

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Migration, defined by International Organization for Migration, is “a process of moving, either across an international border, or within a state.” It includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants. (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2005) Migration is becoming an important global phenomenon in contemporary world. The growth of migration and population mobility, international trade and communication technologies are shaping global health (MacPherson et al., 2007).

World situation

There are now about 192 million people living outside their place of birth, which is about three percent of the world’s population. This means that roughly one of every thirty-five persons in the world is a migrant. Between 1965 and 1990, the number of international migrants increased by 45 million- an annual growth rate of about 2.1 percent. The current annual growth rate is about 2.9 percent. Currently, the UN’s official estimate remains at 175 million migrants globally (IOM, 2005).

Regional situation

The volume of international migration from and within the Asian Region increased rapidly during the 1990s and has continued to do so. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that between 1995 and 1999 about 2

million Asian workers left their country every year for contract employment. Approximately 1.2 million labor migrants were from South Asia, 1.3 million from South-East Asia and 100,000 from China (IOM, 2005).

During recent years, Thailand's gradual economic growth has been attracting a huge flow of migrants from its neighboring countries, especially those from Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Those people come to Thailand for seeking job opportunities and higher payment jobs due to less or lack of good payable jobs in their countries.

The flow of migration in the region, in general, however, is not only determined by the current economic gap among countries, but also by historical reasons (including changes in the borders or occupation), demand and supply of both unskilled and skilled workers in certain sectors, gender division of labor in respective countries, access to education and other social services, and political stability (Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, 2006).

Estimate number of migrants

The number of migrant population in Thailand cannot be known with any precision and can be calculated through rough estimation. According to data from Ministry of Labor, the total numbers of registered workers and dependents from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are 1,284,920 (IOM, 2005). Ministry of Labor also revealed that in 2004 alone, total number of 814,247 work permits had been issued to the migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Half of the work permits had been granted to Myanmar migrant workers within the country, including nearly 5,000 to those in Phangnga Province. (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006) All

and all, the number of registered migrants reflects only 2% of the total Thai population in 2004. (MacPherson et al., 2007) Up to two-thirds of the total Myanmar migrants are in the highly productive age group between 15 and 59 years. (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006)

Routes and reasons for migration

There are many informal routes used by Myanmar migrant workers entering Thailand. By using vehicles via border check-points, by crossing over mountains or rivers where check-points are not established and so on, just to mention some. A study conducted by Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) of 1,000 Myanmar migrant workers in 3 border towns found that over one-half of migrants entered Thailand holding legal documentation and then overstayed, becoming illegal workers. (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006)

A study, covered nearly 400 Myanmar migrants, was carried out between January and May 2003 by the World Vision Foundation of Thailand (WVFT) and the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) in Mae Sai (Chiang Mai), Mae Sot (Tak Province) and Ranong (Ranong Province) found that there are five main reasons for those migrants to migrate from Myanmar to Thailand. Those five main reasons are:

- (1) Low earnings in Myanmar
- (2) Unemployment in Myanmar
- (3) Family poverty
- (4) Traumatic experiences, such as forced labor, and
- (5) A lack of qualifications for employment. (Huguet & Punpuing, 2005)

Besides, the study also found that nearly half of the Myanmar migrants mainly involve in agriculture, fishing and fishery processing industries in the Southern Thailand, including Ranong and Phangnga (Huguet & Punping, 2005).

One of the factors, among many others, that migrants chose for working and staying is geographical location of the receiving province or country. The geographical distribution of migrants in Thailand is highly correlated with the underlying structure of the regional/provincial economy and with proximity to the border. Most Laotian workers, for an instance, are employed in Bangkok or in the Northeast, and Cambodians are in Eastern provinces. Myanmar migrant workers, however, are more concentrated in the Northern and Southern regions. This finding is also consistent with that from World Vision Foundation of Thailand and Asia Research Center for Migration (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006).

Geographical location of Phangnga Province

Phangnga Province, about 788 km from Bangkok, is located in southern part of Thailand adjacent to Ranong Province, Surat Thani Province, Krabi Province and Phuket Province and Adaman Sea. The province has the population of 238,573 and it is also one of the provinces in Thailand that Myanmar people migrate for such reasons as seeking better opportunity for job, finding higher salaries, among many others (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006).

Estimate number of Myanmar migrants in Phangnga Province

The estimation of registered Myanmar migrant workers in Phangnga Province is 22,284, among the total number of 610,106 Myanmar migrant labor force who registered for work permit in 2004 throughout the whole country, and the figure might

be double for non-registered ones. (IOM, 2005) Among the total number of Myanmar migrants in Phangnga Province, over 75% of them are working in Agriculture and Animal husbandry industries. There are also some others working as fishermen, construction workers and general labors. The majority of them are Tawai (Dawei) ethnic group and Mon and Yakai (Rakhine) constitutes a small proportion (IOM, 2007).

1.2 Health related quality of life and migrants

There are many studies done for the health related quality of life of migrant workers around the globe, whether migration of people within the country or migration of alien labor workers from one country to another.

In China, Li et al. (2006) studying about 4,208 rural-to-urban young migrants at the mean age of 23.49 years of both males and females illustrated that one-fourth of the respondents reported they had fair or poor health on their general health status by using SF 12 questionnaire. In the study, nine items, out of the total twelve items, were employed and the composite index was reverse-coded with a higher score indicating a better health related quality of life. The Cronbach alpha for the nine items was 0.66. These nine items were general health, two items of physical functioning, two items of role physical, two items of role emotional, bodily pain and social functioning.

1.3 Quality of life of migrants in Thailand

In general, health related quality of life of migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar in Thailand is poor and pitiful. They reside in the crowded place which is poorly ventilated and there is little access to hygienic facilities. Even worse, some places provide a chance for transmitting such communicable diseases as

Tuberculosis, dengue fever and the like. Some of the local employees even cheated those alien workers by confiscated their ID cards, provided lower minimum wages, among many others, than specified by the National Labor Laws of Thailand. Moreover, many migrants experienced delayed payment or even non-payment of their wages. Many of them have few breaks per week or no at all, or even they have breaks for some illnesses, their wages were deducted. There are many restrictions on traveling within the province and to other provinces. Personal security is one of the main concerns for migrant workers. (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006)

Before the notorious tsunami disaster in December 2004, Phangnga province of Thailand was less known by outside world. After the tsunami, however, that area has come into the light and more and more funding are pouring for the well-being of migrant workers there (Labor Migration in the GMS, 2006). However, there was no study related to the health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Phangnga after the traumatic Tsunami.

So, this study emphasized on assessing the health related quality of life Myanmar migrant workers in two of the districts of Phangnga province to explore their health related quality of life after the Tsunami.

1.4 Research questions:

1. What is health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand?
2. What are the relationships between socio-demographic characteristics and health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand?

3. What are the relationships between social relationship with people and health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand?
4. What are the relationships between sense of insecurity and health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand?
5. What are the relationships between workplace situation and health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand?

1.5 Research objectives

1.5.1 General Objective

To assess health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa District and Kuraburi District, Phangnga Province, Thailand.

1.5.2 Specific Objective

1. To assess the health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand.
2. To explore the relationships between each demographic information and the health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand.
3. To explore the relationships between social relationship with people and the quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and

Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand.

4. To explore the relationships between sense of security and the health related quality of life of the Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand.
5. To explore the relationships between workplace and the health related quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Takuapa and Kuraburi Districts, Phangnga Province, Thailand.

1.6 Conceptual framework

1.6.1 Independent Variables

The four main parts of independent variables consisted of

1. Socio-demographic characteristics
2. The interviewee's social relationship with people
3. The interviewee's sense of security in community
4. Workplace situation

Socio-demography: The socio-demography contained 1)Gender 2)Age 3)Ethnicity 4)Marital status 5)Current migrant's status in Thailand 6)Educational achievement 7)Length of staying in this community 8)Type of occupation 9)Monthly income 10)Working days per week 11)Working hours per day 12)Days-off in a week 13)Number of your family members in this community. 14)Number of your children in this community 15)Number of your dependents in this community 16)Thai language skills.

Social relationship: The interviewee's social relationship with people was asked about the person that the interviewee consulted when he/she felt sad or

depressed; how frequently did the interviewee talk to his/her close friend; what kind of activity was common among the interviewees when they had free time and, finally, did they think people in this community were friendly or not.

Sense of security: The interviewee's sense of security in the community was questioned about their opinion on their own safety from police arrestment when they were at home; their opinions on their own security in this community and, finally, the things that they thought most concern to them.

Workplace situation: Questions about workplace contain first and foremost, the opinion on the relationship between the interviewee and his/her employee or supervisor; and their job satisfaction.

1.6.2 Dependent Variables

Health related quality of life: Self-perceived health status questionnaire on SF12 was asked how they think their own health would be. The SF-12 questionnaire set comprises of 12 physical- and mental-related questions and it is the abbreviation of the SF 36 (Short Form 36 Health Survey). Its main application is in surveys and in outcome studies where space constrains prevents use of the SF 36. Two recall periods: acute (one week) and standard (four weeks) were used under different circumstances.

This study applied two-week recall period in order to get more sensitive recall period.

1.7 Operational definition

Gender refers to male and female.

Age refers to how old is interviewee during the time of interview.

Ethnicity refers to which ethnicity does the interviewee belongs to and it is diversified into Mon, Karen, Rakhine, Dawei, Myanmar and others...

Martial status refers to the current marital status of the interviewee. It was classified into married, single, widowed, divorced or separated.

Current migrant's status in Thailand refers to the interviewee that he/she holds a legal documentation for working or staying in Thailand or not. It was classified into registered and non-registered.

Educational achievement refers to the highest year of education that the interviewee had achieved. It was sub-divided into no education, primary education (grade 1-4), secondary education (grade 5-8) and higher education (grade 9 and up to diploma or university bachelor degree).

Length of staying in this community refers to for how long that the interviewee has been staying in this community. It was divided into less than 6 months, 6 months to 1 year, 1-2 years and more than 2 years.

Type of occupation refers to the present job that the interviewee relies on for his/her survival. It was further divided into dependent, breadwinner (construction site worker, rubber plantation worker, fisherman, rice mill worker, ice factory worker, restaurant worker) and other occupations.

Monthly income refers to the total amount of money that the interviewee can earn in a month. It was classified into less than 2,000 Baht, 2,001 - 4,000 Baht, 4,001-6,000 Baht, 6,001-8,000 Baht, and more than 8,000 Baht.

Working days per week refers to the number of days that the interviewee has to work in a week.

Working hours per day refers to the total number of working hours that the interviewee has to work in every single day.

Days-off in a week refers to the total number of non-working days in a week that the interviewee has.

Number of your family members in this community refers to the total number of people staying with the interviewee in this community at present during the time of interview. It was sub-divided into 1-2 members, 3-4 members and more than 4 members.

Number of your children in this community refers to the total number of children that the interviewee has in this community at present during the time of interview. It was sub-divided into no single one, 1-2 children, 3-4 children and more than 4 children and it is also sub-divided into among the total number of children that the interviewee has, how many boys and girls.

Number of your dependents in this community refers to the total numbers of dependent people in this community who has neither income nor job and totally relies on the interviewee. It was sub-classified into no single one, 1 dependent, 2 dependents and more than 2 dependents.

Thai language skill refers to can the interviewee basically communicate in Thai language or not? It was divided into cannot communicate at all, can communicate basically, can speak fluently but cannot read and write, and fluently in Thai.

Social relationship with people refers to the interaction between interviewee and the people in the community.

Sense of security refers to how the interviewee feels his/her own security while staying in the community.

Workplace situation refers to the relationship between interviewee and his/her employee or supervisor where he/she is currently working.

Health related quality of life refers to self-perceived general health status of Myanmar migrant workers by the time of interview.

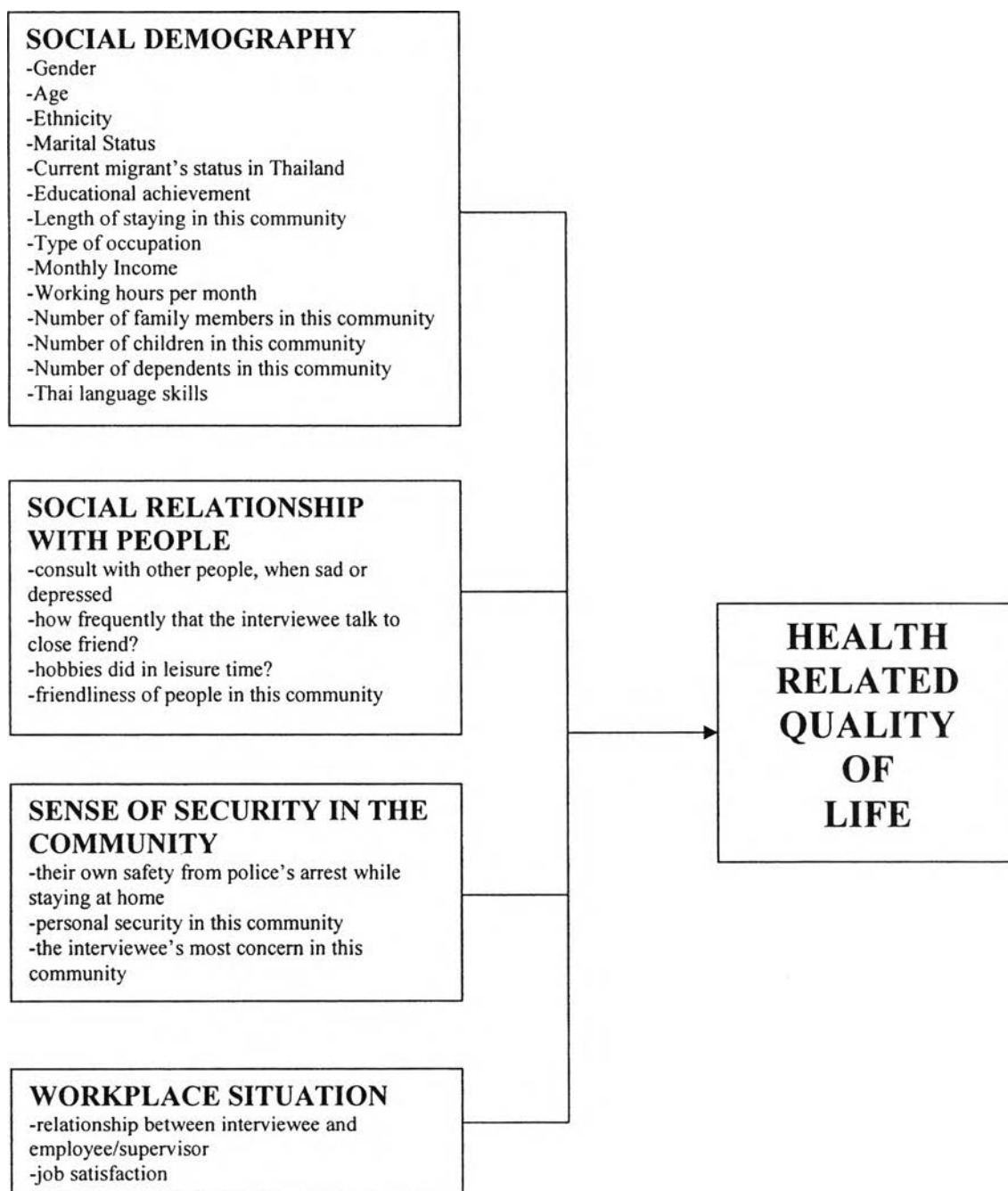
Independent variables**Dependent variables**

Figure 1: Conceptual framework