

# New Trends in Irregular Migration under Economic Integration

in North East and South East Asia

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## 1 Objective of the study

The objective of this paper is to explore possibilities of migration policy in the era of regional economic integration, where internal movement of workers and citizens are in increasing tendency, while there are also growing potential of irregular migration which bring about growing risks for the nations within the region.

In such discussions, “securitization” concept of the Copenhagen School has become more widespread among experts and migration policy makers.

In ASEAN, there have been several political discussions at the regional level to introduce new technologies in migration control to facilitate internal migration while reducing irregular migration. This is important to realize free movement of skilled labor by the end of 2015. In addition, ASEAN Human Rights Declaration was adopted so as to eliminate exploitation of workers and trafficking in the face of growing activity of smugglers in ASEAN countries especially in Indochina Peninsula. In this presentation, the present stage of irregular migration in such regions will be demonstrated.

## 2 Nature of irregular migration in North East and South East Asia

Irregular migration is more costly and irregular migrants are exposed to higher risks than regular migration, Irrespective of such costs and risks, it has become commercialized in East Asia.

Irregular migration can take place not only based upon strong motivation of migrants to get out of poverty, but also through deceptive recruitment by recruiters (agents), who try to match labor demand of and supply for migrants. The cost to cross border with illegal measures is very high because of risks and rights of migrants are not guaranteed but are exposed to several dangers. In addition, asymmetric information between migrants in a country and employers in another country leads to exploitation as well as conflicts.

Talking about pull factors of cross-border migration are growing mismatches in the labor markets. The positions or occupations in such labor markets at the local level cannot be filled by locals or cannot be filled by youngsters, who move to urban areas.

Talking about push factors, difficulty of subsistence for families, high poverty and underemployment, low education and school dropouts can be important background. Naturally, social unrest, repressive politics, wars and civil wars can be also push factors. Many of such irregular migrants cannot get any protection like refugees by Geneva Convention and New York. However, because of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol, many Asian countries enacted anti-trafficking legislation and formulated plans of action to combat trafficking.

Especially in North East Asia and South East Asia, this has changed the political circumstance of irregular migration and gradually changing the attitudes to victims of trafficked persons. Gender-specific irregular migration is attracted political attention. These are changes in better direction. In this presentation, the author raises several examples of irregular migration and policy changes in the 2010s.

### **3 Possible linkages between economic integration and migration management**

For the past one decade, regional economic integration in North East and South East Asia has been advancing not only through *de facto* economic integration but also *de jure* economic integration. Especially, ASEAN+1 scheme has created many free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements in this region.

However, schemes of international migration has not been a main agenda of such trade negotiations. Recruitment, transportation and working conditions of migrant workers are regulated mainly through MOUs together with national legislations. ASEAN countries, has accumulated many kinds of experiences to prevent human rights violation and to protect migrants ,while migrants themselves still have strong obligations and risks of deportation. In relation to this policy agenda, the author try to discuss on the schema of economic integration and migration by Prof. Philip Martin.

In reality, the growing international migration in North East and South East Asia has been based upon growing interdependence of local areas with their geographical proximity and common ethnic heritages as well as historically established social networks. Regional and national policies can be adjusted to local conditions and be linked with activities of civil societies, so that they can really function.

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