

ARE THE “LEFT BEHIND” REALLY LEFT? SHARED ADVANTAGES IN RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION FROM THE MEKONG DELTA TO HOCHIMINH CITY

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Introduction

Generally, rural-urban migration, associated with rapid urban growth, was considered as a negative phenomenon by the authorities in most of the countries of the world. This conception probably reached its peak in East and Southeast Asia, where the governments tried for a long time to systematically counterbalance the comparative advantages of the city by favoring the rural area. These policies obtained mixed successes. However, without taking the extreme example of Cambodia at the end of the seventies, with its criminal drift, it was under communist regimes that these policies aiming at favoring the countryside and at restricting rural-urban migration were the most successful, notably through the setting of a residential control system.

The problems that governments were concerned with were the management of rapidly growing cities and the loss of human resources from rural areas. The advantages of urbanization and its historic relation with development are often forgotten. These philosophies also eclipse the point of view of the main concerned individuals, who are the migrants themselves and their relatives staying in the village. It is precisely this point of view that we tried to emphasize during a specific survey on rural-urban migration to Hochiminh City in 1999.

Many studies have already been undertaken about migration in Vietnam and

especially rural-urban migration, with some very good syntheses (for example: Dang Anh & al., 1997; UNDP, 1998; Dang Nguyen Anh, 2001; Dang Nguyen Anh & al., 2002; ILO & al., 2003).

Migration to Hochiminh City has been studied since the implementation of the economic liberalization policy (for example: Vien Kinh Te Thanh pho Ho Chi Minh, 1992, 1996 & 1997; Truong Si Anh, 1994; Truong Si Anh & al., 1996a & 1996b).

The project on rural-urban migration, financed by the French Foreign Office, was jointly executed by the French Centre on Population and Development (CEPED) and the Institute for Economic Research of Hochiminh City (IER); a survey in two steps that may be called a “tracing survey” was conducted:

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- Conduct of a household survey in the departure area (in January, 1999). For that purpose, as it was impossible to contact all the departure zones, we identified the region of Vietnam in which the highest proportion of the migrants to Hochiminh City was born (three communes of Can Giuoc District, Long An Province, in the Mekong Delta, including 30,000 inhabitants) (figure 1). The postal addresses of all the children living in Hochiminh City were noted down. The survey included several types of questionnaires: a household questionnaire to identify the descendants who left the home; socioeconomic questionnaires for the households with migrants and for the households without migrant, including the perception of the migration by the non-migrant population; a migrant questionnaire (socioeconomic situation and living standard, preservation of relations with the village); and a specific questionnaire for the return migrants. These various types of questionnaires did not cover the same number of persons and the data must thus be weighted, a procedure which will not be detailed here.

- Conduct of a survey of the migrants themselves, found at the level of the arrival zone in Hochiminh City (in April-May, 1999) (1,906 migrants in Hochiminh City). This procedure was made possible because the addresses are generally well identified in Hochiminh City (district, street and house number) and because some migrants even had a phone contact, with the hypothesis at the beginning that most of the rural households know the precise address of the migrants belonging to their family. However, among them, only 528 persons (240 males and 288 females) with a complete and correct address, were found and interviewed in Hochiminh City that is 28%. The analysis naturally has to take

this loss into account, because the migrants found are certainly not identical to those who were not, as we may think that their situation is on average more precarious. However, the analysis of the sample structure shows that there does not seem to be a bias at this level¹.

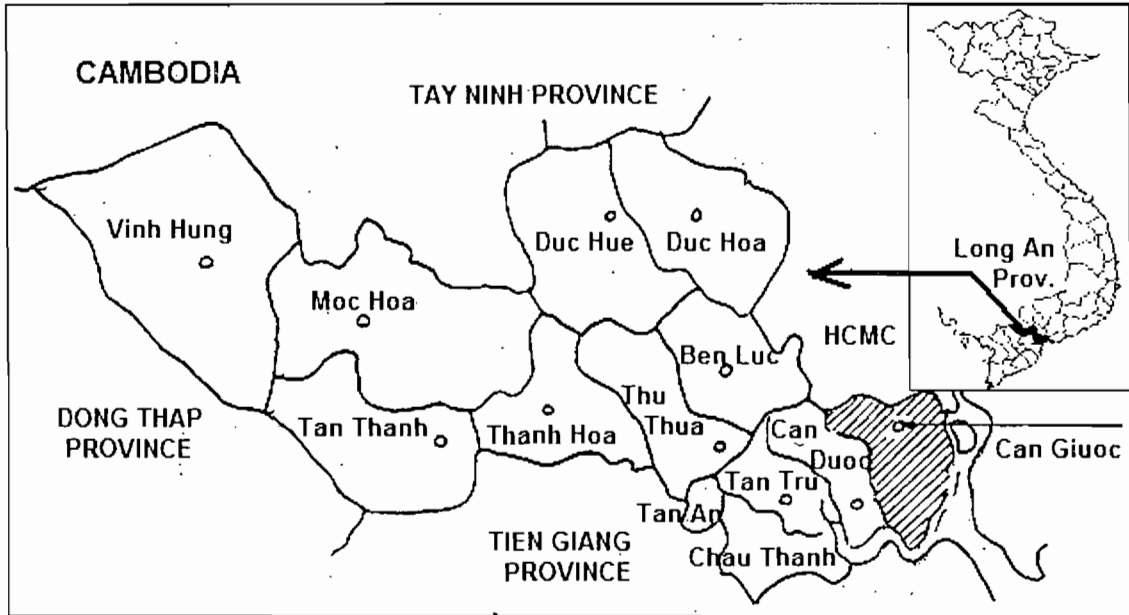
Several books and articles have been published (Gubry & Le Van Thanh, 2000; Gubry & al., 2002 & 2003; Vu Thi Hong & al., 2003). Most of the data, discussed here in English for the first time, come from this survey.

The recent increase in urban growth

The population of Hochiminh City, like that of most of the cities of Vietnam, and certainly of the largest, began again to grow substantially since the implementation of the economic liberalization policy (*Doi Moi* or *Renovation*) decided in 1986. Previously, we observed a stagnation, even a decrease in the urban population, that we can attribute to a policy of easing the congestion of the cities from 1975, then to a strict residential control, but also to the fact that interest to migrate to cities was limited because of their low economic growth.

1. In reality, the rate of loss varies according to the district of arrival in the city. The loss is much lower in the central districts where the addresses are precise. These are precisely the purely urban districts, the most interesting to be studied in the analysis of rural-urban migration. Indeed, the peripheral districts of Hochiminh are still largely rural and the living conditions do not fundamentally differ from those of the departure areas. They attract a large number of migrants simply because of the nearness of Can Giuoc district with Hochiminh City. In fact in that case they are rural-rural migrations, often for marriage.

Figure 1: Location of the survey areas



At present all the factors favorable to strong urban growth are present: decline of the residential control system, strong economic growth especially in the largest cities where investments are concentrated, deepening of the gap between the living standard in countryside and the cities, and maintaining of a large rural population able to supply an important reservoir of future migrants (Gubry & Le Thi Huong, 2004). To these we may add the still limited unemployment in the cities, thanks mainly to the informal sector: 96.4% of the in-migrants to Hochiminh City during the period 1995-1999 found their first job within three months (Gubry & al., 2002 & 2003).

However, as often in social phenomena, with all the indicators for strong urban growth being present, the actual urban growth was somewhat delayed.

Concerning Hochiminh City, the study of the urban growth implies that we discern beforehand the urban zone, as Hochiminh City's administrative limits still include a vast rural zone (Le Thi Huong, 2000 & 2004). In order to maintain comparability over time, we

shall take here only the administrative definitions of the urban population used by the census.

Urban growth includes three components: the natural increase of the urban population, the migration increase and the reclassification of rural zones into urban zones according to the geographic extension of the cities; the respective part of each of these elements varies over time (Oberai, 1989). The table 1 presents the recent evolution of all the indicators, from 1979 till 2004:

- reclassifications of rural districts (*huyen*) in urban districts (*quan*) were made in 1997 and in 2003;

- the natural increase decreases regularly as a result of a faster decline of the birth rate than the death rate;

- the migration component increases regularly: - 1.8% a year for the period 1979-1989, + 0.3% a year for the period 1989-1999, and + 1.0% a year for the period 1999-2004.

On the whole, the preliminary results of the census of October, 2004 give for

Hochiminh City a total population of 6.1 million inhabitants, with an urban population of 5.1 million inhabitants. The data allow one to calculate an average number of in-migrants to the city of 51,000-52,000 persons a year.

The living conditions of the migrants are supposed to improve with the migration (and

this is generally verified), but what are the consequences of the rural-urban migration on those “left behind” in the countryside? Is there a break between the migrant and the family staying in the village, or on the contrary are the contacts maintained for the mutual profit of both sides?

Table 1: Recent evolution of the population of Hochiminh City (1979-2004)

Ho Chi Minh City	1979	1989	1999	2004**
Urban population	2,842,946	2,899,753	4,204,662	5,140,412
Average annual increase rate of urban population (%)	-	0.2 (1979-1989)	3.8 (1989-1999)	3.7 (1999-2004)
Average annual increase rate of urban population without reclassification (%)*	-	0.2 (1979-1989)	1.8 (1989-1999)	2.2 (1999-2004)
Birth rate (‰)	-	21.3 (1984)	19.7 (1994)	16.3 (2002)
Death rate (‰)	-	5.4 (1984)	5.1 (1994)	4.0 (2002)
Average annual natural increase rate (%)	-	1.6 (1979-1989)	1.5 (1989-1999)	1.2 (1999-2004)
Average annual migration increase rate (%)	-	-1.8 (1979-1989)	0.3 (1989-1999)	1.0 (1999-2004)
Total population	3,419,978	3,924,435	5,037,155	6,117,251

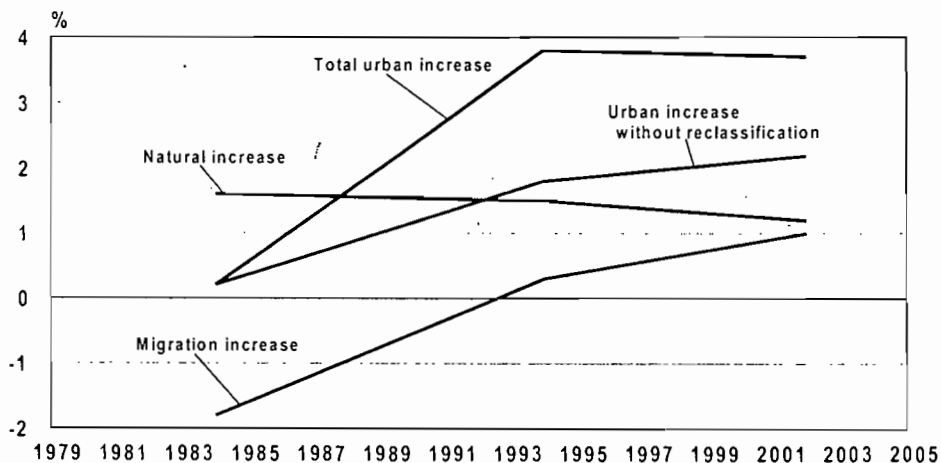
Sources: - Statistical Office Hochiminh City- Population censuses 1979, 1989, 1999, 2004
 - Banister, 1993

* At 1999 census, 740,181 people belonged to the 5 new urban districts created in 1997 (District 2, District 7, District 9, District 12 and Thu Duc).

At 2004 census, 398,712 people belonged to the new urban district Binh Tan created in 2003.

** Census sponsored by People’s Committee of Hochiminh City, in October 2004, five years and a half after the 1999 general census. The authors thank Statistical Office of Hochiminh City for these preliminary results.

Figure 2: Recent evolution of the increase rates of Hochiminh City (%)



Improving living conditions in the countryside due to rural-urban migration

Many questions were asked at the level of the village to try to work out the consequences on the rural households of the migration to the city of one of their members. We shall quote here only the ownership of farmland, the practice of agriculture, the surface of farmland, the type of construction, the living space, the light source, the water supply, the type of toilet, and the goods possessed; these data were synthesized to indicate a level of wealth. We did not ask here a question on the amount of the income, which would have given poor results without

a specific survey².

Four categories of households were analyzed in the countryside: the households without a migrant, the households with a migrant in Hochiminh City, the households with a migrant elsewhere, and the households with a return migrant. We shall compare here the households without a migrant with those who have a migrant in Hochiminh City (which we shall often call "households with migrant" to simplify).

The households with a migrant in Hochiminh City are more often owners of farmland (83.1%) than the households without a migrant (65.7%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of households by farmland ownership and migration status (%)

Migration status of households	No farmland	Farmland	Total
Households with migrants living in HCMC	16.9	83.1	100.0
Households with migrants living elsewhere	22.0	78.0	100.0
Households without migrant	34.3	65.7	100.0
Households with return migrants	38.7	61.3	100.0
All households	26.2	73.8	100.0
<i>Samples</i>	569	1,599	2,168

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

It is a little bit surprising, at first sight, to notice that the households with a migrant are more likely to have agriculture

for their main income (75.9%) than the households without a migrant (62.6%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of households by main income source and migration status (%)

Migration status of households	Main income source		
	Agriculture	Non agriculture	Total
With migrant elsewhere	84.5	15.5	100.0
With migrant in HCMC	75.9	24.1	100.0
Without migrant	62.6	37.4	100.0
With return migrant	54.6	45.4	100.0
All households	68.6	31.4	100.0
<i>Samples</i>	1,487	682	2,169

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999.

2. For more details about the methodological aspects, we send the reader back to the publications of the project.

These results lead us to formulate several hypotheses:

1°) The lack of farmland does not constitute the main reason for the migration towards Hochiminh City;

2°) The income of farmland allows some members of the households with land to migrate to the city;

3°) The area of the land cultivated by the households of Can Giuoc is correlated

to the migration; thus, the income from migration allows families to buy more land and thus to rely more on agriculture while other sources of income are imperative when farmland is missing.

Actually, the average area of farmland is double for the households with a migrant (1,406 m²) compared with the households without a migrant (715 m²) (Table 4).

Table 4: Average farmland area per inhabitant according to ownership status, main income source and migration status of households (m²)

Migration status of households	Average	Owner households	Agriculture activities	Non agriculture activities
With migrant in HCMC	1,406	1,688	1,743	1,761
With migrant elsewhere	1,138	1,444	1,299	-
With return migrant	716	1,168	1,148	191
Without migrant	715	1,089	1,058	143
All households	1,082	1,467	1,477	220
<i>Samples</i>	<i>2,168</i>	<i>1,599</i>	<i>1,487</i>	<i>681</i>

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999.

Five types of construction were defined, from type 1 (the strongest) to type 5 (the weakest). The households with a migrant have more solid construction and thus better housing

(13.9% of types 1-3) than the households without a migrant (9.7%) (Table 5). Apparently this is the result of the remittances towards the village that were partially invested in housing.

Table 5: Distribution of households by type of construction and migration status (%)

Migration Status of households	Type of construction				
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5
With return migrant	-	-	8.6	13.6	28.3
With migrant in HCMC	0.6	0.3	13.0	9.1	48.0
Without migrant	0.4	0.1	9.2	4.5	50.8
With migrant elsewhere	-	-	17.0	10.0	53.4
All households	0.2	0.1	10.0	7.7	47.0

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

The average living space per capita is also higher among the households with a migrant in

Hochiminh City (18.5 m²) than among the households without a migrant (14.7 m²) (Table 6).

Table 6: Average living area per inhabitant according to migration status of households

Migration Status of households	m ² /inhabitant
With migrant elsewhere	18.6
With migrant in HCMC	18.5
With return migrant	16.0
Without migrant	14.7
All households	16.7
<i>Samples</i>	2,168

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999.

The light source and the water supply are only slightly better among the households with a migrant: 46.9% of the households with a migrant are connected to the electricity network with a regular usage, against 44.3%

of the households without a migrant (Table 7); the households with a migrant more often buy the water brought in tanks, considered as drinkable (16.2%), than the households without a migrant (12.9%) (Table 8).

Table 7: Distribution of households by migration status and light source (%)

Light source	Migration status of households		
	Without migrant	With migrant in HCMC	All households
Electricity, regular use	44.3	46.9	47.0
Electricity, non regular use	41.8	40.8	41.3
Paraffin	39.2	31.1	34.6
Candle	0.6	2.2	1.6
Accumulator	0.6	0.1	0.4
Private electric generator	-	0.1	0.2
No light	0.4	0.1	0.2
<i>Samples</i>	804	733	2,168

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

N.B.: The category "all households" represents all households whatever may be their status among the four defined categories and not only the two shown in the table.

These data show especially the very low incomes of the households in the Mekong Delta, which do not allow them to pay a subscription to the electricity network or to pay for drinking water. It is

also the case for investment in hygienic toilets (Table 9): 15.3% of the households without a migrant and 14.1% of the households with a migrant have no sanitary installation.

Table 8: Distribution of households by migration status and source of water supply (%)

Source of water supply	Migration status of households		
	Without migrant	With migrant in HCMC	All households
Rain water	90.9	88.8	88.4
Pond and stagnant water	43.0	39.3	40.6
Piped water in house	35.8	35.6	38.1
Water bought from truck	12.9	16.2	14.5
River	14.2	18.1	14.0
Public tap or tank	8.2	4.9	7.5
Well water (UNICEF pump)	5.6	5.5	5.4
Well water (without pump)	-	0.1	0.0
Other	4.9	7.0	4.9
<i>Samples</i>	<i>804</i>	<i>733</i>	<i>2,168</i>

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

N.B.: The category "All households" represents all households whatever may be their status among the four defined categories and not only the two shown in the table.

Table 9: Distribution of households by migration status and kind of toilet (%)

Kind of toilet	Migration status of households		
	Without migrant	With migrant in HCMC	All households
Over pond ^(a)	43.2	36.8	41.4
Over river	25.4	30.6	25.8
Flush toilet	4.5	5.9	6.0
Septic or half septic tank ^(b)	4.2	5.6	5.0
Public toilets ^(c)	3.6	3.7	3.7
Latrines ^(d)	3.7	2.9	2.9
Other	0.1	0.5	0.4
No toilet	15.3	14.1	14.9
Total	100	100	100
<i>Samples</i>	<i>804</i>	<i>733</i>	<i>2,168</i>

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

(a) With fish farming

(b) Isolated hard tank, septic (one pit) or half septic (two pits)

(c) Mobile bowls

(d) Non isolated pit

The table on the equipment of the households indicates that the expensive equipment is more often owned by the households with a migrant (Table 10).

Table 10: Proportion of households using equipment by migration status and type of equipment

Type of equipment	Without migrant (%)	With migrant (%)	Average equipment per 100 households
1. Set of wood table and chairs	91.4	96.3	156
2. Salon	6.3	6.9	8
3. Wood/iron cupboard	89.8	94.4	168
4. Gas stove	3.3	3.9	5
5. Electric stove	2.1	2.1	3
6. Electric cooker	20.5	24.9	25
7. Fan	61.2	66.0	85
8. Rechargeable battery	4.4	2.6	4
9. Radio	3.9	6.1	5
10. Radio cassette	51.6	54.9	55
11. Video tape recorder	1.9	2.1	2
12. Black-white TV	25.5	26.2	25
13. Colour TV	36.1	40.7	43
14. Video player	8.7	8.7	10
15. Air conditioner	0.1	0.0	0.2
16. Refrigerator/Deep freezer	4.0	3.9	4.7
17. Washing machine	0.4	0.3	4.6
18. Electric generator	0.1	0.3	0.3
19. Microcomputer	0.2	0.6	1
20. Photo camera	0.7	1.1	0.8
21. Video camera	0.2	1.1	0.4
22. Sewing-machine	31.3	39.3	39
23. Embroidering machine	1.2	1.4	2
24. Bicycle	70.6	66.4	94
25. Cyclo	-	-	-
26. Engine cyclo/delivery tricycle	-	-	-
27. Motorcycle	27.2	25.3	32
28. Rowing boat	9.1	12.9	10
29. Motor boat	5.4	5.9	6
30. Telephone	3.6	2.6	4
31. Car	0.0	0.4	0.3
32. Van/truck	0.4	0.1	0.4
33. Tractor	0.7	0.6	1
34. Water pump	2.0	2.5	3
35. Combine harvester	0.2	0.1	0.3
36. Thresher, mill	0.9	0.7	0.7
37. Cattle	0.0	0.6	0.3
38. Ox cart	0.0	0.0	-
39. Other kind of cart	1.0	1.0	1
40. Other agriculture machines	0.1	0.0	0.2

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

On the whole, the various results collected on housing, living conditions and equipment may be used to calculate a wealth index to distribute the population according to the level of wealth (Table 11). The better situation of the households with a migrant

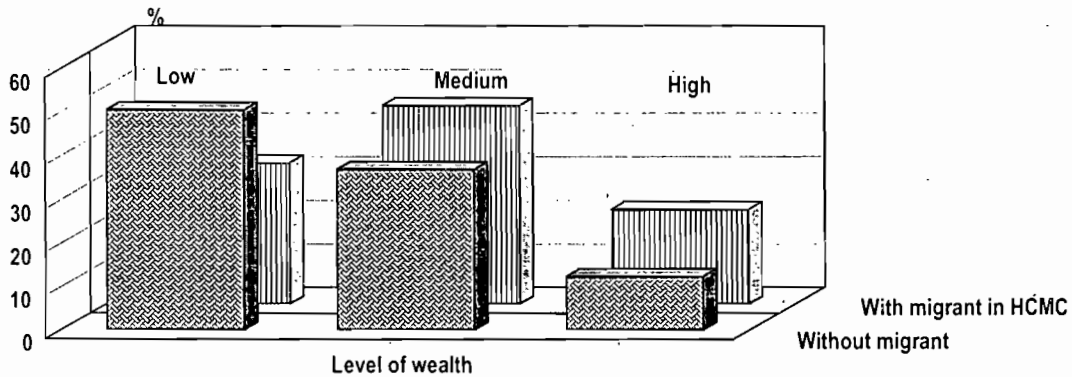
appears clearly: the proportion of households with a high level of wealth varies from 12.4% of the households without a migrant to 21.9% of the households with a migrant in Hochiminh City and 31.2% of those with a migrant elsewhere.

Table 11: Distribution of households by migration status and level of wealth (%)

Level of wealth	Migration Status of households				All Households
	Without migrant	With migrant to HCMC	With return migrant	With migrant elsewhere	
Low	50.6	32.5	43.0	29.2	45.2
Medium	37.0	45.6	38.4	39.6	38.3
High	12.4	21.9	18.5	31.2	16.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Samples	1,178	534	302	154	2,168

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

Figure 3: Level of wealth of households in the countryside



Statements of parents and migrants

Beyond the factual data, it is interesting to analyze the statements of the parents and the migrants, which will allow us to see the level of the contacts maintained between the migrant and his/her family. We shall examine the reasons for the move, the frequency of the remittances and those of the mutual visits.

Table 12 shows that among 1,906 migrants for whom the parents gave information, at least 52.0% moved for economic reasons. If we add up the reasons of unemployment (30.2%), of insufficient income (20.3%) and of searching for better living conditions (1.5%), a higher proportion of males than females have given a reason of this kind. A proportion of 38.1%

of the migrants moved to Hochiminh City to get married; among them, the females are more numerous than the males. According to the families in the rural area, 18.8% of the migrants moved for studies and training. Despite the variety of the reasons for move, we notice a desire by all migrants to leave a less advantageous place for a more favorable one.

It is interesting to emphasize the differences

between the statements of the parents and those of the migrants themselves. Both are subject to a memory effect related to the environment of their residential place: the statements of the migrants notably seem influenced by the contingencies of the urban life (incomes, living conditions) and by the possibilities that it offers (education), while marriage, which could have been the initial reason for moving, is overshadowed.

Table 12: Distribution of migrants by sex, origin of statement and reason for move (%)

Reason for move	Statement of families in Can Giuoc			Statement of migrants in HCMC		
	Male	Female	Together	Male	Female	Together
Marriage	16.3	53.7	38.1	2.9	28.8	17.0
Unemployment	38.6	24.2	30.2	33.3	24.3	28.4
Low income	26.4	15.9	20.3	27.5	23.3	25.2
Education	27.1	12.8	18.8	42.5	22.9	31.8
Family settlement	8.8	8.9	8.9	16.3	20.1	18.4
Like urban life	9.6	6.5	7.8	3.8	5.6	4.7
Leave rural life	3.7	2.9	3.2	2.1	5.6	4.0
Better living conditions	2.3	1.0	1.5	13.3	10.4	11.7
Join the army	2.5	-	1.1	5.0	0.0	2.3
Health care	1.5	0.3	0.8	0.0	0.6	0.4
Leave agriculture	1.1	0.3	0.6	3.3	2.4	2.8
Divorce	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.2
War asylum	-	-	-	2.9	5.2	4.2
Lack of land	-	-	-	1.7	0.0	0.8
Others	0.9	0.2	0.8	7.1	2.0	4.4
<i>Samples</i>	793	1,113	1,906	240	288	528

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

N.B.: More than one reason per person

We asked in the survey as well about the frequency of remittances and goods which were sent to the village (table 13) and those received from the village, which it is important not to forget (Table

14). As was anticipated, migrants are more likely to send remittances than to receive money or goods from their family in the village. Among migrants sending remittances, more sent once a month than

with any other frequency. The males are more likely than the females to send remittances or to receive support from the village; the statements of the parents are in accordance with those of the migrants

on this subject. However, a little curiously, the parents assert more often than the migrants that they never receive remittances or send support to the migrants.

Table 13: Distribution of migrants by sex, origin of statement and frequency of money or goods sent to Can Giuoc (%)

Frequency of money or goods sent to Can Giuoc	Statement of parents in Can Giuoc			Statement of migrants in HCMC		
	Male	Female	Together	Male	Female	Together
At least one time per week	2.0	2.2	2.1	4.2	2.8	3.4
At least one time per month	19.1	11.7	14.8	18.8	13.9	16.1
At least once in three months	12.1	12.6	12.4	12.1	9.4	10.6
At least one time per year	7.1	7.0	7.0	12.1	14.9	13.6
One time every 2 or 3 years	1.1	1.5	1.4	4.6	4.9	4.7
Never	58.5	65.1	62.3	48.3	54.2	51.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Samples	800	1,107	1,907	240	288	528

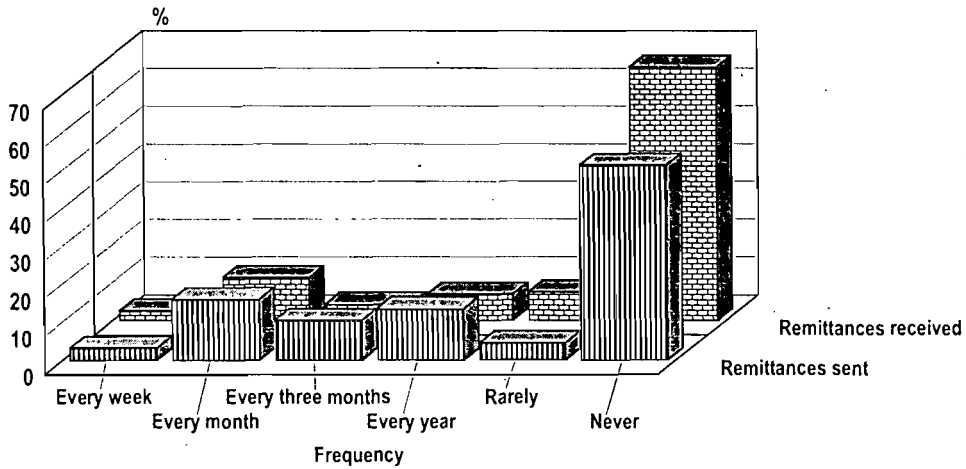
Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

Table 14: Distribution of migrants by sex, origin of statement and frequency of money or goods received from Can Giuoc (%)

Frequency of money or goods received from Can Giuoc	Statement of parents in Can Giuoc			Statement of migrants in HCMC		
	Male	Female	Together	Male	Female	Together
At least one time per week	3.5	1.4	2.3	4.6	1.0	2.7
At least one time per month	6.5	4.1	5.1	13.8	9.4	11.4
At least once in three months	3.6	1.9	2.6	3.8	4.9	4.4
At least one time per year	4.0	3.4	3.7	8.3	5.9	7.0
One time every 2 or 3 years	0.1	0.8	0.5	6.7	8.3	7.6
Never	82.3	88.4	85.8	62.9	70.5	67.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Samples	800	1,106	1,906	240	288	528

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

Figure 4: Remittances sent and received by the migrants in Hochiminh City



To learn about the preservation of the link between the migrant and his/her family, we also asked a question about mail and telephone calls. This question appeared of limited interest because these kinds of contact are little used as a result, on one hand, of the

nearness of Can Giuoc and, on the other hand, of the limited number of telephones in the countryside. However, the question about mutual visits, of the migrant to the village (table 15) and of the family to the city (table 16) is very interesting.

Table 15: Distribution of migrants by sex, origin of statement and frequency of visits back to Can Giuoc (%)

Frequency of visits back to Can Giuoc	Statement of parents in Can Giuoc			Statement of migrants in HCMC		
	Male	Female	Together	Male	Female	Together
At least one time per week	16.5	11.2	13.4	23.3	11.8	17.0
At least one time per month	43.0	41.1	41.9	37.5	38.5	38.1
At least once in three months	28.9	34.6	32.2	16.7	20.5	18.8
At least one time per year	8.6	11.7	10.4	19.6	24.3	22.2
One time every 2 or 3 years	1.9	0.7	1.2	2.5	3.8	3.2
Never	1.1	0.7	0.9	0.4	1.0	0.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Samples	800	1,105	1,905	240	288	528

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

We shall not be surprised also to find more visits of the migrant to the village than visits of the parents to the city: it is more the responsibility of the children to visit

their parents, who are older and have less money to move. These visits are very frequent; most migrants visit their village at least once a month and the largest

proportion of parents are in the “at least once in three months” category. It may be recalled that the visits are facilitated by the short distance between Hochiminh City and

Can Giuoc (approximately 25 km). At least, these visits maintain very close links between the migrant in the city and his/her family in the village.

Table 16: Distribution of migrants by sex, origin of statement and frequency of the visits of the family from Can Giuoc (%)

Frequency of the visits of the family from Can Giuoc	Statement of parents in Can Giuoc			Statement of migrants in HCMC		
	Male	Female	Together	Male	Female	Together
At least one time per week	1.8	2.6	2.3	5.4	2.1	3.6
At least one time per month	12.5	10.1	11.1	12.9	17.0	15.2
At least once in three months	17.6	20.3	19.2	22.1	28.5	25.6
At least one time per year	12.0	16.7	14.7	25.8	22.2	23.9
One time every 2 or 3 years	2.8	2.0	2.3	7.9	10.8	9.5
Never	53.4	48.4	50.5	25.8	19.4	22.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Samples	800	1,104	1,904	240	288	528

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

Strongly positive opinions about rural-urban migration

When we speak about the advantages of rural-urban migration, another valuable approach (which is not the least important) is to directly ask the main concerned people

their opinion. In this respect, the question to the parents in the village received answers without any ambiguity: 90.2% of the families are "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the migration to the city of one of their members (Table 17).

Table 17: Attitudes of the family about migration according to sex of the migrant

Attitude of family about migration	Male	Female	Both sexes
Very satisfied	26.9	24.8	25.7
Satisfied	64.1	64.8	64.5
Indifferent	7.0	9.1	8.2
Not satisfied	1.3	0.3	0.7
Not satisfied at all	0.1	0.1	0.1
Doesn't know	0.6	0.9	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Samples	799	1,106	1,905

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

The reasons of satisfaction are, in this order, the employment, a "happy family" in Hochiminh City and better schooling conditions (Table 18).

Figure 5: Attitude of family in countryside about migration

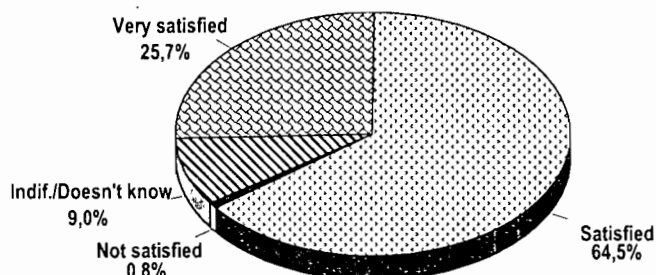


Table 18: Reasons for satisfaction of parents with migrant according to sex of migrant

Reason of parents for being satisfied with the migration	Male	Female	Both sexes
Employment	43.1	26.8	33.7
Family happy in HCMC	9.7	39.1	26.8
Better schooling conditions	14.8	7.0	10.3
Family settlement	6.0	10.8	8.8
High income which means remittances to family	11.4	0.5	8.0
Better living conditions	5.7	5.1	5.3
Better future for children	1.9	0.3	1.0
Happy living in city	1.0	0.7	0.8
End of military service	1.0	-	0.4
Health care	0.1	-	0.1
Higher security	0.1	-	0.1
Other reasons	4.9	4.9	4.9
Total	100	100	100
Samples	770	1,064	1,834

Source: Survey on rural-urban migration to HCMC, 1999

Finally, we asked the parents and the migrants to estimate the impact of the rural-urban migration on the family, on the village and on the country (Table 19). This impact is considered very positive in every case and especially for the family. It is only when considering broader geographic levels that the

number of persons who report not knowing is high; this is rather logically, but they were probably also influenced by the dominant official positions on this subject. We are at least very far from the unfavourable atmosphere about the city regularly spread by the media.

Table 19: Assessment of impact of rural-urban migration respectively by the parents in Can Giuoc and by the migrant in Hochiminh City (%)

Level of impact	Respondent	Impact			Total
		Positive	Negative	Don't know	
Impact on family	Parents in Can Giuoc	82.3	2.5	15.2	100.0
	Migrant in HCMC	88.2	1.7	10.1	100.0
Impact on village	Parents in Can Giuoc	69.5	2.5	28.0	100.0
	Migrant in HCMC	41.6	4.5	53.9	100.0
Impact on country	Parents in Can Giuoc	48.9	1.2	49.9	100.0
	Migrant in HCMC	22.7	3.1	74.2	100.0

Source: 515 migrants in HCMC and their 515 families in Can Giuoc

Conclusion

The factual data showed us that migration towards the city of one of its members tended to increase the living standard of the family remaining in the village, even if this improvement remains limited on some aspects; the statements of the main concerned persons showed the continuing strength of the relations between the migrant and his/her family; the opinions of everybody, both in the city and in the village, are very favourable to the migration. There is thus a strong contrast between the official governmental opinion (existing in many countries) saying that rural-urban migration is a bad thing and the opinion of the population saying that it is good. This positive opinion is a new objective factor which may be added to the many factors concerning the long-term continuation of rural-urban migration in Vietnam.

The migration towards the city or, more exactly, the fact for a family to send one of its members to the city, really seems to come from a collective decision, at least partially: people try to minimize the risks, while increasing their incomes. The advantages of the rural-urban migration are

objectively shared, even if they are felt with nuances; we cannot say that those who were left behind are abandoned in the context of current Vietnam.

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