*Thammasat Review* 2015, 18(1): 63-81

# Benefits of Rural-Urban Migration for Migrants' Better Life: A Case Study in Nang Rong, Buriram Province, Thailand

Piyawat Katewongsa
*Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University*
piyawat.kat@mahidol.ac.th

## Abstract

Rural-to-urban migration is a major pattern of population movement in Thailand. The aims of this movement are significantly related to various dimensions of the migrants' well-being, such as better education, job opportunities, health facilities, standard of living, and wages (Van Landingham, 2003). This study explores the benefits of rural-to-urban migration by examining Nang Rong District, Buriram Province, as a case study. The changes in the migrant's life, including income, savings, housing, living condition, working hours and social networks, were assessed as indicators of a better life.

The study employed data from a longitudinal study entitled "Demographic Responses to a Changing Environment in Nang Rong: 1984-2000,", with 2,270 cases observed as the units of analysis. Unlike a cross-sectional study, which records activities at a single-point in time, the subject of a longitudinal study is observed over a period of time, sometimes years. Results indicated that rural-urban migration was able to meet migrants' expectation for a better life at a level of 40.3 percent, overall. More than half of the migrants failed to meet the criteria of a better life standard. Nevertheless, if considering that the main purpose of migration was to gain higher income, the vast majority (84.2 percent) accomplished their goal. The most influential determinants on migrants' better life are moving cohort, years in education, marital status and social network. For these reasons, well-managed migration can help maximize potential benefits and reduce the risks when people move. People who desire to migrate from a rural to an urban area for a better quality of life, should first assess the current economic situation, social networks, couple support and their individual characteristics, especially age and education. A favorable combination of these supportive components could help migrants achieve their expectation of improved life conditions.

**Keywords:** Rural-urban migration, Nang Rong, benefits of migration, better life

## Introduction

Rural-to-urban migration is a major pattern of population movement in Thailand. The aims of this movement are largely related to aspects of the migrants' well-being, such as better education, job opportunities, health facilities, standard of living and wages (Van Landingham, 2003). As the basic premise underlying most microeconomic models of decision-making related to migration, individuals migrate in the expectation that their life will improve (Todaro, 1976; DaVanzo, 1981). For this reason, movements from rural villages to large cities are often undertaken with the hope of improved opportunities for economic or social advancement (Sjaastad, 1962; Van Landingham, 2003).

Migration is seen as being economically advantageous and an opportunity to enjoy a higher level of living, yielding higher income and better health than for those left behind. But migration can also be costly, resulting in difficult working and living conditions, as well as psychological stress. The migrant must adjust to a new lifestyle, which often brings a new set of health risks (Evans, 1987; Chen, 2011). Migrants from rural-to-urban areas are disadvantaged across several dimensions of health status, including physical functioning, role limitations due to physical health problems, general mental health and general health perception (Van Landingham, 2003).

It should be noted that migration is one of several household survival strategies. It does not always follow that a higher income from migration buys well-being and happiness (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010) Theoretically, households have the ability to control risk to their economic well-being through the allocation of family labor in different labor markets (Jong, Chamratrithirong & Tran, 2002). During periods when economic conditions in urban areas are stronger than in rural areas and rural labor productivity does not result in sufficient income, the household can rely on remittances from urban migrants to support their daily life (Jong, Chamratrithirong & Tran, 2002).

Migration is also a selective process. Migrants from rural-to-urban areas are most likely to be younger people with better education or skills. Many scholars also argue that migrants are healthier than non-migrants. However, this argument may be based on short-term evidence, since migrants may be in relatively better health on arrival but not in the long-run. In many cases, migrants' health degenerates due to difficult access to health care and poor living conditions (McDonald & Kennedy, 2004; Lankila *et al.,* 2013; Lu & Qin, 2014).

For decades, Thailand has experienced population distribution imbalances due to the economic and social differences between rural and urban areas. The influx of capitalism has further converted the traditional social structure of Thailand from an

agricultural to an industrial society (Siriprachai, 1995; Entwisle, Walsh, Rindfuss & Chamrathithirong, *et al.* 1998). As a result, Bangkok and other large cities have become the main destination for rural-to-urban migrants, due to high labor demand in the industrial and service sectors (Ratniyom, 2002).

Considering the migration history in the Northeast of Thailand, the National Statistical Office (NSO) recorded that 8.9 percent of Northeastern people migrated out of the region in 1980, with levels for 1990 and 2000 being respectively 7.8 percent and 37.4 percent. Of those, 70 percent and 76 percent were 5-year migrants aged 30 to 39 years, respectively (NSO, 1980; 1990; 2000). The 5-year migrants from the Northeast region accounted for 76.0, 83.2, 87.0 and 84.3 percent of all internal migration respectively in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2013 (NSO, 1980; 1990; 2000; 2013).

Among Thailand's 76 provinces, Buriram is the sixth largest supplier of migrant workforce in Thailand (United Nations, 1995). This study focuses on Nang Rong, one of the province's districts, as a case study in internal migration. As Thailand has shifted from agricultural to a more labour-export oriented economy, many residents of predominately rural Nang Rong moved out of the district in search of work in the non-agricultural sector. The main destinations of these migrants are: 1) Bangkok; 2) Nakhon Ratchasima City; 3) Laemchabang and Map Ta Phut Industrial Estates along the Eastern Seaboard; and 4) Buriram City. Following this pattern, the average number of migrants in Nang Rong households increased from 0.2 percent in 1957 to 1.8 in 1984, climbing to 1.9 in 1994 (Entwisle, Walsh, Rindfuss & Chamrathithirong, *et al.* 1998).

The present study focuses on the migrants' well being. The comparison between benefit and risk in movement is considered, in view of the fact that, despite several members in some families migrating to urban settings, minimal difference in economic return from migration has been reported (DeWalt, Stonich & Hamilton, 1993; Hugo, 1994). This paradox raises an interesting question: *"Do rural migrants actually achieve a better life in urban areas?"*

## Research Objective

In order to answer the research question, this study explores the benefits of rural-to-urban migration, by examining Nang Rong district as a case study. The changes in the migrant's life, including income, savings, housing, living condition, working hours and social networks, were assessed as indicators of a better life.

## Literature Review

Besides birth and death, migration is considered as a demographic phenomenon which creates changes in the size, distribution and structure of the population (Prasartkul, 2000). Out-migration reduces population at source and increases it in the destination area. It is also well documented that migration can result in an imbalance between population and resources (DaVanzo, 1981; Warr, 1993).

As in many other countries, Thailand is experiencing population distribution imbalances due to the economic and social differences between rural and urban areas (Siriprachai, 1995). The force for migration has accumulated from the evolution of the Thai economy and social system over an extended period of time, at both origin and destination. Considering migration as a selective process which primarily involves healthy young people, in many cases migration causes a decrease in production, as well as labor shortages in the place of origin. In the place of destination, migration can result in social-structural and cultural changes which affect both the migrants and the local people (Lee, 1966; Rattanawarang, 2002). The effect, however, will be different between places, depending on the rate of migration. In a place with a higher rate of migration, people will have to adjust to a more rapidly changing environment, compared to places with a lower rate of migration (Lee, 1966).

From the microeconomic perspective, the benefits of migration may accrue over a period of time. For this reason, migration is an investment that entails costs now in the hope of benefits in the future. Migration is also considered as an investment in human capital, because it is embodied in the human being as a long-term benefit. Therefore, migrants may be expecting future benefits rather than short-term increases in their earning potential. Potential migrants will compare both the strong points and the obstacles at both origin and destination (DaVanzo, 1981).

Nevertheless, this perspective is often criticized due to its unclear assumptions. For example, the utility of migration is not easily observable or measurable, migrants may not actually analyze cost-benefit implications, or people do not always make rational decisions when they move. The workers who have to move for job rotation or new positions, or the children who move to another region to accompany their parents, are less likely to move of their own free will (Lee, 1966).

It is not surprising, therefore, that numerous economic models have been employed to measure the benefits of migration in an attempt to understand actual behavior, rather than to describe survey respondents' reports of motivation, goals, or intention. The potential migrant's assessment of expected benefits and cost of migration is therefore determined by measuring income, wages and availability of public services. All of these indicators tend to influence policy more directly than the more subjective variables that are often employed (DaVanzo, 1981; Todaro, 1976).

## Data and Method

*Source of data*

This study has been developed by reference to the longitudinal study "Demographic Responses to a Changing Environment in Nang Rong: 1984-2000," managed by the Institute for Population and Social Research of Thailand's Mahidol University (IPSR) and the Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill). This dataset provides rich information on population dynamics, that can be seen from the household roster and life-history calendar. The dataset also includes variables to measure socio-economic status, assets and occupational tools, fertility, mortality, migration processes, land use patterns and agricultural equipment of the household. Despite these advantages, the data employed for the analysis are derived from a study concluded in 2000, or 14 years ago at the time of writing. Nevertheless, the amount of data and the longitudinal nature of the study, can help explain rural-urban migration in ways that are still relevant today.

Systematic, probability random sampling was applied in the sample areas at the sub-district level and village levels. A complete census of all households in the sample villages was collected. In general, the unique characteristics of these panel data are appropriate for this type of examination.

Nang Rong district is located in the southwest of Buriram Province, close to the Thai-Cambodian border. It occupies an area of approximately 1,300 sq. km and forms part of the southern portion of the Korat Plateau. Historically, most of the Nang Rong population consisted of farming families tilling rice, cassava and sugar cane. Over time, however, soil deterioration, coupled with decreasing annual precipitations, resulted in lower and unstable crop yields. Thus, households experienced economic pressure to meet essential needs and some family members decided to migrate to urban areas to supplement income and improve their families' prospects (Rattanawarang, 2002; Katewongsa *et al.,* 2013).

Nang Rong district has experienced accelerated social and economic change in the past three decades. Migration has changed household land-use by the movement of its members. Members of landless households were often forced to leave the home community, while those with large land-holdings experienced out-migration of their younger working-age family members for jobs in industrial areas (DeWalt *et al.,* 1993; Entwisle *et al.* 1998).

The dataset of this study includes follow-up of rural-to-urban migration from three sections of the survey: 1) Migration history from the life-history calendar; 2)

Migrant characteristics; and 3) Migration experience. These data were then processed by multivariate analysis. Data were merged and restructured into the individual level as the primary unit of analysis. The life history calendar was used to analyze migration experience by observing longitudinal data obtained from retrospective analysis of respondents between the ages of 13-51. After being merged, 2,270 cases were observed as the units of analysis.

## Measurements

*Outcome variable: Better life indicators*

Most previous studies assessed 'better life' by subjective measures, by asking a set of questions which expressed migrants' feelings about several aspects of urban life and their life satisfaction. However, to measure the actual life situation of migrants, the present study employed an objective approach by focusing on eight essential dimensions of a "better life index", as adapted from the "Better Life Initiative 2011" of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011).

To measure migrants' post-migration circumstances, conditions on first arrival were compared to the present situation at destination. A positive result from a comparison of the changes in the migrant's situation indicates a 'better life', while a negative result, or no change, was interpretated as 'no better life.' The following formula was used to calculate migrants' better life:

$$BLMs = Sj - Si$$

***BLMs*** represents the better life index of the migrant, Sj reflects the present situation at the destination and Si denotes the situation at first arrival. A negative or zero result implies that the migrant does not have a better life in the new location. Conversely, a positive result implies that migration has contributed to a better life.

The OECD "better life index" draws on data for housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, civic engagement, health, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance. The index is considered as a useful analytical tool for measuring well-being, because it allows comparison accross countries (OECD, 2011). However, due to the limitations of the data issued by the Nang Rong-IPSR survey, the better life index for this study encompasses eight statistical models using the same independent variables for eight different dependent variables, as per the better life indices, as follows: 1) Income, 2) Savings, 3) Air flow and privacy, 4) Water supply, 5) Kitchen, 6) Toilet facilities, 7) Working hours and 8) Social networks.

*Explanatory variables*

Logistic regression analysis has been employed to examine better-life determinants. The theoretical variables according to both macro and micro perspectives of migration were applied in the model (DaVanzo, 1981; Evans, 1987; Todaro, 1976; Van Landingham, 2003; Chen, 2011). Nine independent variables were entered into the models: 1) Gender; 2) Age at first move; 3) Moving time period; 4) Marital status; 5) Years of education; 6) Dependants at arrival; 7) Access to social networks; 8) Number of moves; and 9) Moving cohort.

The moving cohort variable was constructed by using 'year at first move' as the baseline and categorized by the economic status of Thailand as measured by GDP. Finally, the variable was divided into four categories: 1) Before 1985 (slower economic growth); 2) 1986-1990 (faster economic growth); 3) 1991-1996 (normal economic growth); and 4) 1997-2000 (the so-called 'Tom Yum Kung' crisis when the Thai baht suffered a 100 percent devaluation against the US dollar).

## Results

*Sample description*

A greater proportion of Nang Rong migrants were female. The majority of migrants who moved away from Nang Rong were married, female and had completed primary education. The average age at first move was approximately 17 years, and most moved between 1991 and 1996, at times of normal economic growth. The number of moves varied, ranging from one to 27, with an average of two. Prior to moving, most migrants utilized their social networks in readiness for relocation, as indicated by the presence of friends or relatives at the destination. Most first movers arrived with no dependants.

**Table 1** Characteristics of the Nang Rong district migrants

| Migrant characteristics | Mean | S.D. | Min | Max | Measurement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | Nominal |
| Age at first move | 16.74 | 4.77 | 13 | 58 | Interval |
| Moving cohort | 2.36 | 1.02 | 1 | 4 | Ordinal |
| Moving time period | 10.82 | 6.74 | 0 | 38 | Ratio |
| Marital status | 1.76 | 0.57 | 1 | 4 | Nominal |
| Years of education | 8.09 | 3.38 | 0 | 16 | Ratio |
| Dependants at first arrival | 0.38 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 | Nominal |
| Access to social networks | 0.75 | 0.43 | 0 | 1 | Nominal |
| Number of moves | 1.61 | 0.91 | 1 | 27 | Ratio |

*Better life: The expected benefit of migrants*

Numerous scholars have pointed out that rural people decide to move to urban areas expecting to improve their own circumstances and those of their immediate family. All too often, however, migration is also viewed as a gamble, with migrants as players or investors in the migration process. Their success or failure is decided by numerous factors (Schultz, 1976).

**Table 2** Percentage distribution of migrants' better life

| Indicators | Better | Not better | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income | 84.2 | 15.8 | 100.0 |
| Monetary savings | 32.6 | 67.4 | 100.0 |
| Air flow and privacy | 56.0 | 44.0 | 100.0 |
| Water supply | 44.1 | 55.9 | 100.0 |
| Kitchen | 21.0 | 79.0 | 100.0 |
| Toilet facilities | 26.0 | 74.0 | 100.0 |
| Working hours | 19.2 | 80.8 | 100.0 |
| Social network with fellow northeasterners | 39.3 | 60.7 | 100.0 |
| Average (Total divided by number of indicators) | 40.3 | 59.7 | |

To measure migrants' change in conditions, as shown in Table 2, the data from present situation at the destination and the initial situation at first arrival were compared. Table 2 shows that rural-to-urban migration was able to meet migrants' expectation of a better life at a level of 40.3 percent overall. More than half of the migrants failed to meet the criteria of a better-life standard, however. Nevertheless, if considering that the main purpose of migration was to gain higher income, the vast majority (84.2

percent) accomplished their goal. In terms of savings as an indicator of cumulative income, only 32.6 percent of migrants were able to save money.

The housing and living condition index was measured by air flow and privacy of living place, water supply, kitchen and toilet facilities. The result of the present study found that 56 percent of migrants had better air flow and privacy, while improvements in water supply was reported by 44.1 percent of respondents. It should be noted, however that, because migrants might already have had a good water supply since their first arrival, these results cannot be interpreted directly as an indicator of an unfavorable living condition.

Unlike the rest of the living condition indicators, there was no improvement in kitchen and toilet facilities for most migrants, when compared to first arrival. Only 21 percent of migrants had a better kitchen and 26 percent had better toilet facilities, as shown in Table 2.

Social networks with fellow northeasterners and work-life balance can be considered as an important benefit for migrants, but are often neglected in survey measurements. This study found that 19.2 percent of migrants had fewer working hours than at the previous location. Aside from the financial considerations of a reduction in income, fewer working hours can be interpreted as a favorable indicator, since a shorter working week results in reduced fatigue and less work-related stress. Fewer working hours may also provide the migrants with more opportunity to relax and engange in social activities, to enhance their social networks. It is not surprising, therefore, that most migrants in this study worked longer hours than at their previous location. Since a higher income was the main motivation for migrating, they were willing to work long hours, despite a lower work-life balance and less time to relax.

*Determinants of a better life*

The same eight statistical models in the logistic regression analysis were employed to examine better-life determinants of migrants across each dimension, including: 1) Income; 2) Monetary savings; 3) Air flow and privacy; 4) Water supply; 5) Kitchen; 6) Toilet facilities; 7) Working hours; and 8) Social network with fellow northeasterners. The same set of independent variables was entered into the eight models to examine the explanatory factors of migrants' better life.

The nine independent variables in the equation included: 1) Gender; 2) Age at first move; 3) Moving time period; 4) Marital status; 5) Years of education; 6) Dependants on arrival; 7) Access to social networks; 8) Number of moves; and 9) Moving cohort. Tests of co-linearity and multi-colinearity were conducted using a correlation matrix to examine highly inter-correlated predictor variables as a basic assumption of logistic regression. These tests confirmed that no pair of independent variables had a correlation greater than 0.65. For this reason, all independent variables were allowed into the statistical models. Table 3 illustrates the findings.

**Table 3** Logistic regression odds ratios of independent variables on economic benefits

| Variables | | Incomes | Saving money |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male migrant | Odds ratios | 0.819 | 0.813† |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.164) | (.125) |
| Age at first move | Odds ratios | 0.987 | 0.971† |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.018) | (.016) |
| Moving time period | Odds ratios | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.000) | (.000) |
| Migrant's marital status | | | |
| - Single# | | | |
| - Married | Odds ratios | 1.158 | 1.230 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.183) | (.140) |
| - Widowed | Odds ratios | 2.380 | 0.971 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (1.121) | (.703) |
| - Divorced and Separated | Odds ratios | 1.285* | 0.725 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.510) | (.375) |
| Years of education | Odds ratios | 1.080 | 1.062** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.031) | (.021) |
| Dependants at first arrival | Odds ratios | 1.058 | 1.125 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.172) | (.131) |
| Access to social networks | Odds ratios | 1.649** | 0.963 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.193) | (.151) |
| Number of moves | Odds ratios | 0.989 | 0.956 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.043) | (.036) |
| Moving cohort | | | |
| - 1997 – 2000# ('Tom Yum Kung' baht crisis) | | | |
| - Before 1985 (Slower economic growth) | Odds ratios | 7.456*** | 1.865* |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.338) | (.264) |
| - 1986 – 1990 (Faster economic growth) | Odds ratios | 5.447*** | 2.361*** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.263) | (.228) |
| - 1991 – 1996 (Normal economic growth) | Odds ratios | 3.838*** | 2.022** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.213) | (.209) |
| Constant | Odds ratios | 0.772 | 0.278** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.582) | (.476) |
| n | | 2270 | 2270 |
| Wald Chi square | | 90.217*** | 42.575*** |
| Degree of freedom | | 13 | 13 |
| Cox and Snell R2 | | .069 | .033 |

#Reference group, † p value < 0.10, * p value < 0.05, ** p value < 0.01, *** p value < 0.001

Table 3 shows that 'moving cohort' had the strongest effect on household income, both in terms of income and savings. After controlling for factors, migrants who moved during the economic crisis of 1997-2000 were 5.6 times less likely to have better incomes than other cohorts and this was statistically significant (odds ratios = 7.46*** before 1985, 5.45*** in 1986-1990, and 3.84*** in 1991-1996 respectively). They were also 2.1 times less likely to have increased savings, and this was also statistically significant (odds ratios = 1.86* before 1985, 2.36*** in 1986-1990 and 2.02** in 1991-1996 respectively).

Social networks also played a significant role in migrants' life, with those belonging to a social network on arrival, being 1.65 times more likely to enjoy better income compared to those without a social network (odds ratios = 1.65**). The years of education positively influenced migrants' savings (odds ratios = 1.06**), while marital status influenced income, with divorced and separated migrants 1.3 times more likely to have better income compared to single migrants (odds ratios = 1.27*).

In terms of housing and living conditions, it is noteworthy that, compared to singles, married migrants had better living conditions across all dimensions (odds ratios = 61.81*** airflow/privacy, 48.37*** water supply, 3.01*** kitchen and 5.74*** toilet facilities respectively), after controlling for factors (Table 4). Moreover, male migrants were 45 percent less likely to have better kitchen and toilet facilities than females (odds ratios = 0.46*** and 0.65*** respectively). Education can improve migrants' quality of living conditions. This analysis showed that an increase in a year of education significantly and positively influenced improvement in water supply, kitchen and toilet facilities.

**Table 4** Logistic regression odds ratios of independent variables on living conditions

| Variables | | Air flow and Privacy | Water supply | Kitchen | Toilet facilities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male migrant | Odds ratios | 1.083 | 0.950 | 0.457*** | 0.645*** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.161) | (.141) | (.135) | (.124) |
| Age at first move | Odds ratios | 0.966† | 0.999 | 1.013 | 1.017 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.018) | (.016) | (.015) | (.014) |
| Moving time period | Odds ratios | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) |
| Migrant's marital status | | | | | |
| - Single# | | | | | |
| - Married | Odds ratios | 61.806*** | 48.372*** | 3.010*** | 5.743*** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.183) | (.194) | (.158) | (.157) |
| - Widowed | Odds ratios | 2.812 | 1.711 | 1.774 | 0.733 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.718) | (1.073) | (.695) | (1.065) |
| - Divorced and Separated | Odds ratios | 1.699 | 1.800 | 0.865 | 1.486 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.377) | (.507) | (.465) | (.437) |
| Years of education | Odds ratios | 1.000 | 1.061** | 1.074*** | 1.084*** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.026) | (.023) | (.020) | (.019) |
| Dependants at first arrival | Odds ratios | 0.867 | 0.815 | 0.825 | 0.942 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.172) | (.149) | (.140) | (.130) |
| Access to social networks | Odds ratios | 1.053 | 1.252 | 1.218 | 1.043 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.192) | (.164) | (.158) | (.146) |
| Number of moves | Odds ratios | 0.946 | 0.992 | 1.030 | 0.992 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.041) | (.036) | (.033) | (.036) |
| Moving cohort | | | | | |
| - 1997 – 2000# | | | | | |
| ('Tom Yum Kung' baht devaluation crisis) | | | | | |
| - Before 1985 | Odds ratios | 1.477 | 1.061 | 2.063** | 0.692 |
| (Slower economic growth) | (Std.Err.) | (.314) | (.279) | (.250) | (.240) |
| - 1986 – 1990 | Odds ratios | 1.621† | 1.306 | 1.446† | 0.853 |
| (Faster economic growth) | (Std.Err.) | (.266) | (.252) | (.225) | (.209) |
| - 1991 – 1996 | Odds ratios | 1.627* | 1.273 | 1.016 | 0.901 |
| (Normal economic growth) | (Std.Err.) | (.234) | (.232) | (.209) | (.188) |
| Constant | Odds ratios | 0.211** | 0.033*** | 0.055*** | 0.061*** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.575) | (.528) | (.480) | (.449) |
| n | | 2270 | 2270 | 2270 | 2270 |
| Wald Chi square | | 1067.501*** | 851.877*** | 126.482*** | 179.717*** |
| Degree of freedom | | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Cox and Snell $R^2$ | | .488 | .414 | .076 | .106 |

# Reference group, †p value < 0.10, *p value < 0.05, **p value < 0.01, ***p value < 0.001

In terms of work-life balance and social network dimensions, the present study found that migrants' age at first move was negatively associated with working hours. An inverse relationship was observed between age at first move and working hours, with older migrants being less likely to enjoy better working hours.

Regarding the moving cohort, people who moved between 1991 and 1996 were twice as likely to have better working hours than people who moved during the period of economic crisis (odds ratios = 2.01***).

In terms of social networks with fellow northeasterners, Table 5 illustrates that male and married migrants were about 30 percent less likely to have better social networks, compared to their female and single counterparts (odds ratios = 0.71** and 0.65** respectively).

**Table 5** Logistic regression odds ratios of independent variables on psychic benefits

| Variables | | Working Hours | Social Networks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male migrant | Odds ratios | 1.172 | 0.712** |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.147) | (.120) |
| Age at first move | Odds ratios | 0.961* | 1.002 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.019) | (.015) |
| Moving time period | Odds ratios | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.000) | (.000) |
| Migrant's marital status | | | |
| - Single# | | | |
| | Odds ratios | 0.845 | 0.652** |
| - Married | (Std.Err.) | (.165) | (.135) |
| | Odds ratios | 1.140 | 0.576 |
| - Widowed | (Std.Err.) | (.809) | (.751) |
| | Odds ratios | 1.662 | 0.683 |
| - Divorced and Separated | (Std.Err.) | (.364) | (.335) |
| Years of education | Odds ratios | 0.995 | 1.005 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.026) | (.020) |
| Dependants at first arrival | Odds ratios | 1.212 | 0.893 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.154) | (.128) |
| Access to social networks | Odds ratios | 1.129 | 1.099 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.181) | (.149) |
| Number of moves | Odds ratios | 0.990 | 0.995 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.038) | (.032) |
| Moving cohort | | | |
| - 1997 – 2000# | | | |
| ('Tom Yum Kung' baht devaluation crisis) | | | |
| - Before 1985 | Odds ratios | 1.313 | 0.786 |
| (Slower economic growth) | (Std.Err.) | (.321) | (.528) |
| - 1986 – 1990 | Odds ratios | 1.554 | 1.004 |
| (Faster economic growth) | (Std.Err.) | (.278) | (.349) |
| - 1991 – 1996 | Odds ratios | 1.998** | 1.106 |
| (Normal economic growth) | (Std.Err.) | (.249) | (.250) |
| Constant | Odds ratios | 0.267* | 0.593 |
| | (Std.Err.) | (.565) | (.467) |
| n | | 2270 | 2270 |
| Wald Chi square | | 23.277* | 23.067* |
| Degree of freedom | | 13 | 13 |
| Cox and Snell $R^2$ | | .018 | .018 |

#Reference group, †p value < 0.10 , *p value < 0.05, **p value < 0.01, ***p value < 0.001

## Conclusion

Rural-to-urban migration has indeed changed the life of most Nang Rong families. Migration has been able to fulfill migrants' expectations of a better life at a level of about 40 percent, overall. Nevertheless, based on the better life index, more than half of migrants who moved from rural to urban areas failed to obtain a better life at their destination. This result corresponds with the findings from previous studies whereby, even though migrants experienced increased daily or monthly incomes, this was achieved through difficult working and living conditions, and psychological stress. The longer working hours, while generating higher income, took their toll on migrants' emotional happiness and relaxation (Evans, 1987; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010; Chen, 2011).

When moving for better income, migrants need to take the economic condition of the country into consideration. Moving during a period of economic crisis carries a higher risk of lower income and fewer savings. An economic downturn is associated with unemployment, job loss and lower wages. A slowdown can disproportionately affect the cost of living (OECD, 2008). Furthermore, the role of social networks affects the flow, quality of information and job opportunity. Historical analyses from France, Spain and Thailand suggest that youth, foreign immigrants, lower-skilled migrants and those without social networks are more likely to face the adverse consequences of rising unemployment, lower income and reduced quality of life (Granovetter, 2005; Sawangdee, Katewongsa & Musikaphan, 2009).

The standard of living conditions, especially kitchen and toilet facilities, can have a direct effect on migrants' sanitation. The results from this study indicate that only a minority of migrants had better kitchen and toilet facilities compared to the time of their first arrival, and this was particularly true for male and single migrants. Results from Table 4 indicate that being female and married are strong, positive predictors for better living conditions. Most household chores and taking care of family members are carried out by women (Ross & Ross, 2012). For this reason, females or married migrants tend to experience better living conditions compared to their male or single counterparts.

It is noteworthy that the years of completed education also had a significant positive effect on living conditions. Those who lack information on what is a good living standard may place a lower priority on their own standard of living and it is advisable, therefore, to inform would-be migrants on the importance of living conditions for quality of life (Siriprachai, 1995; Katewongsa, 2013).

Finally, migrants gained the least benefit towards a better life from improvements in social support networks and work-life balance. Nevertheless, social support

networks and work-life balance are still important factors for migrant welfare. Age at first move and moving cohort were associated with better working hours (Granovetter, 2005). Meanwhile, females and married migrants had stronger social support networks than males and singles. The results from both living conditions and emotional well-being suggest that though rural-to-urban migration might generate higher incomes, the same does not hold true for increased happiness and well-being (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010).

The findings from this study suggest that it is not easy for migrants to achieve a better life by moving for work. Migrants' expectations of a better life in the city were not totally accomplished in this case study of Nang Rong district families Even though better incomes can be realized in the near-term, living standard and work-life balance might worsen over time (Evans, 1987; Chen, 2011). In other words, migrants often find themselves working extended hours and living in a crowded area as the trade-off for a higher income. These results are consistent with the findings from previous studies, which reported a minimal difference in benefits derived from migration (DeWalt, Stonich & Hamilton, 1993; Hugo, 1994; Van Landingham, 2003). The findings from this study also confirm that migration is often viewed as a gamble, with migrants being the players or investors in the migration process. They may succeed or fail depending on the above factors (Schultz, 1976).

In summary, well-managed migration can help maximize potential benefits and reduce risks associated with migration. Would-be migrants from a rural to an urban area should first assess the current economic situation, social networks, couple support and their individual characteristics, especially age and education. A favorable combination of these supportive components could help migrants achieve their goal of a better life as the desired result.

## References

### In Thai

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (1980). *The 1980 Population and Housing Census (Whole Kingdom),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (1990).*The 1990 Population and Housing Census (Whole Kingdom),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (2000). *The 2000 Population and Housing Census (Whole Kingdom),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (1980). *The 1980 Population and Housing Census (Northeast),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (1990). *The 1990 Population and Housing Census (Northeast),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (2000). *The 2000 Population and Housing Census (Northeast),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

National Statistical Office of Thailand, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. (2013). *The 2013 Migration Survey (Whole Kingdom),* Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Thailand.

**In English**

Chen, J. (2011). Internal Migration and Health: Re-examining the Healthy Migrant Phenomenon in China. *Social Science & Medicine, 72*(8), 1294-1301. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.02.016

DaVanzo, J. (1981). Microeconomic Approaches to Studying Migration Decisions, in G.F. De Jong and R.W. Gardner (Eds.), *Migration Decision Making* (pp. 90-129). Santa Monica.

DeWalt, B.R., S.C. Stonich & S.L. Hamilton. (1993). Honduras : Population, Inequality, and Resource Destruction. In J. Carole & T. Barbara Boyle (Eds.), *Population and Land Use in Development Countries* (pp. 106-123). Washington DC: National Academy Press.

Entwisle, B., S.J. Walsh, R.R. Rindfuss & A. Chamrathithirong. (1998). Landuse, Land-Cover and Population Dynamics, Nang Rong, Thailand. In D. Liverman, E. F. Moran, R. R. Rindfuss & P. C. Stern (Eds.), *People and Pixels: Linking Remote Sensing and Social Science* (pp. 121-144). Washington D. C.: National Academy Press.

Evans, J. (1987). Introduction: Migration and Health. *International Migration Review,* 21(3): v-xiv. doi: 10.2307/2546605

Granovetter, M. (2005). The Impact of Social Structure on Economic Outcomes. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 19(1), 33-50.

Hugo, G. (1994). Migration as a Survival Strategy: *The Family Dimension of Migration.* Paper Presented at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Population Distribution and Migration, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Jong, G.F., A. Chamratrithirong & Q.G. Tran. (2002). For Better, for Worse: Life Satisfaction Consequences of Migration. *International Migration Review,* 36(3), 838-863.

Kahneman, D., & A. Deaton. (2010). High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but not Emotional Well-Being. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America,* 107(38), 16489–16493. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1011492107

Katewongsa, P., Y. Sawangdee, J.S. Walsh & A. Chamratrithirong. (2013). Effect of Population Dynamics and Mechanization on Agricultural Land Use: An Evidence from Nang Rong, Thailand. *Journal of Population and Social Studies,* 21(2), 154-170.

Lankila, T., S. Näyhä, A. Rautio, M. Koiranen, J. Rusanen & A. Taanila. (2013). Health and Well-Being of Movers in Rural and Urban Areas – A Grid-Based Analysis of Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1966. *Social Science & Medicine,* 76, 169-178. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.10.021

Lee, E. S. (1966). A Theory of Migration. *Demography,* 3 (1), 49.

Lu, Y. & L. Qin. (2014). Healthy Migrant and Salmon Bias Hypotheses: A Study of Health and Internal Migration in China. *Social Science & Medicine,* 102, 41-48. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.11.040

McDonald, J.T. & S. Kennedy. (2004). Insights into the 'Healthy Immigrant Effect': Health Status and Health Service Use of Immigrants to Canada. *Social Science & Medicine,* 59(8), 1613-1627. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2004.02.004

Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD). (2008). Impact of the Economic Crisis on Employment and Unemployment in the OECD Countries. *Economic Outlook and Interim Global Economic Assessment* 84, 1-19.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD). (2011). *How's life?: Measuring well-being,* OECD Publishing. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264121164-en

Pramote Prasartkul. (2000). *Demography: Substantive Study on Human Population,* in Thai. Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University Printing.

Ratniyom, A. (2002). *The Relationship between Industrialzation and Migration: Application to Industrial Development Zone at Laem Chabang and Map Ta Phut area.* Doctoral Dissertation, The National Institute of Development Adiministration (NIDA), Thailand.

Rattanawarang, W. (2002). *Migration and Land Use Change: A Case Study in Nang Rong, Buriram.* Doctoral dissertation, Mahidol University, Thailand.

Ross, R. & J. Ross. (2012). People of Thai Heritage. In L.D. Purnell (Ed.), *Transcultural Health Care: A Culturally Competent Approach* (pp. 1-18). F.A. Davis Press.

Sawangdee, Y., P. Katewongsa & W. Musikaphan. (2009). Impact of Economic Fluctuation and 1997 Thailand Economic Crisis on Cirrhosis Cause of Death. *Journal of Population and Social Studies,* 18(1), 49.60.

Schultz, T.P. (1976). Notes on the estimation of migration decision functions. Paper presented at the World Bank Research Workshop on Rural-Urban Labor Market Interactions, Washington, D.C.

Siriprachai, S. (1995) Population Growth, Fertility Decline, Poverty and Deforestation in Thailand, 1850-1990. In M. Hoadley & C. Gunnarsson (Eds.), *Village Concept in the Transformation in Rural Southeast Asia* (pp. 92-116) London: Curzon Press.

Sjaastad, L.A. (1962). The Costs and Returns of Human Migration. *Journal of Political Economy,* 70(5), 80-93.

Todaro, M.P. (1976). *International Migration in Developing Countries.* Switzerland: International Labour Office.

United Nations. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (1995). *Trends, Patterns, and Implications of Rural-Urban Migration in India, Nepal, and Thailand.* United Nations, New York.

Van Landingham, M. (2003). Impacts of Rural to Urban Migration on the Health of Young Adult Migrants in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Paper presented at the African Migration in Comparative Perspective, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Warr, P.G. (1993). *The Thai Economy in Transition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.