



ASIAN REVIEW

Vol. 28 No. 1 2015

RAMIFICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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Introduction

Supang Chantavanich, AKM Ahsan Ullah, and Min Ma

This issue of *Asian Review* contains a collection of research articles that examine current issues on cross-border migration in South-east Asia. Human mobility in the region is driven by a diverse range of actors and occurs on a spectrum that covers voluntary migration on one end to forced displacement on the other. An abundance of research exists on many of these groups, such as refugees and migrant workers, who have been migrating for decades due to ever-changing political and economic dynamics in the region. Others, such as individuals who are trafficked for labor, are part of lesser-known migration patterns that involve illicit, hidden networks of traffickers. The clandestine nature of human trafficking challenges emerging efforts to research, investigate, and expose these patterns of migration.

The authors of this issue bring into focus several types of mobility from various disciplinary backgrounds. The issue begins with a broad examination of the migration and development nexus in which Thanh-Dam Truong reflects on the interface between migration studies and border studies. She suggests that a human-centered approach to migration is direly needed in order to identify appropriate responses to the processes of people on the move. She adds that, while the concern for border security is universal as inscribed in international law, practices of border security differ given historical and geopolitical contexts of drawing and redrawing borders as well as resources allocated for control. She argues that the two areas of study (migration and border) should be united in order to produce a coherent body of knowledge about cross-border flows and to remove or at least temper aspects of structural violence embedded in them. She suggests that a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues concerning borders and human migration may oddsot guide the policy process in addressing the injustices embedded in the creation of fl exible border regimes for some groups, and harsh ones for others.

To map the complex and multiple understandings of protracted refugee situations, most literature in the study of forced migration describes protracted refugee situations as displacement in which long-term solutions seem untenable due to long-lasting conflicts and restrictive government policies towards refugees in countries of asylum. Refugees in protracted displacement may not face immediate risks to physical security, but may find their basic economic and social rights unfulfilled for extended periods. The UN agency for refugees (UNHCR) has recently introduced a framework of durable solutions to propose concrete ways in which refugees in protracted situations can rebuild their lives in dignity. Aungkana Kamonpetch, in her article “Envisaging the contemporary Thai government’s measures and interventions toward a refugee repatriation plan: Impacts on durable solutions and protection issues” illustrates how possible durable solutions can occur in the case of refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border. Along these borders, Karen and Karenni refugees, who are ethnic minorities from Myanmar fleeing armed conflict since the 1990s, are able to access opportunities to be resettled in third countries. In addition, the prospect of voluntary repatriation for some is not impossible as peace talks between the new Myanmar civilian government and the various ethnic minorities are ongoing. The article displays how cooperation from the international community under the efforts of UNHCR and the Royal Thai Government can lead to resolution for refugees in the twenty-five year protracted situation at the border. Durable solutions are possible.

The voluntary economic migration of millions of migrant workers in Southeast Asia is a phenomenon that is expected to increase in years to come. Economic theories of international migration point to push factors such as poverty, economic deprivation, and unemployment in places of origin, as well as pull factors such as higher wages and employment opportunities in destination countries (Massey et al., 1993). As flows of economic migrants continue and options for their temporary or permanent settlement in destination countries become more viable, it has become apparent that the social networks of migrant populations play a key role in supporting their mobility, as described by Castles and Miller (2009). In this volume, the different roles of social networks are examined by Kristine Stenbeck in “Reaching the unreachable: The role of civil society in providing access to education for migrant chil-

dren from Myanmar in Thailand.” In 2008, it was estimated that over 128,000 migrant children resided in Thailand, many of whom had accompanied their parents from Myanmar or were born in Thailand. The availability, accessibility, and affordability of education for these migrant youth depend on the management of civil society groups who provide education services to these children. Using the United Nation’s 4As framework on education, Stenbeck highlights the significant role of civil society in making access to education possible for these children, many of whom are undocumented. Indeed, education for migrant children is distinct from that offered to the mainstream Thai population as it takes into consideration the different language skills, the legal and economic status of children and their families, and most importantly, state political will to support their opportunities.

At the same time, research has also revealed the exploitation of various groups as they migrate to seek wage-earning opportunities. Two examples are offered in this volume in the articles by AKM Ahsan Ullah and Sustarum Thammaboosadee. In ‘Replacement migration and governance: migrant domestic workers in Egypt,’ AKM Ahsan Ullah paints a picture of the exploitative conditions of migrant domestic workers from Southeast Asia in Egypt. Ullah examines the international legal instruments that constitute the international legal framework governing migration and trafficking to draw connections between these legal instruments and the status of migrant domestic workers in Egypt. He introduces the concept of replacement migration by which migrant domestic workers replace the role of “others” in a family setting. Ullah offers a comparative picture between freelancers and live-in migrant domestic workers, where the former usually stay in Egypt without legal papers, and the latter face conditions that are akin to slavery. The paper examines relevant laws in Egypt that prohibit the exploitation of children in prostitution, pornography, begging, and forced labor and highlights their constraints given their failure to recognize domestic labor as productive labor in the first place. As a result, recruitment of underage girls as domestic workers continues unabated.

Sustarum Thammaboosadee in his paper ‘Failure of development under neoliberalism: Involution of migrant towns in Thailand’ observes the failures of the neoliberal economy using case studies of three migrant towns in Thailand. He suggests that inequality is not a

market failure but rather has been constructed. In neoliberal involution, the low end of the economy consists of a desperate workforce labeled as the “precariat.” Due to the lack of political power to bargain, the precariat contains workers who are forced to accept whatever risks are involved in the neoliberal economy. His paper aims to dispel the “neoliberal myth” that “a rising tide lifts all boats” because only a minority of elites benefit from economic evolution. Instead, he argues that the majority are “involutated” into an unreachable gap.

Finally, this volume turns to efforts of labor-sending countries to stem the risks of labor migration. We look at the Philippines as an example of a labor-sending country that has set up formal structures to protect its workers abroad. As one of the top labor-sending countries in the world, the Philippines is regarded by some as “a global model for managing international labor migration” (Center for Migration Advocacy, 2009). In ‘A study of skilled labor migration from the Philippines,’ Gamolporn Sonsri examines the policies and regulations enacted by the Filipino government over the span of 40 years to manage labor migration abroad. Sonsri also looks at formal and informal mechanisms for protecting workers’ rights abroad, focusing on a small case study of Filipino workers in Thailand.

Together, the articles in this volume offer contrasting perspectives of migration. The volume illustrates some of the ways in which informal and formal mechanisms work to protect the rights of migrants abroad. Meanwhile, they illuminate areas in which stronger devices are clearly needed to minimize the vulnerability of migrants abroad and to prevent their exploitation. With growing trends of cross-border migration and economic integration in the region, the governments and joint bodies in Southeast Asia must continue to work together to examine and address these issues for greater economic, political, and cultural prosperity in years to come.

Supang Chantavanich, AKM Ahsan Ullah, and Min Ma

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Migration, security and development: Reflections on integrating migration into border studies

Thanh-Dam Truong

ABSTRACT—Discerning the interfaces between migration studies and border studies in the globalizing process is necessary for inter-disciplinary cooperation to achieve a productive integration of common concerns. Seeing the transformations of migration and of borders as a twin process would be helpful in building a unified approach to cross-border movements, their plural forms and contextual significance for border regions—both at the frontier as well as inside a society. A unified approach can help shed more light on the limitations of current practices of governance of cross-border movements. Processes of identities constructions and diverse experiences of human security among people on the move require new responses to ensure that human-centred values are honoured.

Introduction

Migration studies and border studies may be seen as twin fields. They have emerged from the context of Post-World War II reconstruction and post-colonial statecraft. Though they share the same concerns about the movements of people across borders and the protection of sovereignty, their initial foci of research differed but are increasingly becoming overlapping. Originally conceived as a subject of demography, migration research was concerned with the assessment of the geographical movements of the human population within a country in statistical terms and identifying the key factors underpinning their patterns (Ravenstein, 1885). Major societal disruptions during the World Wars and the decolonization process prompted mass migration across borders in different parts of the world under disorderly conditions. New research foci were added to help reduce human suffering by way of designing normative frameworks and distinctive institutional

Issues in the Thai government's policies on the repatriation of refugees

Aungkana Kamonpetch

ABSTRACT—With the advent of reform in Myanmar, Thailand hopes to be able to repatriate the large number of displaced persons from Myanmar. However, a survey shows that most Myanmar displaced persons do not yet have enough confidence about their security after repatriation. This article sets out the conditions and framework under which planning for repatriation should proceed. A human rights approach is needed to protect the rights of refugees. At present, the human rights mechanisms within ASEAN are not strong enough, and ASEAN is reluctant to intervene in controversial bilateral issues. The key players are thus the respective governments and UNHCR. Local community organizations also need to be part of the discussion. Any repatriation plan must meet basic international legal standards and have the acquiescence of the refugees themselves.

Introduction

The Thai government has clearly preferred refugee repatriation as durable solution since Thai the refugee exodus from Indochina in 1975. Thailand had experience in repatriating large numbers of Indochinese refugees in the 1980s and Hmong in the late 2000s. The Thai government's first choice is refugee repatriation to neighboring countries.

In recent years, the repatriation of displaced persons from Myanmar across the Thai-Myanmar border has been primary solutions imposed by the National Security Council (Operation Center for Displaced Persons 2013, 5).¹ Since the negotiations began in 2012 for a cease-fire agreement between the Myanmar government and several ethnic armed groups, the Thai government has wished to implement the repatriation of Myanmar refugees to their homeland. Although the

“Reaching the unreached”: The role of civil society in providing access to education for migrant children from Myanmar in Thailand¹

Kristine Stenbeck

ABSTRACT— In the last twenty years, the focus on human rights has only increased, resulting in a series of international and regional agreements for countries to take responsibility to improve their citizens’ lives. Marginalization is often the result of political, social or cultural disparities, and the issue of human rights evolves into complex and diverse tendencies. Studies have been done to find obstacles in gaining equality; the issues have been recognized and acknowledged and awareness that the goal of Education for All cannot be achieved without collaboration between governments and non-governmental institutions has taken place. In 1990 the Thai government ratified the UNESCO agreement on Education for All and is currently taking part in the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education’s program Reaching the Unreached.

Introduction

Although Thailand has hosted migrants from neighboring Myanmar for several decades, many migrant populations in Thailand continue to be excluded from social participation and the realization of basic human rights. Among these is the universal right to education for children and adults. According to the Thai state, children from Myanmar are considered stateless or illegal immigrants (Huguet and Chamratrithirong 2011). The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) considers this group as part of the “the unreached,” a description used for groups who have been historically or culturally excluded due to economic and political trends. According to SEAMEO, the unreached “are in the lowest range in the indicators of education participation and performance, and they lack or have no access to educational opportunities and services” (SEAMEO 2008).²

Replacement migration and governance: Migrant domestic workers in Egypt

AKM Ahsan Ullah

ABSTRACT—The paper examines how migrant domestic workers, children and adults, make their ways to Egypt and secure employment. The paper also analyzes international legal instruments that constitute the international legal framework governing migration and trafficking to draw connections between these legal instruments and the status of Asian migrant domestic workers in Egypt. This paper is based on qualitative research conducted between 2012 and 2013 with 16 child migrant workers and 25 adult migrant workers selected using snowball sampling. This study analyzes the circumstances of child and adult domestic workers. Adult domestic workers are generally freelancers, and usually stay in Egypt without any legal documents, while child domestic workers are live-in workers mostly staying in Egypt with legal documents. The conditions of the majority of live-in child migrant workers are extremely exploitative which stands in sharp contrast to human rights standards regarding minors.

Introduction

According to the International Labor Organization, there are 52.6 million domestic workers worldwide and the majority of those workers (85 percent) are adult women, but there is also a sizable proportion of children between the ages of six and fifteen working as domestic workers (ILO 2012). The ILO estimates that as many as 7.4 million children under the age of fifteen work in domestic service in the developing world. Since they are hidden it is very difficult to conduct research about their experiences (Ullah 2015; Ullah, Hossain and Islam 2015).

In Egypt, there are about 100,000 migrant domestic workers (ILO 2012), however, there is no data available on how many of them are

Failure of development under neoliberalism: Involution of migrant towns in Thailand

Sustarum Thammaboosadee

ABSTRACT—This articles demonstrate the unevenness of socio-economic development under neoliberalism by utilizing the term “neoliberal involution.” After Thailand shifted from import-substitution to export-orientation in the 1980s, industries need to achieve competitive low cost of production. In the decades since, an influx of migrant laborers has fulfilled this condition. Research in three different Thai provinces shows that migrant communities are subject to a process dubbed “neoliberal involution.” First, migrant laborers are forced to accept high economic risks because of the low political power to negotiate in the labor market. Second, they are victims of social-disintegration in both their host and home countries. Finally, intensive commoditization isolates them from any real community and constructs conditions of hyper-individualism.

Introduction

Since the 1985 Plaza Accords, Thailand has played an important role as a supplier in the global supply chain by offering competitive low-cost wage labor. According to transformations of the global economy, the relative low wages and docile workers fulfill conditions for production (Hewison 1998). Migrant workers play a significant role as labor power for global production. During the 1990s, the migrants from the western border of Thailand were motivated to cross into Thailand for political reasons (Glassman 2004). After the 1997 financial crisis, a neoliberal regime was embedded in Thai economic policy. Thailand's industries shifted from import-substituting to export-oriented, which demanded competitive low cost of production (Phongpaichit and Baker 2002). Migrant laborers have entered into labor-intensive sectors in Thailand along with the dramatic growth

A study of skilled labor migration from the Philippines¹

Gamolporn Sonsri

ABSTRACT—The purposes of this article are to study policies and regulations relating to skilled labor migration in the Philippines, and to study the roles of various sectors in the Philippines in encouraging and supporting labor migration to international labor markets, especially to Thailand. The study uses desk review of documents and qualitative research methods through in-depth interviews with representatives from government agencies, the private sector, and civil society in the Philippines. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis and descriptive induction to identify the key mechanisms used in the Philippines to govern migration overseas to work, namely the Migrant Workers and Overseas Philippines Act of 1995 (Republic Act 8042) and various government policies for overseas employment and the establishment of a high standard of protection for the welfare of overseas workers. The suggestions obtained from the research results are as follows: 1) High labor-exporting countries that lack policies to promote labor export should consider labor management in the Philippines as good practices for managing overseas workers. 2) The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration should cooperate with the Office of Foreign Workers Administration in Thailand to supervise and monitor an Exit Clearance Certificate for skilled Filipino workers.

Background

Southeast Asian countries comprise labor-sending countries with relatively well-developed legislation and mechanisms to govern labor migration (e.g., the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam) as well as countries that are fairly new to organized labor migration (e.g., Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar). The former send workers to countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as

Book Review

Premjai Vungsiriphisal, Dares Chusri, and Supang Chantavanich, eds. *Humanitarian Assistance for Displaced Persons from Myanmar: Royal Thai Government Policy and Donor, INGO, NGO and UN Agency Delivery*. Springer Briefs in Environment, Security, Development and Peace, Vol 17, Migration Studies No. 4. Springer-Verlag, 2014. ISBN 978-3-319-02795-1. Available through <http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319027944>

With more than 100,000 displaced persons from Myanmar living in temporary shelters in Thailand, the Royal Thai Government has for several decades faced critical policy decisions balancing its national security and economic interests against its obligation as a host to ensure access to humanitarian aid and protection for displaced populations. Myanmar has undergone a series of political reform in recent years, most drastically with its transition to a nominally civilian government in 2011, yet many of the factors contributing to the original flow of displaced persons across the border still persist. Within this context, *Humanitarian Assistance for Displaced Persons from Myanmar* (2014) offers a look at the current situation of displacement and the implications of various Royal Thai Government policies over time. The book draws the reader into current discussions around possible durable solutions to end the 30-year crisis of displacement of people from Myanmar.

This book is a part of a series of 4 volumes in the Springer Briefs in Environment, Security, Development, and Peace (Volumes 15-18) that present the results of six studies on sustainable solutions for displaced persons on the Thai-Myanmar border, conducted in partnership with UNDP with funding from the European Union. The editors of this volume are internationally recognized researchers from the Asian Research Center for Migration at Chulalongkorn University, a center of excellence for research on migration, labor, and refugee issues in the Southeast Asia region. Having provided critical research and analysis since the Indochinese refugee crisis in the 1980s, the authors are well-grounded in the issues at hand and offer authoritative analysis of current migration challenges in the region.

Humanitarian Assistance for Displaced Persons from Myanmar is

divided into two sections. The first section offers a unique, historical perspective of displacement along the Thai-Myanmar border that highlights the various factors influencing the Royal Thai Government's policies toward displaced persons in Thailand. The authors introduce policy responses along several dimensions, including protection, administration of temporary shelters, education, health, individual registration, and livelihoods. The second section of the book presents quantitative and qualitative results of research conducted from 2010 to 2011 to analyze the rationale of current policies and strategies. This section establishes an evidence base for the development of alternative policy options, providing unique insight into coordination mechanisms that have developed among key players.

In a complex situation with myriad actors and interests, the book provides a useful mapping of the key actors responsible for policy-making and implementation, particularly from the Royal Thai Government. An accurate understanding of their roles, as they are juxtaposed with the efforts of international aid organizations and donors, is critical for any scholar or practitioner working on issues related to displaced populations in Thailand. Further, the book offers useful analysis of how current policies have been influenced by Thailand's long history of hosting other displaced populations through the 1980s.

The book succeeds in presenting original research to serve as a starting point for future discourse on Thai policy and roles of international actors given recent changes in Myanmar and Thailand's interests. Although its research methodology could be more clearly presented and writing style more concise, it offers the reader access to analysis that integrates the perspectives of displaced persons on their prospective solutions, including resettlement, local integration, and repatriation.

Humanitarian Assistance for Displaced Persons from Myanmar offers a comprehensive overview and complements existing literature on the international response to displaced persons from Myanmar in Thailand. The book serves as a useful entry point for students and researchers wanting an introduction to the case of displacement in Thailand and access to original evidence and analysis of potential durable solutions.

Min Ma

Contributors

Aungkana Kamolpetch is a researcher in the field of Migration and Refugee Studies and Southeast Asian Studies. She specializes in social and human rights issues raised by refugees and migration policy. She was educated at Silpakorn University (B.A.); Chulalongkorn University (M.A.) and as a scholar at International Programme at Chulalongkorn University (Ph.D). Dr. Kamonpetch's published research has dealt with issues of forced migration, durable solutions, asylum, humanitarian politics, irregular migration, human trafficking, development, environment and migration.

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Contributors

Thanh-Dam Truong obtained her Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. She is a retired Associate Professor of Women, Gender and Development Studies and coordinator of the research cluster on Migration and Human Security (2007-2012) at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Her long-standing research on South-east Asia is multidisciplinary and addresses the nexus of culture and political economy. One of her focus is the nexus of gender, migration and human security.

AKM Ahsan Ullah AKM Ahsan Ullah is associate professor of Geography, Environment and development studies and Deputy Dean (Graduate Studies and Research) at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at the University of Brunei Darussalam. Dr Ullah has contributed to refereed journals. He contributed chapters to a number of books, and published a number of books on migration, refugee and development studies. In his last 20 years of career, Dr Ullah taught and researched at a number of Universities in Africa, North America, Europe and Asia.

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