

*JSPS (Kyoto University)-NRCT (Thamassat University)
Core University Program Conference 2006
“Emerging Developments in East Asia FTA/EPAs”
October 27-28, 2006
Kanbaikan Hall
Doshisha University*

**Thailand’s Cross-border Trade in the
Greater Mekong Subregion:
Selected Social Issues**

By

Srawooth Paitoonpong, Ph. D.
Thailand Development Research Institute
e-mail: srawooth@tdri.or.th

Thailand's Cross-border Trade in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Selected Social Issues

Srawooth Paitoonpong *

This paper is basically based on the author's involvement with two collaborative research projects on cross border trade in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). The first one, in 2004, is on the Cross Border Economies of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The study is the fourth in a series undertaken by the Development Analysis Network (DAN), a research network of the above-mentioned four countries of the GMS. The second research is on "Reviewing the Poverty Impact of Regional Economic Integration in the Greater Mekong Subregion". The study is a collaborative effort of the same four countries in the GMS, initiated and coordinated by the Asian Development Bank under the Regional Technical Assistance (RETA) Project. Besides the findings from the two research project, extensive extant studies and secondary data have been utilized. This paper focuses on only few selected social issues for the purpose of sharing the knowledge and creating awareness of the importance of social problems emerging in the process of cross border trade.

The growing integration of economies and societies around the world, as manifested by free trade agreements and free trade areas, is a complex process that affects many aspects of our lives. In general, the social aspects of cross border trade are not usually reflected in trade figures in spite of their significant impact on the life of the people particularly in the border areas.

Cross border trade is broadly defined in this paper to include border trade and trade (exports and imports) of goods that go across borders, to and from neighboring countries, both formally and informally, and both locally or from/to other parts of Thailand. Border trade is officially defined as trade of goods among local habitants or enterprises of border areas of both countries. The amount of border trade is usually small and the goods traded are usually for daily consumption or natural products. (Ministry of Commerce 2006). Formal trade refers to exports and imports that go through customs procedure at formal border checkpoints. In this case, exporters and importers must be registered with relevant government agencies. Informal trade does not undergo regular customs procedures. It can be in the form of daily crossing the border carrying small quantity of goods or bringing goods across the border through informal or cultural checkpoints, or sneaking into the border or smuggling. (Usually cross border trade does not include goods that are flown through the sea and airports).

* *Dr. Srawooth is Senior Research Specialist, Human Resources and Social Development Program, TDRI.. The author wishes to thank Prof. Shigeyuki Abe for his support and valuable comments on the draft paper. He also wishes to thank the JSPS Core University Exchange Program for giving him the opportunity to present the paper at the Core University Program Conference 2006 "Emerging Development in East Asia FTA/EPAs", Kyoto, 27-28 October 2006.*

Thailand has a border about 1,810 km long with Lao PDR, extending from Chiang Rai Province to Ubon Ratchathani Province. The Thai-Lao border has 36 crossing points, 13 of which are permanent, 2 temporary and 21 informal. The border with Cambodia is about 800 km long extending from Ubon Ratchathani Province to Trat Province. The Thai-Cambodian border has one international check-point and four temporary ones. The volume of Thailand's cross border trade with Cambodia and Laos at various formal checkpoints is presented in Table 1. The figures are formal trades going through custom checkpoints only.

Table 1 Cross Border Trade ^{a/} between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos by Provinces, 2005

(million dollars US)			
Border provinces	Export	Import	Total trade
<i>Thailand - Cambodia</i>			
Trat	284.60	0.69	285.29
Chanthaburi	58.91	2.79	61.70
Sa Kaeo	378.17	25.36	403.54
Surin	14.36	6.26	20.62
Si Sa Ket	3.77	3.28	7.05
Sub Total	739.82	38.39	778.20
<i>Thailand - Laos</i>			
Nong Khai	496.32	35.03	531.35
Mukdahan	134.28	23.87	158.14
Ubon Ratchathani	66.10	30.22	96.32
Nakhon Phanom	60.48	15.89	76.37
Chiang Rai	37.81	12.22	50.03
Loei	22.12	21.89	44.01
Nan	1.30	2.36	3.66
Phayao	0.06	1.20	1.26
Uttaradit	1.61	0.94	2.55
Sub Total	820.06	143.63	963.69

Note: Exchange rate = 1 dollars US / 40 Baht

a/ This is *de facto* cross border trade figure. It is *de jure* border trade according to the official source.

In 2005, Thailand's total export and import from Cambodia were \$921.7 million and \$ 31.7 million; to Laos exports was \$ 774.5 million and import was \$ 228.1 million.

Source: Office of Commercial Affairs, Border Trade Unit, Bureau of Border Trade Promotion and Trade Initiatives, Department of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce

The border economy involves not only economic activities but also social ones, some, or many, of which are informal or even illegal. Indeed, along the GMS borders, considerable off-record or underground movements of goods and services take place as well as the movement of people. Contagious diseases are carried in connection with such movements, particularly the movement of people. Examples of non-trade border issues in GMS include migrant workers or the migration of workers, human trafficking, drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS, smuggling, illegal logging and trafficking, car stealing, border robbery, border ethnic minorities, and the Mekong River ecosystem.

This paper gives an illustration of three interrelated social issues, namely, migrant workers, human trafficking, and HIV/AIDS in the Mekong region.

MIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND

Cross border trade generally involves movements of goods and services and movements of people across the border. The movement of people across the border includes formal crossing through international gates, informal crossing through informal or cultural gates, and illegal crossing at various secret or unnoticed spots along the border. An example of people crossing the border on formal basis illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of People Crossing at Selected Formal Checkpoints

	Inbound	Outbound
Chiang Khong		
Passports	18,913	39,775
- Thais	2,210	3,425
- Foreigners	16,703	36,350
Border pass	37,563	37,265
- Thais	8,931	9,063
- Foreigners	28,632	28,202
Sa Kaeo (2003)		
All categories	3,794,562	3,796,326

Source: Development Analysis Network 2005. The Cross Border Economies of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam; TDRI, "Reviewing the Poverty Impact of Regional Economic Integration in the Greater Mekong Subregion".(forthcoming)

Informal or illegal crossing of people at the border are common. In the study areas in Mukdahan and Sa Kaeo, people from Laos and Cambodia cross the border regularly to find employment, for medical services, education or social or cultural functions. Some came in connection with smuggling and trafficking. (TDRI 2006, Participatory Assessment: Thailand). In Sa Kaeo, some Cambodians, during their hard time, even came to rob the Thai villagers¹ Some migrate to work at the village level and later move on into big cities or Bangkok.

As illegal immigration of workers is a part of cross border movements of people, one can say that it is related to cross border trade by definition. Nevertheless, it has been found that cross border trade creates opportunities for the movements of people across the border. For example, connections, corruption, trafficking or lack of efficient control at the border are main ingredients for illegal immigration. The opening of the border and the interactions of people at the border are also important factors affecting irregular migration.

Since the early 1990s Thailand has become an important country of destination for unskilled migrant workers from neighboring low-income countries. In fact, the rapid economic growth in Thailand over the last two decades has effectively transformed the country from a labor-exporting country (during the period 1970-1980) to a *de facto* labor-importing country by the early 1990s. Most of the migrant workers are from Myanmar, with relatively smaller numbers from Cambodia, China, Lao PDR and South Asian countries.

¹ An interview with official at the cultural gate in Baan Khaodin, Sa Kaeo.

It may be said that the lack of effective migration-law enforcement is a major cause of the increasing number of undocumented migrant workers in Thailand. Historically, the Thai Government in 1973 required migrants employed in Thailand to get a work permit. It also listed a number of occupations and professions that were prohibited to aliens. In 1979 foreign workers were forbidden to undertake manual work. From 1988 up to the present, there has been an influx of migrant workers, particularly from Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR.

In 1992 the first registration of undocumented migrant workers was undertaken. Since 1996 there has been a relaxation of the control on migrant workers, with the re-registration occurring in 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2005 (IOM 2004). The number of registered migrant workers increased from 99,974 persons in 1999 to 1,269,074 in 2004, of which 905,881 are from Myanmar, 181,579 from Cambodia and 181,614 from Lao PDR (Table 3).

It has been argued that one reason for employers to hire migrant workers is because Thai unskilled workers are “choosy,” preferring not to take “3D” (dangerous, difficult and dirty) jobs. Thus, migrant workers accept jobs that Thai nationals do not want, especially in fisheries, construction work and farming. Some female migrants are employed in the industrial and service sectors, working in factories, in the entertainment business, and as domestic workers. Yet, it may be noted that the real reason for this may be that most migrant workers get relatively lower wages than Thai workers (UNESCO 2005).

Migrant workers are employed in various jobs such as in agriculture and livestock, domestic work, construction, fishing or fisheries, rice mills and as stevedores. Many of them (30%) are in the “others” category (Table 4), which comprises services followed by domestic work, construction and fishing and fisheries (approximately 15% each).

Migrant workers can be found throughout the entire country, even in the Northeast where they comprise a major source of domestic labor, i.e., 15,891 migrant workers in 2004 (Table 5). The majority of migrant workers are living in the Central and Southern Regions, and Bangkok, 24, 20 and 19 percent respectively.

Box 1. Crossing the Thai-Lao border

Crossing the Thai- Lao border via the national gate in Wan Yai, Mukdahan, is different from crossing at the international gate in terms of eligibility, rules and regulations. The national gate opens daily from 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.. Only Wan Yai and Sai Buri (in Lao) villagers are eligible to cross the border via the gate. For Lao people who want to cross the border to Thailand, they need an identification card with a valid photo attached. After the identification is checked by an official, the official will give the tag with brief personal information, and then they have to pay a fee of five baht. In practice, the official will allow only the Lao people who regularly cross the border. While Thailand has clear rules and regulations related to crossing the border, Lao rules and regulations are less clear, narrowly informed, and subjected to personal judgment of officers. Thai people in Wan Yai know about the Lao rules and regulations from the local radio broadcasting and other villagers. The crossing fee from Thailand into Laos is 30 baht per person, which is six times higher than the fee collected at the Thai border.

Source: TDRI, 2006.

Figure 1. Illegal migrants from Cambodia arrested by local police and immigration officials in Sa Kaeo



Source: TDRI 2006

Table 3 Registered Migrant Workers by Country of Origin and Sex, 1998-2004

		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Myanmar	Males	59,968	58,701	257,354	196,520	134,812	497,372
	Females	29,350	32,023	193,981	152,744	112,979	408,509
	Total	89,318	90,724	451,335	349,264	247,791	905,881
Cambodia	Males	8,418	6,898	43,216	28,363	13,976	123,998
	Females	1,074	1,023	14,340	10,251	5,699	57,581
	Total	9,492	7,921	57,556	38,614	19,675	181,579
Lao PDR	Males	849	749	25,771	17,229	8,611	80,981
	Females	315	262	33,587	24,967	12,703	100,633
	Total	1,164	1,011	59,358	42,196	21,314	181,614
Total	Males	69,235	66,348	326,341	242,112	157,399	702,351
	Females	30,739	33,308	568,249	187,962	131,381	566,723
	Total	99,974	99,656	894,590	430,074	288,780	1,269,074

Source: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2005. Population of Thailand in 2005.

Table 4 Migrant Workers by Activity (as of May 31, 2005)

Activity	Migrant workers	Percentage
Agriculture and livestock	182,791	21.5
Maid	126,343	14.9
Construction	124,614	14.7
Related fishery	74,500	8.7
Marine and fresh water fishery	60,655	7.1
Rice mills, brick makers, ice mills	16,702	1.9
Stevedore	4,312	0.5
Mining and quarrying	1,568	0.1
Others	256,145	30.2
Total	847,630	100.0

Source: Office of the Administrative Commission on Irregular Migrant Workers, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour.

Table 5 Employers and Migrant Workers' Work Permit Granted under the Cabinet's Resolution on Migrant Workers (as of May 31, 2005)

Region / Province	Employer	Myanmar	Lao PDR	Cambodia	Total	Percentage
Whole Kingdom	204,818	632,454	105,134	110,042	847,630	100
Bangkok	64,332	105,134	40,177	17,709	163,657	19
Central Region ¹	38,555	156,874	24,815	23,840	205,529	24
Eastern Region ²	20,394	34,965	15,272	53,781	104,018	12
Western Region ³	11,107	46,685	3,850	2,105	52,640	6
Northern Region ⁴	30,431	129,904	3,110	944	133,958	16
Northeastern Region ⁵	9,038	2,832	1,063	1,464	15,891	2
Southern Region ⁶	30,961	155,423	–	10,199	171,937	20

Notes: ¹ Comprises Samut Sakhon, Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani, Nakhon Pathom, Nonthaburi, Samut Songkhram, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Saraburi, Lop Buri, Chai Nat, Ang Thong, Sing Buri, and Uthai Thani;

² Comprises Chon Buri, Trat, Rayong, Sa Kaeo, Chachoengsao, Chanthaburi, Prachin Buri, and Nakhon Nayok;

³ Comprises Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Suphan Buri, and Phetchaburi;

⁴ Comprises Tak, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Kamphaeng Phet, Nakhon Sawan, Lamphun, Lampang, Phitsanulok, Uttaradit, Phichit, Phetchabun, Phayao, Nan, Sukhothai, and Phrae;

⁵ Comprises Ubon Ratchathani, Kalasin, Nong Khai, Loei, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Ratchasima, Mukdahan, Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, Surin, Si Sa Ket, Sakon Nakhon,

Buri Ram, Amnat Charoen, Chaiyaphum, Roi Et, Yasothon, Maha Sarakham, and Nong Bua Lam Phu;

⁶ Comprises Ranong, Surat Thani, Phuket, Phangnga, Chumphon, Songkhla, Pattani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Trang, Krabi, Satun, Yala, Narathiwat, and Phatthalung.

Source: Office of the Administrative Commission on Irregular Migrant Workers, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour.

Migrant workers in Thailand pose a number of issues in the context of regional economic integration. These include:

- (1) Management of undocumented migrants
- (2) Security and crime
- (3) Contagious diseases
- (4) Human trafficking
- (5) Poor labor standard
- (6) Unemployment and low wage problems of Thai unskilled workers

To mitigate the problems of irregular migration and for mutual benefit, the Thai Government has signed a memorandum of understanding on employment cooperation with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar in 2002/2003.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

By and large, human trafficking is closely related to cross-border irregular migration. The illegality of much of this undocumented migration clearly makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation – to becoming victims of human trafficking. In the GMS it appears that, in the vast majority of cases, the actual movement aspects of the trafficking are generally “voluntary” in the sense that the person himself or herself has made the decision to travel for work, within the limited range of the choice available (Marshall 2001, 3).

Elsewhere, each year up to 350,000 illegal migrants from Mexico enter the United States, and as many as 800,000 migrants from other parts of the world enter the European Union. In 2005, 464 people died while crossing from Mexico into the United States, and each year around 2,000 people drown in the Mediterranean on their way from Africa to Europe (*The Economist*, 8 October, 2005, 18).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), at least 2.45 million trafficking victims are currently toiling in exploitative conditions, and that another 1.2 million are trafficked annually, both across

Box 2. Definition of human trafficking

Human trafficking has been defined as “the illicit and clandestine movement of persons across national borders, largely from developing countries and some countries with economies in transition, with the end goal of forcing women and girl children into sexually or economically oppressive situations for profit of recruiters, traffickers and crime syndicates, as well as other illegal activities related to trafficking, such as forced domestic labour, false marriages, clandestine employment and false adoption” (United Nations General Assembly 1994). The definition is incomplete. It does not include boys and men who are also victims of trafficking, and the listing of situations is not exhaustive. Trafficking arises in a variety of situations beyond the list given, including trafficking for begging and use of people as agents of crime. A key element behind trafficking is coercion. Nevertheless, as will be discussed later, it is possible that there are other situations where there is no coercion at the time of trafficking, but it occurs when the person arrives later in a circumstance tantamount to slavery, such as being forced to work in appalling labor conditions or other illegal activities
Source: MRLC et al. 1999, 33.

and within national borders. The US Department of State also gives an estimate that between 600,00 and 800,000 persons are trafficked across international borders each year – most for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (UNFPA 2006, 44).

In Thailand, there is a dearth of in-depth research on the extent of human trafficking and the problems confronting the victims. There are several issues regarding trafficking and exploitation. Migrants must pay brokers to help them enter the country. They are at risk of being cheated or being arrested on the way. They have no information or any commitment regarding their respective jobs. Some are coerced into forced labor or prostitution, or sexually assaulted. Many of them have a very poor working environment and living quarters (WVFT 2004, 1). Very recently, some migrant workers from Myanmar were forced to traffick drugs by swallowing condoms filled with drugs, after which they cross the border (*Thai Rath*, 31 December, 2005).

Box 3. Human traffickers arrested forcing migrant workers to traffic drugs in stomach

In Songkhla, Thailand, on December 29, 2005, the police arrested a Burmese man named Abi Rahman for trafficking drugs to Malaysia. At his house, the police found 10 Burmese men detained. Abi Rahman confessed that the 10 Burmese were smuggled into Thailand through Ranong Province and were in transit to be trafficked to Malaysia at the trafficking fee of 2,000-3,000 baht per head. The workers would be used to traffic drugs into Malaysia at a fee of 20,000 baht per shipment. To traffick the illicit drugs, Rahman forced the workers to starve and made them swallow a few condoms filled with drugs. Then the workers would be sent to Malaysia through the border fence. As soon as the workers arrived at the destination, the drug “bags” would be retrieved and the workers would be sent to work.
Thai Rath, 31 December, 2005.

Human trafficking may be classified into three types. The first and largest category of trafficking is migrant workers who are brought into the country to take jobs of a low standard. It is a combination of migration and labor exploitation—exploitation in a range of forms including debt bondage, low or no wages, excessive working hours, unsafe conditions, etc. Some migrant workers are charged a high fee for traveling into Thailand as well as the additional costs associated with job seeking. Some of them have been robbed along the way; women have been raped. At the destination, industries hiring a high proportion of irregular migrants include factories and fisheries as well as domestic labor.

The second but highest profile form of trafficking is prostitution or sex work. Although in some ways similar to the other forms of labor exploitation mentioned previously, it falls into a slightly different category as it often has an illegal or ambiguous status. The third category of trafficking is those forms of “labor” that address demand, which society generally finds unacceptable. This includes the trafficking of young children for begging, such as from Cambodia to Thailand. It also includes the abduction of young boys in China and the trafficking of Vietnamese and Burmese women into China to become brides for sale.

There is a dearth of data on number of trafficked persons because of the difficulty in assessing and distinguishing between (poor innocent) trafficking victims and economic migrants who are in the business on a voluntary basis. For the first category of trafficking victims, the migrant workers who are given poor jobs in sub-standard working conditions, the number of people at risk can be an indicator. For the third category, migrant child beggars, the number can be observed from those arrested by the

Thai authorities, some of whom are deported to Cambodia. The number of children beggars from Cambodia is estimated to be more than 10,000.

For the number involved in cross-border prostitution from neighboring countries, a rough estimate has been made: in 1996, at least 12,607 women out of 77,094 prostitutes in Thailand were migrants (Kritaya and Pornsuk 1997, 24). This number is said to be an extreme underestimation. While it is difficult to differentiate between Thai prostitutes and migrant prostitutes, it is even more difficult to say who are trafficking victims and who are not.

Although it is difficult to quantify the number of person involved or the extent of human trafficking in Thailand, two major studies provide more information about the activity. One is a study by Kritaya and Pornsuk (1997), entitled “The Route of Women Workers from the Neighboring Countries into the Sex Industry in Thailand.” Another is a study by the World Vision Foundation of Thailand in collaboration with the Asian Research Center for Migration (2004), led by Prof. Supang Chantavanich. The former study describes characteristics of the trafficked victims and their problems as well as the process of trafficking of women into the sex industry in Thailand. The study is based on a survey of 128 female migrant workers (33 employed in the sex industry and 95 in other occupations) and 30 Thai women working in the sex industry. An in-depth interview was also conducted of 62 female migrant workers in the sex industry, 11 Thai female sex workers, 6 operators of brothels, 11 Public Health officials, 7 persons from NGOs, and 2 leaders of minority groups in Myanmar. The study was conducted in 18 provinces of Thailand. The World Vision publication, entitled “Research Report on Migration and Deception of Migrant Workers in Thailand,” is a survey analysis of 1,187 Burmese migrant workers in three areas: 395 from Mae Sai, 399 from Mae Sot, and 393 from Ranong.

An example of the findings is that traffickers can be classified into three groups by scale of operation: large organizations, medium-size organizations, and small ones. Most of the organizations in Thailand are small ones (Kritaya and Pornsuk 1997, 57). Similarly, Marshall (2001, 4) divides traffickers into two categories: organized crime and cottage industry. Within GMS, he maintains that trafficking resembles a cottage industry more than organized crime, with a range of small-scale operators along the way. It has been said that those people who

Box 4. Trafficking from Laos

In Mukdahan province, trafficking of workers occurs in places remote from strict inspection at the immigration office. Such locations are along bordering villages, such as Ban Wan Yai, Don tan, and Nong Lom. No foreign workers are found in Ban Soon Mai and.

There are two ways for Laotians to illegally enter Thailand --coming through broker or sneaking in on their own. For the first method, most of leading brokers are Thais who usually fetch Lao workers at the rendezvous in the wood along the Mekong river bank. Then those brokers who are not the local people would hide the illegal migrants in the truck or van in order to delivery them to prospective employers in other provinces.

The second method is that foreign workers would disembark at an international gate where they give false information that they are going to be hired for rice harvesting or visiting a relative. In fact, some of them would stay at their relatives for a few days. Then, they would make their ways to Bangkok and other provinces, and not report back to the immigration control as required.

“A few days before the trafficking, a stranger drove into the village. He must be an illegal broker. After that, the Lao migrants disembarked from boat arriving in the wood close to the village” (villager from Wan Yai)

Source: TDRI 2006

facilitate migration which results in trafficking may often be the same as those who facilitate other forms of less exploitative migration. Such agents and even traffickers or smugglers are often seen as providing a service to the community.

The study by Supang (2000) seems to support the argument of Marshall (2001) that the process of trafficking can happen at the later stage of cross-border migration. For example, most migrant workers (96.5%) said that they were not deceived while they were in their hometowns. Only three respondents (0.8%) claimed that they were forced to walk to Thailand; one of the respondents was deceived and one was threatened. Deception while traveling, deception while seeking jobs and deception at the workplace accounted for 1.9, 1.1 and 4.1 percent of the total respectively (WVFT 2004, 41-42).

The types of exploitation and abuse among women migrant workers found by the World Vision study are shown in Table 6: seven women migrants (1.8%) were forced into prostitution, and nine (2.3%) were assaulted sexually.

Table 6 Types of Misconduct and Violation

	Number	Percentage
None	337	84.5
Being forced into prostitution	7	1.8
Being assaulted sexually	9	2.3
Being forced into labor	16	4.0
Being forced into slavery	3	0.8
Escaped from arrest	3	0.8
No answer	24	6.0
Total	399	100.0

Source: WVFT 2004, Table 3.11.

The World Vision study has more limitation in terms of areas covered, which may have some relationship with the degree of trafficking. It is possible that the deeper that migrants move into inner cities or urban areas, the higher is the risk they face of being exploited. Another reason is that at Mae Sot, Mae Sai and Ranong, there are higher concentrations of migrant workers than in the inner cities. Whether this hypothesis holds true is a subject for more research.

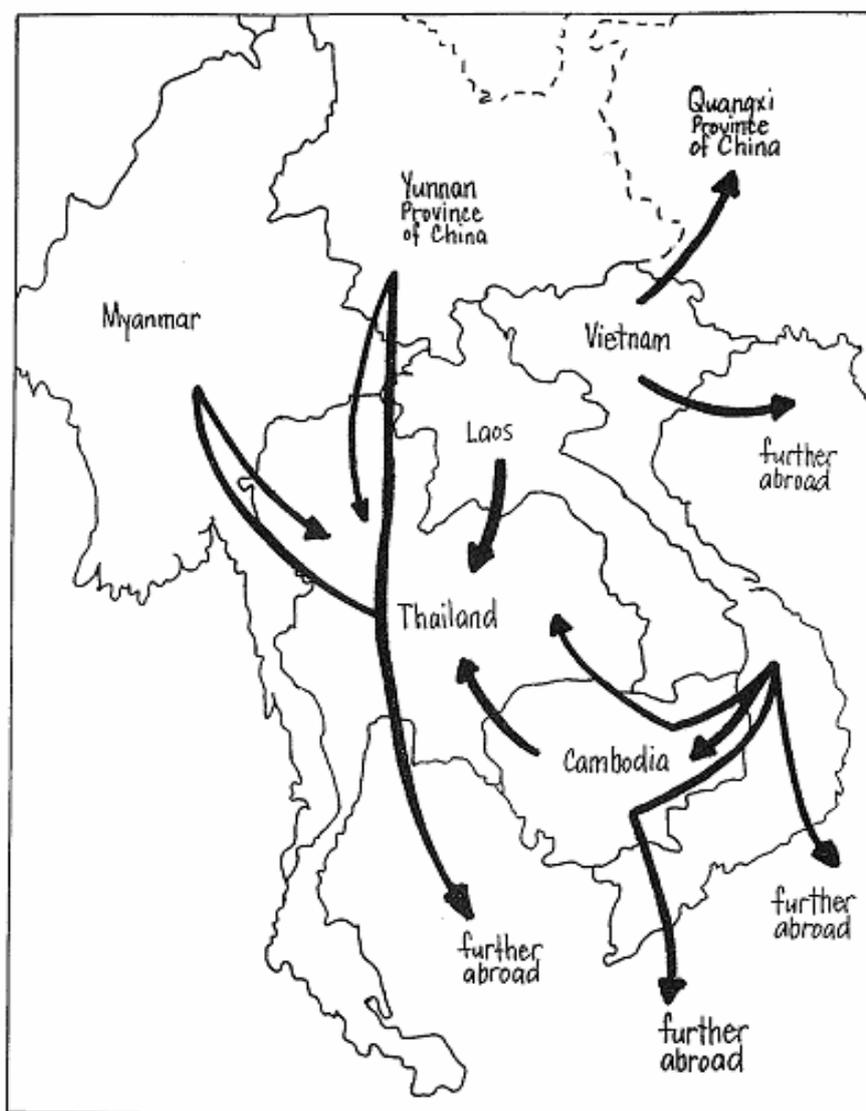
Figure 2 shows the trafficking routes within GMS. Countries in GMS are known as source, transiting and/or receiving countries or areas. While the routes on the map focus on trafficking within GMS, the trafficking is beyond the GMS boundary to other countries in Asia, Europe, North America, Australia, the Middle East and even South Africa.

As shown in Figure 2, women and children from Myanmar, Yunnan Province, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam are trafficked to Thailand and some of them are trafficked further abroad. In the late 1990s more and more women and children from China, Myanmar and Vietnam are trafficked to places such as Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, Macao, Singapore, United States, Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands (Caouette 1998, 13). However, there are no reliable estimates of the number of trafficked victims.

HIV/AIDS IN THE MEKONG REGION

HIV/AIDS is a long-standing issue for countries in the Mekong region. The region is known to be the epicenter of Asia's HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the end of 2001, approximately 40 million people were living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) worldwide. About 6.6 million were from Asia and the Pacific. Of the 6.6 million PLWHA in Asia and the Pacific, nearly 1 million were from the four countries of the lower Mekong region—Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam (Table 7).

Figure 2 Human Trafficking Routes within the Greater Mekong Subregion



Source: (Caouette 1998, 8).

Table 7 Number of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the Greater Mekong Subregion, 2001 and 2004

Country	2001		2004	
	Population	PLWHA	Population	PLWHA ^a
Cambodia	13,411,000	170,000	13,363,421	170,000
Lao PDR	5,403,000	1,400	6,068,117	1,700
Thailand	63,584,000	670,000	64,865,523	570,000
Vietnam	79,175,000	130,000	82,689,518	220,000

Total	160,603,000	971,400	166,986,579	961,700
-------	-------------	---------	-------------	---------

^{a/} = Figure at the end of 2003

PLWHA = People living with HIV/AIDS

Source: UNAIDS (2002) quoted in USAID, Bureau for Asia and the Near East, 2003. HIV/AIDS in the Mekong Region, www.avert.org/aidssoutheastasia.htm

According to a USAID study (2003), the first cases of HIV in the Mekong region were identified in Thailand in 1984: males who had sex with males. Heterosexual transmission of HIV was detected in the country in 1985 and then began to occur on a wider scale by 1989. Early on, Thailand documented high HIV prevalence levels in female sex workers and injecting drug users. Lao PDR and Vietnam reported their first cases of HIV infection in 1990; at that time HIV prevalence was still low in Lao PDR. In Cambodia, the first case of HIV infection was found in 1991 in a man donating blood, although the virus was found in Cambodian refugees in Thailand as early as 1989. Since then, Cambodia has experienced the fastest-growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in Asia.

There are a number of reasons why HIV/AIDS spreads very fast in GMS. First, drug use injection is a significant problem throughout the subregion. The “Golden Triangle,” comprising parts of Myanmar, China, Lao PDR, and Thailand, is a leading supplier of opiates, particularly heroin. Drug trafficking routes crisscross GMS and provide easy access to illicit drugs. Second, the movements of people across national borders are a major factor in HIV/AIDS contacts. The border and urban areas in GMS are sites for the booming sex industry in Southeast Asia. Mobility, increased tourism, the presence of peacekeeping forces, the opening up of formerly centrally-planned economies, human trafficking, a lack of educational and economic opportunities for women and girls, poverty and other factors have contributed to the rapid growth of the sex industry (USAID 2003, 1)

Box 5. Imported HIV

“Many Cambodians who are hired for paddy harvesting also sell sex, as many as 7-8 girls out of 10; the rest of which are too old and the beginning ages 11-12 years old. Sex workers are not only girls, but there are also 11-12 years old boys and older. Service fees range from 300-500 baht, at wherever they choose to do so. These sex workers might spread the HIV too” (Villager, Wang Mon, Sa Kaeo).

Source: TDRI 2006

Migrant workers are claimed to be vulnerable to HIV/AIDS contacts and transmission. A study to confirm this hypothesis was undertaken in 1999 by CARE Thailand/Raks Thai Foundation, with the support of the Japanese Foundation for AIDS Prevention. The study does not, however, provide information with regard to evidence about or the extent of HIV/AIDS among migrant workers. Rather, it tried to identify the risk behaviors of migrant workers in three areas, namely, Samut Sakhon and Samut Prakan, Trat, and Chiang Khong.

Cross-border fishing is also a means for HIV/AIDS transmission. Thai fishermen who fish in Cambodian waters had a high chance of contacting HIV. Over-fishing in Thai waters in the Gulf of Thailand has led an increasing number of Thai fishermen entering Cambodian waters. This leads to increased contact among peoples of three nations: Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. The study maintains that fishermen are linked to outbreaks of HIV infection in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Irian Jaya in Indonesia. Prevalence data among fishermen in Ranong show increasingly high levels of HIV

infection from 7 percent in 1991 to 14 percent in 1992 and 22 percent in June 1993 (Anthony et al. 1995, 9). Fishermen travel more than people in other occupations. In particular, they have many chances for docking at Cambodian and Vietnamese ports during a single trip that could extend over several months. Fishing boats have to dock occasionally in order to refuel, load ice, sell fish, allow the crew to rest and have recreation, repair equipment, stock up on food, meet friends and colleagues, engage in sex, go to bars and gambling dens, and avoid monsoon and other storms. It is very common among fishermen (captains and boat crews) to have sex with prostitutes in the ports they visit. The study indicates that condom use by Cambodian and Thai men in commercial sex establishments is extremely low. Besides, the men who are the clients in brothels and the sex workers themselves have many misconceptions about HIV/AIDS, such as it is curable; if one is healthy one cannot get AIDS; unattractive commercial sex workers do not have AIDS; clean people do not have AIDS; one cannot get AIDS by having sex with a virgin in a brothel (Anthony et al. 1995).

According to the TDRI study at the border level (TDRI 2006), the pattern of HIV/AIDS contact has changed a little. IDU does not seem to be the major cause of HIV/AIDS. In Mukdahan, in the past the HIV/AIDS patients got contact through Laotian sex workers. Today, teenagers are the vulnerable group of HIV/AIDS contact because of their behaviour in changing sex partners frequently. Another vulnerable group is housewives who contact HIV/AIDS from their husbands. In Sa Kaeo, the risk groups of HIV/AIDS infection are workers and old men who contact from Cambodian sex workers. Here there is an increasing trend of infected wives but they do not seek treatment from local health care centers because they do not want other villagers to know. According to the study and rapid assessment, there seems to be a decline in HIV/AIDS in these two provinces recently.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is an example of the negative side of economic integration and the free movement of people across borders. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that it is because of income disparity and poverty that the problem is caused, and economic integration should be considered as a means to solve the problem.

CONCLUSIONS

Economic integration along GMS borders needs to be looked at closely with regard to many non-trade issues if it is to achieve the ultimate goal of development. Quite a number of non-trade, informal or illegal issues reflect the fact that a large number of stakeholders are paying the price of increasing cross-border activities. Ways to ensure that economic integration can mitigate, if not eliminate, the negative impact need to be identified.

REFERENCES

- Adisorn Theeravit, and Adisorn Semyaem. 2002. *Thai-Lao Relations in Laotian Perspective*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University and Thailand Research Fund.
- Anthony Pramualratana et al. 1995. *Assessment of the Potential for Spread and Control of HIV among Cross-border Populations along the Thai-Cambodian Border*. Nakhon Pathom: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.
- Asian Development Bank 2000. *The Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program: GMS Assistance Plan 2001-2003*. Manila.

- CA International Information Co., Ltd. 1999. Project on Promoting Market, Trade and Investment in ASEAN: Industrial Products under Economic Cooperation Strategy in Lao, Cambodia, and Myanmar. The second progress report (improved edition) presented to Department of Business Economics, Ministry of Commerce. (in Thai)
- Caouette, Therese M. 1998. Needs Assessment on Cross-border Trafficking in Women and Children—the Mekong Sub-region. Prepared for the United Nations Working Group on Trafficking in the Mekong Sub-region.
- CARAM Thailand. 2000. HIV/AIDS and Mobile Populations. Workshop Report. In Collaboration with Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Migration.
- CARE Thailand/Raks Thai Foundation. 1999. *Migrant Workers and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability Study: Thailand*. Bangkok.
- Community Development Department. 2004. National Rural Development Committee Survey (NRD-2C) Database, 2003. Basic Minimum Needs (BMN) Database, 2002 and 2004. Bangkok: Ministry of Interior.
- Department of Trade Negotiations. 2004. *Trade Profile between Thailand and Lao PDR*. Bangkok: Bureau of East Asian Economic Cooperation. (in Thai)
- Development Analysis Network. 2005. *The Cross Border Economies of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam*. Phnom Penh.
- The Economist*. 2005. “Illegal Immigration: Decapitating the Snakeheads.” 8 October: 18.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2004. *Labour Migration in the Mekong Region*. Bangkok.
- King, Roger. 2002. Development Opportunities in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Perth, Australia (kingintedservs@bigpond.com).
- Kritaya Arjawanijkul, and Pornsuk Kerdsawang. 1997. *The Route of Women Workers from the Neighboring Countries into the Sex Industry in Thailand*. Nakhon Pathom: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. (in Thai)
- Mahidol University, Institute for Population and Social Research. 2005. *Population and Social Research 2005*. Bangkok. (in Thai)
- Marshall, Phil. 2001. Globalization, migration and trafficking: some thoughts from the South-East Asian Region. United Nations Interagency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region. Paper presented at the Globalization Workshop, Kuala Lumpur, May 8-10.
- Mekong Region Law Center (MRLC), and Office of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs of Thailand. 1999. Trafficking in Women and Children. Proceedings of the 1997 Regional Conference, in cooperation with SEAFILD/CIDA and UNICEF – Thailand. Bangkok.
- Ministry of Industry, Office of Industrial Economics. 1995. *Development of Economic Cooperation among the Three Countries along Road No. 8*. Bangkok.
- Mukdahan Provincial Statistical Office. 2004. *Statistical Reports of Changwat Mukdahan*. Bangkok: Statistical Forecasting Bureau, National Statistical Office.
- Nakhon Phanom Provincial Statistical Office. 2004. *Statistical Reports of Changwat Nakhon Phanom*. Bangkok: Statistical Forecasting Bureau, National Statistical Office.
- National Economic and Social Development Board. 1995. *Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Project on Economic Cooperation in the Six Countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (Thailand, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar and Yunnan)*. Bangkok.

- _____. 2003. *Economic Cooperation Strategy*. Bangkok: Office of Area Development. (in Thai)
- National Statistical Office, National Economic and Social Development Board, and Thailand Development Research Institute. 2005. *Country Development Partnership in Poverty Analysis and Monitoring: CDP-PAM Phase II*. Bangkok.
- Nilsson, Mans. 2003. "Development and Natural Resources in the Mekong Region: the Institutional Challenge."
http://pdf.wri.org/mekong_governance_mreg_nilssonsegnestam.pdf
- Nualnoy Trirat. 2003. Illicit drugs and human security. Paper presented at 2003 TDRI Year-end Conference on Human Securities, November 29-30, at the Ambassador City, Jomtien, Chon Buri. (in Thai)
- Richer, Kerry, Philip Guest, Wathinee Boonchalaksi, Nittaya Piriathamwong, and Nimfa B. Ogena. 1997. *Migration and the Rural Family: Sources of Support and Strain in a Mobile Society*. Nakhon Pathom: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.
- Sa Kaeo Provincial Statistical Office. 2004. *Statistical Reports of Changwat Sa Kaeo 2004 Edition*. Bangkok: Statistical Forecasting Bureau, National Statistical Office.
- Socio Economic Consultant Co., Ltd. 2004. Strategies of Border and Transitional Trade between Thailand and Mekong Sub-region countries. Presented to Institute of Trade Strategies, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. Bangkok. (in Thai)
- Supang Chantavanich. 2000. *Cross-border Migration and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability at the Thai-Cambodia Border: Aranyaprathet and Khlong Yai*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration and Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University
- _____. 2003. *Culture of Peace and Migration: Integrating Migration Education into Secondary School Social Science Curriculum in Thailand*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University.
- Thai Rath*. 2005. 31 December.
- Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI). 1995a. *A Comparison of Investment Capacity between Lao PDR and the Northeastern Provinces of Thailand*. Bangkok: TDRI. (in Thai)
- _____. 1995b. *Industrial Development in Nine Target Provinces and Income Distribution Impact on Neighboring Provinces and Countries: A Case Study of Industrial Development in the Northeast of the Golden Peninsula (Khon Kaen, Nakhon Phanom, Lao PDR – Viet Nam)*. Bangkok: TDRI.
- _____. 1996a. *Development Co-operation in the Greater Mekong Subregion Vol. I*. Bangkok: TDRI.
- _____. 1996b. *Development Co-operation in the Greater Mekong Subregion Vol.II*. Bangkok: TDRI.
- _____. 1997. *Thailand's Border Trade with Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia and Myanmar*. United Nations ESCAP. Border trade and cross-border transactions of selected Asian countries. Bangkok: TDRI.
- _____. 1998. *Economic Crisis and the Role of Technical Assistance*. Bangkok: TDRI.
- Thailand Trends Monitoring Project. 2003. "Border Trade: Building a Relationship Along the Seams." <http://tmp.trf.or.th/1index.htm> (in Thai)
- Ti Le-Huu, and Lien Nguyen-Duc. 2003. *Mekong Case Study*. Water Resources Section, Division of Environment and Sustainable Development, UN-ESCAP.

- United Nations. 1997. *Border Trade and Cross-Border Transactions of Selected Asian Countries*. Study prepared under the ESCAP/UNDP Regional Trade Programme. New York.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 1991. *Thailand Development Cooperation Report*. Bangkok: UNDP.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2005. *Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific: Issue Paper from Thailand*. Bangkok: Asia Pacific Migration Research Network (APMRN).
- United Nations ESCAP. 1997. *Border Trade and Cross-border Transactions of Selected Asian Countries*. Bangkok.
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 49/166 of 23 December 1994 as cited by Coomaraswamy, R. 1997. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2006. *UNFPA State of World Population 2006: A Passage to Hope -- Women and International Migration*, New York.
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 2003. *HIV/AIDS in the Mekong Region: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand & Viet Nam*. Policy Project for Bureau for Asia and the Near East. Washington, D.C.
- Vitit Muntarbhorn. 1997. The Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region: Law and Policy as Effective Countermeasures? In MRLC (Mekong Region Law Center) and Office of the National Commission on Women's Affairs of Thailand in cooperation with SEAFILD/CIDA and UNICEF–Thailand, 1999. Proceedings of the 1997 Regional Conference on Trafficking in Women and Children, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Wacharin Yongsiri. 2004a. *Border Trade: Thai and the Mekong Sub-region*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. (in Thai)
- _____. 2004b. *Border Trading between Thailand and Cambodia Problems and Solutions*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. (in Thai)
- World Vision Foundation of Thailand (WVFT). 2004 *Research Report on Migration and Deception of Migrant Workers in Thailand*. In collaboration with Asian Research Center for Migration. Bangkok.

Websites

- http://203.157.145.5/HealthData/province_info.asp (Accessed in July 2005)
- <http://203.157.19.193/aids/Aidstab5.html> (Accessed in July 2005)
- <http://www.adb.org/GMS/Projects/default.asp> (Accessed in July 2005)
- <http://www.aranimmigration.com/index.php> (Accessed in July 2005)
- <http://www.dft.moc.go.th> (Accessed in July 2005)
- <http://www.dft.moc.go.th> (Accessed in October 2006)
- <http://www.iom-seasia.org>.
- http://www.mol.go.th/statistic_01.html (Accessed in July 2005)
- <http://www.nesdb.go.th/> (Accessed in July 2005)