SUPPORTING BRIGHTER FUTURES

Young women and girls and labour migration in South-East Asia and the Pacific

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IOM UN MIGRATION

Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Foreword

Around the world, more people are on the move than ever before. Many of them are seeking new opportunities and a better life for themselves and their families, sometimes involving long-term separation as family members travel internationally for work.

Gender is increasingly becoming central to discussions of the causes and consequences of migration, with wide recognition that the "feminization" of migration has altered migration patterns and processes globally. Gender influences reasons for migrating, who migrates and to where, how people migrate and the networks they use, opportunities and resources available at destinations, and relations with the country of origin. Risks, vulnerabilities and needs are also shaped by one's gender, and often vary drastically for different groups. The roles, expectations, relationships and power dynamics associated with being a man, woman, boy or girl, significantly affect all aspects of the migration process, and can also be affected in new ways by migration.

It is therefore crucial to better understand these different experiences as people who may be vulnerable negotiate the challenging processes involved in international migration for work. The increasing prevalence of labour migration of young women and girls, as well as the impacts on those left behind, should be a pressing concern for all migration policymakers, practitioners and researchers. However, even those with the greatest compassion and energy for positive change often struggle to understand the specific issues and needs that arise when young women and girls embark on migration. In this volume, and through this partnership, IOM and the Government of Australia, have understood this dilemma and so have sought to fill the gap by reviewing the current evidence base on the labour migration of young women and girls in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

The papers in this volume have been designed to review the existing evidence on salient issues affecting the migration of young women and girls – namely, the links with educational migration, inter-generational labour migration, as providers of households, the impacts on those left behind, migrant smuggling and human trafficking. With particular attention on current and emerging problems for young women and girls as well as potential solutions, it is our hope that this volume becomes a useful companion for policymakers and practitioners in the region as they carry out actions and interventions aimed at improving the lives of young women and girls, and their families, across South-East Asia and the Pacific. Ultimately, we also hope that this volumes contributes to supporting brighter futures for young women and girls across the region.

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

At first glance, this research publication may seem niche, perhaps relevant only to "fringe" aspects of international migration. Historically, we know from decades of studies, data collection and analysis that there has been a strong bias toward the migration of young, working age-people who "self-select"' (i.e. choose) to migrate internationally in order to realize opportunities in other countries.[1] Outside of displacement settings, and especially for irregular migration, empirical findings also show that young men have tended to undertake the more uncertain or riskier forms of migration.[2] However, there is also growing recognition of incremental shifts in migration patterns and processes, with increasing numbers of young women and adolescent girls[3] undertaking migration independently (as opposed to being part of a family unit), including via irregular migration and smuggling routes.[4]

Social changes and greater empowerment of women and girls, including through greater access to information and resources via ICT, means that the labour migration of young women and girls is a current issue that we must increasingly grapple with. Policies and practices designed to severely reduce (if not eradicate) unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration that places these migrants at risk of harm, is especially relevant to young women and girls, who may face greater risk of exploitation and abuse. Given the evident trends before us – related to social change and societal/gender expectations, transnational connectivity and international migration – the migration of young women and girls is also a strategic one. In the future, more households across the region will be reliant on remittances sent home by young women and adolescent girls. This issue is highlighted by Harriot Beazley in her paper in this report, in which she refers to women having been labelled "heroes of development" for their ability to support households back home through remittances. In this sense, the topic of this research is anything but fringe. The migration of young women and girls will become more of a priority for policymakers and practitioners safeguarding our collective prosperity in the region through optimizing the benefits that international migration can bring.

How is migration changing?

Migration has evolved significantly over recent years, both in terms of numbers of people migrating and their demographic characteristics. Of the 258 million international migrants in 2017, 48.4 per cent were women and girls.[5] The "feminization" of migration has been well documented, involving an increase in the number and proportion of women and girls migrating internationally[6] as well as a trend toward

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1   We note that there exists wide acknowledgement of the broad spectrum concerning "choice"' in migration, which can be virtually non-existent (e.g. coerced trafficked victims, forcibly displaced persons) to very significant (e.g. wealthy retirees and industrialists). See McAuliffe et al., 2017:172–175, for a discussion of key literature on the topic.
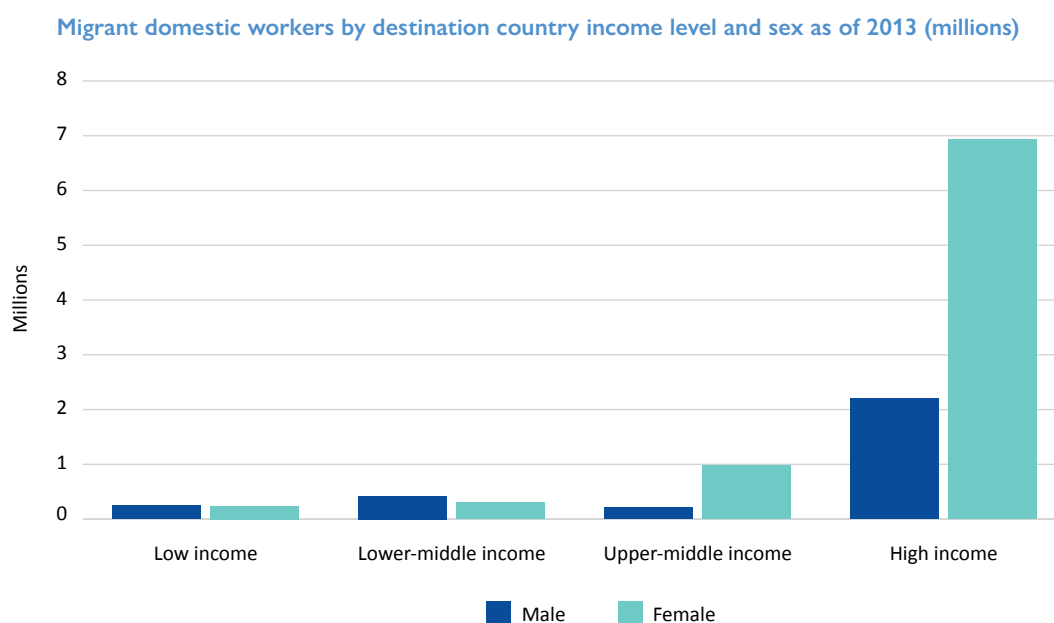2   Monsutti, 2007; van Bijlert, 2016.
3   For this publication, we apply the UN definition of youth, which is 15 to 24 years of age (UN, n.d.).
4   De Regt, 2010; Grabska, del Franco and de Regt, 2016; Pickering and Cochrane, 2013.
5   UN DESA, 2017a.
6   Castles and Miller, 2003.

them migrating independently rather than as family members.[7] Women are increasingly migrating to work in specific sectors, and in some countries the majority of emigrants are female, including from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.[8] The latest data from the International Labour Organization, for example, show that women represented almost three-quarters of all migrant domestic workers and just over 80 per cent of migrant domestic workers in high income level countries (see graphic below).[9]

Migrant domestic workers by destination country income level and sex as of 2013 (millions)

Source: IOM, 2017:29 based on ILO, 2015.

In addition, we are seeing increasing numbers of children migrating around the world, including as migrant workers, asylum seekers and in order to pursue educational opportunities.[10] These changes are apparent at the global level, and are also reflected regionally. In mid-2017, for example, female migrants below the age of 19 in South-East Asia accounted for almost 8 per cent of all international migrants, and around 16 per cent of all female migrants.[11] Likewise in the Pacific, just over 9 per cent of all international migrants were females under 19, accounting for around 20 per cent of the female migrant population.[12]

While migration presents new opportunities, it can also raise challenges for young women and girls who have themselves migrated or who have been left behind by their migrant-worker parents, especially as they are likely to experience greater vulnerability and face heightened risks because of their gender and age. At the same time, young women and adolescent girls' agency must be given due consideration and further examined, including the broader impacts of their migration. While research on the impact of migration related to young women and adolescent girls exists (see the text box below), there remains the need to draw upon this and other current evidence to effectively inform policy and programme responses in the field of labour migration, including labour rights and protection, transnational family dynamics and the impact of gendered migration on countries and communities of origin, transit and destination.

7   Ahsan Ullah, 2013.
8   UN, 2006; Martin, 2007.
9   ILO, 2015.
10   UNICEF, 2016, ; UNESCO, 2019.
11   UN DESA, 2017b.
12   Ibid. The Pacific region refers here to Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia following UN DESA classification.

Selected publications on the impacts of migration on young women and girls globally

Ziway or Dubai: Can flower farms in Ethiopia reduce migration to the Middle East? by Kerilyn Schewel (2019). IOM *Migration Research Series*, No. 55, IOM, Geneva.

Birth registration and protection for children of transnational labour migrants in Indonesia, by Jessica Ball, Leslie Butt and Harriot Beazley (2017). *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 13(3):305–325.

Who migrates? Tracking gendered access to migration within households 'in flux' across time, by Choon Yen Khoo, Maria Platt and Brenda Yeoh (2017). *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 15(3):326–343.

Comparative research report: *Time to look at girls: Adolescent girls' migration in the south*, by Katarzyna Grabska, Nicoletta del Franco and Marina de Regt (2016). Global Migration Centre, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva.

Urban migration of adolescent girls: quantitative results from developing countries, by Mark Montgomery, Deborah Balk, Zhen Liu, Siddharth Agarwal, Eleri Jones, and Susana Adamo (2016). In: *International Handbook of Migration and Population Distribution*. (M.J. White, ed.). Springer, London, pp. 573–604.

Everyone is leaving. Who will sow our fields? The livelihood effects on women of male migration from Khotang and Udaypur districts, Nepal, to the Gulf countries and Malaysia, by Jagannath Adhikari and Mary Hobley (2015). *HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 35(1):11–23.

The feminization of international migration and its effects on the children left behind: Evidence from the Philippines, by Patricia Cortes (2015). *World Development*, 65:62–78.

Securing a better living environment for left-behind children: Implications and challenges for policies, by Theodora Lam, Miriam Ee, Lan Anh Hoang and Brenda Yeoh (2013). *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 22(3):421–445.

Girls on the move: Adolescent girls and migration in the developing world, by Miriam Temin, Mark Montgomery, Sarah Engebretsen and Kathryn Barker (2013). Population Council, New York.

About this project

From the outset, the main objective of this research project has been to explore and critically examine the existing evidence base on key aspects of the topic so as to inform potential policy and programmatic responses designed to enhance labour migration impacts for young women and girls in South-East Asia and the Pacific (and minimize the potential harm resulting from some practices). This publication entails a desk-based review of the current published evidence-base, and provides a knowledge "stocktake" for those involved in the ongoing development, delivery and refinement of related policy and programmatic interventions in the region.

The papers contained in this publication have been written by leading academic and applied experts in the field, whose task has been to review and reflect upon the current evidence base and state of research findings. The papers were also reviewed by the Expert Panel assembled for this specific project (see text box below), who provided guidance, comments and suggestions on the thematic papers according to their specific areas of expertise.

Overall, there is a dearth of research on the labour migration of young women and girls in the Pacific. There are likely to be several reasons for this. First, the body of research and analysis on migration more broadly is far larger in South-East Asia than the Pacific in light of relative populations, research infrastructure as well as research funding. In his paper on irregular migration and smuggling, Andreas Schloenhardt points directly to the current lack of information available on the Pacific: "The smuggling of young women and girls in the Pacific Islands is extremely under-researched and little is known about the levels and characteristics of irregular migration in this region." Second, it is also likely that, at least to some extent, prevailing stereotypes (regardless of their accuracy or not) of young Asian female trafficked sex workers, influence research and policy agendas, taking up a disproportionate amount of space. Sallie Yea points to this in her paper on human trafficking of young women and girls in Asia–Pacific in this volume: "Whilst much of the literature has focused on women and girls trafficked into the sex and nightlife entertainment industry, there is also a high prevalence of trafficking for domestic servitude and for forced labour in other sectors as urgent issues that have been relatively under-documented by comparison."

The papers in this report all raise – in varying degrees – underlying gender inequality as being significant in the so-called "root causes" underpinning migration of this cohort. This is most apparent in Sallie Yea's paper on human trafficking in the region, in which she argues that the structural settings that funnel girls into low skill, low pay jobs increases the risks of trafficking under false pretences, such as through offers of higher paid "waitressing" overseas to local factory workers. It is also referred to by Lan Anh Hoang when she cites studies showing that despite their preferences to continue their education, Laotian girls become migrant workers in order to send remittances back to their families, including to fund the education of siblings. Re-doubling existing efforts to tackle gender inequality within countries as a key development priority would go some way to assist in reducing the structural socioeconomic factors associated with the types of migration that are most harmful to young women and girls, namely irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking. Roy Huijsmans offers some hope in this regard by pointing out that girls' experiences of their parents' migration can provide practical financial support as well as motivational incentives to attain higher education outcomes that offer greater employment choice, including to *not* migrate.

The papers in this volume also suggest that policy and practice may not necessarily be keeping up with the changing nature of young women and girls' agency in determining their own (migration) futures. With increasing transnational connectivity and evolving social norms in many parts of the region, there exist emerging shifts in the ability and desire of young women and adolescent girls to make their own way in the world. Theodora Lam explores this issue in relation to those left behind, citing research in

Viet Nam and Indonesia showing how young women may choose to reference migration social norms as a means of furthering their family's or their own personal aspirations. Further, Sallie Yea points to the potential for empowering advocacy that engages young women and girls in anti-trafficking campaigns and awareness raising. Similar approaches are also highlighted by Harriot Beazley in her paper on inter-generational labour migration, in which she refers to programmes in Vanuatu that aim to support young women's adaptive leadership skills as a means of building confidence as they transition into adulthood.

Overall, this research report on the labour migration of young women and girls in South-East Asia and the Pacific has been produced to help deepen our collective understanding of the specific issues affecting this strategically important cohort. We hope that all readers – policymakers, practitioners, researchers, students and migrants themselves – are able to learn something new from this volume, as well as to draw on its contents as they undertake their work, study or other activities.

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1. Young women and girls left behind: Causes and consequences

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Introduction

Young women and girls are broadly defined to be those aged 10 to 24 years by the United Nations.[1] Despite their age, many of them – particularly those in South-East Asia and the Pacific – may have already experienced migration either as migrants themselves or through personal encounters with migrant relatives and/or friends given the high migration rates in these geographical regions. Bearing in mind that migration is relational whereby migration processes and migrants' lives are closely intertwined with other familial, social and structural factors, migration affects – to varying degrees – those who do and do not move. Non-migrants are also affected by migration whether directly through the absence of close migrant relatives or indirectly via vicarious experiences of migration. This paper thus focuses specifically on exploring the causes and impacts of migration on young women and girls who have remained in their home country in South-East Asia and the Pacific. The paper first highlights some key characteristics of these young women and girls and considers the diverse sociocultural contexts in which they reside alongside the possible causes for their situation. Thereafter, the paper turns directly to the often-neglected voices and emotions of young females who have been "left behind" by migrants. It explores the different circumstances and issues young women and girls face as daughters, sisters and/or wives of migrants,[2] reasons for their (im)mobility, and the everyday challenges they encounter as they navigate their transition into adulthood within communities where a culture of migration predominates. Finally, the paper concludes by offering some suggestions for interventions and areas for further investigation.

Contextual background: Issues girls and young women face

Countries within the South-East Asian and the Pacific regions are very diverse politically, economically, socially and/or culturally. Such diversities also exist within each country itself. Nonetheless, migration in contemporary times may provide some common threads across and within the countries in these regions even though their histories and cultures of migration may differ. While this paper is unable to delve into the comprehensive details of each South-East Asian and the Pacific country due to the

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1   As there is no universal definition of adolescence and youth, this paper will examine research pertaining to girls and young women within this age range without prejudice to the definitions adopted by various organizations, countries and context under study (see www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/One%20pager%20on%20youth%20demographics%20GF.pdf). Also, given the varied definitions available, it is often difficult to obtain uniform statistics or data conforming to this age group alone.

2   In light of existing research and analysis, the paper mainly focuses on daughters.

uneven data available – particularly those relating to young women – and space constraints, this brief section is important in highlighting selected key contextual factors affecting young women and girls alongside the migration trends within these regions to facilitate a fuller understanding of the issues some young women and girls are facing within the environment they dwell. Knowing that youth is a relational and social construct that comprises a diverse and liminal group, the findings presented in this section are not intended to make generalizations about young women and girls in these regions. Instead, one must continually remember to consider the specific sociocultural and political contexts that partially contribute to each outcome. It is also important to stress from the outset that this paper focuses mainly on research from low to middle-income countries within these regions given their greater resource limitations, as compared to the upper-middle and advanced economies such as Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore.

An overview of young women and girls in terms of total and migrant population as well as school enrolment, literacy and labour force participation rates in each region is presented in Annex 1. In general, the proportion of young women and girls among the total and migrant population is higher in South-East Asia where there is also an observably higher rate of feminized migration. Many developing countries within these regions, particularly in the Pacific, are also experiencing a "youth bulge" due to a higher demographic proportion of youths versus other age groups in the population. For some, this has resulted in local issues such as high unemployment and underemployment rates among the youths and/or greater dependency on their families.[3] While the school enrolment and literacy figures for young women and girls have generally improved for both regions, one must consider that the overall high percentage is often propped up by certain better performing countries. For instance, the gender parity index (GPI) for primary to tertiary gross enrolment ratio is 0.95 in Lao People's Democratic Republic while youth literacy rate for female population aged 15–24 years in Myanmar is around 84.4 per cent in 2016 (compared to Indonesia's purported 100% for the same age group).[4] Most countries in South-East Asia and the Pacific have still not attained the targeted full school enrolment rate for their population even though access to education has generally improved with compulsory education ranging from five to 15 years in these regions.[5] More importantly, many governments in both regions are also grappling with improving access to quality as well as relevant education.[6] With higher qualifications and extended years of schooling for young women and girls, many are still experiencing poor employment prospects due to limited opportunities, skills mismatch and the "'pushdown' effects of expanding access to education" as evidenced in countries such as Indonesia.[7] Regardless of education levels and despite education replacing agrarian activities for youths, Indonesian girls' involvement in craft, domestic and/or waged-agricultural work, for example, was still considerably higher than boys' throughout the years.[8]

With limited local prospects, migration appears to provide many South-East Asians and the Pacific Islanders with an alternative avenue of livelihood and pathway to economic success.[9] At the same time, there are other factors encouraging people in these regions to migrate including the keen efforts of many governments in promoting international migration as an economic solution to addressing the country's developmental and poverty issues. Natural disasters as well as climate change[10] in recent years

3 Curtain, 2011; Duncan, 2008; Harper, 2017; Hugo, 2013; LYU and UNFPA, 2014.
4 Discovery DCode, n.d.; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.
5 Discovery DCode, n.d.; Woo and Corea, 2009.
6 Levine, 2013; United Nations, 2018; Woo and Corea, 2009.
7 Beazley, 2015; Khoo and Yeoh, 2017; White, 2012:94.
8 Geertz, 1961; White, 2012.
9 Bylander, 2015; Hugo, 2013; Kelly, 2011; LYU and UNFPA, 2014; OECD, 2015; UNESCAP, 2017; Ware, 2005.
10 The impacts of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of left-behind young women and girls is an important topic which cannot be adequately addressed within the scope of this paper. More targeted research on this aspect is also needed.

have also compelled migration in these regions due to a loss of livelihoods and homes.[11] The growing feminization of labour migration can also be attributed to a general global preference and demand for hiring women in numerous factory, care and domestic work.[12] Over time, people grow increasingly accustomed to the idea of a family member, including daughters/wives/mothers, leaving their families to work in foreign lands in order to improve the family's overall well-being.[13] Living in environments with a dominant feminized migration culture may also exert additional unseen pressures on young women and girls who stay. Interestingly, while governments and policymakers have been diligent in capturing emigration data, there is still no accurate data describing the size and characteristics of the population being left behind in South-East Asia and the Pacific. Estimates can also be wide-ranging; for instance, various scholars have suggested anywhere from two to nine million children in the Philippines to be left behind by migrant parents.[14] The lack of disaggregated data for this critical segment of the population makes it difficult to fully understand the extent of the situation and impacts on both left-behind young women and girl, as well as boys.[15]

Finally, while matrilineal societies exist within some countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Marshall Islands, many of the communities in these regions are patriarchal. Many young women and girls often have to submit to the male authority, such as fathers or husbands, in their households, having limited mobility and freedom to make independent decisions even after reaching the age of majority which ranges from 15 to 21 years.[16] Many girls are also encouraged by their families to marry early, thus keeping them constantly under a man's watch. Despite the rising age at first marriage in these regions, a notable percentage of girls in countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Solomon Islands, Thailand and Vanuatu are already married by 18.[17] Based on the mean age at first marriage, many also generally marry before turning 25.[18] Early marriages, often followed by young pregnancies, have critical implications on young women and girls' health, education, aspirations and mobility.[19] On one hand, early marriages and the persistence of traditional gender roles may limit their movements by entrenching them in caregiving roles within the domestic sphere, but they may also kickstart their motivation to migrate in order to fulfil familial obligations, provide economic care for the family and escape patriarchy.

Broad impacts of migration on left-behind girls and young women

The previous section hints at some contextual issues and dilemmas confronting many young women and girls in their home countries even before adding the migration of a close relative into the mix. Naturally, they also have to contend with other ever-changing social, familial and gendered expectations, inequality, material needs and wants, urban and global influences as well as new challenges brought about by greater access to new media and technologies.[20] Given that the impacts of migration should be considered alongside intersections of age, class and gender amongst others, the numerous issues young women and girls face are to be also kept in mind as we turn now to exploring the impacts of

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11 Duncan, 2008; IOM, 2017; Oakes et al., 2017; Prakash, 2018.
12 See for example Khoo et al., 2014; Lam and Yeoh, 2019; Sijapati, 2015; Small and Dixon, 2004; Tisdell, 2014.
13 Butt, 2018.
14 Cortés, 2007; IOM et al., 2008; Lam and Yeoh, 2018.
15 Martin and Herzberg, 2014.
16 Reid, 2014; Woo and Corea, 2009.
17 Jones, 2010; LYU and UNFPA, 2014; Rumble et al., 2018; UN DESA, 2012; UNICEF, 2018.
18 Woo and Corea, 2009.
19 United Nations, 2018.
20 Notably, boys and young men are also often subjected to similar conditions as girls. However, this paper focuses mainly on the experiences of young women and girls.

international migration of family members on left-behind young women and girls. While the terms, "stay-behind" and "left-behind" have seemingly been used interchangeably thus far, one should note that the former carries an underlying tone of choice while left-behind tends to indicate a lack of choice given the temporary labour migration regime that forbids family reunification in host countries, an absence of consultation or involvement in familial/parental migration decisions, as well as the lack of resources to pursue any migration aspirations.[21] Admittedly, the sense of choice is sometimes unclear but more importantly, this paper does not imply any negative connotations when using "left-behind". Besides, the state of staying or being left is unlikely to be permanent given that the movements of young women and girls and their families are often in a constant flux.

As mentioned earlier, research on left-behind children is still relatively limited despite a surge of studies (mainly situated in North America and East and South Asia) in the past decade. Studies eliciting the voices of youths – especially females – are even scarcer in both scope and numbers. Existing research focusing largely on various well-being outcomes such as economic, educational, emotional, psychological, physical/developmental as well as gender roles and familial relations are disproportionately situated in selected South-East Asian countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, and much less work on the Pacific can be found.[22] Much of the existing research also does not present gendered-differentiated outcomes, though research highlighting the voices and emotions of left-behind young women and girls in Indonesia, revealing their aspirations and rationale for choosing to stay or migrate, have emerged recently.[23] Apart from those who chose to stay, left-behind young women and girls are a very diverse group and would have rather varied experiences and reasons for being "left" at home. For example, some are forced to stay; some are failed migrants who have either never left or have now returned; some are migrants-in-waiting; some are "virtual" travellers who may be partaking in another country's events/programmes through digital means; others may be children of cross-national marriages (for example, Japanese-Filipino children) or overseas-born natives from the Pacific who are purposively sent to their home country for different reasons including (a) complicated family and citizenship situations; (b) getting in touch with their cultural roots; and/or (c) as a form of disciplinary measure.[24] On the other hand, the frequent coming-and-goings of islanders in the Pacific, for example Tongans, could create a perspective that no one is ever really leaving or being left behind.[25] To investigate further, we now turn to three broad – and often interrelated – aspects on the impacts of migration on young women and girls.

Economic and education outcomes

Existing quantitative and qualitative research on the different well-being outcomes of left-behind children in South-East Asia has produced an array of mixed – both positive and negative – findings. A complex combination of various factors such as gender and age of migrants, substitute caregivers and children, type of surrogate carers, sociocultural and circumstantial contexts, destinations, distance and length of parental migration as well as the presence of a migration culture in the community impinge on the outcomes.[26] Thus far, where gender is taken into consideration, not many studies in South-East Asia or the Pacific have highlighted young women and girls as being more negatively affected than boys when one or both parents migrate internationally. In addition, studies from both regions in the recent years –

21 Lam et al., 2018; Lam and Yeoh, 2018.
22 See reviews by Lam et al., 2018; Lam, Yeoh and Hoang, 2013.
23 See for example Chan, 2017; Khoo and Yeoh, 2017; Khoo and Yeoh, 2018; Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019.
24 Cave and Koloto, 2015; Chan, 2018; Jensen and Miller, 2017; Lam et al., 2018; Robertson, Cheng and Yeoh, 2018; Seiger, 2017; Suzuki, 2010.
25 Cave and Koloto, 2015.
26 Beazley, 2015; Graham and Jordan, 2011; Lam et al., 2018.

albeit mainly from the Philippines – have shown that left-behind children are also not necessarily worse off than children living with both parents.[27] Overall, most studies would agree that children – both boys and girls – typically gain materially and economically from their parent's migration.[28] Remittances have also generally led to higher investments in education for girls, granting them improved access to (better) education, the completion of more years of schooling and obtaining higher qualifications, particularly for those from Fiji, parts of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.[29] For the Tongans, remittances were especially important in the past as they provided subsistence for teenage girls.[30] The increased allocation of remittances to girls' education is also aided by compulsory education laws that helped ensure most young girls achieve a basic education.

Occasionally, different persons within the same community may give conflicting views on the outcomes of migration for left-behind children as evidenced in interviews conducted in Lombok, Indonesia.[31] Local government officials stressed the necessity of remittances (read positive) for the survival of left-behind children while teachers described "psychological symptoms" and emotional trauma amongst those left-behind. They reported that left-behind children "were more likely to drop out of school" with left-behind girls leaving school before turning 11 (end of primary school) to look after younger siblings.[32] Left-behind children themselves revealed positive experiences of remittances when received regularly. Indonesian girls, in particular, demonstrated an awareness that their parent(s) migrated to support their education and improve their lives. Thus, they expressed happiness in attending school and would study hard and recite the Quran out of their deep sense of "obligation and duty" toward their migrant parents.[33]

Findings on academic performance of left-behind young women and girls have also been rather mixed. A study by Asis and Ruiz-Marave found that left-behind Filipino children performed better than those from non-migrant households at school and that girls performed better than boys.[34] In their survey of 487 children, left-behind girls aged 9 to 11 appeared to perform academically better than boys and have better school progression/pacing though these results are not significant. Other studies, however, revealed Filipino children from mother-migrant families to be doing more poorly than other children academically.[35] One study however reported left-behind boys with migrant mothers as "significantly more negatively affected than girls, even though there is wide evidence that education expenditures on girls are more sensitive to income changes."[36] The long-term migration of Thai mothers was also found to affect school enrolment adversely while fathers' absence had no similar adverse impact.[37] Such mixed findings drive home the need to have more targeted studies in each country in order to facilitate the design of appropriate measures to help left-behind girls.

27 Asis, 2006; Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2013; Jampaklay, 2006.
28 Lam et al., 2018.
29 Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2013; ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004; Gounder, 2016; Jampaklay, 2006; Khoo and Yeoh, 2018; Yang, 2008.
30 Connell and Brown, 2005.
31 Beazley, Butt and Ball, 2018.
32 Ibid., 597.
33 Ibid.; Khoo and Yeoh, 2017.
34 Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2013.
35 Battistella and Conaco, 1998; Cortes, 2015; ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004.
36 Cortes, 2015:76.
37 Jampaklay, 2006.

Well-being and social outcomes

As earlier indicated, the gender and type of surrogate carer – grandmother/father, left-behind father/mother, other relatives and/or non-relatives – for left-behind children is one factor affecting their well-being. Existing studies revealed that the presence and support of good surrogate carers are critical in mitigating the negative impacts caused by the migrant parent's absence.[38] Left-behind young women and girls are also enlisted to become carers either for themselves or their families. For instance, the eldest daughter in the Philippines, regardless of age, may be tasked to assume heavier care burdens, make household decisions, take on additional responsibilities and chores as well as care for younger siblings in their mother's absence.[39] Overall, earlier studies portrayed left-behind Filipino daughters – especially the eldest – as more disadvantageously affected by parental migration. Similarly, Vietnamese girls also have to pick up the household chores formerly performed by their older sisters who have now married internationally.[40] Reports of girls spending more time on household chores are possibly unsurprising given the prevailing gendered division of labour within both regions to accord domestic work to women.[41] However, later research comparing three study countries, the Philippines, Nigeria and Mexico, revealed that Filipino children of engaged migrant mothers who communicate and remit regularly actually spent less time doing household chores. Some possible explanations of this reversal include the greater availability of resources in the household due to migration, transmission of social remittances as well as a greater emphasis on schoolwork instead.[42]

Returning to the earlier studies reported in the Philippines, left-behind daughters also appear to cope with the added household and caring responsibilities "by leaving school earlier and forming their own families through early marriages and unplanned pregnancies in order to fulfil their own lives".[43] Daughters from poorer families experience a more significant drop in their quality of life and falling grades upon their mothers' migration. However, they do become more independent and learn new skills in the process. The negative outlook presented raises causes for concern over the possible cumulative negative impacts of migration and poverty. It also highlights the need for a longitudinal approach toward understanding the impacts of migration and change in care and familial relations on left-behind children over the years. By contrast, the social and economic status of left-behind young Vietnamese women are actually elevated when there is an international (marriage) migrant in the household, thus raising their marriage prospects as well as bargaining power.[44] The option of marrying internationally for women has transformed the local marriage market quite significantly in favour of females.

Left-behind daughters also react differently to their situation; from qualitative interviews conducted with subsamples of larger studies, some are resentful while others are more reflective and accepting of their situation, and adjust their lifestyles accordingly to accommodate the change in reciprocation of their migrant mothers' actions.[45] Vietnamese girls aged 12 to 15 demonstrated their thoughtfulness over their transnational family formation and are more likely to understand and sympathize with the split-family arrangement.[46] As migration becomes increasingly normalized in many of the societies within the region, negative effects may also gradually become less pronounced.[47]

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38 For selected examples of studies discussing the various surrogate carer-types and well-being outcomes, see ECMI/AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004; Hoang, Yeoh and Wattie, 2012; Lam and Yeoh, 2019.
39 Parreñas, 2005.
40 Belanger and Tran, 2011.
41 Jordan et al., 2018.
42 Ibid.
43 Hoang et al., 2015:265.
44 Belanger and Tran, 2011.
45 Hoang et al., 2015.
46 Hoang and Yeoh, 2015.
47 Lam, Yeoh and Hoang, 2013; Yeoh, Hoang and Lam, 2010.

A handful of other quantitative studies also presented some well-being indicators relating to left-behind girls that are informative. A study of 496 Thai children aged 9 to 11 first reported, through the perspectives of children from both international migrant and non-migrant households, that left-behind children and girls are more resilient[48] in coping with adversities than their respective counterparts.[49] Further investigations into the same sample (*n*=1,030), but now encompassing carers of children aged 3 to 5 and 9 to 11, later revealed negative impacts on the mental health of left-behind children, especially girls, if their mothers have ever migrated after their birth.[50] In another quantitative study, the impacts of migration on the physical development of left-behind girls are mixed. On one hand, Filipino left-behind girls (and boys) aged 9 to 11 are taller than their peers from non-migrant households, possibly due to having better nutrition brought about by their parents' migration. On the other hand, Vietnamese left-behind girls are significantly more likely to be stunted than left-behind boys and girls from non-migrant families. This stunting is likely attributed to cultural preferences of feeding boys over girls.[51] Moving away from well-being indicators, the absence of Indonesian migrant fathers has also created difficulties for left-behind mothers to register their children's births which may lead to future problems for the children themselves.[52]

Overall, traditional gendered norms continue to persist in both South-East Asian and the Pacific countries but gendered ideologies have been strategically altered to factor in international migration, sometimes in positive and other times in regressive ways. Many left-behind girls in South-East Asia appeared to have grown better than earlier cohorts at weathering the separation from their migrant parents/relatives and not all end up becoming materialistic or in dire situations as popular media often portray. The improvements can be partly explained by the increasing access to new communications channels/tools over the years facilitating frequent communication and reducing feelings of isolation and abandonment. A better understanding of migrants' decisions and lives overseas also helped left-behind young women and girls cope better with their absence and motivated them to live more productively in improving themselves. While information on the economic and educational benefits for the left-behind in the Pacific can often be derived through country reports, less is unfortunately known about the social adjustments and outcomes for left-behind children there. This is perhaps due to the smaller and more scattered proportion of left-behind populations from the Pacific region, making it difficult to conduct thorough research. What is known, however, is that many migrants from the Pacific, such as the Tongans, can frequently conduct short-term visits home which help greatly in conserving their economic, social and cultural ties.[53] This freedom is perhaps aided by the availability of dual citizenship programmes to some Pacific States as well as a more fluid migration regime unlike those confronting low-waged South-East Asian international migrants who are often labour-bound to their employers for a contractual two years before being able to return home.

Individual choices: "Rights" and obligations

Adolescent and young females remaining in their home countries are affected by the migration of their immediate family members as well as other non-related persons in their communities. Material and social remittances from relatives may affect the well-being of left-behind young women and girls personally, but they are equally affected by the culture of migration and the overt manifestations of

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48 Resilience in this study is captured through children's subjective well-being as demonstrated by their answers as "always enjoying school" and being "very happy".
49 Jampaklay and Vapattanawong, 2013.
50 Adhikari et al., 2014.
51 Graham and Jordan, 2013.
52 Ball, Butt and Beazley, 2017.
53 Cave and Koloto, 2015; Duncan, 2008.

material and economic effects of migration through the appearance of newer and bigger houses and vehicles, modern appliances and clothing, within their community. Numerous studies have emphasized that communities with a dominant and long-standing history of migration may "influence and shift value systems in dramatic ways, becoming a 'referential behaviour repertoire,' orienting value systems and motivating new perspectives and choices".[54] Left-behind young females – especially those with migrant parents – are reportedly more susceptible toward migration and likelier to develop migration aspirations in replication of their predecessors' footsteps.[55] While this may hold true for some, we must not forget that left-behind young women and girls do have agency and capacity to make their own migration choices. Even though many Vietnamese girls may want to marry internationally like their sisters, they retain the choice of marrying for love or a local suitor they deem as a good match.[56]

Indeed, recent studies reveal that left-behind young women and girls make conscious decisions that may run counter to parental, partner and/or societal expectations whether in staying or leaving.[57] Through their own voices, we learnt that just as there are young women and girls who decided to migrate to fulfil their dreams, there are now more who are becoming increasingly vocal about their decision to stay.[58] In cases where societal or parental pressures attempt to deny them their freedom in deciding to stay or leave, left-behind young women and girls strategically subscribe to gender-appropriate scripts to help validate their decisions in their negotiations for the desired (non)migration outcome; for instance, reasoning that migrating or staying as necessary for providing care for the family.[59] Some Indonesian young women put their marriage plans on hold or break off their relationships in order to fulfil their life aspirations through migration while others first consider their positions as wives, and defer to their husband's wishes over their personal aspirations.[60]

In most cases of successful migration, migrant parents are able to offer their left-behind children greater educational opportunities and choices.[61] Indonesian left-behind girls recount their options in pursuing higher degrees and greater liberty in selecting a desired course of study.[62] Even as migration afforded left-behind young women and girls more aspirational capacities and the freedom to dream a little bigger, daughters were mindful of the sacrifices their parents made and moderated their career choices to reputable gendered occupations such as teaching, nursing or working as a pharmacist. They are aware that courses guiding their career paths toward becoming doctors or civil servants are either too costly or take a longer time. Left-behind young women and girls carefully balanced religious piety, their responsibilities as dutiful daughters with their aspirations when making choices that will avoid further burdening their parents financially, and make good of their parents' remittances whilst simultaneously securing their own future prospects and steady income upon graduation.[63] We are thus reminded that "[a]spirations are not open sets of individualised desires and possibilities – roles as wives, mothers and homemakers remain cosmologically 'pre-destined' and women's immobility is still largely culturally valorised".[64] Nonetheless, this does not invalidate the decisions young women and girls eventually make.

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54   Bylander, 2015:1125.
55   Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019.
56   Belanger and Tran, 2011.
57   Chan, 2017, 2018; Khoo and Yeoh, 2018.
58   Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019.
59   Bylander, 2015; Chan, 2017.
60   Khoo and Yeoh, 2018.
61   Likewise, adverse changes in the family's migration situation may also derail the plans of left-behind young women and girls.
62   Khoo and Yeoh, 2017; Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019.
63   Ibid.
64   Robertson, Cheng and Yeoh, 2018:620.

Potential for practical interventions/assistance

A salient point that emerged from the review is that stay/left-behind young women and girls need not be more disadvantaged than males or their peers from non-migrant households. External agencies can capitalize on existing positive outcomes in respective countries to better the lives and prospects of these young women and girls. The following are three suggestions for interventions.

(a)   Enhancing existing education programmes

Knowing that many left-behind young women and girls have improved access to (higher) education, various programmes aimed at harnessing the "youth bulge" can be launched through schools to enhance their employment prospects upon graduation. Career advisors can guide girls on potential career choices in their country and scholarships or internship programmes with various industry players (both locally and internationally) for them to gain first-hand experience and make informed occupational choices. Availability of stipends and/or scholarships for furthering their education would be helpful in enabling young women and girls choose their truly desired course of study. Regularly reviewing the curriculum can ensure that the education provided is relevant for the job market, and the quality of education taught should be on a par with the standards of advanced economies in order to facilitate the transfer of qualifications.[65] Making school interesting and relevant for girls will also help lower incidences of early marriages and dropout rates.

(b)   Youth-engagement programmes

More formal and informal programmes engaging directly with girls from migrant families would be useful to better understand their circumstances and needs. Concrete measures could include counselling and life-skills training sessions such as those helping them to manage their stress and make decisions. Group exercise programmes are a simple and low-cost way of gathering left-behind young women and girls together socially.

(c)   Better recognition of their agency

It would be useful to prepare and disseminate visually attractive and concise information packages through social media recognizing the agency of young women and girls and affirming their rights to make migration or life choices for themselves. Such packages could be designed to guide them in the process of decision-making, empower them to make their own life decisions and provide support for those who chose to stay. A platform can also act as a consultation channel to obtain information about young women and girls' views as well as a feedback channel for them to pose questions and obtain answers. However, such platforms should be carefully moderated to avoid abuse.

Recommended areas for further examination

Given that research to date has not fully explored the impacts of migration on left-behind young women and girls or given them enough space to voice their views, struggles and aspirations, there is a need for future research to focus on mending these gaps to come up with more relational, intersectional, longitudinal and comprehensive studies on left-behind girls spanning the different ages from 10 through 24. At the same time, studies should not neglect their male counterparts as the inclusion of males'

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65   See   for   example,   https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ED-02-ASEAN-Qualifications-Reference-Framework-January-2016.pdf.

views and experiences could provide a more gendered understanding of the different outcomes and experiences of migration whilst also addressing males' needs and wishes. The scope of the study should also be widened both thematically and geographically to cover more topics as well as countries with currently little-known information on left-behind young women and girls.

Conclusion

Various factors ranging from environment to migration often work together to affect the well-being of left-behind young females who come from very diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds. In some cases, the local circumstances are what propelled young women and girls' family members to migrate in the first place, thus placing them in the situation of being left behind. The impacts of migration on left-behind young women and girls are also very heterogenous and complex, having both positive and negative impacts on their economic, education and well-being outcomes. While regular remittances may often improve the economic situation and education prospects for left-behind young women and girls, migration can also affect – in unexpected ways – their life options and freedom to make informed personal choices. Given their fluid movements within societies that are constantly in a flux of change, young females may not remain in the (im)mobile state permanently and they are continually negotiating between familial obligations, social expectations and personal aspirations to achieve their ideal state of being. It is thus important to explore more carefully the impacts of migration together with the needs and aspirations of young women and girls.

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Young women and girls left behind: Causes and consequences

Annex 1: Overview of Key Data Relating to Girls and Young Women Aged 10 to 24 in South-East Asia and the Pacific*

Year	% of total population aged 10–24	% of total population who are females aged 10–24	% of population aged 10–24 who are females	% of total migrant population aged 10–24	% of total migrant population who are females aged 10–24	% of migrant population aged 10–24 who are females	Gross enrolment ratio, primary to tertiary (Gender Parity Index)	Female youth literacy rate (%)	Female labour force participation rate (%)
	2017							2016	2013
South-East Asia	25.6	12.5	48.8	17.0	8.8	51.9	1.02	97.1	59
Pacific	22.0	10.7	48.6	13.8	6.7	48.8	1.02	Not Available	61
Source						[66]	[67]		[68]

* The data pertains to the total population of the respective regions only.

66 UN DESA, 2017.
67 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.
68 Asian Development Bank, 2015.

2. Young women and girls' migration and education: Understanding the multiple relations

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Introduction: The multiple relations between the education and migration of young women and girls

In the South-East Asian context, the relation between young women and girls' education and migration can take multiple forms. This is the case because of the considerable socioeconomic, political and cultural diversity as well as the different histories of migration found across the region. It is also complicated by the different realities lived by young women and girls that are shaped by the intersecting social positions they occupy within society at large (such as social class and ethnicity) as well as within the household (e.g. birth position). Some girls and young women are enrolled in full-time formal education, whereas others are working full-time and possibly even married. Adolescence also needs to be recognized "as a specific gendered period in the life course" in which age, education and migration interact in ways that are always gendered.[1]

Within this social diversity, we can study the multiple relations between adolescent migration and education from two broad perspectives:

- An intergenerational perspective looking at how parental migration affects their children's education and migration;

- A focus on the life course looking at how education and migration interact during youth.

Following this framework, this chapter synthesizes the state of knowledge on these multiple relations between youth education and migration in the South-East Asian context, paying particular attention to its gendered dynamics.

The effects of parental migration on children's education and migration

Migrant parents often justify their migration across international borders as a means to provide for their children who remain in the country of origin, including by financing their education through remittances.[2] Using remittances to pay for their children's education is a common way through which parental migration affects children's education. Drawing on research in Indonesia, Choon Yen Khoo and

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1   Grabska, de Regt and Del Franco, 2019:7.
2   Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2013:1; Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019:8.

Brenda Yeoh argue that "parental investments via remittances are crucial to facilitate young people's pathways through the education system, especially during the years beyond the basic education phase".[3]

Although separated from one or both parents, evidence suggests that migrants' children are not worse off in terms of educational outcomes. Analysing survey data of nearly 500 children below 12 years of age from Laguna and Batangas (the Philippines) and their households, Maruja Asis and Celia Ruiz-Marave conclude that "if parental migration affects school outcomes, it is associated with positive outcomes, or with outcomes which show that children in transnational households are not doing worse than children living with both parents."[4] A UNICEF working paper studied the same issues in the Philippines and also included older children (up to 17 years of age).[5] The report adds that children of migrants are more likely to hold membership of academic organizations and are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities. In addition, it also notes that children of migrant parents were more likely to earn academic and non-academic awards than children of non-migrating parents.[6] This study is however based on a relatively small sample size (n=130) and provides a word of caution about the relative poor self-perception among children of migrants in the 13–16 years age-group.[7]

Parents may also migrate with their children. Some families in South-East Asia have for instance migrated from Myanmar to Thailand[8] and Indonesian and Filipino families have migrated to Sabah, Malaysia.[9] Although provided for in the 1989 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, access to school is not guaranteed in Malaysia. An amendment (no. 550) to the 1996 Malaysian education law in 2002 has effectively limited free education to children who hold Malaysian citizenship.[10] As a result, thousands of undocumented migrant children in Malaysia are out of school,[11] which includes some who are born on Malaysian soil.

Other obstacles also exist for migrant children, including girls, to access education.[12] In Thailand, following the 2005 Cabinet resolution, children who lack a legal status are allowed to enrol in any Thai government school.[13] Various studies on migrant education in Thailand indeed show that since then the attendance of Thai government schools has increased among children of migrant workers and refugees.[14] However, although not finding significant gender difference in enrolment rates of migrant children of 14 years or below, research by Nongyao Nawarat in northern Thailand reports that girls were underrepresented among the age group 15 and above.[15] This was not just the case in school enrolment rates but also in refugee camp statistics more broadly. Nawarat explains this as follows: from the age of 15 work becomes an attractive option for young migrants and refugees. Unlike boys, girls often work as a nanny or domestic worker for Thai families. Such work typically requires living-in with the employers, thereby effectively terminating girls' education.[16]

The nationalism of national education systems provides another challenge for migrant students.[17] Again the case of Thailand is instructive. In Thai government schools the medium of instruction is the Thai

3   Khoo and Yeoh, 2017:281–282.
4   Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2013:13.
5   Edillon, 2008.
6   Ibid., 31.
7   Ibid., 33.
8   Jolliffe, 2016; Nawarat, 2018.
9   Allerton, 2019; Lumayag, 2016.
10   Lumayag, 2016.
11   UNESCO, 2017:56–57.
12   UNESCO, 2018:44–45.
13   Tuangratananon et al., 2019.
14   Dowding, 2014; Punpuing et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2014:46–47.
15   Nawarat, 2018:495.
16   Ibid., 496.
17   Lall and Vickers, 2009.

language and migrant students are expected to learn about Thai history and society.[18] If upon entry into a Thai school migrant children are assessed as having a weak command of the Thai language, they are placed at a lower age-grade than their Thai peers. Combined with the practice of not recognizing any previous educational attainment in country of origin, this means that many migrant children in Thai schools are "placed in a class lower than the normal grade level for their age."[19] Since Nawarat's research shows that migrant girls are less likely to be able to combine work and schooling when they reach their teenage years, this means that if migrant girls access schools of the Government of Thailand, they in particular are likely to end up with fewer years of education than their male peers, despite the overall enabling policy context.

Since parental migration has been widespread for some decades now, it has also become possible to study its effects when the children of migrants have reached adolescence.[20] Unlike the immediate effect of parental migration on their children's education, here the findings are more strongly gendered. Qualitative research conducted in East Java, Indonesia indicates that the migration decision-making of adolescent girls is shaped strongly by their own experience of parental migration. This may lead some adolescent girls to decide to stay put.[21] Such decisions have become possible because of migration, as decades of migration have diversified the economy in these sending sites. Through remittances these households may have achieved a lower middle-class status and remittance-financed education has provided the children with professional degrees which they hope will enable them to find locally meaningful employment and which also makes them look down upon the low-skill service work that characterizes migrant work. Importantly, the decision to stay is also driven by the desire of not reproducing the feelings of neglect these girls have experienced themselves.[22]

Education-migration dynamics over youth's lifecourse

The effect of education on migration

Quantitative research indicates that educational attainment affects the decision to migrate during youth's life course in two ways. First, econometric analysis of quantitative data from Camarines Sur, a main province in Bicol, the Philippines, indicates that years of schooling "show a significant positive effect on the decision to leave the village, especially for the women" among a pooled sample of 2,905 individuals aged 15–56 in 1994.[23] Assuming cost-benefit calculations, Leonardo Lanzona explains that the higher earning potentials for more educated individuals draws them away from rural settings.

Second, research that focuses specifically on the education–migration nexus as it plays out during the life phase of youth paints a different picture. It observes that in many rural areas of South-East Asia, girls' educational attainment still often lags behind that of boys. Survey data from Lao People's Democratic Republic illustrate this point.[24] The opportunities to find paid employment in these parts of rural South-East Asia are often severely limited. Given improved infrastructure and increased exposure of rural

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18 Note though that national governments are not the sole provider of education for migrants. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand many "learning centres" operate that provide education to migrant children (Ali, Briskman and Fiske, 2016; Dowding, 2014:6; Letchamanan, 2013; Lumayag, 2016). Often times, educational curricula in such learning centres are more geared towards the needs of migrant children and may be more gender sensitive. Yet the downside is that the educational attainments obtained from such learning centres may not be recognized by government schools in receiving or sending countries alike and providing separate education for migrant children constitutes a form of segregation.
19 Nawarat, 2018:494.
20 Khoo and Yeoh, 2017.
21 Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019.
22 Ibid.
23 Lanzona, 1998:41.
24 Ibid.

youth to life beyond the village, (temporary) migrant work has become a real option.[25] Especially in the South-East Asian context, these youth rural–urban migration flows have become strongly gendered because of the high demand for young female workers, in particular in the manufacturing and service industries that has emerged over the past decades in the proximity of many South-East Asian cities.[26]

The above trends produce a gender-age dynamic. This refers to the observation that migration is typically located in the youth stage of the life course (the age-dynamic in migration) and that girls tend to get involved in migration at a younger age than boys (the gender-dynamic). This gender-age dynamic is not particular to the South-East Asian context, but according to Montgomery et al.,[27] it is particularly pronounced in this part of the world. They illustrate this on the basis of 2008 Cambodian census data which show that with regards to internal migration "beginning about age 15, higher percentages of urban Cambodian girls than boys have recently in-migrated, with the percentages for girls remaining higher into young adulthood (age 24)."[28]

While girls' migration may be triggered by leaving school at a young age, the idea of re-continuing their education with their expected migrant earnings often features in young women's and girls' motivations to migrate.[29] In most cases such objectives may not be realized. Especially if migration for work is cross-border, adolescent girls themselves also understand that their chances for continuing education abroad are unlikely.[30] Yet there are also important exceptions that paint a different picture. For example, Agnes Camacho found that of the 50 child migrants she interviewed in Metro Manilla, 30 per cent gave pursuing studies as their main reason for coming to work in the capital city.[31] Thanks to night schools providing education for adults and young migrant workers, at times free of charge, some of these young female migrants succeeded in combining internal migrant work with completing secondary education. In fact, some girls insisted that it was because of their migration that they were still in school, as is illustrated by this quote from 18-year-old Lucy who migrated to Metro Manilla in her teenage years:

> If you ask me, I'm happy (with the decision I made). If I didn't move here, I would not have continued my studies. I am working, and one more year, I would graduate from high school.[32]

Adolescent girls' migration affecting education

As previously discussed, migration affects education in three ways. Most straightforwardly, due to an overall pattern of uneven development, internal migration is often a requirement for furthering one's education. Despite the progress made, in many rural parts of South-East Asia and the Pacific access to education is relatively scarce, often of poorer quality and might not go beyond (incomplete) primary education.[33] Quantitative research shows that in the context of Indonesia, for example, the mere fact of migrating during childhood from a rural to an urban location results in "2.9 years more schooling relative to an observably similar individual who remained in the rural area" regardless of "gender, age at migration, and network size in the city".[34] Children and youth often have to migrate internally to larger villages, district or provincial centres in order to complete basic levels of education, to access boarding

25 E.g. Huijsmans and Trân Thi Hà Lan, 2015; Mills, 1997.
26 Bélanger and Pendakis, 2009; Derks, 2008; Elmhirst, 2002; Mills, 1999; Phouxay and Tollefsen, 2011.
27 Montgomery et al., 2016.
28 Ibid.:577.
29 Grabska, de Regt and Del Franco, 2019:144–146.
30 Bylander, 2015.
31 Camacho, 1999:63.
32 Camacho, 2010:146.
33 Gerber and Huijsmans, 2016; UNESCO, 2017:39.
34 Resosudarmo and Suryadarma, 2014:330.

schools or to pursue (informal) vocational education.[35] Completing university level education almost certainly requires migrating to capital cities or other major urban centres. There is also a necessity to migrate to further one's education in maritime South-East Asia where this may well require relocating to another island.[36]

Internal migration to continue schooling plays out in a gendered landscape. Studying away from the village is often costly, especially if students do not have relatives in the town or city with whom they can stay while studying away from home. This may lead rural families to prioritize the further education of sons over daughters. Such a gender pattern is noticeable in Table 1, and as indicated by the gender ratio, this pattern is more pronounced in relation to movement between major regions within the country. Thailand forms the exception. Here a greater share of the young migrant women than the young migrant men mentioned education as the main purpose for internal migration.[37]

In addition, young women and girls themselves may also contribute to reproducing gendered educational inequalities through their migration. Based on research in central Java, Carol Chan[38] shows for example that, if the remittances adolescent girls send home are used for financing the education of younger siblings, some of the moral judgements to which the independent migration of adolescent girls is subjected to, may be countered because such remittance-sending behaviour is in line with the normative idea of a dutiful daughter.

Table 1. Share of internal migrations for purpose of education by sex of persons aged 15–24

Country	Share of all moves between *major* regions for purpose of education			Share of all moves between *minor* regions for purpose of education		
	Men	**Women**	**Gender ratio**	**Men**	**Women**	**Gender ratio**
Cambodia	14.3	6.5	2.2	15.5	7.8	2.0
Indonesia	19.3	13.8	1.4	31.4	28.0	1.1
Thailand	20.6	22.0	0.9	*no data*	*no data*	–

Source: Adapted from Table 1 and Table 2 in Bernard et al., 2018:27.

As discussed below, including the topic of internal migration for education in a book on adolescent girls' labour migration is important because these educational projects may well depend on migrant labour. In addition, it also raises the question of whether internal migration for education increases the likelihood of labour migration afterwards; or whether internal migration for the education of young women and girls leads to labour migration of family members. Answering such questions needs further research.

In large-scale quantitative research, migration for the purpose of education is typically distinguished from migration for purposes of work. When studying the migration of adolescent girls from relatively poor households in particular, such compartmentalization can be misleading.[39] Longer-term qualitative research shows that even if the stated purpose of migration is "education" (i.e. migration for education), the everyday reality after having migrated may well better qualify as "labour migration" (see Textbox 1). Lyda Chea and Roy Huijsmans illustrate this argument with the example of a Laotian girl (Padu).[40] She is the first born child of two teachers in a rural village in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Padu left her

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35 Chea and Huijsmans, 2018; Faming, 2019.
36 ADB, 2016; Nilan, 2009:36.
37 Bernard, Bell and Cooper, 2018:27.
38 Chan, 2017.
39 Huijsmans, 2012.
40 Chea and Huijsmans, 2018:42.

Limitations of quantitative research for understanding adolescent migration

Survey and Census data are useful starting points for understanding young women and girls' migration. Yet, it is important to recognize some of its limitations. First, census derive migration from the difference in place of residence at time of census and place of residence five years previously. Consequentially census data leave seasonal migration undetected and "both short-term and circular migration flows are apt to be seriously under-estimated".[a] Yet these are precisely the forms of migration in which girls and young women tend to get involved in when first becoming mobile.[b] Second, the one-off interviews characterizing survey and census research do not allow for building the required levels of rapport to come to know about migration at a young age, which may be illegal (in case of cross-border migration) or sensitive for other reasons.[c] Third, in quantitative research, migration and education are often predefined in standard ways. For this reason, this chapter has also drawn on ethnographic and qualitative research which allows for rethinking the concepts of education and migration and the various ways in which these interact over the young life course. Importantly, this includes capturing how young women and girls themselves understand migration, education, and the relation between the two.

a Montgomery et al., 2016:576.
b Huijsmans, 2019.
c e.g. Huijsmans, 2019; Sano, 2016:140, 177.

village at the age of 19 to pursue further education in the form of a vocational course in health and hygiene in Vientiane. Padu, and also her parents, referred to her internal migration as for reasons of "education". However, without relatives in the city Padu ended up staying with a family for whom she worked in exchange for board and lodging. Padu's course required attending class for a few hours in the late afternoon on weekdays. Yet, she spent a much larger number of hours working in her host-family's household and riverside restaurant. As such, even though her main reason for internal migration was firmly stated in terms of education, her daily time-expenditure shows that "work" was the main feature of her migrant experience in Vientiane. This example underscores that migration for education and migration for work are not mutually exclusive categories.

Resisting singular interpretations is also important when young women and girls migrate for work. For many adolescent girls, migration for work is also driven by a desire to see the world beyond the village. In addition, for adolescent girls from poor households who have left school at a young age Chea and Huijsmans[41] argue that "labour migration often constitutes the most realistic route towards acquiring a skill that cannot be obtained through everyday work in the village".[42] This can take two forms. First, adolescent girls may enter migrant work with the explicit aim of acquiring new skills. Second, adolescent girls may enter informal apprenticeship arrangements in urban areas which to the outside observer may look like ordinary forms of migrant work, yet are undertaken with an education objective. The former has the advantage of earning and learning at the same time and is therefore common among adolescent girls from poor households who seek to acquire new skills. Informal apprenticeships often need to be paid for and are therefore out of bounds for the poorest adolescent girls, but still more accessible than formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, because they do not come with any educational entry requirements.

The phenomenon of migration for work in order to acquire a skill is well illustrated by Danièle Bélanger and Katherine Pendakis[43] in research on young internal female migrants working in the Vietnamese garment industry. They conclude that "many women view factory work in the garment sector as

41 Ibid., 41.
42 See also Nguyen, 2019:64; Temin et al., 2013:2.
43 Bélanger and Pendakis, 2009.

a potential and real source of learning, in spite of the monotony and repetitive nature of the tasks performed".[44] A 24-year-old female internal migrant explains the relation as follows:

> *When I completed secondary school, I took the university entrance examination. I failed the first time, but my parents encouraged me to try again. When I failed again, I felt sad that I would not learn anymore … I decided to go to Hanoi …When I came to Hanoi and began working, I realized that there were many things to learn … I had lessons in the technology of sewing and other specialized kinds of knowledge that are related to my job. I think that these skills are very valuable for the future because I have the ability to go to another factory with these skills or open my own tailor shop.[45]*

Popular forms of migration for work and learning among adolescent girls comprise informal apprenticeships in beauty shops, hairdressing salons and in sewing. The current policy focus on vocational training takes the form of creating and expanding formal TVET programmes. In this policy context, informal, household-based forms of apprenticeships that do not lead to any formally recognized diplomas receive little attention and are seldom recognized as a form of education by researchers and policymakers alike.[46] Although the quality of such placements no doubt differs considerably and fees can be substantial, for rural adolescent girls in particular, such urban, informal on-the-job trainings are an important form of migration, which, albeit for work purposes, also provide a form of education. These placements do not come with the educational requirements of formal TVET programmes, the arrangements are highly flexible, there is no separation between the "classroom" and the shop floor as is the case in formal TVET programmes, and there is the widespread idea that apprenticing in an urban workplace provides them with vocational skills and knowledge not easily obtained in rural settings.[47]

Lastly, the very experience of migration for work also constitutes an education in the broadest sense of the term as young female migrants acquire life skills and life experiences through the process of migration. For example, Grabska et al. conclude that the migrant girls and young women they have worked with recognize that "learning to protect oneself was often seen as a positive consequence of migration".[48] Recognizing labour migration as educational does not mean denying the many vulnerabilities of girls and young women in migration. Rather, it suggests adopting a more balanced perspective acknowledging adolescent girls' vulnerabilities in migration whilst also appreciating that, through migration, young female migrants learn to manage these vulnerabilities and to mitigate the gendered dangers of migration at a young age.[49]

Appreciating labour migration as educational is particularly important in relation to young female migrants from rural areas. Across South-East Asia there is a strong discourse which equates rurality with backwardness and not being up-to-date.[50] These discourses have historical roots and continue to be reproduced through popular culture and policies that seek to "modernize" the countryside.[51] Rural youth are acutely aware of their subordinate position vis-à-vis urban youth. This means that for adolescent girls, rural–urban migration is not just a "transition from one environment that is relatively familiar to another about which much may be unknown" as Montgomery et al. posit.[52] It also means moving to a place in which they stand out and are looked down upon because of their rural traits.

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44   Ibid., 280.
45   Ibid., 280–281.
46   Chea and Huijsmans, 2018.
47   Ibid.
48   Grabska, de Regt and Del Franco, 2019:179.
49   Huijsmans and Baker, 2012.
50   Mills, 1997.
51   Huijsmans, 2010.
52   Montgomery et al., 2016:573.

Hence, rural girls leave their village with anxiety about whether they will be able to succeed in these urban or cross-border destinations that they consider more up-to-date. Against such a background, the mere achievement of successfully managing internal or cross-border migration at a young age must be recognized as a transformative experience in its own right constituting an educational experience that contributes positively to adolescent girls' self-esteem.[53]

Conclusion

This chapter has mapped out the multiple ways in which youth's migration and education interact. In doing so, youth is recognized as a period in the life course in which gender relations and identities solidify. This means that the various relations between youth migration and education are shaped by gender relations and are given meaning by young women and girls in gendered ways.

The chapter has distinguished between an intergenerational perspective and a life course perspective. The former looks at how parental migration affects the education of their children. For countries that can draw on several decades of widespread labour migration such as Indonesia and Thailand, one can also study how parental migration affects migration decision-making of adolescent children. A life course perspective entails analysing the multiple ways in which migration and education interact over the young life course of adolescent girls.

This chapter has gone beyond a focus on the effects of migration on formal schooling. Drawing on qualitative research it has argued that for adolescent girls from poor households, labour migration may well constitute a form of learning. In addition, migration may also be important for accessing informal education, such as informal apprenticeships, while the very experience of migration can be recognized as educational too.

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3. Intergenerational cycles of migrating for work: Young women and girls migrating for work in South-East Asia and the Pacific

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Introduction

This paper examines the literature exploring the intergenerational contexts of young women migrating for work in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vanuatu. Concentrating on both rural to urban migration and transnational migration for work, the focus is on the specific factors that lead to adolescent girls and young women migrating for work, and the likelihood that this type of migration is continued from one generation to another. The paper concludes by identifying recent programme interventions that have been successful in breaking the cycle of high female migration, and in the protection and empowerment of female migrant workers in the region.[1]

Intergenerational cycles of female migration for work refers to the ways in which the migration trajectories of women and girls are reproduced across generations. The enduring nature of these gendered migratory paths are the result of a number of influences, including: global structural forces and the new international division of labour, government policies within migrant-sending nations, and community and household characteristics, including the economic status and education of female migrant workers, and specific social cultural norms which generate and perpetuate female out-migration in migrant-sending communities. To provide an analysis of intergenerational female labour migration in the South-East Asia and the Pacific regions it is important to explore these factors in more detail, and how they play out in each country.

Structural forces

Over the last three decades rural poverty, limited employment or career opportunities and global neoliberal economic forces have been major factors in migration decision-making, leading to a significant rise in internal and transnational labour, with an accompanying surge in family fragmentation. A key feature of this new international division of labour has been emerging economies in South-East Asia attempting to "sell" the labour of their rural youth to labour-attracting countries that wish to achieve their development goals.[2] Initially in South-East Asia labour migration was predominantly male, with young men going to work in the informal economy in cities, overseas on plantations or in the construction industry. Since the late twentieth century, however, there has been a shift in gender norms, with the growing feminization of labour migration globally. In South-East Asia this livelihood strategy has been most evident within poor rural communities in Indonesia and the Philippines, where women make up between 60–75 per cent of overseas workers.[3]

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1 Hennebry, Hari and Piper, 2018.
2 Somaiah, Yeoh and Arlini, 2019.
3 Lam and Yeoh, 2018; Silvey, 2006; Piper, 2008; Butt, Ball and Beazley, 2017.

Indonesia

Domestic service is one of the biggest employers of adolescent girls and young women from impoverished rural communities in Indonesia. Non-governmental organizations' advocates purport that there are 600,000 child domestic workers in Jakarta alone. At least 50 per cent of these domestic workers are female, under 18 and in many cases under the legal minimum working age of 15.[4] In terms of transnational migration the majority of documented female migrants also work as domestic servants in the Middle East.[5] In 2018, Indonesia sent 283,640 migrant workers abroad. Of that number, 198,975 were female and 150,000 of them were migrant domestic workers.[6] This makes Indonesia one of the major sources of female migrant domestic workers in the world. However, many unskilled women secure false travel documents to complete the journey through official channels and undocumented labour migration is up to four times higher than official migration figures.[7] The numbers of undocumented female migrants have increased since the Government of Indonesia placed a moratorium on female migration to the Middle East in 2015, after a number of cases of abuse and the implementation of the death penalty. However, since the ban it has been estimated that up to 10,000 undocumented female migrants have continued to travel to the Middle East per month, through the help of illegal agents.[8]

Philippines

Research in the Philippines has also emphasized the role of migration as a livelihood strategy for impoverished families. The Philippines has a long history of female international migration, and since the 1970s the State has promoted overseas female migration to the Middle East (64% in 2015) and Asia, including Japan.[9] In 2015 domestic servants were the top occupation for new hires for Filipino women, and it is often mothers who go to work as domestic servants in the cities or overseas.[10] Much of the research in the Philippines emphasizes the role of young female workers in supplementing the family income, and how adolescents, usually girls, move to Manila or overseas in search of employment as a means of supporting their families.[11] The phenomena has impacted on family relationships over the past few decades, with the lives of girls and young women living in many poor communities significantly shaped by this rapid growth in migration.

Cambodia

Female migration is a relatively recent but increasingly prevalent phenomenon in Cambodia, and since the early 2000s it has become a major livelihood strategy for disadvantaged rural communities.[12] The situation in Cambodia is in line with broader regional and global trends of a feminization of migration, due to the increased demand for women in domestic work and the manufacturing sector, along with changing societal trends in recent years that allow women to migrate independently. The majority of female migrants in Cambodia travel to the capital Phnom Penh, with 75 per cent of women finding work in the capital, and 44 per cent of all female migrants working in the garment industry.[13] However,

4   Rosenberg, 2003:18.
5   ILO, 2013.
6   Tirtawening, 2019.
7   Ball, Butt and Beazley, 2017.
8   Ganesha, 2018.
9   Asis, 2017.
10   Lam and Yeoh, 2018.
11   Graham and Yeoh, 2013; Parreñas, 2005.
12   Nurick and Hak, 2019; Green, 2018.
13   Zimmer and van Natta, 2015.

undocumented migration over the border into Thailand is extremely high, where they are employed in the construction sector, agriculture or domestic work.[14] In recent years there has also been a growing transnational demand for Cambodian female labour in Malaysia, Singapore and the Republic of Korea.[15] From 2000 to 2012 Cambodian women made up 87 per cent of all Cambodians migrating to Malaysia for work. The vast majority of these women were domestic workers (75%) and in Malaysia's manufacturing industry.

Myanmar

Myanmar has only recently seen a growth in female labour migration. Young women often work in tea plantations, garment factories, food and beverage services, domestic work or in the sex industry.[16] However, there is still an under-representation of women in the domestic labour force and opportunities in the labour market for young women are very limited, with most lacking an education and working in low-paid and low-skilled work.[17] Young women with limited employment opportunities travel across borders to Thailand and Singapore to work as domestic workers, where they can earn more money than in Myanmar. As in Indonesia and Cambodia, Myanmar has recently banned women from migrating into overseas domestic work.[18] As a result, they continue to migrate through irregular channels, making them vulnerable to arrest and making it difficult to know the number working in neighbouring countries. The Government of Myanmar has estimated that there are around 28,000 undocumented Myanmar migrant domestic workers in Thailand and between 30,000 and 40,000 in Singapore.[19] International organizations and migrant non-governmental organizations put these figures far higher.[20]

Vanuatu

In the past, Ni-Vanuatu (Vanuatu citizens) have migrated throughout the Pacific archipelago for work, but as elsewhere this kind of migration has traditionally been practiced by men.[21] The main remittances into Vanuatu are through workers' participation in New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) guest-worker scheme, which employs temporary Ni-Vanuatu male migrants as seasonal horticultural workers.[22] The majority of female migration in Vanuatu, therefore, is internal, from rural to urban areas, where better employment opportunities are to be found.[23]

More men migrate to urban centres than women, and as in Myanmar men dominate formal employment, particularly construction, manufacturing, government and public administration. When employed, young female migrants are engaged in less stable, non-contract jobs, making them vulnerable to employer abuses and exploitation. Gender-based inequality is deep in urban areas, compared to rural areas and young women are more vulnerable. In particular female market vendors are one of the most vulnerable groups, with the majority of market vendors in urban areas being uneducated women.[24]

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14   Nurick and Hak, 2018.
15   Zimmer and van Natta, 2018.
16   IOM 2016 cited in UNESCO, n.d. pp. 1–7.
17   Ibid.
18   UN-Women, 2017.
19   Zimmer and van Natta, 2015.
20   IOM, 2018.
21   Cummings, 2013; Jolly, 1987.
22   Cummings, 2013; Hammond and Connell, 2009.
23   Beazley, 2017.
24   Parker, 2018.

Government development policy

With the growing feminization of labour migration, dominant discourses promoting migrant women as agents of development has become prevalent within migrant-sending nations. The Government of Indonesia, for example, has encouraged and facilitated female overseas migration to reduce its unemployment numbers and to encourage foreign remittances.[25] Women are encouraged to migrate due to their reliability in sending home remittances to pay for their children's education and subsistence in their communities. Consequently, they have been promoted by the State as "heroes of development".[26] Such systematic enculturation in policy of overseas migration in Indonesia, the Philippines and Cambodia, has resulted in the promotion of overseas migration to women in low-income families by provincial and local government leaders. In poor communities, young girls aspire to migrate when they are old enough to do so or they falsify their documents to be able to go earlier. In this way the Government's and family values have converged, creating strong pressures for young women to work overseas to improve the lives of their families.

In Vanuatu, however, the Government's rhetoric promoting female labour migration does not exist, and women are not encouraged to migrate for work by their families or the Government as they are in South-East Asia. For example, women are not permitted to participate in the RSE guest-worker scheme to New Zealand.

Community and household characteristics

The socioeconomic circumstances of families in migrant-sending communities must be understood to appreciate the reasons for existing cycles of female migration across generations. Most female migrants come from impoverished poor subsistence economies where families are struggling to make ends meet and where there is a lack of welfare support from the government. For poor families in rural South-East Asia, transnational labour migration is a multi-generational poverty reduction strategy, due to a lack of waged, low-skill employment at home and the increased demand for unskilled female labour in wealthier countries.[27]

Cultures of migration

As a result of these enduring circumstances, communities with high levels of out-migration have developed what has been described as a "culture of migration", where overseas migration is seen as desirable, and girls aspire to migrate as soon as they are old enough to do so.[28] Within these communities female out-migration has become an accepted and necessary method for achieving personal and family aspirations, particularly among the rural poor.[29] In these communities, young women face increased pressures to migrate from parents and household members, situated around the expectations that they should be contributing to the household economy once they are old enough to do so.[30] What is clear from the literature is that migration decisions are embedded within a household, even if young women are seeking individual wealth or escaping the family home.

25   World Bank, 2015.
26   Chan, 2014; Graham and Jordan, 2011.
27   Palmer, 2016.
28   Beazley, 2015.
29   Camacho, 2006:31; Derks, 2008; Beazley, 2015; Ball, Butt and Beazley, 2017; Bylander, 2015.
30   Bylander, 2015.

During her research in a migrant-sending community in the Philippines, Parreñas' findings were similar to research conducted in migrant-sending communities in Indonesia, where girls are socialized to migrate by their migrant mothers. Specifically, Parreñas found that communities have a "migration-oriented culture" and that:

> *The cognition of rural-urban differences as constructed through migrant parents facilitated a subjective willingness for migration among left-behind children.*[31]

Traditional social attitudes towards female migration in Cambodia are also undergoing rapid change. In the past female migration was not encouraged, but in her research on *Women on the Move* in Cambodia, Derks describes how "female labour has come to play an essential role in the country's move toward economic development and modernization" after the years or warfare and genocide.[32] She further explains how the massive growth of Cambodian women working in the garment and sex industry was "unimaginable ten years before", and that female labour is playing an essential role in the country's move toward economic development.[33]

Changing decision-making processes surrounding gender and labour migration is therefore leading to changes in gender and intergenerational dynamics within the household. Over time traditional gender roles have intersected with patriarchal ideologies and migration systems to allow previously immobilized women to access labour migration.[34] As a result of these cultures of migration "the migration experience of individuals can have a relational effect on other household and community members' imagined or actual migrations and futures, such as gendered migrations".[35]

Culturally defined emotions

In their research among migrant-sending communities in Indonesia, Beazley, Butt and Ball describe how a feminized culture of migration is reproducing gendered ideas about work and duty among children in migrant communities. The research found that socializing cultural emotions in the community enable children to adjust their behaviour and emotions to the normative prescriptions of the culture of migration in their community. Specifically, the concept of *malu* (shame) is a collectively shared and socialized emotion to discourage individualism and support social harmony and deference in Indonesia. Within the socializing context, children are expected to control intense negative emotions including feelings of anger or sadness when their mothers migrate for work. The study suggests children of migrants are entangled in pervasive community anxieties around transnational migration which shape children's emotional responses to parental absence. In this way children are socialized to transnational migration from a young age. Importantly, adolescent girls in the study had strong aspirations to themselves migrate, once old enough, to contribute to their family's well-being.[36]

In Vanuatu, however, society continues to have negative views towards young women migrants, as it is believed they should remain in the villages with their mothers or husbands. As a result of these cultural beliefs young Ni-Vanuatu women living in the cities are perceived as a "problem" by women elders and chiefs, because they are challenging traditional *kastom* (custom), through their appropriation of new

31 Parreñas, 2005.
32 Derks, 2008.
33 Ibid.
34 Khoo, Platt and Yeoh, 2017.
35 Ibid.
36 Beazley, Butt and Ball, 2017.

cultural forms.[37] However, the perceptions held by village chiefs and older women that young women in urban areas are unconcerned about *kastom* was unsupported during participatory research with young women living in the cities. Research demonstrated that many young women and girls regarded *kastom* as a vital component of their lives and that they did not reject traditional life, but instead sought a renegotiation of tradition through interactions constructed through social relations.[38] The research also found that young women had a strong desire to participate in the overseas RSE guest-worker scheme in New Zealand, but were denied the right to do so due to traditional patriarchal beliefs that it was "men's work".[39]

Social and cultural norms

As described, therefore, the factors influencing an adolescent girl's likelihood of migrating for work include poverty, a lack of education and social cultural norms, including whether her own mother has migrated for work. In this respect, a growing body of research has examined the economic impact of transnational migration on children who have been left behind by their migrant mothers.[40] Some of these studies argue that the material benefits of remittances from migrant parents provides a positive impact,[41] with children left behind experiencing an improved quality of life.[42] Within this literature, however, children of migrant parents are often depicted as emotionally resilient and well looked after.[43] These constructions of the experiences of young people in migrant communities are now being challenged by accumulating ethnographic evidence which examines the lives of children left behind by their migrant parents, particularly by their migrant mothers.

These recent studies in Indonesia and the Philippines reveal that risks for children whose mothers have migrated are especially acute for young girls and include neglect, abandonment, and dropping-out of school, making them more vulnerable to child trafficking and migrating through undocumented channels.[44] Further, the likelihood of an adolescent daughter of a migrant mother in turn herself migrating depends on other intersecting factors, including: whether she has been registered at birth (and can attend school); whether the mother's employment is skilled, with associated income levels; whether remittances are reliable; whether the mother is able to pay recruitment debts; and how long the mother is away.[45] The reliability and size of remittances is an important factor: if remittances are irregular or insufficient to cover the child's basic needs, the child will be negatively impacted, meaning they have to drop out of school. For daughters who drop out of school, social norms dictate that they must either get married and move into their husband's household or they must find work to contribute to the family income. In many South-East Asian rural communities if a girl is married at 15 she is no longer considered a child and is expected to contribute to the family income. In migrant-sending communities there is a high expectation that she will leave to find work, as her mother has done.[46] A lack of access to a sustainable livelihood or an education results in daughters of migrants being vulnerable to recruitment agents (for unsafe undocumented migration) and in migrating for work themselves.

37 Cummings, 2013; Beazley, 2017.
38 Beazley, 2017.
39 Cummings, 2013.
40 Graham and Jordan, 2011; Lam, Hoang and Yeoh, 2013; Beazley, Butt and Ball, 2017; McKay, 2007.
41 e.g. Yeoh and Lam, 2006; Graham et al., 2012.
42 Lam, Hoang and Yeoh, 2013; McKay, 2007.
43 Coe et al., 2011; McKay, 2007.
44 Allerton, 2014; SMERU, 2014; Graham et al., 2012; Graham and Jordan, 2011; Beazley, Butt and Ball, 2017.
45 Butt, Ball and Beazley, 2017.
46 Sano, 2012.

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Labour migration, therefore, is perceived as a way for young women to provide for their impoverished families, as well as an opportunity to take on adult responsibilities within the family.[47] Although the majority of literature on female migrants emphasizes how remittances are significant to their families, adolescent girls have diverse reasons for migrating for work and these are not only economic. Migration may also be understood as a liberating process for female adolescents, allowing them to exercise their agency and as a necessary step in their transition to adulthood. They are migrating to escape controlling patriarchal social norms enforced by their parents and to evade cultural ideals of being dutiful daughters.[48] Others are wanting to escape early marriage, domestic violence, abusive relationships or marital conflicts at home.[49] As Whitehead, Hashim and Iversen have stressed, therefore, the interplay of gendered dynamics within households demonstrates the ability for even the least powerful to exercise their agency within prevailing social norms.[50] Such dynamics effect migration decisions and the role that migration makes to the household across future generations.[51] The reality, however, is that young, poorly educated rural girls who have dropped out of school possess inadequate skills. Often their only choice is to migrate for work, to a factory, as a domestic worker or in the entertainment industry, as these are the most accessible job opportunities for them.[52]

Although female labour migration in Cambodia began in the early twenty-first century, recent research has already documented how female migration has had a negative effect on the daughters of migrants.[53] Girls in migrant families are more likely to drop out of school as they are expected to contribute to household chores (including caring for their younger siblings) and the household income while their mother is away.[54] Almost 74 per cent of household heads reported they would take female children out of school, reflecting traditional thinking that girls are better suited to household chores.[55] Girls from migrant households have a 27 per cent higher probability of participating in economic activities than those in non-migrant households, which with the restructuring of gender relations, means they are more likely to migrate for work themselves. [56]

Grandmothers

Ethnographic research in migrant-sending communities in the Philippines and Indonesia has also explored how older relatives, including grandmothers, are supporting intergenerational cycles of migration for work by looking after their grandchildren while their daughters are away.[57] This is due to the increased life expectancy of grandmothers in recent years and their willingness to participate in the migration experience.[58] Research in Cambodia has revealed how grandmothers encourage their daughters to migrate to urban centres in order to support the family.[59] The majority of these migrant workers were young women employed in garment factories. Grandmothers in the study stayed behind to look after the children, but they also travelled frequently to the city to care for their migrating offspring and assist with household duties. As scholars have pointed out, however, the "care

47   Hashim and Thorsen, 2009.
48   Khoo and Yeoh, 2017.
49   Gil Araujo, 2009.
50   Whitehead, Hashim and Iversen, 2007.
51   Ibid.
52   Nurick and Hak, 2019; Silvey, 2006; Beazley, 2007.
53   Derks, 2008; Nurick and Hak, 2019.
54   Tunon and Khleang, 2013.
55   OECD, 2017.
56   Ibid.
57   Graham et al., 2012; Ball, Butt and Heazley, 2017.
58   Croll, 2010.
59   Lawreniuk and Parsons, 2017.

triangle" involving a grandparent as the caregiver only works when all parties are empowered to follow through on commitments.[60] This includes the adult female child sending money home to provide for their children and their own mothers and the grandmothers being strong enough to perform the role. If the grandmothers are unable to support their granddaughters then the granddaughters are more likely to be vulnerable to sexual abuse, trafficking and migrating themselves.

Technology

In the past fifteen years the role of communication technology in intergenerational family relations has significantly contributed to the ease with which mothers can share information about the migration experience with their daughters and in sending home remittances.[61] Relationships and exchanges between family members are heavily dependent on digital technology and communications – via text message, social media and skyping – which Bryceson has noted "have been axiomatic to the initiation, maintenance and expansion of transnational family exchange".[62] In her study of transnational intergenerational relations between Filipino migrant mothers and their young adult children, Parreñas examined how mothers manage to achieve increased intimacy across great distances as a result of new communication technology.[63] The literature also shows how mothers feel more able to leave as they can sustain regular positive communication with their child during their separation, through texts and mobile phones. In regard to intergenerational cycles of migration, regular communication with their mother socializes a female adolescent to the idea of migrating themselves, once they are old enough to do so. As a result, transnational family networks are being strengthened across national borders by communication technology, providing emotional and financial support, as well as the "motivational impetus for migration" for young girls.[64]

Communication technology has also enhanced social networks that support migrant communities in Indonesia and the Philippines and more recently in Cambodia. In these countries migration flows are strongly connected to the international labour migration of former generations, with the migration strategies of women in these communities adapted over three or four generations. Such strategies include social networks embedded in the migrant's place of origin, which through communication technology continue to influence intergenerational decisions to migrate.[65] In Myanmar and Vanuatu, however, the practice of female migration is less established.[66] As a result the social networks and cultural practices are less developed but are growing each year as new generations of young women migrate for work.

This paper has summarized the main factors that contribute to intergenerational cycles of female labour migration in the South-East Asia and the Pacific region. The final section of the paper considers the success of interventions that have aimed to prevent girls and young women migrating for work and to protect the rights of female migrants in the region.

60 Ball, Butt and Beazley, 2017.
61 Datta, 2014; Bryceson, 2019.
62 Bryceson, 2019:4.
63 Parreñas, 2005.
64 Bryceson, 2019:2.
65 Piper, 2008; Khoo and Yeoh, 2017.
66 Derks, 2008; Bylander, 2015; Petrou, 2018.

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Policy implications

When migration is one of the few options for mothers and young women to earn a livelihood, more needs to be done by governments to ensure their protection. Young women need to be considered in policymaking intervention and design, including their psychological and emotional needs. It is also important to acknowledge that the feminization of migration in the South-East Asia and the Pacific regions is reproducing gendered ideas about work and family obligations among young women in migrant communities.

Indonesia

A deeper appreciation of how to meet the needs of young women is possible through youth-focussed participatory research that explores the motivations and impacts of transnational and local migration on young people's lives. In Indonesia Save the Children's ENABLE programme had considerable success short-circuiting the cycle of migration of girls from poor families in high migrant-sending communities.[67] The ENABLE programme developed a culturally grounded understanding of community structures and beliefs at the village level, which were essential for building effective interventions. The programme's success at the village level was due to the commitment to community participation, which led to an in-depth understanding of local cultural norms and community education committees which raised awareness of the importance of girls' education and the dangers of illegal (undocumented) migration; providing young people with vocational training for livelihood sustainability; and prevention strategies at the village level.

Philippines

In the Philippines the NGO *Atikha* provides economic and social services to overseas Filipinos and their children left behind.[68] Its main areas of action are:

- Increasing awareness of migration realities: most children do not know how their parents are living. Such awareness reduces the desire to migrate themselves.

- Increasing savings consciousness: An organization of youth savers working to counter growing consumerism.

- Promoting education to ensure that children only migrate by choice and not out of necessity.

- Developing gender sensitive financial literacy among young women, female overseas workers and caretakers, including savings schemes and investment instruments.

- Developing community-based tourism initiatives, with training in ecotourism and homestays.

Vanuatu

Little is known about the relationships between gender and labour migration in Vanuatu, or the policies needed to increase advantages for young women, while avoiding socioeconomic costs. However, an

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67 Beazley, 2018.
68 Atikha, 2019.

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) funded *Youth Challenge Vanuatu* leadership programme for young women who have migrated to the capital Port Vila, and for those still living in rural areas, has had an impact on young women's confidence, behaviour and attitude and has increased their confidence in the decisions that they take in their lives.[69] On a policy and programme level, therefore, it is necessary to empower young women to be able to make decisions and to network and mobilize others. Such a focus on young women's adaptive leadership skills avoids adult-dominated protectionist agendas that position young women as a source of anxiety and facilitates a smoother transition to adulthood. Although most international welfare agencies claim to be "rights-based" in their approaches to working with young people, especially young women, the methods that these agencies adopt to conduct contemporary research into young people's lives are often directed by adult-centric agendas, which are dismissive of the agency, autonomy and resilience of the young migrants.

Cambodia and Myanmar

In Myanmar and Cambodia (and Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam), the EMERGE programme has been working across the Mekong Delta with young female migrants living in urban centres. The aims of the EMERGE programme are to:

- enhance young migrant urban women's rights;

- raise the profile of urban migrant women's issues;

- improve equitable participation in the economy;

- improve young women's resilience to changing circumstances;

- improve access to decent work;

- enable meaningful participation for female migrants to have a voice;

- develop actions against gender-based violence (GBV);

- conduct high quality evidence-based research in project sites.

In Myanmar the EMERGE programme is focused on safer employment for migrant women, personal and career advancement for female garment workers and safer conditions for sex workers. In Cambodia the programme aims to develop protections for marginalized women, and to ensure safer work places and communities for young migrant women. The programme is implemented by CARE and funded through DFAT's Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). EMERGE shares the programme's best practices, tools and resources between projects, country offices, local partners and other stakeholders, such as governments and local and international non-governmental organizations.[70]

Conclusion

There is still much research to be done in the Asia–Pacific region, to understand young women's motivations and experiences – both positive and negative – and from the perspective of young people themselves. It is recommended, therefore, that as with the ENABLE and EMERGE programmes, further community-based research in migrant sending communities is undertaken. Such an approach will ensure that development planning and programming are appropriate for the Asia–Pacific region.

69   Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2009; Youth Challenge Vanuatu, n.d.
70   CARE Australia, n.d.

Recommendations

- Community-based research in migrant-sending communities to understand community social norms and cultural practices (for more effective intervention);

- Collection of sex and age disaggregated data to allow for a better understanding of the reasons that adolescent girls and young women migrate and how gender inequality affects migration decisions among young women (to better inform effective interventions and policymaking);

- Raise awareness of dangers of migration among potential migrants and communities, including through the media (social media, radio, internet and newspapers);

- Access to education for adolescent girls in migrant communities, including through informal education programmes;

- Improving the economic and employment status of adolescent girls and young women in their communities so they are more self-sufficient. This includes programmes to support local investment and alternative forms of income for young women so they do not have to migrate;

- As migration decisions are often made at the household level it is important to support adolescent girls and young women to participate actively in decisions that affect them, including their own migration and the migration of their parents;

- Return migrants workers should be provided with small-business counselling, and financing facilities, so they invest their money locally and do not decide to migrate again;

- Policies must be enforced to dismantle networks that facilitate undocumented migration and prevent the illegal recruitment of female migrant workers, including those who are underage;

- Governments and migrant-sending communities (and recruitment agents) must be socialized to laws on the protection of female migrant workers, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Domestic Workers, and the dangers and negative impacts of undocumented migration;

- The ILO Convention on Domestic Workers must be enforced through States parties, which are required to take steps to ensure that the work performed by domestic workers who are under the age of 18 "does not deprive them of compulsory education, or interfere with opportunities to participate in further education or vocational training";

- Migrant workers must receive better pre-departure training, including on their human rights, what they might expect *en route* and at the destination, whom to contact if they are at risk of harm, safe housing alternatives as well as occupational skills.

- Adolescent and young women must have access to birth certificates, passports and other documentation and communication devices needed to migrate safely and to prove one's identity.

- Migrant workers must also be trained to understand local culture in their destination country as violations of cultural norms may be considered criminal offences.

Atikha

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4. Young women and girls as providers for households of origin

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Introduction

This paper examines how young women and girl migrants have increasingly become household providers within the five countries that make up Mainland South-East Asia (Mainland SEA): Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.[1] The focus on Mainland SEA is both important and interesting given the convergence and divergence in migration trends and patterns in the subregion. The recent exponential increase in female migration within and from the countries where female migration was once frowned upon, implies profound transformations in places of origin. The paper begins with an overview of the differences and similarities in migratory trends for women and girls in Mainland SEA. It then presents an overview of the socioeconomic, cultural and religious explanations for why so many young women have become providers of their households at places of origin. This is followed by a review of the impacts of migration on migrants' families and their well-being. Finally, this paper suggests practical interventions and assistance that could alleviate some of the most negative of these impacts and concludes with recommendations on areas for further examination.

Regional perspective

Labour migration is widespread across Mainland SEA, concerning at least 3–5 million workers by one estimate.[2] International migration within the subregion is primarily intraregional, much of which is irregular and may not be fully captured by official data.[3] Women across the subregion migrate both internally and internationally through regular and irregular channels to seek income-generating opportunities in a variety of sectors including domestic or care services, manufacturing industries, commercial agriculture, the sex industry, and entertainment and hospitality industries. International migration is driven by economic inequality and demographic disparity (especially in the case of South-East to East Asian migration) that exists across the five countries and manifests in similar ways.

As the only major destination country in Mainland SEA, Thailand forms a hub for labour migration from all the countries in the subregion. While Cambodia, Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic have recently begun formal labour export programmes (Malaysia, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China and, increasingly, the Middle East are

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1   The Pacific is not included in the main body of the paper due to the limited research on the subregion. See the textbox at the end of this paper for an overview of female labour migration from Pacific islands.
2   ADB, 2013.
3   Harkins, Lindgren and Suvavoranon, 2017.

main destinations), much of international migration from these countries is spontaneous and Thailand-bound. They have all experienced rapid growth in labour migration in recent years. In 2016, Cambodia had a 109 per cent positive increase in its international labour migration rate, with Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic at 53 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively.[4] Published data from within Thailand does not disaggregate based on sex but does show that the majority of the 2,062,807 international migrants working legally in Thailand in 2017 came from Myanmar (approximately 65%), Cambodia (17%) and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (7.5%). Of these, roughly half are women, and many more women migrants (as well as male) may be unaccounted for within official data.[5] These numbers suggest that despite attempts by the Government of Thailand to curb waves of incoming migration, intraregional movements remain a core component of the subregion's demographic makeup.

Viet Nam stands apart from the other countries as it does not demonstrate the same labour migration trends into Thailand as the other countries. The country is the largest source of migrant contract workers in the subregion with Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Algeria as the main destinations. According to the latest statistics, 131,751 Vietnamese contract workers were deployed in 2017,[6] 42 per cent of which were female, and 500,000 were working overseas in 2018.[7] These figures reflect those that have migrated abroad under bilateral agreements between Viet Nam and destination countries. Vietnamese women also migrate abroad increasingly through irregular channels, including overland to Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and to other countries in South-East and East Asia.

For example, Viet Nam is the largest source of marriage migrants in the subregion which, according to research, is actually the family's economic strategy in many cases. Marriage provides migrants with access to the labour market of industrialized economies where their labour can be sold at a higher price. On average, approximately 15,000 Vietnamese women migrate through marriage to East and South-East Asian countries on an annual basis.[8] Marriages are mostly arranged by commercial brokers and Vietnamese brides are predominately women aged under 30 (70% of age less than 22) who have never been married.[9] Research finds that their remittances form a substantial portion of the total income of their families in Viet Nam, enabling their parents to invest in production and business, education, health care and daily consumption.[10] This vital flow of remittances has helped to transform gender relations in sending areas, increasing the value of daughters and weakening son preference.[11]

As economic globalization intensifies, transnational movement of goods, services and labour is accelerated by more open and active borders. The income-generating activities that come with booming border activity are particularly important for young women who migrate to border areas in order to participate in trade and sex work or work in entertainment and hospitality establishments.[12] Cross-border migration is notoriously difficult to track and document but takes place across Mainland SEA. There is evidence that border trade enables women to increase their household income through

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4   ADBI, OECD and ILO, 2018:4.

5   Data from ILO, 2017.

6   Xuất khẩu lao động đạt số lượng kỷ lục trong năm 2017 (Labour exports set a new record in 2017), http://thoibaotaichinhvietnam.vn/pages/xa-hoi/2018-01-16/xuat-khau-lao-dong-dat-so-luong-ky-luc-trong-nam-2017-52751.aspx (accessed 8 September 2018).

7   VietnamNet, 2018.

8   IOM, 2017.

9   Nguyen and Hugo, 2005:12; Seol, 2005.

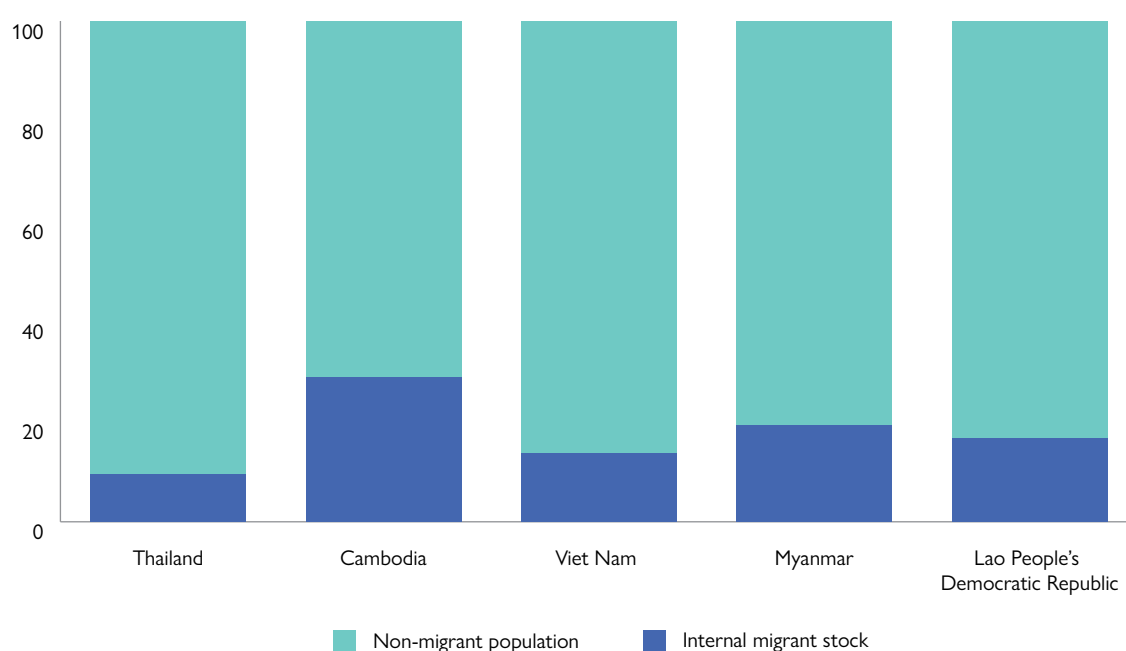10   Belanger, Tran and Le, 2011.

11   Belanger and Tran, 2011. Research has shown comparable impacts on sending communities of Thai marriage migrants. See Suksomboon, 2008.

12   ILO, 2018a.

unregulated and informal income generating activities within border towns.[13] Cross-border migration is particularly important for young Vietnamese women who mainly participate in two irregular flows: 1) from southern provinces to Cambodia for work in commercial sex and entertainment establishments along the border; and 2) from northern provinces to Southern China for marriage or sex work. Migration to Cambodia is facilitated by the stereotype of Vietnamese women as sexually adventurous and uninhibited, as well as less worthy of respect than Khmer women,[14] while China-bound migration is encouraged by the female demographic deficit in China after decades of sex-selective abortion and female discrimination.[15]

However significant it is, international migration is eclipsed by internal migration in each country. In 2016, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimated that there were over three times as many internal migrants in the region as international. In Mainland SEA, the most important internal migration pathways are rural-to-urban (and urban-to-urban in the case of Viet Nam and Thailand). Rural–urban migration is heightened by rapid industrialization within urban centres (particularly in less developed Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar) as well as limited prospects in rural areas. In qualitative accounts, for example, 16–24-year-old migrants cited the "boredom" of village life in Thailand, and the tedium of agricultural work in the Lao People's Democratic Republic as primary drivers of their migration to more urban areas.[16] The majority of women who migrate internally are young, unmarried and childless.[17]

Figure 1. Percentage of population engaging in internal migration

Source: UNESCO et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e.

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13 See Kusakabe, 2004.
14 Busza, 2004, p. 244.
15 Duong, Belanger and Khuat, 2007.
16 Temin et al., 2013.
17 Kumar et al., 2018.

Migration and remittances are deeply gendered. Gender might enable or constrain women and girls' mobility, shaping their choices, dictating which types of migration or work they can take part in and regulating their migrant lives. A joint 2017 study of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reveals that there is little variation in remittance sending between intraAsian migrants, regardless of gender, sector, nationality, destination country or even legal status.[18] However, evidence from various qualitative studies suggests that female migrants tend to be more consistent and reliable remitters and daughters are, therefore, favoured over sons when parents decide whose migration to support.[19] The discrepancy between the official statistics reported by the ILO and IOM study and qualitative research could be explained by the fact that women are more likely than men to engage in irregular migration and their remittances, therefore, tend to go through irregular channels and are not sufficiently officially accounted for.

In 2012, a survey conducted by the Government of Cambodia found that, although female migrants earn less on average than men, they remit 20 per cent more than their male counterparts, and they do so more regularly.[20] The same year, a World Bank study on the Laotian garment sector found that amongst the predominately young female workers, most would have liked to continue their education but their families could not afford it – thus, they send remittances home to enable their siblings to study.[21] In Myanmar, a 2017 report showed that historically, Burmese women were more financially able to access legal migration; allowing for more "official" remittances to be sent by women – an important distinction as Myanmar has a substantial problem with irregular remittance networks.[22] Thai migrant women are also more likely to remit than male migrants, with 74.5 per cent of all remittances going back to parents in rural communities.[23] In Viet Nam, evidence suggests that while females do tend to remit more often, and a larger share of their salaries, overall, male migrants remit larger amounts of money, which is attributable to gendered wage differences.[24]

Despite the importance of gender and age, most countries in Mainland SEA do not regularly publish disaggregated statistics that identify and address the full scope of gendered patterns of migration – particularly those harder to quantify and capture such as internal or irregular migration.[25] Where gender-disaggregated statistics are available (such as Viet Nam and Thailand),[26] it does not account for

18 However, it was reported that remittance channels do vary quite substantially, particularly between sending countries and differ greatly between migrants of differing legal status. These variances could at least in part help to explain differences in official data (Harkins, Lindgren and Suvavoranon, 2017:63).
19 Hoang and Yeoh, 2015b; UN-Women, 2017.
20 Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics, 2016.
21 World Bank, 2012.
22 Ma, 2017.
23 UNESCO et al., 2018d.
24 UNESCO et al., 2018e.
25 "Within the ASEAN region, there is a lack of accurate statistical data on labour migration, particularly due to the large share of irregular migrant workers who are not fully captured in official data. Moreover, disaggregation of data on migrant workers in terms of gender and sector of work is not comprehensively available or entirely consistent in definition" (Harkins, Lindgren and Suvavoranon, 2017:11).
26 Viet Nam stands apart from the other countries in the region as the country with the most complete published statistics available online and in English. See www.gso.gov.vn. However, while full net migration information is available on an annual basis, individual data pages are not available for public access. Thailand is notable in the region for publicly publishing information on incoming migration. The National Labour Force Survey, for example, is updated annually and gives information on foreign-born nations that have been registered to legally work in the aftermath of recent government policy changes. See web.nso.go.th.

irregular migration patterns or migrant domestic workers.[27] The lack of reliable gender-disaggregated data has a crippling effect on our ability to support safe migration pathways for women and more gender sensitive migration policies and interventions.

Table 1. Foreign immigrants in Mainland SEA countries, 2017

	Total Population	Total Foreign Immigrants
Thailand	69,183,173	3,600,000
Cambodia	16,245,729	76,300
Myanmar	53,855,735	74,700
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	6,961,210	45,500
Viet Nam	96,491,146	76,100

Source: UN DESA, 2017.

Drivers of young women's and girls' labour migration

Economic development, industrialization and urbanization

Since the 1990s, households around the world have become increasingly reliant on women and their migration for their survival.[28] Due to limitations on discrete household data in this region, it is extremely difficult to determine the extent to which women have actually become household providers within individual country contexts. In at least one study published in 2014, the authors looked at household head using self-definition. They found that, generally, in South-East Asia female-headed households are more common in urban areas than rural.[29] They are lowest (approximately 9%) in the rural areas of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and highest (approximately 40%) in urban Viet Nam. In Cambodia and Thailand, between a quarter and a third of all households were headed by women. While female household headship does indicate degrees of women's economic autonomy and decision-making power in some contexts, it does not always equate household providership. Within each country there are differing cultural and socioeconomic factors that can help to explain why women are increasingly becoming financially responsible for their households, and how this could account for understandings of household head.

Throughout the past decades, much of Mainland SEA has rapidly transformed from an overtly agrarian to industrialized and increasingly urbanized region. However, this industrialization has not been even

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27 The Governments of both Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic have bans on migration for domestic work, and thus their official migration statistics do not include any data on domestic workers who migrate. Anecdotal evidence suggests that despite this ban, women from these countries have continued to migrate for domestic work through irregular migration channels (primarily to Thailand) (Harkins, Lindgren and Suvavoranon, 2017). In 2011, the Government of Myanmar also instituted a policy banning women from migrating overseas for factory work or in domestic, entertainment or cleaning industries (ADB, 2016:73).

28 See Sassen, 2000.

29 Dommaraju and Tan, 2014.

across the five countries in the region. Thailand has experienced the largest economic growth, followed by Viet Nam – which helps to explain why they have very different migration patterns from the other three countries, although Cambodia is also rapidly developing and urbanizing. A 2013 Population Council study shows that in poorer countries, substantial percentages of urban, adolescent girls are recent internal migrants, with a large share being of rural origin. Within their study, Cambodia, Viet Nam, and Thailand all ranked within the top ten countries worldwide experiencing these trends.[30] While both Viet Nam and Thailand's urbanization trend may have slowed since then, this study points to evidence that industrialization and urbanization have substantial influence over women's and girls' decisions to migrate.

Like other countries in the region, a majority of internal migrants in Viet Nam are young and female.[31] Women make up 45.3 per cent of the total official labour force in Thailand; an estimate which includes both registered and undocumented migrants.[32] As Thailand continues to industrialize and Thai women increasingly work outside the home, there is a strong rise in demand for domestic and care labour, making the country a more attractive destination for women within the subregion. Remittances flow back to Myanmar, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia, to be used for the care of their own children in origin communities in what has been characterized as the South–South transnational care chain.[33]

In 2012, UN-Women reported that female participation in Cambodia's formal labour force was 79.2 per cent – one of the highest in the region.[34] This is associated with the high rate (57%) of female migration from rural areas to Phnom Penh for work in either the hospitality industry or in garment factories. In 2018, 85 per cent of the nearly one million Cambodians working in the garment sector were young women (between 15–29).[35] In Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic similar patterns of urbanization, industrialization and internal migration are at play. In 2015, the Myanmar Population and Housing Census noted that the majority of largely female internal migrants initiate their move within their 20s.[36] In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, internal migration is also female-dominated, many of whom move before the age of 25 to the capital Vientiane to work in domestic service, hospitality or the garment industry.[37]

Table 2. Female participation in internal migration in Mainland SEA countries, 2018

	% of population that engages in internal migration	% Female
Thailand	~1.2%	47.8%
Cambodia	~25.0%	49.6%
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	~17.0%	59.2%
Myanmar	~20.0%	53.0%
Viet Nam	~13.6%	52.4%

Source: UNESCO et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e.

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30   Temin et al., 2013.
31   UNESCO et al., 2018e.
32   World Bank, 2018.
33   Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012.
34   UN-Women, 2012.
35   ILO, 2018b.
36   UNESCO et al., 2018c.
37   UNESCO et al., 2018b.

Young women and girls as providers for households of origin

Overall, within the subregion, the majority of women who migrate for economic purposes do so internally and at a young age. Further, a significant portion appears to find work in either domestic service, hospitality, or the garment/manufacturing industry. Comparative research examining these macro trends across the region have yet to be published but could help to illuminate cross-cutting trends within the industries that exist regardless of the nationality of worker.

Religion and culture

Researchers have frequently noted that migrants in many Asian contexts are socialized to treat migration as a communal good for the whole of the family.[38] This has become more pronounced when migration is feminized.[39] Many young women and girls reportedly migrate out of duty to family, which serves as a reflection of their status and rank within the family order.[40] This is observed not just among labour migrants but also among those who migrate overseas for marriage. Research on Vietnamese brides in Singapore, for example, shows that "helping" the family is one of the primary motives for their migration to Singapore through marriage.[41] In Myanmar, daughters are born indebted to their parents and the failure to provide economic support for the family is considered demeritorious or even immoral.[42] The moral obligation to provide for the family compels many to take the well-travelled route to Thailand in search of work.

Women's responsibility for the economic health of their family is rooted in religious and cultural traditions of these countries. For example, in Cambodia, the traditional role of women in society is prescribed by Theravada Buddhist beliefs and enshrined into society through the *Chbap Srei* (the sister's law), which explicitly states that the woman is expected to do what is necessary to promote and support her family. This could include managing family finances or earning supplemental income in service to the husband (or father) and her family.[43] Although a working woman may have a visible degree of economic independence, a Cambodian woman's role as provider is not meant to equate to a household decision-maker or give her a position of authority within the family. Therevada Buddhism is also the dominant religion in Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, where scholars note similar gendered expectations and practices.[44]

In contrast, in Viet Nam, femininity ideals promoted by the socialist State emphasize women's contributions in both the public and private spheres,[45] which explains Viet Nam's high rates of female labour force participation (73% in 2018)[46] and female literacy (93% in 2015).[47] However, scholars note the enduring influence of Confucianist values regarding family and gender relations, especially in the North, which place the household provider's role at the centre of the notion of masculinity and emphasize sons' rather than daughters' demonstration of filial piety through economic support for parents.[48] Thus, there is no explicit expectation for Vietnamese women and girls to provide for the

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38 Piper, 2008.
39 Piper, 2002.
40 See De Jong, 2000; Piper, 2002; 2008; Phouxay and Tollefsen, 2011.
41 Yeoh et al., 2013.
42 Chambers, 2018.
43 See Jacobsen, 2008; Mortland and Ledgerwood, 1994; Surtees, 2003.
44 Dommaraju and Tan, 2014; Chie, 2011; Fox, 2003; Wilson, 2004. There is evidence that in some countries labour migration can positively impact the sociocultural status of women in their origin communities. However, in highly patriarchal contexts, the upward financial mobility of women could also be seen as a threat. UNFPA and IOM, 2006; Sijapati, 2015.
45 Hoang, forthcoming.
46 World Bank, 2019.
47 World Bank, 2017.
48 Hoang and Yeoh, 2011.

household despite their traditionally important role in small trade and farming.[49] The lack of social pressure for women and girls to provide economic support to the household as well as the restrictive norms regarding female sexuality broadly contributed to the social disapproval and even stigmatization of female migration, until recently, when the restructuring of the global economy led to an unprecedented demand for female labour at the same time as the government cut back on welfare provisions and subsidies in agriculture, healthcare, and education. Nowadays, female labour migration is no longer frowned upon, yet still generally considered a less than ideal livelihood option in Vietnamese society.[50]

Impacts

There is ample evidence of the social and economic benefits of migration for young women and girls across Mainland SEA, the most notable of which are increased economic autonomy and personal freedoms. The increasing economic burden being placed on them, however, does not go without consequence. The employment opportunities and migration pathways available to them are highly gendered, rooted in and perpetuating inequalities along class and gender lines. Female migrants, especially those in irregular situations, are vulnerable to many risks including labour exploitation, sexual abuse and violence, and trafficking. Further, because most female migrants within the subregion participate in South–South movements, their migration experience is more likely to be temporary, involve porous/irregular borders, result in smaller remittances and lead to vulnerable, insecure or marginal situations.[51] This has important social, economic and security implications for both female migrants and their left-behind families.

Economic impacts

The general consensus in the literature on internal migration in Mainland SEA is that the vast majority of migrants benefit economically from their moves (although their remittances can be relatively insignificant in general), have higher levels of labour force participation than non-migrants and earn much more than they would be able to earn undertaking equivalent work in their areas of origin.[52] A large proportion of their remittances are, however, spent on daily living expenses rather than production or business expansion.[53] Migrants' economic contributions to the family do not necessarily lead to property ownership or greater authority in family decision-making.

Given that the majority of female migrants come from rural areas with high unemployment rates and incomes below national averages, remittances have a significant impact on poverty reduction even when they are mostly used for "non-productive" purposes. In Viet Nam, a 2004 survey of 624 households in Mekong Delta, the major source of marriage migrants, shows that the percentage of households that were very poor before their daughters married men from Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China decreased from 20 per cent to 1 per cent.[54] This is corroborated by a mixed-methods study on marriage migration from Viet Nam to Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea which found that 93 per cent of the 276 migrant women in the study had been remitting money to their parents and, for the majority of families, the total amount of money received

49 Leshkowich, 2015; Horat, 2017.
50 Rydstrøm, 2001; Hoang, 2011.
51 Bylander, 2017.
52 Guest, 2003; Deshingkar, 2006.
53 Evidence shows that remittances are utilized similarly throughout Mainland SEA (Deelan and Vasuprasat, 2010). For example, in Thailand (Osaki, 1999; Sobieszczyk, 2015), Myanmar (Ma, 2017), and Cambodia (IOM, 2010).
54 Nguyen and Tran, 2010.

within a year was many times greater than the annual average per capita household income recorded for the study site.[55] The survey also reports that the working status of marriage migrants has a strong positive effect on their likelihood of remitting, lending support to Piper and Roces'[56] criticism of the wife-worker dichotomy based on migrants' trajectories. They might officially enter the destination country as "wives" but the true motives of their migration might not differ greatly from those of migrant contract workers. Remittances from marriage migrants help families pay debts and hospital bills, finance the education of younger children, cover daily expenses and even build houses.[57]

Social impacts

One of the most pervasive social impacts that the feminization of migration can cause is the development of a "culture of migration" within sending communities, which can result in the changing of youth's aspirations, dependence on remittances, a decline in the rate of school completion and negative changes in community cohesion – all of which reportedly impact females in a more negative way than males. For example, a 2012 study in the Lao People's Democratic Republic reported that 85 per cent of all female migration events concerned girls aged 12–17 years, whereas only 32 per cent of all male migration events were found in this age group.[58] This could be explained by a greater demand for young female migrants (for domestic work, in particular), but is also due to gendered decision-making on the part of adult guardians, as males are usually kept in school for longer. Likewise, girls between the ages of 15–19 in Cambodia are nearly twice more likely to work than boys in the same age group – suggesting that similar results could hold true for those choosing migration for labour.[59] In Viet Nam, marriage migration is associated with an increased school dropout rate among young girls, who aspire to migrate to Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China through marriage.[60]

Although they do not have to face the risks and dangers associated with border crossing, internal migrants are no less vulnerable to privation, labour exploitation and abuse. Female migrants from rural areas predominantly work in garment and manufacturing industries and the informal sector where labour protection laws are not rigorously enforced.[61] Garment and manufacturing factories are heavily criticized by international human rights groups for being fraught with underpay, exploitation, and hazardous work conditions. Garment work is highly established in both Viet Nam and Cambodia, and increasingly on the rise in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. In 2016, it was estimated that across the Asian region, the sector employed more than 40 million workers and contributed at least USD 601 billion in exports.[62] While the industry has been lauded for its contribution to creating formal, stable waged-work in the region, the vulnerability of the workers persists. The full scope of the impacts this industry has had on female migrant workers has yet to be comprehensively understood.

There is growing scholarly attention to the impacts of restrictive Asian migration regimes and the exploitative "migration industry" that thrives on them.[63] The commercialization of migration brokerage results in an inflated cost of migration, increased financial pressure on migrant families, and migrants' greater vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Rather than offering migrants and their families a

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55 Belanger, Tran and Le, 2011.
56 Piper and Roces, 2003.
57 Yeoh et al., 2013.
58 Huijsman, 2012.
59 Surtees, 2003.
60 Nguyen and Tran, 2010.
61 Abrami and Henaff, 2004; Marx and Fleischer, 2010.
62 Huynh, 2016.
63 Hoang and Yeoh, 2015c; Hoang, 2017; Platt et al., 2017.

route out of poverty, migration sometimes drives them into debt. Debt-financed migration severely constrains migrants' agency and reproduces inequalities in labour-sending areas. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable to the risks associated with debt-financed migration because they have little, if any, prior experience with the formal labour market or even waged labour. The financial stress caused by debt-financed migration has been found to adversely impact the migrant's relationship with her family back home and even push some women to engage in sex work, or to "run away" from their contracted work to enter the treacherous informal labour market, which effectively strips them of their legal migration status and the rights associated with it.[64]

Security and human rights

The expectation that young women and girls provide their families with economic support has been attributed to the prevalence of human trafficking in Mainland SEA.[65] Girls in search of a better life are routinely enticed by promises of employment and then sold for prostitution, marriage and forced labour. In some situations, girls are even turned over to recruiters by their families for debt bondage labour. Known as a haven for child sex tourists, Cambodia is one of the countries most affected by human trafficking in South-East Asia. A source estimates that between 30 and 40 per cent of Cambodian parents sell their children, mostly daughters, for sex.[66] Victims of trafficking in Mainland SEA can be found in several distinct cross-border flows that overlap labour migration corridors within and beyond the subregion: from Viet Nam to China and Cambodia, and from the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Myanmar to Thailand and increasingly China, including Macao Special Administrative Region, and Malaysia. Thailand is not only a major destination country but also a transit point and source from which girls, particularly ethnic minorities from the northern hills, are trafficked to be commercially sexually exploited both internally and to Japan, Malaysia and as far as the United States of America and Canada. Trafficked women and girls are frequently subjected to violence and even life-threatening situations with little prospect of escape or seeking assistance due to language barriers, isolation as well as their subservience to and dependence on traffickers, employers and procurers. They are vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and substance abuse and often suffer long-lasting health problems.

It is common for low-waged labour migrants, especially those moving from rural to urban areas either within or outside their home country, to live in poor-quality and over-crowded housing which increases their susceptibility to infectious diseases. The 2004 Viet Nam Migration survey shows that female migrants were 50 per cent more likely to experience sickness than their male counterparts.[67] Migrant sex workers are routinely exposed to aggressive behaviour, physical violence and forced sex as well as risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STIs. Rates of HIV infection among sex workers in the Viet Nam–Cambodia border zone are higher than elsewhere in the country.[68] Similar observations have been made in Thailand and Cambodia where the risk of HIV amongst female migrants is substantially higher than for non-migrant women in comparative communities.[69]

64   Hoang and Yeoh, 2011, 2012, 2015a; Hoang, 2017.
65   Rafferty, 2007; Davy, 2014.
66   Kneebone and Debeljak, 2010.
67   Mark and Fleischer, 2010:35.
68   Chris and Stachowiak, 2003.
69   Webber and Spitzer, 2010; UNAIDS, 2014.

Potential for practical interventions

As the demographic imbalance and income disparities within Mainland SEA continue to grow, migration will increase in the years to come. To optimize socioeconomic benefits of migration and mitigate the risks and challenges migrants have to face in transit and at destination, it is vital that national governments collaborate to ensure they have access to safe, regular migration pathways and that the legal instruments intended to protect migrants' rights are consistently developed and enforced across the subregion. The recent experience of Thailand shows that bureaucratic procedures which migrants are required to go through to regularize their status must be low-cost, transparent and simplified or they are likely to backfire. Before a strict new migration law (Emergency Decree on Managing the Work of Aliens B.E. 2560) was implemented in 2017, the Government of Thailand launched an aggressive campaign for "national verification"– a process that allowed migrants already working in the country to gain legal status by obtaining passports, work permits and visas. The costs of national verification, however, are very high for many foreign migrants, most of whom are low-waged labourers from the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Myanmar, because the complex bureaucracy leads employers to use brokers to organize documents on behalf of their workers. This substantial investment subjects migrants to enormous financial stress and exacerbates their already precarious situation as they often have to enter labour debt bondage in order to become regular.[70] Given that women and girls are more likely than their male counterparts to migrate through irregular channels and hold precarious jobs in the informal sector (e.g. domestic work), the financial costs and risks involved in such a national verification process are even more significant.

The lack of access to reliable information and legal support is the most important challenge for migrant women and girls, especially those participating in internal and irregular cross-border migration. The provision of information and counselling services could be easily done by both government agencies and civil society organizations thanks to the ongoing expansion of social media and the increasing affordability of telecommunication technologies.

Recommended areas for further examination

There are several areas that require further examination:

(1) Migration into China: While there is increasing evidence that economic migration from Mainland South-East Asia into China is accelerating, it remains under-researched primarily due to difficulties in accessing data.

(2) The use of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) in migration and their direct impact on women and girls in the subregion: Thailand entered into MoUs with Cambodia and Myanmar in 2003 and with the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2002 but few migrants pursue these paths, in part because of the relatively high costs, long wait times and limited rights afforded to MoU migrants.[71] On 6 December 2018, a MoU on migrant workers' protection between two Cambodian recruitment associations and three Malaysian associations was signed.[72] These MoUs are bilateral, non-transparent, non-binding and, therefore, might increase migrants' vulnerability.

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70 Bylander, 2019a.
71 Bylander, 2019b.
72 Kunthear, 2018.

(3) Impact of Thailand's Emergency Decree on Managing the Work of Aliens B.E. 2560 on cross-border female migration into the country: Migrants working without a valid permit are subjected to harsh penalties under this new law (enacted in 2017 and amended in 2018). This decree has important implications for Myanmar, Laotian and Cambodian female migrants, and could lead to changes in migration patterns in the future.

(4) Skilled and semi-skilled female migration to developed countries: Little attention has been paid to a growing trend of young women migrating from Mainland SEA to engage in skilled or semi-skilled employment in developed countries. In 2018, the Government of Japan agreed to accept 10,000 nursing caregivers from Viet Nam by 2020 and was working to set similar targets with Indonesia, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.[73] Australia has recently introduced a work and holiday visa scheme for Vietnamese and Thai nationals aged between 18 and 30. It is important to understand impacts of new schemes like these on social and economic mobility of migrant women and girls and their families.

Labour migration of young women and girls from Pacific islands

Migration from Pacific islands is largely a male phenomenon as employment opportunities for women and girls are very limited. Most migrants from this region participate in seasonal labour programmes in Australia and New Zealand or work in the seafaring sector, both of which value male strength. Among seasonal migrant workers from the Pacific, just 14 per cent are female, which is attributable to both a higher demand for male labour and gender norms.[a] For example, Gibson and McKenzie found that 95 per cent of their Tongan respondents believed that seasonal work in Australia was more appropriate for men.[b] This should be seen in the context that less than a third of women in the Pacific are formally employed.[c] In New Zealand, Pacific workers are employed mainly in horticulture and viticulture. Workers sent to Australia were initially restricted to the horticultural industry but the scheme has been extended to agriculture, accommodation and tourism since 2012. Women are often selected for "feminine" tasks such as grading and packing of products. Academic research on these seasonal labour programmes, particularly studies that have a specific focus on women and girls, is limited but evaluations report positive outcomes in terms of remittances and skill acquisition, especially with regard to time management, financial literacy and English language.[d] Remittances are mostly used for personal and household consumption but there is some anecdotal evidence of them being invested in small businesses. Australia launched The Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) in 2018 – a non-seasonal low and semi-skilled employment programme – following a successful pilot programme in the North. With a focus on the service sector, especially care work, the Scheme is intended to promote Pacific women's labour force participation and gender equality. It is expected that a labour scheme that specifically targets women like the PLS will benefit not only migrants themselves but also their children, families and communities of origin.

a   Kagan, 2014.
b   Gibson and McKenzie, 2011.
c   Duncan and Voigt-Graf, 2010.
d   ILO, 2012.

73   Tobita, 2018.

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5.   Trafficking of young women and girls in South-East Asia: A review of existing evidence

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Introduction

Asia–Pacific has been identified as a key region with a human trafficking problem by both the United Nations and International Organization for Migration. Within this broad region, South-East Asia has gained notoriety as an epicentre for human trafficking. In both South-East Asia and the broader Asia–Pacific region, the trafficking of young women (those aged below 21 years) and girls (those aged below 18 years) has been regarded as a particularly prominent concern by both practitioners and policymakers alike. Trafficking of young women and girls in the broader region occurs predominantly within the sex and nightlife entertainment sector, and for domestic servitude in the private economy. Whilst these two expressions of trafficking have tended to dominate discussions of the trafficking of young women and girls in the region, labour trafficking into other sectors and trafficking for forced marriage are also commonplace throughout the region.

This paper provides an overview of the trafficking of young women and girls in the region, focusing on the key issues surrounding their trafficking, the broader impacts – social, economic, human rights – of the trafficking of these groups. The paper also provides some suggestions for practical interventions and assistance to both prevent trafficking and protect victims, as well as identifying areas requiring future examination. Because of the enormous geographical scope of the region, South-East Asia will be drawn on as the major geographical case study, along with Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. The key suggestion of the paper is that the past 15 years of intensive anti-trafficking efforts aimed at this subpopulation have yielded little in the way of the reduction of trafficking, identification of best practices and even basic evaluations of past interventions. This lack of tangible success is discussed further in the last part of the paper.

Mapping the trafficking of young women and girls in Asia–Pacific

The breadth of the Asia–Pacific region, both socioculturally and political-economically, means that patterns of human trafficking are complex and variegated. Recent civil conflicts and environmental catastrophes have acted to exacerbate already challenging structural contexts in many States that have resulted in a rise in precarity and vulnerability for many. And with many commentators lamenting the lack of rigorous research and data on a range of aspects of human trafficking[1] as well as some questionable estimates and claims,[2] it is indeed challenging to gain a complete picture of human trafficking, both

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1   Harkins, 2017.
2   Weitzer, 2014; Brunner, 2015.

where young women and girls are concerned as well as other subpopulations more generally. This part of the paper documents some key trends where young women and girls are concerned, drawing on existing research. These trends are: the ongoing challenge of addressing trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation; the increasing prevalence and growing concern with trafficking for domestic servitude, particularly in the private and informal economy; trafficking for labour exploitation in sectors other than domestic work; and trafficking for forced or transacted marriage (note that this last trend will not be explicitly discussed here as it is not generally considered a labour issue).

Commercial sexual exploitation

In the early 2000s, after the passing of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children[3] (the Trafficking Protocol), there was a clear focus within both government and non-governmental sectors on the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, primarily within the commercial sex industry. This focus was understandable given that the Protocol itself prioritized the trafficking of women and children over other groups.[4] The concern of a large number of government and non-governmental organizations worldwide with sexual exploitation and forced prostitution in the context of migration meant that, concurrently, the sex industry also became a focus of anti-trafficking efforts. This interest in girls and young women in forced prostitution was also evident in the Asia region. In particular, South-East Asia (Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines) emerged as a key site for the enactment of anti-trafficking interventions aimed at the rescue and rehabilitation of young women and girls in the sex industry.

These types of interventions have been consistently challenged by those foregrounding the moralizing intent behind rescue/removal and lack of understanding of the structural circumstances that compel young women and girls to enter the sector initially,[5] the (mis)representation of the trafficking circumstances of young women and girls, including through popular media such as film,[6] and interventions that reinforce rather than ameliorate lack of agency and sideline issues around choice and compulsion.

In the Thai context, for example, shelter-based rehabilitation of female sex trafficking victims has been subject to criticism for reproducing some of the very conditions of trafficking, including forced confinement, surveillance and lack of opportunities to earn income or restore livelihoods in any meaningful way.[7] In the Philippines, an in-depth study of one shelter for sex trafficked girls in Cebu city also found that shelter-based rehabilitation was not conducive to preparing girls for life after release from the shelter because the conditions post-rehabilitation had not significantly altered. These conditions concern opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and employment, accommodation that was safe and sustainable social support systems.[8] Many young women and girls enter the sex industry through what may be termed constrained choice[9] and therefore need decent livelihood and educational alternatives so sexual labour does not become a default option.

The stigma produced by allusion to sexual deviance in the context of prostitution is one documented across many contexts in Asia and not only produces a sense of shame and stress for many young female

3   UN, 2000.
4   Although notably, some countries in South-East Asia, such as Thailand, had anti-trafficking laws in place prior to the Trafficking Protocol which also focused exclusively on women and children in the sex industry.
5   Weitzer, 2007.
6   Yea, 2014; Andrijasevic, 2007; Krsmanovic, 2016.
7   Gallagher and Pearson, 2010.
8   Yea, 2010.
9   Sandy, 2010.

survivors of trafficking, but also can affect their citizenship status, their economic opportunities and, possibly, their future migration trajectories. Stigma and shame, in other words, can be productive realms through which vulnerabilities may be heightened.[10] The key point to take away from documentation of such cases for policy and programmatic purposes is that far greater critical attention needs to be paid to current processes of return and reintegration, because many interventions appear to be devoid of an understanding of the sociocultural and gendered context in which they are embedded; a point recently made by Rebecca Surtees in her examination of return and reintegration of trafficked women and girls in Indonesia.[11] A related concern is the over-identification of trafficking cases, in which young women are sometimes removed from the sex industry through rescues, despite not formally meeting the criteria for the crime of trafficking in persons.[12] Both these problems highlight the failure of State anti-trafficking authorities to appreciate the contextual circumstances of women and girls in the sex industry and post-trafficking.

Trafficking for domestic servitude

A number of migrant rights non-governmental organizations have undertaken comprehensive documentation of the exploitation of young women and girls in domestic work in Asia–Pacific, including for Malaysia,[13] Singapore[14] and in the Middle East States.[15] The studies found that debts associated with migration costs yoked domestic workers to exploitative and often abusive employment situations that were in many cases characterized by lack of freedom (of movement and association), excessive working hours and poor remuneration.[16] One of the key concerns raised by many organizations reporting such situations is the ways managed migration regimes (involving both State and private sector organizations) which were supposed to enhance protections of foreign domestic workers actually acted to heighten their vulnerability to errant employers.

The challenges of addressing trafficking of young women and girls for domestic servitude are complex and manifold and include the fact that domestic work is often unregulated or poorly regulated, occurring in private spaces, and that government authorities often do not see it as trafficking because domestic workers consent to their migration (which may include signing contracts or other agreements) and usually migrate through regularized channels, especially if their migration is overseas. Undoubtedly preconceptions about trafficking as primarily a phenomenon associated with sexual exploitation and not applicable to exploitation in the domestic (non-commercial) sphere presents an enormous challenge in recognizing and responding to trafficking for domestic servitude. Much recent critical scholarship on anti-trafficking has, in this vein, questioned some of the highly stylized images of victims in the sex industry circulating in the popular media and fictional portrayals of human trafficking, noting how such stereotypes can make it difficult to focus on trafficking for domestic servitude, amongst other, possibly more hidden, forms.[17]

10   Vijeyarasa, 2010.
11   Surtees, 2017.
12   Agustin, 2007.
13   Huling, 2012.
14   Humanitarian Organization for Migrant Economies (HOME), 2019.
15   Anti-Slavery International, 2006.
16   Guichon, 2014.
17   Andrijasevic, 2007.

Labour trafficking

Many of the issues raised by trafficking of young women and girls for domestic servitude also apply to other sectors where labour trafficking occurs. Young women and girls are trafficked throughout Asia for sweatshop / factory work, touting and begging, seafood processing, as well as other forms of service work, such as circus performing. Perhaps a useful way of thinking about these manifestations of trafficking is through the types of movements involved, particularly whether they are cross border or internal. Whilst a large proportion of labour trafficking of adults in Asia–Pacific is cross-border in nature and organized through the types of managed migration schemes alluded to above, trafficking of young women and girls is more likely to be internal because the legal-immigration requirements for crossing international borders are prohibitive for moving younger victims. The differences in the organization of migration are important because they have a determining impact on both the nature of exploitation and responses that are available or required to support victims. For example, in Viet Nam, girls (and some boys) aged between 10 and 16 years are recruited for work in sweatshop factories and as flower sellers on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City from the central regions of the country. Contracts are usually verbal, with parents accepting an advance on the child's salary prior to their migration. Once in Ho Chi Minh City the children are confined and monitored and subject to severe workplace regimes, often working in excess of 16 hours a day when orders need to be filled. Promises to parents that children will be provided decent accommodation and some form of education are routinely broken. Because of the absence of a legal contract and a lack of oversight of this labour migration precisely because the victims are minors, monitoring and redress is difficult because it falls outside the realm of civil and labour disputes, a point that also applies to domestic labour. Children who are rescued through joint operations between police and non-governmental organizations are returned to prior situations where they often find it difficult to reintegrate, including returning to school, something which also applies to young women and girls trafficked for domestic servitude.[18] Of all the sectors where girls and young women are trafficked, however, labour trafficking in the service and industrial sectors of the home country has received by far the least attention from researchers and anti-trafficking stakeholders more generally. Given that issues of reintegration and recovery (including mental and physical health issues) are equally as prevalent for female child labour trafficking victims as they are for sexual exploitation or domestic servitude, it is crucial that further research be initiated. Moreover, given that young women and girls are regularly recruited for sex and entertainment work in the context of failed labour migration for factory or service work in other sectors, labour exploitation as a site of vulnerability to other forms of trafficking has thus far been poorly understood. For those working overseas and migrating legally the process is markedly different, with young migrant women normally signing legally binding contracts with State and private agency oversight. However, as the experience of migrant domestic workers discussed above suggests, labour contracts for migration overseas does not always stem the vulnerability of young women, and may in fact heighten it.

Key issues for trafficking women and girls in Asia–Pacific

The foregoing part of the paper briefly mapped the main trafficking trends for young women and girls in the Asia–Pacific Region, drawing on South-East Asia as the key case study to illuminate these trends, suggesting that the initial focus on sex trafficking – although not necessarily displaced more recently – has been tempered by greater policy and organizational attention to other expressions of trafficking, particularly domestic servitude and marriage trafficking. In this part of the paper I turn to examine the key issues that create situations of vulnerability for young women and girls throughout the

18   Yea, 2017.

region. Persistent gender inequality and discrimination, coupled with growing inequality and a political-economic environment characterized by neoliberal impulses have combined in different geographical milieus around the region to leave young women and girls with few prospects and, of particular relevance to discussion here, compel many to engage in tenuous and poorly construed (labour) migration opportunities. Thus, while these trends may have increased young women's opportunities for work, low education and skill levels nonetheless mean they are often shunted into more tenuous employment opportunities.

Gender inequality, referring to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for men and women and girls and boys, is one of the most urgent ongoing issues facing young women and girls in the Asia Region. As UN-Women states, "gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of men and women and boys and girls are taken into consideration".[19] As many of the examples cited above have demonstrated, cultural perceptions about the (low) value of girls leads to a range of negative consequences which impact on their vulnerability to trafficking. Most directly this occurs when girls are denied educational opportunities, forced into early marriages (and often unsafe pregnancies) and discriminated against in the workforce. The lack of opportunities for meaningful inclusion in decisions about their futures, and platforms through which these can be pursued, is a major hurdle for safeguarding young women and girls throughout the region from engaging in tenuous migration and employment opportunities that can lead to trafficking.[20]

In research conducted by this author in the Republic of Korea in the mid-2000s with young women and girls trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation in bars and brothels around United States military bases, it was found that over 90 per cent of those interviewed had graduated high school, and of this number, more than 50 per cent had commenced college degrees and either dropped out due to lack of opportunities or graduated and were unable to find employment in their chosen vocation. Disillusionment with employment prospects and lack of opportunities for graduates due to gender bias towards the employment of males over females was one of the major contributing factors propelling these young women abroad to the Republic of Korea.[21]

What was also notable about this study was the finding that one key motivation for migration of many of these young Filipinas was either familial dissolution or gender-based violence. Whilst young women relished the opportunity to go abroad, many were propelled by more immediate and urgent desires to leave oppressive domestic situations.[22] Although not well-researched to date, this finding does have resonance across a range of contexts in Asia, where young women and girls often leave their natal or marital families due to violent and abusive domestic situations, or due to sexual violence during political conflict.[23] Traffickers are well-positioned to take advantage of these types of situations in offering jobs abroad or in other areas of the country to girls already traumatized and seeking a pathway to escape their current situations.

Papua New Guinea illustrates another important issue in the trafficking of young women and girls in the region, namely the persistence of traditional tribal practices that perpetuate gender-based discrimination. In Papua New Guinea the internal trafficking of children, including girls as young as five, has been reported as occurring under the direction of tribal leaders. These children are both traded for labour, and for sexual purposes, including polygamy. As the United States Department of State (US DoS) report for 2018 states,

19   UN-Women, n.d.
20   Rafferty, 2007.
21   Yea, 2015.
22   Yea, 2005.
23   Beyrer, 2001.

> *Traditional customs in Papua New Guinea permit parents to sell their daughters into forced marriages—often to wealthy men and politicians—to settle debts, leaving them vulnerable to forced domestic service. Polygamy in Papua New Guinea is also a serious concern, as it affirms patriarchal attitudes that men own women and perpetuates discrimination against women and girls. Young girls sold into polygamous marriages are often forced into domestic service for their husbands' extended families.[24]*

Papua New Guinea illustrates the ways gender-based discrimination and violence in the context of traditional cultural practices can severely exacerbate the trafficking harms for young women and girls.

Neoliberal globalization

A large body of critical scholarship on development in Asia–Pacific has examined the causal relationship between the proportion of the population experiencing precarity in their work and broader lives, including a rise in levels of chronic poverty and political-economic contexts defined by deepening neo-liberal globalization.[25] The defining features of neoliberalism include a roll back in social welfare, a rise in flexible and precarious work arrangements, reduced security for the population in areas such as livelihoods and rising dispossession from land. Dispossession from land is one area which has produced heightened vulnerability for the population, as governments region-wide sell off productive assets of citizens to foreign and local business interests. In Cambodia, this has uprooted families and induced both internal and international population movements,[26] exposing many young women and girls to recruitment for international marriage, the sex industry or other tenuous work opportunities. Such trends are repeated region-wide.[27]

Education and opportunities

The rollback in State-provisioned services that has emerged as a key feature of neoliberal policies throughout Asia has affected the availability of educational and employment opportunities for young women and girls. There are two manifestations of this trend that are notable in rendering girls vulnerable to trafficking. First are the ways young women are pushed into low-wage, precarious work in both the service sector and factories and processing. It is the flow-on effects of these employment dynamics that are a cause for concern as they present a prime target for traffickers recruiting girls and young women for poorly understood work/marriage opportunities abroad. In research conducted by this author in Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia, for example, it was found that across all three contexts young women employed in factory jobs and service industries such as shop assistance or waitressing, were approached frequently by recruiters offering opportunities abroad. In the Philippines, for example, young women trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to the Republic of Korea were frequently approached by Filipino women and men to work as waitresses in the Republic of Korea. Recruiters offered salaries five times in excess of what they were being paid in the Philippines. Similarly, in Indonesia's Batam Island (a hub for factory and processing work and a major export processing zone), young female internal migrants found that factory work was extremely arduous and poorly remunerated, with many confessing that, when approached with opportunities to enter hostessing or sex work, they reluctantly agreed. Second, young women who enter college and either graduate or

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24   US DoS, 2018.
25   For example, Rigg, 2015.
26   Springer, 2013.
27   Peksen, Blanton and Blanton, 2017.

withdraw before the completion of their degree express disillusionment with the lack of opportunities in their field, the low pay and gender-based discrimination they encounter in employment opportunities (as mentioned above). Disillusionment leads them to seek out tenuous opportunities abroad. In research involving young Filipinas in the Republic of Korea and Singapore, for example, this author found graduate accountants, teachers and nurses who were passed over for employment opportunities in favour of male peers.

Denial of opportunities to gain a decent education have been recognized widely by both UN-Women and the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as culturally based forms of discrimination. Girls enter the workforce at a young age or become child brides. The latter practice is forbidden under international and most national laws. When exploitation is involved, children are considered to be victims of trafficking under international and most national laws irrespective of whether they consented at any point. And whilst as the above discussion suggests, education does not necessarily translate into better opportunities or increased security, it can at least provide a platform from which girls' vulnerability to child labour or child marriage is lessened.

New challenges: Catastrophes and conflicts

This final part of the paper provides an overview of two of the most widespread and urgent challenges affecting the trafficking of young women and girls – as well as children and youth more broadly – in the South-East Asia Region; namely, environmental catastrophes and civil conflict. The number of persons displaced by civil conflict in the Asian Region totalled 7.7 million in 2018, including 3.5 million refugees, 1.9 million internally displaced persons and 1.4 million stateless persons.[28] Environmental catastrophes, particularly the increasing number of catastrophic events caused by climate change, presents a similarly stark picture, with an estimated 11.4 million people displaced by natural disasters in 2017.[29] Although the breakdown of these figures by gender and age cohort is more difficult to obtain, some efforts to document the situations of young women and girls in specific contexts of displacement have yielded notable and highly disturbing trends. In the case of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar–Bangladesh for example, close to one million refugees have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar over the past decade, with most remaining in overcrowded refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar. From here, traffickers – both Bangladeshis and Rohingyas – are said to recruit girls for work opportunities primarily either in the nearby tourist resort areas around Cox's Bazaar or in Dhaka, although girls are more likely to be detected the further they travel in Bangladesh, given the need for official documents. Girls between 13 and 17 years are reported to be confined in brothels in Cox's Bazaar and forced into prostitution. The majority of Rohingya girls seeking job opportunities outside the refugee camps are employed as domestic helpers. Those recruited to work in Dhaka or other areas by traffickers are normally given false job descriptions, with the majority believing they will be deployed as waitresses or domestic helpers. Whilst many of those abducted or recruited are unaccompanied minors, having been separated from their parents or other relatives, many others are recruited under false pretences with the consent of parents desperate to see their children provided opportunities for work beyond life in the camps.[30]

Environmental catastrophes also exacerbate the vulnerability of young women and girls to trafficking through the insecurities associated with displacement. The IOM has documented several cases of

28 UNHCR, n.d. Figures for subregions, such as South-East Asia, were not available.
29 IOM, 2018.
30 See especially, Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, 2019. Very little in-depth research has been conducted on the situations of young Rohingya women refugees in Cox's Bazaar and the types of experiences documented here are based largely on the Asia Dialogue report and some anecdotal cases that appear in the media, including Al Jazeera, 2017, 2018.

major disasters in the region leading to extreme situations of vulnerability of populations to human trafficking, including the 2004 Asian Tsunami, Cyclones Sidr and Aiar in Bangladesh in 2007 and 2009 respectively, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 and the trafficking of drought-affected migrants from Cambodia to Thailand.[31] Due to climate change, droughts have become increasingly common throughout the region, with farming communities increasingly targeted by recruiters in countries as diverse as Cambodia and India. An alarming, but hitherto largely undocumented trend in the trafficking of young women and girls in countries where logging and plantation agriculture are important economic activities, involves the recruitment of young women and girls to brothels in logging/rural camps. In Papua New Guinea and Indonesia this practice is widespread, and girls recruited tend to be indigenous or from rural areas and already suffering disadvantages in education and opportunities.[32] In sum, displacement because of both civil conflict and environmental catastrophe have produced situations of heightened and often extreme vulnerability for young women and girls, with recent reports confirming the high risk to trafficking faced by this subpopulation in the context of displacement.

Conclusion

Trafficking trends for young women and girls in the South-East Asian Region are complex and varied in nature, with many young women being both forced and compelled to move as a result of environmental or political-economic insecurities, and others moving voluntarily to seek out opportunities for work or education. Some of the key ongoing issues that impact the degree of vulnerability to trafficking for young women in South-East Asia include gender-based and economic inequality, gendered violence and family dissolution, and cultural practices that disadvantage or marginalize young women (for example by excluding young women from educational opportunities). New concerns of climate and politically induced dislocation have also had a marked impact on the vulnerability of young women and girls to trafficking throughout the region in recent years. Whilst much of the literature has focused on women and girls trafficked into the sex and nightlife entertainment industry, there is also a high prevalence of trafficking for domestic servitude and for forced labour in other sectors. These are urgent issues that have been relatively under-documented by comparison. More thorough and detailed examination of these sectors would provide a much more comprehensive picture of the trafficking of young women in the region, as a corrective to the generalization of trends within the sex industry.

A key finding is that many current anti-trafficking interventions appear to have actually failed to alleviate the vulnerability of young women and girls throughout the region to trafficking, and many anti-trafficking interventions oriented to protecting female victims generally have not been successful in reintegrating survivors into community and livelihood situations that could stem their vulnerability to re-trafficking. This finding, therefore, leads to two recommendations. First, because many anti-trafficking programmes and projects remain remotely situated in relation to broader sociocultural and structural issues, interventions are often unsuccessful. Girls who receive shelter-based health/psychosocial rehabilitation and livelihoods/skill training, for example, are often released into situations where there is a lack of suitable employment opportunities or where victims/survivors cannot return home because of displacement or untenable family situations.[33] Addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence in the pre- and post-trafficking lives of young women and girls thus becomes a crucial anti-trafficking concern. Similarly, government policies that displace communities means that anti-trafficking interventions aimed at reintegration are unrealistic because many young women and

31   IOM, 2016.
32   IOM, 2012.
33   See Yea, 2010, for an example of this in the Philippines.

girls lack stable communities to which they can return. Such interventions also appear to sit in marked contrast to government policies aimed at attracting foreign investment, such as was briefly discussed in relation to Cambodia. Until these broader structural concerns are reconciled in ways that enhance the rights and security of young women and girls throughout the region, focused and often technocratic interventions such as skills training and family/community reintegration assistance – whether aimed at prevention or protection – are likely to be partial at best in their success.

Second, discussion in the paper suggests the need for a reconceptualization of the agency of young women and girls and the need for processes that re-centre their aspirations, desires and realities. Whilst there is nothing new in this suggestion, years of failure to reduce the incidence of trafficking of young women and girls in South-East Asia begs the question of whether a new approach is warranted. One promising approach here is proposed by Briones,[34] who draws on a capabilities framework to suggest that rights-based approaches are often idealistic (focusing on entitlements), whereas a capabilities approach focuses on demonstrating how agency should be tied to capabilities, in terms of what young women and girls can do within the limits of their circumstances.

Participatory methodologies represent one possibility for actioning such an approach, and although such methodologies have had a rich history in international development, their application to trafficking of women and girls has been limited to date. One project by Anti-Slavery International with child domestic workers, which is based on an approach centred on involving girls in advocacy activities aimed at improving their lives, illustrates the possibilities of participation. Piloted in six countries, including the Philippines, the project provides an excellent example of a novel approach to reducing the harms of child domestic labour as young girls articulate needs, desires and practical realities in their own terms, facilitated, but not driven, by outside advocates.[35] There is enormous scope in the South-East Asian region not just to fill the many gaps in our knowledge of trafficking situations involving young women and girls, but also of the potential for new approaches and methodologies to be introduced if, indeed, futures are to be at all brighter than they are at present.

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6. Irregular migration and smuggling of young women and girls in South-East Asia and the Pacific: A review of existing evidence

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Introduction

Irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants are widespread across South-East Asia, and, less so, in the Pacific Islands.[1] Millions of people migrate in this region in ways that are not, or not entirely, compliant with national laws, or that occur in legal vacuums or grey areas in which laws are non-existent, contradictory or not fully developed.[2]

Unable to organize their journey themselves or establish contacts in transit and destination countries, many migrants resort to smugglers who facilitate the irregular movement in return for payment. Many smugglers abuse the situation of migrants by charging exorbitant fees, by coercing or threatening the migrants or by placing their lives and safety in danger. Young women and girls constitute a substantial proportion of smuggled and irregular migrants in the region.

While these problems are long-standing, much of the available research either examines them in very general terms or focuses specifically on irregular labour migration, especially of young men, or, to a lesser extent, on the plight of refugees. The purpose of this paper is to summarize the available evidence concerning the irregular migration and smuggling of young women and girls in the region and identify knowledge gaps and areas for further research.

It must be stressed from the outset that it is often not possible to clearly separate information concerning irregular migration from the smuggling of migrants, and the smuggling of migrants from trafficking in persons, because many reports do not or not adequately differentiate between these three phenomena. Irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking sit along a spectrum and can morph from one into another: by definition, the smuggling of migrants is one form of irregular migration that involves illegal border crossings that are facilitated by others demanding payment for their assistance.[3] Smuggling can transform into trafficking if the facilitation of illegal entry involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person using coercive or deceptive means for the

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1   For the purpose of this paper, "South-East Asia" refers to the ten member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and "Pacific Islands'" to the member States of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), not including Australia and New Zealand.
2   Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.
3   See art. 3 subpara. (a) of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2247 UNTS 507, 15 November 2000 (entered into force 28 January 2004); see also, Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.

purpose of exploitation.[4] If children are involved, coercive or deceptive means are not an element of trafficking.[5] It also must be noted that most sources do not distinguish between male and female migrants and that the literature on the experiences of children who are smuggled (rather than trafficked) is, at best, in its infancy.

Current and emerging issues

International migration is an integral part of the history and daily life in South-East Asian and Pacific island nations. The region comprises a wide range of political and government systems, differing levels of development and wealth, and diverse demographic and natural settings that broadly explain the needs and desires of men, women and children to migrate from one place to another, permanently or temporarily, within, from, into and across the region.

In the context of migration, the region can be broadly divided into three subregions: (1) Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, (2) Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines (and Singapore and Brunei Darussalam), and (3) the Pacific Islands States. While many circumstances, events and migration routes connect these subregions, several characteristics set them apart and a large volume of irregular migration and smuggling takes place within each subregion rather than between them.

Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam

Irregular migration from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar is mostly characterized by labour to Thailand, a country that has experienced remarkable economic growth over the past three decades.[6] With the levels of wealth and education rising, Thailand has developed a high demand for foreign workers from neighbouring countries who often work for wages and under conditions unacceptable to many Thais.

With many Thai women taking up employment and acquiring higher levels of education, demand for foreign labour exists in sectors and professions traditionally filled by Thai women, especially in the domestic service, hospitality and sex industries. Female migrant workers can also be found in large numbers in Thailand's agricultural, manufacturing, garment, seafood processing and construction sectors.[7] Irregular migration of young women and girls to Thailand is mostly motivated by the desire to find work and earn enough money to support relatives through remittances. It involves short- and long-term stays. In many border areas, women and children cross into Thailand on a weekly or daily basis to work in nearby markets, on fields or in factories.[8]

Among the many irregular migrants living and working in Thailand, estimated to be in the millions,[9] are a large number of migrants from Myanmar, many of whom are refugees. The circumstances of irregular migration from Myanmar are complex, involving both political and economic causes that are difficult to separate in many cases. Some ethnic minorities in Myanmar face severe hardship

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4   See art. 3 subpara. (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2237 UNTS 319, 15 November 2000 (entered into force 25 December 2003).
5   See art. 3 subparas. (c) and (d) of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.
6   UNODC, 2018a; Bylander, 2019; Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016; Ahsan Ullah, Yusof-Kozlowski and D'Aria, 2016.
7   Ashan Ullah et al., 2016; Jalilian, 2012; Pasadilla and Abela, 2012; UNODC, 2018b.
8   Jalilian and Reyes, 2013; Sophal, 2013; UNODC, 2015,2018b; see also, World Bank, 2012; Margesson, 2011; Bylander, 2015.
9   UNODC, 2017; Bylander, 2019.

and discrimination and thus decide to emigrate. The Muslim Rohingya minority in Rakhine state has experienced particularly grave violence by Buddhist extremists and government forces in recent years. As a result, some 800,000 Rohingyas fled to neighbouring Bangladesh,[10] others to Thailand, or to Malaysia which is home to a large Rohingya community.[11] Ethnic minorities living in Myanmar's east and north tend to migrate to Thailand, sometimes China, often leaving the country for fear of persecution.[12]

The factors that draw adult men and women to Thailand also shape irregular migration and the smuggling of children. In the case of older teenagers, some decide independently to move to Thailand in search of work. More commonly, their families instigate, and in some cases facilitate, such movements. Younger children tend to move with their parents and often spend much of their youth and adolescence in Thailand, growing up in conditions that lead them into the same types of employment pursued by their parents and peers. The phenomenon of child begging is frequently mentioned in this context, though there is much uncertainty about whether children are trafficked into Thailand for this purpose, whether they are recruited in Thailand, or whether their parents lead them into begging and the selling of flowers or other goods in the streets of Thailand's big cities and tourist areas.[13]

Regardless of whether migration is voluntary or involves forced displacement, much of the migration to Thailand is irregular. Many migrants depart their home country and enter and remain in Thailand without – wittingly or unwittingly – complying with the requirements of labour and immigration laws. Migration is frequently irregular because migrants only partly comply with existing regulations, possibly because these regulations are unclear or unnecessarily obstructive or bureaucratic. Many migrants choose irregular channels of migration because official avenues are inefficient, expensive and slow; in the case of refugees, such avenues are non-existent.[14] The same observations have been made about Vietnamese labour migrants entering Cambodia.[15] Moreover, existing bilateral labour migration agreements prevent women from seeking employment in certain industries, do not allow them to bring their children, or, especially in the case of minors, prohibit labour migration altogether.[16] These circumstances fail to deter (and protect) many young women and children who instead opt for irregular channels and use the assistance offered by smugglers.

Smuggling migrants, including women and children, to Thailand is a common occurrence. Based on the available information, smuggling is particularly common in instances where borders are tightly controlled and can only be crossed with great difficulty, often requiring local or expert knowledge.[17] This is the case, for instance, where migrants need travel or identity documents or work permits that they cannot, or not easily, obtain through regular channels. Smugglers also offer services allowing migrants to cross borders clandestinely hidden in cars, trucks, or other vessels. Smuggling is less common in areas where borders can be crossed easily and undetected without the aid of smugglers.[18] In instances in which migrants flee from persecution and generalized violence, smugglers are often the only option to reach destinations that promise safety and a better future. This is best illustrated by the "Andaman Sea crisis" of 2015, when thousands of asylum seekers from Myanmar, many of them Rohingya refugees, sought to reach Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia on vessels operated by smugglers.[19]

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10   IOM, 2018.
11   UNODC, 2013; UNODC, 2018a; Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.
12   Rose and Sarausad, 2011; Ahsan Ullah, 2011; Margesson, 2011; Song, 2018.
13   Van Doore, 2018.
14   UNODC, 2015; Orbeta jr and Gonzales, 2013; Bylander, 2019; McAuliffe, 2017; Ullah et al., 2016.
15   Nguyen and Loi, 2013; Asian Development Bank, 2013; UNODC, 2015.
16   Bylander, 2019.
17   UNODC, 2018a.
18   Ibid.
19   Chatterjee, 2016.

It is curious that several reports on irregular migration from Cambodia note that women are less likely than men to use smugglers to cross into Thailand and suggest that, as a result, men are at a greater risk to become victims of trafficking.[20] Other sources have made different observations and instead argue that Cambodian women are more vulnerable to trafficking because they are less likely to demand workplace rights and often work as domestic servants in private homes where exploitation is more likely to occur.[21]

The circumstances of irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants in the Greater Mekong Subregion, and the situation of irregular and smuggled migrant women and children, demonstrate the overlap between the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and the difficulties of clearly separating the two phenomena. Many women and adolescent girls come to rely on the services of smugglers; some actively seek them out. Many do so because feasible alternatives are lacking; some engage smugglers or are recruited by them on the advice of relatives or prior migrants. Many are ill-informed about the nature and specifics of their irregular journey; some are misled by their smugglers.[22]

Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines (and Singapore and Brunei Darussalam)

Indonesia and the Philippines are mostly source countries for labour migrants. Many migrants from these countries are women who emigrate to work in the domestic service, hospitality and health sectors in the region (such as Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China) and further afield.[23] Indonesia and the Philippines have gone to some length to regulate labour migration and protect the rights of labour migrants abroad. Nevertheless, irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking remain common phenomena.[24]

Official channels for labour migration from Indonesia are bureaucratic and often require high up-front payments, which drives many migrants into using irregular avenues, including smuggling.[25] Corruption and bribery further fuel irregular migration and smuggling of Indonesian women.[26] Because many migrants deal with private brokers when they leave Indonesia, they are often unaware or unsure whether their journey is regular or not, and some parts of their venture may be legal, while other parts are not.[27] Information about the smuggling of migrants from the Philippines is very limited. It appears to involve both sea and air routes, sometimes using fraudulent documents, especially if destinations in the Gulf Region, Europe or North America are involved.[28]

Malaysia is primarily a destination country for labour migrants from other parts of South and South-East Asia. The relative prosperity of Malaysia and its high labour demand attract large numbers of migrants, many of them Indonesian women who work as helpers in private homes.[29] Some women enter the country irregularly and with the aid of smugglers. For some, their irregular status stems from the mere fact that they entered Malaysia using unlicensed brokers or recruitment agents.[30] For

20 UNIAP, 2010; Miller and Baumeister, 2013; UN-ACT, 2015; UNODC, 2013, 2018b; Munro, 2012.
21 UNIAP, 2007; Chalamwong, Meepien and Hongprayoon, 2012.
22 Van Doore, 2018.
23 Khoo, Platt and Yeoh, 2017.
24 Spaan and van Naerssen, 2018; UNODC, 2015, 2018a.
25 UNODC, 2012, 2015; UNDP, 2009.
26 Ford, 2006; Nadratuzzaman Hosen, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2005.
27 Spaan and van Naerssen, 2018; Silvey, 2007; UNODC, 2012.
28 UNODC, 2015; IOM, 2013.
29 Nadratuzzaman Hosen, 2005; Silvey, 2007; Amri, 2015; UNODC, 2018a; Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.
30 UNODC, 2015; Spaan and van Naerssen, 2018.

others, their status in Malaysia becomes irregular if they overstay their work permits or otherwise fail to comply with visa conditions. Malaysia is a particularly popular destination among Muslim migrants, including refugees from Myanmar and Cham women from Cambodia.[31] There are frequent reports about the use of fraudulent documents to facilitate illegal entry and employment of Indonesian nationals in Malaysia. This includes women who misstate their age to meet minimum age requirements stipulated by Malaysian law for domestic workers.[32]

Malaysia and Indonesia experience considerable levels of irregular migration of asylum seekers, many of them from Afghanistan, the Middle East and Sri Lanka, who seek protection from persecution, conflict, and other human rights abuses.[33] For some, Malaysia and Indonesia are merely transit countries to other destinations because neither country is party to the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees[34] nor has formal systems to protect refugees and asylum seekers. For this reason, many seek to reach Australia, though measures implemented by the Government of Australia to stop irregular boat arrivals have made that all but impossible.[35] As a result, since 2013 fewer asylum seekers enter these countries, though many who had arrived before the Australian policy changes remain in Malaysia and Indonesia in irregular situations with few protections and nowhere to go. Based on available information, most asylum seekers in these countries are men, many of whom travelled alone. If women and children are smuggled, they commonly do so with family or in larger groups.[36] Instances of smuggling unaccompanied minors, most of them Afghan boys, have also been reported, albeit not at the same level as in other parts of the world.[37]

Little is known about irregular migration and the smuggling of young women and girls to Singapore and Brunei Darussalam. Both countries have substantial foreign labour populations, many of them from other countries in the region.[38] Singapore attracts large numbers of young female Indonesian migrants seeking employment as nannies, caretakers and domestic helpers.[39] Both countries tightly restrict immigration and exercise stringent border controls, which may indicate that instances of irregular migration and smuggling are less common than in other parts of South-East Asia.

Pacific Islands

The smuggling of young women and girls in the Pacific Islands is extremely under-researched and little is known about the levels and characteristics of irregular migration in this region.[40] The small size and populations of these island States are one reason why few studies have been conducted that systematically document and analyse the smuggling of migrants. Furthermore, some reports make generalizations that are not valid for a region that comprises diverse cultures, histories, economies and patterns of migration.[41] The relatively low number of known cases of migrant smuggling has also been attributed to the limited capacity of these countries to detect irregular arrivals. At the same

31 Chia and Kenny, 2012; Mekong Migration Network and Asian Migrant Centre, 2013; UNODC, 2015.
32 Nadratuzzaman Hosen, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2004; UNODC, 2015.
33 Missbach and Sinanu, 2011; Munro, 2011.
34 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 189 UNTS 137, 28 July 1951 (entered into force 22 April 1954), and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, 606 UNTS 267, 31 January 1967 (entered into force 4 October 1967); collectively referred to as "Refugee Convention".
35 Schloenhardt and Craig, 2015.
36 Amri, 2015.
37 Correa-Velez, Nardone and Knoetze, 2017.
38 UNODC, 2015.
39 Van Hear, Bakewell and Long, 2012.
40 IOM, 2017.
41 See also, Lindley and Beacroft, 2011.

time, it has been noted that higher rates of detection and refusal of entry at the border are not necessarily indicative of growing smuggling activities.[42] Put simply, issues arising in one country may not be experienced by others. Much of the available information is anecdotal or based on isolated incidents, and trafficking and smuggling are frequently conflated.

Most sources identify the trafficking of young women to some port cities or to mining and logging sites as the main irregular migration issue affecting some parts of the region, including the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. This mostly involves young women from China, the Philippines and Thailand who are recruited for legitimate work but are sometimes sexually exploited. Some women move to the region and engage in the sex industry voluntarily; such cases are better described as migrant smuggling if women use paid services to enter the Pacific Islands illegally.[43]

People from the Pacific Islands have a long history of migration within the region and to countries along the Pacific Rim that are home to large diasporas of Pacific Islanders. Based on the available information, such migration occurs almost exclusively using legal avenues often benefiting from visa-waiver schemes or special citizenship, labour migration, or travel arrangements.[44] There is no open-source information suggesting that smugglers, recruiters and other agents offer paid services to facilitate the illegal entry of young women and girls from the Pacific Island to other countries. While there is a potential for unregulated migration flows within and from the region, especially in response to climate change, natural disasters, or other environmental, political or economic causes,[45] such flows, insofar as they may already occur, do not appear to be facilitated by smugglers.

Instances of child trafficking in the region mostly involve the exploitation of local children. Insofar as known cases are concerned, irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants from the Pacific Islands mostly involve adult men. Reports of foreign nationals transiting through the region irregularly, sometimes with the aid of smugglers, are somewhat isolated and do not indicate a broader pattern.[46]

Implications

Irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants have serious implications for the countries and people in South-East Asia and the Pacific. Importantly, millions of migrants who are crossing international borders irregularly or who are living abroad in an irregular situation lack access to the rights and protections that are available to nationals and regular migrants. They often work for wages and live in conditions that would be intolerable for the local population. All too often they have to live in hiding, afraid of being detected and deported by national authorities. In these circumstances, irregular migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking, especially if they are in places where they do not speak the local language, are not familiar with relevant laws and regulations, do not know their rights, and have limited contact with people other than their employers. There are ample examples of irregular migrants living and working in conditions where their freedoms are severely restricted, that are unsafe, where they are underpaid, and where they experience coercion, force and physical violence.

For young women and girls, these circumstances can be all the more severe. Their special vulnerability can stem from multiple factors, especially their young age and inexperience which can mean that they know little about their rights and options. It also means that they are more prone to believe false

42 UNODC, 2016, 2018b; Pacific Immigration Director's Conference, 2010.
43 UNODC, 2016; IOM, 2017; Lindley and Beacroft, 2011; UNODC, 2018b.
44 Lindley and Beacroft, 2011; UNODC, 2018b.
45 See generally, Parker, 2018.
46 Save the Children, 2015; UNODC, 2016; Lindley and Beacroft, 2011.

promises made by recruiters, smugglers and employers, and are more likely to succumb to coercion and threats. Some of these vulnerabilities are created by structural gender dynamics, especially in systems where women have limited access to government services or live in patriarchal societies where women are pressured and controlled by men or by their families.

Poverty, inequality, and a lack of education and employment opportunities in their home countries are among the many triggers for the migration of men, women and children in South-East Asia. In some instances, persecution, war, and generalized violence gives them no option but to flee abroad. Much of this migration is irregular and smugglers are used because legal avenues of migration are non-existent, slow, cumbersome, or expensive.

These circumstances call for approaches that raise the status of women and children, better protect their rights, and that ensure better education opportunities for women at all levels. Furthermore, given the high levels and complexities of irregular migration flows in the region, there is an urgent need to create accessible and affordable legal avenues of migration, to legislate comprehensive and modern immigration laws that cater for labour shortages, population developments and offer asylum for those in need of protection. The Global Compact for Migration provides a blueprint to address some of these complex questions.

The smuggling of women and children within and across South-East Asia and the Pacific is a symptom, not a cause of irregular migration. Smugglers act as enablers of migration where government systems fail to manage migration flows in a fair and effective way. This does not excuse the work of unscrupulous smugglers in any way, but demonstrates that the emergence and scale of the smuggling of migrants is, in the region and elsewhere, frequently the result of border controls and immigration restrictions that leave persons forced or willing to migrate with little option but to resort to the services of smugglers.[47]

For many migrants, the services of smugglers go well beyond transportation and border-crossing, and may include the supply of fraudulent documents, accommodation and employment in the destination country. The smuggling of migrants is a lucrative business and many smugglers prey on the desperation and vulnerability of their clientele. Many smugglers greatly over-charge for their services; some offer loans which can lead migrants into debt traps and tie them to their smugglers or employers for months or years. In such circumstances, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons can become indistinguishable.

While the profits from the smuggling of migrants can be significant and many smugglers operate professionally and with years of experience, it is a business that often involves little skill and organization. Many smugglers are amateurs and become involved in smuggling if and when opportunities arise. Frequently, they use their local knowledge, their cars, trucks and boats to facilitate local transportation or illegal entry into another country. The smuggling of migrants has many hallmarks of organized crime, in that it involves coordination and profiteering, but it does not always involve criminal organizations. Much of it is a "cottage industry" involving individual or groups of opportunists, some of whom are networked across borders and, as mentioned, offer a range of services. Myths about mafia-style smuggling cartels operating in South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands generating millions of dollars in profits are not supported by much evidence.[48]

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47 Kneebone, 2010; Czaika and Hobolth, 2014.
48 UNODC, 2018a; Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.

Further work

While this paper merely provides a sketch of the causes and characteristics of irregular migration and the smuggling of young women and girls in South-East Asia and the Pacific, further work needs to be done to provide a better understanding of the scale of these phenomena, the patterns and means of these irregular flows, the experiences of young women and girls during and after their journey, and of the protection and countermeasures adopted by States insofar as they are directed at young women and girls or impact on them differently. Apart from the lack of more comprehensive material documenting numbers and patterns, there is very little information about the role of gender and age in the smuggling of migrants, both in relation to smuggled migrants and smugglers themselves.

Globally, the smuggling of migrants remains an under-researched topic, often shrouded by myths and misinformation. Furthermore, some governments are reluctant to support research in this field for fear that it may reveal aspects of their immigration and asylum systems they would prefer to keep hidden and/or because they do not want to be exposed to criticism of their border protection and refugee policies. In many places there is little transparency about the operation and enforcement of immigration laws, while many countries fail to integrate strategies against irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants into broader policies on labour migration, asylum and development.

Against this background, it would be desirable to conduct further and more targeted research on the many facets that explain and shape irregular migration and smuggling of young women and girls in South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands and, importantly, examine these facets nationally and locally. This needs to go hand-in-hand with thorough assessments of national immigration policies, laws and practices in this area, how they impact young women and girls, and of the ways in which they facilitate human movement, protect the rights of migrants, and prevent smuggling and other forms of irregular migration, especially of young women and girls.

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