



## **Impact of Migration on Older Age Parents**

### **A Case Study of Two Communes in Battambang Province, Cambodia**

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## Introduction

The movement of people from rural areas in developing countries to cities and across borders, primarily in search of employment, is an inescapable consequence of development and the globalization process occurring throughout the world. This type of labor migration has become persistent and an accelerating reality in many developing countries, including Cambodia (Chan, 2008; Lim, 2008). How this impacts on family members including intergenerational solidarity remains, however, a matter of considerable debate. International forums concerned with advocacy and mass media accounts tend to view migration as undermining the family and leading to the loss of economic, social and psychological support and personal care for elderly parents from absent children (Knodel et al. 2010). Older people being left behind to fend for themselves in rural areas due to the out-migration of their adult children has also been a common account in the Cambodian literature.

A Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) study funded by the World Bank entitled *Moving Out of Poverty* identified migration for wage employment as a critical channel for improving individual well-being. Yet, the authors also cited the movement of people out of rural areas as a driving demographic change towards an erosion of traditional sources of protection for older adults still living in these areas (FitzGerald et al, 2007). Another CDRI study funded by the Asian Development Bank cites migration as accelerating the destabilization of rural areas: ‘as able-bodied young men and women desert village after village, while the old and the very young, along with the destitute, are left behind to tend the farms’ (Murshid, 2007). In short, these statements imply that the migration of adult children away from their parents’ home in rural areas of Cambodia and other developing countries has the potential of disrupting and eroding long-established and time-honored family values and norms that have worked to solidify the family and maintain intergenerational solidarity. These negative portrayals fit within a broader argument that the general process of development, of which increased migration, especially to urban areas, is an integral part, undermines the extended family and its function as a source of old age support (Aboderin, 2004; Hendricks and Yoon, 2006; Hermalin et al, 2003).

At the same time, there are alternate perspectives that view the impact of migration on the family as it is occurring in the developing world in a less negative light. In much of this literature, migration is seen as part of a household strategy to diversify risks for families and benefit both migrant and non-migrant members, including presumably older age parents who typically remain behind in the place of origin (Cai, 2003; Stark and Bloom, 1985; Stark and Lucas, 1988; Vanwey, 2004). Still, most of this literature is urban based and from the perspective of the migrants. Even when non-migrant family members are considered, few prior studies specifically address impacts on older age parents. In addition, the focus of these studies is typically limited to implications for economic exchanges rather than the fuller range of support that children potentially provide parents that would also include social interaction, assistance with daily living, and care giving services related to health.

One perspective that does consider a broader range of impacts and focuses more broadly on how family relations and structure change as societies pass from agrarian to industrial and then to postindustrial forms is that of the ‘modified extended family’ (Knodel et al. 2010; Litwak, 1960, 1987; Smith, 1998). It maintains that impacts on the type of support being considered are responsive to changing contexts. Rather than development leading to the demise of extended family relations, a modified form emerges that is adapted to the changed circumstances. According to this view, advances in technology, especially with respect to transportation and communication, permit family members to maintain close contact and to

fulfill some, if not all, of the responsibilities to each other, including filial obligations to older age parents that previously required geographical proximity. So far, the concept of a 'modified extended family' has mainly been discussed in the context of economically advanced Western countries, especially in the United States. Nevertheless, the modes through which important family structures can be fulfilled over geographical distance and the extent to which they are maintained in a changing society merit exploration in the context of the developing world (Knodel et al. 2010).

Cambodia, the setting of the present study, provides a particularly interesting case for this purpose. Cambodia's recent economic history has been characterized by an increase in industrialization, especially within the garment industry, as well as generalized increased jobs in urban areas (Ear, 2005). At the same time, the economic situation lags well behind neighboring Thailand and Viet Nam. Migration to urban areas or to more prosperous Thailand provides prospects of economic hope for poverty stricken families in rural areas, and strategies for diversifying risk may involve the migration of one or more children. Local studies have verified the accelerated tendency of younger adults to seek wage labor opportunities either in Cambodian cities or across the border into Thailand and even Malaysia where there is a great demand for labor (Chan, 2008; Lim, 2008). Local research has also highlighted the potential of remittance to play a factor in the poverty and well-being of rural areas (Analyzing Development Issues, 2005; Ballard, 2007; Murshid, 2007; Ang et al, 2007). Still literature that links migration to the family is particularly underdeveloped in Cambodia.

The 2004 Cambodia Survey of the Elderly uncovered some important elements of Cambodian family life and migration (Knodel et al., 2005). As in much of the world, the family in Cambodia traditionally has primary responsibility for older persons. The family therefore is responsible not just for providing material support for older members but also for assistance related to functional health including providing needed assistance with activities of daily living. Such support is especially critical for frail older adults. Given the necessity of being in close proximity in order to engage in intergenerational exchange, particularly that which is related to daily physical needs, living arrangements has been an important part of the familial support system. The 2004 Cambodia Survey of the Elderly indicated that almost half of those 60 and older in Cambodia have at least one child living out of the province. At the same time over 80 per cent also have a child living nearby (Zimmer et al., 2008). This suggests the possibility of complex interactions among and across children and their parents with respect to support of various kinds. This includes physical support, which requires proximity, and material support, which does not. Whether a concomitant decline in support is occurring is an important but under-investigated issue.

## **Research Questions**

The overarching question addressed in the study is "*How does migration of adult children affect the well being of rural older-age parents who remain behind and how does this migration impact intergenerational solidarity?*" A sub-theme addressed is "How do impacts differ between internal and cross border migration?" A series of specific questions address social impacts, intergenerational solidarity, material support and monetary exchanges, health and psychological well-being, and future research, national development and policy.

1) Social impacts:

- a) To what extent does migration of adult children lead to desertion and neglect of older parents and other family members?
- b) How do migrants and their parents maintain social contact and does this vary by location of migrant?

c) How have technological advances, for instance in telecommunications, such as the advent of cellular phones, affected contact between older rural parents and their migrating children?

2) Intergenerational solidarity:

a) Do parents view filial obligations of migrant and non-migrant children differently and if so in what ways?

b) How do the types of intergenerational exchanges differ depending upon location of migrant?

c) To what extent and in what ways are older rural parents responsible for grandchildren left behind by migrant adult children?

3) Material support and monetary exchanges:

a) How does migration of children relate to the material well-being of parents and other members of the migrant's family who remain behind?

b) To what extent does the net balance of material exchanges over the duration of the separation favor one or the other party?

c) Is there an interaction between the presence of non-migrant children and material support from migrant children?

d) Does care for grandchildren affect monetary support from migrant adult children?

4) Health and psychological well-being:

a) Does migration of children affect the physical health and psychological well-being of parents?

b) Do migrant children make contributions to facilitate or cover costs of parent's health care?

c) Are decisions to migrate, or return migrate back to the parental home or district, made with parental health in mind?

5) Future research, national development and policy:

a) What are the implications of this project for the development of improved surveys for future more extensive studies on migration?

b) Which results from the study are best able to inform policy in Cambodia and in what way?

c) What policy recommendations can be made to policy makers based on results of the study?

## **Research Methods**

The Cambodia Migration Impact Study consists of a non-probability sample of two-hundred and sixty five individuals who have living children. Cambodia has twenty-four provinces and this study takes place within Battambang province which lies in the northwest region of the country. Battambang is bordered to the west by Thailand and other Cambodian provinces. It is a province known to provide many laborers to Thailand and other provinces, especially since the late 1990s.

Cambodian provinces are administratively divided into districts which are in turn separated into communes. Battambang has thirteen districts and the study took place in two communes within two of these districts. The first study commune was Treng, one of four within the district of Ratanak Mondol. This commune lies on the western side of the province and nears but does not border Thailand. Highway 67, a main road that connects the provincial capital of Battambang and the provincial capital of Pailin province, runs through the commune. At the time of the 2008 Census Treng had a population of 12,410 living in 2,534 households. The second study commune was Talos, one of eleven within the district of Mong Ruessey. This commune is situated on the eastern side of the province and is near highway number 5, a main highway that runs north to south across the province and connects the provincial capital of

Battambang to the national capital of Phnom Penh. Treng is also not far from the province of Pursat. At the time of the 2008 Census the commune consisted of 1,765 households and had a population of 8,509.

Communes are further divided into villages; the unit within which the sample was selected. Villages were selected purposively based on a combination of accessibility during the rainy season, when the interviewing took place, the ease of which a sampling frame could be accessed, and for some geographic spacing between villages. The sampling frames came in the form of household registers kept in the commune police office. These registers contain the name, sex, date birth, and marital status of all people in all households within villages. The commune of Treng has eight villages, five of which were selected for study. Talos has nine villages, and again, five were selected for study. Two additional villages in Talos were used in the study pre-test.

The current study selected households that contained an individual born between 1940 and 1950 from the registers and sought to interview one person from each household that contained such an individual. The list of people born within this time period was verified by the village chiefs of their respective village and those who had moved away or died were eliminated from the list. Village chiefs also added new residents not on the list. During the verification process with the village chiefs, spot maps were made that identified the specific households in which the potential respondents lived. Interviewers then visited the villages and were dispersed to eligible households to conduct the interviews. In cases where there was more than one eligible respondent a random selection was made on whom to interview. Interviewing was completed within five days.

There were no refusals, meaning everyone that was contacted was interviewed. If a respondent was not available the interviewer attempted a contact on another day and at times appointments were made to return. However, some eligible respondents were not available at the time the interviewer visited, often because they were out working in their farm at the time. The response rate was 80 per cent.

[NOTE: Would be good to have a map here of the areas where research took place.]

## Research Findings

In this section research findings are discussed under eight major heading: living arrangements of parents and children, migration impacts on parents’ well-being, material support and monetary exchanges, basic characteristics of ever migrant children, exchange support between parents and ever migrant children, parents’ health and psychological well-being, social contact between parents and children, and caring for grandchildren.

### Living Arrangements of Parents and Children

The study defines migrants as children who have moved away from home out of the districts of their parents. Children who remained in the original districts of their parents after their parents had migrated to the study sites are not considered as migrants. While information was gathered on all migrant children, more detailed information was gathered on migrant children who had been away continuously or cumulatively for at least one year.

The findings of our study indicate that substantial migration does indeed characterize the elderly households surveyed. A total 68 per cent of the respondents reported having an ever migrant child and 64 per cent said that they had a current migrant child. In the more densely settled and built up Talos commune compared to the more dispersedly populated Treng commune significantly higher percentages of elderly respondents indicated that they had an ever migrant child (77 per cent versus 58 per cent) and a current migrant child (71 per cent versus 57 per cent) (Table 1).<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Parents with a current migrant child, an ever migrant child, a co-resident child, and a child living in the same village, by respondents’ commune of residence**

	Treng commune (Ratanak Mondul district)	Talos commune (Mong Ruessey district)	Total
Number of cases	131	134	265
Percent with a current migrant child	57.3	70.9*	64.2
Percent with an ever migrant child	58.0	76.9**	67.5
Percent with co-resident child	80.2	79.9	80.0
Percent with a child living in the same village	92.4	90.3	91.3
Average number of living children	4.7	4.9	4.8

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

In total the respondents in both communes had 1,268 living children. Of these 33 per cent had ever migrated and 28 per cent were current migrants. Consistent with the findings above, significantly higher percentages of the children of the Talos than the Treng respondents were ever migrants (38 per cent versus 27 per cent) and current migrants (33 per cent versus 24 percent). The percentage of current migrants away for less than one year was only slightly different in Treng (5.7 percent) than in Talos (5.1 percent). Of note, 68 per cent of all the respondents’ living children had never migrated and still remained within the districts of their parents (Table 2).

<sup>1</sup> Given that the sample is purposive statistical significance levels should be interpreted as largely suggestive.

## Migration Does Not Leave Parents Alone

Looking more closely at the data it becomes clear that while migration characterizes the elderly households surveyed, the older-age parents are not being left alone. While a high percentage of the elderly households reported having a migrant child, an even higher percentage stated that they had a child living at home. In total, 80 per cent of the elders had a co-resident child and 91 per cent had a child living in the same village. Elderly households from the two communes varied little in this regard (Table 1). Despite the high migration rates of their children, the elderly parents had not been left alone. This may be explained by the high fertility rate of this cohort of parents aged 60 to 70 years. On average, the respondents had 4.8 living children. This allowed some children to migrate while others remained behind in the homes or villages of their parents.

**Table 2. Children's migration status by respondents' commune of residence**

	Treng commune (Ratanak Mondul district)	Talos commune (Mong Ruessey district)	Total
Number of cases	617	651	1,268
Percent distribution of migration status <sup>(a)</sup>		***	
Never migrated <sup>(b)</sup>	72.9	62.4	67.5
Return migrant	3.6	5.1	4.3
Current migrant away for one year or more	17.8	27.5	22.8
Current migrant away for less than one year	5.7	5.1	5.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percent all current migrants</i>	23.5	32.6	28.2
<i>Percent ever migrant (current plus return migrants)</i>	27.1	37.6	32.5

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Migration refers to moving out of the district where the respondent lives.

(b) Includes 38 children who live outside the parents' district but did not migrate; instead the parents (i.e. the respondents) moved to the current district while the children remained behind.

Consistent with the finding that high migration rates had not left older age parents alone is the finding that not all able-bodied children had migrated. As mentioned above only one-third of the children of the sample households had ever migrated while two-thirds had remained within the districts of their parents. Moreover, a child's sex, age, and current marital status had no bearing on their migration status. Based on these characteristics roughly one-third of the children were still grouped as ever migrants while two-thirds were still grouped as never migrants (Table 3). So while able-bodied children had evidently migrated, even more able-bodied children had not.

**Table 3. Migration status of children by characteristics of children**

	Migration status of children		
	Percent never migrant child	Percent ever migrant child	Total
All cases = 1,268	67.5	32.5	100
Male cases = 610 <sup>(a)</sup>	66.4	33.6	100
Female cases = 628 <sup>(a)</sup>	67.4	32.6	100
Cases under age 30 = 560 <sup>(a)</sup>	66.1	33.9	100
Cases age 30 and older = 679 <sup>(a)</sup>	67.5	32.5	100
Cases currently married = 785 <sup>(b)</sup>	66.6	33.4	100
Cases not currently married = 443 <sup>(b)</sup>	68.4	31.6	100

(a) Excludes children under 15 years.

(b) Excludes children under 15, monks, and don't know.

### Living Arrangements by Characteristics of Respondents

Overall, there were no statistically significant differences between the elderly respondents based on sex, age and current marital status with respect to living arrangements with their children. Only slight differences are apparent between male and female respondents, between married and not currently married respondents, and between respondents aged 60-64 and those aged 65-70 (Table 4).

**Table 4. Living arrangements of respondents in relation to children by characteristics of respondents**

	Sex		Age		Current marital status <sup>(a)</sup>		Total
	Male	Female	60-64 Years	65-70 years	Not married	Married	
Number of Cases	106	159	143	122	105	160	265
Percent of respondents with any							
Co-resident child	82.1	78.6	80.4	79.5	78.1	81.3	80.0
Child living in same village <sup>(b)</sup>	95.3	88.7	90.2	92.6	87.6	93.8	91.3
Current migrant child	65.1	63.5	66.4	61.5	59.0	67.5	64.2
Ever migrant child	67.0	67.9	68.5	66.4	62.9	70.6	67.5

There are no statistically significant differences in this table.

(a) Married includes those who are currently married but not living with spouse. Not married is defined as those who are separated or divorced, widowed, or single with an adopted child/children.

(b) Includes co-resident children.

### Living Arrangements by Characteristics of Children

Unlike the respondents living arrangements with respect to their children, there were significant differences among the respondents' children with regard to living arrangements with their parents based on their sex, age and marital status. Significantly higher percentages of not married children and those aged less than 30 both co-resided and lived in the same



village as their parents than did percentages of married children and those aged 30 or older. Moreover, significantly higher percentages of female than male children also lived in the same village as their parents. These differences reflect the life stages of the children with younger and not married children more likely to live with or nearby their parents. By contrast, there were no significant differences among the respondents' children based on sex, age and marital status with regard to their being current or ever migrants (Table 5).

**Table 5. Living arrangements of children in relation to parents by characteristics of the children**

	Sex		Age		Current marital status <sup>(a)</sup>		Total
	Male	Female	Under 30	30 or older	Not Married	Married	
Number of Cases	627	640	589	679	404	785	1268
Percent of children who							
Co-reside with parent	29.7	33.8	49.2	16.5***	64.6	11.2***	31.7
Live in same village of parent <sup>(b)</sup>	56.0	62.2*	63.5	55.2**	69.8	52.4***	59.1
Are current migrants	28.7	27.5	27.7	28.6	27.5	28.7	28.2
Are ever migrants	32.9	32.0	32.4	32.5	31.6	33.4	32.5

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Excludes 29 cases below 15 years old, 6 cases who are monks, and 5 cases indicated as don't know.

(b) Includes co-resident children.

### Household Composition of Respondents

The study examined the household composition of the respondents by their sex and by the migration status of their children. While 93 percent of the male respondents lived with a spouse in the household only 34 per cent of the female respondents did so. By contrast, while 53 per cent of the female respondents lived with children but no spouse in the household, only 5 per cent of the males fell into this category. This underscores the higher percentage of females than males who were not currently married and who could not rely on a spouse for material and psychological support. While only a small percentage of the respondents lived alone the frequency was higher for females than for males (Table 6).

If older-age parents with migrant children were typically left alone we would expect large percentages of them to live without a child in the household. This was not the case. More than three-fourths of the respondents with a current migrant child also lived with a child. Interestingly, respondents with a current migrant child were less likely to live alone than respondents with no current migrant child, although the former were more likely than the latter to live only with a spouse. Only slight differences are evident, however, between those with and without a current migrant child among those who live with only a spouse and grandchildren or only with grandchildren (Table 6).

**Table 6. Household composition of elderly respondents by sex and migration status of children**

	Sex		Migration Status		Total
	Male	Female	Has current migrant Child	Has no current migrant child	
Number of Cases	106	159	170	95	265
Percent of respondents who live					
Alone	1.9	3.8	1.8	5.3	3.0
With spouse only	8.5	4.4	7.6	3.2	6.0
With spouse and children	34.0	10.7	19.4	21.1	20.0
With spouse, children, and others	43.4	15.1	27.1	25.3	26.4
<i>(With spouse, children, and grandchildren)<sup>(a)</sup></i>	<i>(16.0)</i>	<i>(6.9)</i>	<i>(11.2)</i>	<i>(9.5)</i>	<i>(10.6)</i>
With spouse, others, but no children	6.6	3.8	6.5	2.1	4.9
<i>(With spouse, grandchildren, but no children)<sup>(a)</sup></i>	<i>(4.7)</i>	<i>(3.1)</i>	<i>(4.7)</i>	<i>(2.1)</i>	<i>(3.8)</i>
With children but no spouse	0.9	11.3	5.9	9.5	7.2
With children, others but no spouse	3.8	41.5	24.1	30.5	26.4
<i>(With children, grandchildren but no spouse)<sup>(a)</sup></i>	<i>(1.9)</i>	<i>(13.2)</i>	<i>(9.4)</i>	<i>(7.4)</i>	<i>(8.7)</i>
With others only	0.9	9.4	7.6	3.2	6.0
<i>(With grandchildren only)<sup>(a)</sup></i>	<i>(0.0)</i>	<i>(6.3)</i>	<i>(5.3)</i>	<i>(1.1)</i>	<i>(3.8)</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) Household compositions in italics that specify living with grandchildren are a subset of those living with others and are therefore not added into the total.

## Migration Impacts on Parents' Well-Being

Migration of adult children from rural areas is often said to erode the well-being of elderly parents. The findings of our study do not support this contention. In general, the situation of elderly parents with or without migrant children was comparable. Indeed, their mean wealth scores, physical ability scores, family satisfaction scores, and psychological well-being scores were not significantly different. At the same time respondents with a current migrant child reported higher rates of landlessness (36 per cent) than respondents with no current migrant child (22 per cent). This is not surprising as households without land would be under greater pressure to have children work as migrants (Table 7).

With respect to the argument in CDRI's *Participatory Poverty Assessment of the Tonle Sap* (Murshid 2007) that the destitute are being left behind because they lack credit and skills to migrate, our findings offer some insight. If the destitute were unable to migrate due to the constraints of their poverty then we would expect that the wealth scores of the respondents without a current migrant child would be much lower than those with a current migrant child. This is not the case. The mean wealth score of the respondents with a current migrant child is 4.8 while that of the respondents without a current migrant child is only slightly lower at 4.6 (Table 7). This lends doubt to the assertion that the children from the poorest families do not migrate.

**Table 7. Selected indicators of respondents' well-being by migration status of children**

	Migration status		
	Has current migrant child	Has no current migrant child	Total
Number of cases	170	95	265
Mean wealth score <sup>(a)</sup>	4.8	4.6	4.8
Percent distribution of economic satisfaction			
Very satisfied	8.8	7.4	8.3
Somewhat satisfied	13.5	12.6	13.2
neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	42.9	28.4	37.7
Somewhat unsatisfied	19.4	26.3	21.9
Very unsatisfied	15.3	25.3	18.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Mean score<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>3.19</i>	<i>3.49*</i>	<i>3.30</i>
Percent distribution of land ownership			
None	35.9	22.1	30.9
1 ha or less	21.8	27.4	23.8
1.01 to 2 ha	17.1	23.2	19.2
More than 2 ha	25.3	27.4	26.0
Total	100.0	100.00	100.0
Percent distribution of self-assessed health			
Good	4.7	11.6	7.2
Fair	37.1	41.1	38.5
Poor	58.2	47.4	54.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean physical ability score <sup>(c)</sup>	4.5	4.6	4.5
Mean family satisfaction score <sup>(d)</sup>	7.3	7.5	7.4
Mean psychological well-being score <sup>(e)</sup>	11.1	11.4	11.2

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test and T-test

(a) Measured as a summed score of thirteen household items plus two housing characteristics.

(b) Measured by scoring responses from 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied.

(c) Physical ability score is based on respondent's perception on three measures. Highest physical ability score is 6 and lowest is 0.

(d) Family satisfaction score is based on respondent's perception of how family gets along and depends on each other and how children are doing with their lives. Highest family satisfaction score is 9 and lowest is 3.

(e) Psychological well-being score is based on respondent's perception on six measures. Highest psychological well-being score is 18 and lowest is 6.

Since the large majority of elderly parents have a co-resident child, the migration of their other children does not generally have an adverse effect on them. But does this also hold true for elders **where the** nearest child lives outside the household or even outside of the village? Our study addressed this question by examining the characteristics of the respondents by the location of their nearest child.

Respondents with a co-resident child have on average significantly higher wealth scores, economic satisfaction scores, family satisfaction scores, and psychological well-being scores than do respondents whose nearest child resides in the same village or outside the village. Moreover, the per cent distribution of land ownership among respondents with a co-resident child is significantly higher than that of respondents whose nearest child resides in the same village or outside the village (Table 8).

**Table 8. Selected indicators of respondents' well-being by location of nearest child**

	Location of nearest child			
	In household	In village	Outside village	Total
Number of cases	212	30	23	265
Wealth score <sup>(a)</sup> (mean)	5.14	3.30	3.26***	4.77
Percent distribution of economic satisfaction			**	
very satisfied	18.9	10.0	30.4	18.9
Somewhat satisfied	24.5	10.0	13.0	21.9
neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	38.7	43.3	21.7	37.7
Somewhat unsatisfied	13.2	16.7	8.7	13.2
very unsatisfied	4.7	20.0	26.1	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean score <sup>(b)</sup>	3.40	2.73	3.13**	3.30
Percent distribution of land ownership			***	
None	25.0	40.0	73.9	30.9
1 ha or less	24.1	33.3	8.7	23.8
1.01 to 2 ha	20.8	16.7	8.7	19.2
More than 2 ha	30.2	10.0	8.7	26.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percent distribution of self-assessed health				
Good	7.1	3.3	13.0	7.2
Fair	40.1	30.0	34.8	38.5
Poor	52.8	66.7	52.2	54.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Physical ability score <sup>(c)</sup> (mean)	4.52	4.73	4.61	4.55
Family satisfaction score <sup>(d)</sup> (mean)	7.55	6.61	7.05***	7.41
Psychological well-being score <sup>(e)</sup> (mean)	11.41	10.10	10.77**	11.21

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test and ANOVA Test

(a) Measured as a summed score of thirteen household items plus two housing characteristics.

(b) Measured by scoring responses from 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied.

(c) Physical ability score is based on respondent's perception on three measures. Highest physical ability score is 6 and lowest is 0.

(d) Family satisfaction score is based on respondent's perception of how family gets along and depends on each other and how children are doing with their lives. Highest family satisfaction score is 9 and lowest is 3.

(e) Psychological well-being score is based on respondent's perception on six measures. Highest psychological well-being score is 18 and lowest is 6.

The percent of respondents with all children outside the village (and who thus may be considered to have been left alone) is less than 10 per cent. Still many are landless and poor. Compared to respondents with a co-resident child their incidence of landlessness is much higher (74 per cent versus 25 per cent) and their average wealth score is much lower (3.26 versus 5.14) (Table 8). Of note, 18 of the 23 respondents that comprise this group are females and 13 of these females are not currently married. This finding seen in light of our earlier discussion about the poorest leads to an interesting observation: While the destitute are not being left behind, the left behind are largely destitute.

### Economic Satisfaction

The mean economic satisfaction score of respondents with no current migrant child was significantly higher than that of respondents with a current migrant child (Table 7). At the same time the mean economic satisfaction score of respondents with a co-resident child was significantly higher than those of respondents whose nearest child lived in the same village or outside the village (Table 8).

Of interest to note, respondents with all children outside the village had a higher mean economic satisfaction score, a higher mean family satisfaction score, and a higher mean psychological well-being score than respondents whose nearest child lived outside the household but in the same village. Notwithstanding their average low wealth score and collective high rate of landlessness, the respondents with all children living outside of the village (again who may be considered left alone) were not necessarily unsatisfied with their economic or family situations and not all suffered adverse psychological well-being (Table 8). Meanwhile, the small sample sizes of respondents whose nearest child lived outside the household in the village or outside the village lead us to interpret these findings with some caution.

There were no significant differences in the mean economic satisfaction scores of the respondents with respect to sex, age, marital status, and commune of residence. Mean economic satisfaction scores were only slightly higher among male than female respondents, those aged 65-70 than those aged 60-64, the married than the not currently married, and those from Talos commune than from Treng commune (Table 9).

**Table 9. Social class indicators by characteristics of respondents**

	Sex		Age		Current marital status		Commune		Total
	Males	Females	60 to 64	65 to 70	Not married	Married <sup>(a)</sup>	Treng	Talos	
Number of cases	106	159	143	122	105	160	131	134	265
Mean wealth score <sup>(b)</sup>	5.51	4.28***	4.97	4.54	3.88	5.36***	4.53	5.01	4.77
% Satisfied with economic situation								*	
very satisfied	17.9	19.5	16.1	22.1	18.1	19.4	22.9	14.9	18.9
somewhat satisfied	24.5	20.1	19.6	24.6	25.7	19.4	16.0	27.6	21.9
neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	38.7	37.1	44.8	29.5	32.4	41.3	35.9	39.6	37.7
somewhat unsatisfied	14.2	12.6	12.6	13.9	12.4	13.8	13.7	12.7	13.2
very unsatisfied	4.7	10.7	7.0	9.8	11.4	6.3	11.5	5.2	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean score <sup>(c)</sup>	3.37	3.25	3.25	3.35	3.27	3.32	3.25	3.34	3.30
% With education	89.6	47.2***	72.0	54.9**	45.7	76.3***	61.1	67.2	64.2
Land owned		***				***			
None	21.7	37.1	28.7	33.6	45.7	21.3	31.3	30.6	30.9
1 hectare or less	17.0	28.3	22.4	25.4	32.4	18.1	21.4	26.1	23.8
1.01 to 2 hectares	24.5	15.7	18.9	19.7	14.3	22.5	17.6	20.9	19.2
More than 2 hectares	36.8	18.9	30.1	21.3	7.6	38.1	29.8	22.4	26.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Married is included who currently married but not living with spouse; Not married is defined who separated or divorced, widowed, single with adopted child/children.

(b) Measured as a summed score of thirteen household items plus two housing characteristics.

(c) Measured by scoring responses from 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied.

## Education

The percentage of male respondents with education was significantly higher than that of the female respondents. Traditionally boys in Cambodia, especially during the years when the respondents' were of school age, were given more opportunities to attend school while girls were kept at home to help their mothers with domestic chores and taking care of younger siblings. Similarly, the percentages of married respondents and those aged 60 to 64 with education were significantly higher than those who were not currently married and those aged 65 to 70. The lower incidence of education among those not married is likely attributable to

the fact that 94 per cent were female. No significant difference was found among those who had attended school based on the respondents' commune of residence (Table 9).

### **Wealth Scores**

As noted above the mean wealth score of respondents with a current migrant child and that of respondents with no current migrant child were not significantly different (Table 7). Also noted above the mean wealth score of respondents with a co-resident child was significantly higher than those of respondents whose nearest child lived in the same village or outside the village (Table 8).

Mean wealth scores are examined here by the respondents' sex, age, marital status, and commune of residence. Mean wealth scores of male respondents and married respondents were significantly higher than those of female respondents and those not currently married. The male respondents were much more likely to be married than the female respondents (94 per cent versus 38 per cent) and therefore more able to rely on a spouse to contribute to activities generating income. No significant differences obtained between the mean wealth scores of the respondents based on age or commune of residence (Table 9).

### **Land Ownership**

The per cent distribution of land ownership between respondents with a current migrant child and those with no current migrant child was not significantly different (Table 7). By contrast, the per cent distribution of land ownership among respondents with a co-resident child was significantly higher than those of respondents whose nearest child lived in the same village or outside the village (Table 8).

Land ownership distribution is examined here by the respondents' sex, age, marital status, and commune of residence. The percentages of land ownership distribution among male respondents were significantly higher than those of female respondents. The rate of landlessness was proportionally higher among females than males (38 per cent versus 22 per cent), while the rate of owning more than one hectare of land was proportionally higher among males than females (61 per cent versus 35 per cent). Meanwhile, the percentages of land ownership distribution among married respondents were significantly higher than those not currently married. Again the lower incidence of land ownership distribution among those not currently married may be explained by the high incidence of females among them. No significant differences obtained between the percentages of land ownership distribution of the respondents based on age or commune of residence (Table 9).

### **Material Support and Monetary Exchanges**

Migration of adult children from rural areas has been said to leave elderly parents behind to work on their farms with no one to help (Murshid 2007). This observation maintains that children who continue to live with their parents make greater contributions to them. Our study addresses this issue by correlating children's contributions to parents with respect to regular help with business or farm work and to monetary contributions. The findings show that while children who live with or near their parents provide more regular help with business or farm work, children who live further away contribute more money.

## Complementary Aspects of Children's Contributions to Parents

A total 71 per cent of the children who co-resided with their parents, and 22 per cent who lived outside the household but in the same village, helped their parents with business or farm work regularly. Despite the high rates of migration among their children, parents had not been left behind to run their businesses or work on their farms with no one to help. Children living outside of the village of their parents were less likely to provide this type of help on a regular basis (Table 10).

By comparison, children who lived further away from their parents were more likely to give them larger sums of money. Among children who gave money to their parents in the past year, 66 per cent of those who lived outside of the country, and 46 per cent of those who lived outside of the province inside Cambodia, contributed more than 100,000 riels (US\$ 25). In contrast, among the children who gave money to their parents in the past year, only 8 per cent of those who lived in the same village contributed this much (Table 10).<sup>2</sup>

These findings suggest that children make different and complementary types of contributions to their parents depending on their location of residence. Children who continue to live with their parents are available to make valuable contributions by providing regular help with business and farm work. Children working outside of the province within Cambodia and outside of the country, while obviously not available to provide regular help with business and farm work, do contribute important monetary support.

**Table 10. Child's contribution to parents by child's current location of residence**

	Child's location						Total
	In HH	In village	In district	In province	Out of province	Out of country	
<b>Number of cases</b>	374	346	127	92	199	94	1232
% who gave money in past year	79.9	86.7	87.4	70.7	69.8	72.3***	79.7
Amount of money given in past year among those who gave money <sup>(a)</sup>						***	
20,000 riels or less	-	35.4	19.8	14.5	6.3	4.9	22.3
20,000 – 100,000 riels	-	56.9	55.0	43.5	47.7	29.5	51.0
Over 100,000-500,000 riels	-	7.1	19.8	32.3	32.8	39.3	19.6
Over 500,000 riels	-	0.7	5.4	9.7	13.3	26.2	7.1
<b>Total</b>		100	100	100	100	100	100
% gave rice or foods monthly or more frequently in past year <sup>(a)</sup>	-	36.6	24.4	9.0	4.3	6.9***	21.4
% helping with any housework in past year	89.0	38.0	26.2	21.7	21.0	29.8***	47.7
% helping with housework regularly in past year	8.6	12.8	6.3	4.3	1.0	2.1***	7.5
% helping with business or farm work in past year	80.5	50.9	37.0	18.5	14.0	23.4***	47.9
% helping with business or farm work regularly in past year	71.1	22.0	15.7	7.6	8.0	13.8***	32.3

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Does not include co-resident children.

## Children's Contributions to Parents' House Construction

In addition to regular help with business or farm work and with monetary support, children also made contributions in labor and money to the construction of their parents' houses as

<sup>2</sup> Co-resident children were not asked about amounts of money contributed after pre-tests produced unreliable results.

well as gave their parents expensive items. Overall, 58 per cent of the respondents' children provided labor to build houses for their parents and 22 per cent contributed money to build houses. Almost three fourths of those who contributed money for the house construction co-resided with the parents at the time as did 60 percent of those who contributed labor (Table 11). Less than 10 per cent of the respondents' children gave their parents an expensive item such as jewelry, gold, household item, land, livestock, or major work equipment. Just over half of those who gave these items lived with their parents (Table 11).

**Table 11. Child's contribution to parent's house construction by the location of child at the time the contribution was made**

	Money to build house	Labor to build house	Expensive item <sup>(a)</sup>
Number of cases	1239	1239	1239
Percent who contributed	21.9	58.4	9.0
Percent distribution of residence at time of contribution among those who contributed <sup>(b)</sup>			
With parent	73.3	60.0	53.6
In same commune	10.5	33.5	16.4
In same district	1.5	1.9	0.0
Outside of district	13.9	4.6	27.3
Others	0.8	0.0	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Jewelry, gold, major household item, land, livestock, major work equipment

(b) If child was living in more than one location during time of contribution, table indicates nearest of these locations.

### Contributions of Migrant and Non-Migrant Children to Parents

Overall 80 per cent of the respondents' children gave them money in the past year. However, there were significant variations with respect to their migration status. The percentage of non-migrant children giving money to their parents in the past year was higher than that of the current migrant children, and particularly so with respect to the current migrants away for less than a year. But while proportionally more non-migrants than current migrants gave their parents money in the past year, the current migrants contributed larger sums. Among the children who gave money in the past, 50 per cent of the current migrants away for one year or more, and 43 per cent of the current migrants away for less than a year, contributed more than 100,000 riels to their parents compared with only 14 per cent of the non-migrant children (Table 12).

In addition to money, the respondents' children provided their parents with rice or other food and helped them in their work. Here too there were significant variations with regard to the children's migration status. In the past year non-migrants were more likely than current migrants to give their parents rice or foods monthly or more frequently, to help their parents regularly with housework, and to help their parents regularly with business or farm work. The differences were especially pronounced between the non-migrants and the current migrants away for one year or more. The differences were less acute between the non-migrants and the more recent migrants who may have been helping their parents in the past year before they left (Table 12). Due to their closer proximity the non-migrant children were clearly in a stronger position than the current migrant children to assist their elderly parents with regular food and labor contributions.



**Table 12. Child's contribution to parents by child's current migration status**

	Migrant Status				Total
	Non-migrants	Returned migrants	Current Migrants		
			One year or more	Less than one year	
Number of cases	826	55	284	67	1232
% who gave money in past year	83.1	81.8	73.3	64.2***	79.7
Amount of money given in past year among those who gave money <sup>(a)</sup>				***	
20,000 riels or less	30.7	16.7	7.0	16.7	22.3
20,000 – 100,000 riels	55.4	58.3	42.8	40.0	51.0
Over 100,000-500,000 riels	11.9	16.7	33.3	33.3	19.6
Over 500,000 riels	2.0	8.3	16.9	10.0	7.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Gave rice or foods monthly or more frequently in past year <sup>(a)</sup>	30.2	60.7	4.3	11.1***	21.4
% helping with any housework in past year	56.4	67.3	17.9	50.7***	47.7
% helping with housework regularly in past year	8.9	21.8	1.1	6.0***	7.5
% helping with business or farm work in past year	61.1	45.5	9.8	49.3***	47.9
% helping with business or farm work regularly in past year	41.6	36.4	2.5	40.3***	32.3

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Does not include co-resident children.

On their part, the returned migrant children made important contributions to their parents. Among the children who gave money to their parents in the past year, 25 per cent of the returned migrant children contributed more than 100,000 riels; a higher rate than that of the non-migrants but a lower rate than that of the current migrants. Of note, a much higher rate of returned migrants than that of either the non-migrants or current migrants gave rice or food monthly or more frequently to their parents in the past year. Similarly, a higher proportion of returned migrants helped their parents regularly with housework in the past year than that of either the non-migrants or current migrants (Table 12). These data may indicate that the returned migrants came back to help their elderly parents.

### Contributions to Parents by Selective Characteristics of Children

As noted above, 80 per cent of the respondents' children gave them money in the past year. As there were significant variations among these children with respect to their migration status, there were likewise significant differences among these children with respect to their sex, marital status, and age. Female and married children and those aged 30 or older were more likely to give money to their parents in the past year than male and not married children and those aged less than 30 (Table 13).<sup>3</sup> By comparison, among the children who gave money, those not currently married, those aged less than 30, and those whose parents resided in Talos were more likely to contribute more than 100,000 riels to their parents in the past year than the married children, those aged 30 or older, and those whose parents resided in Treng (Table 13).

In all, 21 per cent of the respondents' children gave rice or food monthly or more frequently to their parents in the past year with female and married children and those aged 30 or older more likely to do so than male and not married children and those aged less than 30. In all, 8

<sup>3</sup> In this section only characteristics for which differences are statistically significant are compared.

per cent of the respondents' children helped their parents with housework regularly in the past year. Female children and those aged less than 30 were more likely to help than male children and those aged 30 or older. Moreover, 32 per cent of the respondents' children helped their parents with business or farm work regularly in the past year. Those not married children and those aged less than 30 were more likely to help than the married children and those aged 30 or older (Table 13).

**Table 13. Children's contribution to parents by sex, marital status, age and parent's commune of residence**

	Sex		Current marital status		Age		Commune of parent		Total
	Males	Females	Not married	Married	Under 30	30 or older	Treng	Talos	
Number of cases	604	627	442	785	558	674	596	636	1232
% who gave money in past year	76.2	83.1**	72.6	84.1***	74.9	83.7***	78.0	81.3	79.7
Amount of money given in past year among those who gave money <sup>(a)</sup>				***		***		**	
20,000 riels or less	20.2	24.3	6.7	24.8	17.3	24.5	28.6	16.8	22.3
20,000 – 100,000 riels	53.9	48.4	41.1	52.5	42.1	54.9	48.1	53.6	51.0
Over 100,000-500,000 riels	20.2	19.0	33.3	17.4	27.2	16.2	16.9	21.9	19.6
Over 500,000 riels	5.6	8.3	18.9	5.3	13.4	4.4	6.5	7.7	7.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Gave rice or food monthly or more frequently in past year <sup>(a)</sup>	18.2	24.8*	12.6	23.4**	17.4	23.5*	23.2	19.8	21.4
% helping with any housework in past year	37.8	57.1***	68.8	36.0***	61.2	36.5***	48.9	46.5	47.7
% helping with housework regularly in past year	4.5	10.4***	6.5	8.0	9.1	6.1*	7.6	7.4	7.5
% helping with business or farm work in past year (n=1230)	50.5	45.5	65.9	38.1***	59.7	38.1***	48.5	47.4	47.9
% helping with business or farm work regularly in past year (n=1230)	33.6	31.1	54.9	19.7***	44.4	22.3***	31.7	32.8	32.3

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Does not include co-resident children.

### Parents' Contributions to Children

Parents, on their part, often make important contributions to their adult children. Parents from rural areas of Cambodia have been shown to provide rice and money to their daughters in the initial stages of securing work as garment workers in Phnom Penh (Analyzing Development Issues 2005). Overall respondents contributed assets or major financial help to 58 per cent of their children. Of note, significantly higher percentages of married than not married (68 per cent versus 41 per cent) and never migrated than ever migrated children (61 per cent versus 52 per cent) received such assistance from their parents (Table 14).

Among all the children who received assets or major financial help from their parent 53 per cent co-resided with their parents and 34 per cent lived in their parent's commune of residence at the time of receiving assistance. The per cent distribution of residence at the time of receiving help was significantly different both among married and not married children and among never migrated and ever migrated children. Not married children were more likely

than those married to receive assistance while living with their parents. By contrast, married children were more likely than those not married to receive assistance while living in the same commune but not the same household as their parents. Perhaps not surprisingly, non-migrant children were more likely than migrant children to receive assistance living with or in the same commune as their parents, while the migrants were more likely than the non-migrants to receive assistance while living outside of the district of their parents (Table 14).

**Table 14. Parents' contribution to child by child's sex, marital status, and migration status**

	Sex		Current marital status		Migration status		Total
	Male	Female	Not married	Married	Never migrated	Ever migrated	
<b>Number of cases</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>1239</b>
Percent of those whose parents ever gave them assets or major financial help	60.3	55.7	41.1	67.5***	61.1	51.6**	57.9
Percent distribution of residence at time of contribution among those who received help <sup>(a)</sup>				***		***	
With parent	51.1	54.2	78.5	43.7	53.6	50.2	52.6
In same commune	34.2	33.7	9.4	42.6	40.3	18.7	33.9
In same district	3.3	3.2	0.6	4.0	3.4	2.9	3.2
Outside of district	10.7	8.4	10.5	9.1	2.6 <sup>(b)</sup>	26.3	9.5
Others	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.2	1.9	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) If child was living in more than one location during time of contribution, table indicates nearest of these locations.

(b) These are children who live outside the parents' district but did not migrate; instead the parents moved to the current district while the children remained behind.

## Basic Characteristics of Migrant Children Away for at Least One Year

### Migrant Children Away for at Least One Year

In all, 344 of the respondents' children had migrated continuously or cumulatively for at least one year. For a large majority (88 per cent) their migration experience consisted of one or more continuous stays of at least one year. This was more likely the case for females than males.<sup>4</sup> The remainder of migrants had either had a series of stays under a year that cumulated to a total of at least a year (6 per cent) or had a mixture of continuous and cumulative stays totaling a year or more (6 per cent). A total 47 per cent of the migrants had been away for more than 5 years and 74 per cent had been away for more than 2 years. This indicates a relatively long history of migration among the respondents' children. Married children and those aged 30 or older were more likely to be migrants longer than those not married and those aged less than 30 (Table 15).

Most (70 per cent) of the migrant children lived with their parents before migrating. Those not married children and those aged less than 30 were more likely to have done so than married children and those age 30 years or older. A majority (58 per cent) of the migrant children helped support their parents' livelihood before moving away with daughters more likely than sons to have done so (Table 15).

<sup>4</sup> In this section only characteristics for which differences are statistically significant are compared.

The largest single group of children (57 per cent) migrated mainly for work. Other large groups of children migrated primarily for marriage (21 per cent) and for education (10 per cent). With respect to the main reasons why children migrated there were significant variations based on age and marital status but not on sex. Perhaps not unexpectedly, children who are not currently married and those aged 30 or less were more likely than married children and those 30 or older to have migrated principally for work, while the reverse was true for those who migrated mainly for marriage (Table 15). Most (63 per cent) migrant children moved from the rural communes of their parents to urban areas.

**Table 15. Selected aspects of migration by sex, age and current marital status of migrant children away for at least one year<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Sex		Age		Current marital status		Total
	Male	Female	Under 30	30 and older	Not married	Married	
Number of cases	174	169	145	199	105	230	344
Type of migration		*					
One or more continuous stays of at least one year	84.4	91.1	85.8	89.3	87.4	88.0	87.8
Cumulative stays of less than a year totaling at least one year	6.0	5.9	8.5	4.1	7.8	5.3	5.9
Both of the above	9.6	3.0	5.7	6.6	4.9	6.7	6.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of years as migrant				***		***	
1-2 yrs	23.6	29.6	41.4	15.6	37.1	22.6	26.5
3-5 yrs	25.3	27.2	29.0	24.1	29.5	23.5	26.2
6-10 yrs	24.7	18.3	22.1	21.6	20.0	22.2	21.8
11 and over	26.4	24.9	7.6	38.7	13.3	31.7	25.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
% who lived with parents before migrating	69.4	70.3	81.7	60.8***	82.5	64.0***	69.6
% who helped support parents' livelihood before moving away	52.3	63.9*	64.1	53.8	64.8	55.7	58.1
Main reason for moving				***		***	
Work	55.2	59.2	62.8	52.8	65.7	53.0	57.0
Marriage	17.2	24.3	14.5	25.6	6.7	28.3	20.9
Education	12.6	7.7	15.2	6.5	20.0	5.7	10.2
Others	14.9	8.9	7.6	15.1	7.6	13.0	11.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
% moving to urban area	61.3	64.4	70.6	57.2*	76.0	55.8***	63.0
% whose parents had any other children living in villages at the time of migration	91.4	94.1	89.0	95.5*	91.4	93.0	92.7

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Includes return migrants and current migrants away for at least one year.

### Returned Migrant Children

A minority (16 per cent) of the 344 migrant children who had been away for at least one year had subsequently returned and lived within their parents' districts at the time of the survey. Before they returned the main activities of these migrants were mostly working (80 per cent) and studying (11 per cent). The migrants who worked were engaged in numerous wage pursuits; primarily non-agriculture labor (27 per cent), agriculture labor (23 per cent), factory work (18 per cent), other contractual work (16 per cent), and construction work (14 per cent) (Table 16).

**Table 16. Returned migrant characteristics by sex, age and marital status<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Sex	Age	Current marital status	Total
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	Male	Female	Under 30	30 and older	Not married	Married	
Number of cases	26	29	28	27	18	37	55
Main activity at the place before returning							
Working	84.6	75.9	89.3	70.4	83.5	78.4	80.0
Studying	7.7	13.8	3.6	18.5	5.6	13.5	10.9
Taking care of family	-	6.9	3.6	3.7	5.6	2.7	3.6
Military	3.8	-	-	3.7	-	2.7	1.8
Others	3.8	3.4	3.6	3.7	5.6	2.7	3.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Among those working, % doing type of work before moving back <sup>(a)</sup>							
Farming	13.6	4.5	8.0	10.5	13.3	6.9	9.1
Agriculture labor	22.7	22.7	28.0	15.8	40.0	13.8	22.7
Non-agriculture labor	31.8	22.7	32.0	21.1	40.0	20.7	27.3
Construction	18.2	9.1	16.0	10.5	6.7	17.2	13.6
Factory	-	36.4	20.0	15.8	6.7	24.1	18.2
Other contractual work	13.6	18.2	12.0	21.1	13.3	17.2	15.9
Self-employed	9.1	4.5	4.0	10.5	-	10.3	6.8
Others	13.6	-	12.0	-	20.0	-	6.8
Number of years returned							
1-2 yrs	61.5	69.0	78.6	51.9	72.2	62.2	65.5
3-5 yrs	23.1	24.1	14.3	33.3	22.2	24.3	23.6
6-10 yrs	7.7	3.4	7.1	3.7	-	8.1	5.5
11 and over	7.7	3.4	-	11.1	5.6	5.4	5.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
% who returned because <sup>(a)</sup>							
Work was completed or lost employment	46.2	34.5	42.9	37.0	38.9	40.5	40.0
Take care of parents	11.5	13.8	10.7	14.8	16.7	10.8	12.7
Take care of children	-	10.3	3.6	7.4	-	8.1	5.5
To get married	7.7	10.3	14.3	3.7	-	13.5	9.1
Sickness	7.7	3.4	7.1	3.7	5.6	5.4	5.5
Help with family's farm or business	-	3.4	-	3.7	-	2.7	1.8
Others	26.9	31.0	25.0	33.3	38.9	24.3	29.1
% whose parents had children 15 or older living with or nearby before moving back	88.5	86.2	85.7	88.9	83.3	89.2	87.3
% who are currently contributing to the support of the parents' livelihood	65.4	65.5	75.0	55.6	77.8	59.5	65.5

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) May include multiple responses and significance not tested for this outcome.

Nearly two-thirds of returned migrants had come back only in the last two years, and fully 89 per cent had returned within the last five years. The return of migrant children to the districts of their parents was then a relatively recent development. This may reflect a pattern of successive migratory moves interspersed with temporary returns to the home village between moves. Thus some of the returned migrants may well migrate out again. Reasons why migrant children returned to the districts of their parents had mainly to do with employment being completed or terminated (40 per cent). Smaller percentages cited taking care of parents (13 per cent) or getting married (9 per cent) as the main reason for returning (Table 16).

Before the returned migrants moved back, the parents of a large majority (87 per cent) of these migrants had children 15 or older living with or nearby them. Importantly, 66 per cent of the returned migrants were currently contributing to the support of their parents' livelihood (Table 16).

## Exchange Support between Parents and Migrant Children Away for at Least One Year

Exchanges of support and services between parents and migrant children can flow in either direction or be entirely absent. As we have seen migrant children living outside of the district of their parents contribute monetary support to their parents. At the same time parents often provide material support to migrant children especially in financing costs incurred during the early stages of the migration process.

### Parents' Contributions to Migrant Children Away for at Least One Year

Among the respondents' 344 children that migrated for at least one year, nearly half had received help from their parents to pay expenses to migrate. Those not married children and those aged less than 30 were more likely to receive such assistance than married children and those aged 30 or older.<sup>5</sup> Aside from monetary support parents provided rice or food on a regular basis to 17 per cent of their migrant children with those not married more likely to be recipients of such provisions than those not married (Table 17).

### Material Exchanges between Parents and Migrant Children Away for at Least One Year

In total 56 per cent of the respondents' migrant children away for at least one year provided their parents with regular financial support as migrants. Married children were more likely to provide their parents with regular financial support than those not married.<sup>6</sup> Of note, parents expected that 54 per cent of their migrant children would be better able to support them financially as a result of migrating. Proportionally parents were more likely to hold this expectation for children who were not married and those aged less than 30 than for those married and those aged 30 or older (Table 17). This may indicate that parents had been receiving less from the former types of children than the latter before the children migrated.

During the entire time that the migrant children were away, a higher proportion (42 percent) were said to have contributed more to their parent's material support (food, money, assets) than their parents (33 percent) contributed to theirs. This underscores a net positive flow in the direction of parents. Of note, the contribution of the female migrants to this net positive flow was significantly higher than that of the male migrants (Table 17).

In total 55 per cent of 256 migrant children who were away for one year or more contributed to the medical expenses of their parents who had such expenses. Children under 30 were more likely to do so than older children. Moreover, one-fourth of the migrant children had ever returned to help their parents when they were ill. This reveals the strong concern of the migrants for the well-being of their parents. Overall, parents were very or somewhat satisfied with three-fourths of their migrant children (Table 17).

**Table 17. Support exchanges between parents and ever migrant children<sup>(a)</sup> by child's sex, age and marital status**

	Sex		Age		Current marital status		Total
	Male	Female	Under 30	30 and older	Not married	Married	

<sup>5</sup> In this section only characteristics for which differences are statistically significant are compared.

<sup>6</sup> Again in this section only characteristics for which differences are statistically significant are compared.

Number of cases	174	169	145	199	105	230	344
% whose parents helped to pay expenses to migrate				**		***	
Paid all or most expenses	28.2	25.4	35.9	20.1	42.9	18.3	26.7
Paid some expenses	24.1	18.3	23.4	20.1	21.9	20.9	21.5
Only loaned money	-	0.6	0.7	-	1.0	-	0.3
% whose parents provided rice or food on a regular basis	14.9	20.1	20.7	15.1	26.7	13.5**	17.4
% who provided parents with regular financial support as migrants	51.1	60.9	61.4	52.3	54.3	58.3**	56.1
% whose parents expected that they would be better able to support them financially	51.7	55.6	61.4	48.2*	61.9	50.4*	53.8
Contribution of material support between migrant children and parents		*					
% who contributed more to their parents	33.9	50.3	47.6	38.2	41.0	43.9	42.2
% whose parents contributed more to them	36.2	29.6	33.1	32.7	41.0	29.1	32.8
% who contributed about equally	7.5	6.5	6.9	7.0	5.7	7.8	7.0
% who did not contribute to each other's support <sup>(b)</sup>	22.4	13.6	12.4	22.1	12.4	19.1	18.0
Contribution of migrant children to medical expenses of parents among those who had them				*			
% who gave a lot	15.9	23.7	27.0	13.8	22.9	17.8	19.5
% who gave some	21.7	27.1	24.3	24.1	26.5	23.7	24.2
% who gave a little	12.3	10.2	7.2	14.5	6.0	13.6	11.2
% who had ever returned to help parents when they were ill	24.1	25.4	28.3	22.1	28.6	23.9	24.7
% whose parents are very or somewhat satisfied with how they are doing	71.3	78.1	77.2	72.9	72.4	77.4	74.7

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Ever migrant children includes return migrants and current migrants away for at least one year.

(b) Includes two cases indicated as others.

## Parents' Health and Psychological Well-Being

The health and psychological well-being of elderly parents with or without a current migrant child is comparable. As noted above, there were no significant differences between their mean physical ability scores, family satisfaction scores, or psychological well-being scores (Table 7).

### Self-Assessed Health

The respondents were asked to assess their health as good, fair, or poor. There were no significant differences between the self-assessed health of the respondents with or without a current migrant child. In total only 7 per cent of the respondents considered their health as good while 54 per cent assessed their health as poor (Table 7).

Moreover, the self-assessed health of respondents by location of their nearest child likewise reveals no significant differences. However, rather intriguingly, a higher percentage of respondents whose nearest child lived outside the village assessed their health as good, and a lower or equal percentage of this group assessed their health as poor than did either the respondents with a co-resident child or respondents with their nearest child in the same village (Table 8). The perceived relatively better health of the respondents with their nearest child outside of the village may actually have enabled their children to migrate. Again the small

sample size of the respondents with their nearest child outside the village leads us to interpret the findings with some restraint.

### Parents' Physical and Psychological Health

Based on the lowest score of either respondent or spouse, the respondents with no current or returned migrant child assessed their or their spouses' current health more favorably in comparison with respondents with a current migrant child and with respondents with a returned migrant child. Of note, more than half of the respondents without a migrant child, and more than two-thirds of the respondents with either a current migrant child or a returned migrant child described their own or their spouses' health as poor or very poor (Table 18).

**Table 18. Physical and psychological health of respondent and spouse by migration status of child**

	Migration status of child		
	Has no current or returned migrant child	Has current migrant child <sup>(a)</sup>	Has returned migrant child <sup>(a)</sup>
Number of cases	86	170	41
Percent distribution of current health status <sup>(c)</sup>			
Good	8.1	3.0	2.4
Fair	38.4	28.0	26.8
Poor or very poor	53.5	69.0	70.7
Percent distribution of health status in past year <sup>(c)</sup>			
Improved	11.6	6.5	7.3
Stayed the same	15.1	30.0	26.8
Got worse	73.3	63.5	65.9
Percent with functional limitation <sup>(d)</sup>	74.4	74.6	73.2
Percent with a household limitation <sup>(e)</sup>	43.0	52.1	53.7
Percent with an activity of daily living limitation <sup>(f)</sup>	5.9	10.1	17.1
Mean family satisfaction score <sup>(g)</sup>	7.5	7.3	7.5
Mean psychological well-being score <sup>(h)</sup>	11.4	11.1	11.4

(a). Respondent may also have a returned migrant child.

(b). Respondent may also have a current migrant child.

(c). By lowest score of either respondent or spouse.

(d). Functional limitation means that either respondent or spouse have some difficulty or cannot walk 200 meters on their own or have some difficulty or cannot lift a 5 kilogram bag of rice.

(e). Household limitation means either respondent or spouse have some difficulty or cannot do the work that needs to be done to maintain the house like cleaning, cooking or repairs.

(f). A limitation with an activity of daily living means that either respondent or spouse needs help caring for themselves, like bathing and getting dressed.

(g). Family satisfaction score is based on respondent's perception of how family gets along and depends on each other and how children are doing with their lives. Highest family satisfaction score is 3 and lowest is 9.

(h). Psychological well-being score is based on respondent's perception on six measures. Highest psychological well-being score is 18 and lowest is 6.

Again based on the lowest score of either the respondent or spouse, a higher percentage of respondents without a migrant child reported that their or their spouses' health had improved in the past year compared with respondents either with a current migrant child or with a returned migrant child. At the same time, a higher percentage of respondents without a migrant child likewise reported that their or their spouses' health had gotten worse in the past year compared with the two other groups who had a migrant child (Table 18).

Generally, the physical and psychological health of the respondents and their spouses was comparable whether they had no migrant child, had a current migrant child, or had a returned migrant child. No significant differences were found among these three groups of respondents based on functional limitations, household limitations, activity of daily living (ADL) limitations, mean family satisfaction scores, and mean psychological scores (Table 18). Still



it is noteworthy that 17 per cent of the elders with a returned migrant child suffered serious functional limitations (i.e. either respondent or spouse needed help caring for themselves) compared with 10 per cent with a current migrant child and 6 per cent with no migrant child (Table 18). This finding may indicate that some of the returned migrant children came home to care for their parents when the latter were no longer able to care for themselves.

## Social Contact between Parents and Children

Social contact between parents and adult children is valued in Cambodia. The migration of children away from their parents reduces opportunities for sustained day-to-day interaction and thus threatens to undermine this value. While migration may contribute positively to the economic well-being of migrant families, it may also erode social relationships between parents and children. In the past long distances separating parents and children prohibited regular monthly visits and phone connections were not available. Now the advent and wide use of mobile phones greatly facilitates the ability of parents and migrant children to communicate over long distances separating them.

### Social Contact of Children with Parents

Our findings reveal that a majority of migrant children living outside the districts of their parents talked and/or had visits with their parents at least once a month. Overall 62 per cent of the migrant children living in Cambodia and 51 per cent of the migrant children living outside Cambodia had monthly contact with their parents. Understandably, both groups relied heavily on phone calls rather than visits to maintain this social contact. These levels of social interaction are somewhat lower than with those of children living outside the village but within the districts of their parents, i.e. children not considered to be migrants in this study. Among this group of non-migrant children 71 percent had visits with their parents at least once a month (Table 19).

Overall, female children living outside the village of their parents were more likely to talk and/or have visits at least monthly with the respondents than comparable male children. While female children were more likely to talk with the respondents at least monthly on the phone than the male children, the reverse was true with respect to having visits at least monthly with the respondents. Meanwhile married children living outside the village were somewhat more likely to talk and/or have visits at least monthly with the respondents than comparable not married children. Of note, while the percentages of married and not married children who talked on the phone at least monthly with the respondents were virtually the same, the percentage of married children who had visits at least monthly with the respondents was twice that of those not currently married (Table 19).

**Table 19. Social contact of children living outside village of respondent by child’s sex, marital status, and location**

	Sex		Current marital status		Location with respect to Respondent			Total
	Male	Female	Not married	Married	Within district outside of village	Outside district within Cambodia	Outside Cambodia	

Number of cases	276	242	134	374	128	295	96	519
Percent of children who had visits with parents at least once a month	29.0	26.0	15.7	32.1 ***	71.1	17.3	1.0 ***	27.6
Percent of children who talked with parents on the phone at least once a month <sup>(a)</sup>	53.5	62.0	58.8	57.9	n/a	59.7	51.0	57.5
Percent of children who had visits and/or talked with parents at least once a month <sup>(a)</sup>	60.9	64.5	61.2	63.6	71.1	62.4	51.0 **	62.4

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Data on phone communications was not gathered for children living outside of the village but within the districts of their parents.

### Social Contact of Parents with Children

The social interaction of parents with all of their migrant children was more intense than the interaction that individual migrant children had with their parents. This is the case simply because parents often had more than one migrant child with whom to interact. Overall 69 per cent of the respondents with a migrant child living in Cambodia, and 54 per cent of the respondents with a migrant child living outside of Cambodia, talked and/or had visits with them at least once a month. Again both sets of respondents relied heavily on phone calls rather than visits to maintain this social contact. By comparison, 80 per cent of the respondents with a non-migrant child living outside the village but in the same district had at least monthly visits with them (Table 20).

**Table 20. Social contact of respondents with children living outside of village by respondent's sex, marital status, and children's location**

	Sex		Current marital status		With children living <sup>(a)</sup>		
	Male	Female	Not married	Married	Within district outside of village	Outside district within Cambodia	Outside Cambodia
Number of cases	81	127	77	131	88	153	63
Percent of respondents who had visits with children at least once a month	42.0	48.8	37.7	51.1	79.5	24.2	1.6
Percent of respondents who talked with a child on the phone at least once a month <sup>(b)</sup>	63.0	54.3	50.6	61.8	n/a	66.7	54.0
Percent of respondents who had visits and/or talked with children at least once a month <sup>(b)</sup>	81.5	76.4	67.5	84.7 *	79.5	69.3	54.0

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Percent of responses is specific to type of child mentioned in heading. Statistical significance not tested.

(b) Data on phone communications was not gathered for children living outside of the village but within the districts of their parents.

Overall, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to talk and/or have visits with their children living outside of the village at least once a month. While male respondents were more likely than female respondents to talk on the phone at least monthly with these children, female respondents were more likely than male respondents to have visits at least monthly with them. Meanwhile married respondents were more likely than those not currently

married to both talk on the phone and have visits at least monthly with their children living outside the village (Table 20).

## Caring for Grandchildren

Overall 142 of the respondents had returned migrant or current migrant children away for at least one year who had their own children, i.e. grandchildren of the respondent. Only 5.6 per cent of these respondents had ever gone outside of the district to take care of these grandchildren for at least three months. These care takers were all female and a significantly higher proportion were not currently married than married (Table 21).

**Table 21. Respondent has ever gone outside of district to take care of grandchildren (children of migrants) for at least three months by respondent's sex, marital status, and commune of residence**

	Sex		Current marital status		Commune of parent		Total
	Male	Female	Not married	Married	Treng	Talos	
Number of cases <sup>(a)</sup>	56	86	54	88	52	90	142
Percent incidence of care giving to grandchildren (children of migrants)	0.0	9.3*	11.1	2.3*	5.8	5.6	5.6

Significance levels: \*=.05 level; \*\*=.01 level; \*\*\*=.001 level based on chi-square test

(a) Includes respondent who have returned migrant or current migrant children away for at least one year who have their own children.

Of the 142 respondents with grandchildren among their migrant children, 22 per cent had taken care of these grandchildren for at least six months when their migrant children were away. These caretakers were more likely to be female than male, not married than married, and from Treng commune than from Talos commune. Overall, the average number of grandchildren cared for by these respondents was 1.8, the average age of the grandchild when they started to live with the respondent was 5.7 years, and the average total time the grandchild lived with the respondent was 4.2 years (Table 22).

With regard to the costs incurred for raising these grandchildren during the period of care giving, in 61 per cent of the cases the grandparents paid most or all expenses, in 25 per cent the grandchild's parents paid most or all expenses, and in 13 per cent both parties shared expenses. In cases where the grandparents paid most or all costs the respondents were more likely to be male than female, and not currently married than married. In instances where the grandchild's parents paid most or all costs the respondents were more likely to be female than male, and married than not married (Table 22).

**Table 22. Respondent has ever taken care of grandchildren (children of migrants) for at least six months when migrant was away by respondent's sex, marital status, and commune of residence**

	Sex	Current marital status	Commune of parent	Total
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	Male	Female	Not married	Married	Treng	Talos	
Number of cases <sup>(a)</sup>	56	86	54	88	52	90	142
Percent who cared for grandchildren (children of migrants)	17.9	24.4	27.8	18.2	25.0	20.0	21.8
Mean number of grandchildren cared for	2.20	1.67	1.67	2.00	1.69	1.94	1.84
Mean age of grandchild when started to live with respondent	7.14	4.80	5.84	5.66	5.55	5.85	5.73
Mean total years grandchild lived with respondent	4.61	3.93	3.98	4.40	4.11	4.27	4.21
Percent distribution of those who paid expenses of raising grandchild during period of care giving							
Grandchild's parents paid most or all	23.8	25.7	12.0	35.5	31.8	20.6	25.0
Grandparents paid most or all	66.7	57.1	72.0	51.6	59.1	61.8	60.7
Both grandparents and grandchild's parents shared	9.5	14.3	16.0	9.7	9.1	14.7	12.5
Other	-	2.9	-	3.2	-	2.9	1.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) Includes respondent who have returned migrant and current migrant children away for at least one year who have their own children.

## Conclusions

Our study set out to address the overarching question: “How does migration of adult children affect the well being of rural older-age parents who remain behind and how does this migration impact intergenerational solidarity?” Our inquiry into this question focused on several specific areas: social impacts, intergenerational solidarity, material support and monetary exchanges, health and psychological well-being, and future research, national development and policy. We now present our conclusions under these categories.

### **Social Impacts**

While a high percentage of the elderly households reported having a migrant child, an even higher percentage stated that they had a child living at home. Despite the high migration rates of their children, the elderly parents had not been left alone. This may be explained in part by the high fertility rate of our respondents aged 60 to 70 years. On average, the respondents had 4.8 living children. This allowed some children to migrate while others remained behind in the homes or villages of their parents. More than three-fourths of the respondents with a current migrant child also lived with a child.

Consistent with the finding that high migration rates had not left older age parents alone is the finding that not all able-bodied children had migrated. Only one-third of the children of the sample households had ever migrated while two-thirds had remained within the districts of their parents. Moreover, a child’s sex, age, and marital status had no bearing on their migration status. So while able-bodied children had migrated, even more had not.

Social contact between parents and adult children is valued in Cambodia. The migration of children away from parents reduces opportunities for sustained day-to-day interaction and has the potential to undermine their social relationships. In the past long distances separating parents and children prohibited regular monthly visits and phone connections were not available. Now with the advent and wide use of mobile phones long distances separating parents and children no longer pose barriers to communication.

Our findings reveal that a majority of migrant children living outside the districts of their parents talked and/or had visits with their parents at least once a month. Overall 62 per cent of the migrant children living in Cambodia and 51 per cent of the migrant children living outside of Cambodia had monthly contact with their parents. Both groups relied heavily on phone calls rather than visits to maintain this social contact. These levels of social interaction are only modestly lower, albeit reliant on phone calls than actual visits, than with children living outside the village but within the districts of their parents, i.e. non-migrants in this study. Among this group of non-migrant children 71 percent had visits with their parents at least once a month.

### **Intergenerational Solidarity**

Observers have claimed that the migration of adult children from rural areas in Cambodia leaves elderly parents behind to work on their farms with no one to help. Our empirical evidence does not support this contention. While children who live with or near their parents provide more regular help with business or farm work, children who live further away contribute more money. A total of 71 per cent of the children who co-resided with their

parents, and 22 per cent who lived outside the household in the same village, helped their parents with business or farm work regularly. Children living outside of the village of their parents were less likely to provide this type of help on a regular basis.

By comparison, children who lived further away from their parents were more likely to give them larger sums of money. Among children who gave money to their parents in the past year, 66 per cent of those who lived outside of the country, and 46 per cent of those who lived outside of the province but inside Cambodia, contributed more than 100,000 riels (US\$ 25) compared to only 8 per cent of those contributing money who lived in the same village.

These findings suggest that children make different and complementary types of contributions to their parents depending on their location of residence. Children who continue to live with their parents are available to make valuable contributions by providing regular help with business and farm work. Children working outside of the province but in Cambodia and those outside of the country, while obviously not available to provide regular help with business and farm work, do contribute important monetary support.

A substantial minority (22 per cent) of respondents with grandchildren among their migrant children had taken care of these grandchildren for at least six months when their migrant children were away. Caretakers among the respondents were more likely to be female than male, and not married than married. Overall, the average number of grandchildren cared for by these respondents was 1.8, the average age of the grandchild when they started to live with the respondent was 5.7 years, and the average total time the grandchild lived with the respondent was 4.2 years.

### **Material Support and Monetary Exchanges**

Exchanges of support and services between parents and migrant children can flow in either direction or not at all. As noted above migrant children living outside of the districts of their parents contribute monetary support to their parents. More than half (56 per cent) of the respondents' migrant children provided their parents with regular financial support as migrants. Meanwhile, parents often provided material support to migrant children especially in financing costs incurred during the early stages of the migration process. Among the migrant children away for at least one year almost half (49 per cent) received help from their parents to pay for migration expenses.

During the entire time that the migrant children were away, more migrant children (42 percent) were said to have contributed more to their parent's material support (food, money, assets) than their parents (33 percent) were said to have contributed to theirs. This underscores an overall net positive flow in the direction of the parents. Of note, the contribution of the female migrants to this net positive flow was significantly higher than that of the male migrants.

Among the respondents' children who gave them money in the past year, there were significant variations with respect to their migration status. The percentage of non-migrant children giving money to their parents in the past year was higher than that of the current migrant children, and particularly so with respect to the current migrants away for less than a year. However, among those who gave money, the current migrants contributed larger sums. Among the children who gave money in the past, 50 per cent of the current migrants away for one year or more, and 43 per cent of the current migrants away for less than a year, contributed more than 100,000 riels to their parents during the previous year compared with only 14 per cent of the non-migrant children.

In addition to money, the respondents' children provided their parents with rice or other food and helped them in their work. Here too there were significant variations with regard to the children's migration status. In the past year non-migrants were more likely than current migrants to give their parents rice or foods monthly or more frequently, to help their parents regularly with housework, and to help their parents regularly with business or farm work. Due to their closer proximity the non-migrant children were clearly in a stronger position than the current migrant children to assist their elderly parents with regular food and labor contributions.

Children also made contributions in labor and money to the construction of their parents' houses. Overall, 58 per cent of the respondents' children contributed labor, while 22 per cent contributed money to build houses for their parents. Among those who contributed, co-resident children were much more likely to contribute money and labor than non-co-resident children.

Generally, respondents taking care of grandchildren when their migrant children were away paid most of the expenses. During the period of care giving, 61 per cent of the grandparents paid most or all expenses, 25 per cent of the grandchild's parents paid most or all expenses, and 13 per cent of both parties shared.

### **Health and Psychological Well-Being**

Migration of adult children from rural areas has been said to erode the well-being of elderly parents. The empirical evidence of our study does not support this contention. In general, the situation of elderly parents with or without migrant children was comparable. Indeed, their mean wealth scores, physical ability scores, family satisfaction scores, and psychological well-being scores were not significantly different.

Respondents were asked to assess their health as good, fair, or poor. There were no significant differences between the self-assessed health of the respondents with or without a current migrant child. Moreover, the self-assessed health of respondents by location of their nearest child likewise revealed no significant differences. However, based on the lowest score of either respondent or spouse, the respondents with no current or returned migrant child assessed their and their spouses' combined current health more favorably in comparison with respondents with a current migrant child and with respondents with a returned migrant child.

At the same time, no significant differences were found among respondents with or without a current or returned migrant child based on functional limitations, household limitations, activity of daily living limitations, mean family satisfaction scores, and mean psychological scores. Still it is noteworthy that 17 per cent of the elders with a returned migrant child suffered an activity of daily living limitation, which constrained the elders' ability to care for themselves (i.e. either respondent or spouse needed help caring for themselves) compared with 10 per cent of the elders with a current migrant child and 6 per cent of elders with no migrant child. This finding may indicate that returned migrant children came home to care for their parents when the latter were no longer able to care for themselves.

In total more than one-half (55 per cent) of the migrant children away for at least one year contributed to the medical expenses of parents who incurred them. Moreover, one-fourth of the migrant children had ever returned to help their parents when they were ill. This reveals the strong concern of the migrants for the well-being of their parents.

## **Future Research, National Development and Policy**

Given the economic conditions within the country, the Cambodian government has a limited budget for programs geared towards the family and support for older adults. It is imperative that programs supported by the government, as well as by non-governmental organizations, are able to obtain maximum impact. Given the above realities, the Cambodian situation may be complex while it also represents realities in other developing countries. Solid empirical research, like that undertaken in this study, is necessary in order to advise policy makers on the correct course of action for supporting older adults and the families in which they live.

Contrary to the view that the migration of adult children in Cambodia has negative social consequences on elderly parents, our research indicates generally positive impacts on the well-being of older age parents. The high average number of living children among the respondents allows them to benefit from complementary contributions from co-resident children, those living nearby and migrant children. Similarly, the migration of adult children does not have a negative impact on intergenerational solidarity. Mobile phones enable parents and migrant children to maintain social contact with each other. More than half of the migrant children provided their parents with regular financial support as migrants and more than two-fifths contributed to the medical expenses of parents who had them. This lends some support to the idea that 'modified extended family' relationships are emerging between older age parents and migrant children in Cambodia.

While our study reveals generally positive impacts of migration on older age parents there is nonetheless one area of particular concern. The percent of respondents with all children outside the village (and who thus may be considered to have been left behind) is less than 10 per cent. Still many are landless and poor. In comparison especially to respondents with a co-resident child their incidence of landlessness is much higher and their average wealth score is much lower. Of note, 18 of the 23 respondents that comprise this group are females and 13 of these females are not currently married. Government and NGO policies and programs developed to mitigate the adverse affects of migration would do well to target such people.

Despite the fact that our study shows intergenerational solidarity between parents and both migrant and non-migrant children it takes place within an overall context of poverty. The wealth of elders is not great and one can imagine that it would be less so without the help of children. Therefore, it is possible that children play a role in limiting the impact of rural poverty but poverty still exists. While opportunities for migration will help rural elders through the support of their migrating children, there is also some need to be cautious. Families with fewer children, and a future of declining family size could impact on the intergenerational exchanges that take place.



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