for their families by their dispersion across Southeast Asia and beyond. Eventhough this paper has placed individuals rather than families at the centre of migration, the predominance of females in labor migration forces us to give some weight to the position and role of women in families.

The movement of thousands of Indonesians, Filipinos and Thais within and beyond Southeast Asia clearly indicates that there are significant processes within the migrant systems involving migrant labor movements. Their movement is not a one-time event but rather a dynamic process consisting of a sequence of events across time (Boyd, 1989:641). As pointed out by Mabogunje in his programmatic article on rural-urban migration in Africa, labor migration in Southeast Asia, too, needs to be viewed as “a circular, interdependent, progressively complex and self-modifying system” (1990:4). Theorizing the dynamics of labor migration in Southeast Asia has made us move from a consideration of linear, unidirectional, push-and-pull, or cause-effect models to ones that see migration as circular, interdependent, progressively complex and self-

modifying systems in which the effect of changes in one part can be traced through the entire system. For many Filipinos and Indonesians, for example, once labor migration begins, it turns into a self-developing process. Peterson assumed that pioneer migrants or groups set examples that can develop into a stream of what he called "mass migration" (1958:263-4). In a study of foreign domestic workers in Brunei Darussalam (Mani 1994), it has been noted that through the networking of pioneer migrants at the local Catholic Church, Filipinas not only moved in greater numbers into Brunei Darussalam, but also moved out of the domestic sector into the service sector of the country within a decade. The positions they vacated were filled by lower-paid Indonesian females. This self-developing process helps to explain how labor migration gains momentum as networks reduce both the direct monetary costs of movement and the opportunity costs (that is, earnings foregone while searching for work and housing, or learning new skills), and also decrease the psychological costs of adjustment to a new environment in the receiving countries. Thus movers and stayers can be regarded as active decision makers (Fawcett, 1989).

This paper has suggested that economic inequalities within and between nation-states and the admission policies of the receiving countries are important factors for labor migration in Southeast Asia. Within the context of these factors, it must be noted that individuals, household and families develop strategies to cope with stay-or-go alternatives. This assumption is aptly summarized in Charles Tilly's provocative phrase that it is "not people who migrate but networks" (1990:75). In other words, Southeast Asian labor migrants are not "atomistic flies" (Cohen, 1987). Their social networks consist of more or less homogenous sets of ties between three or more actors. Network patterns of social ties comprise economic and political networks of interaction, as well as collectives such as groups (e.g. families, communities) and associations (labor agencies etc). Migrant networks in Southeast Asia, then, are sets of interpersonal ties that connect movers, former movers and non-movers in countries of origin and destination through social ties, which can include kinship, friendship, or weak social ties. In international labor migration, networks may be even more important than in domestic migration because there are more barriers to overcome, e.g. entry and exit permits, and whether these are unavailable, the costs of illegal crossing.

Development is the broadening of choices. These include choices in consumption and investment as well as working and living. There is no moral, philosophical or logical basis to assert that those born in a particular geographical area must live and die in that area. If trade and capital flows enlarge choices in consumption and investment, unrestricted labor mobility alone can enlarge the choices for working and living. Yet the world has hardly any nations where entry is free. In fact "it is precisely the control which states exercise over borders that defines international migration as a distinctive social process" (Zolberg, 1989: 405). Restrictions to movement and entry also imply that the labor migration process is characterized by disincentives rather than incentives (Bhagwati, 1984). It is clear that borders and restrictions in Southeast Asia sustain transnational inequalities, and unrestricted labor mobility across the region will help reduce the inequalities in living standards. The issue, however, is not only who benefits from free mobility (senders, receivers, or both), but how to promote it, since it is desirable in itself.

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