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## Sex trade related migration in Cambodia - A case study of the brothel town Svay Pak

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**Abstract:**

Sex trade is an obvious part of the labour market for resource poor, migrant women, a category that might be increasing substantially in numbers with the feminization and increase of migrant flows in developing countries. Still there is not much economic research on the topic. The aim of this study is therefore to shed more light on the phenomenon of sex trade related migration. I will do so through a case study of determinants of migration to a small Cambodian town and migration hot spot, Svay Pak after a government imposed closure of the 23 brothels that used to entirely dominate the economy of the town. Focusing on key topics in different dominant economic theories of migration, an interview survey was conducted with 120 Svay Pak inhabitants.

It was found that earnings in sex trade can be considerable, in comparison to earnings in typical female migrant occupations. Sex trade seems to benefit the surrounding community with big income linkages, proved by a big inflow of migrants not working directly in sex trade and the tremendous effects on the surrounding community of the closure of brothels. This was the case even though sex workers only constituted a small part of the entire population. Despite good earnings, remittances sent from Svay Pak followed the general pattern of being used for the most basic kind of expenses. Remittance behaviour also showed the presence of strong remittance obligations of female migrants.

Key words: sex trade, prostitution, migration, Cambodia, informal economy.

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## 1. Introduction

Sex trade is an evident and often very visible part of many developing countries' informal labour markets. It has also been claimed that sex trade is the cause of substantial flows of labour migration from developing countries (Brussa 2007 pp. 76-78). Furthermore, sex trade is linked with several popular topics on the development economics research agenda such as migration, remittances and informal economy. Still it has not been given much attention by economists. Interest has rather been dominated by anthropological or health perspectives. Studies focusing on how "every day" sex trade integrates into developing countries' economies are more or less absent. As Mofatt notes, lack of research of course has a lot to do with the difficulties in obtaining reliable data for studies of activities being as obscure and socially stigmatized as the sale and purchase of commercial sex (Mofatt 2005 p. 193, see also Cameron 1999 p.1523). Estimates of the size, frequency and impact of sex trade are often based on anecdotal evidence, rather than rigorous studies.

### Indications about the economic importance of sex trade in existing research

The few more rigorous studies that have been undertaken of the economic impact of sex trade, indicate that it may actually constitute a substantial part of many developing countries' economies (Bishop 1998 p.35). This is especially true for Southeast Asia. A study conducted by Lin Lean Lim (1998 p.7) claim that sex trade accounts for a significant proportion of the economies in several Southeast Asian countries: between 2-14 percent of GDP in Indonesia, Malaysia the Philippines and Thailand. Lim also estimated that between 0,25 and 1,5 per cent of the total female population in these countries were working as sex workers<sup>1</sup> (Lim 1998 pp. 7, 26-27,41)<sup>2</sup>. In another widely quoted study Phongpaichit et al. estimated that the value-added of commercial sex work in Thailand was approximately 100 billion baht per year for the 1993-1995 period, i.e. in comparison about one third of the value-added in agriculture (the biggest employer) or in construction and corresponding to around 3% of Thai GNP at the time (Phongpaichit 1998 referred to in Clark 2003 p. 195). Phongpaichit used very conservative figures compared to other observers, still, the number of sex workers in her accounts makes up 2.2-3.3 percent of Thai females in

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'sex worker', which is the term commonly used by sex workers' unions. They claim the traditional term 'prostitute' has too many, socially stigmatizing, connotations. By using the term worker it is, they say, easier, to claim the rights given to workers in legal and less stigmatized occupations. See f.ex. <http://www.nswp.org/> or [www.iusw.org](http://www.iusw.org). Some, especially, abolitionists claim that using the term "sex worker" is a way of normalizing the practice of and legitimizing sex trade and thereby increasing supply and demand for sexual services and hence the exploitation surrounding the phenomenon. See also Pheterson, Gail (1990).

<sup>2</sup> Lim used questionnaires as well as unstructured interviews with key informants, including sex workers, managers of sex trade establishments, police and other government and non-government officials. Lim conducted regional case studies and covered different sub sectors of the sex trade. However, Lim does not give any information about the total number of respondents.

the 15-29 age range (Pongpaichit 1998 p. 208, pp 195-210).<sup>3</sup> Some researchers also refer to old traditions of seemingly extensive sex trade in Thailand (Murray 2001 p. 75 referring to Elmers 1995:43).

The example of Thailand not only highlights sex work as a possibly distinct and sizable part of a developing economies' labour markets, but it also highlights the possibility of important *linkages to other sectors of the economy*. A 1997 survey by the Thai Ministry of Public Health found that out of 104 262 employed in 7759 establishments where sexual services were sold, only 64 886 were sex workers. This figure did not take into account food stall owners, cigarette and liquor vendors, health workers and bribed public officials that were also living on the sex industry (Lim 1998 p. 9 citing Bhatiasevi<sup>4</sup>) If remittances sent from sex workers are taken into consideration the number of people depending on the sex industry for their livelihood reaches even higher numbers. In 1992 the value of estimated remittances, US\$ 300 million, sent from Thai urban sex workers to rural areas was bigger than several of the development programmes funded by the Thai government, according to Lim (1998 p.10).

The sex industry also has linkages and interdependencies to business in the border area between the informal and the formal sector - such as gambling/casino, entertainment industry and segments of the tourism industry. Sex trade may act as a crucial component in several Southeast Asian tourism industries and thus as a source of foreign exchange and possible source of capital for development-enhancing investments (Tipton 1998 pp. 391-392).

#### Rural-urban migration and sex trade

Another reason to pay attention to the phenomenon of sex trade is the *demographic preconditions* connected with the likelihood of sex trade taking place. The future population growth is probably going to increase, in a big scale, the population most likely to supply sexual services i.e. young, poor, urban women (Ahlburg et al. 1998 p. 169, Mofatt 2005 p. 195).

According to UN projected growth rates the world population is going to increase to 7.8 bn by 2025. Of this growth 88 percent is estimated to take place in urban areas. I.e. by 2025 about 60 percent of the world population will live in cities. Moreover, 90 percent of all urban growth is estimated to take place in

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<sup>3</sup> Phongpaichit used conservative estimates of the number of sex workers in different subsectors of the sex trade and multiplied these with payments and conservative estimates of amount of sold services. Information was acquired through field observations, interviews with key informants and government officials. When reviewing literature from different continents Vandepitt et al. (2006) found that percentage of the population estimated to be female sex workers in sub-Saharan African capitals was between 0.7% and 4.3% . In Asia the figure ranged between 0.2% and 2.6%; in the ex-Russian Federation between 0.1% and 1.5%; in East Europe between 0.4% and 1.4%; in West Europe between 0.1% and 1.4%; and in Latin America between 0.2% and 7.4%.

<sup>4</sup> Bhatiasevi, Aphaluck. 1997. "Health Ministry denies estimates of two million sex workers", Bangkok Post 29 July, p. 4.

developing countries, many of which in Asia. Thus, we are likely to see an increased number of mega cities in developing countries and hence probably also increased numbers of urban poor (Steinfatt 2002 pp.8-9).

Of the world's poor 70 percent are women. In Southeast Asia 50 percent of the population was projected to be below the age of 15 in 2010. Thus, there is probably going to be an increase in the numbers of young, female, urban poor and, as Steinfatt notes, sex work is likely to be a principal source of income available for this group of women. Thus sex trade is likely to be an increasingly appearing phenomenon (Steinfatt 2002 pp.8-9).

Many researchers observe what they describe as a feminization of migration flows with an increasing proportion of developing countries' migrants being women (Skeldon 1999 p.1, Staab 2004 p. 5, Piper 2002 p. 1, Yamanaka 2005 p.1). For example, the green revolution/technical changes in agriculture tend to press more women than men out of the sector, and the proportion of migrating women trying to find occupation in urban areas is therefore increasing (Tipton 1998 p. 389).

*Hence, there seem to be a relationship between migration and the increased size of the populace that dominates supply of sexual services, i.e. young, female urban poor.* This motivates a focus on migration when trying to understand push and pull factors involved in sex trade, as well as it motivates studies of sex trade when trying to broaden the understanding of the determinants of migration in developing countries.

In the typical labour market of developing countries, formal sector jobs often are much more difficult to obtain for migrants, compared with what is offered to those with an urban origin. Therefore, migrants have to a great extent to rely on informal sector employment (Vahapaasi 2005 p. 4, Derks 2008 pp. 65-69). As Sex work is an informal sector occupation with both easy entry and relatively high pay off for uneducated labour it explains the link between migration and sex work (Meier et al.2005 p. 371).

One might expect supply in the sex market to be a decreasing phenomenon when the economy develops and there is a growth of alternative employment opportunities. However, this does not seem to have been the reality in several Southeast Asian economies. In the countries surveyed by Lim 1998, sex trade did not decrease. On the contrary, both supply and demand seem to have increased with economic growth (Lim 1998 Pp. 206-208). As noted by de Haas (de Haas 2008 p. 16), economic development does little to

reduce migration pressures, rather it does the opposite, leading to a migration hump (Haas 2008 p.9). As discussed above, migration and urbanization pressures may in turn result in increased sex trade.

Thus, the link between development, migration and sex trade is another reason to take an interest in sex trade and sex trade related migration.

### The aim of the study

To conclude, sex trade is intrinsically linked to migration. Sex trade may thus be an increasing phenomenon along the path of urbanization and economic development. Sex trade is an obvious part of the labour market for resource poor, migrant women, a category that might be increasing substantially in numbers with the feminization and increase of migrant flows. It may also reach proportions that in turn affect prospects for development. Still there is not much economic research about sex trade in developing countries.

The aim of this study is therefore to shed more light on the phenomenon of sex trade related migration. I will do so through a case study of the determinants of migration to a small Cambodian town and migration hot spot, Svay Pak. The survey took place after a government imposed closure of the 23 brothels that used to dominate the economy of the town.

The outline of the study is the following: Chapter two will provide an overview over existing research into migration patterns in Cambodia, relying heavily on statistics from the Cambodian national Institute of Statistics. It also describes existing, limited, research about sex trade in Cambodia. Chapter three describes some dominant themes in economic theories of labour migration. Chapter four presents the survey methodology. Chapter five presents the observations. Chapter six analyses observations against the background of previous research on migration and sex trade as presented in chapters two and three and summarizes the more important findings.

## **2. Background: Migration and sex trade in Cambodia**

### **2.1 Migration in Cambodia**

This chapter relies heavily on official statistics compiled by Cambodian National Institute of Statistics (NIS). The Japanese Statistics Bureau and Statistics Sweden have also been very involved in producing this statistical material. The last NIS population census, in 2008, reported the Cambodian population to be

13.4 million, with a growth rate of 1,54 percent per year. The population is young, with one third below 15 years age (NIS 2009c). 80 percent is living in rural areas (NIS 2009b, p. 33). During the last decades Cambodia has experienced rapid growth and decreased overall poverty. However, in the country side poverty is still deeply rooted and income differences are increasing sharply, both between urban and rural areas and inside the rural areas themselves. Between 1994 and 2004 per capita consumption rose with eight percent amongst the poorest fifth, compared to 45 percent amongst the richest fifth of the population (World Bank 2006 p. 26). Of the total number of poor, 90 percent live in rural areas. (World Bank 2009 p. 21-25, MOP 2006 p. 49). Economic growth has been centered to Phnom Penh and other urban areas and can mainly be attributed to garment manufacturing, construction and tourism (MOP 2006 p. 50). If growth continues to remain urban focused, rural poverty will remain high and hence urban areas are likely to continue to attract migrants (MOP 2006 p50).

The 2008 census recorded 26.5 percent of the population as migrants (NIS 2009b p.51). Migrants make up almost 60 percent of the urban population, (NIS 2009a p. 97) and 65 percent of the urban migrants originate in the country side. A majority of migrants are rural-rural migrants, however, if you look at the five years preceding the census, urban migration dominates (NIS 2009a p. 101). Of the total number of recorded migrants 97 percent were internal migrants (NIS 2009a p. 99).

### Reasons for migrating

Looking at the reasons for migrating, search for employment was the reason quoted by 18.8 percent of females and 24,2 percent males interviewed in the 2008 census. Almost half of all female migrants moved because their family moved, while this was the case for only about a quarter of male migrants (NIS 2009a p. 99). Marriage and transfer of work place are other frequent reasons for resettlement. For six percent the reason was that they were orphaned and two percent report “insecurity” as the reason.

After taking over Phnom Penh in 1975 the Khmer Rouge ordered the entire population to evacuate the city, which remained a ghost town until 1980. It took many years for population displaced by the civil war to resettle, however, the proportion of migrants in the population has decreased since the previous census in 1998 as many in the older age groups who resettled because of the civil war have now passed away (NIS 2009b p. 51).

Only 0.36 percent of NIS interviewees report “lost land/lost home” as the reason for migrating. In individual smaller surveys however, the issue of landlessness appears as an important issue when analyzing poverty and migration in Cambodia (Maltoni 2006 p. 149). Historically it used to be the case that many newly married couples were provided with new, not cleared, land either by the government or

by parents (Maltoni 2007 p. 15). This is no more the case. On the contrary there are strong forces depriving vulnerable groups of land that they used to cultivate, but to which they were not formally entitled. Following a process of formalizing land ownership many poor have had to leave their land. 12-15 percent of the rural population is estimated to be landless with an increase of 1-2 percent per year and additional 40 percent are near landless or land-poor (Maltoni 2007 p. 15 referring to Haapala 2003).

Landlessness is one common characteristic of vulnerable groups. Worst affected of this poverty are female headed households, internally displaced, demobilized soldiers and indigenous minorities (Maltoni 2007 p. 15). Cambodia has remarkably high share of female headed households which remained constant at about 26 percent in both the 1998 and the 2008 census. Half of those were married, 43 percent were divorced, separated or widowed and eight percent were never married (NIS 2009a p.138). Without access to land there is an increased reliance on migration for survival as possibilities for obtaining employment are extremely limited (Maltoni 2007 p. 15). When exposed to a sudden emergency of some kind, such as medical expenses, the sale of land is often the only option available to access cash. When this option is exploited, and there are no (more) possibilities to indebt yourself, migration is frequently the only option available to raise cash (Maltoni 2007 p. 8, 14). Maltoni finds a strong connection between health problems, debt and landlessness. However, NIS found “insecurity” and “lost land/lost home” to be reasons for migrating in only 2.36 percent of the cases in its huge data set.

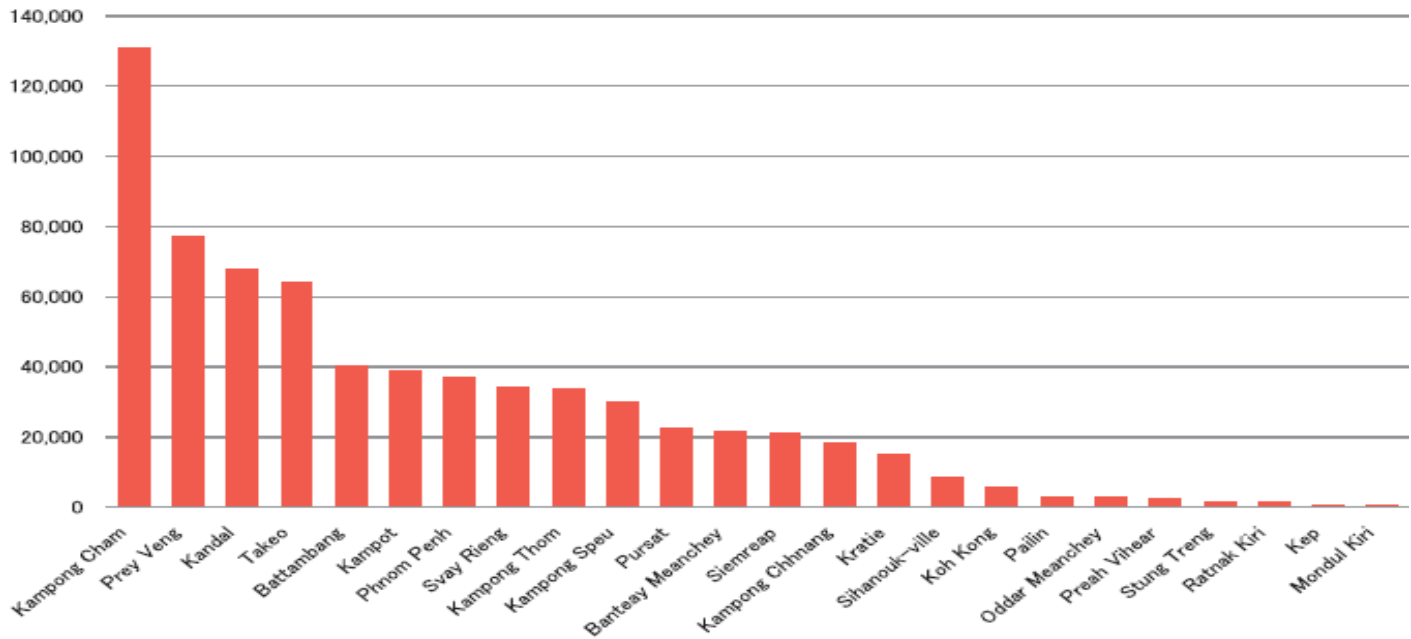
#### Characteristics of migrant sending areas

When analyzing the cross-province flows of migrants, some provinces strongly dominate as migrant senders or receivers. The migration flows look similar both when looking at longer (5 years) and shorter (1 year) periods of time (NIS 2009b 102). Over the five years preceding the 2008 census a total of 679 415 migrated to another province (i.e. internal migration inside the province is not included in the figure) (NIS 2009b p. 91).

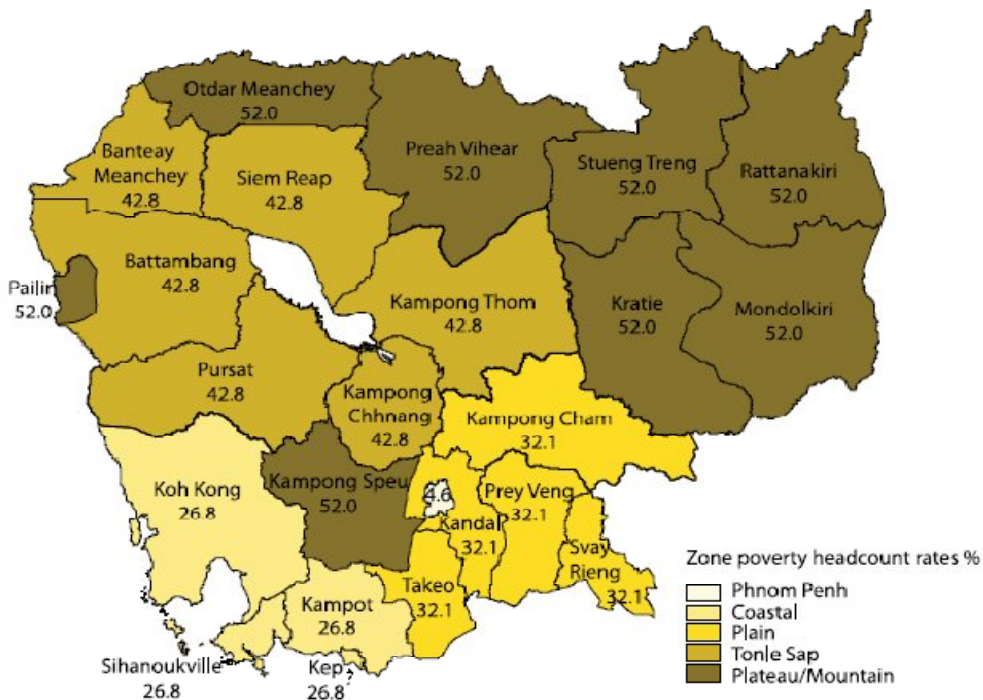
What is striking is that the poorer northern and northeastern provinces (see map) are not big migrant sending areas (see figure 1). Instead the, in relative terms, more prosperous South-eastern provinces close to Phnom Penh dominate both as senders and receivers (NIS 2009b. p. 92).

**Figure 1** Nr. of migrants leaving the province 2003-2008

(Source: NIS 2009b p. 93)



**Cambodia poverty map**



(Source: UNDP 2007 p. 23, originally MOP 2006 p.53.) The map shows poverty headcount levels, with the provinces divided into five different geographical zones in order to reach statistical significance.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> New poverty measures from the latest Cambodian Socio- Economic Survey 2009 are not yet available.

### Migration to the Phnom Penh area

Svay Pak I situated 11 km from Phnom Penh. During the years 2003-2008 the Phnom Penh area received almost 40 percent of the total number of cross province migrants (NIS 2009b. p. 91). Migrants came predominantly from Kampong Cham (20,4%), Prey Veng (15,9%) and Kandal (15,6%) and these provinces are also the top-sending provinces on the national level. During 2003-2008 the Phnom Penh area received in total about 250 000 migrants while Battambang, the second biggest recipient, received only about 55 000 migrants (NIS 2009b p.92).

It is likely that populous areas are overrepresented in migration flows and thus overshadow other characteristics than population size of the sending provinces. Table 1, ranks different provinces according to how big *proportion of total migration from the province* that went to Phnom Penh. It also ranks the provinces according to *how big migration is in relation to the total population size of the province*. Moreover, it lists the twenty percent poorest provinces. You can see from the table that the top sending provinces are still in the top if you adjust for population size and size of total migration. It is also quite clear from the table that the poorest provinces are not important sending areas to Phnom Penh. I.e. the provinces in the left column are largely absent in the three columns to the right, where the same provinces re-appear. Unfortunately I have found no statistics about the gini coefficient at provincial level, such could have shed more light on the importance of relative deprivation as a determinant of migration flows.

**Table 1** Migrant flows to Phnom Penh in 2008\* by proportion of total migration, population size and poverty\*\*

Provinces ranked after poverty headcount index		Provinces ranked after <i>share of the province's migrants</i> leaving for Phnom Penh		Provinces ranked after <i>share of province's total population</i> resettling in PP		<i>Number of migrants from the province</i> resettling in the Phnom Penh area	
Kampong Speu	52.02	Svay Rieng	51.0	Prey Veng	0.00936	Kampong Cham	11632
Kratie	52.02	Kandal	49.2	Svay Rieng	0.00895	Kandal	9485
Mondul Kiri	52.02	Prey Veng	41.3	Takeo	0.00766	Prey Veng	8864
Preah Vihear	52.02	Kampong Cham	37.6	Kandal	0.0075	Takeo	6474
Stung Treng	52.02	Takeo	35.3	Kampong Cham	0.00692	Svay Rieng	4320
Ratanak Kiri	52.02	Kampong Speu	34.2	Kampot	0.00535	Kampot	3134
Pailin	52.02	Kampong Chnang	33.2	Koh Kong	0.00437	Kampong Speu	2869
Otdar Meanchey	52.02	Kratie	29.8	Kampong Chnang	0.00427	Kampong Thom	2347

(Source: NIS 2009b 89-92) \* *The financial crisis hit Cambodian garment industry hard from the end of 2008. These figures are pre-crisis figures (Dasgupta 2009).* \*\* *Poverty estimates are from 2004 (MOP 2006 p.53). The provinces were divided into five different poverty zones, in order to reach statistical significance, with five different numbers on*

*the index. Compare with the map on the previous page. Poverty head count index measures the percentage of the population with per capita consumption below the poverty line.*

### Migrants' access to resources

The Cambodian literacy rate has increased over the last decade, from 62.8 percent in 1998 to 78.35 percent in 2008. However, there are still great differences in literacy between urban and rural areas, 90.17 percent compared to 75.33 percent in the country side (NIS 2009a p. 47). In the rural population women have a considerably lower literacy rate than men, 69.46 percent compared to 81.66 percent (NIS 2009a p. 49).

However, the primary school enrollment rate has increased over the last decade and hence the literacy rate has improved a lot in the young population. In the age group 15-24 the literacy rate was 87.5 percent in 2008 compared to only 78.8 for the 25-34 age group (NIS 2009a p. 52). The rural literacy rate for the 15-24 age group was 85.1 per cent percent while only 74.5 for the 25-34 age group (NIS 2009a p. 56).

Almost half of the literate population lacked completed primary education in 2008 (NIS 2009a p. 51). In the age group 15-19 years, 27 percent had not completed primary level education (NIS 2009a p.52).

*The level of education of migrants is higher than that of the general population.* Literates are more mobile than illiterates. The higher the level of education the higher is the overall migration rate in the cohort (NIS 2009b p.104). The proportion of illiterate migrants in the group of “10+ years and employed”, i.e. 75 percent of all migrants, has decreased from 28.5 percent in 1998 to 19.5 percent in 2008. But *the level of illiteracy among female migrants is still more than twice the level among men, 27.2 compared to 12.5 percent.* The proportion of literate migrants with either no schooling or only some, not completed, primary education measures 36.7 percent among females and 31.5 percent among males (NIS 2009b p. 52).

The education level is an indicator of access to resources. Another indicator of access to resources (which is used in the survey later on) is the *prevalence of TV sets* and ownership of other consumer durables. The Ministry of Planning's poverty profile found that a TV set was owned by 50 percent of all households. Dividing the population into different consumption quintiles the prevalence of a TV was as follows: poorest quintile 26.7 %; next poorest 38.8%; middle 49.%; next richest 57.8%; richest 79% (World Bank 2009 p. 36 referring to MOP 2006). A couple of years later, in 2008, NIS found that 81 percent of households in the urban areas and 53 percent in rural areas owned a TV (NIS 2009a p. 149).

Maltoni (2010 p. 33) found that of 302 interviewed households who had sent cross-border migrants, 71% owned a TV at the time of the interview. They report a frequency of 74 percent among 147 interviewed migrant garment workers in year 2003 (Thy 2006 p. 107).

#### Age structure of migrants

During the period 2000-2005 the age group 15-25 years made up 30 percent of all migrants, while only comprising 18 percent of the total population (Maltoni 2006 p. 149). When decomposing the urban population it becomes even clearer how big the flows are of young migrants; during the same period, urban migrants comprised 14 percent of the entire 15-29 age group, while this age group only represented 9.65 percent of the total population (Maltoni 2006 p. 140).

Female migrants outnumbered male migrants in the 15-19 age group, but their numbers declined in the 20-39 age group, probably due to child bearing (Maltoni 2006 p. 150).

Also in the 2008 census young people dominated the migration statistics. 15-29 year olds made up about 36 percent of all migrants, which is about the same as in the 1998 census. However, among women the biggest group of migrants was found in the 20-24 cohort (13.41 percent of all female migrants) while it used to be in an older age group, the 25-29 cohort, in 1998. Thus it seems female migrants are getting younger (NIS 2009a p. 102).

#### Economic activity among migrants

The share of economically inactive is much bigger in the migrant population than in the overall population. 75 percent of migrants are recorded as economically active compared to 80 percent in the overall population (15-64 years). Only a couple percent of migrants are recorded as unemployed. The inactivity rate is considerably higher among migrant women than among men, 30.5 compared to 17.5 percent. Both in 1998 and in 2008 women accounted for about 65 percent of inactive migrants (NIS 2009a p. 106). At the same time it is worth mentioning that the economic activity rate of female headed household has decreased from 86.9 to 86.2 percent (NIS 2009b pp. 24, 150). NIS cannot explain why the share of economically inactive female migrants is so high and is asking for further examination (NIS 2009b pp. 52, 152). Speculating about the reason, could it be difficulties to statistically capture informal sector work, including illegal and stigmatized activities such as sex work? Entry barriers into formal sector jobs are higher for migrants than for other workers, especially so for female migrants (see the later discussion), thus possibly explaining why women should be drawn into informal sector work to a higher extent than men.

### Migrants' sectors of employment

In 2008 the dominant sector of occupation in Cambodia was found in “agriculture, forestry and fishery” employing 72.2 percent of the economically active population aged 5 and over (NIS 2009b p. 67). This was the dominating sector also for migrants, thanks to the big proportion of rural-rural migrants, employing about half of them. Migrants were over represented in all other sectors of the economy (NIS 2009b p. 68). The most common sectors of occupation were “services and sales”, employing 15.83 percent of economically active migrants, and “craft and related workers”, employing 11.46 percent (NIS 2009b p. 67-69).

There are clear differences in the occupational profile between the sexes (see table 2). Female migrants dominate in manufacturing and retail work as well as in “accommodation and food service” and “art, entertainment and recreation”.

**Table 2** Sectors of occupation for economically active migrants by sex.

<b>Sector</b>	<b>% of economically active <i>female</i> migrants employed in the sector</b>	<b>% of economically active <i>male</i> migrants employed in the sector</b>
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	53.79	49.65
Manufacturing	13.72	6.47
Wholesale & retail, repair	18.02	9.76
Accommodation & food service	2.42	1.17
Art, entertainment & recreation	0.66	0.60
Construction	1.07	5.12
Transport & storage	0.77	6.97
Public administration	1.58	8.92
Other sectors	7.97	11.34

(Source: NIS 2009 b. p. 68)

### The labour market for female migrants

About 40 percent of the population work as “own account worker” and a similar big share work as “unpaid family worker”. More than half of those employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing are employed as unpaid family workers. This is especially true for women, as 57 percent of *all* economically active Cambodian women were recorded as unpaid family workers in this sector. Men employed in the same sector tend to be “own account workers” (52.9%) (NIS 2009b p.161). Most of the youth start their

working career as unpaid family workers. Only 0.1 percent of the work force was recorded as “employers” (NIS 2009b p.160).

In 2008, 70 percent of those employed in manufacturing were working in the garment industry compared to 35 percent in 1998. There is a heavy dominance of young females in this sector, most of them recorded as “paid employees” (NIS 2009b p.160).

Males and females constitute almost equal proportions of Cambodian migrants. However, migration to urban areas is increasing and young females dominate the urban migration. This pattern is growing clearer over time and can be attributed to the large number of young women moving to work in the garment industry in Phnom Penh and in the Kandal province. In the age group 15-29, women accounted for 55 percent of the urban migrants during the period 2005-2008. Urban migrants of both sexes aged 15-29 in total reached 358 072 persons during the period 2005-2008 (NIS 2009b p.104, NIS 2009a p. 101).

*The occupational profile of women differs a lot with their marital status (see table 3). The employment rate of women has increased, from 47.7 percent in 1998 to 57 percent in 2008. A big share, about 30 percent, of this increase is accounted for by never married, divorced, widowed or separated women (NIS 2009b p. 140-141). The proportion of women working in the agricultural sector decreased with eight percent during the same period of time (NIS 2009b p. 142). Never married females in urban areas are concentrated in manufacturing while a big share of married women is active in services and sales (NIS 2009b p. 146).*

In rural areas agriculture is the dominant employment sector for all categories of marital status, except the “never married” women. *The proportion of never married females employed in agriculture is 10 to 20 percentage points lower than the employment rate among those of other marital status (NIS 2009b p. 144).*

*The proportion of never married women aged 15 and over has increased a lot and this trend appears especially clear in the urban areas. Two thirds of urban women in the age of 20-24 have never been married compared to 42 percent in rural areas. In the age group 25-29 one third of urban women have never been married, compared to 20 percent of rural women (NIS 2009b p. 139). This trend is even clearer in Phnom Penh where the proportion of unmarried women in their 30s is higher than in any other area and the proportion of married is lower, regardless of age (NIS 2009b p. 139). The proportion of widowed, divorced and separated women is much greater than the corresponding proportions among men, especially in the rural areas (NIS 2009a p.41, Maltoni 2006 p. 148).*

**Table 3 Employed females in urban areas by marital status and occupation**

- Percentage of each category of women employed in different dominant sectors

% of each category of women employed in a sector	Tot nr of employed women	Employed & never married	Employed & married	Employed & widowed	Employed & divorced	Employed & separated
Service & sales	37,4	26,0	<b>44,0</b>	46,3	44,3	45,7
Crafts & manufacturing	26,7	<b>43,8</b>	17,0	9,5	16,7	16,5
Agriculture & forestry	13,7	6,7	17,9	21,2	14,1	9,1
Misc.	22,2	23,5	21,1	23,0	24,9	28,7

(Source: NIS 2009b p.146)

One reason for the concentration of never married women in garment industry is that the long working hours in manufacturing are much more difficult to combine with child care and family than for fex. sales work. However, another reason is a strong social stigma associated with the independent lifestyle associated with being a garment worker. Young women living outside the immediate control of their family are socially condoned and thought to be inclined to sexually immoral behavior. This is also the case with divorced or widowed women (Lee 2006 p. 1, Derks 2008 pp. 45-47)

#### Networks, entry barriers and access to the urban labour market

Previous research on Cambodian migration indicates the existence of strong entry barriers for young women of rural background when trying to enter the labour market. Derks and Maltoni point at the importance of access to networks for enabling migration and for finding employment. Networks are used for mobilizing the financial resources needed to migrate, for practically being able to undertake the trip and for finding and being invited to apply for jobs (Derks 2008 pp.36, 65-67, Maltoni 2006 pp. 156-161). Derks also report about a wide practice of labour migrants buying the services of brokers to find a job, when lacking the relevant network themselves. Garment workers frequently pay a broker (“meekcol”) who has contacts in the factories to be able to get into the recruitment process. It is also common to pay for sewing and knitting trainings to increase your chances for being employed at the factories (Derks 2008 p.36, 67). Maltoni found that half of the garment workers interviewed in his study had paid for help to find employment (Maltoni 2006 p. 154). Self-employed labour migrants, such as street vendors, do not need the same access to networks as those employed, however, they do need resources to invest in starting up a business.

Maltoni (2006) compared the migration process of 146 garment factory workers and 70 beer promotion women. Beer promotion women is an interesting comparison for the purposes of this study as it is a stigmatized and probably less attractive occupation than garment factory work. The occupation is frequently associated with indirect sex work, although this is far from always the case (see more later). Maltoni found important differences between the two groups which illustrate the importance of access to resources and networks to be able to overcome entry barriers to attractive positions. The two groups originated in the country side and similarly saw mainly young females employed in their sectors. However, garment workers much more frequently received help from their families. According to Maltoni the mobility of rural poor is highly dependent on access to networks of better off and better connected relatives, either for access to credits or for finding work (Maltoni 2006 p. 159). Two thirds of garment workers were assisted in finding a job by relatives but only a third of the beer promotion women. Instead 20 percent of beer promotion women were helped by friends while this was the case for merely five percent of garment workers. Furthermore, Maltoni found that it was more common with beer promotion women finding an occupation by themselves, without any assistance of others. But still an overwhelming majority depended on someone else for finding a job. Only 27.1 percent of beer promotion women and 17.7 percent of garment workers had managed to found a job on their own (Maltoni 2006 pp. 158).

While garment workers had a very high frequency of relatives among co-workers, 44.2 percent, it was the case only for 11.2 percent of beer promotion women. Furthermore, 40.8 percent of garment workers and 18.6 percent of beer promotion women reported having co-workers from their home village (Maltoni 2006 p. 160). However, the comparison is not totally accurate as factories are normally employing a big number of workers while the total number of beer promotion women working in different beer gardens in Phnom Penh combined possible would have corresponded to the total number of employees in only single factory. I.e. the sheer size of a factory increases the possibility of finding relatives among co-workers.

The risks associated with migration, such as being cheated or being employed with bad working conditions, are greater without a safety net of relatives or others. Maltoni found that brokers were especially important for poor migrants, without enough capital to risk being unemployed for a long period of time, who needed to be sure about being employed before leaving the village. But this also requires the means to hire a broker (Maltoni 2006 p. 158).

One third reported that the reason for taking the beer promotion job was for lacking other opportunities and only 15.7 percent said the reason was that it was better than their previous job (Maltoni 2006 p. 159).

While 74.1 percent of garment workers originated in households owning a TV in the village, this was the case for only 41.1 percent of beer promotion women (Maltoni 2006 p. 156). To conclude, in general, migrants ending up as garment workers had better access to resources and networks and this seems to have opened up more options for them on the labour market.

### Earnings in typical migrant occupations

As can be seen from table 4 the earnings in different typical migrant occupations vary a lot over time and in between them. Garment factory work is at the higher end of earnings and the sector has attracted more than 250 000 workers over the last decade (Maltoni 2010 p. 9). However, also in this comparatively attractive occupation for young female migrants you see big fluctuations in normal earnings. The big supply of labour and an increase of the share of temporary workers, as well as fluctuations on the world market (including difficulties for the industry when phasing out the multi-fiber agreement) at times contributed to a downward pressure on wages (CDRI 2006 p. 17).

**Table 4** Earnings in typical migrant occupations measured over a period of years

	Daily earnings (riels)									Percentage change over previous year		
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2005 May	Aug	Nov	2003	2004	2005
Cyclo drivers	9,489	8,408	8,975	8,572	7,614	7,970	7,726	7,857	7,768	-4.5	-11.2	4.7
Porters	7,951	6,746	7,044	6,676	6,895	6,616	7,056	6,000	6,473	-5.2	3.3	-4.0
Small vegetable sellers	7,016	6,493	6,566	6,532	6,947	7,321	8,574	5,938	8,385	-0.5	6.4	5.4
Scavengers	4,310	3,211	3,685	3,944	4,446	4,947	5,270	4,335	4,801	7.0	12.7	11.3
Waitresses*	2,306	2,800	4,365	4,932	4,448	4,324	4,287	4,648	3,893	13.0	-9.8	-2.8
Rice-field workers	4,175	4,064	4,304	4,177	4,139	4,013	3,822	4,009	4,224	-2.9	-0.9	-3.0
Garment workers	8,006	8,608	8,904	9,577	9,277	8,466	7,235	8,756	8,659	7.6	-3.1	-8.7
Motorcycle-taxi drivers	8,597	10,768	12,184	10,092	9,204	10,563	11,130	9,406	9,645	-17.2	-8.8	14.8
Unskilled construction workers	9,769	6,672	6,453	6,558	6,382	6,659	8,130	6,069	6,691	1.6	-2.7	4.3
Skilled construction workers	15,491	11,105	12,605	13,111	12,679	12,055	12,320	10,273	11,253	4.0	-3.3	-4.9

Note: The surveys on the revenue of waitresses, rice-field workers, garment workers, unskilled workers, motorcycle taxi drivers and construction workers began in February 2000. \*Waitresses' earnings do not include meals and accommodation provided by shop owners. Source: CDRI.

\* Source: CDRI 2006 p.17. The survey annually choose 40 people from each group, except garment workers, were the sample consisted of 120 people. The research was carried out in Phnom Penh and in two other nearby provinces. The figures correspond very well with a study on incomes of street vendors and motor cycle taxi drivers by the Cambodian Association for Informal Economy Development, were N=40 (2004 p. 21).

In 2005, 85 percent of garment factory workers were women originating in rural areas (World Bank 2006 quoted in Chen Chen Lee 2006 p. 2). The garment industry has a high turnover of staff, employees are young and in general do not stay many years in the occupation. This is partly explained by many garment workers leaving the occupation when getting married (Nareoun 2006 p. 98). Another explanation is probably the vulnerability that defines being an employee and paid salary worker in a sector exposed to fluctuations, and the explicit demand for young, female employees (Derks 2008 p. 70).

Although garment workers' salaries are in relative terms good, and although it is one of few options for paid employment for young rural women, it is an occupation with a high degree of vulnerability. Kang

and Darnet find that the normal textile worker income is not a living wage, as garment workers rely heavily on overtime payment to make ends meet. During times of low demand overtime work is not an option. According to Kang and Darnet the living wage of garment workers should range from at least US\$90 per month to US\$120 per month. However, they found that the effective wage in the garment industry was only US\$79 per month, which included overtime and other allowances. If overtime was excluded (frequently the case at the time of their study due to the economic crisis) the average effective wage was only US\$67<sup>6</sup> per month (Kang et al. 2009 p.26, see also Derks 2008 p. 178 and 74). Lim (2007 p. 34) found monthly earnings to be US\$ 68 in a sample of 120 garment workers. Claims of offering good working conditions for garment workers has been an important determinant for the competitiveness of Cambodian garment industry. Following the end of the multi-fiber agreement, an ILO initiated project for improving working conditions in garment factories has attracted the interest from well-known international labels such as H&M and Linditex, resulting in garment manufacturing being the most controlled and monitored sector in Cambodia (Derks 2008 p. 78-79, 85). Still workers may easily find themselves in a very vulnerable position and it is unclear what the impact has been of the ILO initiative. Illegal strikes protesting against poor working conditions seem to be an increasing phenomenon (Derks 2008 p. 82, U.S. State Department 2011 p.33).

It is frequently claimed that many sex workers are former or present garment workers. Derks notes that fruit juice vendors, as well as female students and factory workers are thought to be increasingly involved in “free sex” as well as sex in exchange for money and gifts. She notes that this is partly a substantiated claim but it is also a sign of the prejudice facing young rural women leaving their families to work in Phnom Penh (Derks 2008 p. 191). However, considering the high degree of vulnerability involved in garment work, and the limited options available in a labour market characterized by high entry barriers for young rural women, it is not unlikely that many young women are in fact pushed from garment manufacturing into the sex market. Despite the frequently poor pay, many garment workers send remittances and, as discussed later, the pressure for daughters to support their rural households is strong and is sometimes a heavy financial burden.

### Remittances

Maltoni points out that there is a big gap in the understanding of migration flows in Cambodia and their impact on migrants’ source communities (2010 p. 21). There are many reports about the size and

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<sup>6</sup> This figure compares fairly well with the CDRI estimate four years earlier, in table 4: US\$ 67 per month, means a daily income of Riel  $67 \times 4200 / 26 = 10823$ . Oanda.com average exchange rate for the first half of 2009 was used, i.e. US\$=Riel 4200. The figure is based on a six day working week. CDRI 2007 found that 63.33% of a sample of 120 garment workers worked six days a week, the remaining worked seven days.

importance of remittances but they are, Maltoni shows, often contradictory and frequently information is lacking about data collection methods. Still remittances are ascribed great importance by several international agencies claiming remittances have “transformed the Cambodian country side” (f.e.x. ADB 2004 p. 60).

The Cambodia Poverty Profile (MOP 2006) interviewed 15 000 households all over Cambodia and found that *the share of different income groups receiving remittances does not differ a lot* (see table 6). *Thus remittance senders originate in all kind of households. Furthermore, the absolute size of domestic remittances received by the sending households was found to be about the same, with exception of the richest quintile that receive considerably more. However, for remittances sent from abroad there was a clear positive correlation with the income level of the migrant sending household. Furthermore, according to Crassard (2009 p. 1) the bulk of foreign remittances is sent by the Cambodian diaspora and not by labour migrants.*

**Table 6** Frequency and size of remittances received by households in different consumption quintiles 2004

Remittances during past 12 months	1(poorest)	2	3	4	5 (richest)
% received domestic remittances	11.4	11.4	12.8	11.5	10.9
% received foreign remittances	2.9	3.6	4.0	5.2	8.5
Value of domestic remittances (000 Riel)	36.9	37.8	35.6	40.7	92.3
Value of foreign remittances (000 Riel)	23.3	36.3	46.0	77.1	219.7

(Source: MOP 2006 p. 77-78, referring to Knowles 2005/CSES 2004)

According to Maltoni, previous research indicate that *remittances are primarily used to cover very basic expenses* and are better seen as a part of household survival strategies rather than a resource for productive investments. Food, education, health care and repayment of debts dominate (Maltoni 2007 referring to Maltoni 2006, Maltoni 2010 p.25, 55-58; see also Chang 2009 p. 37, Derks 2008 p. 178, Kodamanchaly & Ogawa 2005 p. 11).

As noted, the frequency of remittances from abroad seems to be strongly correlated with the income level of the receiving households. Thus it is likely that households receiving remittances from abroad are more resource rich. Still, despite this, Chang (2009) found that even the spending of these more well off households was centered on very basic consumption rather than on productive investments (see table 7).

**Table 7** Use of cross border remittances

Costs and Benefits of Cross-Country Labour Migration in the GMS: Cambodia Country Study

**Table 3.16: Use of Remittances Reported by Households (%)**

	Past year	Past 5 years
Consumption expenditure	<b>81 percent</b>	<b>77 percent</b>
General consumption (mostly food)	23 percent	20 percent
Debt repayment	14 percent	12 percent
Medical treatment	12 percent	8 percent
Purchase of non-productive assets (idle land, TV)	7 percent	5 percent
Education and training	4 percent	2 percent
House improvement	3 percent	3 percent
House maintenance or repairs	3 percent	3 percent
House building	4 percent	15 percent
Durable household items	8 percent	7 percent
Loan to others without interest	4 percent	2 percent
Productive expenditure	<b>19 percent</b>	<b>23 percent</b>
Fertiliser for farming	7 percent	3 percent
Land for production	3 percent	5 percent
Machinery for agriculture	2 percent	4 percent
Vehicles for business	0 percent	2 percent
Investment in new business	1 percent	1 percent
Expansion of existing business	1 percent	0 percent
Loan to others at interest	0 percent	1 percent
Others	5 percent	6 percent
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 percent</b>	<b>100 percent</b>

*Source: CDRI survey in September and October 2007*

Source: Chang/CDRI 2009 p 38. Chang sampled 526 households in six villages in typical source communities for cross-border migration p. 23.

### Frequency and size of remittances

Most existing research on remittances focus on remittances linked to the garment industry (Maltoni 2010 p. 25). In a survey of employees in 21 garment factories, i.e. a substantial share of the total number of factories<sup>7</sup>, ADB found that 90 percent of all rural migrants sent remittances. Of the remaining ten percent several had their families living with them. Migrant's remittance obligations were strong and the remitted amounts were a considerable part of workers' salaries, ranging from around US\$20 to US\$40 per month (ADB 2004 p. 60). Kang (2009 p.176). found that three quarters of 269 garment workers interviewed in his survey sent remittances, with the average amount being 15 USD per month. Thy (2005 p. 115 referring to Rupp 2003) described how 89% of 147 interviewed garment workers used to send remittances. As garment earnings are frequently hardly a living wage, as described, remittance obligations must be a very heavy financial burden on many garment workers.

<sup>7</sup> In 2008 there were over three hundred plus factories in the Phnom Penh area (Hall 2010).

In an anthropological in depth study, focusing on the life 18 female rural-urban migrants of different occupations over a number of years, Derks found that most of them sent remittances (2008 p. 176). Sex workers were among those being able to send the biggest amounts, but this was definitely not the case for all. Derks found that the amount and frequency of remittances depended more on the family situation and the life cycle of the women than the kind of employment (Derks 2008 p. 177)

#### Women dominate as remittance senders:

There are considerable differences in male and female migrants' remittance behaviour. Women tend to send more money back home, even if tough they earn less than men (Maltoni 2010 p. 25). Derks explains this with a common interpretation of the Buddhist concept of "kun". Children have a moral obligation to return debt, or merit, to their parents, but there are different ways for men and women to do this. Men return this debt when going into, temporary, monkhood while females do it by offerings at the temple or by giving money to their parents. However, according to some Buddhist scholars this is misinterpretation of kun (Derks 2005 pp. 182, 41).

## **2.2 Sex trade in Cambodia**

In this section I will try to describe what is known about the phenomena of sex work in Cambodia as described in previous, limited research, mostly anthropological studies and studies focusing on health aspects of sex work. I will briefly touch upon indicators of the extent of sex trade and some factors possibly influencing supply and demand on the Cambodian sex market.

### **The extent of sex trade**

Derks describes a situation where Cambodian sex trade has been an increasing phenomena over the last decades (Derks 2008 p. 90, also referring to Tarr 1996). During the years preceding the Khmer Rouge take over sex trade flourished in Phnom Penh. Under the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-79) extramarital sex was punished by death and all commercial exchange was banned (Derks 2008p.90 referring to Burger 1986:223) still sex with Khmer Rouge soldiers was exchanged for food and the Khmer Rouge tribunal has showed on the existence of wide spread sexual abuse during Khmer Rouge years (Derks 2008 p. 91 referring to Frieson 2001:11). After the Vietnamese take over sex work was practiced again, especially close to Vietnamese army bases, among others in the Tuol Kok area in Phnom Penh which later developed into Phnom Penh's prime red light district. Following civil war, a growing number of refugees

resorted to sex work. However, sex work was still prohibited and sex workers were occasionally imprisoned and taken to “rehabilitation” on an island in the Mekong river (Derks 2008 p.91 referring to CWDA 1995). In the early 1990s restrictions were loosened and following the influx of 22 000 UN military and civilian peace keepers brothels, bars and night clubs flourished in Phnom Penh ( Derks 2008 p. 91). According to Derks sex trade diminished somewhat after the departure of peace keepers but has remained considerable. Since 1997 authorities have from time to time cracked down on sex work, but after a brothel was closed in one place, business often opened up in another place or disguised as a karaoke bar or massage parlor. Involvement of interests close to the police and wide spread corruption within the police made crackdowns pointless and they only had temporary effect. With the surge of HIV by the end of the 90s authorities tried to establish a more cooperative approach to brothel owners, among others to be able to introduce a 100 percent condom use campaign. However, temporary show off close downs of brothels and ”cleansing” campaigns continued to occur every now and then. This mostly meant that sex workers were temporarily arrested and had to bribe their way out of prison (Derks 2008 p. 92). In her study of 1000 sex workers Jenkins found many cases of police raping sex workers in connection with the raids and at one occasion even murdering a sex worker (Jenkins 2005 p. 25 see also Ditmore 2006 pp. 49-50).

There is a lot of sensationalism in the accounts of the nature and scope of Cambodian sex work, and there are allegations that NGOs and others with political and moral positions to defend are inflating the numbers of sex workers (Steinfatt et. al. pp. 17-18, Sandy 2007 p. 194). Some estimates counted as many as 100 000 sex workers and there were accounts of hundreds of thousands of trafficking victims (Cambodia Human Development Report 2000 referred to in Kapoor & Swingle 2004 p. 14 and Steinfatt 2003b p.2). Using conservative estimates, produced with more scrutiny, Steinfatt, a statistician, conducted a series of inquiries into the possible extent of sex work in Cambodia (Steinfatt et. al. 2002). Among other techniques used, the team hired moto dop drivers from different neighborhoods who mapped the location of brothels with GPS equipment and asked brothel owners how many were employed at each establishment. Based on a sample containing thousands of observations they arrived at an estimate of a total of 20 829 sex workers all over the country, with the highest concentration in Phnom Penh and other urban areas. In addition to this, they estimated that there would be around 2488 persons trafficked into sex trade (Steinfatt et al. 2002 p. 15). Steinfatt found that about 85 percent of sex workers were to be found in urban areas. In comparison, 330 000 workers were estimated to be employed in the garment industry in 2006. They came from rural areas and more than 90 percent were young women. Construction employed 260 000 mostly young men. Hotels and restaurants together produced 61,000 jobs (Lim S. 2007 p.13).

However, other long-time observers with deep insight into Cambodian sex trade have claimed that the true figures must be much higher than Steinfatt's. Among others, Steinfatt's data collection techniques were criticized for depending on the willingness of brothel owners to reveal honest numbers of their number of employees to Steinfatt's moto dop drivers without knowing if these might hand over information to police or competitors. Another criticism of strong potential for underreporting was the fact that the moto dop drivers engaged in collecting the data perhaps did not know about all establishments selling sex, such as up scale places where moto dop drivers usually do not enter. Another criticism was that they might not be willing to reveal establishments as moto dop drivers frequently are employed by brothel owners and pimps themselves and might have reasons trying to keep the location of some establishments secret (Kapoor & Swingle 2004 p. 12). There are also indications, as mentioned later, of a high turnover of sex workers, with a big proportion of sex workers only staying in the sector for short periods of time, frequently a couple of months and thus much shorter than the normal length of occupation in typical migrant occupations.

It is of course very difficult to measure the scope of sex work and it appears in many different shapes.<sup>8</sup> Except brothel based sex work the market is highly segmented into upscale and low scale sex commerce and there are many places and grey zones for indirect sex work, such as coin-rubbing places, massage parlor, snooker clubs, hotels, night clubs, karaoke shops and beer gardens (Derks 2008 p. 93, Wijngarden 2003b pp. 2-5, see also So 2005). In public parks so called orange-pressing women sell both oranges and sex, sometimes "free lancing" sometimes accompanied by pimps (Derks 2008 p. 93).

### **Factors relating to supply and demand on the Cambodian sex market**

Derks (2008) describes how sex work in Cambodia for decades, or even for centuries, has been associated with Vietnamese women. She explains this with stereotypes and perceived differences in notions of female behavior and sexuality, where Khmer women are considered to maintain certain moral ideas that are nonexistent for Vietnamese women. There are even ideas about the virtuous Khmer women limiting the kind of the services that they offer in brothels, when ending up being sex workers, while the Vietnamese women were ready to offer customers a broader variety of services. Even in interviews with brothel owners and sex workers this kind of stereotypes were portrayed to Derks. And there are even anecdotes telling of brothel owners supervising Khmer sex workers as not to offer inappropriate kind of

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<sup>8</sup> At the time of this survey the PSI "Nr One" condom accounted for 80 % of the Cambodian condom market. As there are a number of high quality reports available of the frequency of condom use (following the 100% condom use campaign), and the organization has very detailed info about distribution and distribution outlets in brothel areas (interview with Tes Chamroeun, PSI National Sales Manager 2005-12-14 ) it is in theory possible to produce fairly good estimates of the number of sold services in some of the more notorious brothel areas. Unfortunately, however, PSI refused to hand out any data.

services, allowed for Vietnamese colleagues. There is also the perception of Vietnamese being more pale skinned than Khmer and therefore perceived as more attractive. While Vietnamese sex workers are described as greedy and prepared to any immoral act, the Khmer women found in the sex trade are described as “broken women” (*Srey Kouc*) and victims (Derks 2008 p. 97, See also Tarr 1997 p.5). Parallel to these stereotypes there is widespread, century old xenophobia towards the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia, probably gaining strength by modern day politicians playing on ethnic divisions (ICES 1995 p. 20). There are even stories about Vietnamese sex workers “flooding and trying to take over the country” (Derks 2008 p. 95 referring to Chou Kim 1993). It is very likely that these stereotypes serve to create a demand for Vietnamese sex workers. Indeed there are many Vietnamese sex workers in the Cambodian sex trade, as mentioned since decades or even since centuries. But even if there is a high presence of Vietnamese sex workers, it is far from the case that sex workers in Cambodia predominantly are Vietnamese (Derks 2008 p. 96, see also Chommie 1999). Steinfatt et al. 2003 found that a bit less than half of the sex workers in Phnom Penh observed in his study were ethnic Vietnamese (Steinfatt et al. 2003 p. 28). Still it is remarkable with the high presence of ethnic Vietnamese sex workers as the Vietnamese minority only makes up a very minor share of the total population in Cambodia.

There are frequent stories of sex slavery and trafficking bringing women into sex work in Cambodia. Women locked in at brothels and coerced by physical force, however, seems to be the exception, and according to Derks such stories often act to reinforce the ethnic stereotypes of the “Madonna and the whore”, i.e. Khmer and Vietnamese women. This said, however, Derks claims that categories are not clear cut and borders are shifting between the sex worker as agent and a victim forced into prostitution and there are different forms and degrees of coercion (Derks. 2008 p. 100, 104, 118, see also Steinfatt et al 2002 p. 16). What is clear, however, according to Derks is that debt bondage is a relatively common practice in Cambodia, as well as in several other Southeast Asian countries, where it is indeed difficult to make the distinction between “voluntary” and “coerced” sex work. There seems to be a historically rooted practice of daughters ending up in bonded labour in order to repay parents’ debts, including through sex work (Steinfatt et al. 2003 p. 24, Booranapin & Mainwaring 2002 p. 767, Hoefinger 2010 p.172, Derks 2008 p. 102, Derks is also referring to Delvert 1961 and Reynolds 1996 and Muecke 1992, Osborne 1997). Muller describes how the practice of debt bondage even was used as a justification for the French colonialization of Cambodia (Muller 2010). Derks describes how agreements between parents and brothel owners/managers are formalized in written contracts, signed with signature or fingerprints (Derks 2008 p. 103). Often agreements extend over a couple of months, but it is not uncommon that they are prolonged, not the least because sex workers accumulate new debts. It is also the case that sex workers themselves make this kind of formal agreements, without the involvement of parents, with brothel owners in

exchange for loans. Even if debts are common, El Kouby reported that 85 percent of her sample of 799 brothel base sex workers not being indebted, which does not exclude that they might have been indebted earlier and have paid off the debts (Wijngarden 2003a p. 7 referring to El Kouby). It seems to be the case that brothel workers in general are younger than free lancing sex workers which might imply that brothels are left after debts are paid off (Wijngarden 2003a p. 14). Wijngarden describes a number of NGO conducted studies reporting about a high turnover of sex workers in brothels. These studies found that the average time spent in brothels was relatively short, in a great majority of the cases the interviewed women had been there less than six months (Wijngarden 2003a p. 14, see also Wijngarden 2003b). Similarly Busza observed a high turnover of sex workers in Svay Pak brothels and found that sex workers involved in debt bondage normally paid off their debts in between six months and two years time (Busza 2004 p. 6). In a study at Svay Pak brothels at four different occasions Baker et al. sampling over 200 sex workers at each time, it was observed that about half of the respondents had been in the brothels for less than six months (Baker et al. 2003 p. 31). In a study involving 793 brothel based sex workers the NGO Adhoc (1999 p. 17) found that 42.0 percent had been occupied for less than six months, 32.2 percent between six months and a year and only 11.1 percent longer than two years. In a NGO survey of 366 sex workers in Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Dunn observed a mean time of 4.5 months and a median of only 2-2.5 months (Dunn 1995 pp. 4-7).

In interviews with 50 brothel based sex workers in Svay Pak Baker et al. found that 20 percent had worked there more than once, going back to their home province and then returning to Svay Pak again (Baker et al. 2003 p. 12). Derks emphasizes that a unique feature of sex work is that it gives the option of cash advances. It was commonly agreed among participants in her study of young rural-urban female migrants that sex work was the easiest way to earn a lot of money (Derks 2008 p. 91). Furthermore, Derks stresses the fact, that there are not many options for paid work available to uneducated, resource poor, rural women (Derks 2008 p. 100). Even in an occupation such as garment work there are strong entry barriers necessitating access to networks or hiring a broker to be able to find or buy a job. Although of another character, there even seem to be some kind of entry barriers limiting unwanted competition in the sex trade. For example Derks observes a strict divide between distinct networks in the Tuol Kok area, resulting in Cambodian sex workers being excluded from work at Vietnamese dominated brothels and the other way around. She also mentions the importance of peer relationships to people already involved in sex business in order to get in contact and employment in the business (Derks 2008 p. 96).

Derks describes how voluntary decisions to enter sex work sometimes are facilitated by such peers telling about glamorous, modern urban lifestyle, contrasting to harsh poor farmer's wife and prospects of

convenience marriages in village. Derks also describes how decisions to enter sex work are made because of factors such as dire economic needs or abandonment by husband or (Derks 2008 p. 100).

### Stigmatization and routes into sex work

Another issue when analyzing the character of female labour market in Cambodia and the supply of women to sex trade is the stigmatized status of divorced women or single women with children. Being an abandoned or divorced woman you have small chances for remarriage (Wijngarden 2003a p. 15). Furthermore, the percentage of divorced women is considerably higher than the percentage of divorced men in all age cohorts, also in the younger, not war effected population. In total 3.1 percent of women were divorced compared to 0.8 percent of men (NIS 2009b p.15). It seems it is much easier for men to remarry than for women. Partially this is probably explained by a skewed gender balance, with more women than men, but in the younger, not war effected, generations the gender balance has evened out.

As already seen in chapter two, it seems that the labour market for young women is partly divided according to marital status. Cambodia has a high number of female headed households<sup>9</sup>, over 25 percent, with the proportion of female headed households remaining the same in the 1998 and 2008 censuses, despite the war generations with a surplus of women declining over time (554 238 households in 1998 and 718 287 households in 2008 ). Sophie El Kouby found in her study that as many as 51 percent of brothel-based sex workers in her sample of 699 women were divorced, an extremely high figure considering the normally low age of brothel workers (quoted in Wijngarden 2003a p.7). Likewise Dunn found that about half of 366 interviewed sex workers in the Phnom Penh Tuol Kork district were divorced (Dunn 1995 p. 4). Furthermore, Maltoni (2006 p. 155) notes that among so called beer promotion women there is a very high share of divorced women. It is worth noticing that female headed households are in general not poorer than male headed households (World Bank 2006 p. 41). Contrary to this pattern, Baker et al. found that only seven percent of 50 interviewed brothel based sex workers in Svay Pak were divorced, separated or widowed (Baker et al. 2003 p.10)

Beer promotion women are working as waitresses but are not employed by the bar owners but are provided to bars by the beer breweries. This means that there are beer promotion women from competing

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<sup>9</sup> NIS defines a household is as a group of persons who commonly live together and who take meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevent any of them from doing so. Head of household is defined as a person who is recognized as such in the household. He or she is generally the person who bears the chief responsibility for management of the household and takes decisions on behalf of the household, and in the case of an absentee *de jure* "HH," the person who is in fact responsible for managing the affairs of the household is regarded as the HH (NIS 2009b p. 24).

brands at the outlets and normally they are supposed to compete by wearing daring clothing and sometimes accept direct or indirect sexual invitations from customers. The women rely heavily on tips from customers and tips are normally shared collectively with colleagues, often creating a strong pressure to please customers, also when this involved accepting sexual harassment and sexual invitations. This has created a common perception of beer promotion women being sex workers and the occupation is stigmatized. It is far from true that a majority of beer promotion women are in fact selling sex, according to studies by several NGOs, but many are indeed involved in sex work or are involved in paid “mistress” (Sangsaa) relationships (Maltoni 2006 p. 154).

There are practical reasons why many divorced women are found here. It gives a chance to escape life as stigmatized and divorced women in the country side. It is also an option for paid work for land less women with children to support. However, you might ask, is it the case that the overrepresentation of divorced women is explained by the stigma? I.e. with the perception of already being a “broken women” or social condoned for being divorced, in the eyes of the surrounding community, the step into stigmatized work as beer promotion women is perhaps not a big step?

#### Earnings of sex workers

As sex trade takes many shapes the earnings on the sex market also differ a lot. Busza found that normal earnings per customer in the Svay Pak brothels were two US\$ (Busza 2004 p.8). Derks found that her interviewees that there were arrangements where brothel workers were paid a fixed salary, independent of the number of customers. But there were also arrangements where they rented a room from the brothel owner and kept earnings themselves (Derks 2008 p. 107) Busza found that contracts in Svay Pak brothels ranged from US\$ 50 to US\$ 3000 with a median of US\$ 300 (Busza 2004 p.6).

In a survey of 366 indirect sex workers in Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, in 1995 Dunn found very big variations in earnings with Vietnamese sex workers earning on average about 20 500 and Khmer 17 200 Riel per day (Dunn 1995 p.7, however there were 21 % missing answers). These were a category of sex workers employed not only for providing sex.

In a survey of 41 indirect sex workers in bigger karaoke bars, night clubs and massage parlours Hean et al. found that earnings were very good, in comparison to typical migrant workers’ earnings and ranged between US\$ 20-50 per client in Karaoke bars in addition to a fixed salary of US\$ 30-50 per month and in some cases US\$70 per month. In addition they received tips between US\$5-10 per day. Sex workers working in bars earned about the same as Karaoke women for sex work, but also had to pay pimps a share of their earnings, sometimes about 20 percent of earnings. In massage parlours women were employed to

provide massage and sometimes also sell sex. The pay was lower, with a fixed pay of about US\$ 30 per month but depending on the number of worked hours, in general with a pay of US\$1 per hour. Income of sex work normally varied between US\$20-30, but could on rare occasions reach US\$50-100. Total monthly earnings for massage and Karoke women were between \$150-300 and for ranged between US\$ 300-600 for bar women (Hean et al. 2002 pp. 18-19).

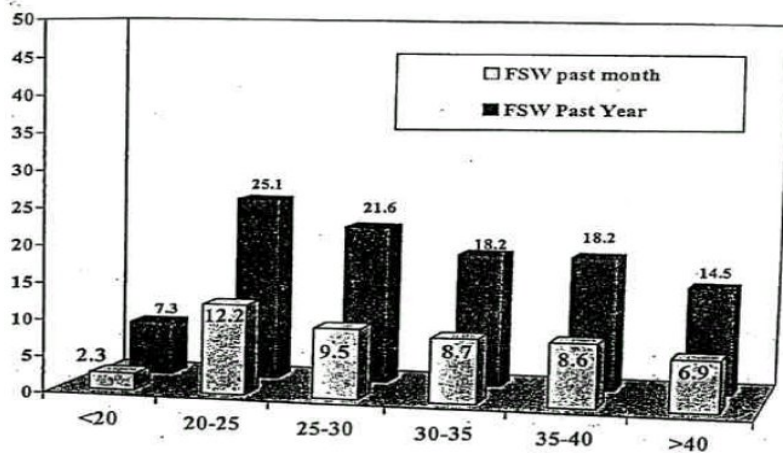
In survey of 114 Beer Promotion Women in Battambang whereof 71.9 percent reported ever selling sex the monthly income was between 200,000 to 300,000 Riels (\$50 to \$75 US) for 72.8 percent of respondents. Nearly all (96.7%) reported that they had another source of income except the one provided by the employer. Among the various sources reported, 30.3% stated that they received money from their boyfriends and 61.8% reported receiving money from clients (Kim et al. 2005 p. 747).

### Demand

There is much sensational reporting about sex trade being driven by foreign sex tourists, especially child sex tourism. This is also a picture that authorities have liked to propagate, but everything points at domestic buyers being overwhelmingly responsible for demand, although there in some locations is a big share of foreign, especially Asian sex buyers (Steinfatt et al 2002 p. 10).

According to some studies Cambodian, urban men who can afford the expense are buying sex with a very high frequency. In a sample of 4810 men all over the country The Cambodia Household Male Behavioral Surveillance Survey found that 19.3 percent of all men in Phnom Penh had bought sex over the previous year. In Sihanouk Ville the proportion was even higher, 30.2 percent. About 80 percent of the entire sample reported that the last sex purchase took place in a brothel. Men in their twenties are the biggest buyers, but it was also very clear that men continue to buy sex when getting married (see figure 2). 16.3 percent of married men and 23.2 percent of unmarried men reported ever buying sex during the previous year (Heng et al. 2000 pp. 13-17).

**Fig. 2** Percentage of men buying sex during past month and past year



Source: Heng et al. 2000 p. 17. N=4810

Many of the places where men socialize in urban areas have a presence of sex workers, most notably many karaoke bars. Buying sex is in itself a way for men to socialize in some urban environments. In its most extreme appearance it is materialized in what is described as being a trend of group rapes (“Bauk”) becoming popular (Hoefinger 2010 p.175). Heng & Hor & Seng & Gorbarch (2000 p. 18) found that only in 21 percent of the cases did respondents visit brothels and sex establishments alone and frequently men went to buy sex in groups. Wijngarden claims that “Most Khmer men regard visiting sex workers as a completely normal form of entertainment, not different from drinking, playing cards or going out to a bar” (Wijngarden 2003 p. 7) Looking at different groups of occupations, police, military, moto dop drivers and office workers belong to the most frequent sex buyers (Heng 2000 p.28). Heng & Saphon & Mean & Hor & Seng & Gorbarch & Mornieau, (2003) found that 80 percent of the military and 68 percent of police surveyed reported ever having had sex with a sex worker (Heng et al. 2003 p.31).

The Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey found big differences in the frequency of male and female sexual activity (NIS 2006 pp. 104-105). In the group “married or living together” below 49 years age it was found that men had been engaged in sexual intercourse during the last four weeks in 90.9 percent of the cases as compared to only 78.9 percent of married women. In the group of divorced, separated or widowed the difference was even more substantial. 23.2 percent of men but only 0.6 percent of women reported having sex during the past four weeks<sup>10</sup>. There are of course great difficulties receiving honest answers to this kind of questions, but still the differences are remarkable and if not revealing the true frequency of sexual activity it might mirror stereotypes about proper sexual behavior.

<sup>10</sup> As a comparison a Durex study found that the frequency of Swedes having sex is almost the same for men and women who live in relationship. The share of reporting having sex at least once a week is 46% for women and 48% for men. (A Durex study quoted in mail interview with Carolina Hemlin, RFSU 2011-04-18)

Wijngarden claims that the demand for sexual services depends on the social construction of gender roles and sexuality in Cambodian society. At the same time as Cambodian men are expected to have a great libido, dutiful women should not have any sexual appetite (Wijngarden 2003 p. 8). According to some observers the explanation for the strong demand of Vietnamese sex workers is that hierarchical structures within the Cambodian society are reflected in the male construction of sexuality. Migrant, minority group women find themselves at the bottom of societal hierarchies and the social construction of male sexuality serves to underline patriarchal, economic and ethnic hierarchies (Wijngarden 2003 p. 9 referring to Tarr 1996).

### Conclusion chapter two

Phnom Penh and other urban areas attract young people who want to escape lack of opportunities in the rural areas. However, those who lack resources and are pushed from their rural homes out of poverty are less likely to migrate to urban areas and have greater difficulties entering the labour market than those better educated and with better access to resources and networks. As the labour market is strongly gender segmented, with male migrants much more spread out over different sectors, but also socially segmented, among others according to your marital status, it seems that the available options for young women of finding paid employment are very restricted. This makes it likely that young migrant women find themselves in the lower segment of the labour market, frequently also in a social sense. Also when using very conservative estimates, the number of young, predominantly migrant, women presently involved in Cambodian sex trade reaches substantial numbers, as a share of total labour migration. Not the least when considering the short period of time that is normally spent in the occupation.

### **3. Migration theory**

As the majority of Cambodian urban sex workers originate in the countryside and as sex trade seems to be closely linked to migration, as discussed in the introduction, theories of labour migration are natural to apply in an economic analysis of Cambodian sex trade.

In the following section some dominant theories from the migration literature are presented. The concepts at the core of these theories are later used as an analytical background and as observation points for the data collection.

Over the last decades there has been a renewed interest in the connection between migration and development. Many have praised the role of migration and remittances as a possible “bottom up” source of development finance and “self-help development”, while others have been more sceptical and have stressed the importance of institutional or structural preconditions for development (de Haas 2008). The discussion between proponents of the different theories of migration focus on causal mechanisms at different levels of aggregation, where focus is shifting from agency towards structure: independent individuals are making the migration decision versus the view of the migrant decision primarily being a product of the setting. However, as Massey points out, theories operating at different levels need not necessarily exclude each other, as causes can operate on different levels, and not only on a single level alone (Massey et al. 1993 p. 454). Therefore, I have allowed myself to use concepts originating in different theories of migration, focusing both on agency and structure, when designing my research. The presentation below starts with neoclassical migration theory and then continues with theories that represent an extension of this model, focusing at different kind of determinants for migration.

Income linkages are a core determinant of labour migration. For example, the prospect of receiving remittances makes households send migrants. In the example of Svay Pak, the booming economy fuelled by income linkages from migrants in the sex industry attracted even more and other kind of migrants to the town. However, there is no developed theory for analysing income linkages<sup>11</sup>. Even though not pronounced, the importance of income linkages is captured in parts of the migration literature, as can be seen in the following.

#### Neoclassical migration theory - Differences in absolute wage gaps

Most of the economic literature on migration follow Michael P. Todaro and explain decisions to migrate with differences in individuals’ expected, discounted, future income when comparing potential income in the migrant sending and in the migrant receiving area. The decision is made by single individuals in order to maximize their personal, economic profit. Absolute wage gaps between different geographic areas are the trigger of migration. In this line of research it is the consequences for the *individual* migrant, *in an assumingly complete and well functioning market*, (Massey et. al. p 458) that is of interest. Focus is on independent agents, not on structure. The model analysed migration from informal agricultural economy to employment in the formal urban sector:

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<sup>11</sup> Sanjaya Lall (1980) has made one contribution developing a typology for defining different kind of linkages.

Harris-Todaro model:

$$M = M (P_e W_u - W_a - T) \quad (\text{risk neutrality assumed})$$

where:

M = migration

$P_e$  = probability of employment in the formal urban sector

$W_u$  = wage there

$W_a$  = agricultural wage

T = cost of moving

$P_e = E_u/L_u$  E = employed, L = labor force

From proponents of “New economics of migration” (NEM) traditional migration theory has been criticized for not taking into account the social setting in which the decision to migrate takes place. For example, critics say, that the possible positive effects of migration on local production activities (income linkages) in the migrant sending family/area are not taken into account. Instead of stressing income maximizing decisions made by single individuals in complete and well functioning markets, critics focus on collective/household decisions, risk minimization strategies and strategies to tackle market failure as important explanatory factors (Massey et al. 1993 p. 458; Perkins et al 2001 p. 300).

Some different, overlapping, lines of arguments are present in the NEM literature and are presented in the following:

#### Mitigate risk and overcome market failures

A central idea in the literature of the NEM is that rural to urban migration decisions are made in order to mitigate risks and to overcome constraints given by market failures, such as failing, absent or inaccessible insurance-, credit-, labour and agricultural markets - which constrain rural income opportunities. I.e, it is not merely the labour market that is of interest, as in neo-classical theory, but also other markets (Massey et al. 1993 p. 438).

The decision to migrate, and the accompanying initial costs, can be seen as a way for the household to acquire financial means to invest in income generating activities when a failing capital market cannot supply credits. Remittances sent home by migrants enable a diversification of income sources and may

provide an opportunity to transform production technology and improve efficiency (Massey et al. 1993 p. 436).

However, not only the investments enabled by remittances increase productivity. If the household's output and income remains constant when the migrant leaves, for example a small farm household, one person less to feed enhances the productivity of a labour abundant farm.

#### The Social setting of the migration decision: A household decision.

Traditionally the literature on migration has largely ignored aspects of migration that have to do with the effects of migration on the source communities (Taylor & Scott & Braw 2003 p.79.). In contrast to neo classical theory – which is emphasizing the role of absolute wage gaps and income maximization by single individuals – NEM is emphasizing *the social environment in which the migration decision takes place*. Migration decisions are not made by isolated, “atomized” individuals, but by *households* or units of people related to the individual. The decision is taken not only to collectively maximize income, but also to minimize risk and to loosen constraints caused by market failures. In this line of migration research remittances sent home by migrants and household's remittances use are seen core variables (Lauby & Stark 1988; Taylor 1999 p. 76, Massey et al 1993 p. 457).

#### The Social setting of the migration decision: Networks

Network theory focus on social capital and the density of human contacts available to facilitate the migrant's move and for arranging employment in the destination area. The more contacts you have with previous migrants, the greater the probability for a move out of any particular area. However, this factor, according to Skeldon, is more a lower order explanation rather than a root cause of migration. Networks reduce the cost and the risk of migrating (Skeldon 2001 p. 33).

According to network theory, migration over time becomes independent of the factors that originally caused it. Migration develops into a self sustaining process, very different from traditional models based on a general equilibrium analysis, as the size of migratory flows are not strongly correlated to wage differentials or employment rates. Rather, the effects of these variables in promoting or inhibiting migration are progressively overshadowed by the falling costs and risks of migrating stemming from the growth of migrant networks (Massey et al 1993 p. 450).

### Relative deprivation

NEM emphasises the phenomenon of relative deprivation as a key mechanism when explaining labour migration. In this line of research it is not absolute levels of income, but how the individual perceives its situation relative to some reference group of people that makes migration a desirable option. I.e. the trigger for migration is not only a wish to improve your standard of living in absolute terms, but also relative to other households. Comparisons with these better off households incur feelings of deprivation and spurs the decision to migrate (Massey et al 1993 p. 438-39).

The relevant comparisons are not just made with any group that happens to be better off. The reference group is living close to the migrant in geographic, social or in other ways, such as to make comparisons natural and providing the framework for how to value a given share of capabilities. The closer you are to a specific group of people in the way you live your life, the more likely are comparisons to take place, and therefore a slight improvement in the reference group's income can be of greater importance for the migrants decision than a big change in the income of someone with a life very different from your own. I.e. for comparisons to be made some similarities have to be perceived. It also presupposes some kind of direct social interaction to take place or sustained social relations to persist. It is people living in your social or geographic vicinity, such as relatives, family or neighbours (Massey et al. 1993, p. 438; Stark and Taylor 1991, p. 1172).

This stands in stark contrast to the neo classical model, as wage differentials between urban and rural areas are not a necessary condition for migration, focus is instead on differentials within the rural communities themselves. The marginal utility is not a function of income alone, as in neoclassical theory, but also depends on how you perceive your situation relative to that of others. It is improvements in your relative endowment that define how you perceive your utility and welfare (Stark & Taylor 1989 p 3.; Stark 2005 p. 4)

According to research by Stark and Taylor (1991), even after the move, migrants tend to keep the reference points in the old communities from which they migrated. If the reference group is a community where migration is common, and the entire community sees its standard of living improving as a result of remittances or economic development, there is a risk of the migrant being caught in spiral of unfulfilled expectations and perpetuated feelings of deprivation. I.e. despite of increased earnings in her new community the differences continue to exist between the migrant and her reference group in the old community (Stark & Taylor 1991 p. 1172).

This said, however, changing your environment from the rural to the urban setting may also imply changing your reference group. Stark and Taylor (1991) even mention the possibility, even though less likely, of the remaining household in the village changing its reference group to that of the migrant's host community (Stark & Taylor 1991, p. 1172). Thereby an increased pressure for remittances appears.

The occurrence of migration and remittances in a community may of course also increase existing inequality and may lead to new feelings of relative deprivation arising within that community. Especially so as a lot of research suggests that it is not the poorest families that migrate but those with enough resources of various kind to support the undertaking. This might in turn lead to more community members taking the decision to migrate and hence migration turns into a self-perpetuating process. (Taylor 1999 p. 80, Stark 2005, Skeldon 2003 p. 12)

Ronald Skeldon has pointed out that it is a mistake to focus solely on poverty when trying to explain migration. While poverty and wage gaps definitely is one explanation, Skeldon claims that a desperate search for opportunities to make a living is not necessarily the sole root cause behind migration. Perceived inequalities and relative deprivation is as important. This is, according to Skeldon, demonstrated by the fact that, generally, it is not the poorest that move, but those that do have access to resources of some kind – economic or human or social capital. Economic, to cover the direct and indirect costs of a move, and human, such as education, to allow potential migrants to understand information about a world beyond the immediate community and social capital enabling migrants to move and arranging employment. (Skeldon 2001 p. 33, Skeldon 2003 p. 4)

However, some research also find empirical evidence showing that it is the migrants from the poorest families that send the biggest amount of remittances (Niimi & Özden 2006 p. 12), furthermore female migrants tend to send more than male migrants from a given level of earnings (Lauby & Stark 1988, 478, 485-86; Lucas 1997 p.751-52)

From the theories presented a number of a number of focal points arise that are of interest in the data collection, such as: the size of migrants' earnings, size and frequency of remittances, the frequency of remittance funded investments and other remittance funded consumption, the surrounding community's dependence on migrant's earnings, the change in living standard caused by migration, social situation at the time of migration and relation to the sending household, access to networks, access to resources before migrating, consumption patterns of migrants and of migrant households, characteristics of migrant sending areas and households.

#### 4. Survey methodology

The data was collected through a questionnaire survey carried out in Svay Pak. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was constructed that tried to gather information about conditions being at the focal point of the theoretical concepts presented earlier in the theoretical chapter. The logic of “snowballing” or networking methodology was used to carry out the sampling. Snowball methodology tries to use the social ties between individuals taking part in in order to get access to stigmatized populations (Lee 1993, *Doing research on Sensitive Topics*. pp. 65). Therefore four persons who had own access to networks surrounding the Svay Pak sex trade helped carrying out the interviews. These were persons with a very good knowledge of Svay Pak and especially of the people involved in the sex trade. Among other relevant experiences, they had previously worked for a NGO that used to provide services to sex workers. Therefore they enjoyed a trustful and respectful relationship with several different kinds of actors involved in the sex trade and the surrounding Svay Pak community. This enabled asking questions about topics of a very sensitive character, without making respondents losing face. The interviewers were both of ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese background and with both Khmer and Vietnamese language skills. This is not unimportant as ethnic background can also be a reason for stigma in Cambodia.

Snowballing brings with it some risk of bias in the feature of samples as the social relations that underpin the sampling procedure may create a risk for homogeneity in the attributes of respondents.. (Lee 1993. P. 67). However, the selection of respondents had an intentional bias for choosing Svay Pak inhabitants connected to Svay Pak sex trade and the surrounding business community, f.ex. street vendors. Furthermore, although the interviewers had common denominators through their involvement in a NGO, their individual history of contacts with Svay Pak sex trade differed, hence reducing the risk for, unintentional, homogeneity. One of the interviewers had own experiences of being a sex worker in Svay Pak.<sup>12</sup> None of them were nowadays living in Svay Pak and they had their sources of income outside Svay Pak. Furthermore, the interviewers were trained in how to carry out questionnaire surveys, when involved in an earlier survey in Svay Pak.

Although many Svay Pak inhabitants had mixed feelings about the brothels, in general the attitudes towards the closure were very negative, because of the dramatic economic consequences. There is a risk that respondents’ answers reflect this in exaggerations about the possible negative effects of the closure. However, the great number of questions, giving a chance to cross check answers, and the fact that the respondents probably understood that interviewers had a very good understanding of the setting may have

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<sup>12</sup> Due to the stigma frequently involved in sex work I have chosen not to mention the names of the interviewers.

discouraged incorrect answers. Furthermore, the great number of interviews carried out, 120, ought to strengthen the overall accuracy of the observed patterns.

Considering the sensitivity of questions relating to sex trade or to private economic matters, the questions/interviewers were careful not to make respondents loose face. In order to neutralize the potential stigma related to questions about sex trade, questions were posed in a way clearly presuming the wide existence of sex trade and economic problems in Svay Pak, thus presuming the phenomena and focusing on frequency rather than about it occurring at all (See discussions in Lee 1993, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, p. 75.) When translating questions into Khmer/Vietnamese it was done with a wording describing the activities in a way that was familiar to respondents, trying to make them feel relaxed. It was important to make the purpose of the study very clear after frequent earlier interest for Svay Pak from the side of authorities or from foreign NGOs interested in a closure of the brothels (See discussions in Lee 1993 p. 76-78). Given the sensitivity of the topics, partly involving information about stigmatizing and/or criminal activity, confidentiality was respected by not recording the names of the respondents. This was important for convincing respondents that they would share their information without a risk of being exposed and could trust that information was handled carefully (Compare discussions about how handle sensitive data in Lee 1993, pp. 164).

The questionnaire involved 130 questions structured into different sub sets of questions. Several sub sets required answers only if the respondent had the relevant characteristics, f.ex. a big sub set of questions concerning migration decisions fell out for those respondents who were not migrants. The interviewers filled in the questionnaires, not the respondents.

For reasons of time it was in some cases impossible for respondents to provide answers to all the questions, in those instances interviewers tried to make sure that at least questions directly targeting core issues about income, spending and migration were answered.

The data was collected 15 months after the closure of brothels, during the first half of December 2005. It is likely that it took some time before you could see the full economic consequences of the closure. In the case people had savings it probably took some time before those were depleted and you saw the full effect on consumption patterns. As mentioned, there were no signs of sex trade being substituted by any other business of any importance, instead many respondents were highly indebted.

### Characteristics of the sample

Until authorities effectively closed the Svay Pak brothels in August 2004, the town and its economy was dominated by 23 brothels clustered along the two main streets and sex trade created an influx of migrants over a period of twenty years. While being a part of the wider Phnom Penh area, at a distance of 11 km away from Phnom Penh, it is a separate small town. The closure of Svay Pak brothels followed international criticism, especially from foreign NGOs, against Cambodian authorities' not taking child sex trade serious enough and brothels were closed in an apparent show off of decisiveness to tackle sex trade.

The total sample consisted of 120 Svay Pak inhabitants. Not only persons directly involved in sex trade were approached, but also the surrounding Svay Pak community. 60 percent of the sample were individuals who had partners and 66 percent had children, hence it is likely that respondents' income has a very direct impact on a larger share of the population than on only respondents themselves. As many as 93 percent of respondents reported that other persons depend on their income, including family and relatives living outside Svay Pak. Almost the entire sample was residing in Svay Pak before the closure of the brothels. Numbers varied with current demand, but in March 2002 Busza found that 279 women were working as sex workers in the brothels (Busza 2004 p.6).

Unfortunately, no reliable statistics is available about the population size in Svay Pak at the time of the survey. However, there are indications making it likely that the sample represents a considerable share of the population. The national census carried out in 1998 counted a total of 3369 inhabitants, disregarding citizenship, in Phum Svay Pak, i.e. Svay Pak town (NIS 2000 p. 205)<sup>13</sup>. If the population size had remained the same, the sample represented 3,6 percent of the Svay Pak population at the time of the survey. However, the NIS study was carried out long before the closure of brothels and while UN peace keepers were still in the country and boosted the Svay Pak economy, which attracted migrants to the town. The departure of UN peace keepers – an important group of Svay Pak sex buyers - from Cambodia was the first blow to the Svay Pak economy. However, consequences were not as far as drastic as the government imposed closure of the brothels during August 2004. When this study was carried out it is likely that many inhabitants had left the town, as confirmed by interviews, as the survey does not show any indication at all of sex trade being substituted by some other business of any magnitude (as shown later in this chapter). Anecdotal evidence from interviews suggests the population was around 2500 at the time of the survey (Interview with former caretaker at the NGO Khemara).

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<sup>13</sup> National Institute of Statistics (2000). *General Population Census of Cambodia. Village Gazetteer*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Planning. P. 205. Svay Pak commune headquarters probably has the exact figures unfortunately I did not manage to release this statistics.

Respondents were predominantly approached in the street or sometimes inside indoor businesses, but also in more secluded places. Most areas and streets of Svay Pak were covered. Business people<sup>14</sup> (including street vendors) were deliberately selected in order to capture an obvious *interface for income linkages* between sex trade and the surrounding economy. Street vending is also a typical source of income for many migrant workers, as entry barriers to formal sector jobs are high for migrants, as discussed earlier (see table 8). Persons directly involved, or with a history of being directly involved in sex trade were also selected (21 percent of the sample was or had been sex workers, pimps, brothel owners or in other ways employed in sex trade).

**Table 8** Occupational profile of the sample after the closure

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Nr. of respondents</b>
Street vendor/sales person	59
Cleaner/laundress	10
Café owner	2
Lottery/gambling broker	4
Teacher/trainer	2
Tailor	7
Hairdresser/pedicurist/perfume seller/ traditional medicine practitioner	10
Masseuse/sex worker	11
Brothel owner, pimp	6
Moto taxi driver	4
Waitress	1
Stay home	3
Cleaner	1
Tot	120

A group frequently claimed to have income- and other linkages to the sex trade is unfortunately missing in the survey: the police. There was anecdotal evidence of senior police men being involved as investors in brothels. Furthermore, police at various levels are very likely to have received bribes, fex. Baker found the monthly police fine to be US\$500 per month and brothel in Svay Pak (Baker et al. 2003 p. 15).

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<sup>14</sup> Only 17,2 percent of Cambodians are estimated to be employees; own account workers make up for 39,1 percent and unpaid family workers 43,5 percent. Only 0,2 percent are employers. (NIS 2008 population census).

Typical characteristics of respondents were being *migrant women*. 78 percent of respondents were female and 70 percent were ethnic Vietnamese. An even higher proportion of respondents, 76.6 percent, were born outside Svay Pak.<sup>15</sup> Half of the respondents were below 35 years of age, the youngest being 15 years old. 75 percent of those below 35 years of age were female. 63 percent of the total number of respondents had attended school.

## 5. Observations

### Economic impact of the closure on the respondents and their surrounding community

When asked whether they found the closure of the brothels good or bad *a great majority of respondents, 84 percent, responded that they found the closure bad*. This figure corresponds with the proportion of respondents earning less today compared with before the closure.

There is a huge *decrease in earnings* of Svay Pak residents following the closure of brothels (see table 9). Respondents were asked about their maximum, minimum and normal earnings per week before the closure and today. The mean normal earnings in a week decreased with about 60 percent, from Riel 145 942 to Riel 58 900. The median normal earnings decreased with 65 percent from Riel 116 850 to Riel 41 000.

**Table 9** Change in income after closure of brothels, all respondents

Earnings per week (Riel)	Before	After	% change
Max earnings median	143 500	60 750	37,7
Max earnings mean	171 412	72 525	57,7
Normal earnings median	116 850	41 000	64,9
Normal earnings mean	145 942	58 900	59,6
Min earnings median	92 250	33 900	63,3
Min earnings mean	122 300	46 907	61,6

\* N=120, 2.m.a.

<sup>15</sup> Four m.a. Feelings towards Vietnamese are often hostile in Cambodia, even though not as much in Vietnamese dominated Svay Pak. While carrying out the interviews I met persons who wanted to be discrete about their Vietnamese roots even in Svay Pak.

21,6 percent of respondents had changed to another occupation during the time after the closure of brothels.<sup>16</sup> At the same time only a small number, 12,5 percent of respondents, report that they work more hours per week today compared with before the closure. This is probably an indication of substituting income opportunities and successful attempts to start substituting businesses are scarce (Less: 40 persons, same: 60 pers, more: 15 pers, five missing answers) and as many as one third of respondents work fewer hours.

When asking respondents how many people used to be active in their business before the closure, the answers reveal a **big decrease in business activity**. As many as 75 percent, from all kinds of business, say there used to be more persons active in the business before. Again confirming the great impact the closure had on the Svay Pak incomes. Only a few respondents say there used to be fewer competitors or colleagues. Considering the small size of Svay Pak it is very likely that respondents have a good picture of the number of competitors. 46 percent answered they had decreased prices on the goods or services that they make a living on.<sup>17</sup>

As many as 72,5 percent of respondents answer that they have had to **cut down their personal or household expenses** since the closure (see table 9). 25,8 percent answer that they have not. When presented with examples of various kinds of expenses a majority of respondents confirm that they have had to cut down on basic expenses such as food, accommodation and clothes (see table 10) . The cut in food expenses is confirmed in the answers of street vendors selling food, who, in line with a majority of business men, report about both falling sales and fewer competitors.

**Table 10** Expenses that respondent have cut down on

Expense	% of respondents*
Entertainment	61,6
Clothes	61,6
Accommodation	49,2
Food	45,8
Transportation	22,5
Investments in business	5,8
Education	5

<sup>16</sup> Seven m.a. As the final closure in August 2004 was preceded by police interventions and temporary closures during the preceding months I count the number of persons who have changed occupation during the last 24 months.

<sup>17</sup> Only 76 percent answer frequency, but this might be a very delicate question to answer. Furthermore, not all respondents were self-employed or in a position to determine prices.

Support to family members not living in the household	3,3
Medical expenses	3,3

\* 120 responses, two m.a.

42,5 percent of respondents were *indebted*. This must probably be considered a very high figure, not the least considering the lack of formal lending systems. 40.8 percent of respondents reported that they had had to sell off belongings during the time after closure. 75.5 percent did not save any money at all.

A huge *decrease in employment opportunities* seems to have taken place. 30 percent of respondents report about family members having lost their employment following the closure, with an average frequency of 2.8 persons in each case. Many more, 66 percent, report about friends and neighbours leaving Svay Pak (14/120 m.a.).

Another indication of the great loss of employment opportunities, and of a likely increase in underemployment, is the above mentioned *decrease in the total number of hours that respondents work*. Only a minor share, 12.5 percent, work more hours, despite the huge decrease in income.

45,8% of respondents have friends or family that have *started to work outside Svay Pak* after the closure but who still reside in Svay Pak. When asked about what kind of occupation these friends or family used to have while working in Svay Pak the answer in 54,5 percent of the cases is that they used to be sex workers. This confirms the picture of sex trade having moved away from Svay Pak to other places.

In theory, the proximity to Phnom Penh, 11 km away, should make a move away from Svay Pak relatively easy. However, one reason for still residing in Svay Pak, but working outside, were reports that Svay Pak sex workers who tried to establish themselves in the Phnom Penh brothel district Tuol Kok where denied establishing their own brothels or to work in brothels run by local patrons. Instead they “free lanced” on the streets and in karaoke bars in Phnom Penh while still residing in Svay Pak. This confirms Derks observations, mentioned in chapter two, about entry barriers even in sex trade. It was observed during the time of the study that motor traffic late afternoon with four women on one motor bike going on the Svay Pak- Phnom Penh road, was a common sight, and made up a large proportion of total traffic leaving Svay Pak during that time of the day.

### Earnings in the sex trade

The proportional decrease in income for workers in sex trade was greater than the decrease for the entire sample. However income levels in sex trade still remained slightly higher than in the entire sample (see Table 11). The table shows the income not only of sex workers but also of other categories working at the brothels, such as brothel owners, pimps as well as one brothel cleaner. It was not uncommon with people attached to brothels changing between different occupations within the sex trade, for example sex workers becoming pimps.

**Table 11** Change in income of employees in the sex sector\* after closure of brothels

Earnings per week (Riel)	Before	After	% change
Max earnings median	225500	82000	- 63.6 %
Max earnings mean	251740	84460	- 66.4 %
Normal earnings median	205000	61500	- 70.0 %
Normal earnings mean	215660	68716	- 68.1 %
Min earnings median	164000	41000	- 75.0 %
Min earnings mean	181220	53628	- 70.4 %

\* 27 respondents who used to work or were still working in the sex trade. 5 brothel owners, 14 sex workers, 7 pimps, 1 brothel cleaner. Several respondents had left sex work but 15 were still occupied in the sector.

Some sex workers continued their work in a couple of massage parlors along the highway, outside the town. Although working conditions and earnings (after transportation costs) were reportedly worse, many Svay Pak inhabitants also continued earning an income in the sex trade in Phnom Penh after the closure, while still residing in Svay Pak. This might be an explanation for why not only before-closure but also after-closure earnings were higher than in the total sample.

### **Migration to Svay Pak:**

#### Geographical origin of migrants

The sample confirms the picture of Svay Pak being a migrant hot spot. As many as 92 respondents, or 76.6 percent, were born outside Svay Pak.<sup>18</sup> Of those a majority, 68.5 percent, were born in Vietnam (2 m.a.) (See table 12). *Most migrants, two thirds, originated in the country side (1 m.a.).* About one fourth of Vietnam's 58 provinces were represented in the sample as migrant sending areas. A majority of

<sup>18</sup> 20 % were born in Svay Pak. Four (3.22%) missing answers.

Vietnamese migrants originate in the relatively well-off Mekong delta and in the Ho Chi Minh City (ADB 2006 p.8). Cambodian respondents mostly originate in provinces close to Svay Pak. Nearby Phnom Penh (11 km) is the single biggest migrant sending area, but except for this group of migrants, most Cambodian migrants in the sample originated in the country side.

**Table 12** Origin of migrants

Vietnam countryside, province*		Vietnam Town		Cambodia countryside, province		Cambodia town	
Phú Yên	1	Hanoi	1	Banteay Meanchey	1	Kampong Cham	1
Hậu Giang	2	Hồ Chí Minh City	1 1	Battambang	4	Sihanoukville	1
Tây Ninh	4			Kampong Cham	4	Phnom Penh	1 6
				Kampong Chnang	1	Prey Veng	1
<b>Mekong delta:</b>				Kampong Thom	1		
An Giang	2			Kampot	2		
Bén Tre	2			Kandal	8		
Cà Mau	1			Prey veng	4		
Cà Mau /Bạc Liêu***	1			Takeo	3		
Cambodia Khrom****	1			Missing answer**	1		
Cần Thơ	1						
Dòng Tháp	6						
Hồ Chí Minh province	2						
Kiên Giang	1						
Sóc Trăng	7						
<b>Tot</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Tot</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Tot</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Tot.</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>

\* One respondent was born in Vietnam but did not provide info about where. \*\* One respondent was born in Cambodia in the countryside, but did not provide info about in what province. \*\*\* The respondent answered Minh Hai, however this province was divided into two provinces in 1997, Cà Mau and Bạc Liêu. \*\*\*\* The respondent answered Cambodia Khrom. Cambodia Khrom or Kampuchea Krom is the Khmer name on the provinces in the Mekong delta, Vietnam, with Khmer minorities. The table records the places of birth, some migrants had resided on other places before settling in Svay Pak.

## **Labour migration to Svay Pak**

When asked why she/he moved to Svay Pak 66 percent (61 persons) of the migrants gave answers implying that they had moved to Svay Pak in order to work (1 m.a.)<sup>19</sup>. 26 % of migrants moved because their family moved there.

A great majority of labour migrants, 80 percent (49/61), were women. 72 percent were ethnic Vietnamese (2/61 m.a.), however, about half of those were born in Cambodia. Two thirds of labour migrants were born in the countryside. Of those born in towns, half originated in nearby Phnom Penh.

### Age structure and mobility of labour migrants

Many of those reporting that they moved to Svay Pak in order to find work have been *residing there for a long time*, on average 10,75 years (5/61 m.a.). The mean and median age for labour migrants (one m.a.) is 39 years, whereas the mean age for the entire sample (120 persons) is considerably lower, 34,6 years and the median 33,5 years. One reason for this age difference between the labour migrant population and the other population must be that the declining economy of Svay Pak meant the town stopped attracting new, young, migrants. Only three respondents moved to Svay Pak in order to work after the closure of brothels. Another reason for the age structure must be that *younger labour migrants have left the town*. More than half of the respondents (67/107, 13 m.a.) reported about friends and neighbours having left the town. Most of them knew several who departed, with the mean number being more than eight persons. Many respondents report about acquaintances moving to sex work in Siem Rep and other towns far away from Svay Pak.

The picture of young labour migrants leaving Svay Pak after the closure is confirmed when observing the length of time that the different groups of respondents have been in their occupation. Labour migrants have had their occupation for a longer period of time than the entire sample (median/average 7/7,3 years compared with 5/6,4 years. Answer frequency 59/61 and 112/120), thus probably indicating that they younger ones have left. Furthermore, there is a considerable difference when looking at the share of respondents who have had their current occupation only for a short time: only 14,75 percent (9/61) of labour migrants report having their jobs for two years or less, compared with 26/120 (21,6%) in the entire sample (Answer frequency 59/61 and 113/120).

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<sup>19</sup> The share of respondents being labour migrants might be even bigger. This is because 6,5 percent of respondents (6 persons) report they moved because the government provided them with land. However, chose not to label them as labour migrants, as it is unclear how voluntary these respondents' decision to move was. There are accounts of authorities relocating people to Svay Pak from their homes in a Phnom Penh slum area around 1985, reportedly an area with many sex workers. These respondents all reported residing in Svay Pak for a long time, around two decades.

The reason for the older migrant population staying in Svay Pak to a greater extent than the younger population is probably that it is even harder for them to find work outside the town, especially in the sex trade. The reason might as well be that with higher age family attachments, such as children and spouse, might make a move more difficult. On the question "Would you like to move from Svay Pak?" 60 percent of migrants answer "no" and 35 percent answer "yes" (5% m.a.).

#### Family decision: age of labour migrants

The average age of all labour migrants was 27.4 years and the median age was 27.0 years, at the time of migration to Svay Pak. The biggest share (33/60) was between 20 and 35 years age, implying that it is more likely that the decision to move was taken when already having established themselves outside the immediate control of the parental family, compared with younger migrants.

However, a quarter (14 out of 60) were below 20 years of age at the time of moving to Svay Pak. Five (12%) were 15 years and younger, two were as young as 12 years old. The low age makes it likely to believe that for this, substantial group of migrants, the decision to move was influenced by the family setting.

#### Labour migrants' reasons for migrating

One third of the labour migrants reported that the reason for moving to Svay Pak was *a sudden crisis* or change in their family's situation (2/61 m.a.). 20 percent of labour migrants report that they have at instances left Svay Pak for their home province and then moved back again, probably confirming that labour migration to the sex industry, with its low entry barriers, might be a common way to tackle a sudden need for cash

However, despite so many moving because of a sudden crisis, only two respondents report that they migrated in order to *repay a debt*. One reason behind the low figure might be general difficulties of obtaining loans in a poor country side area and therefore migration instead of loans becoming the means for trying to raise resources. But it could also be a sign of migrants not belonging to the most resource depleted strata. The latter is confirmed when asking whether the respondents had a TV before moving to Svay Pak. About half had a TV before the move, something that would probably not have been the case if

they originated in the most resource poor households (28/61, 1 m.a.). 62.3 percent (38/61) had attended school<sup>20</sup>.

21 percent (13/61) reported that they *received financial support from their families* to undertake the move (6/61 m.a.). In four of the cases the support corresponded to more than one month's income, but not in a single case to more than two month's income.

21 percent (13/61) reported that the reason for migrating was because their *family needed money to invest* in its business. A high proportion of those do send remittances, (9/13), however, *only very few (two persons, 15 percent) sent remittances that were actually used for investments*.

At the same time, of those moving because of their family's investment needs, only 4/13 received financial support to undertake the move and only one managed to facilitate investments.

More than half (8/13) of those receiving financial support to migrate later sent remittances to their families. But if it was an investment decision behind families' decision to support the migration costs, expecting it to deliver economic returns, it is notable that the share that actually managed to send remittances used for investments is not bigger. However, as noted in the theory chapter, also without remittances one mouth less to feed in a labour abundant household can be seen as an investment in increased productivity.

#### Access to networks before migrating

Half of labour migrant respondents report that they *used to know someone in Svay Pak before moving there* (30/61, 1 m.a.). Surprisingly many (50 percent) did not know anyone at all. This is surprising as it probably was a long distance move in many cases, more than half of interviewed labour migrants originated in Vietnam (even more, 72 percent, were ethnic Vietnamese). However, the proportion of Vietnam born and Cambodian born respondents knowing someone in Svay Pak before the move is exactly the same. It is likely that Svay Pak's character of being a Vietnamese town reduced the costs of migrating for ethnic Vietnamese, especially language barriers, and perhaps made the need for a network/acquaintances in Svay Pak less important. However, it is also a fact of sex work that the entry barriers – such as the need for a network – are lower in the sex trade. Still, as mentioned above, Svay Pak sex workers were barred to enter segments of the Phnom Penh sex trade.

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<sup>20</sup> 7/61 m.a., lack of education is an obvious stigma and it is hence not surprising with a high share of missing answers.

A large proportion, 56 percent (3% m.a.) reported that they had received *help to find a job in Svay Pak by someone they knew before migrating*.

### Dependence on labour migrants' earnings

It has already been described how big the impact of the closure was on Svay Pak inhabitants' economic situation. Earnings of the migrant workers before and after the closure very much resemble those of the entire sample with a drastic 56 percent fall of mean normal earnings (see table 13).

**Table 13** Labour migrants' change in income because of closure

Earnings per week (Riel)	Before	After	%change
Max earnings median	123 000	61500	50.0
Max earnings mean	167 356	72558	56.6
Normal earnings median	102 500	45100	56.0
Normal earnings mean	140 022	58359	58.3
Min earnings median	82 000	38950	52.5
Min earnings mean	117 325	47013	59.9

1000 RIEL=0,23 USD. 1 m.a.

A great majority of labour migrants, 54/61, report about family members or partners depending on their income, who thus were likely to be affected by the huge income loss. Many of the non-remitting labour migrants had been joined by their families in Svay Pak. Respondents were asked to confirm if any of the following categories depended on their income: spouses, children, brothers and sisters, relatives, parents, boyfriend/girlfriend, grand children, friends. Frequently they supported more than one category (see table 14).

**Table 14** Nr. of categories depending on the migrant worker's income

Nr. of migrants	7	31	18	4	1
Nr. of categories depending the migrants income	0	1	2	3	4

If the number of dependent persons in each category supported by the migrants is set at *a minimum*, i.e. 1 person, this gives a total number of dependent family members and relatives of 79 ( $31 \times 1 + 18 \times 2 + 4 \times 3 + 1 \times 4 = 79$ ). This means that each labour migrant who supported anyone on average supports a minimum of 1.46 ( $79/54$ ) persons. If the entire sample of labour migrants is included, also

counting those who do not support anyone else, the minimum ratio of persons supported by labour migrants is on average 1.29 (61/79) persons.

#### Remittances – frequency and how they are spent

29.5 percent (18/61) labour migrants report either sending remittances today or having sent remittances before the closure of brothels. When given examples of possible expenditures, food (9/18), education, (6/18), and in some cases medical care (3/18) are the most common expenditures that remittances are used for.

Capital goods and investments are very rare: roof, support siblings' business, TV, livestock, travel costs to enable family to visit Svay Pak, are mentioned once each. Food is also an expenditure mentioned in all these cases. When given a list of possible expenditures, no one report expenditures such as: housing, car battery, motorbike, fertilizers, irrigation, new land, hire labour. I.e. *remittances are used to cover the most basic needs.*

When asked about the reason for migrating, as many as 21 percent (13/61) of labour migrants answer yes on the question "Did you move because your family needed money to invest in it's business? Most commonly the need to buy input for vending business is mentioned, but also livestock and sewing machine are mentioned investments. Of the 13 migrants in question, only nine sent any kind of remittances at all. And only two were able to send remittances actually used for investments. I.e. *the share of labour migrants being able - either before or after the closure of brothels - to send remittances used for investments merely constituted about three percent.* At the same time 56 percent (10/18) of remittance senders received support from their families' *to undertake the move, a considerably higher proportion than in the entire sample of labour migrants (21 percent).*

When looking closer at the remittance sending labour migrants' reasons for migrating, the overwhelmingly most important reason was a need for income to support kids (13/18). One third stated that the reason for moving was a sudden crisis in their situation (6/18), a higher proportion compared with all labour migrants (20%). To be able to support siblings education was also mentioned (4/18) among other reasons. Only at one instance was private consumption mentioned as a reason.

One reason for migrants not sending remittances might of course be that they were actually joined by their families and catered for those in Svay Pak. And as shown in the presentation of the number of

people depending on the labour migrants income, it was frequently the case that they did have family living in Svay Pak.

#### The size of remittances

Before the closure 18 out of 61 labour migrant respondents used to send remittances to family and relatives. The average size per week was USD 4.25 (two respondents did not tell how much they used to send) and the median USD 2,8. After the closure of the brothels one third, i.e. six respondents, stopped sending remittances. The remaining persons on average sent USD 4,6 and the median size was USD 2,4 per week (one sender did not reveal the amount). The number of labour migrants sending remittances decreased by one third and the total sum remitted decreased with about the same proportion (28%) following the closure of brothels.

*The size of remittances as a proportion of the senders earnings* vary a lot but are often large. On average remittances correspond to 0,37 percent of the senders earnings. Before the closure it was about half, 18 percent.

The great difference might be surprising, however, remittances normally cover the most basic kind of expenses – such as food and education – thus it is not surprising that remittances are allowed to make up a higher proportion of the sending migrants earnings even after earnings have fallen.

*Impact of remittances on the receiver's living standard:* Asked if their families can live a better life than they used to do *before the migrant left*, thanks to the remittances, two thirds (11/18, 1 m.a.) answer that their family live the same kind of life. Only 28 percent (5/18) answer that remittances have enabled their family to live a better life.

The migrants own lives in Svay Pak, however, seems to be better than expected before moving there: an overwhelming majority of remittance senders answer better on the question “Was life in SP better or worse than you had expected before moving here?” 15/18 answers better, 3/18 answer worse which is about the same proportions as in responses from labour migrants not sending remittances. As mentioned earlier, 35 percent of all labour migrants want to leave Svay Pak.

#### Characteristics of remittance senders

There is a very clear gender pattern with *remittance senders predominantly being women*. 32,6 percent (16/49) of female labour migrants sent remittances, compared with 16,6 percent (2/12) of male labour migrants.

When comparing the weekly earnings of remittance senders with those of other labour migrants, their mean and median *earnings before the closure* of brothels are considerably lower: average Riel 118500 and median Riel 80 000 compared with Riel 148500 and median Riel 123 000 (1/61 m.a., 60 answers). Thus it seems *remittance sending labour migrants were poorer than other labour migrants*. As noticed earlier, remittances were used to cover very basic living expenses.

Only in very few cases (2/61) did remittance senders migrate in order to repay a debt. However, after arriving in Svay Pak a large proportion of this category ended up accumulating debts. Another indicator of remittance senders possibly belonging to a category of more resource weak labour migrants was that the proportion of indebted was (slightly) higher among remittance senders (55 percent, 10/18) compared with other labour migrants (48,8 percent, 2/43 m.a.). Furthermore, it was considerably higher compared with the indebtedness in the entire sample (42,5%).

At the same time as remittance senders give the impression of belonging to a poorer category of labour migrants, *they received financial support to migrate from their families to a much greater extent than other labour migrants*, 56 percent compared to 21 percent.

There is also a much higher prevalence of TV sets in remittance sender's families (before migration). This might indicate that remittance senders, despite their current situation, originate in more resource rich families. 72 percent (13/18) of remittances senders' families used to own a TV set before their move, compared with only 34 percent (15/43, 1 m.a. ) of non-remitting labour migrants. However, when looking at the educational level, which should be a good indicator of families' access to resources, remittance senders had slightly lower frequency of education, 55,5 percent compared with other labour migrants, 65,1 percent.

#### Characteristics of those occupied in the Svay Pak sex trade

About one fifth of the sample (27/120) was or had been directly involved in sex trade in different ways. There were sex workers, brothel owners, pimps and one brothel cleaner in the sample. Several had changed between different occupations in the sector and 15 remained working in the sex trade after the closure. A big proportion, two thirds, of those involved in sex trade were indebted, i.e. many more than the 42.5 percent in the entire sample of 120. This is not surprising as those directly involved were also the ones first hit by the closure.

Most of them, including brothel owners, were women, but there were also a few male sex workers and most pimps were male. An overwhelming majority was ethnic Vietnamese (25/27). This was especially

true for migrants, whereof 90 percent were ethnic Vietnamese. 30 percent (8/27) were born in Svay Pak, of the remaining most (16/19) were labour migrants. One third of the ethnic Vietnamese were born in Cambodia. All of the interviewed brothel owners were ethnic Vietnamese.

The share migrating because of a crisis was about the same as in the overall sample of Svay Pak labour migrants, however, only three were divorced and none of those were sex workers (two brothel owners and one pimp).

In many ways the characteristics the labour migrants into sex trade do not differ from those of the entire labour migrant sample. However, it seems they originate in even more, resource poor households. Only a quarter came from households owning a TV, whereas the same figure was over 50 percent for those migrants not working in the sex trade. In the national statistics, mentioned earlier, this corresponds to the situation in the poorest quintile, where 26.7 percent of households owned a TV. Also when looking at the level of education, those involved in sex trade seem to originate in an even more resource poor category. Only about half of migrants directly involved in sex trade had attended school, compared to two thirds among labour migrants in other sectors. Compared to overall Cambodian literacy rate (78.35) the figure is very low. Even in comparison to Cambodian female literacy rate in the country side, 69.46 percent, it is a low figure (and literacy rate is better in Vietnam than in Cambodia).

There are also differences in the access to networks. 56.25 used to know someone in Svay Pak before migrating, which is ten percent more than among other labour migrants. However, after arriving in Svay Pak, 60 percent of other migrants were helped to find a job by someone that they used to know before migrating, while the same figure was much lower, only 43 percent among those migrants working in the sex trade.

Although people in the sex trade on average earned much better than the rest of the sample, the proportion of remittance senders was surprisingly small. Three (18.75) persons sent remittances before the closure, two afterwards. This can be compared to one third of labour migrants not working in sex trade sending remittances.

## **6. Concluding analysis**

This chapter summarizes the most important findings and analyzes observations against the background of previous research on migration and sex trade as presented in chapters two and three.

### The potential of sex trade as a pull factor for migration

The previous chapter described the economic impact of the closure of the brothels on the wider Svay Pak community. General earnings fell sharply; there was a big decrease in household expenditure; a decrease in remittances; a huge fall in business activity and a fall in employment opportunities and an increase of indebtedness. Many inhabitants started to work outside the town or left Svay Pak completely. In short, effects of the closure were enormous and prove the possibility of a great number of people depending on sex trade directly or indirectly. This was the case even though the number of sex workers was not estimated to be more than a couple of hundreds and only a small share of the entire Svay Pak population. These income linkages and the great dependency from sex work of the wider community in Svay Pak implicate that *sex trade can be a strong pull factor for migration, not only for people directly involved in the business.*

The in relative terms, very good earnings of the migrant dominated community (76.6 % were born outside Svay Pak) surrounding sex trade in Svay Pak ought to be a strong pull factor for migration. Except the respondents directly involved in sex trade, the occupational profile of the entire sample of 120 persons (see table 8) largely reflects the typical migrant occupations described in table 2. The level of pre-closure earnings of the 120 Svay Pak respondents was considerably higher than the typical earnings of Cambodian migrants at the same time, as described in table 9. Comparing the weekly pre-closure earnings of the Svay Pak inhabitants with the earnings of garment workers the same year (see table 4) you find that earnings in Svay Pak were extremely good. The average normal weekly Svay Pak income was on average Riel 140 022, with a median of Riel 102 500, compared to typical earnings of only Riel 55 662<sup>21</sup> for garment workers.

Looking at the pre-closure earnings of the fifth of the sample directly employed in sex trade (see table 11) they are about four times the earnings of garment workers. Normal average earnings in the sex trade are Riel 215 660, and normal median earnings were Riel 205 000, compared to weekly earnings the same year of only Riel 55 662 in garment work. Thus, despite big variations in *the earnings of employees in the sex trade, it is on average, very well paid in comparison to comparable migrant worker occupations.* Despite huge income losses, and a restriction of demand to the local, broke, customer base, or in a few cases, less rewarding free lancing in Phnom Penh, the post-closure earnings of remaining sex trade workers were still slightly higher than average normal post-closure earnings in Svay Pak ( See table 9 and table 11).

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<sup>21</sup> This figure is based on a six day working week.  $9277 \times 6 = 55\ 662$ .

### Absolute wage gaps or relative deprivation

In chapter two it was described how migration to the Phnom Penh area, where Svay Pak is situated, is dominated by migrants from the relatively well-off provinces close to Phnom Penh. The poorest Cambodian provinces are only represented as sending areas for minor migrant flows. As can be seen in table 12 this is true also for migration to Svay Pak, with the majority of its rural-urban *internal* migrants moving to the town from nearby, better off provinces. Thus, absolute wage gaps do not seem to be a main determinant behind Cambodian migration as described in classical migration theory.

Most of the poorer provinces are located at great distance from Phnom Penh, thus implicating higher costs for migrating and a higher value of the variable T in the equation determining the benefits of migrating in classical models. But this is not the case for Kampong Speu, the only neighboring province not represented in the sample. Kampong Speu both belongs to the poorest category of provinces and is located in the immediate vicinity of Phnom Penh. The lack of migrants from Kampong Speu, is again implicating that absolute wage gaps is not enough to explain determinants behind migration.

Analyzing migration flows to Svay Pak from Vietnam, rural migrants predominantly originate in the Mekong delta which belongs to the better off regions in Vietnam. This said, it is also an area which is, much closer to Phnom Penh than the poorer Vietnamese regions, thus reducing the T-variable.

However, compared to national migration statistics, and compared to garment workers (compare with Maltoni's study of garment workers, ch. two) the Svay Pak labour migrants were poorly educated and had poorer access to networks and seem to originate in more resource poor households. This was especially true for those working in the sex trade. Even though the sample was small, the survey indicates that labour migrants occupied in sex trade originate in very resource poor families.

### Reasons for migrating – crisis driven migration

When comparing NIS statistics with findings from Svay Pak there are clear differences in the reasons for migrating. Unlike the NIS population census that described crisis situations, such as “insecurity” and “land less/loss” as reasons for migration only in a few cases, 2.36 percent of the respondents, this is a dominant feature of the Svay Pak populace. *One third of Svay Pak labour migrants report “a sudden crisis or change in the family's situation” as the reason for migrating.* This lends support to Maltoni's claims about the frequency of crisis driven migration. However, while he finds a correlation between health problems, indebtedness, land loss and migration, debt seems to be a very uncommon reason for migration to Svay Pak. On the contrary, debts occur while residing in Svay Pak and after the closure of

brothels, commonly among migrants with remittance obligations. You might speculate whether there is a connection between the high frequency of “a sudden crisis or change in the family’s situation” as the reason for migrating and the pattern observed in chapter two, about vulnerable women seemingly clustering in socially stigmatized occupations. Although it is far from the case that the entire sample is directly involved in sex trade, Svay Pak’s infamous name as a hub for sex trade probably occur a lot of stigma and rumours around female migrants settling there, even if not engaging in the sex trade themselves. *The difficulties for young females in finding paid employment and the fact that sex work is an occupation with low entry barriers and one of few opportunities available for young uneducated rural women of raising quick cash earnings, as described in chapter two, might be another explanation for the high share of crisis driven migration to Svay Pak.*

#### Frequency and usage of remittances

The observations in Svay Pak are in line with the findings of previous research on how remittances are used in Cambodia: *remittances are used to cover very basic living expenses*, predominantly food, education and sometimes health care. 21 percent of labour migrants report that they moved because their families needed money to invest in business activities. However, it is very rare in the Svay Pak sample that migrants actually managed to produce that kind of remittances. Hence, when New Economics of Migration literature explains the migration decision as part of a household investment strategy, this may be true when looking at the initial aspirations of some of the Svay Pak labour migrants, but not when looking at the realized remittance flows.

However, while family investment strategies do not seem to be a determinant behind Svay Pak migration, or Cambodian migration in general (chapter 2), the strength of remittance obligations suggests that it is often indeed a household decision. The fact that Svay Pak remittance senders received financial support from their families to migrate to a much higher extent than other migrants also implies that the migration decision of remittance sending individuals is more likely to be a household decision rather than a decision of “atomized individuals”, such as in classical migration theory. The simple fact that many migrants are very young at the time of migrating, as presented in chapter two and also confirmed in the Svay Pak sample, also suggest that the decision to migrate often are likely to take place under the control of the parental family.

While ADB found that as many as 90 percent of the migrant garment workers in its study sent remittances, it seems that it is a much less occurring phenomenon in the Svay Pak labour migrant community, especially among employees in the sex trade. This was the case also before the closure of brothels, despite the previously good earnings. Only 29.5 percent of the interviewed Svay Pak labour migrants were either sending or used to send remittances. But 29.5 percent is still a substantial proportion

and the lower figure is probably to some extent explained by different family situations: the average age in the Svay Pak sample is much older than what is the case among garment workers and many respondents had been joined by or established families in Svay Pak. Almost the entire sample of labour migrants has more than one category of persons depending on their income, normally meaning that several persons depend on their income. Those who do send remittances send a very big share of their earnings, in the same way as garment workers have been found to do. The average share of the salaries sent doubled after the closure of brothels, despite huge income losses, probably supporting the picture of remittances being used to cover very essential, basic living expenses. It is notable that remittance senders were earning considerably less than labour migrants in general. It is also the case that women dominate as remittance senders. This confirms the presence of *very strong remittance obligations on Cambodian female migrants*.

To conclude, the Cambodian labour market has strong features of gender, age, ethnic and social division of labour, limiting young women's employment opportunities. This result in sex work being, income wise, one of the best available options for paid employment for young, female migrants of rural origin. It is also one of few possibilities for receiving cash advances in crisis situations. The survey found that earnings in sex trade can be considerable, in comparison to earnings in typical female migrant occupations. Sex trade seems to benefit the surrounding community with big income linkages, proved by big inflows of migrants not working directly in sex trade and the tremendous effects on the surrounding community of the closure of Svay Pak brothels. This was the case even though sex workers only constituted a small part of the entire Svay Pak population. It seems Svay Pak labour migrants in general, but especially those involved in sex trade, originate in more resource poor households than what is generally the case of Cambodian urban migrants. Despite, in relative terms good earnings, the remittances sent from Svay Pak followed the general pattern of remittances being used for the most basic kind of expenses. Remittance behaviour also showed the presence of strong remittance obligations of young, female migrants.

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## **Interviews**

Carolina Hemlin, RFSU, E-mail interview 2011-04-18

Former caretaker at the NGO Khemara, Interview in former Khemar office 2005-12-12

Tes Chamroeun, Population Services International, National Sales Manager, Interview at PSI office in Phnom Penh 2005-12-14

**APPENDIX**

**SVAY PAK – INTERVIEW GUIDELINE**

Interviewer  
Date and week day:  
Interview nr

Street  
House number where the interview took place  
How was the interviewed “found” (while working, at home, on way to work, shopping etc)

***PLEASE FOCUS ON BUSINESS MEN*** (i.e. food sellers, hairdressers, restaurant and café owners etc everyone that are selling something)

Try to get detailed information about numbers.

Explain the purpose of the interview and explain that it is anonymous. Check if the person has been interviewed already!

Formulate the questions in a language that the respondents understands

#####

- 1 Age
- 2 Gender: M  F
- 3 Children Y  N
- 4 If Y how many:
- 5 Married/living with partner? Y  N
- 6 Occupation
- 7 For how long has the person had the occupation?
- 8 Ethnicity: Vietnamese  Cambodian
- 9 Did you go to school? Y  N

**IMPACT OF CLOSURE OF BROTHELS:**

10 “Do you find the closure good or bad?” Good  Bad

11 Does the person work in Svay Pak only  or outside SP only

12 Or does the person work both in SP and outside

13 Was the distribution of work between inside and outside SP different before closure? (if the interviewed is a business man/ salesperson, try to get a grip of the dependence of doing business in Svay Pak – can they easily do the same business outside SP as well)

How much does the person earn in per week?:

14 Now: Max..... Min..... Normal.....

15 Before closure: Max..... Min..... Normal.....

16 Working hours now and before: Now.....Before.....

17 Nr of working days per week, now..... and before.....

18 If numbers impossible to get on previous question: has business improved or gone down after closure?

Up  Down

19 If the interviewed person is a business man (like food or fruits seller fex): how many similar businesses are there in SP? (if fruit seller – how many more persons are there selling fruits?)

20 How many did there use to be before closure?

21 Have you changed your prices on your goods/service? Up  Down

22 If a business man who have employees: are you employing more or less persons than before?

More  Less

23 If you buy products and services that you need for your business (fex. A restaurant owner has to buy rice from someone) from sellers in Svay Pak: Do you buy less or more than before?:

Type of good..... More  Less

Type of good..... More  Less

..... More  Less

..... More  Less

..... More  Less

..... More  Less

**Expenses/Spending** (As detailed info as possible)

24 Have you had to cut down on any of you personal/you households expenses since the closure?

Y  N

25 If yes, what expenses did you cut down and how many dollars?:

26 Food?

27 Education/schooling?

- 28 Medical expenses?
- 29 Accommodation?
- 30 Entertainment?
- 31 Investment in your business?
- 32 Support to family living outside household?
- 33 Transportation?
- 34 Clothes?
- 35 Others?

Nr of persons dependent on person's income:

- 36 Spouse
- 37 Children
- 38 Brothers/sisters
- 39 Parents
- 40 Friends
- 41 Relatives
- 42 Boyfriend/girlfriend
- Other

43 Does the person save money? Y  N

44 If yes, more (M) or less (L) or the same(S) after closure M  L  S

45 What do you plan to do with your savings?

46 Is the person indebted? Y  N

47 If indebted debt: how has person borrowed since the closure:

48 Have you had to sell off any property since closure?

### **Impact of closure on Friends/neighbours/family/relatives**

How many of your friends and family/relatives/neighbours have lost job/income since closure?:

49 number of family members/ relative who lost their job:

50 Friends and neighbours:

How many of your family/relatives have moved since closure?:

51 Family/relatives: .....Where have they moved?

52 How many to Siem Reap?

53 How many to Phnom Penh

54 Shianoukville?

55 To the country side?

56 To Vietnam

Other places, specify:

56 How many of your friends and neighbours have left Svay Pak:..... Where have they moved to?:  
57 How many to Siem Reap?  
58 How many to Phnom Penh?  
59 Shianoukville?  
60 To countryside  
Other places, specify:

60b. what occupation did they use to have

How many have started to work outside SP, after closure, but still live there?:

61 Family/relatives:

62 Friends/neighbours:

63 How many do you know about that earn more money now compared to before closure?

Other comments:

## **THE SVAY PAK SEX MARKET**

Introduce the topic with a statement like: Living in Svay Pak, that used to have so many brothels, you must have some insights into the lives of sex workers and how the brothels were working!

64 How many sex workers, pimps and other brothel employees do you know about who have managed to find another occupation/can make a living in Svay Pak after the closure?

65 What kind of occupations?

## **MIGRATION**

– these questions are **only for persons born outside Svay Pak** (note, there are more questions that might be relevant for non-migrates coming later):

### **Place of birth:**

(Born in Svay Pak? Y  N  )

66 Born in countryside (C) or in town (T) C  T

67 Country

68 province

69 If have parents alive: are they also living in Svay Pak: Y  N

70 If have children: are they also living in Svay Pak: Y  N

71 Where lived before moving to Svay Pak? Same as place of birth  or other

72 **Would you like to move from Svay Pak?** Y  N

73 If yes: to town  or to country side

74 If country side and family is living in country side: would you like to move to the place where family is living Y  N

75 If family is not living in Svay Pak: how often do you visit your family?

76 For how many years have you been living in Svay Pak?

77 Why did you move to Svay Pak?

80 Have you ever moved back to your province and then returned to Svay Pak again?

Y  N

81 If yes, how many times have you moved back to Svay Pak?

At the time you moved to Svay Pak, had you planned to have your current occupation?

82 Y  N

“ I am going to read a number of statements ”Which of the following statements are true for the you?

I moved to SP because:

83 I had to get money to support my kids

84 I had to get money to support my boyfriend

85 I had to get money to support my self

86 We did not have enough food

87 A broken relationship

88 I divorced

89 I could not stand living with my family

90 I had to get money to support my parents

91 I wanted to be able to buy nice clothes and other things for my self

92 I wanted to finance my brothers and sisters education

93 It was boring to live in the country side

94 I could not stand the people in my village or the people in my home town

95 My family moved and I joined them

96 To repay debt

Was the reason for moving to SP a sudden crisis or change in your family’s situation?

97 Y  N

98 If yes, what kind of crisis (illness, unemployment, bad harvest etc)?

99 Did you move because your family needed money to invest in it’s business? Y  N

100 If yes, what kind of investment? (if possible specify – equipment, fertilizers, to hire labour etc)

101 Was it farming equipment ? Y  N

102 Was it in order to hire labour? Y  N

103 Was it something else

104 Do you send money to family outside Svay Pak ? Y  N

105 Did you use to send home money before the closure? Y  N

106 If same now and before, how much:

107 If less/more than before: how much now.....how much before.....

109 How is the money that you send to your family used?

Is any of the following true? (partly overlapping with the previous questions, but ask question again to be sure):

110 Food

111 Medical care

112 Education

113 New roof

114 New housing

115 TV

116 Car battery

117 Livestock

118 Motorbike

119 Fertilizers

120 Employ labour

121 Invest in irrigation equipment

122 New land

123 Other business investments – specify:

124 Others

125 Before moving, did you know any people who worked in SP? Y  N

126 Did anyone you knew before migrating help you to find a job in SP? Y  N

127 Did your family help you with any money to enable your move to SP? Y  N

128 If yes, was it more than one month's (of family's) income? Y  N

129 Was it more than two month's income? Y  N

130 Did your family have a TV when you where living in the province? Y  N

131 Did you like watching advertisement when living in the province? Y  N

132 Was life in SP better or worse than you hade expected before moving here?

Better       Worse

133 If send home money: Because of the money that you send home, can your family live a better life than they used to have when you grew up or is it the same?

Better       The same

THANK YOU!