

CHAPTER II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Thai female returnees from Japan with children are the target group in this study. The research site is in Chiang Rai province where is one of the migrants sending provinces in Thailand. In mid 1990s, the Mekong Study Center (MSC) based in Chiang Rai province was notified by Thai embassy in Japan that about nearly 300 Thai female migrants were sent back to Thailand to this area from Japan. The research about these returnees was conducted by IOM. Following this research, Self Empowerment Program of Migrant Women (SEPOM) which mainly dealt with female returnees from Japan and their children was established by researchers of project referred above.

2. 1. Profile of the research site

Chiang Rai province, the northernmost province of Thailand is about 785 kilometers north of Bangkok. Chiang Rai province covers an area of approximately 11,678 square meters with an average elevation of 580 meters above sea level, situated on the Kok River basin. The province, which is located within the renowned Golden Triangle area where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand converge, is also known as the gateway to Myanmar, Laos and Southern China. The province is subdivided in 16 district and two minor districts. These are further subdivided into 124 communes and 1510 villages.

SEPOM conducted the survey of seven districts and provided the information of four districts² to the researcher. The four districts are Mae Lao, Mae Chang, Wiang Chan and Mueang district. Interviewees in this study also came from Mae Sai district and Mae Suai district; however, since the information which was provided by SEPOM was limited, the number of migrants to overseas in these two districts is not clear.

² Information was from the News letter of SEPOM in 2004, 2005 and 2005.

- **Mae Lao district**

The area of Mae Lao district was separated from Mueang district and established a minor district on May 31st, 1993. It was upgraded to a full district on December 5th, 1996. Although Mae Lao is small district, it is located near Chiang Rai City so that people can easily access the administrative Institutions. There are 61 villages in Mae Lao district. The number of migrant workers who had been overseas is 631 people, and there are 85 female migrants who had migrated to Japan from this district. The main destination of female migrants is Japan and male migrants tend to work in Taiwan and Middle East countries.

- **Mae Chang district**

Mae Chang district is one of the largest districts in Chiang Rai Province. Main industry is agriculture such as rice cropping, upland field cropping and fruit cultivation. There are 136 villages in Mae Chang district, with a population of 132,684 people. The number of migrants who migrated to overseas is 1,379 people, and there are 206 female and 70 male migrants who had migrated to Japan. Of those who had migrated to Japan, 124 female migrants are still in Japan and 52 of them are returnees. The number of Thai-Japanese children who stayed in Japan is 80 children, and 27 children came back to Thailand. The main destination countries for migrant workers in this village are Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Middle East countries and Korea.

- **Wiang Chai district**

Wiang Chai district comprises 66 villages and has a population of 38,706 people, is a small size district which is located near Chiang Rai City. There is convenient transportation to the city, so many of them are engaged in commercial jobs or work in Chiang Rai City. In the village area, although the main agriculture is rice cropping, irrigation is not adequate, so many are double-crop farming. The rate of migrants to overseas is very high, up to 32 % of the population in some villages.

There are 1,351 migrants who worked abroad and the number of migrants who had worked in Japan is 148 female and 62 male. The number of female migrants who are still in Japan is 221 and those who returned are 114 people. There are 43 Thai-Japanese children in this district. The main destination countries are Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Korea and Brunei.

- **Mueang district**

Mueang district is the capital district of Chiang Rai province. There are 221 villages and has a population of 131,385 people. The area is larger than other districts. Chiang Rai City is located in this district and there is a large labor market which attracts provincial institutions, tourism, factories. The education level within 20 kilometers from the city is relatively high and there are not many migrants to overseas. Contrary to that, the number of migrants overseas increase in the villages further than 20 kilometers reaching 1,773 people. There are 387 female migrants who had worked in Japan and 221 women still stay in Japan. The number of female returnees is 114 people and there are 29 Thai Japanese children in Thailand, and 102 children are still in Japan. The main destination country for female migrant is to Japan and for male is Taiwan.

2. 2. Case study

Seven Thai female returnees with children were interviewed. These interviews were used as case studies.

2. 3. Data collection

Data were collected during June 2007 in Chiang Rai province. The researcher stayed in Chiang Rai province for three weeks. The study employs qualitative methods involving:

- Documentary research and economic conditions and related studies drawn from libraries and the documents provided by SEPOM, Japanese immigration bureau.
- In-depth interview with seven female returnees with their children
Key-informants interview with the director and two staffs of SEPOM, former Thai ambassador in Japan, and the school teachers in Chiang Rai province.
- Participant observation was conducted mainly in Chiang Rai province, in the villages where returnees lived. The researcher visited the home of interviewees, observing their life, family and community environment, and also stayed SEPOM office and participated in some activities such as Japanese language class for Thai-Japanese children.

2.4. Sampling criteria

There is a need to set the criteria of minimum period of absence away from the normal in order to define return migrants. The researcher determined more than two years as the minimum period because according to the International Travel Regulation, a period of one year is considered as migration. To see their reintegration process, the respondents were chosen based on their return and stay in Thailand more than five years. This is a purposive sampling. The conditions of women are: entered or stayed in Japan illegally, and returned to Thailand with their children who were born with their Japanese partners. Since these women had relationship with their Japanese partner, women who changed their illegal status from legal status were also included to see the difference.

2.5. Translation

As the researcher had only limited skill of Thai language, the translators was accompanied whole research period in Chiang Rai province. The researcher hired a

translator who was Japanese. She used to work in Chiang Mai province as a Thai-Japanese translator and the researcher and she was an old friend and co-worker. She clearly understood the aim of this study.

2. 6. Ethical consideration

The researcher explained the objectives of the study and obtained consent from the participants before starting the interview. In conducting in depth interview, the participants were explained the interview was for the academic purpose only. Data from SEPOM were used only with the security purpose, name of interviewees were omitted. The principle of confidentiality and anonymity was observed all through the period of study and report.

2. 7. Scope and limitation of the study

The study relies on a combination of primary and secondary sources, mainly primary sources. The primary sources are life story of Thai female returnees from Japan. To compile these life histories, the researcher used both narrative and biographical interviews. Both these methods allowed the women to express their opinions freely. The women offered new and unexpected perspectives on their situations as well. The seven cases studies on which this monograph is based are a very small sample. Not all Thai female returnees encountered the kinds of problems these seven cases faced and many Thai women do not seek out or use the services of assistance organization. In particular, while some women in the case studies were significantly deceived or exploited by agencies, some women are not deceived or exploited much, if at all. Therefore, readers should be cautious about generalizing from the case studies to the overall situation of them.