

# Returning and Departing: Livelihood Challenges of Returned Migrants and Intergenerational Reproduction of Migration in Northeast Thailand<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

Overseas migration has been described as an important livelihood strategy of the Thai rural population for more than four decades. However, there is minimal research questioning how and why migration has been active over three generations of rural Thai households. Drawing on an empirical case from a village in Udon Thani province, Northeast Thailand, in which migrating to another country has been popular for over 30 years, this paper explores migration and the return of parental generations resulting in limitations to their livelihoods. Using a mixed-methods approach that involves a survey-style questionnaire, and in-depth interviews, the study highlights how intergenerational migrant workers were perpetuated through social and economic conditions, which in turn, enabled a culture of migration. This paper argues that the return home of first and second generations does not mean a return to traditional family life, as migration is a continuing process passed from one generation to the next. This brings a new meaning to rural households and creates a trap for rural development.

**Keywords:** returned migrant, livelihood challenges, intergenerational migration, Northeast Thailand

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## Introduction

The migration of Thai nationals for overseas employment has been prevalent for more than four decades. The Northeast region has had the highest level of international labor migration in Thailand since the 1970s. Poverty, the desire to assimilate oneself within modern society, and inter-cultural marriages have been the primary push factors. It has been found that migration in Northeast Thailand has comprised at least three generations of people, therefore the issue of migration in the area has been widely studied. Migration is a livelihood strategy that earns income away from the farm and has now overtaken traditional income from agriculture in Thailand (Grandstaff, Limpinuntana and Suphanchaimat, 2008). Moreover, it has been found that ways of making a living in the Northeast are highly connected with urban economies since most of the Northeast's household incomes are remittances from members of the family either working somewhere in Thailand or abroad (Kitiarsa, 2014; Rigg and Salamanca, 2011). Migration has also paved the way for women in Northeastern rural areas to take part in modernisation through urban labor (Mills, 1999), or even relocating outside their borders through inter-cultural marriage (Lapanun, 2020). Consequently, people in the Northeast nowadays are highly influenced by both social and economic factors which exist beyond their villages.

Despite that, few academic studies on migration have investigated the issues concerning international migration and the return home of people from each generation. Moreover, little attention has been paid to the question as to why international migration, which is supposed to be connected to rural development and increasing household incomes, has become a livelihood strategy passed down from one generation to another. Previous studies have investigated different views on migration and the financial success/failure of rural people from different generations (Asakit, 2018; Turner and Michaud, 2018). Also included are studies on hindrances that limit socio-economic mobility for Northeastern Thai migrants from each generation. This is related to a structural factor which makes Thailand unable to escape the

middle-income trap (Rigg, Promphakping, and Le Mare, 2014). Meanwhile, limited research is available on the perpetuation of overseas intergenerational migration, especially the relationship between remittances, the skills of returning migrants, as well as limitations to rural development.

This article aims to explore the migration phenomena of a village in Udon Thani province, which has seen the highest level of overseas migration over the last few decades.<sup>2</sup> The paper questions why migration has become a livelihood strategy passed down from one generation to another and investigates why the return home of grandparental and parental generations has resulted in the departure of younger generations. The paper also looks into the limitations of returning migrants and their post-migration livelihoods, as well as the overall meaning of family and home in Thailand. The article starts with a literature review focusing on previous investigations of returning migrant workers and their impact on subsequent generations. Then, I will explain the research procedure as well as the areas of study. Findings of the research, especially the issue of returning home, life after migration, together with limitations to returning migrant households will be explored respectively. Lastly, I will provide a final conclusion.

## Returning Generations and their Impact on the Next Generation of Migrant Workers

Returning and intergenerational migration are topics widely studied among academics. Many scholars have studied the issues of long-term migration such as refugees and diaspora. They tend to investigate the limitations of migrants from each generation in recipient countries, transnational networks, as well as resistant effects on returning to their

<sup>2</sup> Provinces with the highest level of migration over the last decade are Udon Thani, Nakhon Ratchasima, Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, and Buri Ram, respectively. Among these provinces, Udon Thani has always been the first ranked among Thai provinces with the highest level of overseas migration. In 2019, the year in which I carried out the field study, 113,801 workers from Udon Thani were granted certificates for working legally overseas, accounting for 10 percent of the total number of international migrant workers (Overseas Employment Administration Division, 2020).

homeland. Another issue in the field can be seen in terms of returning migrants as agents of change, and whether they bring in capital and skills to build businesses in the community. These researchers tend to investigate the economic advantages of migration. For example, remittances can raise a family's economic prosperity and can be used as capital for investment, thereby improving the economics of the community or even beyond (Marchetta, 2012; Sabar and Pagis, 2015; Gibson, Law and McKay, 2001). Kelly (2000), for example, referred to remittances earned by Filipinos working overseas sent home to buy land and build houses. Upon returning home, they tended to create a small business or acted as loan agents to people in their village. These academics revealed relationships between these remittances, international migration, as well as the ability to be self-employed after migration, measured by their economic activities when returning home as well as increasing assets. However, this research focused only on particular migrants, stopping once they returned home with no reference to the intergenerational effect. Despite the ability to ameliorate the financial status of their family, migration is not something that ends with one generation but tends to pass down to other generations.

Lu Pan (2018) studied the perpetuation of labor migration from China's rural to urban areas in more than three generations. Due to development gaps between these areas, together with low wages, it was difficult for migrant workers, even those who earned higher incomes, to raise their social and economic status. A poor quality education system was the main driving force for young migrant workers and their children, who were left behind and lacked proper education, and ended up moving to an urban area as migrant workers. In Thailand, Asakit (2018) studied migrant workers from different generations from the Northeast who moved to work in urban cities but held different notions of returning homeland. The first generation aged over 65 years old, who used to migrate for work, returned home and then did agricultural work. The second generation aged between 45 and 55, with a little higher level of education than the first generation, tended to return home to become self-employed or take part in local politics, in parallel

with their job in the agricultural sector. But what the second generation and the third generation aged under 40 years old have in common is that they feel that they cannot find jobs outside agricultural sectors, especially for those without better education and technical skills. Rigg, Promphakping, and Le Mare (2014) and Le Mare, Promphaking, and Rigg (2015) referred to a connection between the middle-income trap in the Northeast's rural areas and the failure of the government, together with private sectors to develop human capital. For former migrant workers of the Northeast, returning home meant retiring and uniting with their families. None of them furthered their education, as they perceived that knowledge from the current education system could not be of use in their homeland. Later generations with higher education had to work far away from their homeland where job markets were limited. These articles, however, tend to focus more on international movements rather than movements within Thailand, with the assumption that they will yield higher incomes than local movements, and thus result in a wider range of experiences, which can then be applied to their livelihoods. In their findings, Turner and Michaud (2018) explained the decision process to work overseas by workers from each generation in a northern Thai village, their generational strategies, as well as the success/failure of their migration, all from an inter-generational worldview. But, their study did not connect the continuation of migration to developmental problems, nor to inequality in rural Thailand. In this paper, I argue that although the migration of parental generations led families to a better life, once returned home, all migrant workers faced limitations and difficulties in finding jobs in their hometown, leading to more intergenerational migration. Moreover, with limitations from economic structures faced by later generations, migrating to work overseas remains the family's primary livelihood strategy.

### **Research Methods**

This research was carried out in a village in Udon Thani province. I conducted a field study from October 2018 to November 2019.

Information from the field study was collected from Moo 9, Ban Na Sanook<sup>3</sup>, Muang district, Udon Thani province. The village comprised 139 families, with a population of 504 people (210 males and 294 females). Among the 139 families, there were 10 uninhabited homes, some belonging to those who moved to other provinces, or overseas, or women who married foreigners, some of whom might come back once a year.

The study took a mixed-methods approach. The first step was a survey of the households in the village that had family members who used to migrate and work overseas. I found that out of 139 households, there were 42 households (two thirds of the total number of households) from which at least one person in the family had migrated to work abroad and had already returned to the village. I then used a survey-style questionnaire to interview those people, relying on those who gave verbal consent for participation in my research. I also conducted in-depth interviews with those who had specific profiles and were willing to share their experience with me. Among the participants were those who had worked in more than one country, and most had spent more than five years abroad, ranging from one to twelve years.

I divided the migrants into 3 generations, using their age as a criterion. The first generation comprised people in the village who migrated for work in 1985. They are now 66-75 years old. They mostly have become grandparents in their family. The Middle East was the sole destination for this generation. The duration of their migration ranges from one to five years, from 1985 – 1990. The second generation includes those who migrated after 1990. This was the time when women in the village moved out with their husbands to newly industrialised countries in East Asia, such as Taiwan and South Korea. They are now 41-65 years old; some of them have become grandparents. Their period of migration was from one to 12 years, from 1990 to 2010. The third generation is those aged between 20 to 40 years old. Their period of migration started from 2010 until now. The destinations for this third generation include South Korea, Israel, and Taiwan, among others.

<sup>3</sup> The village's name and all person names quoted in this paper are pseudonyms.

Some of this third generation are the offspring of the first and second generations, and most have a higher level of education than their parents. Among them, some hold university degrees but still decided to work overseas. Many of this third generation entered South Korea illegally. Details of the interviewees are in the following table.

**Table 1** Details of the interviewees

Generations	Years of migration	Ages	Countries of destination*	Gender	
				Male	Female
1 <sup>st</sup> generation	1985-1990	66-75	Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq, Taiwan	2	1
2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	1990-2010	40-65	Taiwan, Korea, Bahrain, Qatar, Uzbekistan, Israel, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam	21	10
3 <sup>rd</sup> generation	2011- present	20-40	Korea, Taiwan, Israel	11	5
Total				50	

\* migrant workers regularly travelled to work more than one country

### Migration of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation

People in Ban Na Sanook have tended to migrate for work overseas rather than moving to other places in Thailand. Most of them do not move to Bangkok for work, or any other industrial provinces. For them, it is perceived that migrating to other places in Thailand yields less money than migrating overseas. According to the survey, the first generation started migrating abroad for work in 1985, with the primary destination being Saudi Arabia. Their basic education was, on average, Grade 4. In those years, six male workers worked on construction sites, together with one female worker who worked as a servant. They are now aged between 66 to 80 years old. Before migrating, all of them worked in the agricultural sector. They were married and had children. All respondents stated that financial needs to support their families forced them to migrate overseas. One of the male workers had previously moved to Bangkok for work, but life there was difficult and the wage

was so low. Then, after he took a loan, he went to work the same construction job in a foreign country but earned higher wages.

In 1985, the broker rate was at 60,000 THB, and all workers could get loans to pay their broker fees and receive their wages, which were between 20,000-30,000 THB/month. After deducting money to pay off debts, the brokers would help transfer the remaining money to the workers' families in Thailand. Normally, after having worked for two or three years, these workers would be able to save enough money to buy assets. Three of these workers in the first generation said that none had been cheated by the brokers, therefore all of them could save money to buy assets they wanted. After the Blue Diamond Affair in 1989, which affected diplomatic relations between Thailand and Saudi Arabia, followed by the Gulf War in 1990, workers changed their destination to East Asia. The success of the workers in the first generation can be defined as saving enough to build a new house, buy a new car or a motorcycle, or purchase pieces of land. What is interesting is that the children of these workers followed the same path as their parents, also becoming overseas workers.

Since workers in the first generation managed to create wealth through working overseas, other people in the village started to follow suit. They began by looking for jobs through recruitment agencies, aiming to work in other countries with the hope to gain money as their neighbors did. At first, men were mainly migrating for work due to the socio-cultural stigma that men were breadwinners of the families, together with the need for laborers in the recipient countries. Then, in the early 1990s, the pattern changed to include the migration of couples, and married women, mostly single mothers to countries such as Taiwan and South Korea, to work in the textile or agricultural sectors, or as maids. For workers in the second generation, Taiwan was among the top destinations for female migrant workers, both migrating alone and with their partners. This was because gender was not an obstacle for female workers in Taiwan. Israel, however, required more male workers. Singapore also needed laborers for its construction sector. So males were the main source of migrant workers in these two countries.

Migrating to work abroad requires a lot of money. Each worker needs to invest from 30,000-100,000 THB. Israel in particular is the most expensive, followed by South Korea, where legal workers are required to study Korean and pass a language test. Therefore, those who would be able to migrate for work in such a manner need to possess capital, in the form of money or assets, as well as social capital. Over 80 percent of the respondents from the first and second generations provided information that they had to get loans from neighbors, cooperatives, or banks to work overseas and pay off their debt in the form of an installment plan. To have enough money for this and still retain some savings, they required at least a year of working overseas. The hiring contract included clear regulations, such as employment agreements, duration of contract, as well as proof of age. These workers had to return home after the end of their contract, or ended up working illegally.

### **Returning Migrants and Livelihood Challenges**

The decision to stop migrating meant returning to live with their families for workers in the first and second generation from Ban Na Sanook. This came by the end of their contract, or they were too old to work in the destination country.<sup>4</sup> But for the third generation aged below 40, many of them wanted to continue migrating for work. Some returned home temporarily to look for a new destination. Others intended to return home permanently but were forced to move out for work again as they needed money. These forces were sometimes driven by droughts. Some had new children so they needed to earn more money to bring them up.

When asked about the priority on spending their remittances, 34 out of 50 (68 percent) of the migrant workers from Ban Na Sanook

<sup>4</sup> Most of the destination countries regulate the period of overseas workers. Israel, for example, limits the hiring contract to 2 years, which can be extended, but must not exceed 5 years and 3 months. South Korea limits each contract to 2 years, which can be extended for 1 year each contract, but in total must not exceed 4 years and 10 months. Also, workers' ages are capped at 40 years old. In the meantime, Taiwan and Singapore do not have age limits for migrant workers, but work duration in these countries is limited to 9 and 10 years, respectively (Rattana, 2019).

confirmed that they used the money to build or renovate a house. Eleven of them (29 percent) spent money to buy more land for agricultural purposes. Five of the migrants (14 percent) went to work overseas to earn money for paying off debts. Among these, two were cheated, thereby forcing them to return home early. Most did not perceive that overseas migration for work would make them wealthier as they had to spend all the money earned paying off debts. Only two of them spent money on investing in a new business, but that was not the priority. Remittances earned over the time they were working abroad were spent on building a new house or renovation, buying more land, and on things that facilitated their rural livelihoods, such as pickup trucks, motorcycles, and tractors. This indicated that migration was only a temporary strategy to save money and would help them escape poverty, rather than earning money to broaden their economic activities.

Research on migration and development generally refers to overseas migration, which is more likely to create a higher income. Apart from creating more assets, returning migrant workers can be agents of change, bringing in both capital and skills for business activities in their community (Gibson et al., 2001; Kelly, 2000). For Northeast Thailand, however, most returning workers are more likely to work in the agricultural sector. Housing and land are important living factors for them (Rigg et al., 2014). In the case of Ban Na Sanook, 7 migrant workers, aged over 40 years with working experience in Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Singapore, revealed that they moved back permanently between 2002 and 2007. Apart from working in agricultural fields, they bought cows for trading, together with setting up convenience stores. After many workers returned home, they all set up convenience stores along the village's main road. They all competed for customers and after a few years, some shops closed down. Now there are only two left. Only two male workers, having worked in construction in Singapore, became building contractors while farming in the agricultural sector at the same time. Over 70 percent of the workers claimed they earned less income once they returned to their homeland. When asked how they survived, most said they did not know. Migrating for work allowed them

to own a house, land, and car, and pay for their children's education. Beyond that, they had to rely on their earnings from farming.

Another challenge faced by returning migrants was that they could not apply the skills they acquired during migration, either from their experience on industrial estates or other overseas work, nor relate them to life in their homeland. This is because there were no other jobs apart from those in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, the government's Reintegration Program focused only on job training in the agricultural field. At Ban Na Sanook, villagers have been striving to adapt to those limitations by investing in non-agricultural businesses. They still have no idea as to how to apply the skills they gained when working overseas to add value to their villages. Dome, a 37-year-old man, who used to work in South Korea, said that he worked in a factory, manufacturing chairs using molding machines. His job was to assemble parts of the chair. During an in-depth interview, he showed a wooden chair covered with leather with wheels at the tip of its legs. This is the chair he made and shipped home from South Korea. It's been many years since he shipped the chair, which is old now. But his mother still displays that chair in front of the house. He said:

After returning, I just worked on the farm. I haven't done anything with my job experience. I only have this job certificate. Moreover, I cannot make this kind of chair without the molding machine. Even if I could make this chair, to whom should I sell it? (Dome [Pseudonym], 2019)

A similar situation faced male migrants who have worked in the construction sectors of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Bahrain, and Singapore. When working overseas they were employed by large companies, working on projects such as the Marina Bay in Singapore and the airport in Libya. Upon returning to Thailand, they could not apply the skills they learnt abroad and often ended up working on a construction site as a laborer for minimum wage.

The livelihood challenges faced by workers in the first and second generations reflect that success cannot rely only on financial

gain. Other factors, such as knowledge and skills, social relations, as well as resilience to uncontrollable variables, are also vital. Among those with children, all still hoped their remittances would help their kids get a higher education so that they would not end up as laborers like their parents. In contrast, this study has revealed that in households where the parents were migrant workers, it was more likely that the next generation would emulate their parents. The next section will discuss the culture of migration and how the children in Ban Na Sanook became the third generation of migrant workers.

### **Intergenerational Perpetuation of Migrant Workers**

Migrant workers in the first and second generations lived during the transformation of Ban Na Sanook, from a remote area in the 1980s to a village where its inhabitants actively migrated to work overseas, thereby improving its economic status. This coincided with the transformation of Thailand's socio-economic structure, moving above the poverty line in 1996, and becoming a middle-income country in 2011 (Jitsuchon, 2012). In the meantime, the government extended compulsory education to Grade 6 in 1977, and Grade 9 in 1997. This structural factor helped workers in the third generation, who were born between 1980 and 2000, aged 20 to 40, acquire a higher education than their parents. Since their parents could escape poverty, the younger generation should have enjoyed better economic and educational opportunities. However, it turned out that among 12 workers in the third generation who participated in the interview process, 8 of them hold a level of education ranging from high vocational to university degree. The rest have an education from grade 9 to 12. Over half of the workers in the third generation are family members of workers from the first and second generations.

Migrant workers in the first and second generations stated that in the past family members were given clear duties. A married woman needed to stay at home and take care of the children, while men were the breadwinners. But in the 1990s more women migrated, leaving their

children under the care of their relatives or parents. Male workers believed that it was their main duty to earn money and take care of their family. Once they left their family behind, they expected the women to take care of the children. Female workers on the other hand felt they were not being good mothers, leaving their children behind with relatives. Therefore, children who were once left behind by one or both of their parents and did not live together as a family for a certain period of time, became the third generation of migrant workers. Growing up in a household and community with overseas migrants became more common and acceptable. Previous left-behind children perceived migration as the best alternative to earn money. Besides this, the social structure of the village where extended relatives lived in the same community helped make left-behind children feel less lonely. One of the workers in the third generation said:

When my father went abroad, I was with my mother. I wasn't lonely as there were a lot of people in the village. I had a lot of friends, and we were all relatives.... Nowadays, thanks to technology, family members living in different countries can easily be connected. Thereby, migration can easily continue.... In those days, we could only contact each other via letters. We had to go to the entrance of the village, which took time by bike, to make a phone call. But now we have the Internet, we can make a Line call every day (Sorn [Pseudonym], 2018).

When the researcher interviewed migrant workers in each generation regarding the meaning of a home, a family, and a good life, almost all of them referred to a secure life, high income, and well-being in terms of materials. Having a good life for them related to material wealth, not a family where all members lived together. The fact that one of the family members left home for a period of time to provide financial support for the family was seen as essential and acceptable. One family with three generations of migrant workers is a good example. Krai is a second-generation migrant worker (38 years old). He worked in South Korea, and his father was one of those who worked in Taiwan. He recalled that:

I was in primary school when my father went to work abroad. I didn't feel sad, but happy. That was because I saw that my friend whose father also worked overseas always had new toys. His family was well-off. I thought if my father went to work abroad, our family would have money (Krai [Pseudonym], 2019).

When Krai's son finished high school, he had become the third generation of this family to work overseas. In their view, most migrant workers in each generation returned home with money. If they allowed their children to work abroad, the family would soon build up their fortune. Moreover, this was seen as a means to bring greater financial security via remittances to families whose only other income derived from a volatile agricultural sector.

Besides living in a culture of migration within the community, limited earning capacity and lack of social opportunities were the main factors motivating intergenerational migration. Migrant workers from the first and second generations had an expectation that remittances would help their children achieve higher levels of education. However, few families succeeded in providing their children with higher education, because most of the next generation migrated to work overseas. For example, one worker (Ms. Varee) from the third generation who graduated with a university degree in accounting migrated overseas to work. The experience of Varee is typical of limitations put on third generational migrants with higher education. When this field study started, Varee, 30 years old, was working in South Korea. Three months later, she was deported after being accused of staying illegally. She recalled that she first worked for a company, followed by working as an officer at a local government agency for five years. Her husband, who graduated from the same university, applied to work in South Korea and got a job as a technician with a salary of 50,000 THB/month, including food and accommodation. Three months after giving birth to her second baby, Varee stopped breastfeeding and left her baby with her mother. She then travelled to South Korea on a tourist visa and

worked on a farm where she packed fruit and vegetables in boxes, together with growing plants on a farm. She earned 30,000-40,000 THB/month. When asked why she went to work as a laborer despite holding a university degree, Varee answered:

I could not survive on Thailand's minimum wage. I also wanted to gain some experience travelling abroad and have a chance to live in South Korea. Furthermore, I did not need to think much, just get up each day, work, and get paid (Varee [Pseudonym], 2019).

Another example is Mr. Chai (25 years old) who has a Bachelor's Degree. Mr. Chai chose to work in Israel after seeing his neighbours become wealthier from working overseas. He expected that working in other areas within Thailand would be similar to working in his hometown, whereas working overseas would allow him to get wealthy quicker.

In the meantime, many families discussed the problems that occurred when their family was separated. For example, their children did not pay enough attention to education. Many left schools after finishing compulsory education level (Grade 9), despite money being saved for their higher education. Some found out that their children, living under a relative's care refused to attend or had quit school. Others got pregnant at the age of 16. These families then encouraged their children to work overseas knowing they would only earn a minimum wage in Thailand. Working overseas did not require an education and paid more. Some people in the village said that going to work overseas was the only chance for those without a degree to earn as much as those with a degree. Many families whose children were not interested in study said despite higher educational opportunities they would end up going to Korea.

This reflects the reality that migration for work overseas has become a significant sociocultural development in Ban Na Sanook. Nonetheless, the success of these migrant workers depends on several factors. Almost all migrant workers in the parental generation could



send money back home. They expected that their children would get a higher education. However, some families, whose children grew up with the culture of migration, perceived that migrating to work abroad was a better choice than studying in school. This is because some of those with higher education also ended up migrating to work overseas. Moreover, even though the younger generation had a higher education than their parents, developmental inequality, together with economic limitations, has led to the continuous migration of workers, passed down from one generation to the next.

### **Conclusion: Continuing Migration across Generations and a New Meaning of Family**

This article investigates questions on returning migrants of the parental (or grandparental) generation, limitations faced by returning migrants, and the perpetuation of international migrants, a situation in which those who were left behind also become workers in a foreign country. Therefore, “returning” or “coming back home” for one generation means “departing” for another. Most academic papers regarding migration and resulting developments mainly focus on positive aspects of migration in such areas as remittances used as capital for agriculture, as well as for their own businesses. This article, on the other hand, illustrates that in reality, migrant workers require money for their livelihoods, investment in assets such as land and housing, as well as their children’s education, rather than acquiring values or applying skills they earned abroad to their business. Moreover, Thailand’s social structure and developmental inequality have resulted in job market limitations. Returning migrants often have no other choice except going back to agriculture. This article also points out that not all families are successful in lifting their economic status through investments in other non-agricultural businesses. Despite the fact that younger generations have a higher education than their parents, they perceive working overseas as a means to create more income than working in Thailand, where the pay is lower. Therefore, the once left-behind children see migrating overseas as their first choice in gaining income.

Rigg et al. (2011), in their studies, questioned the meaning of “households”, which are significant for understanding ways of life in rural areas, especially with agrarian societies. This is because there are differences in the occupations and interests of each family. They may not live together under the same roof but are economically connected. Therefore, “a family” might not refer to situations where everyone lives together. Ban Na Sanook is not different; once each generation migrated, both locally and internationally, the family was connected through material relationships (remittances) from the earnings of members of the family living far from home. The family in this context is not together but is more likely to endure with a more secure financial status, including higher incomes. With regards to the continuation of migration, which has become the prevailing culture, this process has been passed down to younger generations. It might be time to reconsider these circumstances when referring to the “return” or “coming back home” of migrant workers. It’s hard to imagine the possibility that all members of a family would remain together to create family unity. In each family, there is always at least one person working outside the village, overseas in this case. This reflects the problems of rural development in Thailand where the population has limited opportunities. Finally, migration has become a livelihood strategy, which is so significant that it is passed on from one generation to another, with some households fostering migrant workers for three generations.

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