



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
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MINISTRY OF PLANNING

A CRUMP SERIES REPORT

**MIGRATION AND LEFT-BEHIND HOUSEHOLDS
IN RURAL AREAS IN CAMBODIA:
STRUCTURE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC
CONDITIONS**


December 2015

FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to provide the foreword to this report, entitled, “Migration and Left-behind Households in Rural Areas in Cambodia: Structure and Socio-economic Condition”. This is the third report paper of a series of analyses using Cambodian Rural-Urban Migration Project (CRUMP) data. A major project review and policy report is also available. These reports are prepared through close collaboration with the General Directorate of Planning, the Ministry of Planning (MOP) of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) and Professor Zachary Zimmer from University of California, San Francisco, United States of America (USA). Similar to previous reports, the group tried their best to ensure high quality analysis. The results shown in the report provides valuable information and data useful for multi purposes like formulation of development policies, particularly those related to lifting up the living standard of people and households of migrants and their families left behind.

This report examines the socio-economic situation of households, including size, age, health, education, and economic condition, left behind by migrants. As presented in the report, when an older parent is left-behind they could be living with grandchild, spouse, child (sibling of the migrant) or other person. Almost 20% of households with an elderly parent left-behind also contain a child of the migrant (their grandchild). The report shows a higher probability of living in poor socio-economic conditions when a child of a migrant under age 12 is left behind in other situations. Socio-economic conditions tend to be worse in left behind households that contain a single parent of the migrant (usually female) than in other households. Migrant households with younger children may be doing worse because adults living with children in poor socio-economic conditions have greater impetus to migrate in an attempt to find better work than is available in their community of origin.

On behalf of the Ministry of Planning (MOP), I would like to thank the significant intellectual and technical contribution made by Professor Zachary Zimmer from University of California, San Francisco, USA who helped guide the research and the production of this report and worked tirelessly and diligently to assure a successful project. I would also like to acknowledge my appreciation of the financial support provided by UNFPA, allowing a report that could be analyzed deeply and detail.

I hope that the report will become a useful referent document for policy makers and planners preparing policies and plans. 

Phnom Penh, January 2016



CHHAY THAN
SENIOR MINISTER,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to describe the familial structure of ‘migrant’ households in rural Cambodia – that is, households that report the recent departure of a former household member – and to investigate the association between the household structure and the socio-economic conditions of the household. Particular attention is paid to households containing one or more children of the migrant and/or one or more older parent of the migrant. The analysis in this report is primarily descriptive, although multivariate modeling is also reported.

The report analyzed the CRUMP data from rural Cambodia, which consists of 4,500 households, 2,875 of which experienced the recent out-migration of a former household member. This out-migration defines a migrant household. Those living in the household at the time of the interview are considered to be the left-behind population of the household.

Looking at the age structure of migrant households, 7.7% contain either only one or more child under 18, only elders 60 and older, or only a combination of children and elders. About 71% of contain a child age under 18 and about 31% contain an older person 60 and older.

Looking at the specific relationships between migrants and household members, 21.1% of households contain a migrant’s offspring under age 18 and 17.8% contain a migrant’s offspring under age 12.

24.6% contain a parent of the migrant age 60 and older. 23.4% contain a single parent without spouse, and the great majority of these are mothers of the migrant.

12.9% of households contain a spouse of the migrant left-behind and the vast majority of these are wives. Wives are often left-behind with their children while the husband migrates.

When a child of a migrant 18 and under is left-behind they could be living with a combination of spouse of migrant (their parent) parent of migrant (their grandparent) sibling of migrant (their aunt or uncle) or others. The most common structure is child with spouse. But, in 46% of households that contain a child of migrant under 18 this child is living without spouse, that is, without a parent.

When an older parent is left-behind they could be with their grandchild, their spouse, their child (sibling of the migrant) or other person. Almost 20% of households with an elderly parent left-behind also contain a child of the migrant (their grandchild).

The probability of living in poor socio-economic conditions are higher for households that contain a child of a migrant that is under age 12 than in other types of migrant households.

Socio-economic conditions tend to be worse in households that contain a single parent of the migrant than in other households. This parent is usually female.

This report does not suggest leaving children and single parents behind is a cause of poor socio-economic conditions but rather that existing socio-economic conditions are reflected by who is left behind. Migrant households with younger children may be doing worse because adults living with children in poor socio-economic conditions have greater impetus to migrate in an attempt to find better work than is available in their community of origin.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and context

The purpose of this report is to describe the familial structure of ‘migrant’ households in rural Cambodia – that is, households that report the recent departure of a former household member – and to investigate the association between the household structure and the socio-economic conditions of the household. Because households without adults aged 18 to 59, who are typical breadwinners, may be most susceptible to catastrophe or adversity, particular attention is paid to households containing one or more children of the migrant and/or one or more older parent of the migrant. The analysis in this report is primarily descriptive but multivariate modeling is also reported.

Globally, the ‘left-behind’ population is garnering increased attention. This is likely the result of migration itself becoming an important determinant of population change worldwide (International Organization for Migration 2015). The movement of people within and around regions is accelerating across most of the world. The phenomenon is particularly robust in Asia, which has been labeled as “the largest migration corridor in the world” by the United Nations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2013). Much of this migration is internal and rural to urban. A consequence is rapid urbanization in some areas. The UN projects the share of the population in Asia that is urban will increase from about one-half to about two-third over the next few decades (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2014).

Within Asia, Cambodia is following suit. Slow socio-economic recovery and re-population of urban areas following liberation from the Khmer Rouge resulted in the country falling behind its urbanizing neighbors in Southeast Asia during earlier Asian economic booms. But, in more recent years there has been steady migration from rural areas to Phnom Penh, to other rural and urban areas of Cambodia, and to countries abroad, especially Thailand (CRUMP Research Team 2012). The Population Reference Bureau estimates that 13% of Cambodia’s population was

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