

*Workshop on Independent Child Migrants: Policy debates
and Dilemmas, 12th September 2007, Central Hall,
Westminster, London, England.*

*Mapping Migration in
Lao PDR*



LAO PDR

Presented by Inthasone Phetsiriseng

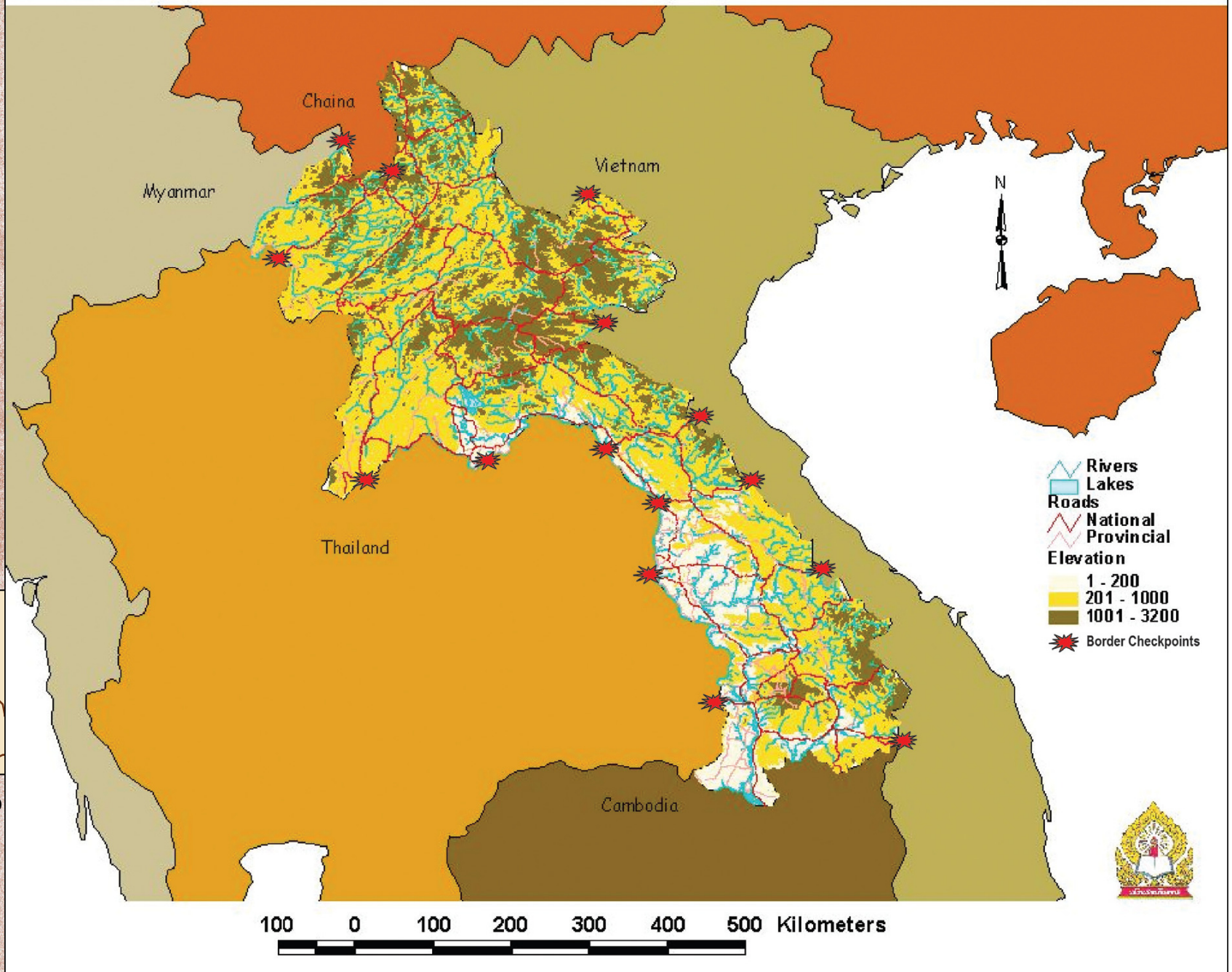
Introduction

- *Labour Migration Survey in Khammuane, Savannakhet and Champasack of Lao PDR (2003, ILO)*
- *Gender Concerns in Migration in Lao PDR (2007, UNIFEM)*



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Lao People's Democratic Republic



Country Profile

- **5.6 million, 49 ethnic groups with four major ethno-linguistic groups**
- **52.5% of the population is ethnic Lao, while the remainder belong to other ethnic**
- **Estimated per capita GDP in 2004 was USD 428**
- **Economic growth does not contribute substantially to poverty reduction and the positive effect is largely offset by increases in inequality**



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Contextual Background

- Geographical position of Lao PDR as corridor creates favourable conditions for the areas of trade, tourism and communication in the region
- Lao PDR is located in the center of a dynamic and prospering region, and as such, has the potential to provide a strategic resource base and land link to its neighbors – Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and China.



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Contextual Background

- On average about 25,000 youth (15 - 18 years old) enter the labour market each year
- Limited economic opportunities in the country are the strongest push factor that contributes to labour migration abroad
- Only 6% of the labour force in the country is paid employees. The vast majority of the labour force is self-employed.
- Therefore many Lao women see more economic opportunities and jobs in Thailand and are keen to look for work there through social and illegal recruitment networks.



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Groundbreaking Survey

Sample size nearly **39,000** people

More than **20,000** people interviewed

Population of three **provinces=1/3**
total population of Lao PDR

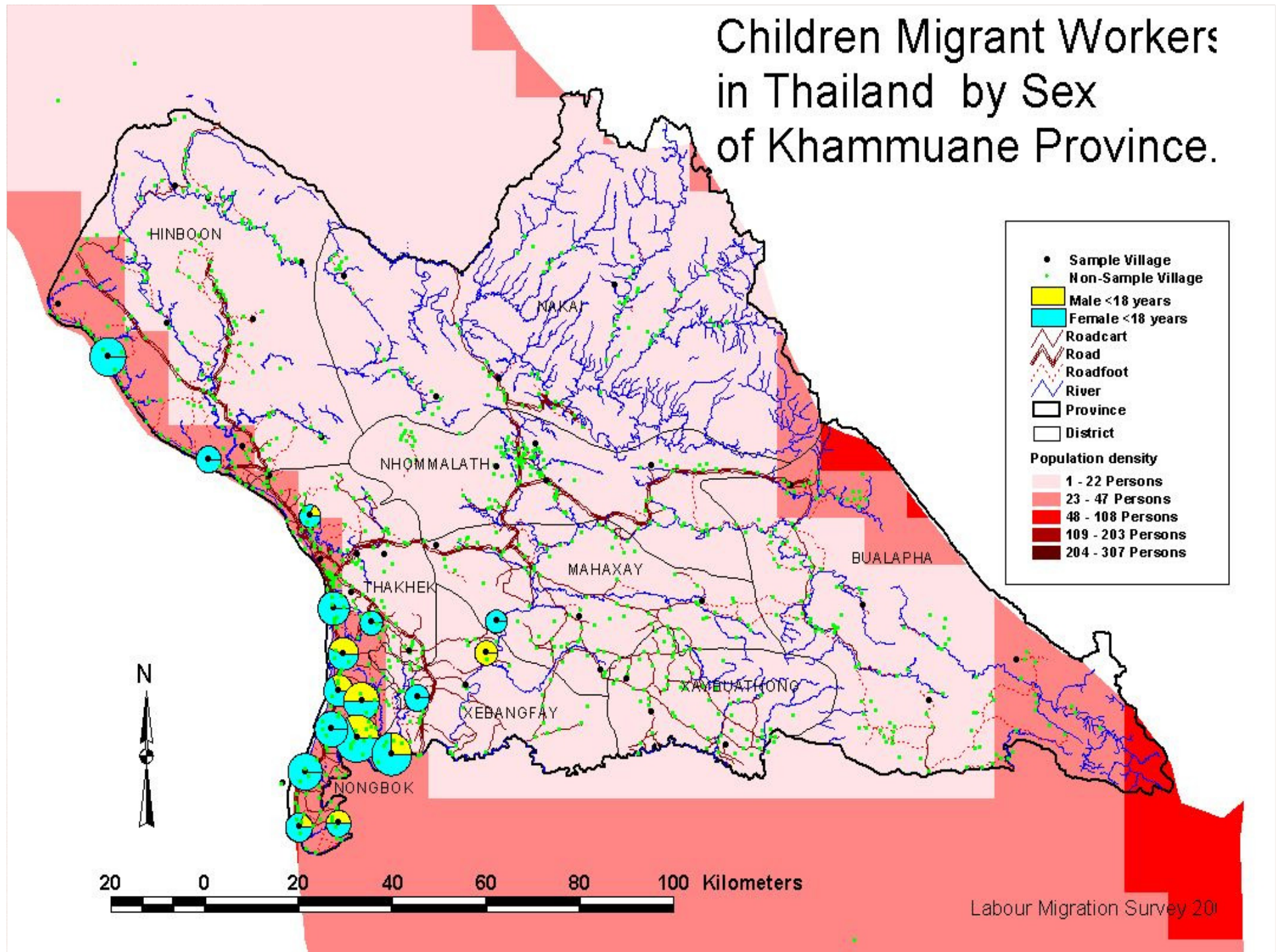
Nearly **6,000** households

7% of household members on the move

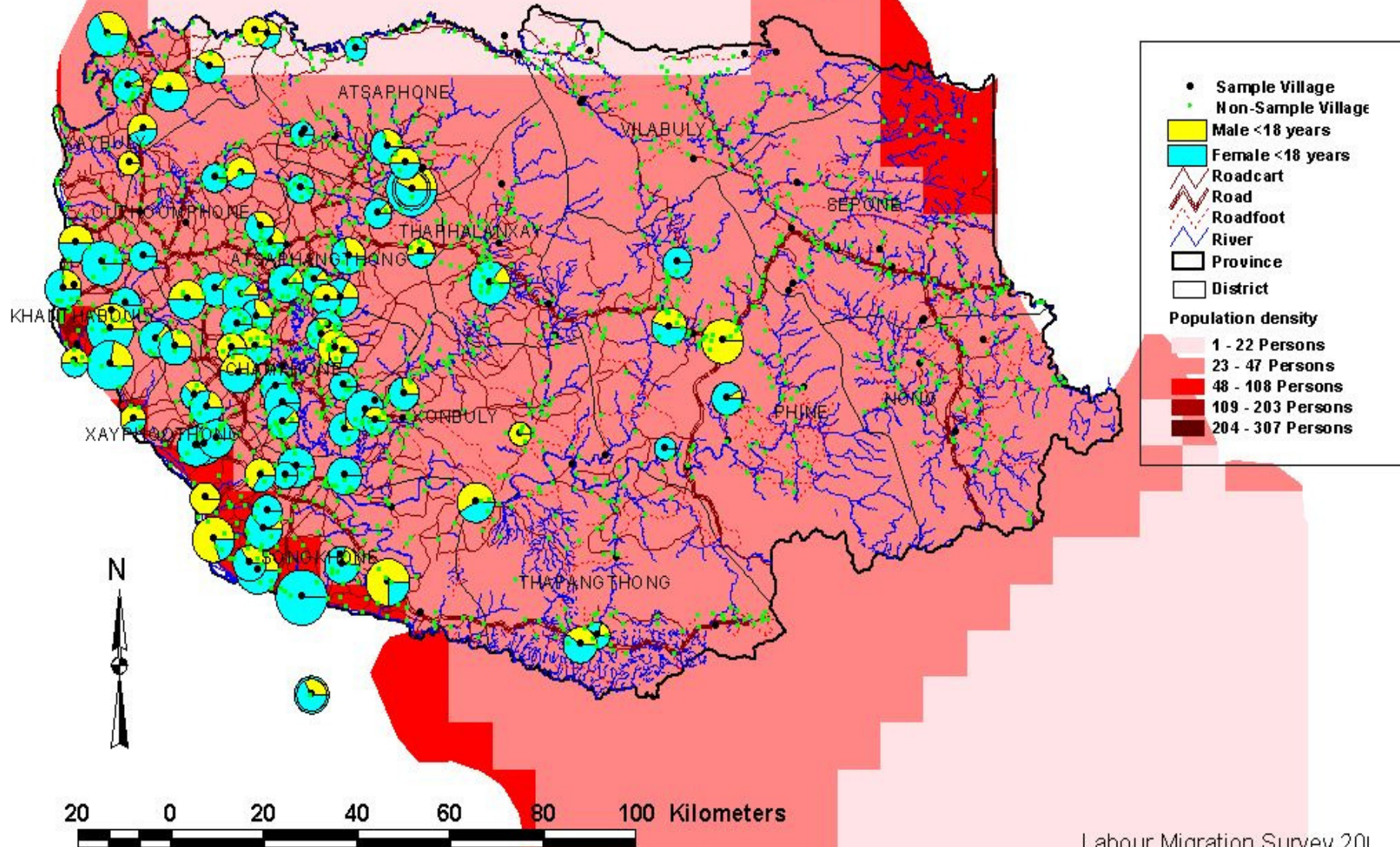


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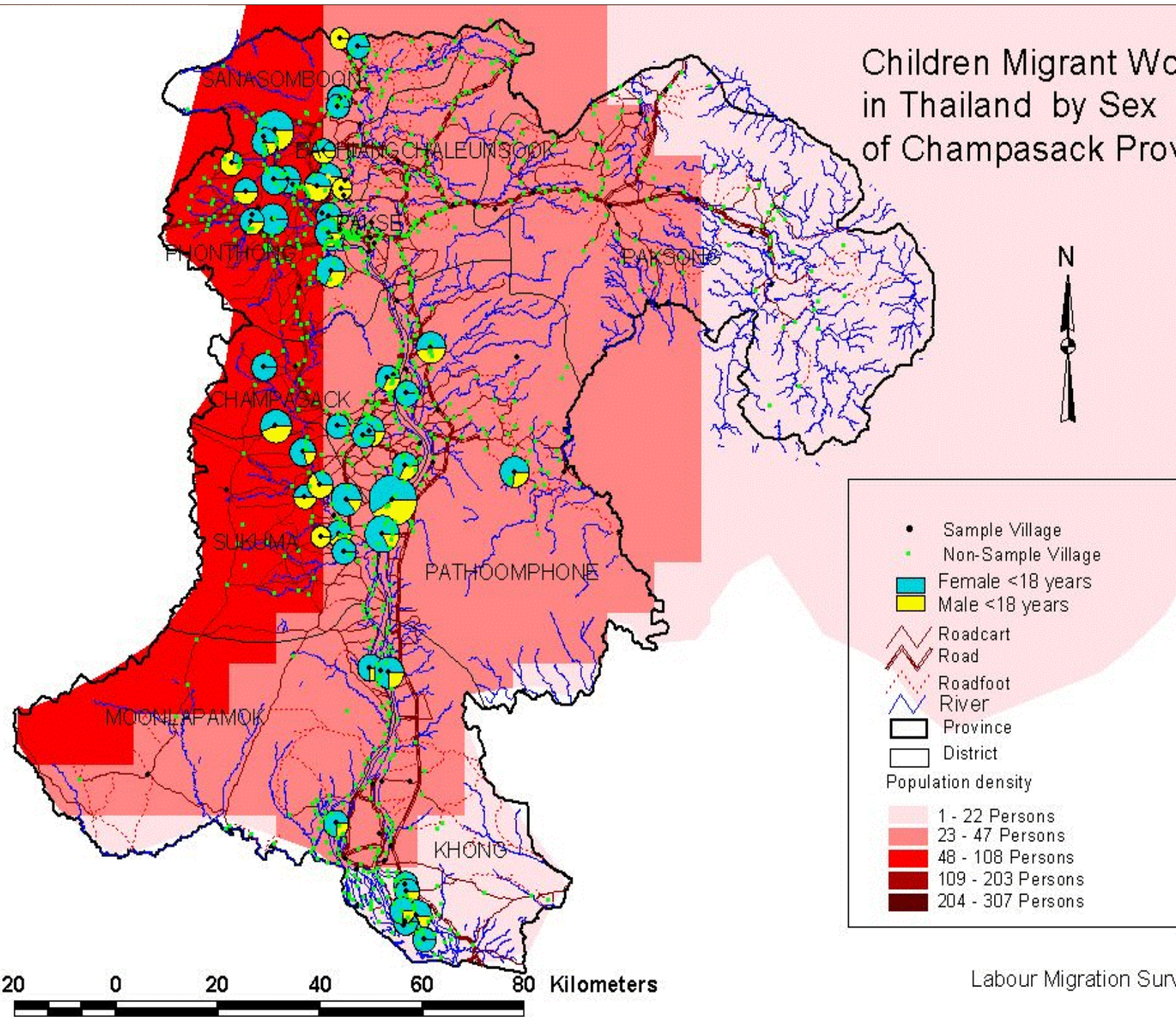
Children Migrant Workers in Thailand by Sex of Khammuane Province.



Children Migrant Workers in Thailand by Sex of Savannakhet Province



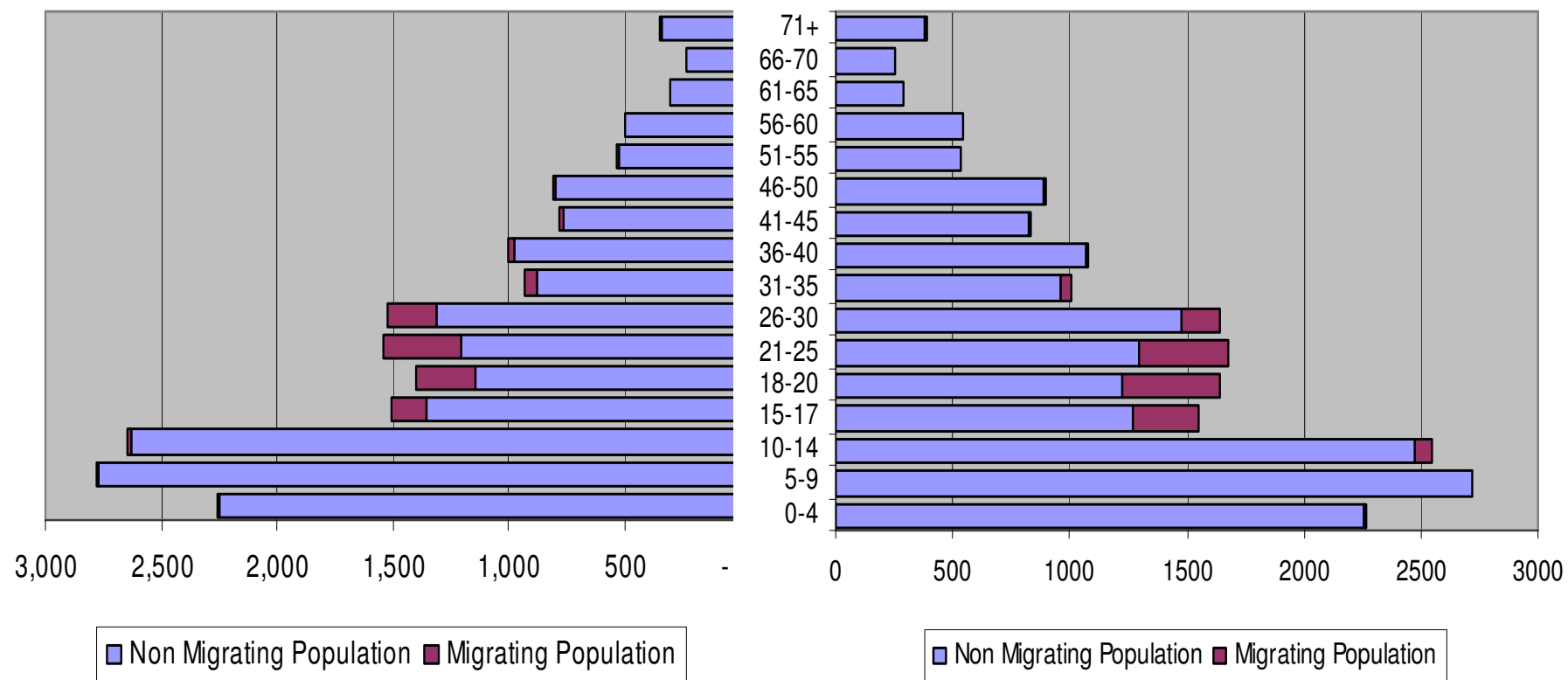
Children Migrant Worker in Thailand by Sex of Champasack Province



Sample Population

MALE

FEMALE



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Main Findings

Migration accelerating

Young children most vulnerable

Contact lost with children: 50%+

Increased trafficking feared



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Routes

- Workers from Lao migrating into Thailand use four channels:
 1. Illegal labour recruitment networks
 2. Cross-border smugglers
 3. Social networks of migrant workers
 4. Using border passes and passports



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Major Outcomes

- Reliable data bank of irregular migrant workers (out of 300 sample villages) in Thailand.
- Labour migration patterns:
 - by age
 - by sex
 - by year of migration
 - by types of jobs
 - by ethnic groups
 - by source areas
(i.e. geographical settings and accessibility
= from urban/rural areas with/without roads)
 - by destination areas (e.g. internal / international)
 - by socio-economic status (SES)
(low, medium and high)

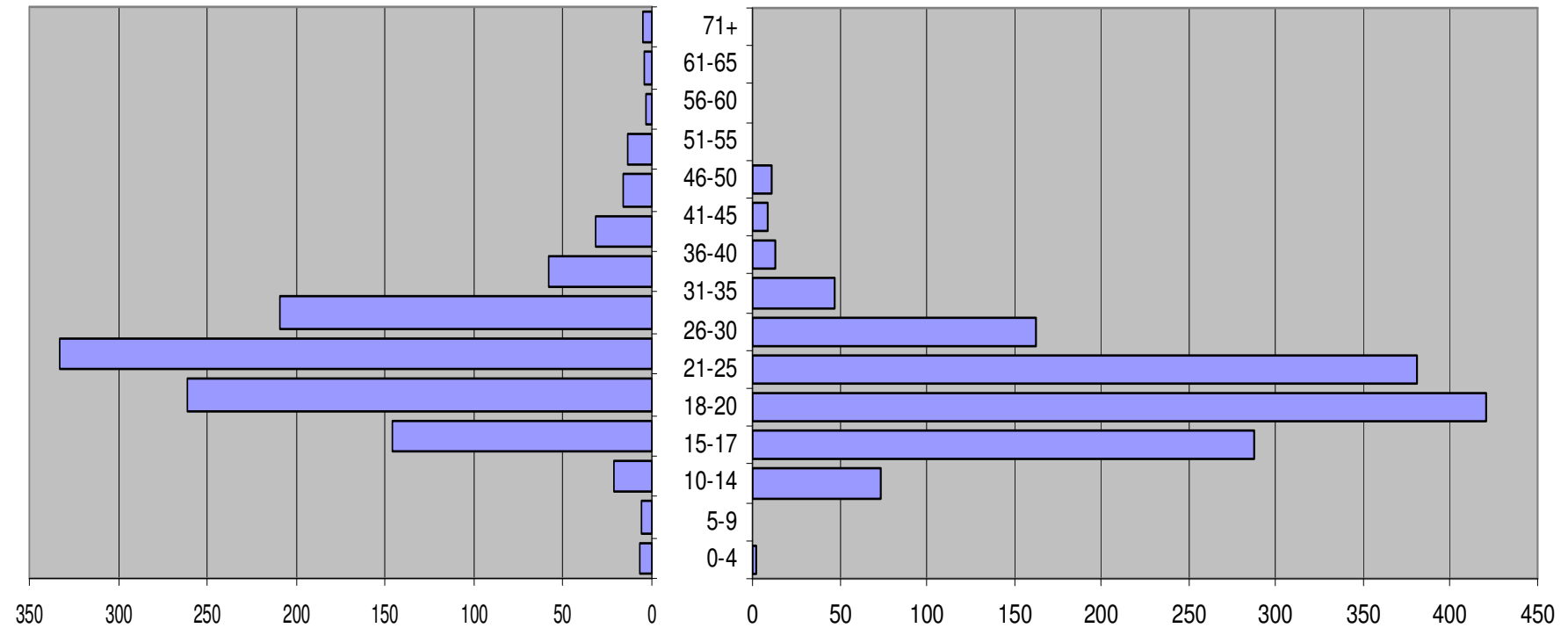


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Migrating Population

MALE

FEMALE



Migration Pattern: Overview

- 6.9% of total sample population are migrating population (55.9%: F / 44.1%: M).
- Among the migrating population, 21.5% are children under 18 years



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Migration Abroad: Overview

- Among total migrating population, **80.8%** migrated abroad.
- Compared to total sample population by sex, migrating **female** abroad comprise of **7.6%**, while migrating **male** abroad comprise of **6.2%**.
= More female migrate abroad than male.
- **21.4%** of total migrating population abroad are **children** under 18 years.
- **81.5%** of migrating population abroad are currently in **Thailand**, **8.3%** in other bordering countries, **0.5%** in Europe and **9.3%** in USA.
- **73.7%** of migrating population to Thailand migrated **during the last 3 years (2000-2003)**.



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Migration to Thailand: Benefits (Remittances)

- Overall, **54.4%** of MWT sent remittances to their families, but the other **45.6%** did not.
- Among SES groups, **70.1%** of **Highest** quintile sent remittances, while only **25.5%** of **Lowest** quintile did.
- Among children, only **29%** of **10-14 age group**, and **46.8%** of **15-17 age group** sent remittance.

Highest percentage (**78.6%**) sending remittances are those in **46-50 age group**.



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Migration to Thailand: Risks

- Risks: 3 criteria
 1. No remittance sent to families
 2. Families cannot contact
 3. No information on livelihood sent
- Overall, **high risk** groups comprise **1.4%** of total Migrating Workers to Thailand (MWT).
(0.6%: M / 0.8%: F).
- **Girls of 10 -14 years** age group are most at risks (3.2% of the age group), as well as those in **15-17 years** age group (2.5% of the age group).
- High risks groups of female MWT comprise 0.8% of total MWT.
- **Male MWT of 15 years old and above** are at high risks, particularly those **21 years old and above** (0.6% of total MWT).



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Internal Migration: Overview

- Only 1.2 % of total sample population are internal migrating population (40.9%: F / 59.1%: M).
- Compared to total sample population by sex, internal migrating female comprise of 1.1%, while internal migrating male comprise of 1.6%.

= Internal migration < International migration
= More male migrate internally than female
(opposite phenomenon to migration abroad)

- 22.1% of total internal migrating population are children.
- Among internal migrating population, 42.5% migrate to Vientiane Capital.



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Internal Migration: Benefits (Remittances)

- Overall, **51.4%** of total internal migrating population sent remittance to their families, but the other **48.6%** did not.
- More **girls** of 10-17 years sent remittance than boys of 10-17 years age group.



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Internal Migration: Risks

- Among **Male** Internal Migrant Workers, between **18-30 years old** are at high risk (average 1.4%).
- Among **Female** Internal Migrant Workers, No particular high risk groups found, But there are some risk groups between **15-20 years old**.
 - their households' heads have no information and contact (0.5%)
 - those who never sent remittances and information to heads of households (1%)



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Health Issues

Health	Male	Female
Often sick	10%	9%
Did not have health check up	65%	67%
Don't know about HIV/AIDS	49%	44%



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Summary

- Survey size first of its kind in Lao PDR
39,000 people in nearly 6,000 households
- Dramatic acceleration in migration
- More than one in five migrants under 18
- Contact lost with more than 50% of children
- Girls aged 10-14 at greatest risk of trafficking
- 49% of males and 44% females don't know about HIV/AIDS and more than 2/3 of MW returnees did not have health check ups.

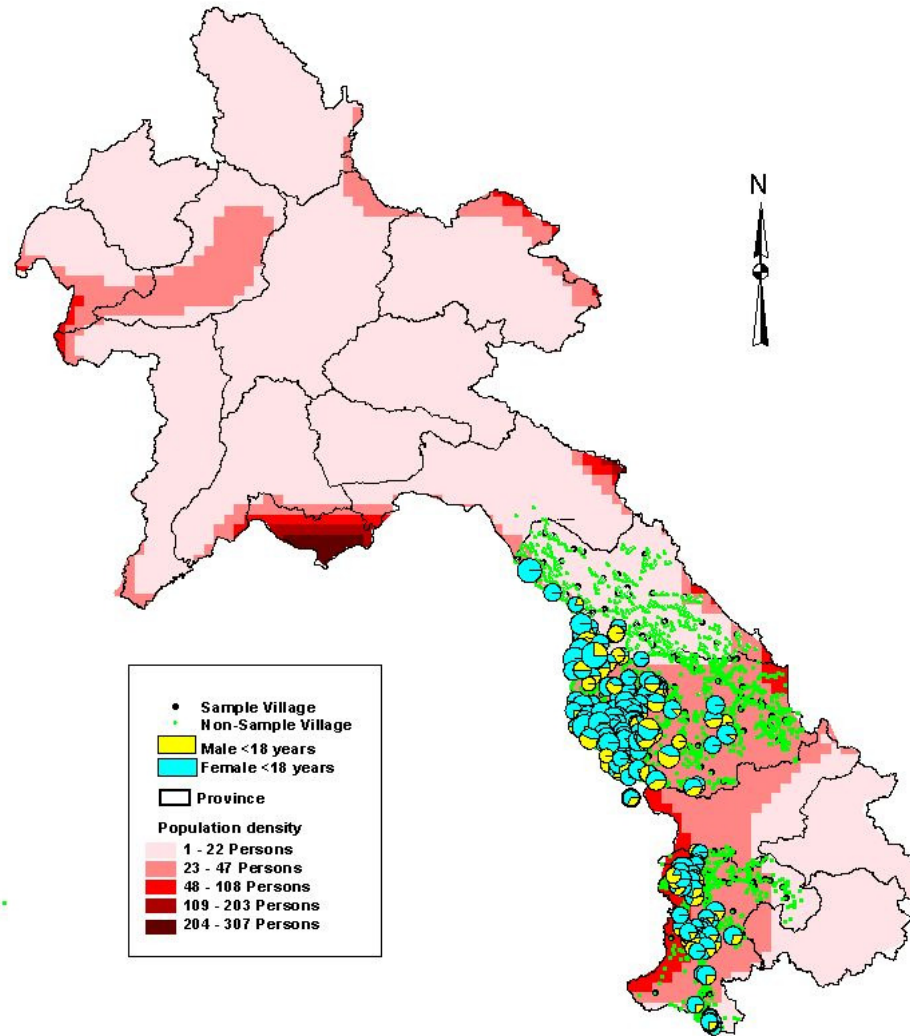


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Children Migrant Workers
in Thailand by Sex
of Khammuane, Savannakhet and Champasack .



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60 0 60 120 180 240 300 Kilometers

Discussion

- “trafficking in persons”
 - The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons,
 - by means of the threat or use of **force** or other forms of **coercion**, of abduction, of fraud, of **deception**, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person,
 - **for the purpose of exploitation**



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(Art. 3(a), UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Organized Crime, 2000).

Discussion

- “migration”
 - A process of moving, either across an international border, or within a State.
 - It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes;
 - it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants.

(International Migration Law, Glossary on Migration, IOM, 2004)

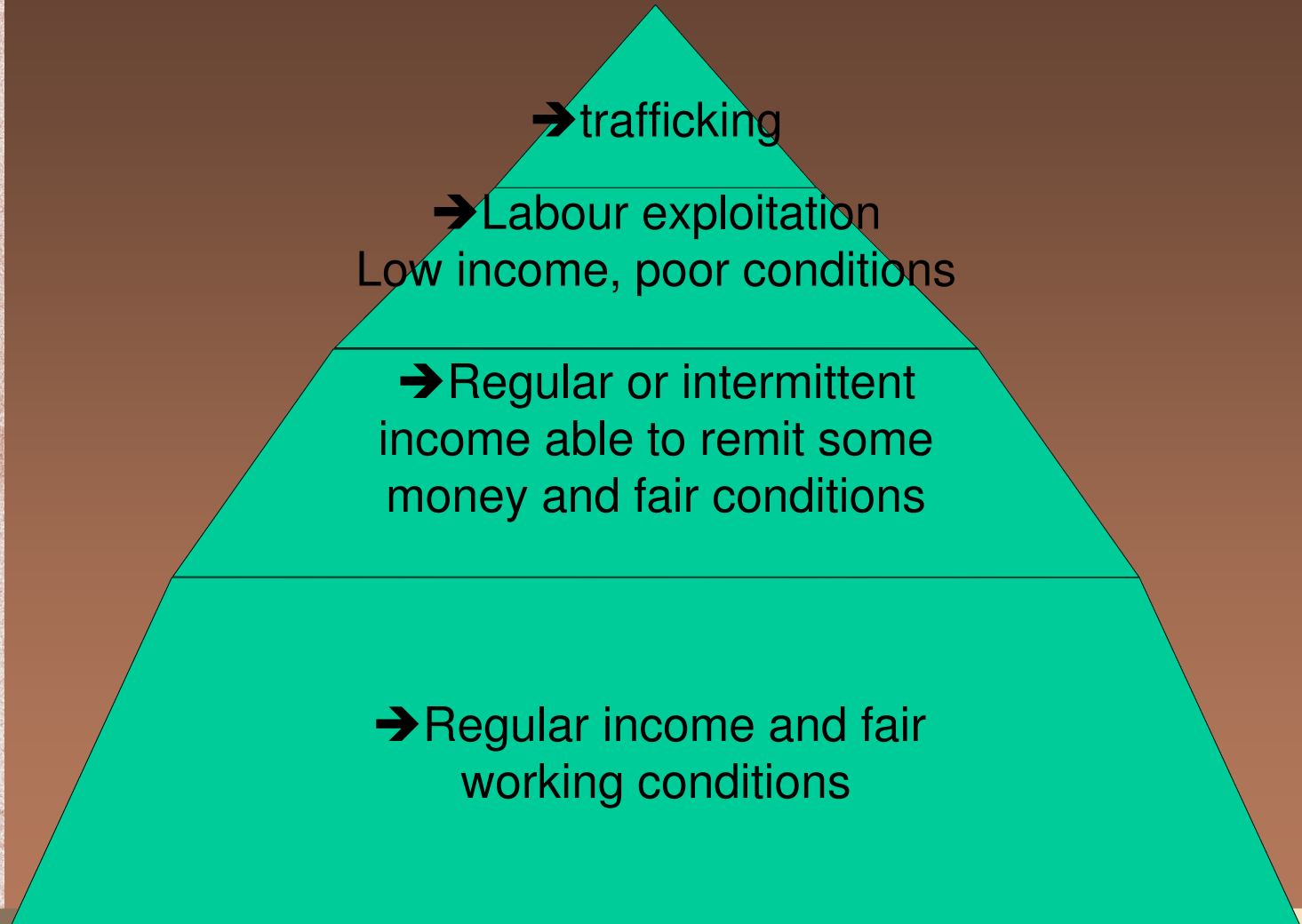


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Discussion



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Discussion

- **The presence of coercion, force and/or deception for the purpose of exploitation is the key in determining whether or not a person has been trafficked, and that distinguishes trafficking from migrant smuggling and other forms of irregular migration.**
- (An Information Guide. Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers, ILO, 2003)



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Discussion

- Trafficking in persons is a modern form of slavery. Traffickers use threats, intimidation and violence to subject victims to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, and forced marriages, to engage in forced prostitution or to labour under conditions comparable to slavery for the traffickers' financial gain (essentially treating people as commodities).
- (ibid)



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Trends in Out-migration

- Lao migrants totaled 181,614 people (of whom more than half, some 100,633 were female)
- Thai employers demanded a total of 45,357 Lao domestic workers (30.54%)
- Registered domestic workers from Lao 72.86% of the total employer demand



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Problems Lao Women Migrant Workers Encounter

During pre-departure phase

- **Poverty in the families and drawbacks in the education system have pushed them to leave school at early ages to help their families to work and to generate income. In many cases, large families could not afford to further the education of their children combined with the gender bias, girls have to suffer.**



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Problems Lao Women Migrant Workers Encounter

During the process of migration

- Due to the expensive charges of the legal recruitment agencies and the dangers involved in illegal migration through illegal recruitment networks, increasing number of migrant workers are shifting towards the use of personal connections through family members, relatives and friends that are currently working in Thailand in traveling and finding jobs in Thailand.



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Problems Lao Women Migrant Workers Encounter

At destination

- Young girls and women migrant workers being in the irregular status in Thailand makes them more vulnerable to abuses, including restriction of movement and communication (being locked in the factories or houses and not allowed to use telephones), forced to work for long hours without rests, being hit and tortured in inhuman manners, working in dangerous conditions, deductions and withholding of salary.



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Problems Lao Women Migrant Workers Encounter

Upon return

- Irregular migrant workers have high risks of being caught by the immigration police upon return. There are many reported cases of irregular migrant workers caught and put in detention centre and are subjected to heavy fines.
- Irregular migrants' hard earning money will be confiscated by the police and they will be deported across the border without money.
- In the worst cases, in some provinces on the Lao border, these irregular migrant workers are also subjected to heavy fines by the immigration police and the village authorities.



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Summary

- Under the Thai and Lao labour law, domestic work has not been fully protected as a form of labour
- Have not as yet been recognized and approved officially as a work sector for recruitment and sending under the MOU
- Though there is high demand for the Lao migrant workers to work in Thailand, the process of recruitment, approval and job offers had been very slow and it has not met the pace of demand by employers.



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Way Forward

- **Cooperation among social partners as well as with migrant workers is especially important to the development of sound labour migration policies and programmes and their effective implementation in a way that respects the rights of migrant workers and members of their families.**



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