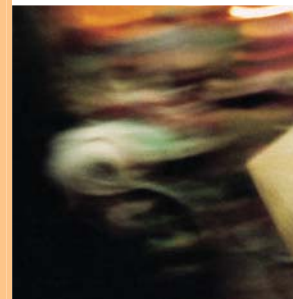
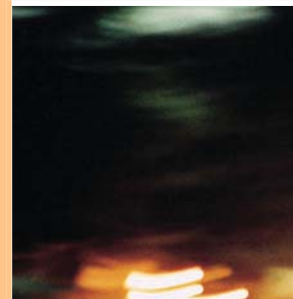
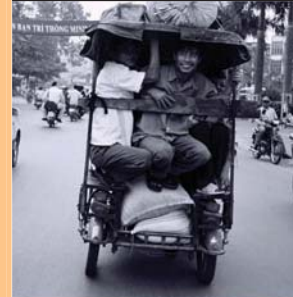


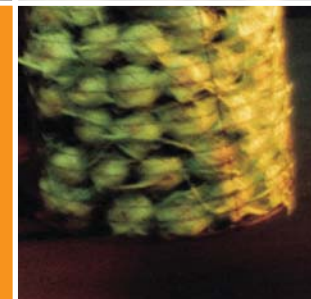


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Internal Migration in Vietnam:

The Current Situation



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Á THÔNG MINH



Internal migration in Vietnam: the current situation

Introduction

Controlling the distribution of the population across the different regions of Viet Nam has been an important policy of the Vietnamese Government. The main objective has been to try to keep the growth of urban areas low and to assist people in moving from places with high population density, such as the Red River Delta, to areas where there is land available for agriculture, such as the Central Highlands.

These policies had some success in the 1970s and 1980s and the percentages of people living in urban areas being only 19.4 per cent in 1989. However, the move toward a market economy, which began with the ‘renovation policies’ (*Doi Moi*) officially introduced in 1986, changed the pattern of migration in the country. Economic growth increased rapidly in and around urban areas and many people in the growing rural population moved to cities. At the time of the 1999 Census about *one in four* people in Viet Nam were living in urban areas. In 1999, the Government approved guidelines for urban development and management, which included an estimate of 45 per cent of the population expected to be living

in urban areas by 2020. This figure could only be reached with high levels of rural-to-urban migration.

Despite its recognition of the link between economic growth and urbanization, the Government, both at the national and provincial levels, views the current migration trends with concern. Overcrowding and poverty are very visible in major cities and there has been a general perception that these are made worse by waves of new migrants moving in from the countryside. There has also been concern about migrants contributing to social disorder, including crime, when they come to live in the cities. Thus the household registration system, which previously was able to control movement to some extent, is still seen by many as a necessary tool to regulate population movement.

Yet at the same time, there has been concern about the effect of regulations such as this household registration system on the lives of migrants. Many policymakers and researchers worry that existing policies not only fail to stop people from moving but also have a negative effect on the lives of the migrants, in getting work and obtaining public services like education and health care.

The debate about the positive and negative aspects of migration, especially to urban areas, has therefore become more intense in recent years. Several national conferences have discussed these issues, and there have been recent changes in the household registration system. But at the same time there continue to be calls by some to retain tight control over migration.

The lack of current and reliable information about internal migration in Viet Nam has been one of the factors contributing to slow policy change on migration. The 1999 National Population Census provided valuable information about trends but provided little useful information about the lives of migrants. And while there have been a number of small in-depth studies of migrants, these have focused only on small areas.

To overcome this lack of information, the General Statistical Office, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund, undertook a national survey on migration in 2004. This survey, called the 2004 Viet Nam Migration Survey, was carried out in 10 provinces that serve as major destination areas for internal migrants. The survey was designed to get information in the following areas:

- The process of migration, including the decision to migrate and adjustment of migrants at the place of destination.
- How migrants and non-migrants at the place of destination differ in their characteristics, participation in the labour market and health.
- Impacts of migration on migrants and their families.

The results of the survey have been widely disseminated at meetings and through four publications. *This booklet summarizes the major findings of the results of the survey, as well as information from other reliable sources*, so that non-demographers can have a better understanding of the situation of internal migration in Viet Nam.

Levels and patterns of internal migration in Viet Nam

The most recent information on levels of internal migration in Viet Nam comes from the 1999 Population Census. During the five years before the census (1994-1999), nearly 4.5 million persons changed their place of residence (rural commune or urban ward) in Viet Nam. Among these migrants, 55 per cent moved within a province, and 45 per cent moved across provincial boundaries within the country. About 1.6 million moved from rural to urban areas.

It is clear that migration is a major factor in urban population growth in Viet Nam, especially in the largest cities. An analysis of the 1999 census data found that rural-to-urban migration was responsible for about *one-third of urban population growth* from 1994-1999. This migration out of rural areas helped reduce rural population growth. Migration also provided slightly over one-half of the population growth for Ho Chi Minh City in this period.

Ho Chi Minh City was clearly the centre of migration with the largest increase (410,553 persons) in the five years prior to the census. Hanoi gained 114,617 people. There were also large migration flows to areas of industrial development in

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