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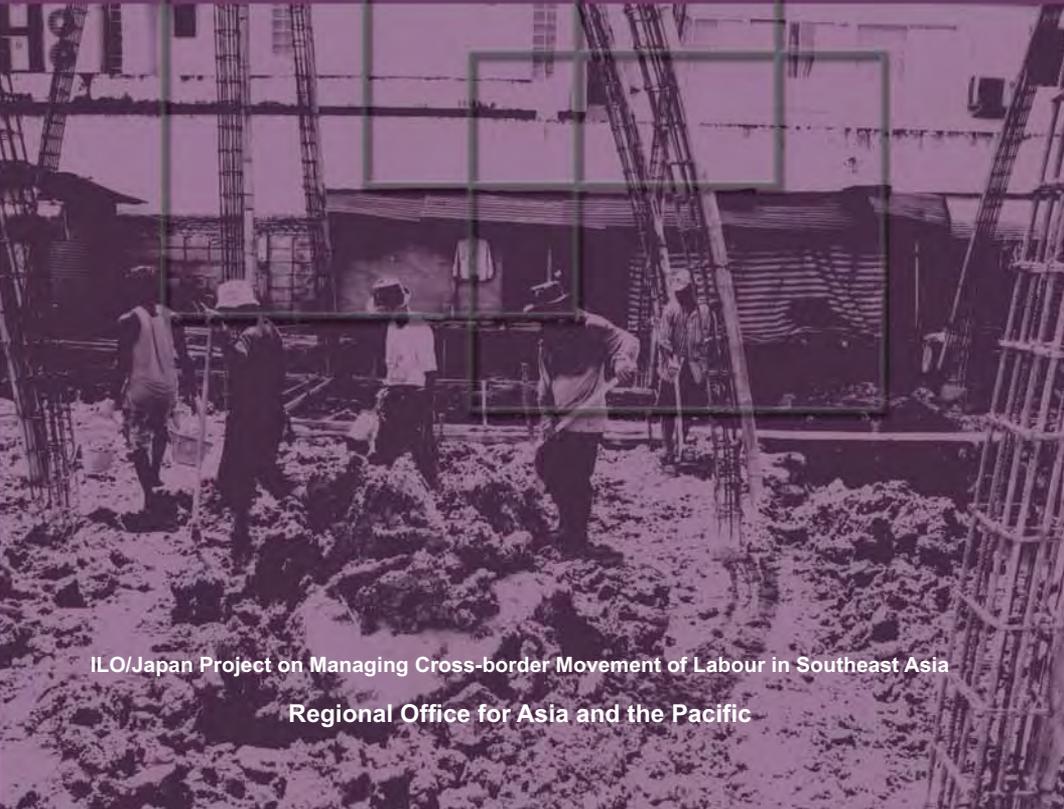


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# Migrant workers' remittances: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar

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Thailand



ILO/Japan Project on Managing Cross-border Movement of Labour in Southeast Asia  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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## Foreword

International labour migration has been a coping strategy for the scores of families and workers in the Mekong subregion who live in poverty. The increased need for low-skilled workers in countries like Thailand and Malaysia and the relatively high wages are pull factors on the needs and desires of the unemployed and underemployed workers in many of the subregion's poor countries. Although labour migration comes with the potential dangers of labour exploitation and human trafficking, migrant workers accept these risks for opportunity to improve the quality of life for their families in their home country.

Migrant workers from the Mekong subregion seek low-skill jobs. A big slice of their hard-earned income is sent back to their home country as remittances for family, while some is saved for contingency in the host country. The remittances, which directly benefit individual households, are widely acknowledged as a major and stable source of external finance for developing countries. Migrant workers' remittances have the potential to spur economic development in the poor migrant-sending communities of such countries.

The development impact of remittances, however, depends first on migrant workers' access to financial services, such as money transfer intermediaries, that are affordable and safe. Second, the impact is determined by the recipient households' capacity to use the income for productive investments. Many recipient households in rural areas lack the opportunity and the ability to invest the remittances productively. While a good share of the remittances received is spent on household necessities, such as housing and transport, relatively large sums of money are spent in ways that do not optimize present or future welfare.

This report highlights a study (supported by the International Labour Office) of migrant workers from within the Mekong subregion and their remittances conducted in late 2007. According to the findings, the migrant worker respondents in Thailand sent on average 12,500 baht a year to their home countries. Thus, with 633,000 registered migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar in 2007, the volume of remittances from Thailand to those three neighbouring countries is a conservatively estimated 7.9 billion baht per year. If the number of irregular migrant workers is included, the volume of remittances would be much higher.

Generally, migrant workers intend to work in a host country for a specific number of years in order to reach a targeted financial goal. The commercial banks in both host and home countries can help them to achieve that goal; and in doing so they can indirectly help to reduce the likelihood for re-migration and, to some extent, irregular migration. While the financial infrastructure in labour-sending countries of the Mekong subregion is still underdeveloped, providing migrant workers in Thailand the opportunity to own a bank account is a good starting point for them to accumulate their savings and build an economic future in their home countries.

To maximize the gains from migration and to reduce the re-migration cycle, there is a need for both host and origin countries to equip migrant workers and their families with financial literacy prior to and during migration.

I would like to express our appreciation to the authors, Aree Jampaklay and Sirinan Kittisuksathit of the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, for conducting the study and to Linda Deelen, a microfinance and enterprise development expert for her contributions along the way. The study has been a result of a joint effort of the ILO

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Sachiko Yamamoto  
Regional Director  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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## Executive summary

The study highlighted in this report explored remittance-sending behaviour of migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. The findings are intended for use as baseline information when formulating policy recommendations and action plans to enhance the development impact of remittances. The study, conducted in late 2007, covered 356 migrants aged 16–34 who were engaged in the manufacturing, construction, domestic and fishing sectors. The majority of the migrant worker respondents first moved to Thailand at a young age and planned to return home some day. About a third of the interviewed migrants had not registered with Thailand's Ministry of the Interior, which is required of migrant workers. More than a third of the respondents reported acquiring few or no skills from working in Thailand.

Remittances refer to the portion of an international migrant worker's earnings sent back from the country of employment to the country of origin. On average, the migrant workers in the survey sent home 25,000 baht in total during the previous two years (about 12,500 baht per annum). The median amount of money sent each time was 5,000 baht. The most commonly reported intention for how the remittances were to be used was for daily expenses, followed by health care, household amenities and education. Approximately 30 per cent of the migrants said they wanted the remittances to be used for income-generating activities. Almost half the migrants reported that the money they sent was the main source of income for their family back home. Only a small fraction reported that one or more family members stopped working after receiving remittances.

The most frequently used method for remitting money was through an informal agent (52 per cent). Other methods included sending it through a relative, a bank, a friend or self-carried (when visiting home). The most commonly reported reason for using an informal agent or a bank was its convenience, speed and hassle-free nature. A substantial proportion of migrants used an informal agent because they did not know of any other way to send money home. And yet, relatives and friends were perceived as the most reliable means. Those who carried their own money considered this mode an opportunity to visit their family.

A substantial number of migrants did not actually prefer the method they used most frequently for remitting money but did so because no better option seemed available. Although an informal agent, relative, friend or employer were the most often used channels, sending remittances through a bank or carrying the cash home by themselves were also preferred channels, with banks being the most preferred.

More than 80 per cent of the migrant respondents incurred expenses when sending money home. All migrants who used a bank and most of those who remitted via an informal agent had to pay a sending fee. More than half of the migrants who relied on friends as their most often used method also paid something extra, though they did not always perceive it as a sending fee. The majority of migrants who sent remittances through an employer also paid a sending fee. Migrants paid those fees in various ways, including as a percentage of the amount remitted, a fixed fee per transaction or a calling fee (to verify if their family received the money), either per minute or per call. In terms of a percentage charged, the median amount was 5 per cent. About one-fourth paid a fixed fee per transaction, with the median fee at 40 baht. Around 11 per cent of the migrants paid a per-minute phone charge (the median at 10 baht per minute). A few paid a fixed phone charge each time they remitted funds (the median was 300 baht). More than half of the migrants from Myanmar could only report the amount paid for sending 100,000 kyat (approximately 2,500 baht); the median amount of sending fee among them was 250 baht. Other expenses were usually not considered as fees but rather as compensation for someone's assistance or as contribution to travelling expenses, the usual amount being around 300 baht.

About half of the migrant workers reported that their family also had to incur expenses when receiving the remittances. More than half reported that their family paid a percentage charge, the median of which was 3.5 per cent. Other expenses included transportation costs, either for the family to get to the money or for persons who took money to the family, with the median amount at the equivalent of 65 baht and 100 baht, respectively.

The migrants' median family income per month before going to Thailand, after they first arrived in Thailand and at the time of the survey was 1,500, 4,000 and 7,500 baht per month, respectively. The median individual income upon first arriving and at the time of the survey was 3,500 and 6,000 baht per month, respectively. About a third reported that deductions were made from their salaries by their employers. The deductions were mostly for salary advances, accommodation/food and the government registration fees. In most cases, the reported amount deducted was less than 2,000 baht per month.

The biggest share of migrants' income went to their remittances, with a median of 2,000 baht per month, followed by food and personal savings. About one-fourth of the migrants spent money on alcohol, at a median of 400 baht per month. Cigarettes accounted for a median of 200 baht per month among almost one-fourth of those surveyed, and about 20 per cent gambled, at a median of 200 baht per month. Personal entertainment, amounting to a median of 300 baht per month, was reported by about half of the respondents. Communication expenses, at a median of 300 baht per month, were reported by 85 per cent of the migrants.

About 21 per cent of the migrant workers had a bank account in Thailand; most of them were from Myanmar, followed by those from Lao PDR. Most of these accounts were arranged by the employer. Those who possessed no bank account mostly cited limited knowledge about banking services. Other reasons included their perception that they did not have the right to open an account, lack of documents required by the bank, insufficient funds for opening an account, inconvenience or refusal by employer to allow them to open an account. Most migrants who did not have a bank account wanted to have one. Of them, about two-fifths wanted it for saving money, for security and for the convenience. Very few of the migrants wanted to have a bank account just for remitting funds.

The proportion of migrants or any family member having a bank account in the home country was very small (12 per cent). Not having any money to save in a bank, limited access to banks (geographical barrier) and lack of knowledge about how to use banking services were major constraints that prevented them from having accounts, even in their own country.

Migrant workers' remittances have the potential to spur economic development in poor migrant-sending communities. To link migration and development, the most effective policy approach would be to improve the legal status of migrants and to improve the general social and political-economic circumstances in the sending countries. The development impact of remittances, however, first depends on migrant workers' access to money-transfer channels that are affordable and safe. Second, the impact is determined by the recipient households' capacity and opportunity to use the money for productive investments.

On the sending end, governments should promote orderly labour migration and reduce the obstacles and costs within that process. In addition, an attractive social, economic and political environment in labour-sending countries should be created. This will encourage migrants to remain involved in their home countries, to return and participate in their home country's growth and to make social and economic contributions.

Labour-receiving countries should promote orderly cross-border movement of labour in a way that generates the development potential of labour migration for both sending and receiving societies. Migrant workers help the host country by taking low-skilled jobs shunned by its nationals and thus help mitigate any labour shortage. The migrants are attracted to this job situation due to better wages, at least compared with what they would earn in their country. Hence, they create double-positive labour market outcomes to both the host and home countries.

The public sector needs to ensure that the benefits of migration reach the migrant workers, to the extent possible, by making certain they are given legal wages, provided with good working conditions and not subjected to exploitative recruitment practices or extorted by unscrupulous officials. Thus, the Thai Government should encourage more migrant workers to access formal financial services, such as having a bank account, so that they can better manage and accumulate their savings, which will enable them to invest or use it productively in their home country. Greater savings combined with proper skills training and job counselling may preclude migrants or family members from re-migrating abroad for employment.

In summary, to maximize the benefits of labour migration and to partially discourage re-migration as well as irregular migration, the Thai Government should:

- 1) raise awareness and provide information to migrant workers about appropriate remittance-transfer channels;
- 2) recognize the role of informal money couriers and register them;
- 3) regulate the fee charged by the informal money couriers;
- 4) reduce documents required for access to banking services in Thailand;
- 5) accept the ID card/work permit issued to the registered migrants by the Ministry of Interior for opening a bank account;
- 6) coordinate with employers to help their migrant employees in opening a bank account;
- 7) reduce the transaction costs for sending remittances, both at the sending and the receiving ends;
- 8) assist returnees and coordinate with countries of origin in identifying opportunities for the productive use of remittances, such as establishing/strengthening village savings funds, providing business start-up counselling and improving the skills of returnees.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Remittances refer to the portion of an international migrant worker's earnings sent back from the country of employment to the country of origin. They are generally viewed as having positive net effects on the economic and social development of migrant-sending countries. But many studies stress the need for remittance transfers targeted, to the extent possible, towards development objectives in the countries of origin and suggest that all stakeholders (government, migrants and the private sector) be included in devising the most effective strategies (Addy et al., 2003). Any initiatives, however, will be hampered by the lack of data on remittance flows and impacts.

In Thailand, migrant workers often cite the need to earn income for their families as the main motive for looking for a job across the border. For instance, in a somewhat recent study, the most common explanation provided by from domestic workers in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot, most of whom were from Myanmar, was to support their family at home; and most did send remittances to their families (Panam et al., 2004). While migrant workers' remittances have the potential to boost economic development in poor migrant-sending communities, the prospective impacts depend on many factors, particularly on migrants' access to affordable and safe money-transferring channels.

Reliable, transparent, convenient and low-cost transactions for remitting money increase the confidence of migrants and thus the likelihood that they will use official channels to send their earnings (Addy et al., 2003). While anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of migrants sent remittances through informal channels, reliable information on remittance flows from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar is limited. Although formal money transfer businesses offer remittance services to most districts of Cambodia and Lao PDR, only a few migrants make use of them. The perceived high cost, lack of information or need for informality may all contribute to the convenience of using the informal remittance-sending channel.

There is a need to understand the extent of migrants' behaviour in sending remittances to their home countries in terms of channels they use and why, the costs and risks, and how their family makes use of the money.

This report offers some insight on those issues. Presented here are the findings of a study on the remittance-sending behaviours of migrant workers in Thailand to their home countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR or Myanmar conducted in late 2007. The study looked at: i) factors affecting migrant workers' decisions regarding the frequency and amount of remittances as well as the choice of remittance channels and costs and risks associated with both formal and informal remittance channels; ii) factors affecting recipient households' choice regarding the use of remittances and their inclination to either spend, save or invest; and iii) the range of services, reliability and costs established by formal and informal money-transfer providers. The study's primary goal was to gain insight on the remittance flows from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar that could then be of value in policy recommendations and action plans to enhance the development impact of remittances.

## 1.2 Methodology

### *Study sample*

To be eligible for participation in the survey, the migrants in the study sample had to meet the following criteria:

- 1) be from the Cambodia, Lao PDR or Myanmar;
- 2) be age 15 or older;

- 3) have worked in Thailand continuously for at least two years;
- 4) have family members left behind in their home country;
- 5) remitted money to their home family in the previous two years.

### **Study design**

The study was designed to include migrants from the three sending countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar and living in Thailand. Previous literature suggests that migrants of different nationalities tend to congregate in different regions. For example, Lao migrants are found mostly in the north-eastern provinces. Provinces along Thailand's western and north-western border as well as the coastal provinces, such as Samut Sakhon, are major destinations for migrants from Myanmar. Migrants from Cambodia mostly work in the fishing industry, especially in Trat, another province in the eastern coast of Thailand. However, Bangkok tends to be a destination for migrants from all three countries.

Given the fact that migrants from different countries cluster in different areas, the study was designed to interview migrants in those provinces in which certain nationalities were most prominent. After taking into account the feasibility for interviewing foreign workers, the researchers selected the provinces of Khon Kaen for Lao migrants, Samut Sakhon for migrants from Myanmar and Trat for Cambodian migrants. Because migrants living and working Thailand's capital may differ from migrants working in other provinces in many ways, including remittance behaviour, the researchers set out to interview migrants of all three nationalities living in Bangkok or nearby.

Initially, the survey aimed to interview about 50 migrants of each nationality working outside Bangkok and another 50 migrants of the same nationality working in Bangkok, totalling 300 migrants. As it seemed safer to set the sampling target a little bit over the required size, 60 migrants were selected instead of 50 for each nationality in each study site. The surveys in most of the study sites met the target, except for the survey of the Lao migrants in Khon Kaen, which was short by four people (table 1.1).

Migrants in Thailand are not only residentially segregated but also work segregated. Thus the researchers were interested in exploring any possible differences in migrants' remittance behaviour across various work sectors. Thus for each study site and each nationality, the survey included migrants working in those sectors in which most migrants of a particular nationality worked (table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Number of migrants intended to interview and actually interviewed, by province, nationality and sector**

Province	Migrant's nationality	Sector	Intended number of migrants to interview	Actual number of migrants interviewed
Bangkok	Lao	Domestic/ factory/ construction	50	60
	Myanmar	Domestic/ factory/ construction	50	60
	Cambodian	Factory/ construction	50	60
Khon Kaen	Lao	Agriculture/ factory/ construction	50	56
Samut Sakhon	Myanmar	Fishing/ factory/ construction	50	60
Trat	Cambodian	Fishing/ agriculture/ construction	50	60
<b>Total</b>			<b>300</b>	<b>356</b>

In each province, field work supervisors were trained to ensure that the surveyed migrants represented an equal proportion of women and men. As a result, the study sample included 177 migrant women and 179 migrant men.

## **Study tools**

### **The questionnaire**

The main tool was a structured questionnaire, designed to meet the study's purposes and to aid in interviewing each migrant worker. The questionnaire included the following topics:

- individual characteristics (age, sex, marital status, education, work sector, legal status, accompanying family members, duration of residence in Thailand and frequency of visits to home country)
- migration experience
- decision to migrate (own/family's/friend's)
- monthly household income before coming to Thailand
- monthly income earned from working (including overtime)
- annual volume of remittances, percentage of income
- reasons for sending/not sending remittances
- frequency of sending remittances
- collective-sending (pooling) of remittances
- remittance-transfer channel used, reason for using this channel
- cost incurred at the sending end/receiving end
- problems encountered at the sending end/receiving end
- transfer time
- documentation required (ID, work permit)
- experience with other remittance-transfer channels
- knowledge about other options/channels
- have a bank account in Thailand (why/why not)
- information and support received regarding remittances
- in-kind remittances sent
- target set before departure on the amount and purpose of remittances
- whether family members in home country expect to continue or cease economic activity after receiving remittance
- potential for use of skills acquired from working in Thailand in home country

### **Developing and pre-testing the questionnaire**

The draft questionnaire was developed and revised in line with the researchers' interests, the literature review and suggestions from officers within the International Labour Organization (ILO). The draft questionnaire was pre-tested (September 2007) with 14 migrants (10 from Myanmar working in Samut Sakhon and 2 each from Lao PDR and Myanmar who were working in Bangkok). It was then revised again, based on the pre-testing experience and comments from the site coordinators. Two PhD students from Myanmar at the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) were also involved in the process of developing and pre-testing the questionnaire.

### **Questionnaire translation**

The finalized questionnaire was translated into Burmese by an IPSR student from Myanmar and into Khmer by IPSR students from Cambodia. To assure the precision of the translation, the Burmese and Cambodian questionnaires were checked independently by native speakers. The Lao migrants were questioned using the Thai language questionnaire because the Lao interviewer could read and write Thai as fluently as a native speaker.

### **Questionnaire training**

After the questionnaire and translations were finalized, a series of interviewer trainings was conducted: one in Burmese for interviewers from Myanmar and the other in Thai for interviewers working with Cambodian and Lao migrants in Bangkok. Interviewer training for the field work in Trat and Khon Kaen provinces was conducted separately in each province.

## **Field work**

The field work for this study was a real challenge, despite awareness of potential problems, such as language barriers and difficulties in gaining access to the targeted migrants. Fortunately, several NGOs working closely with migrants and who were familiar with the study settings provided good support. Through migrants who were affiliated with these NGOs, target migrants were identified and asked to participate in the survey.

In Samut Sakhon province, the ten interviewers were migrants from Myanmar who had been involved with the Labor Promotion Network for Migrants. Two advocacy and research officers with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) helped recruit migrant interviewers and interview migrants from Myanmar living in Bangkok. The producer of a popular radio programme for Lao people in Thailand, who is Lao, interviewed the Lao migrants in Bangkok. Another producer for a radio programme for Cambodian migrants who is Thai but speaks Khmer and is familiar with the situation of Cambodian workers in Bangkok helped locate and interview the Lao migrants. In Trat province, the Raks Thai Foundation helped recruit Cambodian interviewers and conducted field work with Cambodian migrant workers. There was no local NGO support in Khon Kaen province, although a lecturer from the Nursing College at Khon Kaen University served as focal point. However, approaching targeted migrants was more difficult in this study site. Finding Cambodian migrants in Bangkok as well as Cambodian interviewers initially was a challenge. After it became clear that the IRC could assist in only finding migrants from Myanmar, a faculty member who teaches Cambodian language at the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University, was consulted and who then found suitable interviewers.

To avoid difficulties in locating migrants within Bangkok, the study setting was expanded to include surrounding provinces (Nonthaburi, Samut Prakan and Prathum Thani), all within the authority of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

### **1.3 Literature review**

#### ***Migration and remittance: Pros and cons***

International migration has a significant impact on the social, demographic and economic development of all Asian nations (Hugo, 2005). Over 20 million Asian workers are estimated to be living outside their native countries (Hugo, 2005). Since 1996 when the Government first required the registration of immigrant workers from neighbouring countries, Thailand has been classified as a net admission of foreign workers. The total registered (previously irregular) migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar numbered 1,512,587 in 2004, when quasi amnesty was introduced.

Recent study reports acknowledge that it is virtually impossible to stop the migration of both highly skilled and low-skilled people. Stay-at-home policies pursued by migrant-sending countries have not only proved to be ineffective but also, and more importantly, to be counter-productive because they tend to alienate migrants (De Haas, 2005). If migrants were granted economic and political rights, it would perhaps increase their commitment to remit, invest and participate in public debate.

A common anti-migration argument posits that remittances are mainly spent on conspicuous consumption and non-productive investment (Addy et al. 2003). There is also the view that remittances enlarge income inequalities within communities, leading to unnecessary pressure on non-migrant households to send members abroad. Such remittances, so the argument goes, induce changes in consumption patterns, which in small rural communities can lead to the stigmatization of children (Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC).

While some of the literature points to an increased culture of dependency among remittance-receiving households, other research tends to reflect a positive view on remittances and disputes putative detrimental effects (Skeldon, 1997; Guest, 1998; Rwelamira and Kirsten,

2003). Recent work in Latin America, Asia and Africa strongly suggests that remittances potentially enable migrants and their family members to invest in agriculture and enterprises. Other studies have shown that migration does not necessarily lead to passive dependency on remittances but may also lead to increased economic activities and wealth (De Haas, 2005). A Sri Lankan Government official, for instance, noted that overseas remittances “have now become the backbone of the country’s economy” (Hugo, 2005).

In a report on remittance flows from Thailand to Myanmar, Nwet Kay Khine (2007) states that remittances affect economic development and help reduce poverty. Remittances to the recipient households in Myanmar in that study were spent on daily basic and other needs, such as debt repayment, donations, contribution to special events (wedding, funerals, housing improvement, purchasing durable goods, gambling, etc.). For many households, remittances fulfil basic daily needs and also serve as “insurance”, or an emergency fund in cases of household financial crisis. Remittances are also used on education as well as to provide a decent livelihood for the migrant’s family (Punpuing et al., 2005).

### ***Remittance and development***

Remittances complement national savings and increase the financing pool for investment and stimulating growth. Remittances can also support consumption levels of low-income people. From the perspective of a migrant-sending country, remittances function indirectly as a market-based source of development finance, thus reducing the demand for official development assistance. In addition, remittances have proved to be less volatile, and therefore a more reliable source of income than other capital flows to developing countries. Remittances are also less subject to political barriers and controls than either product or other capital flows. Thus, remittances are acknowledged as a more effective instrument for income distribution than large, bureaucratic development programmes or development aid (De Hass, 2005).

The impact on economic growth from remittances in receiving economies is likely to occur through savings and investment. The direct effects of remittances on investment depend on whether remittances support consumption or investment, or both, in the aggregate. Ratha (2003) cites positive effects of remittances on investment in receiving countries, such as Mexico, Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa. In these countries, remittances have financed the building of schools, clinics and other infrastructure. In addition, returned migrants bring fresh capital that can help finance investment projects.

Remittances are having an increasing role in contributing to the economic growth and vitality of the economy in many countries. For relatively poor areas, remittances are a safety net. Remittances can be used both to improve current household economic status and to improve education and access to health care services for the younger generation and those who stay behind (Millennium Development Goal 2, CRC 28). Previous studies show that children in households that receive remittances have relatively good school attendance rates. In addition, families who receive remittances often have a desire to educate their children (Samuel Munzele Maimbo, 2006). Remittance money has helped to control and even diminish child labour in some countries; although in other countries, child labour is seen as increasing because migrants’ children may be forced to work to support family left behind (CRC 31, 32).

### ***Conditions for maximizing the benefits from remittances***

Migration does not always lead to more development. While migration and remittances can potentially contribute, other factors also determine the extent to which the potential is realized. These factors include specific political, economic and social circumstances in both sending and receiving countries (De Hass, 2005). Under unfavourable conditions, remittances may hardly ever lead to investment and development. Instead, they may lead to individuals or whole families withdrawing from social and economic activities in sending countries because their remittances grant them freedom to do so.

General development constraints, such as poor infrastructure, corruption, “red tape”, macro-economic instability and absence of appropriate policies are likely to play a constraining role on remittance transfers and may prevent migrant households from taking the risk of investing socially and financially in their country of origin. These may also lower migrants’ incentives to return and participate again in their home country’s growth (Massey et al., 1998).

The benefits of remittances to an economy need to be complemented by broader financial sector reforms in the long run (Samuel Munzele Maimbo, 2006). Proof of the importance of remittances to migrant-sending countries is that they continue to increase over time. One among many factors determining whether or not benefits of the remittances are fully realized is the financial sector in both sending and receiving ends. In Myanmar, for example, under the banking law adopted in 1990, the State Law and Order Restoration Council permitted foreign banks to open in Myanmar. But their role was limited to only liaising between local and foreign clients for trade and commerce. No foreign bank is allowed to conduct business locally. Even though foreign banks are not authorized to function in local money transactions, local private banks are also not permitted to handle foreign exchange, including remittances (Thai Law Forum, 2007). Formally, three state-owned banks (Myanmar Economic Bank, Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank and Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank) are the only active players for foreign currency transactions. Among them, the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank deals with remittances (Lwin, 2005). Generally, a fee of 10 per cent of the remittance is deducted as a service charge by the state-owned bank, which discourages overseas migrants from choosing this formal channel.

To what extent the developmental potential of migration and remittances is fully realized is also related to the restrictive immigration policies of migrant-receiving countries. Massey et al. (1998) suggest that the restrictive immigration policies have the perverse effect of encouraging undocumented migration and the permanent settlement of migrants and interrupting patterns of circular migration. Their argument is consistent with more recent research, such as that of Hugo (2003), indicating that highly restrictive policies and barriers to entry push migrants into settlement because they fear losing their right to return. Migrants are thus inhibited from investing in and returning temporarily to their home country.

### ***Monetary and in-kind remittances***

The important concept for measuring the economic impact of remittances is the resource transfer – either monetary or in-kind – made by a migrant to his/her home country. Monetary transfers increase the availability of foreign exchange in the migrant’s country of origin. In turn, remittances in-kind often save foreign exchange for the recipient country. Remittances can be in-kind, such as goods sent to households in the home country. Only part of these transfers will be recorded as imports. Migrants can also make donations in the host country to institutions like churches and charitable organizations formed by co-nationals of the home country, make payments and deposits (insurance premiums, tuition for school and payments for international airfares directly to the airlines) on behalf of relatives or friends from their country of origin. Although all these payments should be treated as “remittances” in an economic sense, they are rarely recorded as such. In sum, all these considerations should be borne in mind when assessing the true magnitude of remittance transfers based on official statistics, which for the reasons just outlined tend to underestimate their full economic impact.

### ***Sex and remittances***

Even though the sending of remittances by migrants is a common practice in developing economies (Johnson and Whitelaw, 1974; Oberai and Singh, 1983; Chaudhuri, 1993; Osaki, 2003), past studies indicate that many factors determine the sending of remittances. Sex is one factor. Flows of remittances can be seen as a function of migrants’ status in their family or their relationships to others. Female migrants were more closely attached to their household of origin than were male migrants in various studies (Pongpaichit, 1982; Trager, 1984; Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). In a study of female domestic workers from Myanmar (Punpuing et al., 2005), about 77 per cent reported sending part of their earnings back home. The majority of them

expressed a strong feeling of obligation and responsibility towards their parents and siblings. Of the more than US\$1 billion in remittances sent back to Sri Lanka in 1999, women contributed over 62 per cent. One study showed that Bangladeshi women working in the Middle East sent home 72 per cent of their earnings on average. Of the roughly \$6 billion remitted annually to the Philippines in the late 1990s, migrant women transferred one-third.

Despite the preponderance of women sending money home, the total that women remit may be less than what men send home (UNFPA, 2006). This is because women typically receive less pay for equal work (or are employed in sectors that offer poor remuneration). Even so, migrant women who send money back home forge a new definition of what it means to be female, and this leads to greater autonomy and status in the household or community. Women living abroad often gain new knowledge or skills and gain new ideas or attitudes that lead to enhanced family health in their home country (UNFPA, 2006).

### **Methods of sending remittance**

Because there are several ways to send remittances, it is important to appreciate the differences among them. Some transactions are formally recorded, while some are not. When remittances are sent through formal channels, they are recorded by the receiving country's official statistics as an inflow of foreign exchange into the current account of the balance of payments. Conversely, remittances sent informally in cash through couriers go unrecorded in the official statistics.

Migrants use a wide range of methods to send remittances back home, including banks, credit unions, small and large money transfer companies (such as MoneyGram and Western Union), postal services, hand delivery by the actual sender or by a third party, and less regulated services (Orozco, 2003). Hand delivery is the most traditional method. Many Asian countries use the traditional mechanisms of money transfer, for example the *hawala* in Pakistan and the *hundi* in India.<sup>1</sup> These systems are popular because they are relatively inexpensive (less than 2 per cent of the principal), well organized on the receiving end, and because senders do not need to provide identification (Orozco, 2003).

A study on migrants from Myanmar to Thailand (Nwet Kay Khine, 2007) indicates they use informal channels because Myanmar lacks active and efficient money transaction services run by international and local private institutions, such as Bank, MoneyGram and Western Union. Such informal channels are also called *hundi* (or the *hawala*). The money transfer service originates in the pockets of the migrant workers, especially irregular migrant workers from Myanmar, because they do not have access to a formal remittance system. The impacts of irregularity extend to the migrants' access to formal remittance channels. Remittances from irregular migrants thus are usually transferred informally to the households of the migrants. Informal channels, such as international *hundi* services, operate on personal trust, speed, low costs and door-to-door service (Koser, 2007). Problems encountered before and after settling into destination places also limit their capacity of sending remittances. The affordability of sending remittances is largely dependent on the cost of travelling and settling in Thailand, working conditions and further mobility, living costs, level of income, social networks and, especially, legal status (Nwet Kay Khine, 2007).

In contrast to the relative informality of couriers and *hawaladers*, international money transfer companies are licensed regionally and/or globally. Money transfer companies are authorized to engage in activities that do not involve the receipt of money on current accounts subject to withdrawal by a check. While Western Union has the largest worldwide presence in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Hawala* is a kind of transaction in which money is not physically or electronically transferred. The *hawala* system is an "operation that consists of making a financial transfer between principals located in countries A and B, using intermediaries, *hawaladars* (HA) and (HB), who operate in the informal sector . . . HA receives funds in one (hard) currency and asks HB to advance the equivalent of the paid amount to a designated beneficiary in the local currency". The main feature of *hawala* is that, although the remittance is immediately transferred, the intermediaries settle their debt through various mechanisms of compensation that occur at different moments and do not necessarily involve direct payment between the two *hawaladers* (Orozco, 2003).

money transfer industry, with one-quarter of the global market, other companies like Thomas Cook and MoneyGram also operate globally, though with less presence (Orozco, 2003).

Regional and country-specific businesses and post offices in some countries often compete with the global companies. On the sending side, these competitors are known as “ethnic stores”. They tend to transfer smaller amounts; but when calculated together, they could account for 30 per cent or more of the total remittances sent. Proprietors of United States-based ethnic stores transmitting money to Pakistan, India or Bangladesh complain, however, of unfair treatment and competition from the informal sector. They are unable to compete against the *hawala* system (which operates outside the American regulatory environment) and major companies such as Western Union, which has a far greater ability to shape market conditions. Analysts estimate that these types of informal businesses are gradually declining, with a decrease in global market share from 50 per cent in 1996 to 45 per cent in 2001 (Orozco, 2003).

### ***Amount and frequency of remittances sent***

The average remittance per transaction for Filipino and Indonesian migrants working in Hong Kong was US\$300 on average and \$289 on average for those working in Singapore. This amounted to slightly more than twice the amount sent by their counterparts working in and remitting from Malaysia. Filipinos and Indonesians working in Japan remitted more than twice as much as their counterparts in Hong Kong and Singapore; nearly all Filipinos in Hong Kong and Singapore and 67 per cent of Filipinos in Japan remitted at least once a month. Some 67 per cent of Indonesians working in Hong Kong also remitted at least once a month in contrast to just 14 per cent of Indonesians in Japan who remitted monthly (ADB, 2006). Another study report on migrants from Sri Lanka notes that about a million overseas contract workers – 60 per cent of them female domestics – sent home \$1.2 billion in 2002 (Hugo, 2003).

### ***Remittance use***

Patterns of use are usually categorized to assess whether or not the recipients used the remittances productively or unproductively. In the Myanmar context, using remittances to pay everyday household expenses, cover basic needs (mainly food), pay debts, make (religious and charitable) donations, contribute to special social events such as weddings, funerals, christening of newborn babies, gamble in the underground lottery, purchase durable goods, make improvements to the house and other uses are considered as “unproductive”. In contrast, arranging to pay migration fees for other family members, making investments in agriculture, including buying land, livestock and equipment, investing in businesses, paying for health and education expenses and contributing to savings are classified as productive remittance uses (Nwet Kay Khine, 2007).

Filipino migrants, in one study mentioned in the literature review, most frequently mentioned food, education and clothing as the top three expenditures made by their families with remitted funds. Indonesians remitting from the neighbouring countries of Malaysia and Singapore in that same study most frequently mentioned food, clothing and education as their top three remittance expenditures. However, Indonesians in Japan reported education followed by savings and then food as the most important remittance expenditures. Indonesians remitting from Hong Kong most frequently mentioned savings, education and business development (ADB, 2006).

## **1.4 Organization of the report**

The various remittance-relevant categories of the study findings have been organized into the following five chapters: Chapter 2 gives a profile of the migrants workers surveyed; chapter 3 looks at their different migration, employment and work experiences; chapter 4 concentrates on the remittance-sending behaviour; chapter 5 focuses on income, expenses and savings; and then chapter 6 discusses the situation with access to banking services. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings in a kind of round-up and the final chapter 8 highlights the main issues that emerged from this study and proffers a few recommendations for the governments of Thailand and labour-sending countries to ensure that the benefits of migration and remittance sending are maximized by individuals and societies.

## 2. Profiles of migrant workers

The data presented in table 2.1 provide a descriptive overview of the surveyed migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar working in Thailand. The majority of them worked in manufacturing (30 per cent), while very few worked in agriculture (6 per cent). By nationality, the majority of migrant workers from Lao PDR (39 per cent) and Myanmar (29 per cent) worked in manufacturing, while Cambodians (34 per cent) were predominantly engaged in construction.

**Table 2.1: Percentage distribution of migrant workers, by work sector**

Sector	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Agriculture	5.9	6	0	11.8
Construction	23.6	16.2	20.8	33.6
Domestic worker	12.4	20.5	16.7	0
Entertainment	11.5	17.9	8.3	8.4
Manufacturing	29.8	39.3	29.2	21
Fishing	16.9	0	25.2	25.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

In showing the near-equal sex division among the migrants interviewed, table 2.2 reveals that a large proportion of the migrant workers from Lao PDR and Myanmar in the survey were female, the majority of whom worked in factories. The largest proportion of Cambodian workers was male, most of who worked in construction.

Most studies find that migrants are young, and the results in table 2.2 echo those previous findings. Overall, the majority of migrant workers in the survey were of working age, either young adult (25–34 years) or youth (16–24 years).

According to the survey, 52 per cent of all migrant workers had 1–6 years of education, 45 per cent had 7–12 years, and only 3 per cent had more than 12 years. Migrant workers from Myanmar were more educated than migrant workers from Cambodia or Lao PDR. A third of the migrant workers interviewed were single, and 42 per cent were married, with at least one child. Additionally, Lao workers were more likely to have been married (divorced or separated) compared with the Cambodian and Myanmar migrants. With regard to their registration status, more than half of all the migrant workers were registered with the Thai Ministry of the Interior; 34 per cent were not.

Few of the migrants (7 per cent) had come to Thailand with a passport, and almost all of them were from Lao PDR. Of those with passports, a portion is grouped as those with a work permit<sup>2</sup> while the others had only a tourist visa and thus needed to return to their home country to renew the visas every year.

<sup>2</sup> This is an arrangement based on a memorandum of understanding between the Thai Government and the Government of Lao PDR to allow migrants from Lao PDR to work in Thailand for a two-year period. The migrants are issued a passport and granted a work permit (personal interview with staff of factories in Khon Kaen province, 2007).

**Table 2.2: Percentage distribution of migrant workers, by characteristics**

Characteristics	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	50.3	34.2	48.3	68.1
Female	49.7	65.8	51.7	31.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age group (years)</b>				
16–24	32	41	21.7	33.6
25–34	46.9	49.6	51.7	39.5
35–55	20.2	9.4	26.7	24.4
Don't know	0.8	0	0	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Highest level of completed education (years)</b>				
1–6	52.2	46.6	50.4	58.9
7–12	44.8	53.4	40.7	41.1
13–16	3	0	8.8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>				
Single	46.6	47	45	47.9
Married—live with spouse	33.7	27.4	35	38.7
Married—no spouse	8.4	9.4	10	5.9
Previously married	11.2	16.2	10	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of living children*</b>				
0	21.1	25.8	24.2	12.9
1	37.4	35.5	42.4	33.9
2	24.2	24.2	21.1	27.4
3 or more	17.4	14.5	12.2	25.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Registration status</b>				
Registered	59.3	25.6	89.2	62.2
Unregistered	34.2	58.2	10	35.3
Holding passport/visa	6.5	16.2	0.8	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Single migrants were excluded (166 cases).

Table 2.3 provides information on the economic sector, registration status and nationality of the surveyed migrants. Nearly three-fourths of the Lao migrants working in the agricultural sector were registered, while a large proportion of those in domestic work (95.8 per cent) and the construction (84.2 per cent) sector were unregistered. Most migrant workers from Myanmar in all the economic sectors were quasi-legal – more than 75 per cent of them were registered with the Thai authorities. Likewise, most of the Cambodians were registered, except those engaged in the entertainment sector.

**Table 2.3: Percentage distribution of migrant workers, by work sector, nationality and registration status**

Sector	Nationality and registration status								
	Lao			Myanmar			Cambodian		
	Reg	Unreg	Total	Reg	Unreg	Total	Reg	Unreg	Total
Agriculture	71.4	28.6	100	0	0	0	92.9	7.1	100
Construction	15.8	84.2	100	76	24	100	70	30	100
Household services	4.2	95.8	100	90	10	100	0	0	0
Entertainment	47.6	52.4	100	80	20	100	40	60	100
Factory	23.9	76.1	100	91.4	8.6	100	64	36	100
Fishing	0	0	0	100	0	100	43.3	56.7	100
<b>N</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>119</b>

Table 2.4 shows that more than a third of the migrants lived with their family in Thailand; 12 per cent of them lived alone, and more than half lived with others. Among the migrants from Lao PDR, fewer of them lived with their family, while more of them lived with others. Of those who lived with their family, most lived with a spouse (results not shown). As for those living with others, most reported living with friends or the employer; interestingly, half of the Lao migrants lived with their employers.

**Table 2.4: Percentage distribution of migrants, by living arrangement and nationality**

Living arrangement	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Live alone	11.8	12	10	13.5
Live with family*	37.1	29.1	40	42
Live with others**	51.1	59	50	44.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

\* "Family" includes parents/parents-in-law, spouse, children and siblings.

\*\* "Others" include relatives, friends and employers.

The majority of migrants (57 per cent) indicated that they lived in a village in their country of origin, while one-fourth came from a small city or town. Only a few (5 per cent) came from a capital city.

**Table 2.5: Percentage distribution of migrants, by area of residence in country of origin**

Area	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Village	57.3	50.4	51.7	69.7
Small city/town	25	30.8	24.2	20.2
Big city/town	12.4	11.1	19.1	6.7
Capital city	5.3	7.7	5	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>



### 3. Migration, employment and work experiences

#### 3.1 Migration experiences

Table 3.1 provides information concerning the migrants' age when they first migrated, the person(s) who had the most influence on their decision to come to Thailand that first time, and the frequency of visits back home. Overall, 63 per cent of the migrants said they first moved to Thailand at a young age (16–24 years old), and 73 per cent had decided on their own to do so. Migrants from Myanmar (13 per cent) seemed to move to Thailand at younger ages (younger than 16) in contrast to the Cambodians (9 per cent) and the Lao (8 per cent).

Friends had a bigger influence (28 per cent) on the Lao workers than they did among the Myanmar and Cambodian workers (at 4.2 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively). A surprising result is that recruiters were the least influential on workers' decisions to move, which was consistent across nationalities.

According to the survey, the largest segment of the migrant workers (45 per cent) visited their home country only once every few years or even less frequently. Some 30 per cent of them said they had never returned home since arriving in Thailand. The proportion of migrants who had never gone home was greatest among the migrants from Myanmar (at 48 per cent), which was more than three times the proportion from Cambodia (at 14 per cent).

**Table 3.1: Percentage distribution of migrants, by migration experience and nationality**

Migration experience	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Age at first migration to Thailand</b>				
<16 years	10.1	7.7	13.3	9.2
16–24 years	62.6	73.5	50.8	63.9
25–34 years	21.3	15.4	29.2	19.3
35–50 years	5.9	3.4	6.7	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>The most influential person on the first move to Thailand</b>				
Own	72.5	54.7	81.7	80.7
Family	11.5	9.4	10.8	14.3
Friends	11.5	28.2	4.2	2.5
Recruiter	2.5	4.3	1.7	1.7
Others	2	3.4	1.7	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Frequency of visits home</b>				
Never	30.3	29.1	47.5	14.3
Once every few years or less frequently	45.2	42.7	49.2	43.7
Once a year	24.5	28.2	3.3	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in table 3.2 indicate that, overall, on average migrants had stayed in Thailand for about four years. Males tended to stay longer than females, and migrants from Myanmar tended to stay longer than the other nationals. The data on length of stay give similar results: The

migrants from Myanmar who stayed for at least ten years made up a much larger proportion of migrants compared with the Lao and Cambodians (28 per cent versus 9.4 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively).

**Table 3.2: Percentage distribution of migrants, by duration of residence in Thailand, sex and nationality**

Duration of residence in Thailand (years)	Overall	Sex		Nationality		
		Male	Female	Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<3	24.4	21.8	27.1	40.2	11.7	21.8
3–<5	33.4	33	33.9	36.8	26.7	37
5–<10	27.2	30.7	23.7	13.7	33.3	34.5
10+	14.9	14.5	15.3	9.4	28.3	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Median (months)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>49</b>

Table 3.3 shows that more of the single migrants had stayed in Thailand for less than five years than the others, while more of the married migrants who lived with their spouse had stayed for at least ten years.

**Table 3.3: Percentage distribution of migrants, by duration of residence in Thailand and marital status**

Duration of residence in Thailand (year)	Single	Married–with spouse	Married–no spouse	Previously married
<3	31.3	19.2	26.7	10
3–<5	38	24.2	26.7	47.5
5–<10	20.5	33.3	36.7	30
10 years+	10.2	23.3	10	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Median (month)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>

### 3.2 Employment experiences

The survey findings indicate that the most important motivation for migration was related to the family's economic situation (70 per cent), followed by family reasons (28 per cent). Some 25 per cent of the migrants initially expected to work in Thailand around one to two years. Interestingly, more of the Lao workers (13 per cent) revealed that they were likely to stay permanently in Thailand compared with only a few of the Cambodian workers (1 per cent) and none from Myanmar. Responding to the query on intention to return home, about three-fourths of the migrants said they planned to go back at some time (table 3.4).

**Table 3.4: Percentage distribution of migrants, by aspiration for moving to work in Thailand**

Aspiration	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>Main aspiration for moving to work in Thailand</b>				
Economic reason	70.3	82	69.2	59.6
Family reason	28.3	18	29.1	37.9
Others	1.4	0	1.7	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Target number of years wanting to work in Thailand</b>				
1–2	25	20.5	9.2	45.4
3–4	10.1	4.3	5.8	20.2
5–9	11.2	6	10	17.6
>9	7.9	10.3	4.2	9.2
Permanent settlement	4.5	12.8	0	0.8
Don't know	41.3	46.2	70.8	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Median (years)*</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Plan to return home</b>	75	68.4	68.3	88.2
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

*\*Only migrants who specified the number of years they planned to stay were included.*

### **3.3 Work experiences**

The majority of migrants (43 per cent) said they had gained only “moderate” occupational skills from their work experience in Thailand. The largest proportion of migrants from Myanmar (38 per cent) reported that they had acquired only a “little” in terms of new skills, while the Cambodian workers (29 per cent) said they had gained “very much” in terms of occupational skills.

Almost three-fourths of the migrant workers had changed their employer since arriving in Thailand. Among the migrants who had changed their employer, the largest segment changed one to two times (41 per cent). Breaking that finding down by nationality, the Lao migrants had changed the most often, while Cambodians changed the least (table 3.5).

**Table 3.5: Percentage distribution of migrant, by work experience**

Work experience	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>Gain in occupational skills from working in Thailand</b>				
Very much	21.3	24.8	10	29.4
Moderate	43	39.3	39.2	50.4
Little	23	23.1	37.5	8.4
Not at all	12.6	12.8	13.3	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of times to change employer since arriving in Thailand</b>				
Never changed	27	15	22.7	43.6
1	19.4	18.3	16.8	23.1
2	23.6	25	27.7	18
3	12.6	15.8	12.6	9.4
4	7.3	10	8.4	3.4
5+	10.1	15.8	11.8	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

Table 3.6 presents the main reasons the migrant workers reported as to why they changed the employer, for the first five changes. Although the reason mentioned by the majority of all migrant workers for all five changes was to earn better income, the data show that slightly more than one-fifth of the migrants (22 per cent) said that they moved on because they were being exploited by the employer.

**Table 3.6: Percentage distribution of migrant, by main reason for changing employers and number of changes**

Main reasons	Time changed employers				
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Earn better income	45	36.6	41.1	46.8	55.6
Exploited by employer	21.5	2	24.3	17.7	11.1
Persuaded by friends	6.2	13.1	8.4	9.7	13.9
Business failed	10	11	10.3	8.1	5.6
Followed recruiters	2.7	4.7	2.8	3.2	5.6
Laid off	1.5	2.1	0.9	1.6	0
Others	13.1	31.2	23.3	12.8	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>36</b>

## 4. Remittance-sending behaviour

### 4.1 Cash remittances

#### 4.1.1 Amount of remittances and frequency of remitting

Migrant workers were asked how much they had remitted in the two years prior to the survey. Overall, the migrants sent home a total of about 25,000 baht in that period, or an average of 12,500 baht per annum. In a comparison of median amounts sent, the migrants from Myanmar sent the most (at 30,000 baht); the migrants from Cambodia sent the least (at 20,000 baht). Only 13 per cent of the Cambodian migrants sent more than 50,000 baht in contrast to 21 per cent of migrants from Myanmar and 28 per cent of those from Lao PDR.

**Table 4.1: Percentage distribution of migrants, by total amount of money sent home in the previous two years and by nationality**

Total amount of money sent (baht)	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<=10 000	25	29.1	15.8	30.3
10 001–25 000	26.7	20.5	27.5	31.9
25 001–50 000	27.3	22.2	34.2	25.2
>50 000	21.1	28.2	22.5	12.6
Total	100	100	100	100
Median <sup>3</sup>	25 000	26 000	30 000	20 000
Mean <sup>4</sup>	31 756	34 063	34 534	26 730
Minimum	600	600	1 500	2 000
Maximum	648 000	96 000	648 000	100 000
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

Again, comparing median amounts, women sent more money than men (at 28,000 baht compared with 25,000 baht). Of them, 25 per cent sent more than 50,000 baht during the previous two years, compared with 17 per cent of the men. This is consistent with previous studies in Thailand and elsewhere that indicated women remit more in terms of amount or more frequently than men – even when they receive lower wages (Osaki, 2003; Curran and Saguy, 2001; VanWey, 2004; Piper, 2005).

Migrants aged 25–34 sent more in a comparison of medians than those aged 35 or older and those younger than 25.

<sup>3</sup> Median refers to a measure of central location. It is the value of the middle observation in an array of the dataset (ascendant or descendant). When the dataset is skewed, the median is a more appropriate measure than the mean. The median of 25,000 baht means that half of the migrants sent less than 25,000 baht while the other half sent more than 25,000 baht during the previous two years.

<sup>4</sup> This mean is calculated by trimming the minimum (600) and maximum amount (648,000).

**Table 4.2: Percentage distribution of migrants, by total amount of money sent home in the previous two years, by sex and by age group**

Total amount of money sent (baht)	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25-34	35+
<=10 000	25.7	24.3	28.1	21.6	26.4
10 001–25 000	29.1	24.3	31.6	22.8	29.2
25 001–50 000	27.9	26.6	23.7	28.7	30.6
>50 000	17.3	24.9	16.7	27	13.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Median	24 000	28 000	21 000	30 000	23 025
Mean	29 678	33 882	28 141	35 065	30 195
Minimum	2 000	600	1 500	600	2 000
Maximum	100 000	648 000	100 000	648 000	150 000
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

*Note: Data on ages of three migrants are missing.*

The amount of money remitted may depend on the marital status of migrants and presence of a spouse in Thailand. Table 4.3 shows that previously married migrants<sup>5</sup> sent the largest amounts home (a median of 40,000 baht), while those who had a spouse in Thailand sent the least (a median of 20,000 baht). Although 40 per cent of the previously married migrants who sent more than 50,000 baht made up the largest proportion, only 13 per cent of those married with the spouse living in Thailand did so. It seems obvious that migrants who have a spouse living with them tend to spend most of their money on their family in Thailand and thus have less to send back home.

**Table 4.3: Percentage distribution of migrants, by total amount of money sent home in the previous two years and by marital status**

Total amount of money sent (baht)	Single	Married-living with spouse	Married-apart from spouse	Previously married
<=10 000	22.3	27.5	30	25
10 001–25 000	25.9	34.2	13.3	17.5
25 001–50 000	29.5	25	36.7	17.5
>50 000	22.3	13.3	20	40
Total	100	100	100	100
Median	28 000	20 000	32 500	40 000
Mean	32 405	27 429	34 543	39 865
Minimum	1 500	600	2 000	2 500
Maximum	648 000	100 000	96 000	100 000
<b>N</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>

The amount of remittance sent by the migrant workers also varied across their length of stay in Thailand. The survey respondents who lived in Thailand for at least three years but less than ten years remitted the largest amount of money (a median of 30,000 baht). Those who remitted more than 50,000 baht in the previous two years amounted to 29 per cent of the

<sup>5</sup> Previously married refers to people who were divorced, widowed or separated from their spouse.

migrants living in Thailand at least three years but less than five years and 23 per cent of the migrants living away five years but less than ten years. In contrast, only 13 per cent of the migrants who had lived away less than three years remitted more than 50,000 baht in total in the previous two years (table 4.4).

**Table 4.4: Percentage distribution of migrants, by total amount of money sent home in the previous two years and by duration of residence in Thailand**

Total amount of money sent (baht)	Duration of residence in Thailand (years)			
	<3	3-<5	5-<10	10+
<=10 000	33.3	21	21.7	26.4
10 001–25 000	35.6	23.5	21.7	28.3
25 001–50 000	17.2	29.4	34	26.4
>50 000	13.8	26.1	22.7	18.9
Total	100	100	100	100
Median	16 000	30 000	30 000	21 000
Mean	23 689	35 610	35 467	29 699
Minimum	2 000	600	2 500	1 000
Maximum	86 000	100 000	648 000	96 000
<b>N</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>53</b>

The median amount of total remittance that migrants sent to their family during the previous two years was 25,000 baht, sent over an average of four remittance occasions (table 4.5). The number of times money was sent over the two-year period ranged from 1 to 44 times (44 times amounts to almost twice a month). Migrant women, the Lao and Myanmar migrants and the migrants aged 35 or older sent money one time more than their counterparts. As for sex differences, the proportion of women who sent money more than six times in the previous two years was more than one-third, compared with only one-fifth for men (table 4.6).

**Table 4.5: Percentage distribution of migrants, by number of times money was sent home in the previous two years and by nationality**

Number of times money sent	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
1–3	37.6	28.2	35.8	48.7
4–6	33.7	38.5	36.7	26.1
7+	28.7	33.3	27.5	25.2
Total	100	100	100	100
Median	4	5	5	4
Minimum	1	1	1	1
Maximum	44	24	24	44
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

**Table 4.6: Percentage distribution of migrants, by number of times money sent home in the previous two years, by sex and by age group**

Number of times money sent	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
1–3	43	32.2	38.6	37.7	33.3
4–6	36.9	30.5	36.8	31.7	34.7
7+	20.1	37.3	24.6	30.5	31.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Median	4	5	4	4	5
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	44	24	24	44	24
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

In terms of the amount of money sent each time (table 4.7), the findings show a median of 5,000 baht, ranging from 125 baht to 81,000 baht. About half of the migrants sent 5,000 baht or less each time, with differences among nationalities: More of the Lao (25 per cent) sent the least, at less than or equal to 2,000 baht, compared with their counterparts (10 per cent for the Myanmar migrants and 18 per cent for Cambodians). However, when looking at the amount sent, it was the Cambodian migrants who sent the smallest amount each time compared with the other two nationalities.

Migrant women (at 21 per cent) sent home 2,000 baht or less each time in a larger proportion than the men (at 14 per cent). Another sex difference in remitting behaviour is reflected in the findings showing that women sent a smaller amount each time compared with the men – though in total they remitted more than the men, indicating more frequently sent remittances. Some 22 per cent of the migrants aged 35 or older sent 2,000 baht or less, in contrast to the other age groups (15 per cent and 17 per cent for those aged younger than 25 and aged 25–34, respectively).

**Table 4.7: Percentage distribution of migrants, by amount of remittances sent each time in the previous two years and by nationality**

Amount of money sent each time (baht)	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<=2 000	17.4	24.8	10	17.7
2 001–5 000	35.7	20.5	39.2	47.1
5 001–10 000	30.3	38.5	32.5	20.2
>10 000	16.6	16.2	18.3	15.1
Total	100	100	100	100
Median	5 000	5 466.7	5 291.7	4 333.3
Minimum	125	200	330	125
Maximum	81 000	25 000	81 000	30 000
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

**Table 4.8: Percentage distribution of migrants, by amount of money sent home in the previous two years, by sex and by age group**

Amount of money sent each time (baht)	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
<=2 000	14	20.9	14.9	16.8	22.2
2 001–5 000	39.7	31.6	40.4	32.3	36.1
5 001–10 000	25.1	35.6	33.3	29.3	29.2
>10 000	21.2	11.9	11.4	21.6	12.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Median	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 200	5 000
Minimum	125	200	208	125	200
Maximum	35,000	81,000	35,000	81,000	30,000
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

Consistent with the total amount of remittances, the amount the migrants sent each time also varied across marital status (table 4.9). Migrants who lived with their spouse sent less money each time than did migrants with other marital status (4,400 baht compared with at least 5,000 baht each time for the other groups). More of the married migrants whose spouse did not live with them and the never-married migrants sent more than 10,000 baht each (20 per cent) compared with 13 per cent of those married and living in Thailand with their spouse and only 10 per cent of those previously married.

**Table 4.9: Percentage distribution of migrants, by amount of money sent home in the previous two years and by marital status**

Amount of money sent each time (baht)	Never-married	Married with spouse	Married no spouse	Previously married
<=2 000	12.1	22.5	26.7	17.5
2 001–5 000	35.5	39.2	30	30
5 001–10 000	32.5	25	23.3	42.5
>10 000	19.9	13.3	20	10
Total	100	100	100	100
Median	5 528	4 400	5 000	5 136
Minimum	125	300	500	208
Maximum	81 000	43 000	25 000	20 000
<b>N</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>

In terms of the amount sent on each occasion according to the length of time in Thailand, the migrants who had been away for at least three years but less than ten years remitted the largest median amount of money each time (5,000 baht). The proportion of migrants who had lived in Thailand for three years or longer and sent more than 10,000 baht each time was much greater than those residing in Thailand for less than three years. The migrant workers who had lived in Thailand for ten years or longer had the larger proportions, among both those who sent less than 2,000 baht (23 per cent) and those who sent more than 10,000 baht each time (21 per cent).

**Table 4.10: Percentage distribution of migrants, by amount of money sent home each time in the previous two years and by duration of residence in Thailand**

Amount of money sent each time (baht)	Duration of residence in Thailand (years)			
	<3	3–<5	5–<10	10+
<=2 000	20.7	15.1	14.4	22.6
2 001–5 000	39.1	31.9	36.1	37.7
5 001–10 000	32.2	35.3	28.9	18.9
>10 000	8.1	17.7	20.6	20.8
Total	100	100	100	100
Median	4 333	5 200	5 000	3 500
Minimum	125	300	208	330
Maximum	43 000	35 000	81 000	30 000
<b>N</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>

#### 4.1.2 Migrants' intention for their remittances and how the money was actually used

Consistent with the purpose of their migration, the largest proportion of the migrant workers (85 per cent) intended the money they sent home to be used for daily family expenses. This was consistent across nationalities, sex and age groups. Spending for health care was the second most reported intention. Slightly less than half reported that they wanted the money to be used for education. Approximately 30 per cent of the migrants intended the remittances to be used for income-generating activities; of them, the largest proportion was the Lao migrants (36 per cent), in comparison with the migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar.

Sex differences are not so noticeable in terms of migrants' intention for how the money was to be used, except with education and housing, for which more women than men wanted their remittances to be spent. More migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar remitted money to pay debts than did those from Lao PDR. More migrants aged 35 or older also remitted funds to pay debts than did the migrants from other age groups.

**Table 4.11: Percentage distribution of migrants, by their intention for how remitted money was to be used and by nationality (multiple answers possible)**

Intentions on use of remittances	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Daily expenses	84.8	84.6	88.3	81.5
Health	52.5	43.6	65.8	47.9
Household appliances	46.6	55.6	19.2	65.6
Education	45.2	51.3	45	39.5
Housing	36	54.7	24.2	29.4
Income-generating activities	30.1	35.9	22.5	31.9
Charity/donations	4.8	0	6.7	7.6
Paying debts	4.5	1.7	6.7	5
Expenses for children	1.7	0.9	2.5	1.7
Savings	0.8	0	1.7	0.8
Other	4.8	1.7	3.3	9.2
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

**Table 4.12: Percentage distribution of migrants, by their intention for how remitted money was to be used, by sex and by age group (multiple answers possible)**

Intentions on use of remittances	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Daily expenses	83.8	85.9	83.3	89.2	76.4
Health care	50.3	54.8	45.6	58.1	48.6
Household appliances	46.4	46.9	46.5	49.7	37.5
Education	40.8	49.7	40.4	50.3	41.7
Housing	31.8	40.1	40.4	35.3	30.6
Income-generating activities	30.2	29.9	34.2	34.7	12.5
Charity/donations	7.3	2.3	3.5	5.4	5.6
Paying debts	4.5	4.5	2.6	4.8	6.9
Expenses for children	1.1	2.3	0	1.2	5.6
Savings	1.1	0.6	0.9	0.6	1.4
Other	6.2	3.4	6.1	2.4	8.3
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

Whatever the intention, 91 per cent of all the surveyed migrants' families spent the remittances on daily expenses, which is a greater proportion than what it was for the migrants' expectations (table 4.11 and table 4.13). Health and household appliances were the second and third most common categories, both of which accounted for more than what migrants expected.

Interestingly, a third (13 per cent) of the migrants from Myanmar had to make a payment to security officers (military), representing involuntary payments for which some portion of remittances had to be used.

**Table 4.13: Percentage distribution of migrants, by how remitted money was actually used and by nationality (multiple answers possible)**

Actual use of remittances	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Daily expenses	91.3	94	91.7	88.2
Health	74.4	71.8	73.3	78.2
Household appliances	61.8	82.9	28.3	74.8
Education	57.3	65	49.2	58
Housing	41.7	63.3	22.5	39.8
Income-generating activities	32.6	44.4	15.8	37.8
Coerced payment to security officers (military, police, etc.)	12.9	1.7	34.2	2.5
Expenses for children	8.2	0.9	13.3	10.1
Paying debts	4.8	0.9	6.7	6.7
Savings	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Charity/donations	0	0	0	0
Other	3.4	0	6.7	3.4
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

For both intended and actual use, the differences are greater across nationalities than across sex and age groups. For example, the families of migrants from Myanmar spent money on household appliances, housing and income-generating activities to a much lesser extent than did the other two nationalities.

**Table 4.14: Percentage distribution of migrants, by how the remitted money was actually used, by sex and by age group (multiple answers possible)**

Actual use of remittances	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Daily expenses	90.5	92.1	90.4	92.8	88.9
Health	76.5	72.3	69.3	76.7	76.4
Household appliances	62	61.6	64.9	65.3	47.2
Education	53.1	61.6	57.9	58.7	54.2
Housing	38.8	44.6	45.1	41.9	36.1
Income-generating activities	31.3	33.9	36	36.5	18.1
Coerced payment to military	9.5	16.4	11.4	15	11.1
Expenses for children	8.4	7.9	5.3	10.2	8.3
Paying debt	3.9	5.7	3.5	4.2	8.3
Saving	1.7	1.7	0.9	1.2	4.2
Charity/donation	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	1.7	4.4	3	2.8
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

#### **4.1.3 Remittance as a main source of income for the family left at home**

Even though the majority of the migrants reported that their family back home had at least one family member working (83 per cent), it is clear that the remittances were very important and that the migrants were the main source of family support. As table 4.15 shows, almost half of the migrants noted that their remittances were the main source of income for their family. The proportion was relatively large among the migrants from Lao PDR and Myanmar compared with those from Cambodia, as well as among those aged 25 or older compared with the other two age groups. A slightly larger proportion of female migrants than the males said that the money they sent was the main source of income for their family.

About two family members in the home country of all the migrants, regardless of each migrant's sex, nationality or age, were working at the time of the survey. Smaller proportions of the migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia and migrants aged 35 or older had family members working at home than did those from Lao PDR.

About 6 per cent of the migrants reported that a family member stopped working after the remittances started arriving. The proportion was greatest among the Cambodian migrants, female migrants and those aged 25–34. The number of family members who stopped working was clearly larger among the Cambodian migrants than the other nationalities. This might indicate that migration and remittance have not yet encouraged family members to stop working, or, in other words, there was not yet a dependency on migration.

**Table 4.15: Percentage distribution of migrants, by importance of remittances to the family, family members at home and by nationality**

	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Remittance is the main income for family (%)	48.6	55.6	50.8	39.5
Family members in home country currently work (%)	83	90.6	79.2	79
Number of family members working (median)	2	2	2	2
Family members stopped working after receiving remittance (%)	5.7	1.7	2.8	8.5
Number of family members who stopped working at remittances started arriving (median)	1	1	1	2.5
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

**Table 4.16: Percentage distribution of migrants, by importance of remittances to the family, family members at home, sex and age group**

	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Remittance is the main income for family in home country (%)	46.4	50.9	33.3	54.5	59.7
Family members in home country currently working (%)	83.2	82.5	90.4	84.4	68.1
Number of family members working (median)	2	2	2	2	2
Family members stopped working after receiving remittance (%)	3.5	11.7	3.5	7.2	5.6
Number of family members who stopped working (median)	1	1	1.5	1	1
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

#### 4.1.4 Decision-making about sending remittances

Most migrant workers (80 per cent) reported that they decided on their own when to send, how much to send and by which method to send remittances. About one-eighth of them reported that their spouse was the decision-maker. The proportion reporting that spouses were decision-makers was relatively large among Cambodians, males and those aged 35 or older. At the same time, other family members (parents and brothers/sisters) had more influence among migrants from Myanmar, females and young migrants (tables 4.17 and 4.18).

**Table 4.17 Percentage distribution of migrants, by decision-maker about sending remittances and by nationality**

Who made decision to send money	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Migrant	80.3	87.2	78.3	75.6
Migrant's spouse	11.8	7.7	7.5	20.2
Migrant's parents	4.8	4.3	7.5	2.5
Migrant's brothers/sisters	2.5	0.9	5.8	0.8
Other	0.6	0	0.8	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

**Table 4.18: Percentage distribution of migrants, by decision-maker about sending remittances, by sex and by age group**

Who made decision to send money	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Migrant	78.8	81.9	83.3	80.2	75
Migrant's spouse	18.4	5.1	4.4	13.8	19.4
Migrant's parents	1.7	7.9	6.1	4.2	4.2
Migrant's brothers/sisters	0.6	4.5	5.3	1.8	0
Other	0.6	0.6	0.9	0	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

#### 4.1.5 Recipient of remittance

To whom the migrants sent their remittances depended largely on who was left behind. The data (not shown) indicate that 93 per cent of the migrants had parents/parents-in-law at home. As shown in table 4.19, almost 90 per cent of the migrants sent money to parents. This suggests that almost all the migrants financially supported their parents left behind. However, although 13 per cent of the migrants had a spouse left behind, only 7 per cent sent remittances to that spouse. Almost one-fifth of the migrants sent money to brothers or sisters, and 15 per cent sent money to children. The migrants from Lao PDR sent remittances to brothers or sisters in the largest proportion, while fewer of those from Cambodia sent to siblings. In contrast, a greater proportion of the Cambodian migrants sent money to children than did the migrants from Lao PDR, who made up the smallest proportion.

**Table 4.19: To whom remittance was sent, by nationality (multiple answers possible)**

To whom money was sent	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Parents	87.6	90.6	85	87.4
Brothers/sisters	23.9	35.9	22.5	13.5
Children	14.6	8.6	13.3	21.9
Parents-in-law	8.7	3.4	14.2	8.4
Spouse	7.3	6	8.3	7.6
Other relatives	4.2	3.4	1.7	7.6
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

Along sex lines, more of the migrant women sent money to brothers or sisters than the men did; but they sent to parents-in-law less. About 15 per cent of the men sent money

to their spouse, whereas no women did, suggesting that it is rare for married women to migrate for employment to Thailand and leave their husband at home. In fact, 8 per cent of the migrant married women in the survey left their spouse behind compared with 37 per cent for migrant married men. Of the different age groups sending money to parents, the largest proportion was among those migrants aged 25–34; those aged 35 or older had the smallest proportion, probably because they are less likely to have parents still alive (data not shown). Because migrants aged 35 or older tended to leave their spouse at home, compared with migrants younger than 35 (data not shown), more of them (at 13 per cent) sent their remittances to the spouse than did the others (8 per cent of those aged 25–34 and 4 per cent of migrants younger than 25). However, because about 47 per cent of all the migrants were unmarried (see table 2.2), particularly many of those younger than 35, there was no spouse at home and thus they could remit money to their parents.

**Table 4.20: To whom remittance was sent, by sex and age group (multiple answers possible)**

To whom the money was sent	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Parents	86	89.3	88.6	92.8	73.6
Brothers/sisters	16.2	31.6	21.9	26.4	19.4
Children	15.1	14.1	2.6	15.6	31.9
Parents-in-law	10.6	6.8	5.3	7.2	18.1
Spouse	14.5	0	3.5	7.8	12.5
Other relatives	5	3.4	8.8	2.4	1.4
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

*Note: Data on ages of three migrants are missing.*

#### **4.1.6 Most frequently used method in sending remittances**

The most frequently used method for remitting funds home reported by the largest proportion of migrants was through an informal agent (53 per cent). These survey results are consistent with other studies. For example, an IPSR/ILO study (Punpuing et al., 2006) found that the most common method used for sending money was through informal agents. Qualitative data from the same study revealed that the agents were typically those who helped the migrants find their job in Thailand and asked the migrants to use their remittance-sending service in return (Punpuing et al., 2006).

According to the data in table 4.21, the other methods used (through a relative, bank, friend or carrying by self) were less relied upon compared with use of an informal agent. Clear differences are noted among the migrants across nationalities; this might be due to the different situations in the three countries. While almost all the migrants from Myanmar (93 per cent) used an informal agent to send money home, as few as 5 per cent of the Lao migrants did so. The proportion of Cambodian migrants who used an informal agent was also large (more than two-thirds), though not as large as among the migrants from Myanmar.

The majority of the Lao migrants sent their remittances home through personal networks, such as relatives (33 per cent) or friends (20 per cent). More of the Lao and Cambodian migrants preferred to take money home themselves than did those from Myanmar, none of whom ever did so. Of those who relied on a formal institution such as a bank, the largest proportion was among the migrants from Cambodia (17 per cent) or Lao PDR (15 per cent) compared with very few from Myanmar. However, the bank transfer reference could mean the migrants deposit money into the account of a courier or agent who later delivers it to the family in the home country. The actual incidence of direct bank-to-bank transfer may be little because the banking infrastructure in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar is largely underdeveloped.

The data findings on the Lao migrants showing more of them relied on relatives than informal agents is not consistent with the previous country report (ILO, 2007), which notes that most Lao migrants send money through informal agents. According to the migrants interviewed for this survey, it is possible that relatives may act as money couriers as well. Migrants may consider these informal agents as relatives even though they are providing a remitting service for others also.

The female migrants were less inclined to use informal agents and opted to rely more on employers than males.

**Table 4.21: The most frequently used remitting method, by nationality**

Most-used method of sending money	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Informal agent	52.5	5.1	92.5	59.7
Relatives	12.6	32.5	2.5	3.4
Bank**	11.5	15.4	1.7	16.8
Friends	7.6	19.7	3.3	0
Carried by oneself	7.6	12	0	10.9
Employer <sup>6</sup>	4.2	8.6	0	4.2
Other*	3.9	6.8	0	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

\*Other methods include workmates, NGO/foundation, post office and monks.

\*\* See explanation in the text.

The most often used method did not differ much between the sexes, except that more migrant women sent their remittances through relatives than did the men, and slightly less used an informal agent than did the men. Differences across age groups are apparent: More of the migrants aged 35 or older used an agent's service than did those in the other age groups, while more of those younger than 25 went to banks than the others did, indicating a preference among younger migrants for using a formal agency.

**Table 4.22: The most frequently used remitting method, by sex and age group**

Most-used method of sending money	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Informal agent	55.3	50.3	44.7	50.9	69.4
Relatives	9.5	15.8	14	13.8	8.3
Bank	12.3	10.2	13.2	11.4	6.9
Friends	6.7	8.5	7.9	9	4.2
Carried by oneself	7.8	7.3	7	8.4	6.9
Employer	4.5	4	7	3	2.8
Other	3.9	4	6.1	3.6	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

<sup>6</sup> Sending remittances through an employer means that the employer sends money home for the migrants, either via a bank or an informal agent. However, there is a case in which an employer personally paid wages to migrant workers in their home country (Cambodia) to avoid their money being extorted by unscrupulous security officers on both sides of the border when traveling back home.

Taking into account the duration of residency in Thailand, table 4.23 indicates that the longer migrants live in Thailand, the more they use informal agents. As the findings show, more of the migrants who had lived in Thailand for at least ten years used an informal agent than the other groups did. Also, more of them took their remittance home themselves than did the others. More of the recent migrants, or those who had lived in Thailand less than three years, reported using a bank, friends or the employer than did the longer-term migrants.

**Table 4.23: The most frequently used remitting method, by duration of residence in Thailand**

Most-used method of sending money	Duration of residence in Thailand (years)			
	<3	3-<5	5-<10	10+
Informal agent	36.8	47.9	61.9	73.6
Relatives	9.2	21.9	7.2	7.6
Bank	18.4	8.4	12.4	3.8
Friends	16.1	5.9	5.2	1.9
Carried by self	2.3	8.4	9.3	11.3
Employer	11.5	1.7	3.1	0
Other	5.8	5.9	1	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>53</b>

Table 4.24 presents the reasons for the most frequently used methods described in tables 4.21–4.23. For instance, the reason most often reported for use of an informal agent was that it is convenient, fast and hassle-free. This was similar for those using a bank. Some of those migrants said they used this method because they knew of no other way (17 per cent). This implies that there is room for improving migrants' knowledge about more effective channels for sending remittances. The reason for using relatives and friends was because the migrants believed them to be most reliable. Those who used a bank said they did so also for the convenience, speed and no hassles. Those who carried their own money said they did so to visit their family.

**Table 4.24: Reasons for using a particular mode of sending money, by the method most frequently used**

Reason for the most-used method	Informal agent	Relative	Bank	Friend	Carried by self	Employer
Convenient/fast/easy/no problem	51.6	15.6	67.5	29.6	3.7	40
Know no other way	16.5	2.2	5	0	3.7	6.7
Reliable	15.4	64.4	12.5	48.2	11.1	26.7
Opportunity to speak with family	6.4	2.2	0	0	0	0
Cheap	4.3	0	2.5	7.4	0	6.7
Other people also use this method	2.7	0	0	0	0	0
No better method	0.5	0	2.5	3.7	0	20
Opportunity to visit family	0	8.9	0	3.7	81.5	0
Others	2.7	6.7	12.2	7.4	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15</b>

More than half of the migrants did not know of any other way to send their remittances home than the one they were using (table 4.24). The migrants from Myanmar comprised the largest proportion (roughly two-thirds) of those who did not know of alternative options. Other methods, reported by more than 10 per cent of the migrants, were banks, friends,

informal agents, relatives and workmates. The Cambodian migrants knew about banks and informal agents more than the other migrants did. The Lao migrants considered friends and workmates as another option more than the other migrants did.

**Table 4.25: Percentage distribution of migrants who knew of other methods for remitting money, by nationality**

Knowledge of other method of remitting money	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Do not know of any other method	52.3	44.4	63.3	48.7
Bank	18.5	8.6	19.2	27.7
Friend	12.6	18	8.3	11.8
Informal agent	12.4	0.9	10	26.1
Relative	10.4	9.4	11.7	10.1
Workmate	10.1	21.4	4.2	5
Carried by oneself	8.7	8.6	7.5	10.1
Post office <sup>7</sup>	3.1	4.3	0	5
Monk	2.5	0	5.8	1.7
NGO/foundation	1.4	0	0.8	3.4
Employer	1.1	0.9	0	2.5
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

More female than male migrants did not know of other methods (55 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively); and more of the older than younger migrants did not know of other methods (63 per cent of those 35 or older, 52 per cent of those aged 25–34 and 47 per cent of those younger than 25). More of the male migrants also knew of informal agents than did the females, more of whom considered workmates as an optional channel for sending than did the male migrants. The migrants younger than 25 also considered relatives as a possible money-sending channel more than did their counterparts.

**Table 4.26: Percentage distribution of migrants who knew of other remitting methods, by sex and age group**

Knowledge of other remittance methods	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Do not know of other methods	49.7	54.8	46.5	51.5	62.5
Informal agent	19.6	5.1	10.5	14.4	9.7
Relative	10.1	10.7	13.2	8.4	11.1
Bank	24	13	16.7	21	15.3
Friend	12.3	13	14	11.4	13.9
Employer	1.7	0.6	1.8	1.2	0
Workmate	7.3	13	9.7	12.6	5.6
NGO/foundation	2.2	0.6	0	1.2	2.8
Post office	3.4	2.8	4.4	1.8	4.2
Monk	2.2	2.8	1.8	3	2.8
Oneself	11.2	6.2	8.8	7.8	9.7
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

The data in table 4.27 imply that a substantial number of migrants might not want to use the most frequently used method. According to the findings, more of the migrants said no

<sup>7</sup> A conversation with a migrant from Lao PDR suggests one possibility for migrants using this method: This migrant bought a money order from a bank and sent it home through the post office. Using this method, the migrant's family did not need to pay a receiving fee.

better option seemed available. The methods with a larger proportion of use than what was actually preferred were informal agent, relative, friend and employer: Of the migrants who used an informal agent (the most commonly used method), only about one-fourth actually preferred to do so. And even though small proportions of the migrants used a bank or carried their money themselves, more of them said they preferred these methods. In fact, a large proportion of the migrants (34 per cent) said they preferred to send their money through a bank; but the survey findings also revealed that they cannot do so due to certain limitations.

**Table 4.27: Percentage distribution of migrants, by most frequently used method and by preferred method**

<b>Method most frequently used</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Method preferred</b>	<b>%</b>
Informal agent	52.5	Informal agent	26.7
Relative	12.6	Relative	4.2
Bank	11.5	Bank	34
Friend	7.6	Friend	2.5
Employer	4.2	Employer	1.7
Post office	0	Post office	1.1
Monk	0	Monk	0.6
Carried by self	7.6	Carried by self	28.9
Other	3.9	Other	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>

The data on preferred methods across nationalities reflect some differences: For example, the migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar preferred sending money via informal agents in relatively large proportions (at 38 per cent each), while significantly fewer Lao migrants preferred so (at 3 per cent). The patterns are also similar to sending money through the bank, with more of the Lao migrants preferring it less than the migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar. Among the Lao migrants, the most popular method was to take the money home themselves.

**Table 4.28: Percentage distribution of migrants, by preferred remitting method and nationality**

<b>Preferred method</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Nationality</b>		
		<b>Lao</b>	<b>Myanmar</b>	<b>Cambodian</b>
Informal agent	26.7	3.4	38.3	37.8
Relative	4.2	5.1	5	2.5
Bank	34	20.5	38.3	42.9
Friend	2.5	5.1	1.7	0.8
Employer	1.7	5.1	0	0
Post office	1.1	2.6	0.8	0
Monk	0.6	0.9	0.8	0
Carried by oneself	28.9	57.3	15	15.1
Other	0.3	0	0	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

Male and female migrants differed in their preferences for sending remittances through a bank or carrying it home themselves. More of the male migrants preferred to remit via a bank than did the females, and more females than males preferred to carry their money themselves. More of the migrants aged 35 or older said they preferred to use informal agents than did the younger migrants, but fewer of the older migrants wanted to carry money home themselves. More of the migrants aged 25–34 said they preferred to use a bank than did migrants in the other age groups.

**Table 4.29: Percentage distribution of migrants, by preferred remitting method, sex and age group**

Preferred method	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Informal agent	26.8	26.6	24.6	22.8	40.3
Relative	5	3.4	9.7	1.2	2.8
Bank	40.2	27.7	29	37.7	30.6
Friend	3.4	1.7	1.8	2.4	4.2
Employer	1.7	1.7	2.6	1.2	1.4
Post office	0.6	1.7	1.8	0.6	1.4
Monk	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.6	0
Oneself	21.2	36.7	29.8	33.5	18.1
Other	0.6	0	0	0	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

More of the migrants who had lived in Thailand for at least five years preferred to remit via an informal agent than did the recent migrants. As for the bank channel, fewer migrants residing in Thailand for at least ten years preferred this option.

**Table 4.30: Percentage distribution of migrants, by preferred remitting method and duration of residence in Thailand**

Preferred method	Duration of residence in Thailand				Total
	<3 years	3–<5 years	5–<10 years	10 years+	
Informal agent	16.1	21	37.1	37.7	26.7
Relative	6.9	3.4	4.1	1.9	4.2
Bank	36.8	31.9	39.2	24.5	34
Friend	5.8	0.8	1	3.8	2.5
Employer	6.9	0	0	0	1.7
Post office	1.2	0.8	1	1.9	1.1
Monk	0	0.8	0	1.9	0.6
Carried by oneself	25.3	41.2	17.5	28.3	28.9
Other	1.2	0	0	0	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>356</b>

The stated reasons for preferring a particular method are reflected in table 4.31. The migrants who preferred to use an informal agent or a bank did so, for the most part, because those methods were convenient and fast. Most of the migrants who preferred to take money home themselves did so because they felt it was reliable.

**Table 4.31: Percentage distribution of migrants, by reason for preferred remitting method**

Reason for preferred method	Informal agent	Bank	Self
Convenient and fast	32.6	46.3	6.8
Opportunity to speak with family	12.6	0	1
Reliable	9.5	14.1	44.7
Know no other method	3.2	2.5	0
Cheap	3.2	8.3	1.9
Opportunity to visit family	0	0	25.2
No better method	2.1	0.8	0
Other	2.1	1.7	1.9
No answer	34.7	26.5	18.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>103</b>

**4.1.7 Remittance expenses for the most frequently used method**

Whether or not migrants incurred expenses when sending their remittances through the method they often used depended on the method, as the findings in table 4.32 indicate. All migrants who sent money through a bank (100 per cent) and almost all of those who remitted via informal agents (98 per cent) had to pay a transmission fee. In contrast, the majority of those who used informal networks, such as a relative, reported no expense at all (73 per cent), while 18 per cent paid for other expenses they did not consider as a sending fee, such as compensation for the help. However, more than half of the migrants who relied on a friend for sending money paid a token sum (52 per cent, although 37 per cent of them did not perceive it as a sending fee). The majority of migrants who sent money via an employer also paid a sending fee (73 per cent).

**Table 4.32: Percentage distribution of migrants, by remitting expenses and the method most often used**

Most used method	No expenses	Paid sending fee	Paid other expenses	Total	N
Informal agent	2.1	97.9	0	100	188
Relative	73.3	8.9	17.8	100	45
Bank	0	100	0	100	40
Friend	48.2	14.8	37	100	27
Employer	26.7	73.3	0	100	15
Other	21.4	71.4	7.1	100	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>329*</b>

\* Migrants who took money home themselves are excluded.

Overall, most of the migrants incurred some expense when remitting money; less than one-fifth (17 per cent) incurred no expense. As shown in table 4.33, almost half of the Lao migrants did not have to pay anything, which was a much larger proportion compared with the other two nationalities. Some 77 per cent of all the migrants paid sending fees; only 6 per cent paid an expense that they did not consider as a remittance fee. More of the Lao migrants paid non-fee expenses than did the two other nationalities. This might be explained by the greater incidence of Lao migrants who sent remittances through relatives.

**Table 4.33: Percentage distribution of migrants, by remitting expenses and nationality**

Remittance expense for the most used method	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
No expenses	17.3	47.6	4.2	3.8
Paid sending fee	76.9	35.9	95	95.3
Other expenses	5.8	16.5	0.8	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>106</b>

Almost twice as many women as men paid nothing to send money home (23 per cent versus 12 per cent). And three times as many migrants younger than 35 had no expenses compared with those 35 or older (23 per cent versus 8 per cent).

**Table 4.34: Percentage distribution of migrants, by remitting expenses, sex and age group**

Remittance expense for the most used method	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
No expenses	12.1	23.2	21.7	19.6	7.5
Pay sending fee	80.6	72.6	83.6	74.5	85.1
Other expenses	7.3	4.3	4.7	5.9	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>67</b>

Actually, how much migrants paid in sending fees cannot be so easily determined. For example, the migrants reported paying “fees” in various forms, such as a percentage of the amount remitted, a fixed fee per transaction, a per-minute calling fee as well as a calling fee for each call. Of the migrants who paid a fee to send remittances home (77 per cent, or 253 of 329 migrants), the majority were charged a percentage of the amount sent; the median charge was 5 per cent. Slightly more than one-fourth of the migrants paid a fixed fee per transaction (a median of 40 baht). Around 11 per cent paid a per-minute charge when telephoning, at a median of 10 baht per minute. Very few of them paid a per-call charge, the median charge of which was 300 baht. When going through an informal agent, the migrants noted they had to pay a calling fee.

More than half of the migrants from Myanmar (56 per cent, though data not shown) could not recall the amount of sending fee they paid. What they did know was how much it cost to send 100,000 kyat (equivalent to 2,500 baht), which was around 250 baht.

**Table 4.35: Type and amount of sending fee (multiple answers possible)**

Type of sending fee	%	Amount of expense (median)
% charged	44.3	5%
Fixed amount per transaction	26.9	40 baht
Calling cost per minute	10.7	10 baht
Calling cost each time	2	300 baht
Fee for sending 100,000 kyat*	26.5	250 baht
<b>N</b>	<b>253**</b>	

\* For migrants from Myanmar only

\*\* Include migrants who pay sending fee only

Among the migrants from Myanmar who could only specify how much they paid an informal agent per 100,000 kyat, there were differences in the medians between sex and across ages: Men paid more than the women and the migrants younger than 25 paid more than migrants aged 25 or older.

**Table 4.36: Amount in baht paid to send 100,000 kyat, by sex and age group**

Amount in baht paid to send 100,000 kyat (remittance + fee)	Overall	Sex		Age group		
		Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Median	2 750	2 850	2 650	2 900	2 700	2 700
Minimum	2 500	2 500	2 500	2 500	2 500	2 600
Maximum	4 800	4 800	4 000	4 800	4 000	3 700
<b>N</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>

As shown in table 4.33, about 6 per cent, or 19 of 329 migrants, incurred other expenses. Of them, most sent their remittances through a relative or friend. As already noted, such expenses are usually not considered as fees but rather something given to the couriers as compensation for their assistance or to help defray travelling expenses. The median among the migrants amounted to 300 baht. One migrant reported sending money via a monk who often travels back and forth between Thailand and Myanmar. In return, the migrant paid the monk 300 baht as a donation to his temple.

**Table 4.37: Type and amount of other expenses in sending money**

Type of other expenses	Amount of expense (median) (baht)	N
Pay for compensation	300	17
Pay for donation	300	1
Pay for other	500	1
<b>N</b>		<b>19</b>

#### 4.1.8 Expenses for receiving remittances

Not only do most migrants have to pay when remitting funds, but about half of them reported that their family at home also had to pay some fee to receive the remittance. Almost a third reported that their family paid a receiving fee and almost one-fifth reported that they had to pay additional expenses. A much larger proportion of Cambodian migrants reported that their home family had to pay either a receiving fee (60 per cent) or other expense (26 per cent) compared with migrants from the other countries (22 per cent and 20 per cent for migrants from Myanmar and 13 per cent and 9 per cent for Lao migrants).

**Table 4.38: Percentage distribution of migrants, by expense for family to receive money and by nationality**

Expense for home family in receiving money	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
No expenses	50.5	78.6	58.3	14.2
Pay receiving fee	31	12.6	21.7	59.4
Other expenses	18.5	8.7	20	26.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>106</b>

More migrant men than women reported their family paid a fee or other expense. And more of the older than younger migrants reported their family paid a receiving fee; but fewer older than younger migrants' families had to pay other expenses.

**Table 4.39: Percentage distribution of migrants, by expense for family to receive money, by sex and by age group**

Expense for home family receiving money	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
No expenses	41.2	59.8	50	54.9	43.3
Pay receiving fee	37.6	24.4	28.3	27.5	40.3
Other expenses	21.2	15.9	21.7	17.7	16.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>67</b>

Among those who said that their family had to pay a fee to receive the remittances, 55 per cent noted they paid a percentage charge, the median of which was 3.5 per cent. Given this rate and that the median amount of money sent each time was 5,000 baht (table 4.7), a migrant's family probably paid about 175 baht for each remittance. The charge could be as high as 10 per cent of the money sent. For the other 45 per cent of the migrants, their families paid about 100 baht each time. Fixed amount fees ranged from 30 to 500 baht.

**Table 4.40: Percentage distribution of migrants, by type and amount of receiving fee**

Type of receiving fee	% (migrants' families)	Amount		
		Median	Minimum	Maximum
% charged	54.9	3.5	1	10
Fixed amount (baht)	45.1	100	30	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>			
<b>N</b>		<b>102</b>		

Most of the other expenses that the migrants' families had to pay were transportation costs, either for the family to get the money or to the persons who took the money to the family (90 per cent). The median transportation cost for the family to get the money was 65 baht (ranging from 15 to 250 baht), while it was 100 baht (ranging from 20 to 400 baht) for persons who took the money to the family. About 7 per cent of the migrants considered paying some expense as compensation to the person who delivered the money.

**Table 4.41: Percentage distribution of migrants, by type and amount of other expense to receive money**

Type of other expense	%	Amount (baht)		
		Median	Minimum	Maximum
Compensation	6.5	125	90	400
Transportation cost for family to get money	61.3	65	15	250
Transportation cost for persons to deliver money to family	29	100	20	400
Other expense	3.2	53	6	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>			
<b>N</b>		<b>62</b>		

What might be of greater interest to consider is the total expenses incurred in sending remittances by each method, including the sending expense incurred by migrant and the receiving expense incurred by the family in the origin country. Table 4.42 shows all expenses associated with remitting money. As noted, migrants and/or their family paid expenses in various forms, such as a percentage charge, a fixed amount, a per-minute telephone charge or a per-call telephone charge. As a result, calculating the total amount is rather difficult and not precise. Nevertheless, even an approximate figure could be useful. Based on the median amount sent of 5,000 baht and ten minutes charged for the calling time, the calculations conclude that the cost of sending remittances through an informal agent is the highest (this includes 380 baht each for sending and receiving). Using personal contacts such as a relative or a friend was also rather expensive – 300 baht for relatives and 210 baht for friends – while the median amount paid for money sent through a bank was 275 baht.

Although it seems that sending remittances through a bank costs less than remitting via a relative or informal agent, the reasons for not using a bank can be explained by the fact that not many migrant workers (21 per cent) had a bank account in Thailand. And even fewer migrants (12 per cent) reported that their families had bank accounts in their home country (results shown in chapter 6).

**Table 4.42: Total expense (sending and receiving), by the most frequently used remitting method**

Most frequently used method	N (total=329)*	% having expense	Total expense (median)**	Total paid to send 100,000 kyat (median)
Informal agent	188	98.3	380	2 800
Relative	45	28.9	300	NA
Bank	40	97.5	275	NA
Friend	27	51.8	210	NA
Employer	15	93.3	165	NA
Other methods	14	78.6	300	NA

\* *Self-carried excluded*

\*\**Total expenses, including sending and receiving expenses, calculated based on a remittance of 5,000 baht.*

Of the migrants from Myanmar who reported the amount paid for sending 100,000 kyat, the median total amount, including what the migrants' families paid, was 2,800 baht, with a fee of roughly 300 baht.

#### **4.1.9 How migrants' home families received remittances**

When asked how their family received the remittances sent to them, more than half of the migrants reported that they had to travel to some place away from home to get the money. The proportion was relatively large among the migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar and lowest among the Lao migrants (table 4.43). As noted earlier, migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar sent remittances via informal agents more than any other method while the Lao migrants relied more on relatives (table 4.21). This suggests that informal agents do not usually deliver the remittance directly to migrants' homes. Rather, the families need to travel to the informal agents' to pick up the money. In contrast, relatives may take the money directly to migrants' homes.

**Table 4.43: Percentage distribution of migrants, by how the family received remittances and by nationality**

How family at home received money	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Someone took money to their home	45.3	68	40	29.3
They needed to go somewhere	54.7	32	60	70.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>106</b>

Table 4.44 reflects how migrants' families most often received remittances, which is dependent upon the channel through which it is sent. While only about a third of the migrants who sent remittances through an informal agent reported that someone would take the money to their family, a larger proportion of the migrants using a personal network of relatives and/or friends said that the funds were taken to their family's home (96 per cent said by a relative and 89 per cent said by a friend). This means that, apart from those two sending channels, the recipient families generally had to travel to pick up the money, if it was sent through an informal agent or a bank.

**Table 4.44: Percentage distribution of migrants, by most frequently used remitting method and by how the family received the remittance**

Most frequently used method	How migrant's family received remittance		Total	N
	Someone took the money to their home	Family had to go someplace else		
Informal agent	34.6	65.4	100	188
Relative	95.6	4.4	100	45
Bank	25	75	100	40
Friend	88.9	11.1	100	27

Of the migrants reporting that their families needed to retrieve the money, the most often mentioned place (by two-thirds of the migrants) was the informal agent's home. About 10 per cent reported that their family had to go to a bank, 9 per cent to the district centre, and 7 per cent said to a relative's or a friend's home (table 4.45).

**Table 4.45: Percentage distribution of migrants, by place where the family needed to go to retrieve the remittance**

Place	Overall
Informal agent's home	65.7
Bank	10.3
District town	9.1
Relative's/friend's home	6.9
Private company/recruiting company	5.1
Places in the village	1.7
Other	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>175</b>

As the findings show in table 4.46, more than half of the migrants who said that their family had to travel to an informal agent's home noted also that the agent was located in a small city or town, while about one-fifth reported that these places were in a big city/town and another 10 per cent said in the capital city.

**Table 4.46: Percentage distribution of migrants, by type of place where the family picked up their money and location of the place**

Type of place	Location of the place				Total	N
	Village	Small city/town	Big city/town	Capital city		
Informal agent's home	20.4	51.3	19.5	8.9	100	113
Relative's/friend's home	8.3	66.7	16.7	8.3	100	12
company	0	22.2	66.7	11.1	100	9

The survey findings imply that a substantial proportion of migrants' families have to travel some distance to retrieve remitted money. Table 4.47 provides an indication of distance between where a migrant's family lived and where they had to go to pick up the money. Among the migrants whose family lived in rural areas or villages, almost two-thirds had to travel to either a city or town. Of those whose family lived in a city or town, almost 30 per cent had to travel outside their home area.

**Table 4.47: Percentage distribution of migrants, by location of the family's home and location of the place where the family retrieved the remitted money**

Location of migrant family's home	Location of the place to pick up money				Total	N
	Village	Small city/small	Big city/big town	Capital city		
Village	34.8	49.4	10.1	5.6	100	89
Small city/small	4.3	72.3	17	6.4	100	47
Big city/big town	5.9	17.7	70.6	5.9	100	34
Capital city	0	33.3	0	66.7	100	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>

#### 4.1.10 Transfer time for receiving remittances

Overall, as table 4.48 points out, more than 70 per cent of migrants reported that their family received remittances in less than two days. About one-fourth said their family received the money in less than a week but that it took at least two days. Only a few of the migrants reported that it took at least a week but not more than two weeks. More of the Cambodians (86 per cent) noted receipt within two days, while a somewhat smaller proportion of the migrants from Myanmar (63 per cent) had the same experience.

**Table 4.48: Percentage distribution of migrants, by transfer time to receive remittances and by nationality**

Lead time of remittances	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Less than two days	71.4	67	62.5	85.8
Two days to less than one week	25.5	28.2	33.3	14.2
One week to less than two weeks	2.7	4.9	3.3	0
Two weeks to less than three weeks	0.3	0	0.8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>106</b>

Looking at the breakdown of transfer time by method (table 4.49), it appears that informal agents and banks deliver within two days while other options take longer. Most migrants who used either an informal agent or a bank (about three-fourths each) reported that their family received the remittance less than two days. More than a third of the migrants who used other channels (a relative, friend, etc.) said the money took at least two days before reaching the family. That remittances through banks took one day suggests the migrants might not have transferred the money themselves but did so through someone else, most probably an informal agent. Thus, it is possible that the proportion of migrants who said they more frequently relied on informal agents (table 4.21) may reflect an under-reporting.

In some cases, the delivery of funds (a kind of “remittance advance”) and confirmation of receipt took place concomitantly; a local agent delivered money to a receiver and notified a colleague in the host country, standing with the sender, who then handed over the amount that was delivered. There were also reports of agents who advanced a remittance even before receiving payment from a migrant worker.

**Table 4.49: Percentage distribution of migrants, by transfer time to receive remittances for each method**

<b>Most frequently used method</b>	<b>&lt;2 days</b>	<b>2–&lt;1 week</b>	<b>1–2 weeks</b>	<b>2–&lt;3 weeks</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>N</b>
Informal agent	77.1	20.7	1.6	0.5	100	188
Relative	51.1	46.7	2.2	0	100	45
Bank	75	20	5	0	100	40
Friend	55.6	37	7.4	0	100	27
Employer	66.7	26.7	6.7	0	100	15
Other method	85.7	14.3	0	0	100	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>329</b>

#### **4.1.11 Information needed for sending money and verification of remittance received**

A relatively small proportion (about 18 per cent) of migrants reported needing to show some type of identification or official document when making a remittance transaction, as presented in table 4.50. Of them, about half said they needed show identification (such as an identity card number) for the receiver and slightly more than a third needed the receiver’s bank account number. More of the Cambodian migrants needed to have a document (26 per cent), while only a small proportion of the Lao migrants (6 per cent) said they needed it.

A relatively small proportion also received any notice of delivery (banks of course give a receipt for sending or depositing money). Only slightly more than one-fifth (22 per cent) of the migrants received any proof that their remittance arrived at its intended destination. More Cambodians (at 38 per cent) received such confirmation than the migrants from Lao PDR (at 20 per cent) or Myanmar (at 8 per cent).

**Table 4.50: Percentage distribution of migrants who needed a document to send a remittance and who received notice of money received; and percentage of migrants who reported the need for a document, by type of document needed and by nationality**

Needed a document	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Needed document or information to send money by the most frequently used method	17.9	6.8	20	26.4
Received confirmation when using most frequently used method	21.6	20.4	8.3	37.7
<b>N</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Type of document or information needed</b>				
Address and ID of receiver	51.8	16.7	91.3	25.9
ID or passport	5.4	33.3	4.4	0
Account number	35.7	16.7	4.4	66.7
Document issued by employer	1.8	0	0	3.7
Other	5.4	33.3	0	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>

The method used seems to determine the need for a document or pertinent information, as the data in table 4.51 indicates. When wire transferring money through a bank in Thailand, senders are required to show a document or provide certain information about the receiver, but the survey findings do not suggest this to be the case. This could mean that many of the migrants who said they used a bank actually deposited money into a courier's account, who then delivered it to the family in home countries. It is also very likely that the "bank" referred to by most migrants is the formal money courier, such as Western Union, which works through some banks in Thailand.

More of the migrants who had to show a document (most likely to verify the receiver's identity) used a bank (53 per cent). When remitting through an informal agent, the method used by more than half of the migrants, only a small proportion had to show any document (16 per cent) or received any notification that the money had been received (13 per cent). For other methods, such as remitting via relatives or friends, verification of receipt was even less likely (4 per cent through a relative and 11 per cent through a friend).

**Table 4.51: Percentage of migrants who needed a document to send money and who received any sending receipt or verification of money received, by remitting method most frequently used**

Most frequently used method	Needed documents	Received notification/ sending receipt	N
Informal agent	16	13.3	188
Relative	2.2	4.4	45
Bank	52.5	72.5*	40
Friend	0	11.1	27
Employer	26.7	46.7	15

\* This could mean receiving a slip confirming transfer of the money, either to families or to the account of the agent.

To ensure that remittances reached the intended destination, some three-quarters of the migrant workers called home to inform the family after sending money; only 22 per cent called to confirm receipt of a “remittance advance” (before paying the agent). Given that most of the surveyed migrants came from rural areas, family access to a telephone seems less likely than for those families in urban areas. The data in table 4.52 implies that the migrants’ families might need to go somewhere else to receive a phone call, most likely to the informal agent’s house or an office.

**Table 4.52: Percentage distribution of migrants, by way of confirming that the family had received remittance**

Way of verifying that family had received money sent	%	N
Called family after sending money	74.7	245
Called family to confirm agent delivered an advance**	22.3	73
Other*	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>328</b>

\* “Other” includes phone call or letter from the family or waiting for the courier friend to come back.

\*\* The agent delivers money to the family first and once its receipt is confirmed, the migrant pays the agent in the host country.

Only 29 migrants reported having a problem with remitting money home. Half of them cited a delay in delivery or the money never arrived, according to the data in table 4.53.

**Table 4.53: Number of migrants who encountered a problem with the most frequently used remitting method, by type of problem**

Most frequently used method	Problems encountered						Total
	Did not receive money for some reason	Delay in receiving money	Received only partial amount of money sent	Costly	Inconvenience	Other	
Informal agent	6	7	1	1	0	4	19
Bank	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Friend	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Employer	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Post office	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Oneself	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>

#### 4.1.12 Information about remittance-sending channels

Almost half the migrants (46 per cent) said they learned about remitting money home through friends or workmates (table 4.54). More of the migrants from Myanmar (60 per cent) cited this source compared with the Lao (42 per cent) and Cambodians (36 per cent). The second-largest proportion of migrants obtained information on sending channels from parents or relatives (16 per cent). This was especially the case among the Lao. Employers or the companies where the migrants worked were another source of information, especially among the Lao and Cambodian migrants (14 per cent each). An informal agent seemed more a source of information among the Cambodians (13 per cent) and the Myanmar migrants (10 per cent) than among the Lao (1 per cent).

**Table 4.54: Percentage distribution of migrants, by source of information about remitting and nationality**

Source of information about sending remittance	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Friend/workmate	46.1	41.9	60	36.1
Parents/relatives	15.7	19.7	14.2	13.5
Employer/company	9.6	13.7	0.8	14.3
Informal agent	7.9	0.9	10	12.6
Neighbour/acquaintance	6.2	3.4	10	5
No one	5.6	10.3	4.2	2.5
Word of mouth	3.7	0	0.8	10.1
Bank	0.8	0.9	0	1.7
TV/advertising	0.6	0.9	0	0.8
Other	1.1	0	0	3.4
No answer	2.8	8.6	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

In terms of what the migrants were told by the various sources, as shown in table 4.55, more of them (42 per cent) noted the putative benefits of a particular method. Only one-fourth actually learned how to send a remittance using a particular method, and 13 per cent said they were told of the costs.

**Table 4.55: Percentage distribution of migrants, by information received about sending a remittance**

Information received*	%	N
Benefits of the method	41.6	148
How to send money by a particular method	23.6	84
Cost of sending	12.9	46
That a particular informal agent is reliable	4.8	17
That other migrants also use this method	2.8	10
Information about bank and account number	0.8	3
Other	0.8	3
No information	5.6	20
No answer	6.2	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>356</b>

*\*Only the first answer is presented here.*

#### **4.1.13 Intention before coming to Thailand to send money home**

Although all of the surveyed migrants sent money to their family, not all of them intended to do so before they came to Thailand. The data in table 4.56 show that about 91 per cent intended to remit money home. Those from Myanmar intended to remit money to a greater degree (96 per cent) than did their counterparts, and the Cambodian migrants intended to remit in the smallest proportion (87 per cent). In terms of the amount the migrants intended to remit, the median was 3,000 baht, with a greater intended amount among those from Myanmar and Cambodia and a lower amount among the Lao.

**Table 4.56: Percentage of migrants who intended before coming to Thailand to send money home and amount per month, by nationality**

Intention to send money before coming to Thailand	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Intended to send money before coming to Thailand	91.3	91.45	95.8	86.6
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
Amount intended to send per month (baht)				
Median	3 000	2 000	4 000	4 000
<b>N</b>	<b>302*</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>99</b>

*\*Seventeen migrants who intended to remit were excluded because they could not specify the amount they intended to send; and six did not answer.*

More women than men intended to send money home, and those younger than 35 intended to remit more than those aged 35 or older. The median amount of money sent was greater among the men. However, it did not vary across age groups.

**Table 4.57: Percentage of migrants who intended before coming to Thailand to send money home and amount per month, by sex and age group**

Intention to send money before coming to Thailand	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Intended to send money before coming to Thailand	89.4	93.2	92.1	92.2	87.5
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>
Amount intended to send per month (baht)					
Median	3 600	3 000	3 000	3 000	3 100
<b>N</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>52</b>

Before leaving home, most of the migrants, especially the Cambodians (84 per cent), thought their future remittances would be used for daily expenses (table 4.58). More than half of them wanted the money to be used for health care, and 48 per cent thought it should be spent on children's education. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of the migrants in general and 48 per cent of the Lao migrants intended their remittances to be used for income-generating endeavours.

Larger proportions of the Cambodians and Lao wanted the money they sent home to go for the purchase of household appliances, while only 7 per cent of the migrants from Myanmar expected this type of use. More than half of the Lao migrants also intended their remittances to be used for housing (repairing, renovating or building a new house), which was much larger than the proportion of migrants from Cambodia or Myanmar.

**Table 4.58: Percentage of migrants, by intention before coming to Thailand of how their remittances were to be used and by nationality (multiple answers)**

Intention before leaving home of how money should be used	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Daily expenses	77.8	76.4	73.9	83.5
Health	52.5	50.6	55	51.6
Education	47.5	60.7	44.1	39.2
Income-generating activities	40.4	48.3	39.6	34
Household appliances	37.6	60.7	7.2	58.8
Housing*	35.7	56.2	23.4	30.9
Other	7.8	1.1	11.7	9.3
<b>N</b>	<b>297**</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>97</b>

\* Expenses for housing refer to house repair, renovation and building or buying a new house.

\*\*Twenty-eight migrants were excluded because they gave no answer.

Of the sex and age differences reflected in table 4.59, more women expected their future remittances would be used primarily on daily expenses, health care, education and housing. More of the migrants younger than 35 intended the money they would send home would be used for income-generating activities and to buy household appliances than did those aged 35 or older.

**Table 4.59: Percentage of migrants, by intention before coming to Thailand of how their remittances were to be used, by sex and by age group**

Intention before leaving home of how money should be used	Sex*		Age group*		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Daily expenses	74.5	81.1	77.4	79.9	71.9
Health	51	54.1	47.3	59	42.1
Household appliances	42.6	40.1	43	43.1	24.6
Income-generating activities	41.6	39.2	44.1	43.8	26.3
Education	40.9	54.1	48.4	50.7	40.4
Housing	30.2	41.2	36.6	37.5	31.6
Other	8.1	7.4	7.5	7.6	8.8
<b>N</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>97</b>

\*Twenty-eight migrants were excluded because they gave no answer.

#### 4.1.14 Money pooling for contributions to community of origin

Remittances sent to migrants' families benefit not only the individual households but may also benefit migrants' home communities at large. Not only do migrants remit to their families, but some of them also send money to their communities for public purposes, such as to repair village roads. The data suggest that about 30 per cent of migrants had, at one time or another, pooled money and sent it to their communities, but the proportions varied by nationality. While more than half the Cambodians and 31 per cent of the migrants from Myanmar had done so, only 6 per cent of Lao migrants had. The median number of occasions for such pooled contributions was two, which was consistent across nationalities. The maximum number was highest for Cambodians (20 times). The median amount donated each time was 350 baht, largest among the Myanmar migrants (1,000 baht).

**Table 4.60: Percentage of migrants who pooled money with other migrants and sent to home community, by nationality**

	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Pooled money with other migrants and sent to home community	30.1	6	30.8	52.9
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
Number of times				
Minimum	1	1	1	1
Maximum	20	10	12	20
Median	2	2	2	2
Amount of money donated each time				
Minimum	10	10	50	10
Maximum*	30 000	1 000	2 800	30 000
Median	350	50	1 000	225
<b>N</b>	<b>105**</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>62</b>

\*The maximum amount donated seems too large. It is possible that there was an error in the interview process; for example, this amount may represent the collective amount donated by everyone.

\*\*One migrant was excluded because of failure to answer.

More male than female migrants had pooled their money, according to the data presented in table 4.61. On each occasion, the males also donated a greater amount, though less frequently than the female migrants. Going by the median data, the migrants aged 35 or older donated more times and with more money each time than did the younger migrants.

**Table 4.61: Percentage of migrants who pooled money with other migrants and sent to home community, by sex and age group**

	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Pooled money with other migrants and sent to home community	36.3	23.7	28.1	31.7	27.8
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>
Number of times					
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	10	20	10	20	12
Median	2	3	2	2	3
Amount of money donated each time					
Minimum	10	10	10	10	20
Maximum*	28 000	30 000	28 000	30 000	7 800
Median	400	300	225	500	840
<b>N</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>19</b>

## 4.2 In-kind remittances

Whatever their initial intention, all the surveyed migrants remitted money home, at least in the two years prior to the survey; slightly more than a third of them also sent goods to their family. Across nationality, those from Myanmar sent goods in a relatively greater proportion (about half) compared with the other two groups. Only one-fifth of the Cambodians sent any items home.

**Table 4.62: Percentage of migrants who sent goods home in the previous two years, by nationality**

	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Sent home goods in the previous two years	34.3	31.6	50.8	20.2
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

More women than men sent home any goods, as did more of the migrants older than 35 compared with their younger counterparts, as shown in table 4.63.

**Table 4.63: Percentage of migrants who sent goods home in the previous two years, by sex and age group**

	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Sent home goods in the previous two years	29.1	39.6	32.5	33.5	38.9
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

The married migrants living separately from their spouse were more likely than the others to send goods home. And migrants who had lived in Thailand for at least ten years also sent goods home more so than the migrants who had been away less time.

**Table 4.64: Percentage of migrants who sent goods home in the previous two years, by marital status**

	Marital status			
	Single	Married– living with spouse	Married– apart from spouse	Previously married
Sent home goods in the previous two years	36.1	30.8	43.3	30
<b>N</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>

**Table 4.65: Percentage of migrants who sent goods home in the previous two years, by duration of residence in Thailand**

	Duration of residence in Thailand			
	<3 years	3–<5 years	5 –<10 years	10 years+
Sent home goods in the previous two years	35.6	27.7	34	47.2
<b>N</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>53</b>

The most commonly cited reason for not sending goods home, as shown in table 4.66, was that it was not convenient (41 per cent). Almost one-fifth of the migrants (18 per cent) never sent in-kind remittances because they did not know how to do so. Some of the other migrants believed that there was no need to send goods because they had already sent enough money for their family to buy things; and others said they had no money to buy goods to send. There were migrants who said they had not sent anything because they had not yet visited home, indicating a perception that taking goods home themselves was the only way of remitting in-kind items. In addition, some migrants did not remit in-kind items because they were not certain that their family would actually receive them.

**Table 4.66: Percentage distribution of migrants who had never sent home any goods in the previous two years, by reason for not sending**

<b>Reason for not sending goods</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Not convenient to send	41	96
Don't know how to send	18	42
No need because already sent money	15.4	36
No money to buy anything	8.6	20
Haven't yet visited home	6.4	15
Not sure family would receive goods	5.6	13
Other*	2.1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>234</b>

\* "Other" includes "difficult to send," "costly" and "afraid that things would be checked by police."

In terms of type of in-kind remittances, the data show that a majority of the migrants (71 per cent) sent clothes. More than one-third of them sent food, around one-fourth sent household appliances, and almost one-fifth (18 per cent) sent electrical appliances.

**Table 4.67: Percentage distribution of migrants, by type of goods sent (multiple answers possible)**

<b>Type of goods sent to family</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Clothes	70.5	86
Food	37.7	46
Household appliances	24.6	30
Electrical appliances	18	22
Vehicle	0.8	1
Other	20.5	25
<b>Total N</b>		<b>122</b>

Frequency rates and the value of the in-kind remittances are included in table 4.68. Consistent across nationalities, the median number of such remittances in the two years before the survey was twice, with a maximum of 20 times and a minimum of once. The median value of in-kind remittances was 3,000 baht, with a minimum of 100 baht and a maximum of 60,000 baht. The reported median value of in-kind remittances was the highest among the Myanmar migrants and lowest among the Cambodians. These values of remitted goods are consistent with the proportions of those who remitted in kind, which was also greatest among the Myanmar migrants and lowest among the Cambodians.

**Table 4.68: Number of in-kind remittances in the previous two years, by nationality**

	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Number of in-kind remittances in the previous two years				
Minimum	1	1	1	1
Maximum	20	18	20	6
Median	2	2	2	2
<b>N</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>24</b>
Value of goods sent in the previous two years				
Minimum	100	350	500	100
Maximum	60 000	20 000	40 000	60 000
Median	3 000	3 200	5 000	1 000
<b>N</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>24</b>

Unlike sending funds, when it comes to in-kind remittances, most migrants carried their goods home. Migrants from Myanmar were the exception, however, because the largest proportion of them (36 per cent) sent goods home through friends (only 10 per cent carried things themselves). Because travelling back and forth between Thailand and Myanmar may not be as convenient as it is between Thailand and the other two countries, the use of relatives and informal agents' services is also relatively greater among the migrants from Myanmar.

**Table 4.69: Percentage distribution of migrants, by the most frequently used method for in-kind remitting and by nationality**

Most frequently used method of sending goods	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Oneself	32.8	56.8	9.8	54.2
Friends	30.3	21.6	36.1	29.2
Relative	16.4	8.1	24.6	8.3
Informal agent	10.7	2.7	19.7	0
Employer	4.1	2.7	4.9	4.2
Workmate	1.6	0	3.3	0
NGO/foundation	0.8	2.7	0	0
Other	3.3	5.4	1.6	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>24</b>



## 5. Income, expenditure and savings

### 5.1 Income

Table 5.1 presents the findings on the migrants' family income level before migrating, their income upon arrival in Thailand and at the time of the survey. The majority of migrants (62 per cent) reported a previous family income of less than 2,000 baht per month (and a median income of 1,500 baht per month). The Cambodian migrants reported the lowest level while the data indicates the Lao had the highest family income before their arrival in Thailand.

Once the migrants started working in Thailand, the median family income increased to 4,000 baht and then leapt to 10,500 baht by the time of the survey (although this data reflects only the families living in Thailand and over a period of time). The proportion of the migrants who said they had a family income of more than 5,000 baht per month after they started working in Thailand jumped from 34 per cent to 89 per cent at the time of the survey.

"Current individual income" also shows a substantial increase compared with the individual income upon arrival (individual income before coming to Thailand was not asked in the survey). This was consistent across nationalities. When they first came to Thailand, the majority of migrants (72 per cent) earned between 2,000 and 5,000 baht per month, with a median of 3,500 baht; at the time of the survey, the majority (62 per cent) earned more than 5,000 baht a month (with a median of 6,000 baht). The percentage of those earning more than 5,000 baht per month at the time of the survey was much larger among the Myanmar migrants (82 per cent) compared with the Lao (53 per cent) and Cambodians (50 per cent).

**Table 5.1: Percentage distribution of migrant workers, by income before coming to Thailand, on arrival in Thailand, at the time of the survey and by nationality**

Income	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>Family income before coming to Thailand</b>				
<2 000 baht/month	61.9	57.9	63.7	64
2 000–5 000 baht/month	31.7	39.3	24.8	31.5
>5 000 baht/month	6.3	2.8	11.5	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N*</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>1 500</b>	<b>1 750</b>	<b>1 200</b>	<b>1 000</b>
<b>Family income on arrival</b>				
<2 000 baht/month	9.6	7.8	13.3	7.9
2 000–5 000 baht/month	56.9	72.4	45.1	52.6
>5 000 baht/month	33.5	19.8	41.6	39.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N*</b>	<b>343</b>	116	113	114
<b>Median</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>3,750</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>Family income at time of survey</b>				
2 000–5 000 baht/month	10.7	11.8	2.1	18
>5 000 baht/month	89.3	88.2	97.9	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N**</b>	131	34	47	50
<b>Median</b>	<b>10 500</b>	<b>10 000</b>	<b>12 000</b>	<b>8 200</b>
<b>Individual income on arrival</b>				
<2 000 baht/month	11.5	8.6	15.8	9.9
2 000–5 000 baht/month	72.7	83.8	67.5	66.7
>5 000 baht/month	15.8	7.7	16.7	23.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N*</b>	<b>348</b>	117	120	111
<b>Median</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>3 500</b>
<b>Individual income at time of survey</b>				
<2 000 baht/month	1.1	0	0.8	2.5
2 000–5 000 baht/month	37.1	47	17.5	47.1
>5 000 baht/month	61.8	53	81.7	50.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>6 000</b>	<b>5 500</b>	<b>6 650</b>	<b>5 500</b>

\* Migrants with no answer on income were excluded.

\*\* Only migrants currently living with family were included.

The current family income according to legal status was measured by whether migrants were registered and had a passport and visa or had an “irregular” status. The income difference was somewhat large between median family incomes earned shortly after arriving in Thailand and earned at the time of the survey. Although the data do not provide information on the legal

status of migrants when they first came to Thailand, the survey results indicate clear income differences among those migrants who later acquired legal status and those who did not. The median of the individual incomes for those with legal and irregular status when they first started working did not differ. Both the median of the family and individual incomes of the legal migrants at the time of the survey were greater than those of the non-registered migrants (with no passport and visa).

**Table 5.2: Percentage distribution of migrants, by family income, individual income and legal status**

Income	Overall	Legal status	
		Legal*	Irregular
<b>Family income on arrival</b>			
<2 000 baht/month	7.1	9.5	18.5
2 000–5 000 baht/month	38.4	42.1	55.6
>5 000 baht/month	54.6	48.4	25.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N**</b>	99	126	27
<b>Median</b>	<b>4 000</b>	<b>6 000</b>	<b>3 900</b>
<b>Family income at time of survey</b>			
2 000–5 000 baht/month	10.69	9.7	14.3
>5 000 baht/month	89.31	90.3	85.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N***</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>10 500</b>	<b>11 000</b>	<b>8 200</b>
<b>Individual income on arrival</b>			
<2 000 baht/month	12.3	11.5	10
2 000–5 000 baht/month	70.2	72.7	77.5
>5 000 baht/month	17.5	15.8	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	228	348	120
<b>Median</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>3 500</b>
<b>Individual income at time of survey</b>			
<2 000 baht/month	1.1	1.3	0.8
2 000–5 000 baht/month	37.1	35.5	40.2
>5 000 baht/month	61.8	63.3	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>6 000</b>	<b>6 000</b>	<b>5 500</b>

\* Includes registered migrants and migrants with passport and visa.

\*\* Only migrants living with family included.

According to the survey, about a third of the migrant workers reported their earnings being garnished, mostly by their employers. The deductions typically covered salary advances, accommodation/food or the fees for registering workers with the Thai Government. Regardless of the reason for the deduction, the amount taken was usually less than 2,000 baht per month.

**Table 5.3: Percentage distribution of migrant workers, by salary deduction, nationality and sex**

Income deducted	Overall	Nationality			Sex	
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian	Male	Female
Yes	33	24.8	51.3	22.7	29.1	36.9
No	67	75.2	48.7	77.3	70.9	63.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>355*</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>176</b>

\* One migrant who did not answer regarding deduction was excluded.

**Table 5.4: Percentage distribution of migrant workers whose income was deducted, by amount of deduction for each item and by nationality**

Amount of income deducted	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>Amount deducted for salary advance</b>				
<2 000 baht/ month	75	75	100	57.1
>= 2 000 baht/month	25	25	0	42.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Amount deducted for accommodation and food</b>				
<2 000 baht/month	87.8	95	80	83.3
>= 2 000 baht/month	26.1	5	20	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Amount deducted for registration fees</b>				
<2 000 baht/month	73.9	61.5	75	87.3
> = 2 000 baht/month	36.1	38.5	25	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## 5.2 Expenditures

The study also examined the pattern of migrants' spending in Thailand. The surveyed migrants were asked to estimate how much they spent each month on certain items: food, alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, personal entertainment, personal communication, health care, education and training, work-related equipment, transportation to work, remittances, savings, donations and housing.

As shown in table 5.5, the biggest share of migrants' expenditures was for remittances home; although about one-fifth of the migrants said they did not any save money for remitting on a monthly basis. The proportion of migrants who did not save money each month for remittances was largest among the Cambodians. Among those who did save some money each month for remitting, the median saved was 2,000 baht a month. Given that the median amount of monthly income of the migrants was about 6,000 baht (table 5.1), the amount saved for remitting took about a third of their income. That the migrants expended the largest share of their income on remittances was somewhat consistent across nationalities – the Lao migrants overall spent slightly more on food than on remittances. The median amount of monthly savings for remittances was greatest among the Myanmar migrants (at 2,500 baht a month) and smallest among the Lao (1,750 baht per month).

The amount of earnings reportedly saved monthly for remittances seems higher compared to the amount of money the migrants reported sending home during the two years prior to the survey (see table 4.1). The apparent difference could be a result of differences in declaration: the amount reported being saved for remitting referred to the time of the survey while the amount remitted over the previous two years (table 4.1) was the average amount over that period. This indicates that the current amount for remitting may have increased. It is also possible that the migrants may have saved more money than they actually sent to their family. Or to put it differently, the migrants may have sent less money than they were supposed to send. This discrepancy may imply the accumulation of a cushion fund for future uncertainty in the host country or the lack of trust in money-sending methods.

In terms of income share, the median amount spent on food follows second behind remittances, at 1,500 baht. Food expenditures were highest among the Lao and lowest among the Myanmar migrants. However, those differences were not great. About 7 per cent of the migrants (and 8 per cent of the Cambodians) said they had no food expenses, implying that their workplace provided them with food.

Third in terms of share are personal savings, aside from what was earmarked for remittances, at a median of 1,000 baht, or around one-sixth of the median monthly income. Overall, the Lao migrants saved the least amount each month – about half of what the Cambodian and Myanmar migrants saved. However, although the Lao migrants saved the least in terms of amount, many more of them saved compared with the Myanmar migrants and the Cambodians (66 per cent, 58 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively).

Among migrants who had housing expenses, the median spent was 850 baht, highest for the Cambodians and lowest for the Lao.

About half the migrants reported expenditures on health care (medicine and hospitalization). Some 70 per cent of the Myanmar migrants had health-related expenses (70 per cent), but they spent the least (30 baht). Only 34 per cent of the Lao reported any health care expense, and they and the Cambodians both spent a median of 100 baht.

Migrants also had various work-related expenses, including transportation to work and equipment. Around one-fourth of them had to pay for transport to work. The proportion of the Myanmar migrants who had to pay was much greater than for the Lao or Cambodians. The median amount spent was 360 baht a month, but the Cambodians paid much more (at a median of 700 baht a month). In addition, more than a third of the migrants had to pay for work-related equipment (such as knives and gloves if they worked in a fish processing factory). More of the Myanmar migrants (62 per cent) had to pay for work-related equipment compared with the other two groups; the Lao had the smallest proportion needing to buy anything.

Another common expense went for communication (mostly telephones or telephone calls). Of the 85 per cent of migrants reporting communication expenses, the Lao had the greater representation at 91 per cent and the Cambodians had the smallest at 80 per cent. The median spent (300 baht a month) was the same for all nationalities.

Very few migrants (4 per cent overall) spent anything on education or training while living in Thailand – none of the Lao and only 2 per cent of the Cambodians and 11 per cent of the Myanmar migrants. The reported median amount spent was 200 baht a month.

Overall, about one-fourth of the migrants bought alcohol. Half of the men said they had alcohol expenses (results not shown). Some 44 per cent of the Cambodians purchased alcohol, compared with 18 per cent of the Lao and 15 per cent of the Myanmar migrants. The median spent was 400 baht per month, lowest among the Myanmar migrants and about the same for the Lao and Cambodians.

Another health-risk expenditure included cigarettes, which 21 per cent of migrants reported buying. More of the Cambodians smoked (at 34 per cent), followed by the Myanmar migrants (at 19 per cent) and then the Lao (at 10 per cent). The median spent was 200 baht a month, across all nationalities.

About 20 per cent of the migrants spent money on gambling of all types, including the government lottery. The proportion of Myanmar migrants who gambled was largest (at 27 per cent) and it was smallest among the Cambodians (at 13 per cent). The median spent overall was 200 baht a month, with the Cambodians spending the least (140 baht).

About half of the migrants spent money on personal entertainment (visiting places or spending money at festivals or on national holidays). The proportion was largest among the Lao (at 64 per cent), followed by the Myanmar migrants (at 39 per cent) and then the Cambodians (at 50 per cent). The median spent was 300 baht a month. The Cambodians reported spending the most, at a median of 500 baht.

About half of the migrants also donated money on various occasions. More of the Myanmar migrants reported making a donation, and the Lao had the smallest proportion doing so. The median donation was 100 baht per month, with Cambodians donating the least and the Myanmar migrants making the larger monthly median donation.

**Table 5.5: Percentage distribution of migrants, by monthly expenditures and by nationality**

Monthly expenditure	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Remittance to be sent home</b>				
% with remittance expense	79.8	88.2	85	67.2
Median amount of expense (baht)	2 000	1 750	2 500	2 000
<b>Food</b>				
% with food expenses	93.5	94	95	91.6
Median amount of expense (baht)	1 500	1 775	1 500	1 550
<b>Personal savings (in addition to remittance)</b>				
% with savings	57.9	65.8	58.3	49.6
Median amount (baht)	1 000	500	1 000	1 000
<b>Housing</b>				
% with housing expense	50.6	23.1	75	52.9
Median amount of expense (baht)	850	600	750	1 000
<b>Health</b>				
% with expense on health	49.4	34.2	70	43.7
Median amount of expense (baht)	50	100	30	100
<b>Transportation to work</b>				
% with transportation expenses	27	9.4	65	5.9
Median amount of expense (baht)	360	300	300	700
<b>Work-related equipment</b>				
% with work-related equipment expenses	36	7.8	62.5	37.8
Median amount of expense (baht)	200	75	200	200
<b>Communication</b>				
% with communication expenses	85.1	91.4	84.2	79.8
Median amount of expense (baht)	300	300	300	300
<b>Education and training</b>				
% have educational/training expenses	4.2	0	10.8	1.7
Median amount of expense (baht)	200	NA	200	650
<b>Alcohol</b>				
% with expenses for alcohol	25.8	17.9	15	44.5
Median amount of expense (baht)	400	400	300	420
<b>Cigarettes</b>				
% with cigarette expenses	21.3	10.3	19.2	34.4
Median amount of expense (baht)	200	200	200	200
<b>Gambling</b>				
% with gambling expenses	19.9	19.7	26.7	13.4
Median amount of expense (baht)	200	300	300	140
<b>Personal entertainment</b>				
% with entertainment expenses	50.8	64.1	39.2	49.6
Median amount of expense (baht)	300	300	300	500
<b>Donations</b>				
% with expenses for donations	49.7	23.1	77.5	47.9
Median amount of expense (baht)	100	100	150	50

Although the expenditures for each item shown in table 5.5 are rough estimates that the interviewed migrants were asked to make, the total figure (7,660 baht) turns out to be really close to the median family income of 7,500 baht (see table 5.1). The share kept for savings and remittances was considerably large, amounting to about 40 per cent of the migrant's total expenses.

## 5.3 Savings

### 5.3.1 Individual savings

The survey questions on savings looked at the monthly savings of migrant workers who lived apart from their family while working in Thailand; they accounted for about 63 per cent of all migrants (see table 2.4). The personal savings were considered as separate from what was saved for remittances. Table 5.6 indicates a commonality among almost all the migrants: 91 per cent of them had accumulated individual savings. The median saved each month was 1,500 baht. (This is an average, meaning that they might not have saved money every month; the interviewed migrants were asked to estimate how much they saved on average.)

The amount saved differed across the nationalities: The Cambodian migrants saved the most in terms of the median amount, at 3,000 baht per month, followed by the Lao at 1,250 baht per month and then the Myanmar migrants at 1,000 baht per month.

**Table 5.6: Percentage distribution of migrants with individual savings, by amount of savings (among those living apart from their family) and by nationality**

Individual savings (baht per month)	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
% have savings	90.9	98.8	79.2	89.6
<b>N*</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>67</b>
Amount of savings (baht per month)				
Minimum	400	400	500	500
Maximum	10 000	10 000	5 000	10 000
Median	1 500	1 250	1 000	3 000
<b>N**</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>60</b>

\*Included only migrants living apart from family and excluded migrants who gave no answer.

\*\* Included only those who had savings.

Looking at individual savings across sex and age groups, more men than women had individual savings and in larger amounts. The smaller savings among the females may be explained by the fact that the female migrants remitted more money than the males (see table 4.2), therefore leaving them with less income for their own savings.

In terms of age groups, fewer of the migrants aged 35 or older, who were more likely to have families, especially families that did not migrate with them (spouse and children remaining at home), had any individual savings compared with their younger counterparts (26 per cent (eldest age group) versus 89 per cent (aged 25–34) and 80 per cent (younger than 25)). And those who managed some savings among the eldest group put away less on a monthly basis than the youngest (1,500 baht versus 1,800 baht). The older migrants were more likely to send their money than keep their earnings as personal savings.

**Table 5.7: Percentage distribution of migrants with individual savings, by amount of savings (among those living apart from family), by sex and by age group**

Individual savings	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
% have savings	93	88.8	93.8	95.5	65.4
<b>N*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>26</b>
Amount of savings (baht per month)					
Minimum	500	400	400	500	500
Maximum	10 000	6 000	10 000	10 000	8 000
Median	2 000	1 500	1 800	1 500	1 500
<b>N**</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>17</b>

*\*Included only migrants living apart from families and excluded migrants who gave no answer.*

*\*\* Included only those who had savings.*

According to data in table 5.8, the length of stay in Thailand influenced the savings habits, particularly between the migrants who had lived in Thailand for five years or longer compared with those who had been there less than five years; the median personal savings for the former was 2,000 baht per month, while it was 1,500 baht for the latter. This finding is consistent with the data showing smaller remittances by the migrants who had stayed for more than ten years in Thailand compared with those living there between three and ten years (see table 4.4). It could be that migrant workers who have been away for more than ten years want to build a life in the host country rather than in their home country. However, it is also likely they could sell their acquired assets at any time and return to the home country in the future, especially if their chance for naturalization appears dim.

**Table 5.8: Percentage distribution of migrants with individual savings, by amount of savings (among those living apart from their family) and by duration of residence in Thailand**

Individual saving	Duration of residence in Thailand			
	<3 years	3 –<5 years	5–<10 years	10 years+
% have savings	93.3	93.5	83	92.9
<b>N*</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>14</b>
Amount of savings (baht per month)				
Minimum	400	500	500	500
Maximum	8 000	10 000	9 000	8 000
Median	1 500	1 500	2 000	2 000
<b>N**</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>13</b>

*\*Included only migrants living apart from family and excluded migrants who gave no answer.*

*\*\* Included only those who had savings.*

More of the single migrants and migrants who were previously married had personal savings than the married migrants who had left a spouse behind. The married migrants living apart from a spouse also had a small amount of savings.

**Table 5.9: Percentage distribution of migrants with individual savings, by amount of savings (among those living apart from their family) and by marital status**

Individual savings	Marital status		
	Single	Married–apart from spouse	Previously married
% have savings	91.6	87	90.9
<b>N*</b>	142	23	33
Amount of savings (baht per month)			
Minimum	400	500	500
Maximum	10 000	10 000	1 500
Median	1 775	1 000	1 500
<b>N**</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>20</b>	

\*Included only migrants living apart from family and excluded migrants who gave no answer.

\*\* Included only those who had savings.

### 5.3.2 Family savings

Table 5.10 shows family savings among the 37 per cent of migrants who lived with their family at the time of the survey (see table 2.4). Of them, 88 per cent had family savings (this refers to the savings of all family members including the migrants). The median amount saved was 3,000 baht per month. Again, as with personal savings, the migrants were asked the approximate average amount they saved each month – not the exact amount they actually saved. The largest proportion of migrants who saved came from Myanmar, while the Lao had the smallest proportion. The Cambodian migrants, however, saved the largest median amount of money, at 4,000 baht month.

**Table 5.10: Percentage distribution of migrants with family savings, by amount and nationality**

Family savings	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
% having family savings	88.2	79.4	93	90
<b>N*</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>50</b>
Amount of savings (baht per month)				
Minimum	150	500	500	150
Maximum	20 000	7 000	20 000	15 000
Median	3 000	2 000	3 000	4 000
<b>N**</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>

\* Only those living with their families and who answered the question about income were included.

\*\* Only those having savings and who could specify the amount of savings were included.

More men than women had family savings, according to table 5.10. In a comparison of median amounts, the men also saved more each month than the women did. This implies two scenarios: Because the women remitted more often than did the men (see table 4.2), they may have had less left over for their family savings in Thailand.

Meanwhile, the proportion of migrants aged 35 or older having family savings was lower than that of younger age groups, but their median amount saved per month was greater.

**Table 5.11: Percentage distribution of migrants with family savings, by amount, sex and age group**

Family savings (baht per month)	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
% having family savings <b>N*</b>	93.6 <b>62</b>	83.1 <b>65</b>	85.7 <b>28</b>	92.1 <b>63</b>	83.3 <b>36</b>
Amount of savings (baht per month)					
Minimum	150	500	500	150	500
Maximum	20 000	12 600	12 600	12 500	20 000
Median <b>N**</b>	4 000 <b>58</b>	3 000 <b>54</b>	3 000 <b>24</b>	3 000 <b>58</b>	4 000 <b>30</b>

\* Only those living with their family and who answered the question about income were included.

\*\* Only those have savings and who could specify the amount of savings were included.

Taking into account the duration of residence, the proportion of migrants with family savings was greatest among those who had lived at least ten years in Thailand (at 92 per cent). As for the amount of family savings, however, the data indicate that the migrants who had lived in Thailand for at least three years but less than five years saved the most per month, at a median amount of 5,500 baht.

**Table 5.12: Percentage distribution of migrants with family savings, by amount and by duration of residence in Thailand**

Family savings	Duration of residence in Thailand			
	<3 years	3–<5 years	5–<10 years	10 years+
% having family savings <b>N*</b>	84.6 <b>26</b>	87.9 <b>33</b>	88.1 <b>42</b>	92.3 <b>26</b>
Amount of family savings (baht per month)				
Minimum	500	500	150	1 000
Maximum	7 000	13 500	15 000	20 000
Median <b>N**</b>	2 000 <b>22</b>	5 500 <b>29</b>	4 000 <b>37</b>	3 000 <b>24</b>

\* Only those living with their family and who answered the question about income were included.

\*\* Only those with savings and who could specify the amount of savings were included.

Looking at savings based on marital status, the results show that the smallest proportion of those with family savings were the married migrants who lived with a spouse. Single migrants saved the most each month, at a median amount of 4,500 baht.

**Table 5.13: Percentage distribution of migrants with family savings, by amount and by marital status**

Family savings	Marital status			
	Single	Married– living with spouse	Married– apart from spouse	Previously married
% having family saving <b>N*</b>	100 <b>6</b>	87.2 <b>117</b>	100 <b>3</b>	100 <b>1</b>
Amount of family savings (baht per month)				
Minimum	1 000	150	2,000	1 500
Maximum	12 000	20 000	9 000	1 500
Median	4 500	3 000	3 000	1 500
<b>N**</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

\* Only those living with their families and who answered the question about income were included.

\*\* Only those who had savings and who could specify the amount of savings were included.

## 6. Access to banking services

### 6.1 Access to a personal bank account in Thailand

Only about 21 per cent of migrants had a bank account in Thailand. As shown in table 4.27, around a third of the migrants preferred to send money via a bank because, according to them, it is a more reliable method. But in practice, fewer of them had access to a banking system. More of the migrants from Myanmar had a bank account than the other two groups; the Cambodian migrants had the smallest proportion.

**Table 6.1: Percentage distribution of migrants with a bank account, by nationality**

Bank account in Thailand	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Have bank account	21.1	18	37.5	7.6
<b>N</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>119</b>

More women than men had a bank account in Thailand, and more of the younger migrants had one than did the older ones. This may imply a greater interest in banking services, which requires basic literacy, among women and young people.

**Table 6.2: Percentage distribution of migrants with a bank account, by sex and age group**

Bank account in Thailand	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	16–24	25–34	35+
Have bank account	20.1	22	24.6	23.4	11.1
<b>N</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>72</b>

More of the migrants who were married and living with a spouse had a bank account in Thailand relative to the migrants of other marital status, especially those married but who lived separately from their spouse and those previously married.

**Table 6.3: Percentage distribution of migrants with a bank account, by marital status**

Bank account in Thailand	Marital status			
	Single	Married– living with spouse	Married– apart from spouse	Previously married
Have bank account	21.1	26.7	10	12.5
<b>N</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>

Interestingly, more of the migrants who had recently come to Thailand (those who had lived in Thailand for less than three years) had a bank account than those who had come earlier. However, more of the migrants who had resided in the country for at least five years possessed a bank account, compared with the migrants who had been in Thailand between three and five years – although they were in smaller proportion compared with those who had been in the country for less than three years. It is quite possible that the longer migrants stay in the host country, say more than five years, the more likely they are to have a personal bank account. As for the recent migrants, some of them, mostly from Lao PDR, had their wages paid directly into a personal bank account arranged by their employer.

**Table 6.4: Percentage distribution of migrants with a bank account, by duration of residence in Thailand**

Bank account in Thailand	Duration of residence in Thailand			
	<3 years	3–<5 years	5–<10 years	10 years+
Have bank account	31	10.9	22.7	24.5
<b>N</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>53</b>

It is clear from table 6.5 that the employer is a key factor determining whether or not a migrant has a bank account. More than half of the migrants who had an account cited their employer as having arranged it for them, rather than having chosen to get one on their own.

**Table 6.5: Percentage distribution of migrants with bank account, by main reasons for having a bank account**

Reasons for having a bank account	%	N
Employer arranged it	58.1	43
Convenience	18.9	14
For saving money	12.2	9
For reasons of safety	5.4	4
Other	5.4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>74</b>

*\* Other reasons included “because other people also had one”. Those who did not answer were excluded.*

According to the survey, several commercial banks in Thailand allowed the migrants to open a bank account (which may have been arranged by their employer and not by the migrants themselves). Among the migrants who had a bank account, the largest proportion (almost one-fourth) reported having an account with Siam City Bank, followed by Bangkok Bank, Krung Thai Bank, Siam Commercial Bank and then Kasikorn (Thai Farmers Bank). Other banks mentioned by fewer than 10 per cent of the migrants were Krungsri Ayudhaya Bank and Thai Military Bank.

**Table 6.6: Percentage distribution of migrants with bank account, by name of bank and nationality**

Name of bank	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Siam City Bank	23	0	33.3	25
Bangkok Bank	18.9	52.4	6.7	0
Krung Thai Bank	17.6	14.3	22.2	0
Siam Commercial Bank	16.2	0	15.6	62.5
Kasikorn Bank	12.2	4.8	15.6	12.5
Krungsri Ayudhaya Bank	6.8	14.3	4.4	0
Thai Military Bank	5.4	14.3	2.2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>8</b>

The migrants who did not have a bank account were asked to give reasons for not having one. The most cited reason (by a third of those without an account) was that they did not know how to access banking services. The second most mentioned reason (31 per cent) was that they understood that they did not have the right to open an account or that they did not have the documents required by the bank. Some 18 per cent of the migrants without an account stated that they did not have any money to put into a bank, indicating that they thought banks were merely for keeping one’s savings. Another 8 per cent of the respondents mentioned

inconvenience or having no chance to open an account, while only 3 per cent reported that their employers did not allow them to open a bank account.

**Table 6.7: Percentage distribution of migrants without a bank account, by reasons for not having one**

Reason for not having a bank account	%	N
No knowledge about it	32.1	86
No rights/no documents that are needed	30.6	82
No money to save	17.9	48
Not necessary	8.2	22
Not convenient/no chance to open	7.5	20
Employer did not allow	3	8
Other	0.8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>268</b>

When they were asked if they wanted a bank account in Thailand, most of those without one said yes. More of the migrants from Cambodia were less inclined compared with the Lao and Myanmar migrants.

And among those without an account, more of the men than women expressed interest in having one; there was not much difference between age groups. Previously married migrants wanted an account more so than migrants of the other marital statuses. Across the groups based on length of stay in Thailand, a relatively large proportion of migrants who had been in Thailand between three years and five years wanted an account, but a relatively small proportion of those who had been in Thailand for at least ten years wanted one.

It might be worthwhile to further research into why those who had stayed in Thailand for ten years or longer did not seem so keen on having one. The only explanation at this point could be that this group had a larger degree of people with an irregular status and thus did not possess the requisite documents to be eligible for opening a bank account; hence, their lack of interest.

**Table 6.8: Percentage distribution of migrants without a bank account who wanted one, by nationality**

	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Want a bank account in Thailand	77.8	81.9	89.8	60
<b>N*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>90</b>

*\*Migrants who gave no answer were excluded.*

**Table 6.9: Percentage distribution of migrants without a bank account who wanted one, by sex and age group**

	Sex		Age group		
	Male	Female	<25	25–34	35+
Want a bank account in Thailand	86.1	69.2	75.6	78.6	78
<b>N*</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>59</b>

*\*Migrants who gave no answer were excluded.*

**Table 6.10: Percentage distribution of migrants without a bank account who wanted one, by marital status**

	Marital status			
	Single	Married– living with spouse	Married– apart from spouse	Previously married
Want to have bank account in Thailand	75.8	79.5	75	82.9
<b>N*</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>

*\*Migrants who gave no answer were excluded.*

**Table 6.11: Percentage distribution of migrants without a bank account who wanted one, by duration of residence in Thailand**

	Duration of residence in Thailand			
	<3 years	3–<5 years	5–<10 years	10 years+
Want to have bank account in Thailand	77.2	82.4	78.1	65.8
<b>N*</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>38</b>

*\*Migrants who gave no answer were excluded.*

Among the migrants who stated that they wanted a bank account, about two-fifths wanted one for their savings, while more than a third wanted one for security. Some 17 per cent of the migrants mentioned “convenience” as a reason. Only 7 per cent reported wanting a bank account in order to remit funds, noting that they considered sending money via a bank less costly than other options.

**Table 6.12: Percentage distribution of migrants wanting a bank account, by reason for wanting one**

Reason for wanting bank account	%	N
Want to save money	39.7	83
Security	35.4	74
Convenience	16.7	35
Less costly in sending money home	6.7	14
Other	1.4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>209</b>

About two-fifths of the migrants not wanting an account reasoned that they had no or little money to save in a bank. Slightly more than one-fourth of them said that they did not trust banks, and another one-fourth perceived using bank services as inconvenient, indicating possible constraints or barriers to access.

**Table 6.13: Percentage distribution of migrants not wanting a bank account, by reason for not wanting one**

Reason for not wanting bank account	%	N
No money	39.3	24
Do not trust banks	26.2	16
Not convenient to use bank service	24.6	15
No need	4.9	3
Other	4.9	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61</b>

## 6.2 Access to a personal bank account in migrants' home countries

The proportion of the migrants (or any family member) having a bank account in their home country was even smaller than of those having one in Thailand (12 per cent versus 21 per cent; see tables 6.1 and 6.14). More of the Lao migrants had an account back home compared with the other two groups; the Cambodians had the smallest proportion.

The reasons given for not having a bank account, shown in table 6.15, fall in rank by first, not having money to save in a bank (39 per cent), followed by limited geographic access to a bank (35 per cent), meaning there are few banks located close to the vicinity of their home village. In addition, almost one-tenth of the migrants had no knowledge of how to use banking services. These findings imply that improving access to banks in Thailand for migrants would not necessarily help them in remitting funds because the financial infrastructure in the receiving countries is still underdeveloped.

However, the Thai Government should encourage more migrant workers to access formal financial services, such as having a bank account and ATM card, so that they can better manage and accumulate their savings, which will enable them to invest or use it productively in their home country. Greater savings combined with proper skills training and job counselling may preclude migrants or family members from re-migrating abroad for employment.

**Table 6.14: Percentage distribution of migrants with a bank account in their home country, by nationality**

	Overall	Nationality		
		Lao	Myanmar	Cambodian
Having a bank account in home country	12	18.6	12.5	5.1
<b>N*</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>118</b>

*\*Migrants who gave no answer were excluded.*

**Table 6.15: Percentage distribution of migrants without a bank account in their home country, by reason for not having one**

<b>Reason for not having a bank account in home country</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
No money	38.5	119
No bank close by	35	108
No knowledge	9.1	28
Do not trust banks	7.1	22
No need	3.6	11
Others*	4.5	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>309</b>

*\*Other reasons included “too costly,” “difficult,” and “no specific reason.”*

## 7. Summary of findings

### ***Migrants' profiles***

Overall, the largest proportion of the surveyed migrant workers was engaged in the manufacturing sector; although by nationality, most of the migrant workers from Cambodia worked in the construction sector. The second largest proportion of workers was employed as domestic workers (Lao) and in fishing (Myanmar and Cambodians). Sex proportions were roughly equal. A large number of the Lao and Myanmar migrants were female, the majority of whom were working in factories, while the largest proportion of Cambodians were male and worked in construction. Most of the migrant workers were aged between 16 and 34.

Slightly more than half of all the migrant workers had 1–6 years of education, 45 per cent had 7–12 years, and only 3 per cent had 13–16 years. The Myanmar migrants had had more education than the Lao or Cambodians. A third of those interviewed were single, and 42 per cent were married with one or two children. Additionally, the Lao workers were more likely to have been previously married (widowed, divorced or separated) compared with the Cambodians or Myanmar migrants. The majority of those who were married lived with their spouse (34 per cent), a friend (26 per cent) or their employer (26 per cent). More of the Lao workers lived with their employer than the other nationalities. Most of the migrants came from rural areas, with a fourth of them from a small city or town. Very few came from a capital city (5 per cent).

### ***Migration and work experience***

The majority of the migrant workers first travelled to Thailand at a young age (16–24 years). A larger proportion of the migrants from Myanmar moved to Thailand at younger ages than did the Cambodians or Lao. The majority of all surveyed migrants decided on their own to come to Thailand. In making the decision to migrate, friends were more influential for the Lao than they were for Myanmar migrants or the Cambodians. Informal agents, according to the survey findings, had the least influence on the workers' decision to migrate. About 45 per cent of the migrants visited their home country once every few years, but 30 per cent had never gone home. The largest proportion who had never visited home was from Myanmar.

The most important motivation for migration was an economic reason, followed by family-related reasons. About a fourth of the migrants came expecting to work in Thailand for one to two years, and 75 per cent planned to return to their country of origin. More of the Lao expressed interest in staying permanently than of the others.

Slightly more than a third of those interviewed had not registered with the Thai Ministry of Interior. Very few migrants (7 per cent) had a passport and visa, almost all of whom were from Lao PDR.

A large proportion of the migrants reported gaining only moderate occupational skills from working in Thailand. Only a fifth of them said they had acquired higher-level skills. This proportion was largest among the Cambodians and smallest among the Myanmar migrants. Slightly more than a third of the migrants said they had picked up no skills or very little at all.

Almost three-fourths of them had changed employers since arriving to work in Thailand, the majority of whom had changed employers twice. The main reasons for changing employers were “to earn a better income” (two-fifths) and “to escape from exploitive working conditions” (one-fifth).

## **Cash remittances**

### **a) Amount of money sent and frequency of sending**

On average, the migrant workers had sent home remittances four times, totalling about 25,000 baht each, over the two years prior to the survey. The amount of money sent each time was a median of 5,000 baht. The migrants from Myanmar sent the most overall (a median of 30,000 baht) whereas the Cambodians sent the least (a median of 20,000 baht). Cambodians sent money less frequently than the others did and sent the smallest amount each time.

The women sent more remittances than the men overall, though they sent less each time, indicating more-frequent sending behaviour. In a median comparison, migrants aged 25–34 sent more than those aged 35 or older and those younger than 25; although migrants aged 35 or older sent remittances more frequently than did the other age groups. Previously married migrants sent the largest (median) amount in terms of marital status, while those who had a spouse living with them in Thailand sent the least. Migrants who lived together with a spouse also sent less money each time than did migrants in other marital status groups. Migrants who had lived in Thailand for at least three years but less than ten years remitted the largest overall (median) amount and they sent a large amount each time.

### **b) Migrants' intended use and the actual use of remittance**

Most of the migrants intended their remitted money to be used for daily expenses. Health care was the second-most reported intention. The actual spending for daily living was much more than what was initially intended. This phenomenon is also true for actual spending on health care, household appliances, education and housing. Income-generating activity was mentioned by about 30 per cent of the migrants, along with housing, for both intended and actual use of the remittances.

### **c) Remittance as a main source of income for family of origin**

Almost half of the migrants reported that the remittance they sent was the main source of income for their family. The proportion was relatively large among the Lao and Myanmar migrants, the females and those aged 25 or older.

Because of a presumption that remittances might lead to a passive dependency on them by their family members, the respondents were asked whether any family members who used to work had stopped working once the money started coming home. The findings show this to be true for only a small proportion of the migrants (about 6 per cent). The incidence was higher among the Cambodians, among females and among those aged 25–34. The number of family members who had stopped working was greatest among the Cambodians.

### **d) Decision-making about sending remittances**

Some 80 per cent of the migrants reported that they decided by themselves when to send money home. About one-eighth said that their spouse was the decision-maker, which proportionally was relatively high among Cambodians, males and those aged 35 or older. At the same time, other family members (parents and brothers/sisters) played a greater role among the Myanmar migrants, females and younger migrants.

### **e) To whom migrants sent money**

Almost all the migrants who had parents still in the home country supported them financially. For those who had left a spouse behind, only half of them sent money home. More of the migrant women sent money to brothers or sisters compared with the men, but they sent to their parents-in-law less often than the men did. More of the migrants aged 25–34 sent money to

their parents compared with the other age groups; the smallest proportion was among those aged 35 or older, who were less likely to have parents or a spouse left behind.

#### **f) Most frequently used method of sending remittances**

The most frequently used method of remitting funds was through an informal agent, which was consistent across nationalities, but especially for the migrants from Myanmar. The exception was the Lao who sent money home in a greater proportion through personal networks, such as relatives or friends. The majority of the Lao and Cambodians preferred to take money home themselves compared with most of the Myanmar migrants who did not. Banks were used more by the Cambodians and Lao.

More migrant women sent remittance through relatives compared with the men, while they remitted via an informal agent in a slightly smaller proportion than did the men. Migrants aged 35 or older used informal agents' services more than the migrants in other age groups did, while those younger than 25 used banks more often.

The longer migrants had lived in Thailand the more they used an informal agent to send money home. More of them also carried the money home themselves compared with the others. More of the "newer" migrants, or those who had lived in Thailand less than three years, sent their remittances through a bank, a friend or an employer than did the longer-term migrants.

The reason most often mentioned for using an informal agent was that it was "convenient, fast, easy and problem free". A substantial proportion of the migrants used this method because they did not know of any other method. The reason for using a relative or friend was mostly that this was perceived to be a reliable method. The reason given for using a bank was because it too was "convenient, fast, easy and problem free". Most migrants who carried home money themselves considered this method as an opportunity to visit their family.

More than half of the migrants did not know any other method to send their remittances home than the one they were using. This was especially true for the Myanmar migrants. Other methods, when they were known, included a bank, friend, informal agent, relative or workmate. More females than males did not know of any other method, and more of the older than younger migrants did not know of alternative methods.

More than two-fifths of the migrants used other methods in addition to their most frequently used method. The proportion was largest among the Lao and lowest among the migrants from Myanmar. There was no difference in terms of sex. Fewer migrants aged 35 or older used additional methods than did the younger migrants.

More Cambodians used a bank or an informal agent as a second choice than did the Lao or Myanmar migrants, both of whom relied on a friend to take money home more than did the Cambodians.

A substantial number of the migrants did not actually want to use the method they used. Rather, they used it because no better options were available. The methods used in greater proportion than the preferred method were an informal agent, relative, friend and employer. In contrast, the methods used in smaller proportion than the preferred method were banks and carrying own money home. In fact, the largest proportion of migrants preferred to send their remittances through a bank, even though for various reasons they could not access banking services.

The migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia preferred sending their remittances through an informal agent in a relatively greater proportion, while the Lao preferred to carry their money home themselves. The Lao were the least inclined to send remittances through a bank. More male migrants preferred to use a bank than did the females, and more migrants aged 35 or older preferred to use an informal agent compared with their younger counterparts. Migrants aged 25–34 preferred a bank more than those in other age groups, and migrants who had been

living in Thailand for at least five years preferred remitting through an informal agent more than the recently arrived migrants did; migrants who had resided in Thailand for at least ten years preferred a bank less than the other migrants did.

#### **g) Expenses for sending remittances by the most frequently used method**

All migrants who sent remittances through banks and almost all of those who used an informal agent had to pay a sending fee. Although the majority of those who used an informal network, such as relatives, reported no expenses at all, more than half of the migrants who relied on a friend paid token compensation (some did not perceive it as a sending fee). Most migrants who sent money with the help of their employer also paid a sending fee.

Migrants paid fees in various forms, including a percentage charge, a fixed fee per transaction, a per-minute phone calling fee and a per-call calling fee. The majority of migrants who paid a sending fee were charged a percentage of the amount of money sent; the median percentage charged was 5 per cent. Slightly more than one-fourth of the migrants paid a fixed fee per transaction (the median was 40 baht). Around 11 per cent paid 10 baht per minute to call whenever they wanted to send money home. A few paid a per-call charge of 300 baht. A calling fee was generally associated with the use of an informal agent.

For some Myanmar migrants, the sending fee was included in the total amount they had to pay to remit their funds. To send 100,000 kyat, for example, the median amount paid was 2,750 baht (including a sending fee of around 250 baht and a remittance of 2,500 baht).

Most migrants who paid other expenses did so when they remitted through relatives or friends. The expenses were usually not considered as fees but rather as compensation for a relative's or a friend's assistance or to cover some of the travelling costs. Such compensation amounted to around 300 baht.

#### **h) Expenses for receiving remittances**

About half of the migrants reported that their family also had to pay some fee to receive the remittance. Almost one-third reported their family paid a receiving fee, and almost one-fifth reported paying other expenses. The proportion who reported that their family had extra expenses was relatively large among the Cambodians, the men and migrants aged 35 or older. More than half of the migrants reported that their family paid a percentage charge (at a median of 3.5 per cent). Most of the other expenses were associated with transportation, either for the family to get the money or for persons who took the money to the family (at medians of 65 baht and 100 baht, respectively).

#### **i) Total expense in remittance sending (sending fee and receiving fee)**

Sending remittances through an informal agent was more expensive than the other methods. This channel also incurred the greatest overall expenses, which was 380 baht, including both sending and receiving expenses. Using personal contacts was also rather expensive, at a median of 300 baht for relatives and 210 baht for friends. The median amount for sending money through a bank was 275 baht.

#### **j) How migrants' home families received remittances**

More than half of the migrants reported that their family had to travel to some place to receive the remittances sent to them. The proportion was relatively large among the Cambodians and the Myanmar migrants. Only about a third of the migrants sending remittances through an informal agent reported that someone took the money to their family, while a much larger proportion of migrants using relatives or friends reported that the money was taken to their home. The most-often mentioned place where migrants' families had to pick up their money was at the informal agent's home, typically located in a city or town. The findings imply that a substantial proportion of migrants' families had to travel some distance to get their remittance.

#### **k) Transfer time when sending money**

Overall, more than 70 per cent of migrants reported that their families received remittances in less than two days. Only a few migrants reported that it took at least a week. More of the migrants from Myanmar said that it took their family longer to receive money sent to them compared with the Lao or Cambodian migrants. Most migrants (about three-fourths) who used an informal agent or a bank reported that their family received the money less than two days; more than a third who used a relative or friend said it took at least two days to arrive.

#### **l) Documents needed and verification received when sending money**

About 18 per cent of the migrants needed some type of document or information when remitting money through their most frequently used method. This was the case for more of the Cambodians and fewer of the Lao. The document or information needed included the ID number of the recipient and/or their bank account number. The proportion of migrants who received any verification of arrival after remitting money through their most frequently used method was slightly more than one-fifth. More Cambodians said they received notice than did the other nationals.

Only a small fraction of migrants who sent their remittances through an informal agent reported that the method required a document or additional information, and the agent provided verification that money was sent. For other methods, such as sending via a relative or friend, receiving proof that the money arrived was even less frequent. Thus, migrants often had to call home to check that the money had arrived or, even, to alert them that it would be coming. The findings indicate that the migrants' families had to go some place else to receive these phone calls, most typically to an informal agent's residence.

In some cases, the delivery of funds (a kind of "remittance advance") and confirmation of receipt took place concomitantly; a local agent delivered money to a receiver and notified a colleague in the host country, standing with the sender, who then handed over the amount that was delivered. There were also reports of agents who advanced a remittance even before receiving payment from a migrant worker.

#### **m) Problems encountered with the most frequently used method**

Less than one-tenth of migrants had ever experienced any problem in sending remittances home. The proportion of those who had encountered difficulty was largest among the migrants from Myanmar and smallest among the Cambodians. About 10 per cent of the migrants who sent remittance through an informal agent had encountered problems. There were fewer problems when remittances were sent through a bank or a friend. However, 13 per cent of the respondents indicated a problem when sending remittances through the employer. The problems migrants experienced were basically that their family did not receive anything or there was a delay in receiving it; other less-mentioned difficulties referred to informal agents not sending the money to the home family, receipt of only a portion of the money sent, families having to pay too much to receive the money and the inconvenience in sending and receiving money.

#### **n) Information about sending money**

The majority of migrants learned about remitting money from informal sources, including friends or workmates, parents or relatives, employers and informal agents. The information typically was about the benefits of using a particular method, but some mentioned the process involved or the cost.

#### **o) Intention before coming to Thailand to send money home**

About 91 per cent of the migrants intended to remit money home once they began working in Thailand. The proportion was largest among the Myanmar migrants and smallest among the Cambodians. The migrants intended to send a median of 3,000 baht a month; the migrants from Myanmar intended to send the most and the Lao the least (in a comparison of medians). More migrant women intended to remit compared with the men, and more of the migrants younger than 35 intended to remit than the migrants aged 35 or older. However, the men intended to send more money than the women did.

Most of the migrants, especially among the Cambodians, intended their remittances to be used for their family's daily expenses. More than half intended it for health care expenses. Education was mentioned by almost half of the migrants. Two-fifths of the migrants wanted their remittances to be used for an income-generating activity. Women more so than men intended their remittances to be used for education, health care, housing and daily expenses. More migrants younger than 35 years expected their remittances to be used for an income-generating endeavour and for purchasing household appliances than those aged 35 or older.

#### **p) Pooling monetary contributions for community of origin**

About 30 per cent of the migrants pooled money to send to their home community as a gift. While more than half of the Cambodians and 31 per cent of the migrants from Myanmar had done so, only 6 per cent of the Lao had. The median amount donated each time was 350 baht; the Myanmar migrants donated the most. Male migrants had pooled money in a larger proportion than did the females and donated a larger amount each time, though they donated fewer times. More migrants aged 25–34 had pooled money than those in other age groups; but of those who had donated, those aged 35 or older gave more times and gave a larger (median) amount each time than the other age groups.

#### **q) In-kind remittances**

Slightly more than a third of the interviewed migrants sent goods to their family. The proportion was relatively large among the Myanmar migrants, the females, those who were married but living separately from their spouse and those who had lived in Thailand for at least ten years. The most common in-kind remittance sent over the previous two years was clothing. Other goods included food, household appliances and electrical appliances.

The median number of times that remittances in-kind were sent in the previous two years was twice; the median value of the goods remitted was 3,000 baht, with the Myanmar migrants sending a higher-valued median amount and the Lao sending the least.

The most popular method to get in-kind items home was for the migrants to carry them, except migrants from Myanmar who sent goods mostly through a friend, relative or informal agent.

### ***Income, expenditures and savings***

#### **a) Income**

Both the family and individual income of the migrants had increased after they came to Thailand and after they had been in the country awhile. The median family income increased from 1,500 baht per month (in the home country) to 4,000 baht per month after the migrants first arrived, and then it increased to 10,500 baht per month by the time of the survey. As for individual income, the median income at the time of the survey was 6,000 baht per month, which was an almost doubling (from 3,500 baht per month) of what they earned after first arriving in Thailand. The migrants with legal status earned slightly more income (a median of 6,000 baht a month) than those with irregular status (a median of 5,500 baht a month). Both the family and individual incomes of the registered migrants were higher than incomes of those not registered (and without passport/visa).

## **b) Expenditures in host country**

The migrant workers kept the biggest slice of their earnings for remitting to their family. The median amount of money saved a month for remitting was 2,000 baht. The median amount of monthly savings for remittance was largest among the Myanmar migrants and lowest among the Lao. The second-largest share of monthly expenditure was for food (a median of 1,500 baht), greatest among the Lao and smallest among the Myanmar migrants. Personal savings, considered separately from the savings for remittances, took the third-largest share of monthly earnings (at a median of 1,000 baht). Home rental expense amounted to a median of 850 baht; the Cambodians paid more (by median) than the others, while the Lao paid the least.

About one-fourth of the migrants spent money on alcohol, especially the Cambodians. The median amount spent on alcohol was 400 baht per month. Almost a fourth of the migrants spent income on cigarettes (at a median of 200 baht).

About 20 per cent of the migrants spent money every month on gambling, with the Myanmar migrants doing so in the largest proportion and the Cambodians in the smallest. The median amount spent was 200 baht. About half of the migrants, especially the Lao, spent money on personal entertainment (at a median of 300 baht). Cambodians spent the largest median amount on personal entertainment.

Telephone communication expenses were reported by 85 per cent of migrants. The proportion was largest among the Lao migrants and smallest among the Cambodians, but the median was the same across nationalities, at 300 baht per month.

About one-fourth of the migrants paid for transport to work, and more than a third of them had to pay for work-related equipment. About half of the migrants donated money (on occasion), at a median of 100 baht per month.

Health care (medicine and hospitalization) was another expenditure reported by about half of the migrants. The median amount spent on health care was 100 baht for the Lao and the Cambodians. Few migrants spent their income on education or training while living in Thailand.

## **c) Savings**

Among migrants who lived in Thailand with their family, most had accumulated savings, with the median amount saved per month of 1,500 baht. The personal savings were greatest among migrants who had lived in Thailand for more than five years. The overall family savings (family residing in Thailand) was a median of 3,000 baht a month. It was relatively high for the Cambodian families, at a median of 4,000 baht a month.

### ***Access to a personal bank account***

#### **a) Access to a personal bank account in Thailand**

About one-fifth (21 per cent) of the migrant workers had a bank account in Thailand. More of the Myanmar migrants (38 per cent) had a bank account compared with the others; only 8 per cent of the Cambodians had one. The proportion of migrants with a bank account was relatively large among the females, especially among those who were married and currently living with a spouse and among the more recent migrants. More than half of those who had a bank account said they acquired it with the help of their employer rather than through their own initiative. The migrants reported bank accounts in Siam City Bank (23 per cent), Bangkok Bank (19 per cent), Krung Thai Bank (18 per cent), Siam Commercial Bank (16 per cent) and Kasikorn Bank (12 per cent).

Migrant workers without a bank account stated that they lacked knowledge about how to access banking services. Other reasons mentioned were that they thought they were not eligible to open an account because they did not have the required documents.

Most migrants who did not have a bank account wanted one, especially among the Myanmar and Lao migrants, males, previously married migrants and migrants who had been in Thailand for three years. About two-fifths of them wanted a bank account to keep their savings, for reasons of security or convenience. Very few of the migrants wanted a bank account just to remit money.

**b) Access to a personal bank account in migrant's home country**

The proportion of migrants, or any family member, having a bank account in their home country was very small (12 per cent). The proportion was relatively large among the Lao migrants (19 per cent). In addition to not having money to save in a bank, limitation in geographic access to a bank and lack of knowledge about how to use banking services were the major reported barriers to using a bank in their home country.

## 8. Discussion and recommendations

Migrant workers' remittances have the potential to spur economic development in poor migrant-sending communities. The development impact of remittances, however, depends first of all on migrant workers' access to money transfer channels that are affordable and safe. Second, the impact is determined by the recipient households' capacities and opportunities to use the money for productive investments. Consistent with previous notions, this study shows that remittances from migrants who have come to Thailand from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar provided a safety net for many of their families at home. These families were likely to treat migration as a strategy to address unemployment and to improve well-being. According to the findings, almost half of the migrants reported that their remittances were the main source of income for their family, enabling them to meet their daily material requirements.

Many studies show that remittances lead to a decline in the number of people living in poverty. Even when remittances are directed towards consumption, they generate more economic activities through a cascade of multiplier effects. For example, spending on daily needs and foods will improve food security and nutritional status. Expenditures for health care or education will improve the livelihood prospects of future generations. Channelling remittances for investment into physical capital and production inputs can help in employment and income-generating activities. Needless to say, there is a close connection between economic migration, remittances and development.

The relationship between migration and development is a two-way interconnection because migration can be a cause and a result of development, while underdevelopment can be either alleviated or exacerbated by migration, at least in the short term. Migration can affect development and growth through three channels: i) changes in labour supply, ii) productivity and iii) migrants' transfers. The positive outcomes of successful migration from the labour-sending countries' perspective are remittances, skills acquired, lower unemployment, local economic expansion, strong national foreign currency reserves and poverty alleviation.

As the findings from the remittance survey have shown, households start using migration as a strategy to improve their livelihood, which may encourage those left behind to start investing in skills required to leave the country and seek improved work prospects abroad. In the long run, the economy of the origin country may gradually adjust to the migration of its workforce. This may take the form of increased labour force participation, improved mechanization of agriculture, increased investment in other sectors such as construction, and improvements in human capital accumulation.

Thus, to link migration and development, the most effective policy is to improve the legal status of migrants and to improve the general social and political-economic circumstances in the sending countries. On the sending end, governments should promote orderly labour migration and reduce the obstacles and costs within the migration process. In addition, an attractive social, economic and political environment in labour-sending countries should be created. This will encourage migrants to remain involved in their home countries, to return and participate in their home country's growth and to make social and economic contributions.

Labour-receiving countries should promote the orderly cross-border movement of labour in a way that generates the development potential of labour migration for both the sending and receiving societies. Migrant workers help the host country by taking low-skilled jobs shunned by its nationals and thus help mitigate any labour shortage. The migrants are attracted to this job situation due to better wages, at least compared with what they would earn in their country. Hence, they create double-positive labour market outcomes to both the host and home countries. The public sector needs to ensure that the benefits of migration reach the migrant workers, to the extent possible, by making certain they are given legal wages, provided with good working

conditions and not subjected to exploitative recruitment practices or extorted by unscrupulous officials.

More specific to the objectives of this study, the challenge is how to maximize the benefits of remittances in terms of poverty reduction. Reducing transaction costs involved in sending remittances, offering matching resources/funds for investment, creating special savings schemes, providing access to banking facilities (in home and host countries), linking microfinance institutions/savings programmes to remittances, and influencing the productive use of remittances are some measures to ensure the full benefits in the home economy.

### ***Summary of issues and recommendations***

**Issue:** There is a need to provide knowledge to migrant workers, during pre-departure training, on financial literacy (how to plan and manage their earnings and how to recognize appropriate channels for sending remittances). The findings from the survey indicate that the most common method that migrants used in sending money home was through an informal channel (informal agents). While this method is used because of the perceived convenience, speed, ease and lack of problems, about one-tenth of the migrants using this method had encountered problems. Moreover, a number of the migrants reported that they used this method because they knew of no other way. This implies limited knowledge on options available for sending remittances. The high cost of sending remittances via informal agents was also mentioned as a problem because not only did migrants have to pay to send money, but their families also had to pay to receive the money they sent (about half of the migrants reported this to be the case).

#### *Recommendations to the Thai Government and governments of countries of origin:*

- 1) raise awareness and provide information to migrants about remittance-transfer options during the pre-departure training and on arrival in destination country;
- 2) recognize the role of informal money couriers and register them;
- 3) develop the formal channel with affordable costs and timely procedures;
- 4) regulate the fee charged by the informal money couriers;
- 5) license the well-established informal remittance-sending agencies.

**Issue:** Based on the findings of the study, there is a need to make banking services in Thailand available and accessible to migrant workers. According to the survey, many migrant workers favour sending remittances through a bank. Most migrants expressed their preference for having a bank account in Thailand. However, access to banking services has been hampered by a number of regulatory constraints. Other main obstacles reported include migrants' limited knowledge of how to use banking services.

#### *Recommendations to the Thai Government and development agencies:*

- 1) reduce the documents required for access to banking services in Thailand;
- 2) accept an ID card/work permit issued to the registered migrants by the ministry of the interior for opening a bank account;
- 3) explore opportunities for partnerships between banks and other financial intermediaries in the remittance market to facilitate the remittance transfers for migrants;
- 4) explore ways and means to enable irregular migrants to open bank accounts, possibly by using their own national IDs;
- 5) coordinate with employers to help migrant employees in opening a bank account;
- 6) provide information about banking services to migrants on arrival in the destination country;
- 7) reduce the transaction costs for sending remittances both at the sending and receiving ends;
- 8) exempt remittances from taxation.

*Recommendations to the governments of countries of origin:*

- 1) improve and widen financial infrastructures, and involve microfinance institutions in rural areas where banking institutions are not yet available;
- 2) pursue policies to enhance remittance flows and maximize the development impacts in the local community through micro-credit programmes, enterprise promotion and employment-generation programmes;
- 3) provide financial and technical support to self-help organizations established by migrants in labour-receiving countries and encourage the role of the diaspora in promoting the link between migration and development (through involvement in the transfer of remittances, knowledge sharing and fostering investment and trade between the labour-sending and receiving countries).

**Issue:** Most migrants reported that they intended to return home at some point in the future, but a third of them said they did not gain much in the way of new skills from working in Thailand that would enable them to reintegrate into the labour market of their home country.

*Recommendations for the Thai Government:*

- 1) provide marketable skills training to migrant workers who want to return to their home country, in coordination with authorities in labour-sending countries;
- 2) coordinate with countries of origin in identifying the opportunities for the productive use of remittances in starting up businesses as well as providing business support to the returnees;
- 3) assist labour-sending countries to develop a network of public and private employment services for the reintegration of returned migrant workers.



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## Migrant workers' remittances: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar

The study on migrant workers' remittances to their families Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar investigated the sending behaviour in terms of the amount sent, the frequency in sending, the intended purposes of the remittances and the actual use. The researchers looked at the patterns of remittance sending by nationality, sex, age groups, marital status of migrants and the duration of stay in Thailand, the host country. They also explored the channels for sending remittances, the reasons, the associated costs of various sending channels and how the remittances reach the family in the home country. The researchers surveyed the incomes and patterns of expenditure of migrant workers before migration and after migration. The report covers the savings behaviour of migrant workers and their access to financial services in the host and the home countries. In brief, labour migration has tremendously improved the welfare of migrant workers and their families in terms of gaining greater income, more consumption power and presumably better health care and education for their family. However, there is still room for labour-receiving and labour-sending countries to realize the impact of migration and remittances on social and economic development. For a labour-receiving country such as Thailand, promoting and providing the opportunity for migrant workers from its three neighbouring countries to access its banking services is a starting point for augmenting the benefits of migration, which might indirectly reduce the need for irregular migration and re-migration. It is essential for labour-sending countries to develop the basic financial infrastructure for fostering the benefits from the remittances. Helping migrant workers become financially literate before their departure abroad would enable them to work in the labour-receiving countries with more sound purpose.

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