

Migration, Remittance and Gender Empowered: Case study in Bacninh province, Red River Delta, Vietnam

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Abstract:

This research explores gender differences in migration patterns, income, remittance-sending behavior, gender differences in access to and utilization of remittance-sending services and channels, and the relationship between gender and the management and utilization of remittances. The research findings are based on a survey in Bacninh province, Red River Delta of Vietnam show that the proportion of men and women participated in migration was relatively balanced (50.6% and 49.4% respectively). Majority of migrants is young and married with high educated. The largest proportion of migrants (69.4%) participated in daily shift type of migration who is mostly working in the Industrial zones. While male migrants prefer high income job, females search for the stability. However, even though the earning of women migrants is lower than men, they are more likely saving and sending remittance higher in compared with their male counterpart. Remittances play an active role in contributing towards improved living conditions and the economic development of rural households. More than nine out of 10 female and male migrants interviewed feel that the economic condition of their families has improved through their labour migration, with women being somewhat more optimistic. Remittances are used for different purposes, but are mainly spent on daily living expenses, while education and medical expenses also represent a major expense. More than half of both female and male migrants feel that their position of power within their families has improved through their economic contributions.

Keywords: *migration, remittance, gender reproduction, industrialization, employment*

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of Doi moi (Innovation) reforms in the mid-1980s, Vietnam has experienced the fundamental changes in social-economic development. Vietnam economy has maintained an annual economic growth rate of 6-8 percent per year since the early 1990. In line with the process of economic development, resources have shifted from agriculture to other sectors. There has been a change in the structure of GDP whereby the share of agriculture has relative declined from 42 percent in 1989 to 26 percent in 1999 and 21 percent in 2011 while the industry sector has more than doubled from 23 percent in 1990 to 47 percent in 2011 (GSO, 2011). Rapid conversion of land for industrialization is generating a large numbers of landless

and jobless peasants (Nguyen Thi Dien et al., 2015). In Vietnam, the majority of the poor are farmers whose livelihoods are mainly based on agriculture (Bui Minh, 2012). As a result, the State's farmland acquisition has a major effect on the poor in Vietnam's rural and peri-urban areas. During this process inequality was observed between those regions integrated more into the world economy through economic hubs (Haiphong-Hanoi in the North, Danang in the Centre and Hochiminh city in the South). This uneven development became the main factor driving high mobility in Vietnam recently. For example the capital Hanoi, from 2000 to 2009, the average each year, Hanoi's population increased by about 55,000 people, including immigrant number about 22,000 people (40%) and three-quarters of these are migration to urban areas (Dang, 2001) Red River Delta region of Vietnam shares the common features of agrarian transition undergone by the Doimoi Reform. Agricultural land has been converted toward more market and industrial orientation to gain faster economic development. According to the recent National Survey on Land, in a decade from 2000 to 2010, the non-agricultural land increased 89000 hectares while the land for rice production decreased more than 34000 hectares annually (Nguyễn Ngọc Công, 2012). The overall number of landless farmer households in the region was 3.3 percent in 1999, 13.9 percent in 2002 rose up to 22 percent 2012 (FAO, 2014). Red River Delta historically is also the densest populated region in Vietnam with average 0.04 hectares per head¹. Therefore, since late 1990s this region witnessed a significant increase of off-farm business ever. Rural households often adopt more than one strategy to diversify their livelihood such as intensifying agricultural production and diversifying their economic activities in non-farm business. It is noteworthy that this area have a good infrastructure and transport link allows people to seek employment in the capital Hanoi, and local urban centers without the need of leaving their hometown permanent, especially for woman.

Gender has been shown to have a strong influence on both migration and remittance-sending patterns. Gender influences who migrates, as well as when, where, why and how they migrate. It also affects the amount and frequency of the remittances that migrants send, the way in which these are spent or invested, as well as their potential or limitations to contribute to household and local development in rural communities (Peemans, 2013, Pfau and Giang, 2009). According to the traditional view migration is still regarded as men's work.(Vaddhanaphuti and Wittayapak, 2011). Models commonly found in rural Vietnam are men working away, while women stay home care and homes. However, that migrating model is no longer consistent with current practice, especially in these fast developing provinces in Red River Delta. However, the gender dimension of migration is often neglected in research, even negated in some policies. Therefore, this research aimed to examine the impacts of migration on gender reproduction in the Red River Delta of Vietnam. The following section discusses the methodology used in achieving the objectives. Section three presents the main research results while the last part offers a summary and conclusions.

¹ The area of land devoted to production agriculture accounts for 29% of Vietnam's total land area; Vietnam currently has only 0.11 hectares of agricultural land per person. This area however is distributed uneven distribution across regions. In the Red River Delta, land area for agricultural production accounts for 0.04 hectares per head. IN Mekong Delta, the average MRD people have land for 0.14 hectares agricultural land BUI MINH, B. Q. N., DANG THI VIET PHUONG 2012. Agricultural land, peasant and rural development. *Sociology*, 3, 26-33.

2. Methodology

Bac Ninh province which is typical for a peri-urban city around Hanoi Capital in Red River Delta region is selected as the research site. With 823 km² in total and around 1.038 million populations, it is the smallest province of the delta. However, the province has been represented for the prominent features of modernization and industrialization process in the delta. It has been ranked as five of provinces that have the highest investment in the whole country. Currently, Bac Ninh has 15 industrial zone and more than 35 industrial clusters with more than 9400 ha agricultural land acquired (BIZ, 2013). On one hand, Bac Ninh has a lot of industrial zones which could attract a huge immigration form other places as well as intra-province. On the other hand, it has a good infrastructure with Hanoi and other provinces; therefore, it creates chances for their habitants to migrate out. These diversified and complex patterns of migration flows make Bac Ninh the suitable place for research the interaction of migration within the insights of gender perspectives. To understand gender dimensions of labor migration and agricultural production, 182 male and 174 females are selected respondents to do a survey in 2015. Most of the respondents are easily to access intra their village due to daily shift moving is the most popular type of migration. Other respondents who pursuit other types of migration are interviewed in some specific period like New Year and summer holiday. Beside the survey, the group discussions and in-depth interviews are carried in selected communities. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is used to analyze the data and information.

3. Research findings

3.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of surveyed migrants

The proportion of men and women participated in the survey sample was relatively balanced (50.6% and 49.4% respectively). The ages of the migrants range from 18 to 65 years old, with the average age being 32.4. Figure 1 shows the majority of the respondents are younger than 30 years old, with more than half (53.4%) of the entire sample aged from 16 to 30 years old. The age group 30-40 accounts for 28.4 percent of sample, while the age group 40-50 and over 50 years of age account for only 12.1 and 6.2 percent respectively. While 59,8% percent of female migrants are under the age of 30, only 47.3 percent of male migrants belong to this age group. Thus, while the average age of female migrants is 30, the average age of male migrants stands at 34. From data collected, it can be seen that a random selection of migrant workers is slightly older than the national median age of 27.8 (CIA World Factbook, 2011) and that female migrant workers tend to be younger than their female counterparts.

Table 1: Primary correspondents' main characteristic

| Categories | Gender | | | | |
|------------|----------|----|------------|-----|------|
| | Male=182 | | Female=174 | | |
| | N | % | N | % | |
| Age range | <30 | 86 | 47.3 | 104 | 59.8 |
| | 30-<40 | 50 | 27.5 | 51 | 29.3 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---------|------|------|------|
| | 40-<50 | 28 | 15.4 | 15 | 8.6 |
| | >50 | 18 | 9.9 | 4 | 2.3 |
| Education | Primary | 13 | 7.1 | 12 | 6.9 |
| | Secondary | 64 | 35.2 | 63 | 36.2 |
| | High school | 70 | 38.5 | 74 | 42.5 |
| | College | 33 | 18.1 | 25 | 14.4 |
| | After graduation | 2 | 1.1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Marital Status | Married | 119 | 65.3 | 148 |
| Unmarried | | 63 | 34.6 | 26 | 14.9 |

Source: field survey 2015

In term of education, 7 per cent of migrant workers have primary education, 35.7 percent have a secondary education; 40.4 percent have a high school education; and 16.9 percent have a university degree or higher. The female migrants surveyed tend to have a same level of education as their male counterparts with 8.0 percent and 35.1 percent finishing their education upon completion of primary or secondary school, respectively, compared with 7.1 percent and 35.2 percent of male migrants. There is slight difference in the high school and university level between male and female migrants. At high school level female proportion is little lower than male (36.8% and 38.5%). In contrast, at university level female proportion is higher than male (20.1% and 18.1%). Sixteen percent of migrants are college and university degree holders, many in this group graduated from universities in Hanoi, stayed on this city after graduation in order to find jobs, even though they still settle down in BacNinh province. The majority of migrant have secondary and high school education with 35.7% and 40.4% respectively. Among migrants surveyed, very few have participated in higher education, and all of them are male.

Table 1 also reveals that most of migrants (75.2%) are/have been married. However, there are remarkable differences between men and women in different marital groups. Among female respondents, 85.1% per cent are married, whereas for male respondents, the figure is at 65.3 per cent. Only 14.9 per cent of female respondents and 34.6 per cent of male respondents have been single. The higher average age of male migrants might explain some of the differences in marital status and thus needs to be taken into account when looking at this data.

Gender differences in migration patterns

The largest proportion of migrants participated in daily shift which is up to 69.4% of sample size. This popularity could be explained because moving back and forth helps them to minimize the living cost and maximize the earnings. Besides, migrants, especially female migrants still could manage to take care their children, family, houses and agriculture – which were considered as their responsible. Therefore, the proportion of female migrants in daily shift is much higher than male with 80.5% and 58.2% respectively. In contrast, the proportion of male take part in seasonal migration (26.4) is double the female participation (13.2%). The same trend is observed in all other types of migration, although it shares a very limited part.

Table 2: Patterns of migration

| Categories | | Gender | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|------|------------|------|
| | | Male =182 | | Female=174 | |
| | | N | % | N | % |
| Migration types | Daily shift | 106 | 58.2 | 140 | 80.5 |
| | Seasonal migration | 48 | 26.4 | 23 | 13.2 |
| | Long-term migration | 15 | 8.2 | 5 | 2.9 |
| | Permanent migration | 8 | 4.4 | 4 | 2.3 |
| | International migration | 5 | 2.1 | 2 | 1.1 |
| Migrants' Occupation | Agricultural work | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2.3 |
| | Industrial work | 86 | 47.3 | 122 | 70.1 |
| | Official work | 17 | 9.3 | 17 | 9.8 |
| | Service work | 37 | 20.3 | 15 | 8.6 |
| | Self-entrepreneurs | 12 | 6.6 | 9 | 5.2 |
| | Others | 30 | 16.5 | 7 | 4 |
| Moving frequency | Always | 128 | 70.3 | 129 | 74.1 |
| | Occasionally | 54 | 29.7 | 45 | 25.9 |

Source: Field survey 2015

As shown in table 2, nearly twice as many female migrants as males engage in industrial work; while 47.3 per cent of the men in the sample work in this job niche, 70.1 per cent of the women do so. This group includes mostly daily shift migration working in Que Vo industrial zone. This can be explained by the following factors: first, the female migrant surveyed prefer the stability of this jobs; and their actual frequency of movement as well as their need to return home due to family obligations is higher than that of the male respondents. The detailed results of the interviews showed that female migrant workers tend to evaluate job stability highly, with many voicing their fear of changing jobs. Male migrants tend to seek higher income more than employment stability and thus change jobs more frequently or become self-employed. Second, during recent year there is emerging the preference for female labour in the Bacninh Industrial Zones due to their delicate patience, hard-working and “less trouble making” or less aggressive. It could be say that development has open opportunities for women to access employment market and earn more income. However, at the same time, it seems double the burden when they still need to get responsible for their traditional cultural roles.

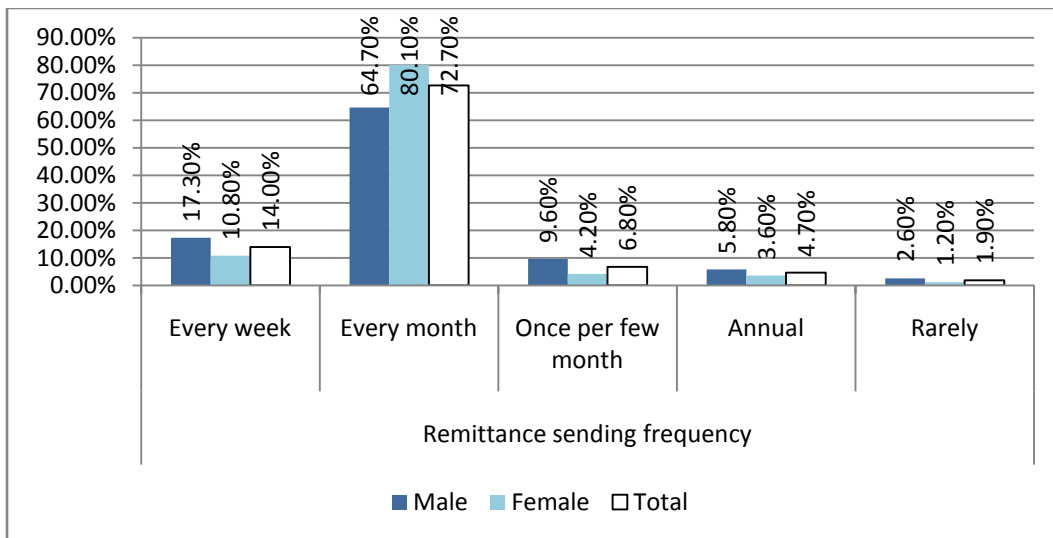
A big difference could also be found in the group of laborer jobs. Among 10.7 per cent working as service workers, male accounts for most with 20.3 per cent of this group. They take the

primary work from driving/ repairing cars and motorbike driver in Hanoi, building constructions intra and inter province and junk collectors and so on.

3.2. Gender difference in income, expenditure and remittance behaviors

As a household economic strategy, remittance plays an important role in circular migration purposes in the village. The volume and frequency of remittances sent back are largely determined by the level of income earned at the destination and the commitment within households. Even though the amount of money depends on level of income individuals earn, most migrants report that they remit half of their income home. 90.7 percent of migrants are claimed by their household that they send remittance back home. And the female migrants are more likely in saving and sending remittance behaviors compared with their male counterpart.

Figure 1: Remittance frequency

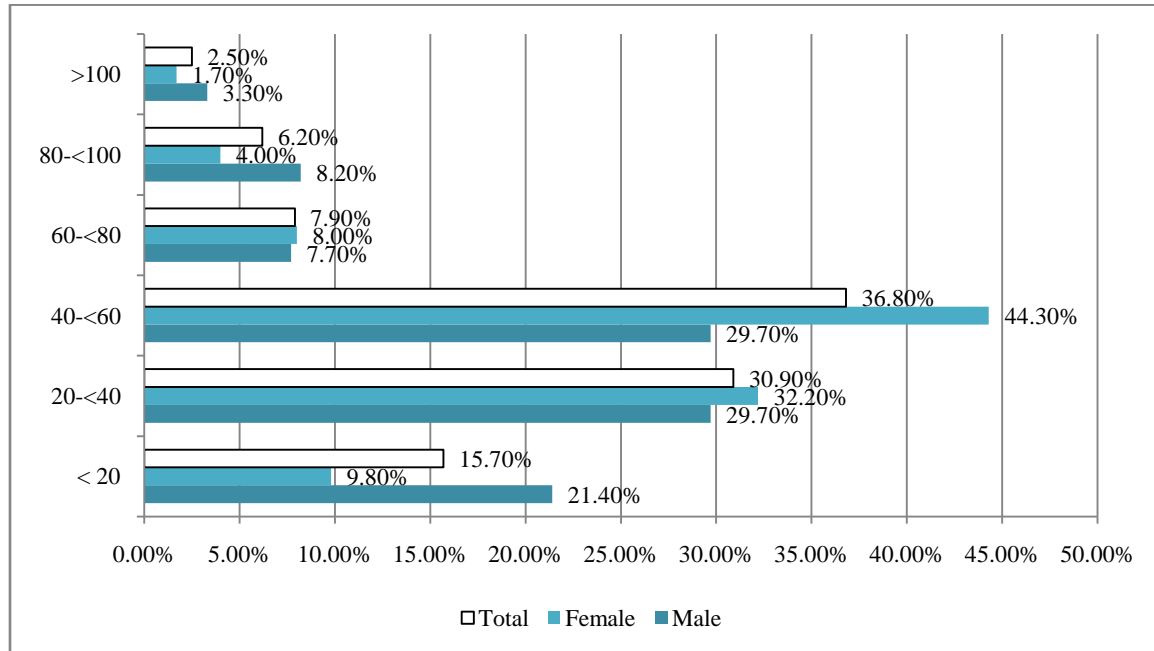


Source: Field survey 2015

Moreover, one of the remarkable features of remittance in the research site is its stability and frequency, which is likely due to the close relationship between the migrants and the family (which will be discussed below). The timing of receiving money in each year however was found to depend upon on the distance and the social networks which permit them to visit or send money home. Due to departures of migrants are mostly near and convenient for them to remit. 72.7 percent of households who reported that they received remittances claimed the frequency of remittance every month. It is coincidence with the wage monthly they received. It is important to note that financial services for money transfer have been developed well in this locality and that the local people are now familiar with this service. From the perspective of migrants, in most cases, they and their family member have bank account. However, most migrants prefer combining visit home and bring their earnings monthly. In this niche, female migrant accounts for 80.1% which is much higher than male migrants. Male migrants sending habit is more diversified. Therefore, the proportions of male behavior in sending remittance every week, or once per few months or every year are all higher than female.

A stable financial inflow ensures the sufficient cash which is entirely opposite with agricultural income which is mainly dependent on the weather and market. It strengthen the household livelihoods security and makes migration becomes a preferable choice for them

Figure 2: Remittance amount



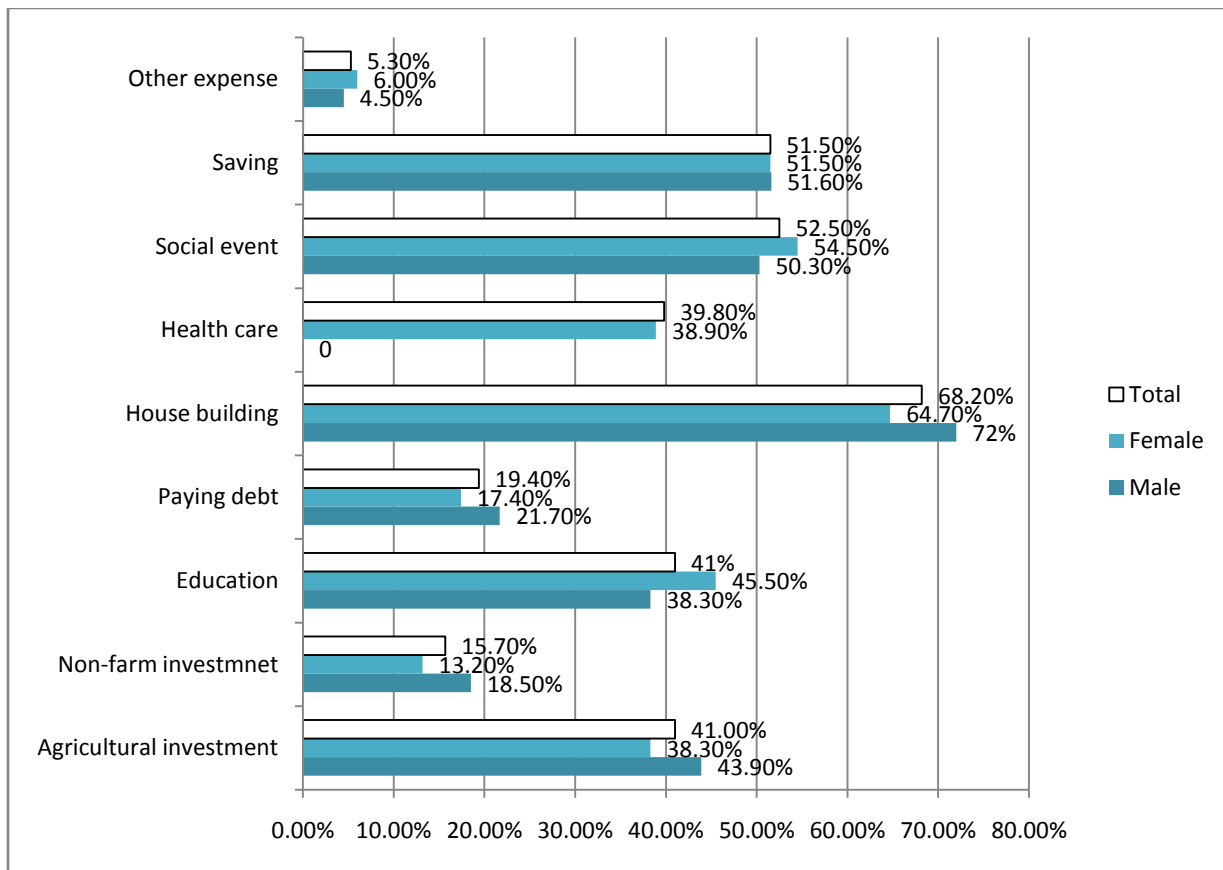
Source: Field survey 2015

The remittance fluctuates quite huge between types of migration. Figure 2 shows the remittance levels in this locality, divided remittance basically into six groups: 1. Under 20 million VND per year, 2. From 20 to 40 million VND per year, 3. From 40 to 60 million VND per year, 4. From 60 to 80 million VND per month, 5. From 80 to 100 million VND per year, 6. Over 100 million VND per year. The first group mostly falls into the household in which the first son has already married but still registers under the same *hokhau* with his parent and circulates out. They send very limited money back to their parent, however, this cannot tell exactly amount of money that they send home, possibly for their wives (who still living in the same dwelling) to take care of their own children. Because the interview is taken with only one member of household, usually the head of household and in most case it will be the eldest male in the family; it cannot capture exactly the inflow of remittance. The sixth group mostly falls into the households which have member migrate international or to the South. Migration to the Southern part such as Ho Chi Minh or Binh Duong city tend to earn the higher income compared with other cities within the countries due to its economic development. Majority is fall in the group 2 and 3, which is equally 29.7 percent for each niche. However, in the group 2, male and female are similar in remittance behavior but in the group 3, female are higher than male (with 44.3% and 29.7% respectively). Group 3 means that migrants send average more than 3 million VND per month.

Three million Vietnam dong is nearly tripled the average income from agriculture for each person per month in the village. A majority of migrants indicated that they benefited from their circulation and earn more than they could in agricultural work. In the village, 83.5 percent of correspondents preferred to have the family member migrate out and send remittance rather than staying put in the village.

Although the amount of remittances from migrants tends to be small, they remain a very crucial financial source for sustaining households. Figure 3 shows the correspondent's purpose of using remittance. It is important to notice that there is a gap between their intended usages with their real usage of remittance. Another crucial point is that figure 3 only reveals the number of people when choosing the remittance purpose, it does not reveal the level of importance of each purpose. For example, if the household have sick or old members, they will devote remittance for health care first and foremost. However, due to the sample size, only 39.8% correspondents reported using remittance for this purpose.

Figure 3: Remittance usage



Source: Field survey 2015

The figure 3 shows house improvement and daily consumption as the most common (68.2%) while social event and saving is second (52.5% and 51.5%) while education and agricultural investment is third (45%). However, when combining with result from the survey about household consumption and reports that the interviewers observed from the field, it shows that the remittance is actually firstly used for household consumption to improve housing and living

conditions of the family, followed by better access to health and then education services. Remittances are often used to upgrade the frequency, quality and variety of food, which is particularly important for families with very young and old members. However, although all household classes use remittances for daily consumption, rich households tended to invest more on consumer durables, tools, and means of transportation while the poor strata use the extra funds for housing, debt reimbursements and health care.

Whether remittances are used for productive purpose or not is always at the heart of the debate. My survey data shows that the share of correspondents which use remittances for productive investments, especially in agricultural production, is relatively large. 67 percent of the correspondents indicated that they had invested in agriculture production. Further in-depth interviews show that 80 percent of the migrants' households receiving remittances planned or actually did invest productively in rice productions or in machinery (for instance hand pumps). However, due to the gap between the intention of remittance usage and the actually use it needs to investigate more to what extent remittances have encouraged risk-taking and have supplied credit for expanding agricultural production.

Regarding to education purpose, twenty two correspondents who chose that purpose are all the households in sample survey who had children still at school age. All of them indicated that they devoted most remittance for their children education. Even in some cases, their living standard is subsistence; they did attempt to invest in children education. It is possibly considered as long-term investment in human capital which would result in long-term patterns of differentiation as suggestion by (Ellis, 2003, Hugo, 2009). The impacts of remittance on the rural society are much more complicated than the current simple economic view (Deshingkar, 2006, De Haan and Zoomers, 2005). In the Red River Delta village, remittances have a social as well as an economic function; they are not only a mean to maintain or improve economic status but also a mean to achieve higher prestige and standing in the local community and family for instance by spending part of remittances on ceremonies or local amenities. Almost 99 per cent of the respondents feel that their remittances are used reasonably, with hardly any difference between male and female respondents.

Nearly as many women as men are in charge of deciding how remittances should be spent (46.5% and 53.5%, respectively). Both groups spend remittances on living expenses, furniture, education, building and repairing the house, and weddings and funerals. However, while 47.6 per cent of men invest in manufacturing, especially agricultural development, only 35.3 per cent of women do so. More women than men spend remittances on developing services or small businesses, health care and debt repayment. Facility buying alone shows the importance of remittances for improved living standards. Remittances greatly contribute to the purchase of numerous facilities.

3.3. Changes in gender norms and roles in rural households

In Viet Nam, traditional views on gender roles within the family still prevail. Men are still considered breadwinners, while women are often reduced to their care and reproductive role. When migration brings the opportunity for female to improve their economic power through salary and remittance, their position of power within their families has enhanced. It is obvious that economic contribution is not the main determinant of the role of a family member, but it is nevertheless an important factor. Literature showed that the level of income is one of the elements considered when husband and wife discuss sharing housework; the narrower the income gap between husband and wife, the more equally they tend to share the housework. It is likely that there is a transfer of power between husband and wife (Loc Nguyen Duc and Grote, 2012, Pfau and Giang, 2008)

Table 3: Increase in respondents' power within the family through economic contributions

| Perception about gender norms change | Gender | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------|------------|------|
| | Male=182 | | Female=174 | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Change remarkably | 16 | 8.8 | 31 | 17.8 |
| Change apart | 89 | 48.9 | 85 | 48.9 |
| Unchanged | 87 | 47.8 | 58 | 33.3 |

Source: Field survey 2015

When asked about the influence of their economic contributions on their power within the family, almost half of the respondents recognize that their power has partly increased (table 3). 40.1% feel that there has been unchanged and 13.3% feel that their power has greatly increased. While an almost equal number of male and female respondents feel that their economic contributions have had partly influence on their position within the family, there are some gender differences between those who felt a difference: twice as many female migrants as males feel that their power has increased significantly (17.8% compared with 8.8%). It is noteworthy that more than half of the female respondents feel that their power has somewhat increased.

Conclusion

Internal migration and its associated remittance flows act as a key livelihood diversification strategy for many rural households and communities - especially those vulnerable households have less access to resources in Vietnam (Oxfam and AAV., 2012). Migration helps rural households cope with the risks and take advantage of revenue opportunities by distributing household labor in many different spaces, to maximize family incomes and reduce risk (Nguyen Thu Phuong et al., 2008). In Red River Delta migration is an important way to diversify household earnings and/ or to ensure the accessibility of resources. Through migration, household members would contribute income, accumulate capital for development. This research aimed to explore gender differences in migration selectivity, remittance behavior, the relationship between gender and the management and utilization of remittances in the home and the community of origin. The study showed that majority of migrants is young and married with high educated. The largest proportion of migrants participated in daily shift type of migration who is mostly working in the Industrial zones. While male migrants prefer high income job, females search for the stability. Twice as many female migrants as males work in industrial zones, which are preferred by flexible working hours which support household and care-taking responsibilities. Remittances play a central role for the families of both male and female respondents. Both female and male respondents feel that their role and power within their family has improved due to their economic contributions. Almost all of the migrants interviewed feel their family is better off. However, remittances are mainly used for daily expenses education, health care, debt repayment, furniture purchase, house construction or investment in production tools. More and more women participate in migration flows, and their status as remittance senders bears the potential to enhance their social status. Given these opportunities, the economic potential of internal remittances needs to be recognized by policymakers and service providers to maximize the development of internal migrants, their families and their communities.

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