

Chapter Seven

A Snapshot of Foreign Skilled Workers

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of responses to the questionnaire survey mailed to skilled migrant workers during the months of February to April 2005. In total, there were one hundred responses. This represents an approximately 7.2 per cent return rate (of the total 1,386 surveys distributed). Unlike the structured interviews that were conducted to study unskilled workers (Chapter Six), the participants in this questionnaire survey were self-administered and self-identified. It was stated clearly in the covering letter attached to the questionnaire that desired participants in this particular study should be foreign nationals who were currently working in Thailand. Also, due to the complexity of, and variation in, definitions of the term ‘nationality’ and ‘skill’, some of the questions were designed to identify whether respondents are skilled and foreign nationals. Participants were asked about their previous and present country of citizenships, level of formal education, occupation and earnings. Thus, it is apposite to first briefly discuss the concept and criteria defining the desired participants before proceeding with analysis of the results. Following presentation of the survey results, the overall results are summarised.

7.2 Conceptual framework for foreign skilled workers

For the purpose of this survey, foreigners are simply defined as people who have never possessed Thai citizenship. More difficult conundrums arise when participants need to be categorised by their level of skill. There is no universally unanimous concept of ‘skill’ and there is in the literature very little consensus about the definition of, and the distinction between, ‘skilled workers’ and ‘unskilled workers’. There is also widespread use of the terms ‘qualified worker’ and ‘unqualified worker’ as synonyms for ‘skilled worker’ and ‘unskilled worker’ respectively. By the OECD (2001: 14) definition, ‘the term “skill” refers to the qualifications needed to perform certain tasks in the labour market’ and ““qualified” means formal qualification.’ Similarly, a ‘skilled or qualified worker’ refers often to a worker who is

in possession of formal qualification, usually at least a college or university degree (Iredale 2000; Martin 2003).

However, it is debatable that 'skill' may not necessarily be obtained only through formal education or training, but also through informal skill creation on the job (Lall 1999). Most jobs to a large extent require multidimensional skills, many of which are acquired from extensive specialised work experience, 'ranging from physical abilities like eye-hand co-ordination, dexterity and strength, to cognitive (analytic and synthetic reasoning, numerical and verbal abilities) and interpersonal (supervisory, leadership) skills' (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2001: 14). Thus, 'skill' can also be measured by occupation, for it offers more information with reference to the work performed and specific skills required of workers.

Some empirical works, such those of Lia Pacelli, Alessandra Venturini, and Claudia Villosio (2003) and Alessandra Venturini, and Claudia Villosio (2001), use a definition of skill based on the wage paid to workers. 'Skill' is – in that case – defined as a premium for otherwise unobservable calibre measured by the extra-pay the workers with certain characteristics are paid. Accordingly, skilled workers can be defined as those workers who have a relatively high wage premium, whilst unskilled workers are those with a low wage premium. Because such wage assessment is quite complicated, this study will simply compare the respondents' wage with the average wages of Thai employees. This is considered an acceptable surrogate for detailed measurement of skill levels.

The term 'skill' is, therefore, a multidimensional concept. In this fashion, the desired participants in this survey are evaluated not only by their formal educational attainments, but also by their types of occupation and wages.

7.3 Responses to the mailed questionnaire

The presentation of responses to the mailed questionnaire follows the structure of the questionnaire and is similar to the presentation of interview results in the previous chapter. The responses are presented in a graphical and tabulated format. Where appropriate,

comparative perspectives are introduced by reference to the migrant construction workers examined in the previous chapter.

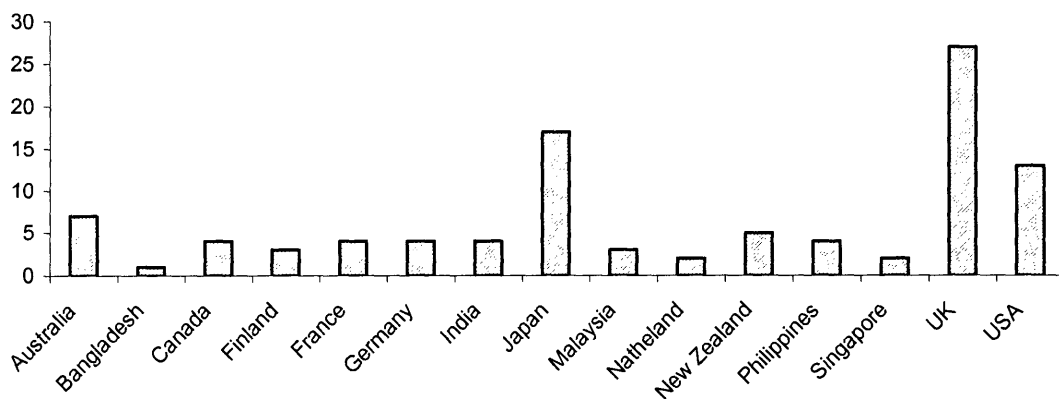
7.3.1 General Characteristic of Respondents

This section not only details the demographic results but also is meant to ascertain whether the respondents correctly identified themselves as foreign and skilled workers, according to our definition. The following part presents the demographic results under four headings: Country of Origin, Age Range, Gender and Marital and Parental Status, Level of Formal Education.

Country of origin

The respondents to the total 100 returned mail questionnaires, as shown in Figure 7.1, came from 15 countries. The largest group was from the UK, making up over a quarter of the sample population. The second and the third largest group were workers from Japan (17 people) and the USA (13 people), respectively. There were seven respondents from Australia; five from New Zealand; four from Canada, France, Germany, India, and the Philippines; three from Finland and Malaysia; two from the Netherlands and Singapore; and one from Bangladesh. None of the respondents have ever possessed Thai citizenship. Nevertheless, nine of the respondents reported having or having had citizenship of other countries, including Australia (1 person), Canada (1 person), Germany (1 person), Indonesia (1 person), Malaysia (1 person), New Zealand (1 person), South Africa (1 person), and the UK (2 persons).

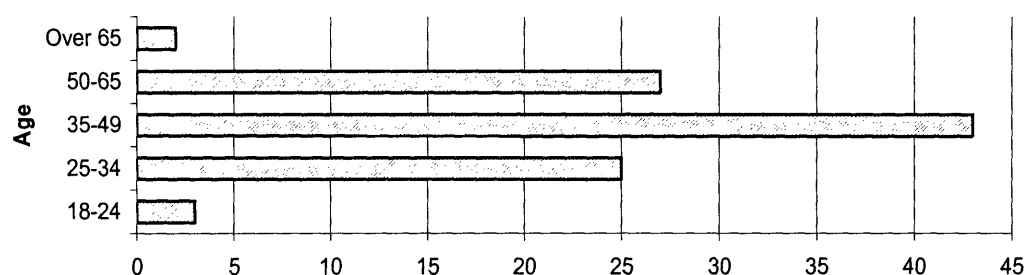
Figure 7.1 Number of Respondents by Country of Current Citizenship



Age structure

The age structure shows quite a different pattern when compared to the case of foreign construction workers examined in the previous chapter. While the sample population of the construction workers was dominated by young adults, the bulk of the mail questionnaire participants were more mature. As can be seen from Figure 7.2, 43 respondents aged between 35 and 49, and 29 respondents aged over 50; whereas only three respondents reported being between 18 and 24 years of age, and a quarter of the total sample population were in between the age of 25 and 34. This finding should not be surprising because the levels of skill are generally positively correlated with age.

Figure 7.2 Number of Respondents by Age



Gender, marital status and parental status

Of the total 100 respondents, the majority were male and most were married or in de facto relationships. Table 7.1 shows that 71 respondents were male and 29 were female. In total, there were 59 married people, 26 single, eight in de facto relationships, and seven divorced or widowed.

Table 7.1 Number of Respondents by Gender and Marital Status

	Never Married	Married	Divorced/ Widow/Widower	De facto	Total
Male	15	46	4	6	71
	21.1 %	64.8 %	5.6 %	8.5 %	100 %
Female	11	13	3	2	29
	37.9 %	44.8 %	10.4 %	6.9 %	100 %
Total	26	59	7	8	100

Interestingly enough, Table 7.2 reveals that almost half of the married and in de facto relationship respondents had spouses or partners whose citizenships were different from their own, and over half of these were married to or living in with Thai citizens. This indicates the high mobility of this group of workers which is well integrated into the local community. This is in stark contrast to the construction worker group. In addition, the study found that of the total 67 married or in de facto relationship respondents, 90 per cent reported having their partners with them in Thailand.

Table 7.2 Citizenship of the Spouse

	Citizenship of the spouse			Total
	Same	Different	Thai	
Married	32 54.2 %	10 17 %	17 28.8 %	59 100 %
De facto	2 25 %	1 12.5 %	5 62.5 %	8 100 %
Total	34 50.8 %	11 16.4 %	22 32.8 %	67 100 %

It can be seen from Figure 7.3 that a little more than half of the respondents (52 people) had at least one child, of which 62 per cent had at least one of their children with them in Thailand. Figure 7.4 indicates that half of the children who were not with their parent(s) in Thailand were grown up and, therefore, independent; while 39 per cent lived with relatives and 11 per cent were in boarding schools in their home countries.

Figure 7.3 Number of Respondents by Parental Status

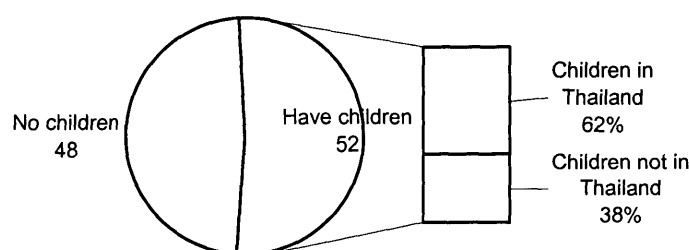
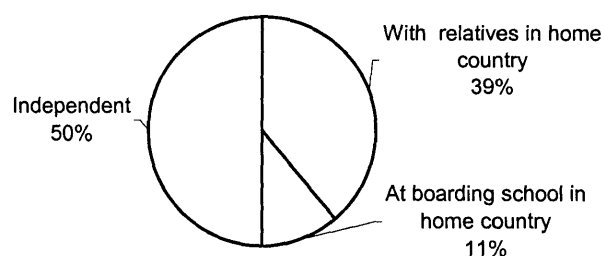


Figure 7.4 Whereabouts of Children Who Are Not in Thailand



Level of Formal Education

Almost all of the respondents had received at least college or university education; there were just four respondents reported having attended only secondary school (Table 7.3). However, these four respondents were, with little doubt, skilled workers by the definition given earlier in the chapter. These four respondents were between 26 and 35 years of age, and earning in excess of 60,000 baht per month. Two of them were managers, one was a business owner, and one a teacher.

Table 7.3 Number of Respondents by Age and Level of Education

		Level of Education		Total
		Secondary	College/University	
Age	18-24	0	3	3
	25-34	0	25	25
	35-49	3	40	43
	50-65	1	26	27
	Over 65	0	2	2
Total		4	96	100

7.3.2 Occupation and earning details

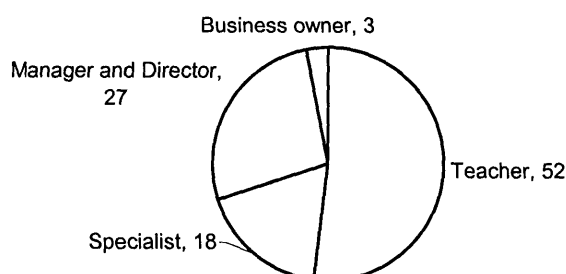
To study their employment situation, the respondents were asked to specify their previous and current occupation, employment experiences and earnings. The results are as follow:

Current occupation

Occupations can be aptly grouped into five categories: Student, Teacher, Specialist, Manager and Director, and Business owner. As Figure 7.5 indicates, of the total one hundred

respondents, 52 were currently teachers, 27 were managers or directors of organisations, 18 were specialists, and three were business owners. More specifically, the ‘Teacher’ category includes 46 teachers, two school head masters, one teaching assistant, one school director, one boarding house master, and one librarian; and the ‘Specialist’ includes five engineers, four counsellors (lawyers), four project assistants (human resource professionals), two software specialists, one accountant, one financial investment analyst, and one biologist.

Figure 7.5 Number of Respondents by Current Occupation



Additionally, Table 7.4 reveals that the largest number of teachers were from English speaking countries, especially UK (23 people) and USA (11 people). As well, the majority of respondents from other English speaking countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand were teachers. Because of their large investment in the country, the largest group of specialists, and managers or directors were Japanese (11 people). This finding is somewhat along the lines of the official statistics examined in Chapter Five.

Table 7.4 Number of Respondents by Country of Current Citizenship and Occupation

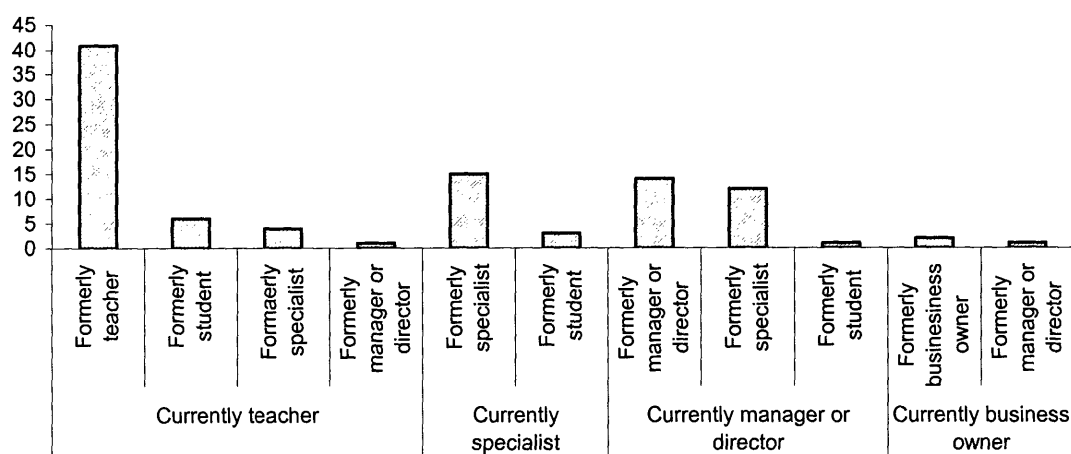
		Current Occupation				Total
		Teacher	Specialist	Manager and Director	Business owner	
Country of current Citizenship	Australia	3	1	2	1	7
	Bangladesh	1	0	0	0	1
	Canada	4	0	0	0	4
	Finland	0	0	2	1	3
	France	3	0	1	0	4
	Germany	0	2	2	0	4
	India	0	2	2	0	4
	Japan	1	5	11	0	17
	Malaysia	1	0	1	1	3
	Netherlands	1	0	1	0	2
	New Zealand	3	2	0	0	5
	Philippines	1	1	2	0	4
	Singapore	0	1	1	0	2
	UK	23	3	1	0	27
	USA	11	1	1	0	13
Total	52	18	27	3	100	

Previous occupation

Unlike the construction workers examined in the previous chapter, the current occupations of most of these respondents were in the same line as their previous professions. The changes were mainly due to promotions. Of the total 52 teachers, as many as 41 were also teachers before coming to Thailand, while four of those reported working previously as marketing, IT and legal specialists, and one of those was a retail manager before becoming a boarding house master in an international school in Thailand. In addition, almost all of the specialists (15 people) reported working formerly in the same line of work; however, three of them were previously students (Figure 7.6).

As for the current manager and director category, Figure 7.6 shows that over half of current managers and directors were also managers or already directors of a company (14 people); and only one manager reported being a student before. Conspicuously, and perhaps not surprisingly, because of their expertise, a large number of managers and directors (12 people) reported working previously as specialists – such as engineers, accountants, human resource professionals, and investment analysts – before taking up or being promoted to a managerial position in Thailand. As well, two of the three business owners also owned a business before, and one was a former general manager before establishing his/her own business in Thailand. This is not surprising because, unlike unskilled work, these lines of work require proper training and, in particular, experience.

Figure 7.6 Number of Respondents by Current Occupation and Previous Occupation

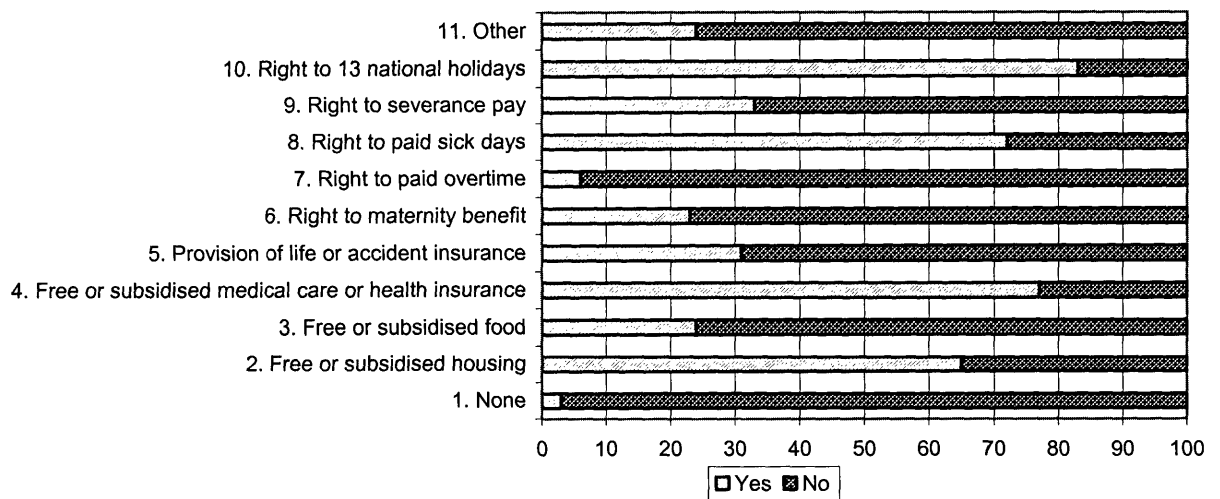


Current work status and employment situations

When asked about their work status, 96 respondents reported being either private or government employees with a written contract, while the three business owners were self-employed. Only one paid apprentice was reported in this survey population.

It is important to examine work-related benefits that were provided for these workers. As shown in Figure 7.7, the three business owners reported having no benefits at all; all other respondents indicated receiving some form of benefits from their employment. The most frequent reported accessible benefits were the right to free or subsidised housing, the right to free or subsidised medical care or health insurance, the right to paid sick days, and the right to at least 13 national holidays per year. Less frequently reported available benefits were the right to free or subsidised food, the right to provision of life or accident insurance, the right to maternity benefits, and the right to severance pay. Twenty-four respondents reported receiving other special benefits such as free return air tickets home, annual bonuses, professional development stipends, free education for children, and personal assistants and drivers.

Figure 7.7 Number of Respondents Receiving Work-related Benefits



Interestingly, only six of the total one hundred respondents reported having the right to paid over time (Figure 7.7). This is, indeed, a stark contrast to the construction workers who were ostensibly deprived of all other benefits but paid overtime. It is unclear why overtime was thus

unpaid for skilled foreign workers. It does appear that quite a large number of the respondents did work overtime. As shown in Figures 7.8 and 7.9, there were 55 respondents who reported working at least nine hours a day and as many as 15 respondents who reported having only one day-off per week. If the majority of these workers were not forced to do overtime work, they nevertheless willingly did it in their spare time. And, perhaps, their contracts incorporated overtime into their salary conditions: this is universally common in professions like teaching, academia, engineering and IT.

For whatever reasons that overtime was worked, under Thailand's labour-related laws and regulations, this right to paid overtime of workers, regardless of their nationality, is protected, as well as other basic rights. However, under the Labour Relation Act B.E. 2518, only Thai nationals are permitted to become affiliates of the committee of labour unions, associations, federations, or councils. Thus, none of the respondents reported being a member of a labour union or similar employee's association in Thailand.

Figure 7.8 Number of Respondents and Number of Hours at Work per Day

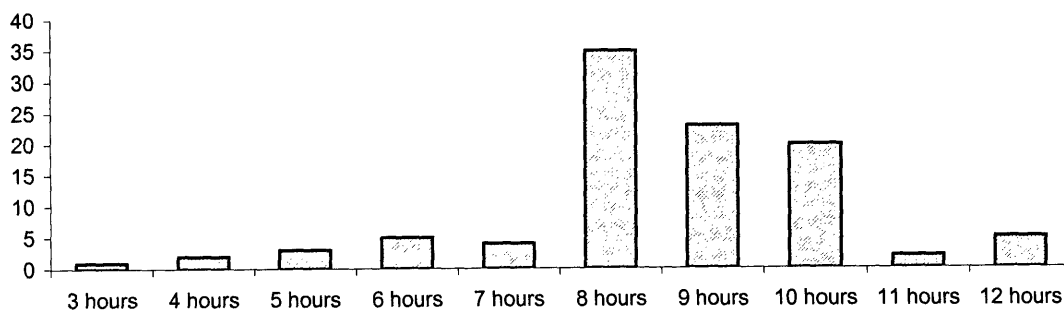
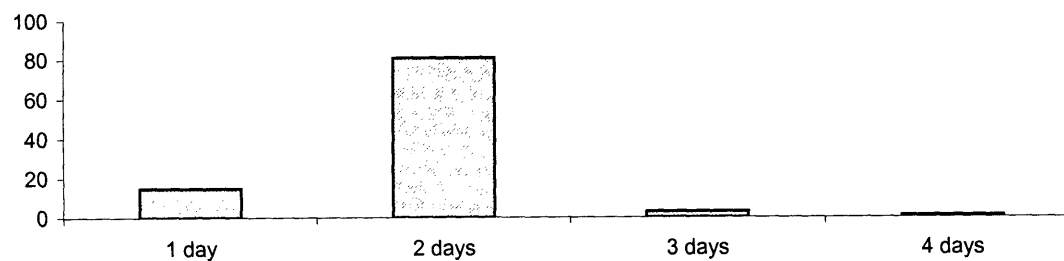


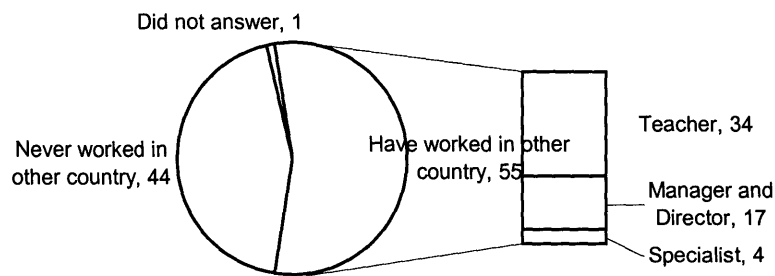
Figure 7.9 Number of Respondents and Number of Days-Off per Week



Overseas work experience

When asked about their previous international work experiences, 55 respondents reported having previously worked in countries other than their own. Over half of these were teachers. The others were managers and directors (17 people), and specialists (4 people) (Figure 7.10). There were, altogether, 46 countries (from all continents) in which these 55 respondents had previously worked.

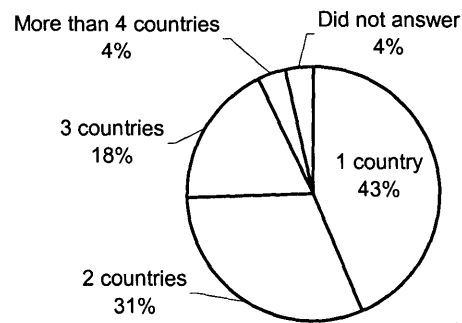
Figure 7.10 Number of Respondents by International Work Experience



Of these 55 respondents who had worked in other countries, 43 per cent reported working in one country before coming to Thailand, 31 per cent had previously worked in two countries, 18 per cent worked in three countries, and four per cent had worked in at least four countries (Figure 7.11). Furthermore, when asked about the duration of their previous international employment, these respondents reported, on average, spending about 2.9 years in one country. The shortest reported period spending in one country was 2 months; the longest time working in one country was 18 years. This information is important because it indicates the high mobility of this group of workers. It is, thus, interesting to also see whether workers with international experience would get paid higher than those without.

As well as the discrepancy in pay between the international experienced workers and non-international experienced workers, it is also necessary to examine the differences in pay between various groups: Gender, Age, Level of Education, Citizenship, and Occupations. The statistical analysis for these groups is presented in Appendix U.

Figure 7.11 Number of Respondents and Number of Country of Previous Employment



Earnings

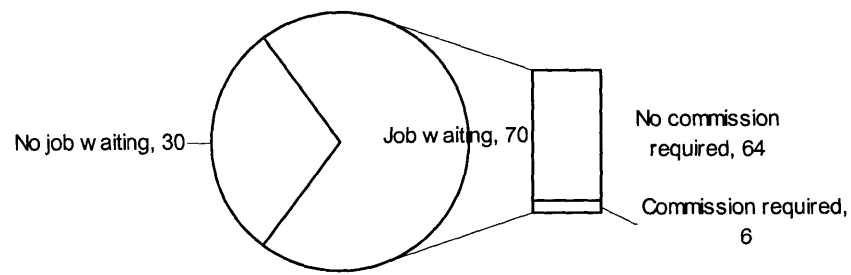
Of the total one hundred returned mail questionnaire surveys, only 86 specified the amount of pay earned from current employment. These respondents were paid, on average, about 107,000 baht per person per month. This is considered to be a very high pay by Thai standards, for a Thai employee was paid less than 7,000 baht per month (as of 1999) and a private Thai employee was paid about 12,500 baht (as of 2000) (National Economic and Social Development Board 2003a: online; National Economic and Social Development Board 2003b: online). The lowest and highest pay for this survey population were 15,000 and 310,000 baht per month.

The ANOVA results presented in Appendix U2 indicate a significant difference in pay only between male and female respondents ($F(1, 84) = 4.728, p = 0.032$), and also a significant difference among respondents in some of the different occupations ($F(3, 82) = 6.565, p = 0.001$). Difference in pay between workers in different age groups, with different levels of education, from different origins, or even between those with and without international working experiences were not significant. Male respondents (mean = 117,086.76, SD = 68422.760) were paid marginally higher than their female counterparts (mean = 86,464.29, SD = 42042.952). And, according to the Post Hoc test results presented in Appendix U3, business owners were most highly paid; whereas there was no significant difference in pay of teachers, specialists, managers and directors. The monthly reward of a business owner was about 184,000 baht higher than the pay of a specialist, 180,000 baht higher than of a teacher; and 166,000 baht higher than that of managers and directors.

Employment process and casual work

To examine the significance of intermediaries between workers and employment, respondents were asked whether they had their current jobs waiting for them prior to their arrival; and if they did, whether or not they had to pay a commission. An overwhelming proportion of respondents (70 people of the total one hundred respondents) reported having their current jobs waiting for them, and only six of them had paid a commission in order to get their jobs (Figure 7.12). This information suggests the insignificance of intermediaries for this group of workers, in contrast to the situation of construction workers discussed in Chapter Six.

Figure 7.12 Number of Respondents by Availability of Current Job Prior to Their Arrival and Job Commission Requirement

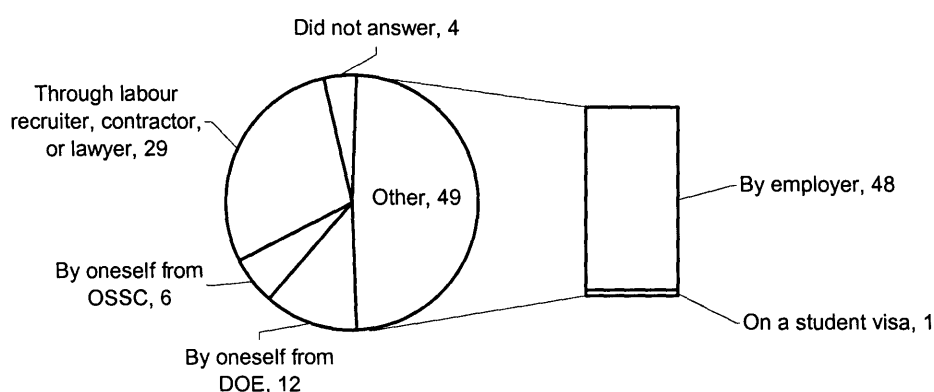


When the four respondents who had paid a job commission were further asked to specify to whom and how much the commissions were paid, one reported paying 7,000 baht to an employment agency (but did not specifically indicate the name or its whereabouts). The other three reported using an Internet mediator called ‘Search Associates: International School Placement & Teacher Recruitment’ <<http://www.search-associates.com>> and reported paying service fees of between 8,000 to 20,000 baht (depending on exchange rates). This demonstrates the role of emerging agencies, especially the Internet. Even the Education Ministry is reportedly taking advantage of the new technology through their website in advertising for and recruiting foreign teachers for their public schools (Kijchalong 2005).

As discussed in Chapter Four, because the term ‘work’ is interpreted very broadly by the Alien Employment Act B.E. 2521, even foreigners who intend to do activities, such as conducting a seminar or voluntary emergency aid, are required to acquire a work permit. Unlike illegal

unskilled workers akin to the construction workers examined in the previous chapter, there are a number of channels to obtain a work permit in Thailand for legal skilled foreign workers. Therefore, when asked how they got their work permit, 12 respondents reported obtaining their work permits themselves from the Department of Employment (DOE), six obtained them from the One Stop Services Center (OSSC), 29 used service providers (mainly lawyers), and 48 obtained permits via their companies or schools (Figure 7.13). Thus, the majority of the respondents reported obtaining their work permits through their employers.

Figure 7.13 Number of Respondents by Channels for Work Permit Acquisition



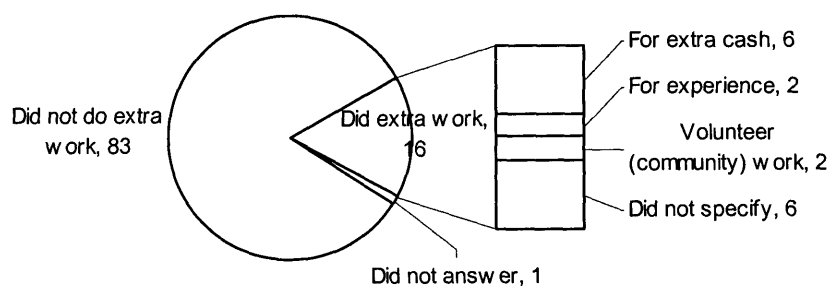
This is because – as examined above – the majority of the respondents reported having their job waiting for them before coming to Thailand, and the law allows employers to apply for work permits for their employees prior to their arrival. One respondent reported being on a student visa while working in Thailand. Without authorisation from the government of Thailand to work specifically, this person was in fact employed in defiance of the Alien Employment Act. This is an example of foreign workers who inadvertently become illegal. As discussed elsewhere, not least because of the complication of Thailand’s visa system and the broad definition of the term ‘work’ in Thai labour-related laws and regulations, many foreign workers accidentally become unlawful; but many of them also deliberately contravene the law (Chapter Four).

Other foreign workers possibly infringing the laws are the 16 respondents who reported doing additional casual work beside their main jobs (Figure 7.14). By law, foreign workers are allowed to do only what is specified in their work permits; otherwise they must seek further

permission from the authority. It is even necessary for the two respondents who reported doing volunteer or community work at their churches to get permission. Of the ten respondents who reported doing extra work and specified the reasons, six did such extra or casual work for extra cash, two for experience, and two reported doing volunteer community work beside their main jobs.

What seem to be harmless activities could in actual fact turn the workers into serious law offenders. For instance, after the aftermath of the recent catastrophic tsunami, over a thousand foreigners, including foreign workers and tourists voluntarily helping survivors in the southern part of the country, were reported to face legal action by the DOE for not having permission to do the work (Charoensuthipan 2005: L5).

Figure 7.14 Number of Respondents Who Do Extra Work and the Reasons



7.3.3 Process of migration

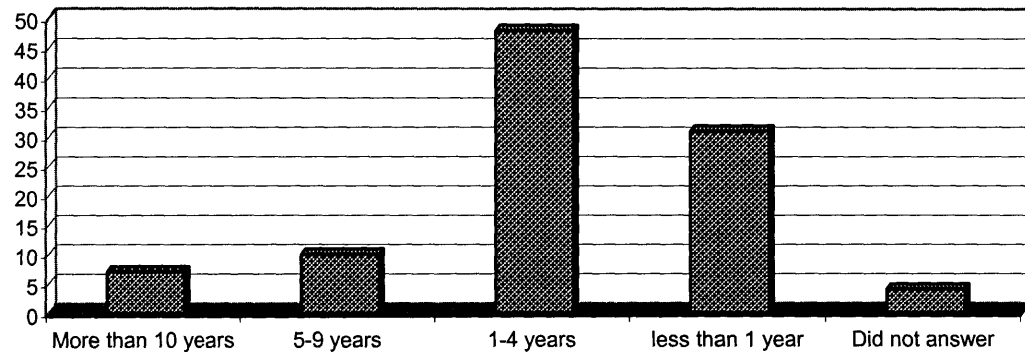
To understand the migratory process, the respondents were asked to specify their period of stay, intended length of stay, pre-migration experience, means of border crossing, and incentives for migration. The results are as follow:

Period of stay and intended length of stay

Presented in Figure 7.15, the study found that most respondents had been in the country for more than one year but less than five years (48 people). Thirty-one people had been in the country for less than a year. Seven people had been in Thailand for more than ten years, and

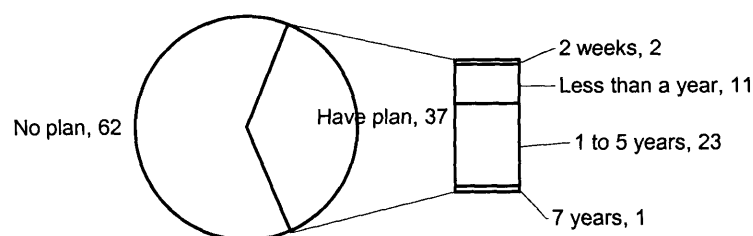
the remaining ten people reported having been in the country for about five to ten years. The longest time a respondent reported living in Thailand is 33 years and the shortest time is three months. This finding is parallel to the finding from the construction worker population examined in the previous chapter. This suggests both long-standing and continuing skilled and unskilled labour immigration in Thailand.

Figure 7.15 Number of Respondents by Period of Stay in Thailand



When asked whether they know how long they intend to stay in the country, more than half of the respondents (62 people) reported that they still did not know, while 37 already had in mind the intended length of stay (Figure 7.16). For those who had plans, 23 respondents intended to stay on for one to five years, 11 people planned to stay in the country for less than a year, one person intended to stay for another seven years, and two said they would only be in the country for another two weeks. Even though the majority of the respondents did not have exact plans for the period of their stay, a relatively large number of them knew exactly how long they intended to stay in the country. Unlike the construction workers, almost all of the 37 respondents planned to be in the country for less than five years. This indicates the circulating and temporary nature of many of these foreign workers.

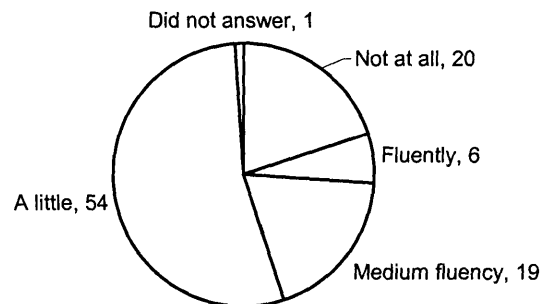
Figure 7.16 Number of Respondents by Intended Length of Stay



Pre-migration

Mail questionnaire respondents were also asked about their fluency in the Thai language. The level of competence in Thai was assessed by the respondents themselves. Figure 7.17 shows that six people could speak and understand Thai fluently, 19 reported having medium fluency in Thai, 20 could not speak or understand the language at all, and 54 reported speaking and understanding Thai a little.

Figure 7.17 Number of Respondents by Level of Fluency of Thai Language



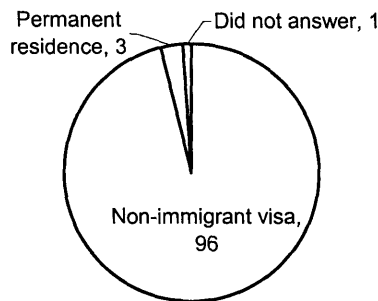
Of the total 79 respondents who reported being able to speak and understand Thai at least a little, the study found that 19 per cent reported learning the language before coming to Thailand, while 81 per cent reported learning Thai in Thailand. More participants from this population were better prepared, at least in the area of language, than the construction workers. However, most respondents did not learn the language before coming to Thailand and for the same reasons given in the previous chapter (the Thai language is unique and, because they did not know the language, these workers needed assistance), this suggests the significance of networking for these workers.

Border crossing

Regarding the means of entry, almost all respondents reported entering Thailand by air through an immigration check point (98 of the total 99 respondents), while the other person responding entered the country by land through an immigration check point. Additionally, Figure 7.18 indicates most reported entering the country with non-immigrant visas, whilst three respondents had Thai permanent residency. Unlike the construction workers who came

from the neighbouring countries, this suggests long-distant migration and legal entry. It is important to be reminded that entry documentation allows the respondents to enter and have the right to abode in the country. Working is prohibited, unless they apply and are granted a work permit.

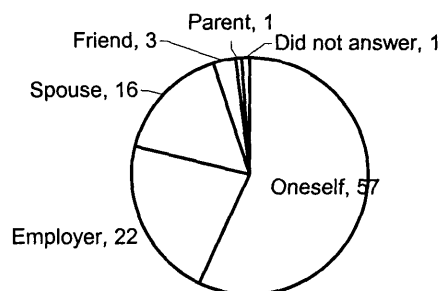
Figure 7.18 Number of Respondents by Documentation of Entry and Residence



Migratory decision and incentives

When asked about the most influential person in their decision to come and work in Thailand, most respondents (57 people) claimed that no one but themselves influenced their decision. Spouses were the most influential person in 16 cases, and one person was influenced by parents (Figure 7.19). Interestingly, not a small number of respondents reported that their employers (22 people) and friends (3 people) had most influence on their decision to come and work in Thailand (Figure 7.19). This is interesting because it indicates that many of these workers did not base their migratory decision on financial considerations alone.

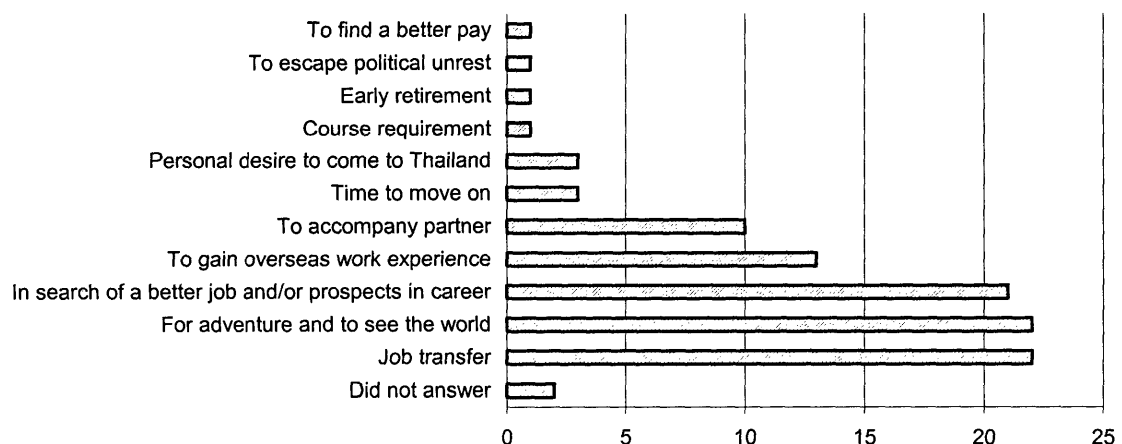
Figure 7.19 Person Most Influential in Migratory Decision



The respondents were, then, asked to specify why they left their home country or their former residence, and the main reason they chose to come and work in Thailand. Besides the main reason, they were also asked to specify other incentives that made them choose Thailand as their place of employment. It is very clear from the results presented in Figures 7.20, 7.21, and 7.22 that the incentives for this group of workers to leave their home countries and to come and work in Thailand were strikingly different from those of the construction workers. Only one person (who was originally from Bangladesh) reported leaving the home country to find better pay; and one person (who originally came from the Philippines) left their home country because of the political unrest.

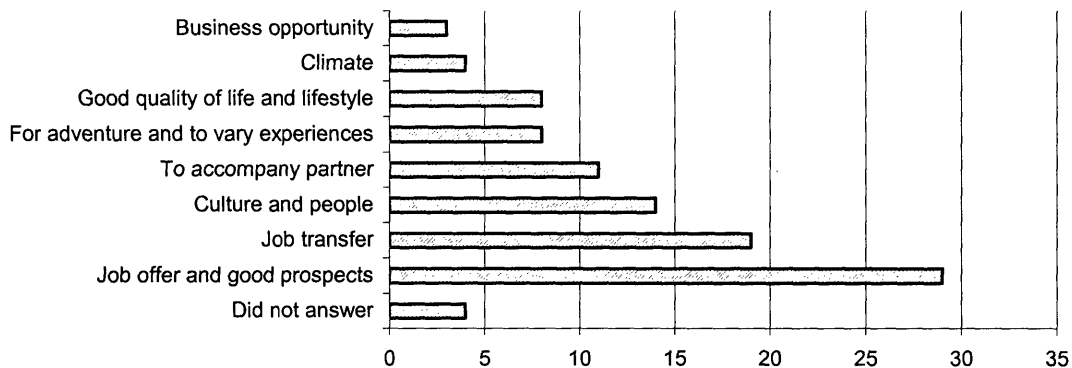
As shown in Figure 7.20, 22 people stated that they left their home country or previous place of residence because of a job transfer. This coincided with the number of respondents who reported that their employers were the most influential person in their migratory decisions. Twenty-two people said that they left their home country or former residence for adventure and to see the world. Besides, 21 respondents wanted to find a better job and/or career prospects, 13 to gain overseas work experience, ten to accompany their partner, and three thought it was time to move on to another country (or were discontented with the situation at home or their previous place of residence). Of those remaining five, three had a personal desire to come to Thailand, one had a course requirement, and one had taken early retirement (Figure 7.20).

Figure 7.20 Number of Respondents by Main Reason for Leaving Previous Residence



Likewise, Figure 7.21 shows 29 people reported that they came to Thailand because there was a job offer and there were good prospects, 19 people came because of a job transfer, 14 people chose Thailand because of its culture and people, 11 people accompanied their partners to Thailand, eight people came to work in Thailand because of the opportunity to travel, another eight people cited a good quality of life and lifestyle in Thailand, and three saw good business opportunities in Thailand's growing economy.

Figure 7.21 Number of Respondents by Main Reason for Coming to Work in Thailand



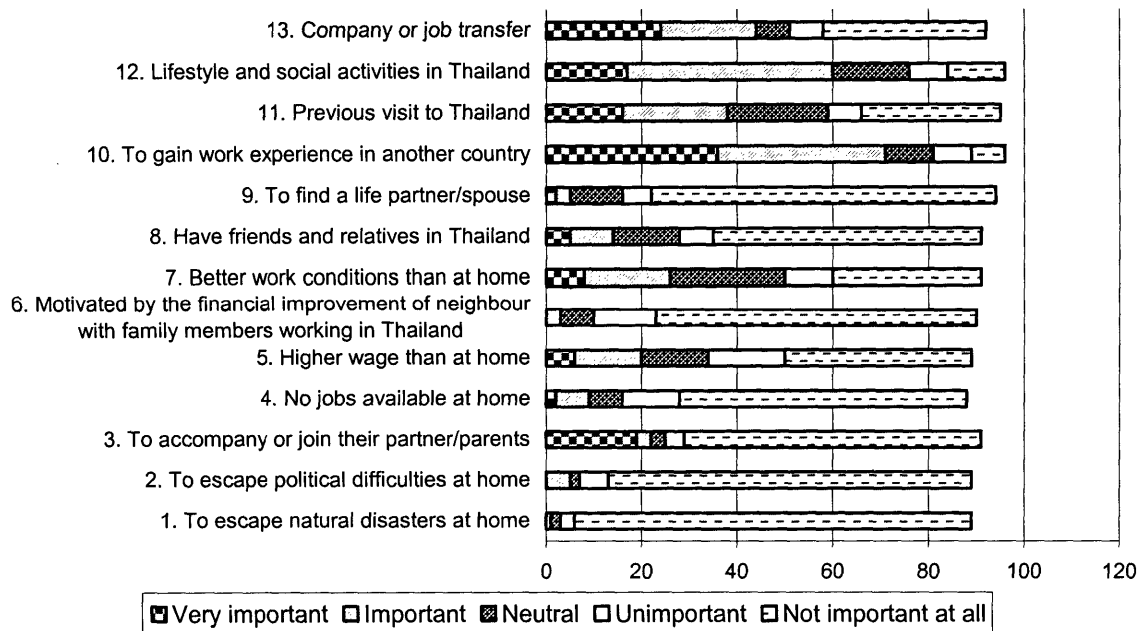
In addition to a main reason, the respondents were asked to specify other additional incentives that made them choose Thailand as their place of employment. Figure 22 shows various reported additional incentives which are grouped into 16 categories. Only 67 respondents reported additional reasons, but multiple responses were permitted. Many respondents said that they liked the Thai culture and people (22 people), while 11 people preferred the climate, eight people came because of job offers, another eight people came because of the low cost of living in Thailand, six people reported coming for adventure and to see the world, five people had friends and relatives already in Thailand, four people preferred the lifestyle they had in Thailand, and the rest reported choosing Thailand because of affordable childcare and good international schools for their children (3 people), good food (3 people), gaining overseas work experience (3 people), safe and politically stable country (3 people), policy of their companies (2 people), their previous visits (2 people), high salary (1 person), and religion (Buddhism) (1 person). In addition, it is interesting to point out that two of the respondents who preferred Thailand because of its culture and people specifically indicated the culture of tolerance of homosexuality in Thailand that enticed them to come to Thailand; a couple of other respondents mentioned beautiful women.

Figure 7.22 Number of Respondents by Other Reasons for Coming to Work in Thailand



It is, overall, quite unambiguous from these findings that, rather than economic or financial reasons, the incentives for this group of workers to come and work in Thailand were more about employment-related matters or personal desires. Nevertheless, for the same reasons given in the previous chapter, the respondents were additionally asked to rate – on a Likert-scale – the significance of 13 pre-designed motives that may have shaped their migratory decision (Figure 7.23).

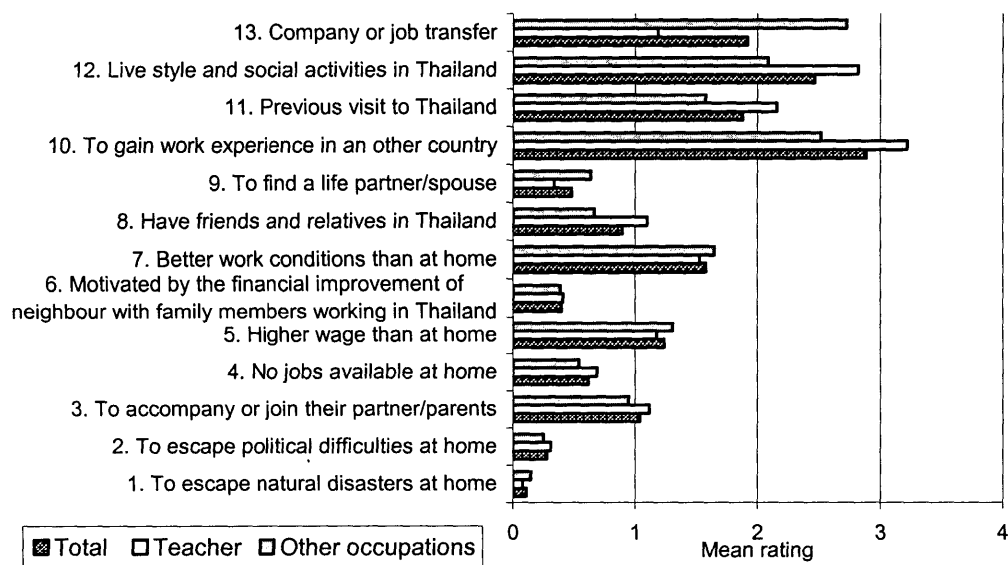
Figure 7.23 Number of Respondents by Level of Importance of Given Reasons and Factors Influencing the Decision to Migrate



There is little doubt from the first glimpse of the data presented in Figure 7.23 that the top five incentives for the migratory decision of this particular sample population were, in no particular order, 'to gain work experience in another country', 'company or job transfer', 'lifestyle and social activities in Thailand', 'previous visit', and 'to accompany their partner/parents'. A large number of respondents gave these five incentives an important or very important rating, while the remaining incentives were mostly scaled as neutral, unimportant or not important at all. For instance, 35 and 36 of the total 96 respondents who took part in the question rated 'to gain work experience in another country' important and very important, respectively; whereas, there was only one person claimed 'to escape natural disasters at home' as an important incentive and none claimed this particular incentive as a very important one for his/her migratory decision.

Nevertheless, as also mentioned in the previous chapter, this information from the Likert scale is more clearly expressed as a mean rating. Figure 7.24 clearly shows that respondents, as a whole, considered the lifestyle and social activities in Thailand and the experience of overseas employment as important incentives for them to leave home and to work in Thailand.

Figure 7.24 Mean Rating of Importance of Given Reasons and Factors Influencing the Decision to Migrate by Occupations

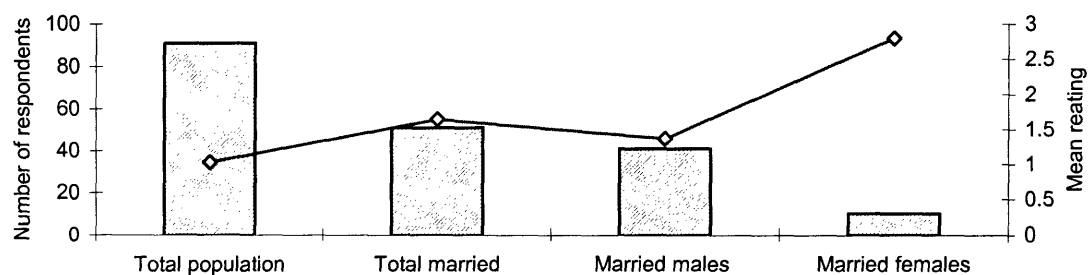


Note: Scale of mean rating: 0 = not important at all; 1 = unimportant; 2 = neutral; 3 = important; and 4 = very important.

It is, also, interesting to examine the mean rating of these incentives by the occupation of the respondents. Results from these further investigations clearly show that, beside the two aforementioned incentives – lifestyle and social activities in Thailand and experiences from overseas employment – teachers, on average, regarded their previous visit to Thailand (average scale of 2.16) as an important incentive for their migratory decision; whereas other respondents saw company or job transfers as more significant reasons (average scale of 2.82). All in all, these data uphold the previous findings: it is not economic or financial reasons, but employment-related matters or personal desires that were the primary incentives for this group of workers to migrate to work in Thailand.

In addition, as for migrant construction workers examined in the previous chapter, a further examination indicates a gender differential in the response to ‘accompanying their partners/parents to Thailand’ incentive. While the mean rating for ‘accompanying their partners/parents to Thailand’ of both the whole sample population and married population was not significant, this choice was indeed considered as an important incentive by married female participants, with an average scale of 2.80; while it was rated 1.37 by married male participants (Figure 7.25).

Figure 7.25 Mean Rating of Importance of 'Accompanying Their Partners/Parents to Thailand' in Influencing the Decision to Migrate of Married Respondents



7.3.4 Social Life and Social Networks in Thailand

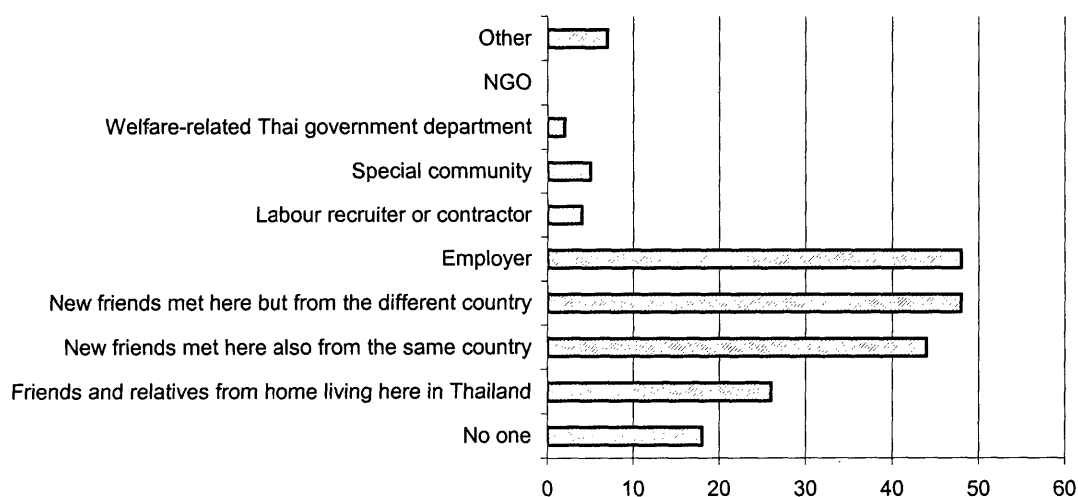
To learn about their social life and social networks in Thailand, the respondents were asked to specify their sources of non-financial and financial assistance, method of finding employment,

leisure time, and connection with friends and relatives in their home country. The results are as follows:

Non-financial sources of assistance

Only 18 respondents reported that they had not sought any sort of non-financial assistance since they came to Thailand. The remaining 81 reported that they normally received non-financial aid from their employers (48 people), new friends met in Thailand but from a different country (48 people), new friends from the same country (44 people), friends and relatives from home also living in Thailand (26 people), special community (such as churches, 5 people), labour recruiters or contractors (4 people), and the department of social welfare (2 people), as well as their embassies (2 people), and their Thai partners' relatives (5 people) (Figure 7.26).

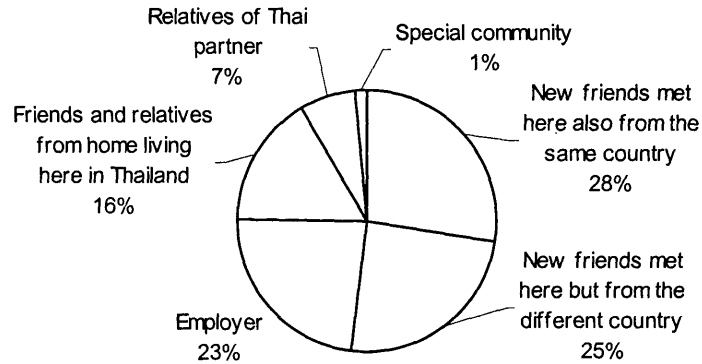
Figure 7.26 Number of Respondents by Sources of Non-financial Assistance



Of these 81 respondents, 73 people did specify the most sought source of non-financial assistance as shown in Figure 7.27. Of these, 28 per cent (20 people) reported new friends met in Thailand who also came from the same country as those they were most likely to seek assistant from, while 25 per cent (18 people) reported new friends from different countries, 23 per cent (17 people) reported employers, 16 per cent (12 people) reported friends and relatives

from home living in Thailand, seven per cent (5 people) reported relatives of their Thai partner, and one per cent (1 person) reported special communities (churches).

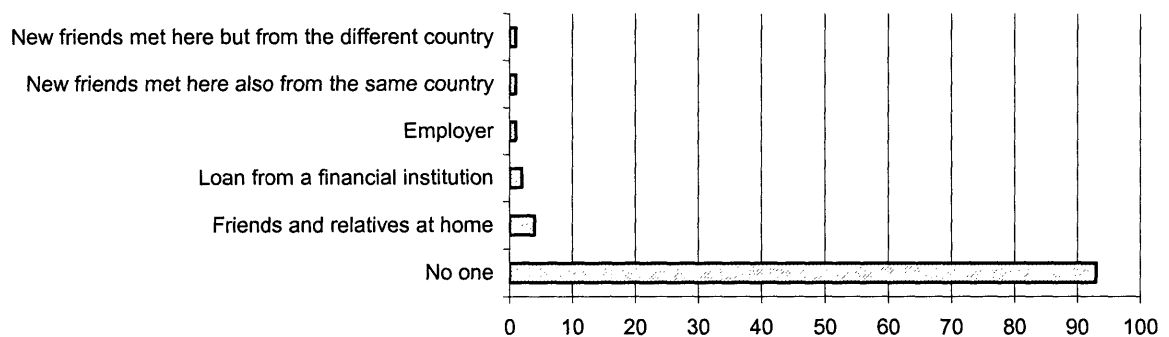
Figure 7.27 The Most Sought Source of Non-financial Assistance



Financial sources of assistance

Nevertheless, when asked about the financial assistance, as shown in Figure 7.28, the overwhelming majority of respondents (93 people) claimed that they had not required such assistance since moving to Thailand. While two respondents did not answer the question, the remaining five respondents reported that, when in need, they normally sought financial aid from their friends and relatives at home (4 people), financial institutions (2 people), employers (1 person), new friends from the same country (1 person), and new friends from a different country (1 person). And, the study further found that three respondents reported that they mostly sought financial assistance from their friends and relatives at home, while the other two reported that a loan from a financial institution was the most sought source of financial aid.

Figure 7.28 Number of Respondents by Sources of Financial Assistance



Methods of finding work

As shown in Figure 7.30, of the total one hundred respondents, 33 respondents reported that they had at least once looked for work while in Thailand. Also, as can be seen from Figure 7.29, they reported that the usual methods of finding work were through the Thai government employment agency (33 people), advertised job openings in newspaper and printed material (19 people), direct contact with potential employers (11 people), internet advertisement (8 people), new friends from the same country (8 people), new friends from other countries (8 people), private employment agency (6 people), friends and relative from home also living in Thailand (3 people), and/or by advertising themselves (1 person). Nonetheless, these 33 respondents found that, from their experiences, the most efficient methods were through advertised job openings in newspaper or printed materials (12 people), direct contact with potential employers (6 people), internet job advertisements (6 people), news from friends from the same country (4 people), private employment agencies (3 people), friend and relatives from home living in Thailand (1 person), or by advertising themselves (1 person) (Figure 7.30).

Figure 7.29 Number of Respondents by Method of Finding Work

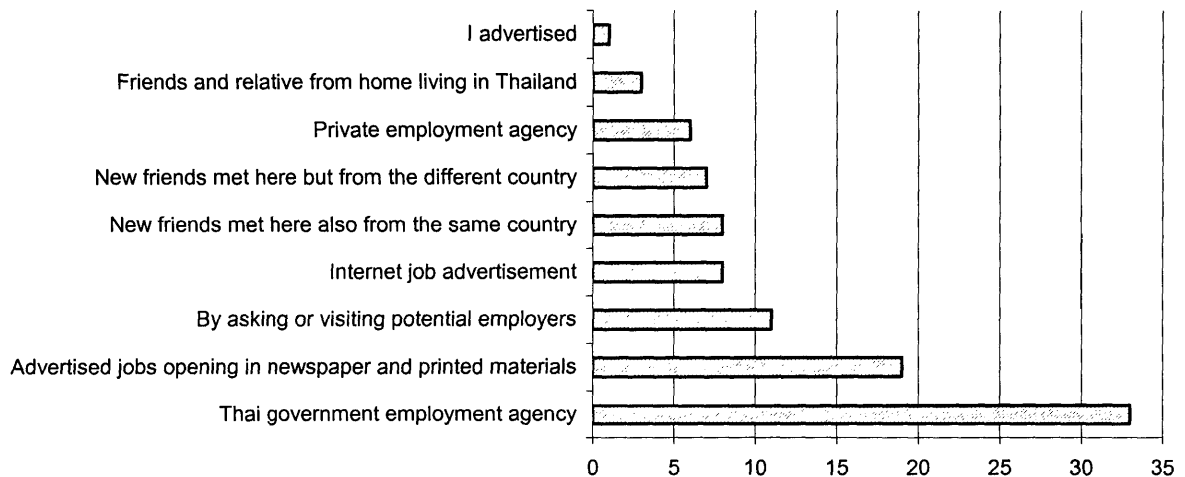
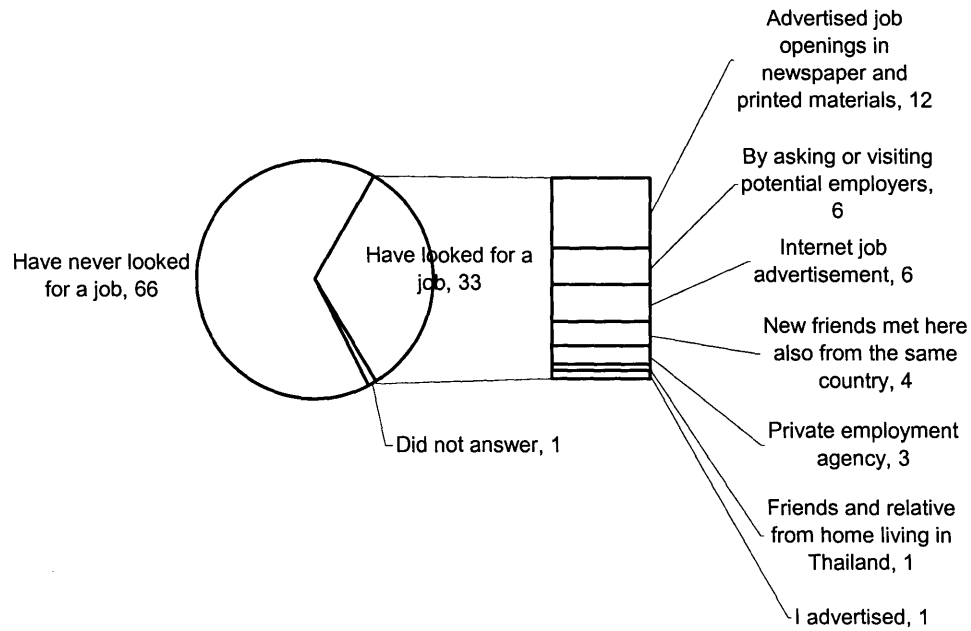


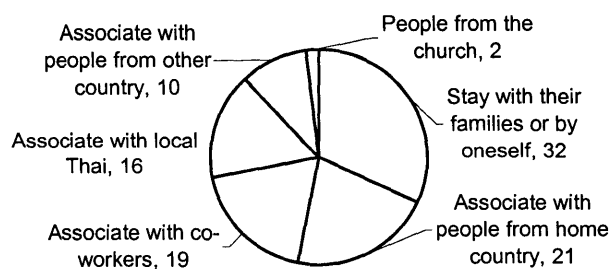
Figure 7.30 Number of Respondents by the Most Efficient Method of Finding Work



Leisure time

When asked about the activity that they usually do in their spare time, 32 reported staying with their families or by themselves, while 21 reported that they associated with people from their home country, 19 associated with their co-workers, 16 associated with local Thais, ten associated with people from other countries, and two spent most of their spare time with people from their churches (Figure 7.31).

Figure 7.31 Number of Respondents by Activity in Leisure Time



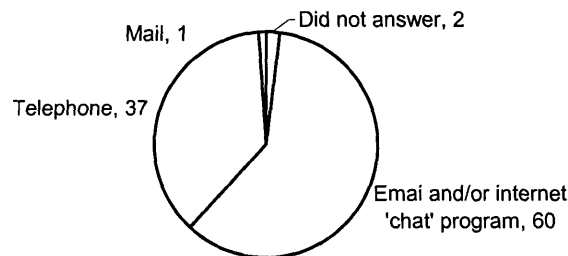
All things considered, unlike the findings reported in the previous chapter, there seems to be no obvious pattern emerging from the findings from this particular population in relation to their social life and social networks in Thailand. These workers seem to mix well with the Thai locals, as well as with people from their home country and from other countries. They

were more self-reliant and had access to more sources of assistance than those construction workers examined in the previous chapter.

Connection with friends and relatives in home country

All respondents who answered this question reported that they were still in touch with their friends and family at home (Figure 7.32). It also shows that their main means of communication were emails and/or internet 'chat' programmes (60 people), telephones (37 people), and mail (1 person). This information is interesting because it not only indicates that, like the unskilled construction workers, this group of workers still had connections with their friends and family at home; it also demonstrates that technology plays a significant role in migration, by making it easier to maintain important family and social relationships after migration.

Figure 7.32 Number of Respondents by Main Means of Communication with Friends and Family at Home



7.3.5 Financial issues and remittances

Respondents were asked about total monthly income, monthly savings and estimated remittances, so that their financial situation and remittance behaviour can be examined. The responses and analysis are as follow:

Total monthly income

Most of this sample population reported that they took home between 50,000 and 149,999 baht per month. While the lowest total monthly income was 20,000 baht, the highest monthly income was reported to be 1,000,000 baht (Figure 7.33). On average, one person earned

134,089.53 baht a month (Appendix V). In comparison, this group earned about 33 times more than the construction workers examined in the previous chapter.

When asked what their incomes were mostly used for, these workers spent not only on essentials but also equally, if not more, on luxuries and pleasures. The most frequently reported uses of income were on living expenses and entertainment, followed by travelling, necessities, saving as investment, accommodation, mortgages in Thailand (on houses and cars), children's education, luxury goods and services (such as furniture, maids and massages), and transportation (Figure 7.34).

Figure 7.33 Number of Respondents by Total Monthly Income

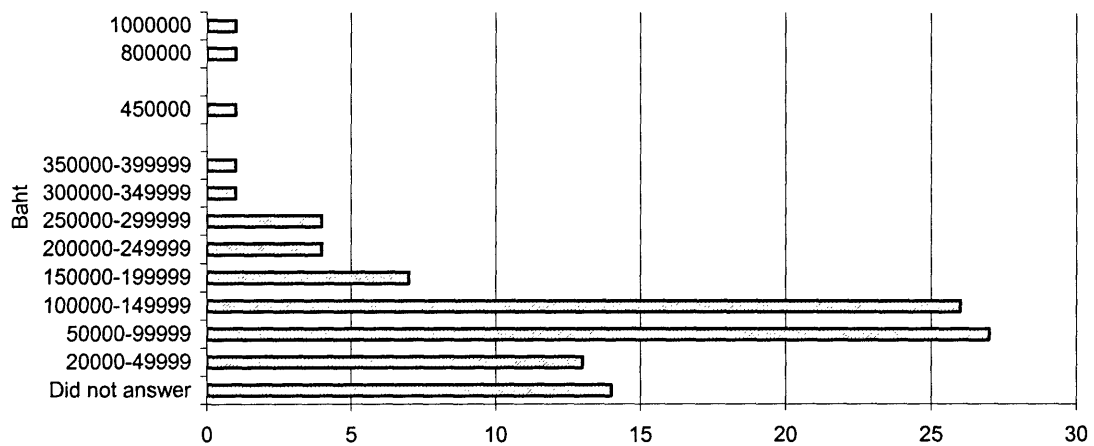
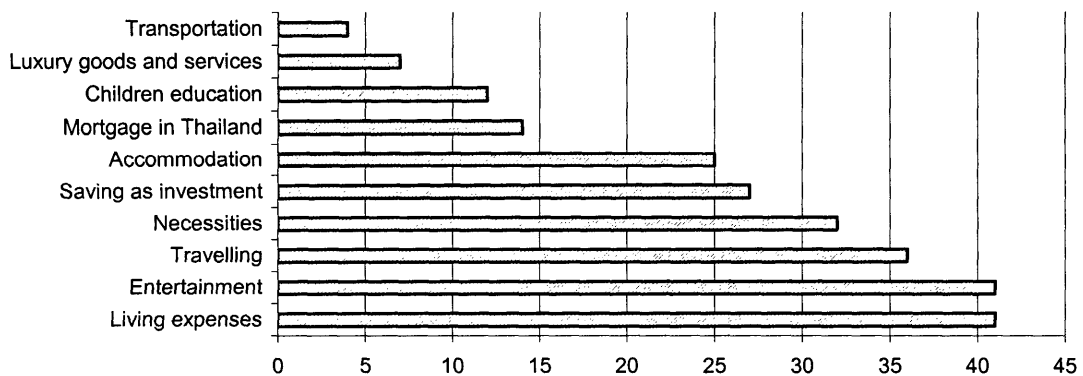


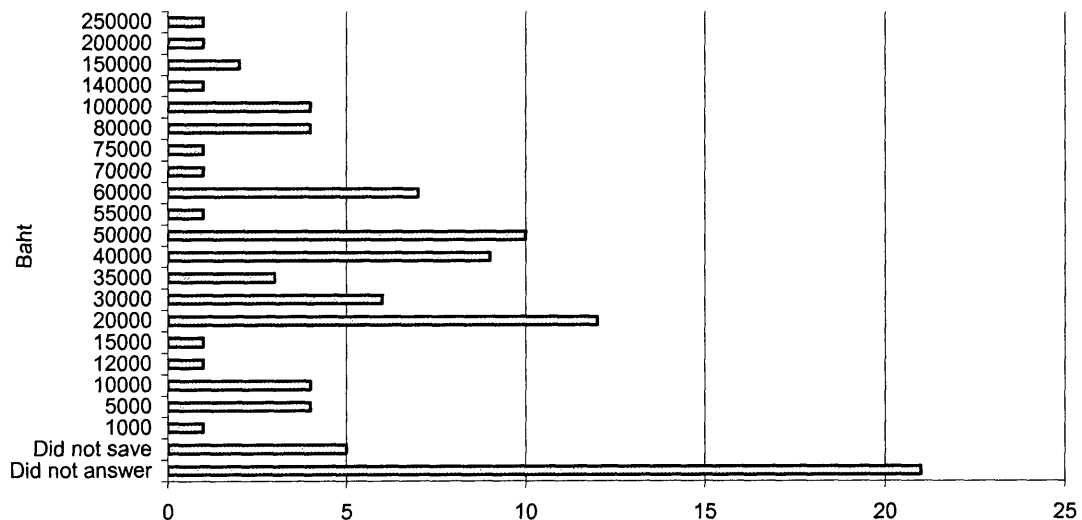
Figure 7.34 Number of Respondents by Main Uses of Income



Total monthly saving

Respondents were also asked to specify the amount of their monthly savings. Only five of 79 respondents reported no saving, while the remainder claimed that they had between 1,000 and 250,000 baht left at the end of each month above expenditure (Figure 7.35). Thus, these workers, on average, saved approximately 47,000 baht a month, which was almost 20 times the amount of the average saving of construction workers (Appendix V). However, while construction workers saved about 60.2 per cent of their average monthly income, this group of workers saved only around 35 per cent of the average monthly income. This indicates a greater propensity of this group to spend.

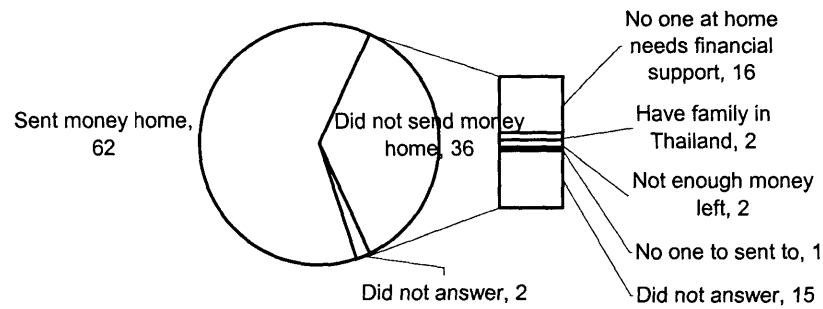
Figure 7.35 Number of Respondents by Amount of Money Saved per Month



Remittances and remittance behaviour

The majority of the respondents responded to questions about remittances (62 of the total 98 people) had sent home some of their money earned in Thailand, while 36 reported having never sent money back to their home countries. Of these 36 respondents, 15 people did not specify reasons for not sending money, while 16 reported that their families at home were financially sufficient, two people had family with them in Thailand, one person had no family at all, and the remaining two people reported spending all of their incomes in Thailand (Figure 7.36).

Figure 7.36 Number of Respondents by Reason for Not Sending Money Home



Of the 62 respondents reporting sending some of their money home, as can be seen from Figure 7.37, two people did not specify the main means of sending remittances, while the large majority (52 people) reported sending the money through a bank transfer (including Internet-banking), four people reported bringing money home by themselves, three people reported sending it through an agent or labour recruiter or contractor, and one person reported sending funds through friends and relatives.

The 62 respondents were, also, asked to specify approximately how much money they send back home per month; while 13 people did not answer, the remaining 49 reported sending between 5,000 and 350,000 baht a month back to their home countries (Figure 7.38). Thus, these workers sent home, on average, about 50,000 baht a month or about 38 per cent of their average total monthly income.

Figure 7.37 Number of Respondents by Means of Sending Money Home

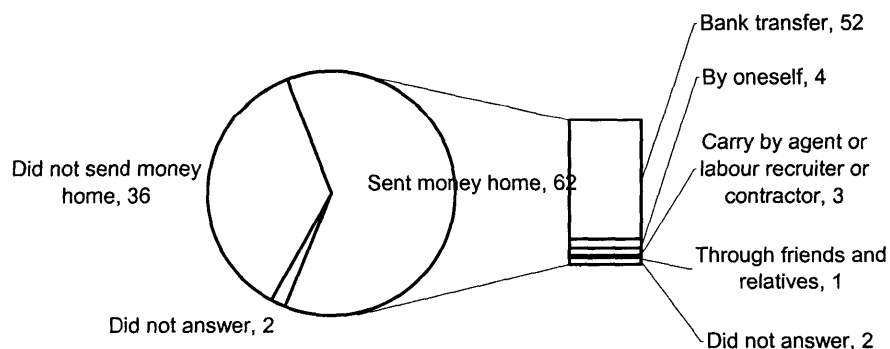
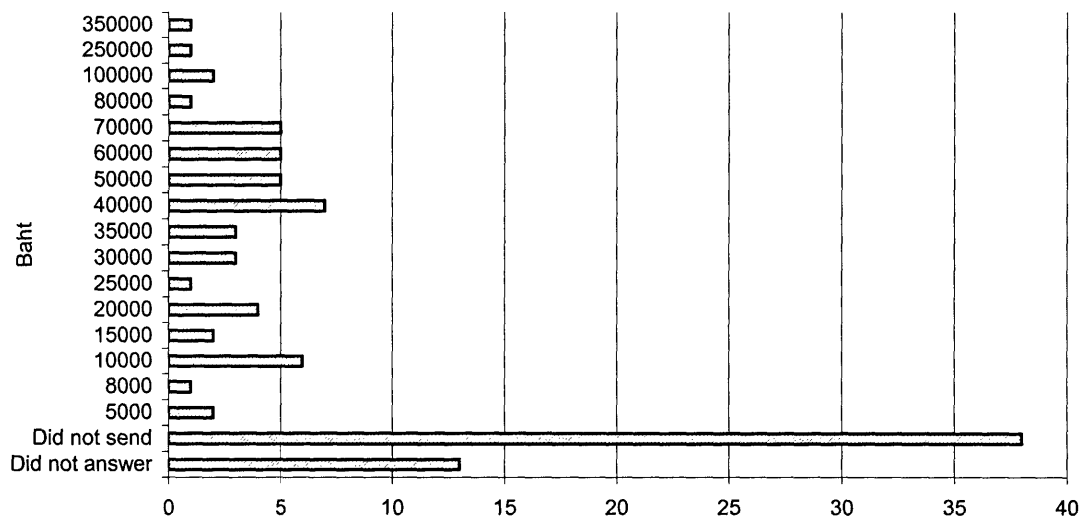


Figure 7.38 Number of Respondents by Estimated Monthly Remittances



When the correlation coefficients between the total monthly income and the estimated monthly saving and the estimated monthly remittance are tested, as can be seen from Appendix V, the results show that there is a tendency for respondents with high incomes to have high savings ($r = 0.525$, $df = 75$, $p = 0.001$). As well, there is a tendency for high income respondents ($r = 0.398$, $df = 45$, $p = 0.006$) and high saving respondents ($r = 0.347$, $df = 42$, $p = 0.021$) to send larger sized remittances.

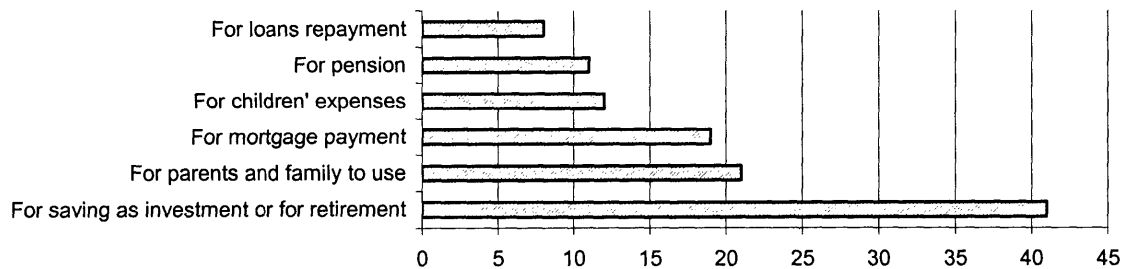
Interestingly enough, unlike the results from the construction workers examined in the previous chapter, the results from a Pearson's correlation analysis of this group of workers, as presented in Appendix W, show no strong indications of the relationship between sending remittances and family ties, gender, ages, education levels, or occupations.

What is more, the ANOVA results presented in Appendix X indicate that the size of estimated monthly remittances are not statistically significantly different between those sent by male and female workers, or between those of respondents who reported having and not having partners in Thailand, or between those of respondents who reported having and not having children with them in Thailand. Likewise, it is evident that there is no significant difference in size of monthly remittances among different age groups, different education levels, or different occupations.

All in all, unlike the findings from the examination of construction workers in the previous chapter, remittance behaviours of this group of workers can only be explained by the amount of their total monthly incomes, and, to a lesser extent, by the size of their savings. A worker with a high income has a high propensity to save more and remit larger sums. According to the results from Pearson's correlation analysis and ANOVA, there appear to be no other clear incentives for sending money back to the home countries of respondents. It is, therefore, necessary to learn more about their remittance behaviour by asking them to specify their reasons for remitting some of their earnings home.

As shown in Figure 7.39, the most frequently reported purpose for sending money back home was for saving as an investment or saving for their retirement. Many of these respondents stated that it was safer to remit their savings to their home countries than in Thailand because of the relatively weak and unsecured Thai currency and financial market. A large number of the respondents reported that some of the remittances were sent for their parents and other family members (21 people) and children (12 people) to use at home. Furthermore, the other reported purposes of the remittances were to pay their financial obligations at home, including mortgages (19 people), pensions (11 people), and loans, including credit cards bills (8 people).

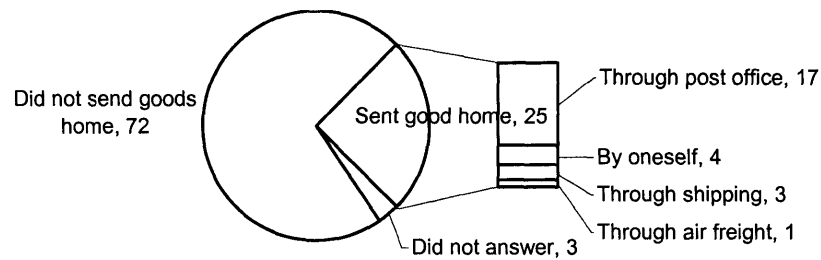
Figure 7.39 Number of Respondents and Reported Main Purposes of Sending Money Home



As also mentioned in the previous chapter, goods and gifts are also important forms of remittances. Nevertheless, like the construction workers, most of the sample population reported that they had never sent goods or gifts home. Twenty-five people reported that they sent some goods and/or gifts back to their home countries, mainly through the post office (17 people), by shipping (3 people), air freight (1 person), and by themselves (4 people) (Figure 7.40). And, the study found that, unlike the construction workers who mainly sent home

clothes or electronic goods, this group of worker sent gifts. The most frequently reported gifts sent home by these respondents were souvenirs and small presents for a special occasion such as Christmas (24 people), followed by furniture and handicrafts (10 people), clothes (7 people), food (3 people), and jewellery (1 person).

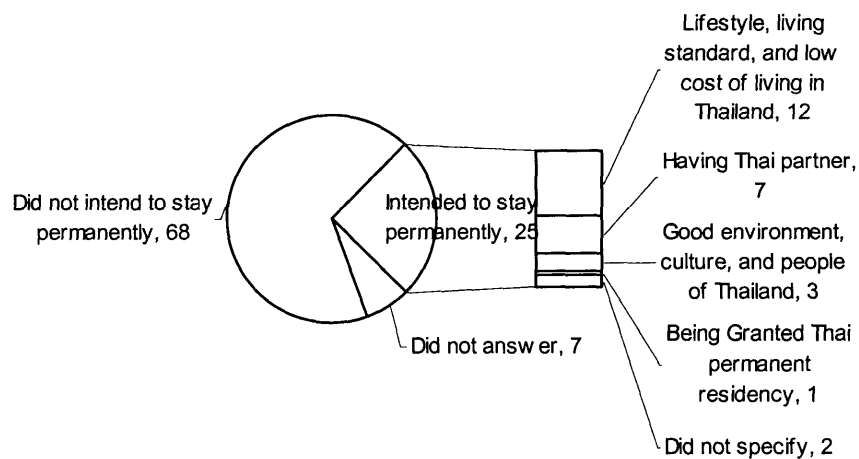
Figure 7.40 Number of Respondents by Main Means of Sending Goods Home



7.3.6 Post-migration

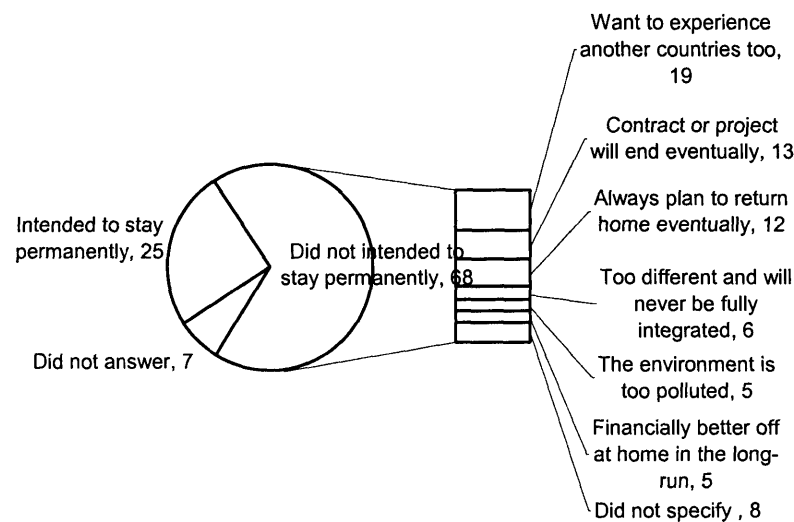
The information presented in Figure 7.41 indicates that, as with construction workers, most of these respondents (68 people) had no intention of staying in Thailand permanently. While seven people did not answer the question, the remaining 25 people reported that they intended to stay in the country permanently because of the lifestyle, living standards, and/or low cost of living in Thailand (12 people), having a Thai partner (7 people), good environment, culture and people of Thailand (3 people), and being granted Thai permanent residency (1 person) (Figure 7.41).

Figure 7.41 Number of Respondents by Reason for Intending to Stay in Thailand Permanently



When asked to cite their reasons for not intending to stay in the country permanently, as shown in Figure 7.42, eight of the 68 respondents did not specify their reason, 19 people wanted to go and experience other countries too, 13 people reported they have contracts or projects which will end eventually, 12 people had always planned to go home sooner or later, six people felt that the Thai and their own cultures were too different and they would never be fully integrated in the local community, five people found that the environment in Thailand was too polluted, and another five people reported that – in the long-run – they would be financially better off in their home countries, owing especially to better social security, welfare, and health care systems at home.

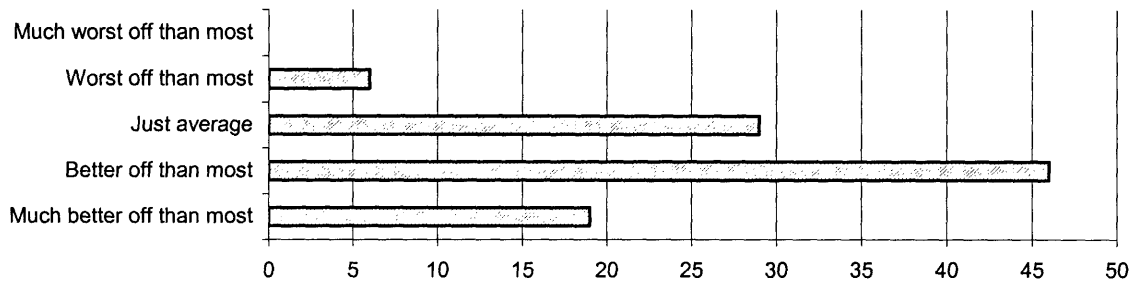
Figure 7.42 Number of Respondents by Reason for Not Intending to Stay in Thailand Permanently



In comparison to people in their home countries who did not come and work in Thailand, most of the respondents reported that they were better off or much better off, while 29 people reported their situation as just average. Like the construction workers, none of the respondents reported that they were much worse off; still, six people reported that they were just worse off (Figure 7.43). It is important to point out that this information should largely be seen in the context of non-financial matters, especially for this sample population. Unlike the construction workers, the reported reasons for leaving their home countries, and for coming to and even for staying in Thailand, have been mostly non-financial ones. Thus, many of these respondents felt that they were better off than most of the people at home because they had experienced,

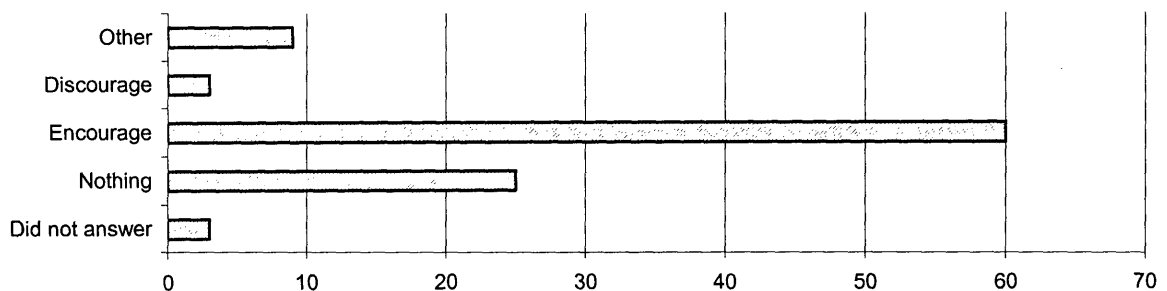
learnt, and travelled more: they might not necessarily earn more money. A couple of people even felt better off despite being paid less than at home.

Figure 7.43 Number of Respondents by Level of Comparative Welfare



Most of the respondents (60 people) stated that they would encourage their friends and relatives to come and work in Thailand, but nine people reported that they would do so only after they had briefed them about the pros and cons of working in Thailand, or if they were convinced that their friends and relatives could adjust to the new environment. Nevertheless, 25 people reported that they would say nothing if they were asked by friends and relatives about employment in Thailand. Only three those would discourage them from moving to work in the country (Figure 7.44).

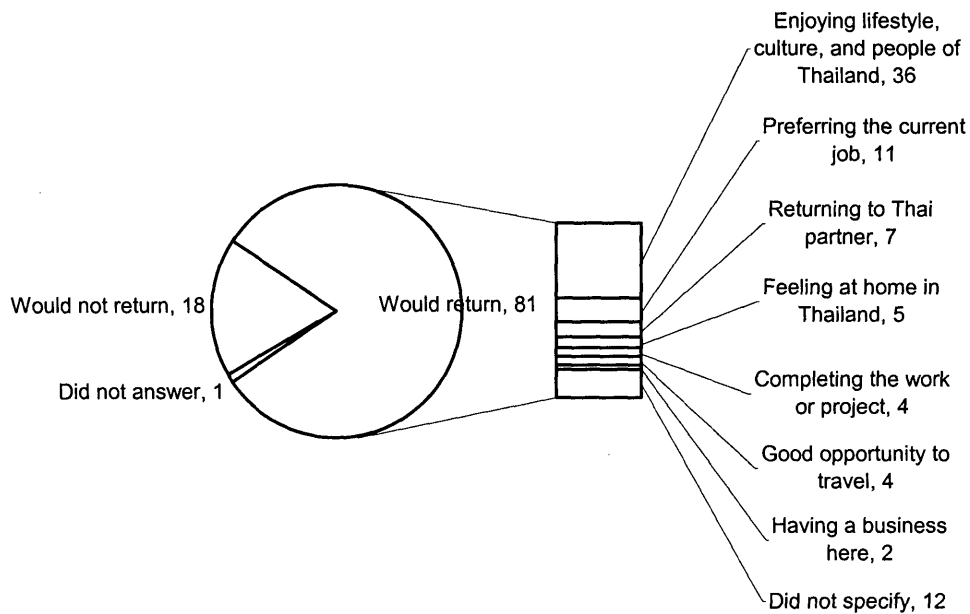
Figure 7.44 Number of Respondents by Recommendation Given to Migrating Friends and Relatives



The greater majority of the respondents reported that they would return to work in Thailand again, had they, for some reason, been required to go back to their countries now. Interestingly, 36 reported the reason being that they enjoyed the lifestyle, culture and people, while 11 people reported that they like their current jobs, seven would return to their Thai partners, five already felt at home in Thailand, four wanted to complete the work or project that they were

assigned to do, another four enjoyed the opportunity to travel more, and two had established businesses in Thailand (Figures 7.45 and 7.46).

Figure 7.45 Number of Respondents by Reason for Returning to Thailand



Of the remaining 19 respondents, one person did not answer the question while 18 people reported that they would not return to Thailand. Citing their reason for not returning to Thailand, as shown in Figure 7.46, seven people wanted to see and learn about different countries and cultures, five people had gained enough experiences and wanted to go home, and two people had finished their work or project; 12 people did not specify any reason (Figures 7.45 and 7.46).

When the respondents were, finally, asked in what country they would like to settle after their retirement, the information presented in Figure 7.47 shows that 43 people reported that they would return and retire in their home countries, while as many as 32 people reported having not decided yet, 19 people would like to see themselves retire in Thailand, and six people would retire elsewhere or between their home countries and Thailand.

Figure 7.46 Number of Respondents by Reason for Not Returning to Thailand

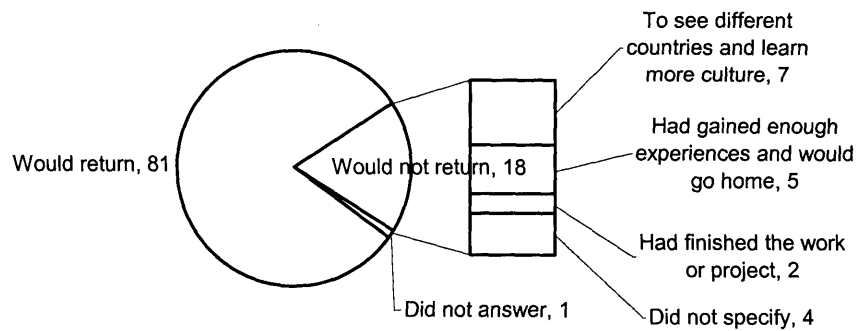


Figure 7.47 Number of Respondents by Desired Place for Retirement



7.4 Conclusion

As in the previous chapter, in this chapter the examination of survey findings was constructed around the six main themes. For this study, skilled workers were defined by the level of their formal education, types of work and, to a limited extent, wages. Some comparisons were also made with the findings from the interviews of unskilled migrant construction workers. It is quite clear that the sample unskilled population and this sample of skilled population are very different in profiles, and in their migratory and employment experiences.

The skilled migrant workers were quite heterogenous. Altogether, they were from fifteen countries. They were, mostly, mature and married. The population was educated and predominantly male. This group of workers was mobile, as over half of the population had had overseas work experiences. Unlike the unskilled construction workers, their current occupations were mainly in the same line as their previous professions. This is because skilled

occupations require proper training and experiences. The majority were employees with written contracts. A few were business owners or paid apprentices. Most acquired requisite work-related benefits as part of their employment. All were paid higher than the average pay of Thai employees. There was no clear evidence of any discrepancy in pay among various groups of respondents. However, men seemed to be paid marginally more than women, and business owners earned, on average, more than others.

Even though all of the respondents were legal immigrants, there were some signs of illegal activities, mainly violating conditions of employment. The study found some respondents had extra or casual work, or were on a student visa. It is clear that the entire group of workers follows 'Pathway One', 'Pathway Two' and 'Path Three' of the 'employment of legal migrants' process (Chapter Four). The period of stay and the intended length of stay indicated the circulating and temporary nature of migration of this group of workers.

In the decision making process, the study not only found individual and collective migratory decisions based on individual and family member choices, but also found that many workers were influenced by employers and friends. Unlike the unskilled construction workers, the determining factors for the movement of this group of workers were about employment-related matters such as job transfers, job offers, and international work experience, and personal desires such as adventure, cultural experiences, and lifestyle. Nevertheless, like female construction workers, the study found that female workers of the group gave higher priority to 'accompanying partner/parents' than their male counterparts when making the decision to migrate.

The study found no strong indication of networking. This is because, so far as seeking assistance is concerned, this group of workers had access to appropriate sources of help. Nonetheless, there were signs of strong integration into the local society: many of them were married to or lived with Thai nationals, and many spent leisure time with locals and new friends from different countries. Like the unskilled construction workers, the majority were still in touch with friends and family at home. However, their contact was based mainly on email and/or internet 'chat' programmes, and the telephone.

This group of workers made a lot more money (approximately 30 times more) than construction workers, but, in relative terms, saved less. Even though the majority remitted part of their incomes home, the study found no other clear indicative stimulus for their remittance behaviour other than the fact that the amount of their monthly incomes and savings dictated the size of the remittance. The main purposes of the remittances were for saving, mortgages, and family expenses.

Even though there were strong signs of respondents' satisfaction with their current situation in Thailand, the study found no strong intention to settle permanently. Only those who had Thai partners intended to live and retire in Thailand.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

International migration has transformed the global economy. It is believed that there are now over 60 million migrant workers worldwide and Asia has the second largest stock of international migrants, after Europe. Moreover, it is undeniable that the pressure for international migration will be greater in future, due to differences in demographics and real incomes between countries. Research has shown that international labour migration (ILM) benefits both the destination countries of immigrants and the source countries of emigrants. ILM also contributes to world income and can reduce poverty. Thus in the destination countries, migrants fill labour shortages in sectors where nationals are in short supply or do not want to work. In the source countries, emigrants help ease unemployment pressures and increase financial inflows in the form of remittances from the migrants to their families back home. Migration is thus a global concern which is ultimately linked to other broader issues such as poverty reduction and human rights.

In Southeast Asia the three major labour importing countries are Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand (apart from Brunei) and all three have adopted differing policies to balance the pressures between achieving longer term goals of industrial-upgrading and technological change, on the one hand, and maintaining competitiveness in the shorter-term, on the other (see Chapter One). In the case of Thailand, the government has 'allowed' the entry of illegal unskilled workers into sectors such as construction, coastal fishing and the fish processing industry and labour-intensive manufacturing. These occupations are regarded as 'dangerous, dirty and degrading' and workers in these occupations earn low wages (see Chapter Five). The presence of foreign workers in these occupations fills the demand for labour in Thailand, thus slowing the increase in domestic labour cost.

The key issues surrounding ILM are how to help countries adapt to large-scale migration, and how to benefit from migration flows. In Thailand, policies have been developed related to skilled workers, but the state's policies regarding unskilled migrants are inadequate and made on an *ad hoc*, reactive basis. Regular registration and repatriation exercises have been utilised

to stem the inflow of undocumented migrants from neighbouring states since the mid-1990s. Thailand also relies on bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries as instruments for negotiating rules governing cross-border movements, such as recruitment and repatriation policies. For example, Thailand initiated a set of bilateral talks with neighbouring countries of Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Myanmar in 2002-3, in an attempt to regularise the recruitment of migrant workers in places of origin, rather than after undocumented arrival in Thailand.

A major reason for Thailand's inability to cope with illegal migrant labour flows and to satisfactorily regulate unskilled labour migration is the paucity of knowledge on the magnitude of migration, cross-border population flows and the contribution of these illegal migrants to the Thai economy. This study aims to address, in part, this deficiency in information, and makes an important contribution to our knowledge about international migration into Thailand. This also provides useful insights for the debate on the management of international migration and for improving our understanding of the Thai government's responses to cross-border movements into Thailand.

This study was undertaken in order to provide crucial information about international labour migration (ILM) into Thailand after the 1997-8 Asian Financial and Economic Crisis. The study, thus, takes a broader view of the entire system of migration of workers, as well as of different groups of workers within that system, in an attempt to provide a better understanding of the current foreign workforce and migrant labour system in Thailand. This includes the causes, characteristics, and processes of ILM to Thailand since the 1990s. In this chapter, the discussions and empirical data presented in the previous chapters are summarised to highlight important findings and conclusions derived from this research. Finally, some suggestions for further research are presented in the afterword.

8.1 Perspectives on migration research: Thailand and the international context of ILM

At the outset, to set the context for this study, this thesis reviewed the general literature on ILM and existing studies specifically focussed on international migrant workers in Thailand.

This review provided a context for the empirical study which followed, and canvassed three major themes.

The first relates to major global trends in ILM. Over time, ILM has grown significantly and changed from a largely forced movement to a voluntary ongoing phenomenon that is temporary in nature. Historically, the pattern of ILM has been governed not only by disparities in economic development and/or labour market opportunities, but also by social and political changes. Migration goals as well as restrictions in immigration policy in both receiving and sending countries also play a pivotal role in encouraging or precluding international labour flows. As outlined in Chapter One, since the early 1970s, Asia has embraced the 'new' international labour migration system. Thailand, the latest in the wave of the Asian economic success economies, has emerged as the 'new' Asian migratory pole. It is the third largest labour-receiving country in the Southeast Asian region, as well as one of the major labour-sending countries. Thus, the country is indeed the epitome of the modern Asian migration model.

Second, different disciplines offer different approaches and methodologies for the study of international labour migration, giving rise to a range of major theories related to ILM. These were also outlined in Chapter One. They also employ fundamentally different concepts, premises, and frames of reference. Currently, an array of theoretical approaches are utilised to explain international labour movements, yet there seems to be no single approach or blanket principle that can be comprehensively used to describe and explain the international migration phenomenon. Nor is there a specific university discipline for the study of this subject. Research on ILM, thus, tends to be intrinsically interdisciplinary and comprised of a variety of methodologies, including a top-down 'macro' level of analysis, focusing on migration policy or markets; and a bottom-up 'micro' level, emphasizing the experience of the individual migrant or the migrant family. It is for this reason that this research draws on a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to the study of international labour immigration into Thailand. The methodological approaches used in this research were outlined fully in Chapter Two.

Third, the review of literature in Chapter One discussed relevant research on ILM in Thailand. Since Thailand has become a net labour importer and foreign workers have made their presence felt in large numbers, there has been a shifting focus of research interest towards the immigration of foreign labour into Thailand. Although studies about migrant labour in Thailand have proliferated recently, there is still a gap in the literature and only a handful of major studies on the subject stand out. Most of these studies focus on either certain welfare-related issues and/or on specific immigrant groups, such as unskilled and illegal workers, and child labour from neighbouring countries.

This review of the international contexts of ILM, with its discussion of different perspectives towards migration research and its presentation of detail about research on migration into Thailand, thus sets the context for this study. The overall aim of this research, as outlined in Chapter One, was to document the extent and characteristics of ILM into Thailand. Achieving this aim involved meeting specific objectives that explored the reasons for Thailand's emergence as a major migratory pole in Asia. It also involved an examination of the policy and legislative environments surrounding labour standards and migration into Thailand, as well as the trends, and characteristics of, migration into Thailand. Finally, the study focussed, at the micro level, on the migration experiences of two groups of workers, unskilled construction workers and skilled workers. In what follows, the major findings of this research are outlined.

8.2 ILM in Thailand

Since the late 1980s, Thailand has witnessed increasing international migratory inflows of foreign workers. The statistical evidence presented in Chapter Five clearly shows that the foreign workforce in Thailand has changed quite considerably since the 1990s in terms of the overall magnitudes, gender structure, and increased diversification in terms of skill level and legal status. As a consequence of Thailand's stringent immigration regulations, especially on permanent foreign settlement, international labour migration into Thailand is characterised by its temporary and circular nature. This was clearly evident in the two case studies conducted of skilled and unskilled migrant workers in the Bangkok metropolitan area as part of this research (see Chapters Six and Seven).

Geographically, foreign workers are concentrated in large expanding cities around the country, particularly in Bangkok and its Metropolitan area, where work is easily found. As economic activity increased in the country, foreign workers were attracted to both the highly skilled and unskilled ends of the labour spectrum. Although the number of skilled foreign workers has been increasing over time, the current population of unskilled foreign workers vastly outnumbers this category of workers. Also, the total inflow of unskilled foreign workers is much greater than the inflow of skilled foreign workers (Chapter Five).

The feminisation of labour migration (as noted in Chapter One) – one of the key characteristics of the modern Asian migration phenomenon – is also evident in the unskilled foreign workforce in Thailand. It is insignificant among skilled workers. While the skilled foreign population is still predominantly male, consistent with the current expansion of industrial and service industries in the Thai economy, unskilled female workers constitute a large proportion (nearly half) of the unskilled foreign workforce. The findings from the migrant population sample survey showed that skilled foreign workers were mature males, were married and were internationally mobile. They were well-educated, well-paid, and well-protected under Thai labour laws. This contrasted with the unskilled foreign workers who were younger, less well-educated and had less experience, and were vulnerable to exploitation. Over half of them were also married. Even though Thailand has an array of labour laws governing the rights of, and protection for all categories of labour, unskilled foreign workers, even those who were registered, were still open to exploitation mainly because of their illegal and temporary work status. Unskilled foreign workers were also usually paid less than the government-legislated minimum wages and deprived of many basic rights (see Chapters Four and Six).

Over the past decade, the source countries of foreign workers in Thailand have not changed. The evidence shows that the originating sources of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the need for specialist skills dictate the origins of skilled foreign workers, whereas geographical proximity explains the origins of unskilled foreign labour. While Japan, China, the United Kingdom, India, and the USA are the main sources of skilled foreign workers, the origins of the skilled foreign population are geographically heterogeneous (Chapter Five). They come from all over the world, especially from the more highly industrialised societies. On the other

hand, the unskilled foreign workers are mostly Burmese, Cambodian, Laotians and – to a lesser extent – from minority groups (such as Shan, Karen, Mon, Akha and Lahu). Uniquely, because of the strict immigration policy and employment regulations for foreign workers, all unskilled foreign workers (excluding permanent residents) in Thailand are regarded as illegal immigrants. They are allowed to work in the country on a temporary basis only, either through amnesties or special regulations.

8.3 The state and regulation of ILM

Government policy plays not only an important role in determining the size and composition of labour flows but also shapes the migratory process. Since obtaining a work permit is necessary for any foreign national intending to work in Thailand, the entire process of international labour immigration can be generally categorised into two processes: ‘legal migrants’ and ‘illegal migrants’. The employment of legal migrants, as outlined in Chapter Four, is regulated through three pathways to the procurement of work permits. These are: the Permanent Resident pathway; the Non-immigrant pathway; and the Under-Special-Laws pathway. The process employing illegal migrants includes the Under-Clause-12 pathway, the ‘Illegal Migrant Worker Registration’ pathway, and the Illegal Employment pathway.

Owing to the restrictive immigration policy in Thailand, the Permanent Resident pathway is not commonly used and the employment of unskilled workers is possible only through the ‘illegal migrant’ process. Unskilled foreign workers in Thailand are thus highly vulnerable to exploitation and violation of their rights. Currently, the main avenue to legal employment of skilled foreign workers is the ‘Non-immigrant’ pathway, and foreign unskilled employment is through Illegal Migrant Worker Registration. Workers employed under these pathways dominate the foreign workforce. The most discretionary pathway of all is the ‘Under-Special-Laws’ pathway. The procedure for obtaining work permits has been simplified, various restrictions have been relaxed, and family reunification is allowed. However, this pathway is only available to foreign workers employed in companies that are promoted by the Board of Investment (BOI), the Industrial Estate Authority or the Petroleum Authority. On the other hand, the ‘Under-Clause-12’ and ‘Illegal Migrant Worker Registration’ pathways are most restrictive. These pathways are specifically intended for *personae non gratae* and illegal

immigrants. They involve various conditions and constraints. This effectively shows that skilled foreign workers are given greater preference, whereas the legal immigration of unskilled foreign workers is not allowed. Generally, the Illegal Employment pathway is chosen when foreigners are involved in 'criminal' activities, work for only a short period, are employed in prohibited jobs, or are unable to afford work permit fees. Such workers simply work without a work permit. There is no way to accurately estimate the number of unregistered illegal workers, but this number is likely to be large.

8.4 Causes of ILM

Reflecting on the key theoretical perspectives about the initiation of ILM (Chapter One), it is clear that labour migration, economic growth and development are interrelated processes. At the macro level, three important factors have resulted in the emergence of Thailand as a 'new' Asian migratory pole, attracting both skilled and unskilled foreign workers into the country. As outlined in Chapter Three, these are: the rapid growth of the Thai economy; divergence in regional economic development (especially between Thailand and its neighbours); and an imbalance in the quantity and quality of the Thai labour force.

Over the past few decades, the macroeconomic fundamentals of Thailand have been relatively strong and the economy has been recovering exceedingly well from the 1997-8 Asian financial and economic crisis. The country has been transformed from an agrarian economy to a newly-industrialising country (NIC). It has changed physically, economically, and politically beyond recognition. Apart from the economic downturn, Thailand has been rapidly accumulating capital in both public and private sectors. This is reflected in the rapid increase in investment in Thailand. These changes in the country's capital accumulation have brought about new employment opportunities and, in turn, an increase in both the scale and scope of demand for labour, which has grown much more rapidly than the labour supply. This has resulted in an imbalance between supply and demand in the Thai labour market. The steady growth of the Thai population and labour force, low technological capability and inadequate skills of Thai workers, combined with the emigration of Thai workers have also contributed to acute labour shortages in the Thai economy. Labour shortages in the economy have thus been the main pull factor for ILM into Thailand.

However, such demand cannot automatically spawn and sustain labour immigration. Other factors too are also responsible for the movement of labour in the first place and for maintaining it (see the discussion on the perpetuation of ILM in Chapter One). This study puts forward five such factors. First, the movement of skilled foreign workers is encouraged by the Thai government through various facilitating policies, especially due to the flows of FDI. Second, despite restrictive immigration policies and strict protocols on illegal immigration, the migration of unskilled foreign workers into Thailand is consistent with the proximity of these sources of labour. There are divergences in economic development between Thailand and its immediate neighbours, Burma, Cambodia and Laos. Moreover, in view of their historical and cultural affinities, the influx of unskilled foreign workers from the neighbouring countries is difficult to prevent and preclude. Third, while ‘formal’ networking plays only a small role in ILM into Thailand, ‘informal’ social networking facilitates and sustains migrant inflows. Fourth, an awareness of employment opportunities in Thailand attracts such a movement owing to information flows facilitated by developments in communication, the media and television. Fifth, improved transportation and lower transport cost have made migration relatively painless and, thus, attractive for migrants.

At the individual level, the study found that economic reasons were of fundamental importance in the migration of unskilled foreign workers to Thailand (see Chapters Six and Seven). Employment-related matters and personal ambitions underpinned the entire rationale of the movement of skilled foreign workers. These were also reflected in the differing remittance behaviours of the two groups of workers. Even though the unskilled foreign workers made a lot less money, they remitted proportionally a lot more than their skilled counterparts. Furthermore, there were signs of ‘collective’ and ‘relative deprivation’ in migratory decision making processes, particularly in the unskilled foreign population. This attests to the economic *raison d'être* of their movement. While differences in attitudes between male and female workers were mostly minor, both skilled and unskilled female foreign workers regarded ‘accompanying partner/spouses’ as an important incentive to migrate.

8.5 The research in summary

In all, this study has accomplished its central aim of documenting the nature, extent and characteristics of international labour migration to Thailand. While much further exploration is necessary to enable a fuller understanding of this phenomenon, this study has presented an historical account of the reasons for the growth of labour migration into Thailand. It has analysed the legislative and policy frameworks which shaped, and continue to shape, the extent of migration to Thailand and presented information about the trends and characteristics of authorised labour migration into Thailand. Finally, the study documented the migration experiences of unskilled construction workers and skilled workers moving into Thailand. In doing so, this research has, importantly, added substantially to the growing body of knowledge about the extent and nature of the immigration of labour into Thailand.

Afterword: Some suggestions for further research

This research explored the general characteristics of foreign workers, possible processes for migrant workers to seek employment in Thailand, and causes of ILM to Thailand, through a multi-level approach to analysis. This study has satisfied its broad aim and specific objectives, thus contributing to a new understanding about ILM into Thailand. However, further generation of empirical data about other aspects of migration to Thailand will enable a more detailed understanding of the complexities of this subject.

Thus, this study suggests the usefulness of further research on the topic, especially at the micro-level. Both skilled and unskilled foreign workers in different industries could be studied and compared, to give an in-depth understanding about issues relevant to a specific industry.

For instance, this study of construction workers found that, due to the nature of construction operations, workers encountered occasional unemployment, thus unavoidably contravening regulations. This suggests that restrictions on the type and place of work may need to be relaxed for the construction industry. An exploration of similar issues specific to other industries would be especially valuable for policy makers.

The study also suggests a further examination of the impacts of the contributions of skilled and unskilled foreign workers at both the macro and micro levels, including economic, political and socio-cultural consequences. An examination at the macro level is not an easy matter because of the lack of availability of appropriate data. For studies on these impacts to produce reliable results, it is imperative that the quantity and quality of data collected at the national level be improved and made publicly accessible. An examination at the macro-level could explore the impacts on the Thai labour market, economic growth and national security. Beside the impacts on wages, unemployment rates and income growth, further research would enable determination of the extent to which there has been a replacement of emigrant Thai workers by foreign immigrant workers, and which activities are more highly dependent on foreign workers.

Even though, as noted above, labour migration and economic growth and development are interrelated processes, it is still unclear whether or by how much international labour immigration generates growth. This will require a longitudinal examination of trends in the Thai labour market, labour immigration, and Thai and international economic development. Even though Sussangkarn (1996b) has studied the impacts of migrant workers on economic growth of Thailand, the focus was only on unskilled foreign workers and this work could usefully be extended.

On the security front, the debate focuses on whether the impacts of migration on incidences of crime, health, culture, contamination and human rights are 'fact' or 'fiction'; it would be constructive to test for any correlation between labour immigration and incidences which reflect these concerns. Furthermore, this study suggests that, at the individual or micro level, an examination of the consequences of international immigration should focus not only on foreign workers but also on others. Further study should also aim to investigate experiences of

local workers and employers. Thai workers are not least affected by the presence of their foreign counterparts (Vanaspong 1997). By focusing on the experiences of Thai workers and employers, such study could well reveal, in particular, social and cultural effects on such issues as xenophobia, pluralism and stigmatisation of 'immigrant work'. It is therefore suggested that issues such as adaptation, assimilation, and return migration, together with psychological and financial issues, could also be addressed.

Finally, the policy implications of labour immigration into Thailand warrant further exploration. Chapter Four revealed that the current labour immigration policy of Thailand was adopted mainly as a result of the government's 'laissez-faire' approach, and such a policy is still mostly reactive, prohibitive and restrictive. This reflects the fact that international labour immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in terms of policy making in Thailand. Since all evidence seems to indicate that ILM into the country will continue, the government could apply a more pre-emptive approach. While acknowledging that the Thai situation has its own unique characteristics, explorations of immigration and foreign employment policies of other labour receiving countries could provide a basis for policy formulation relevant to immigration into Thailand.