Independent child migrants: Some basic information and how to find out more

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Aims of talk

• Present some basic information about independent child migrants
• Make suggestions for finding out more
Sources of information on migrants in developing countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal migrants</th>
<th>International migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro</strong></td>
<td>Available and coverage acceptable (for some groups)?</td>
<td>Available, but coverage often unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censuses, national surveys, administrative data</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Micro</strong></td>
<td>Children starting to receive attention. Lots of advocacy.</td>
<td>(As for internal migrants)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small surveys, qualitative data, case studies</td>
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Internal migration:
Illustrative results from national censuses
Data from censuses

• Source: IPUMS International (www.ipums.org)

• Definitions
  – Independent = does not live with mother or father
  – Child = aged 10-17
  – Migrant = changed province/state within the past 5 years
## Some basic numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Independent child migrants (000)</th>
<th>Independent child migrants as percent all children</th>
<th>Girls as % independent child migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percent of children attending school, by migration status
Percent of children employed, by migration status

- Vietnam
- Ecuador
- South Africa

- Non-migrants
- All child migrants
- Indep child migrants
Percent of independent child migrants attending school, by gender
Percent of independent child migrants employed, by gender

![Graph showing the percent of independent child migrants employed by gender across different ages in Vietnam, Ecuador, and South Africa.](image-url)
International migration: Findings from small-scale studies in Thailand
Background information on migration to Thailand

- Approximately 2m irregular, low-skilled migrants from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar
- Income differential similar to US/Mexico
- Thai government wants labour migrants, not families - though policies vary
Sources of information on child migrants

- Census and national surveys have very poor coverage of international migrants
- Administrative statistics useful
- Growing number of small-scale studies by NGOs, academics, international agencies
  - Mainly look at special groups
  - Aim often to publicize abuses
  - But do obtain useful information under difficult conditions
How many?

- Approximately 200,000 migrant children in Thailand; proportion who are independent is unknown
- 10 percent of migrant population, versus about 1/3 of population of origin countries
- Approximately half of child migrants are girls
The migration process

- Children often travel long distances
- One study found that 93% of children were accompanied by relatives when traveling to Thailand
  - though most did not live with parents in Thailand
- Quality of networks varies by occupation (and hence gender) and village
- Quality of networks is single most important determinant of safety
Education

- In 2003 only 10% of migrant children enrolled in school
- According to 2005 government policy, all migrant children, including unregistered, can go to school
- Small-scale studies suggest barriers include
  - Cost of uniforms, books etc (like poor Thais)
  - Continued fear of apprehension (justified)
  - Language difficulties
- Special schools for migrants
  - Established by NGOs and migrants
  - Some government opposition
Work

- Children often work alongside adults, though tasks may differ - eg wrapping fruit rather than spraying
- Some children work 18 hour days; others complain of receiving insufficient work
- Stories of exploitation by employers - and of good treatment
- Children earn less than adults, partly reflecting experience
- Remittances, or even just reducing mouths to feed, can be important to children’s families
Conclusion
Some key points

• Internal migrants in selected countries
  – Around 1-2% of children aged 10-17 are independent child migrants
  – Lower school attendance, higher employment, than other children

• International migrants in Thailand
  – Networks vital
  – Poor access to education (though Thai govt making efforts)
  – Children’s work important to families
Implications

• Where to put research resources
  – Internal migration: Using existing data (with appropriate skepticism!) is cost-effective
  – International migration: new small-scale studies

• Priorities, targeting
  – If child migrants are really 1-2% of child population, what does this mean for priorities, targeting?

• Diversity of independent child migrants
  – In many countries, child migrants includes significant numbers of students and workers
  – Need to focus on sub-groups