

MIGRANTS IN INDUSTRIAL ZONES

A case study in industrial zones in Bac Ninh province, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Based on push and pull theory of migration and by surveying 190 migrants working in two industrial zones of Bac Ninh province in Vietnam the study found that because of employment requirements, labors in the industrial zones in Bac Ninh as well as migrant labor are dominated by young age and female. Migration not always driven by poor economic condition of the household in the areas of origin, it is the way of life of young rural labor. They migrated to the zones because of the desire of cash for everyday needs that is not available in agriculture production. Otherwise the financial dependence from origin family might be considered as a push factor. In fact migrants in the zones seem to be pulled rather than pushed. They migrate to the zones because of the eyewitness that her or his friends or relatives presented over there. The network that supports for nonfarm employment is available in the zones rather than it is in the areas of origin. Compared to agricultural work, the employment environment in the zones has been perceived better before migration.

Keywords: Migration, Push and Pull, Industrial zone

INTRODUCTION

Migration is not a new subject of study. Historically the mobility of population is common and it increases annually. According to Migrant Policy Institute (MPI) the number of migrant around the world is triple during 1960 – 2013¹. Although there are a lot of studies have been done nowadays, the nature of migration is mystery. It is still not enough to understand migration in a dynamic context and a changing society. In fact, the relations between migration and development are diverse. Its forms usually engages with different social and cultural values (De Haan, 1999) and have changed over time (Majumder, 2012)

Since migration was mentioned as a pattern of development the debates have never ended. The theories of migration has tended to swing back and forth, from development optimism, to structural and neo-Marxist pessimism and skepticism. Then it is turned to the new economics of labor migration with livelihood approaches. However, the integration of those theories of migration is more problematic that it is suggested (Haas, 2007). Similarity the notions of migration are also diverse and its complexity is under estimated (De Haan, 2011). For example, Ellis (2000) argued that rural labors out-migrate because of landless, risk, seasonality, market failure. Deshingkar & Start (2003) found the out migration

¹ (MPI, 2015)

is based on the household economic status. The poor households and households with labor scarcity is less likely to migrate. ADB (2007) saw the labor migrate to find a job and better living condition. Gröger and Zylberberg (2015) considered the shock caused by natural disaster acts as a factor that push rural out-migration

In fact, migration as well as its notions is a topic that considered by policy makers because of its impacts. On one hand, migration is important and viewed as the determinant of livelihood diversification in areas of origin (De Haan, 1999; Ellis, 2000; R. Skeldon, 2003). Through remittances, the migration brings economic development for home rural households. The remittances can be used for repairing or building a new house, paying a debt or education of children (ADB, 2007). The income of households that have migrant labor is higher than those that have not (Liem, 2007; Vakulabharanam & Thakurata, 2014). Additionally, out-migration helps to reduce labor redundancy that is increasingly in rural areas (ADB, 2007). Even if the households do not expect to receive remittance, migration can potentially be a benefit (de Brauw, Mueller, & Lee, 2014). However, migration itself contains a risk (Narayan-Parker & Patel, 2000). If migrant labors can not send home their remittances (Kothari, 2002) or migrant workers fell in debt due to their migration (Ronald Skeldon, 2003). In rural areas, out migration causes a labor shortage in agriculture production in a certain time (Binswanger & Rosenzweig, 1986; Byerlee, 1974)

As a strategy of development to promote economic growth, a thousand industrial zones have been found in developing countries (Milberg & Amengual, 2008). On one hand, industrial zones provided employment opportunities (ILO, 2002; Milberg & Amengual, 2008), but, wages and employment in the industrial zones was low and unstable. Kusago & Tzannatos (1998) showed that income in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) was lower than it was in non EPZs in Taiwan and Maritius. It was also found in Rondinelli's (1987) conclusion that EPZs primarily create low-wage employment in Asia. As Sricharatchany (1983) explains, industries attracted to industrial zones are light industries, seek out cheap labor, require low skilled workers and pay relatively low wage. Thanh's study (2008) found low wages and instable employment prevented land loss households getting employed by the enterprises in Que Vo industrial zones in Bac Ninh province. Moreover, a labor-repressive environment and low union density in industrial zones were also conclude by McCallum (2011). In fact it is still lack of literatures that develop discussion why the migrants in this type leave their home to work at a place considered as exploitative and degrading (Deshingkar, Zeitlyn, & Holtom, 2014).

In Vietnam, the industrial zone has been developed rapidly for more than 20 years. Since the first establishment was in 1991, 149 zones have been built by 2007 (Huy, 2007) and 289 zones by 2013². Together with the formation of industrial zones, employment has been provided increasingly. In 2006, about one million employments have been created in industrial zones (Phong, 2006). It increased to 1.6 million in 2011³ and 2.1 million in 2013⁴.

² Phan Minh Toan Thu , 2014. Building accommodation for labor in industrial zone: experience and solution. <http://www.khucongngghiep.com.vn/nghiencuu/tabid/69/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1053/Default.aspx>, accessed in 24/6/2014

³ Nguyễn Văn Vịnh, 2012. Đổi mới phương thức phát triển KCN. <http://www.khucongngghiep.com.vn/nghiencuu/tabid/69/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/588/i-mi-phng-thc-ph-ttrin-KCN.aspx>, accessed in 31/7/2014

However, the larger part of labor in industrial zones is migrated in some of the fastest province in term of industrial development. For example, in Phu Tho and Thai Binh province migrant labor accounts for 80 percent of total labor in the industrial zones⁵. It is about 70 percent in the industrial zones of Vinh Phuc⁶ and, 65 percent in industrial zones of Bac Ninh⁶. Thus, this research proposes to find out why the proportion of migrant labor is high in the industrial zones, while the wages was low and the employment was instable.

METHODOLOGY

Research has been conducted in Bac Ninh province because Its development of industrial zone has been considered as prominent province in Vietnam. Compared to other provinces in the North of Vietnam, it is ranked at the second in term of the number of industrial zones and areas, and at the first in term of employment creation. It is also considered as the province that has high rate of migrant labor working in the industrial zone.

Que Vo and Yen Phong industrial zones have been selected for doing a survey of migrant labor. The selection is based on the size and the employment provision of the zones. Que Vo industrial zone has 600 ha and provides 58,017 employment, including 50.4% migrant labor. Yen Phong has 1200 ha and provides 71,879 employment, including 82.2% migrant labor⁷

The survey by questionnaire has been conducted on 190 migrants who have been working at the two industrial zones in Bac Ninh. Sample selection was based on 20 households who have highest number of room for rent in two villages, Giang Lieu in Phuong Lieu commune and Ngo Xa in Long Chau commune.

FINDINGS

Who migrants are?

The characteristic of migrant labor industrial zones of Bac Ninh seems not to be changed during 2009 – 2015. Almost of migrant labor is female and comes from rural areas. They are young and low education level. However, according to the survey the tendency of the proportion of female migrants increases slightly from 75.6% in 2009 to 77.4% in 2015. The average age of migrant labor is also moved up softly from 22.4 years old in 2009 to 23.0 in 2015 (see table 1). Compared to ten years before 2009 this finding is different in term of the average of age. According to Anh, Vu, Bonfoh, and Schelling (2012) the average of age of interprovincial migrants in Vietnam from 1989 to 2009 is decreased.

Normally employment in industrial zones is reported as low skill, so high education level was not required for being a worker. It is not an exception for migrant labors who have been

⁴ Phan Minh Toàn Thư - Lê Minh Xuân, 2014. Chăm lo đời sống văn hóa, tinh thần của công nhân các KCN. <http://www.khucongngiep.com.vn/nghiencuu/tabid/69/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1009/Chm-lo-i-sng-vn-ha-tinh-thn-ca-cng-nhn-cc-KCN.aspx>, accessed in 24/6/2014

⁵ Industrial zones of Vietnam, 2014. Accommodation for migrant labor in industrial zones: practice and solution. <http://www.khucongngiep.com.vn/nghiencuu/tabid/69/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/861/NH--CHO-CNG-NHN-CC-KCN--Thc-trng-v-gii-php.aspx>, accessed in 2/6/2014

⁶ <http://www.baomoi.com/Can-chinh-sach-an-long-cong-nhan-o-cac-khu-cong-nghiiep/47/13725299.epi>

⁷ Management board of Industrial zone of Bac Ninh, 2015. Employment report

working in the zones of Que Vo, Bac Ninh. The data collected in 2009 and 2015 both shows that the proportion of migrant labors who graduated from secondary and high school is prominent and even increases slightly. However the migrant labors who have vocational training seem to decrease. Higher educated labors who are not expected to be employed as worker have also been found in the zones.

Table 1: Characteristics of migrant labor in industrial zones of Bac Ninh

		2009 ^(*)		2015 ^(**)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Median	22.4		23.0	
	N	90		190	
Gender	Male	22	24.4	43	22.6
	Female	68	75.6	147	77.4
	N	90	100.0	190	100.0
Education	Secondary School	1	1.1	16	8.4
	High school	59	65.6	136	71.6
	Vocational School	10	11.1	5	2.6
	College	9	10.0	21	11.1
	University	11	12.2	12	6.3
	N	90	100.0	190	100.0
Original area	City	1	1.1	1	0.5
	District town	19	21.1	12	6.3
	Rural area	70	77.8	177	93.2
	N	90	100.0	190	100.0

Source: (*) Thanh (2010); (**) Data collection 2015

Source: Data collection, 2015

Advantage of distance and infrastructure

Once of the notions of migration is the advantage of distance. According to the survey more than twenty provinces are appeared as the areas of origin of migrant workers. However, the larger part of migrant in the industrial zones come from the neighbor provinces like Bac Giang, Lang Son, accounting for 32.22% of the total (see figure 1). Shorter distance make makes migrants contact to their family more often by every weekend. Reported by those migrants that it takes about one and a half hour to two hours to visit their home land which is especially an importance for young and female labors. The tendency seems to change slightly compared to the early state of industrial development in Bac Ninh when the migrants were dominated by intra province (Thanh, 2010). In fact as addressed by Majumder (2012) the type of migration changes from short to longer distance according to the development of infrastructure. This can be an explanation for the reason that why migrant workers from Thanh Hoa and Nghe An account for 34.74%, the largest of the total. Although the distance from those provinces to Bac Ninh is twice time compared to the distance from Bac Giang and Lang Son, the migrant workers still go back home within a day in case of urgent that is impossible if they would have worked in the zones further the south

like in Binh Duong and Dong Nai. Even for other mountainous provinces like Tuyen Quang, Cao Bang and Yen Bai, migrant workers have never taken more than one day to travel home.

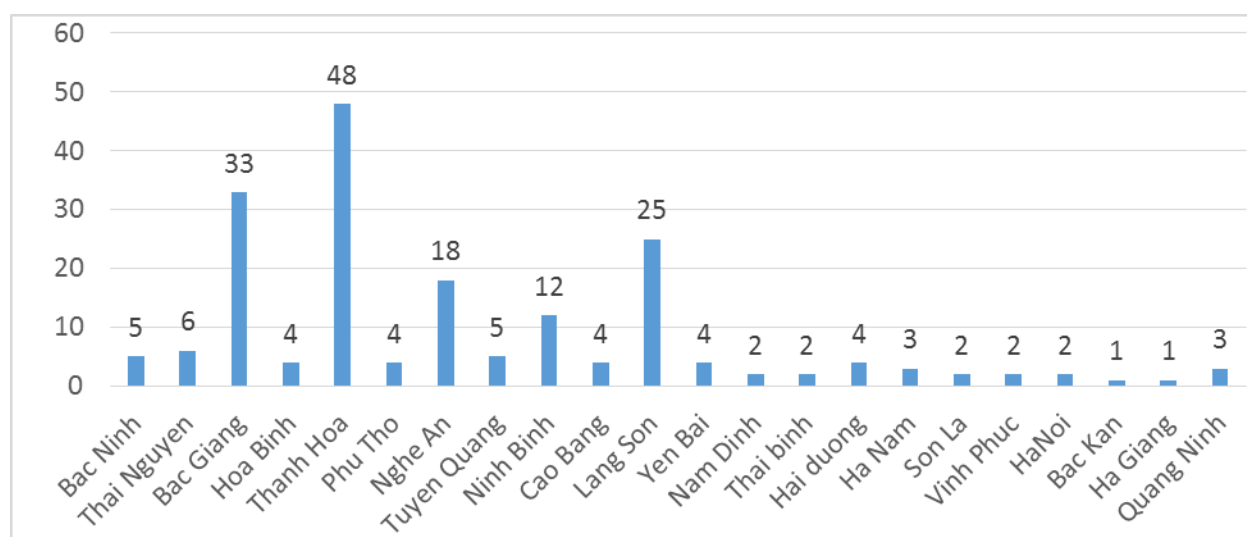


Figure 1: The areas of origin of migrant workers in industrial zones of Bac Ninh
 Source: Data collection in 2015

Lack of none farm employment opportunities in the areas of origin

Because rural labors observed and participated in agriculture work since they were young, their perception of employment tends to get rid of farm activity in order to have a better life. Almost of surveyed migrants have not perceived farm activity as their future employment. It is seen as the hard work because of outdoor performance, especially under the conditions of severe climate. However, none farm employment in the areas of origin failed to attract rural labor. More than a half of migrant labor reported that the industrial zone or factory has not been established in the areas of origin (see table 2). Even the zones or factories are existed, they did not set a priority to work at over there. In fact, there are 81.6% surveyed migrant did not seek for a none farm employment in the areas of origin, including 37.9% not seeking in the zones or the factories nearby, 8.4% seeking for a job in the zones or the factories nearby, but not ready to work over there.

Table 2: None farm opportunity in the areas of origin

	Frequency	Percent
Have no industrial zone/factory	102	53.7
Have industrial zone, but not looking for jobs in the zone	72	37.9
Have industrial zone, looking for jobs, but not work in the zone	16	8.4
Total	190	100.0
Looking for none farm jobs (in and outside the zone)	35	18.4
Not looking for none farm job (in and outside the zone)	155	81.6
Total	190	100.0

Source: Data collection in 2015

According to in depth interviews the fields of none farm employment in the areas of origin is not relevance to rural labor in term of gender and the wage is low. As reported garment and construction industries are the most popular field over these areas. The garment enterprises pay about 3 -4 million VND, meanwhile those in industrial zones of Bac Ninh pay about 5.5 – 8.0 million VND. And the construction work is rather suitable for male than female labor. They do not intend to work at the zones or factories nearby their home land as well because the distance is too close. As mentioned in the previous section, at the young age the migrant worker prefer to work far from their home in order to get more independency that hard to implement if they choose a commuting works.

In addition, almost of the migrant workers have not tried to find other none farm employment in the areas of origin. Only 18.4% of them has attempted to seek none farm employment (see table 1). In fact no of them has thought about creating none farm employment by themselves. They prefer to be employed rather than to be an owner to avoid the risks. Otherwise, in order to run a business in none farm sector they should need a certain amount of capital and an understanding that are not satisfied by migrants' household. Borrowing capital from financial institutions contains risk which is not easy to be accepted by almost of rural labors.

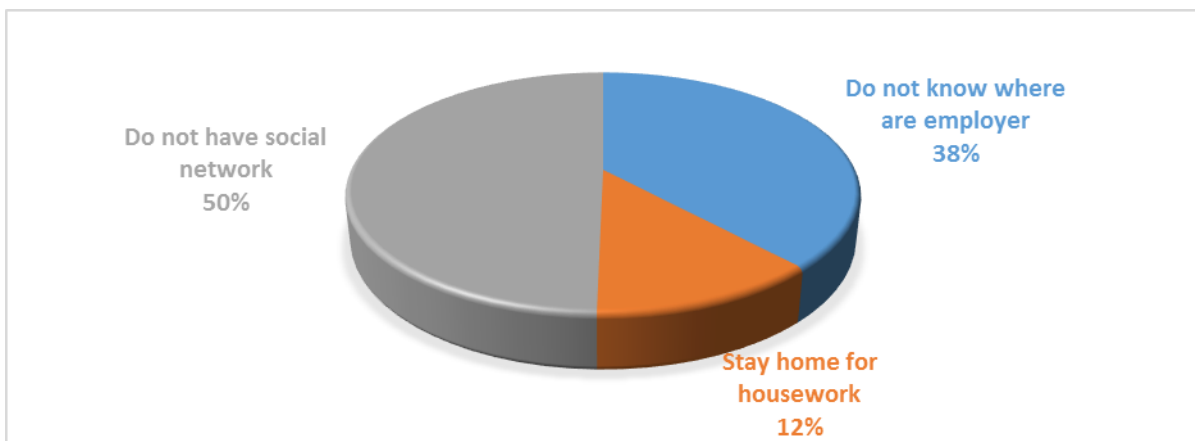


Figure 2: The reasons for not looking for none farm jobs in the areas of origin
 Source: Data collection, 2015

The last considered as the more importance is their perception of getting employment that have to be based on a person, like a friend or a relative, who capable introducing them to the work. The survey shows that 88% of migrants who have had no attempt to find nonfarm employment in the areas of origin does not have such kind of network, including 50% reported that they did not have any social network and 38% did not know where are employer (see figure 2). In addition migrant labors have thought that nonfarm employment, especially in state administrative system, is out of their financial capacity. Several years working as a migrant worker in industrial zone might gain enough money for a position in state administrative system in the areas of origin.

Economic status of the household

According to classical push and pull model of migration, the decision of migration might cause by the economic struggle in the areas of origin. This study argues that the decision to

migrate to industrial zones in Bac Ninh has not been impacted by the economic status of the household in the areas of origin. The survey shows that 79.5% average and well-off households send their labor to the zones and so do the 20.5% poor households⁸ (see table 3). Additionally the main livelihood activities of the households was also diverse before labors decided to migrate to the zones in Bac Ninh. Not only the households that have their main livelihood activities based on agriculture (including cultivation and husbandry) send the labors to the zones, but also the households that have those based on none farm. It is likely shown that migrating to the industrial zones has not impacted by livelihood activities of the household in the areas of origin as well.

Table 3: Household status and main livelihood activities before migration

HH status before migration		Main Livelihood Activities			Total
		Cultivation	Husbandry	Nonfarm	
Well off	Count	5	0	7	12
	% within Livelihood	5.3	0	11.1	6.3
Average	Count	69	27	43	139
	% within Livelihood	73.4	81.8	68.3	73.2
Poor	Count	20	6	13	39
	% within Livelihood	21.3	18.2	20.6	20.5
Total	Count	94	33	63	190
	% within HHstatus	49.5	17.4	33.2	100
	% within Livelihood	100	100	100	100

Source: Data collection, 2015

In fact, unstable income from agriculture and the desire of cash for daily expenditure push young rural labors migrate to the industrial zones. Before migrating to the zones, the main livelihood activities of two third migrants' households depend on agriculture which is characterized as seasonal production. The in-kind products of agriculture capable converting into cash at the end of the season only. Meanwhile their daily needs have been satisfied by cash that they are waged by enterprises monthly in industrial zones. Moreover, working in agriculture with their family makes young labors more economically depend on household and be considered as additional labor that are not expected by the labors.

Social network

Social network plays an importance role in seeking for an employment, but, it is not available much for rural labors in the areas of origin. As discussed in the previous section that almost migrant in industrial zones did not looking for nonfarm employment in the areas of origin because of lacking social network. However, this network is available in relation with looking for employment in industrial zones. The study finds 68% of migrants based on the introduction of relatives and friends to migrate to the industrial zones in Bac Ninh. Those people who have been working at the zones are considered as an evidence to convince rural labors that they are capable to work over there. Additionally, such kind of network did not require any payment that easily accepted by rural labor. Only 10% of them

⁸ Poor household has been evaluated base on the certification that provided by local authority.

managed the migration by themselves. The rest, accounting for 10%, migrated to the zones because the enterprises organized the recruitment at the areas of origin (see figure 3).

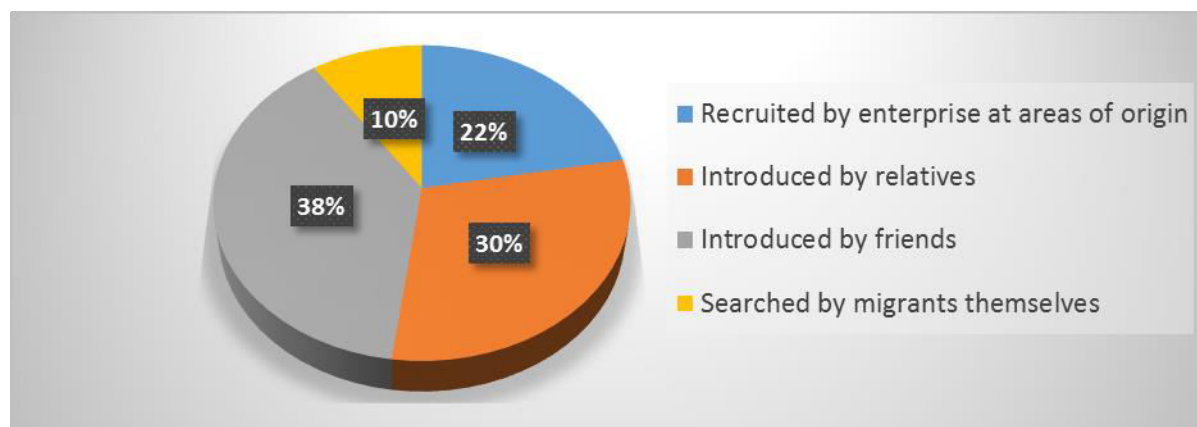


Figure 3: The reason to select industrial zones in Bac Ninh

Source: Data collection, 2015

Recruitment requirement and employment environment

Considered by migrant labors, recruitments by enterprises in industrial zones in Bac Ninh were not so difficult. The story differed from ten years ago that the labors were required high school level and sometimes had to pay a pride to work in the zones (Thanh, 2009). Currently the enterprises requires only identity card, secondary school level and health certification which easily taken at 100 thousands VND (5 euro) from somewhere around the zones.

The interview for employment was also easy. It usually took about five to ten minutes with simple question that every labor can answer. As report by migrants, during the interview the enterprises just observer physic health if it meets the demand of work or not. The labors were tested by walking four or five meters or using chopstick to pick a small rounded balls. Actually the work at the zones is simple, but it requires long hours working, usually from 8 to 12 hours. Moreover the enterprises need labors to work rather than labor need a work.

Table 4: Working duration and decision of migrants at industrial zones

	Up to 12 months	From 13-24 months	From 25-36 months	More than 36 months	Total
Permanent	17	9	4	1	31
Temporary	94	45	9	1	149
Stop whatever	8	1	1	0	10
Total	119	55	14	2	190

Source: Data collection, 2015

In term of employment environment it was perceived differently by migrant labors before and after migration. Before migration working at industrial zones has been considered as better environment. It was reported by migrant's friend or relative that labors have been worked indoor with air conditioner which they have never had in agriculture work.

Additionally the work is light and simple, not like ploughing or weaving in agricultural work. However, pressure on the work was realized by the larger part of migrants when they have been working in the zone. The others who did not feel a pressure on their work because they choose working hour less than 10 hours that was not expected by the enterprises. So, almost the migrants do not intend to work further in the zones. Only 16.3% of migrants have considered the work at the zones as permanent employment (see table 4). Although the Que Vo industrial zone was established for more than 13 years; Yen Phong for more than ten years, the working duration of migrant surveyed in 2015 is mainly up to two years. Only 7.9% of migrant reported to work at the zones more than 2 years.

CONCLUSION

Migration not always driven by poor economic condition of the household in the areas of origin, it is the way of life of young rural labor. They migrated to the zones because of the desire of cash for everyday needs that is not available in agriculture production. Otherwise the financial dependence from origin family might be considered as a push factor. In fact migrants in the zones seem to be pulled rather than pushed. They migrate to the zones because of the eyewitness that her or his friends or relatives presented over there. The network that supports for nonfarm employment is available in the zones rather than it is in the areas of origin. Compared to agricultural work, the employment environment in the zones has been perceived better than that of before migration.

Because of employment requirements, labors in the industrial zones in Bac Ninh as well as migrant labor are dominated by young age and female. It also means the zones seem not to benefit for labor who getting older. In addition the employment in the zones is not stable in the long run. It is more important is to think further on the way back of migrant labors of industrial zones. If what they have earn in the zones will contribute for the development of their livelihood in the areas of origin later.

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