

VIETNAM



AMY Map by Boyet Rivera III

A. Total Stock (Number) of Migrants, as of 2005

MIGRANTS ABROAD		
ESTIMATED STOCK: MIGRANTS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY		
TOTAL		
a. By visa status	Documented migrant workers*	400,000 est.
	Emigrants/residents	-
	Undocumented migrants**	-
	Refugees***	358,268
b. By sex	Male	-
	Female	-
c. Top destination countries	1. Cambodia	6. Japan (33,003)
	2. China	7. Lao PDR
	3. Taiwan (84,185)	8. Thailand
	4. Malaysia	9.
	5. South Korea (38,902)	10.

* Non-resident, temporary, or contract workers.

** Includes illegal entrants, overstayed or "jumped" visas, trafficked/smuggled people

MIGRANTS IN VIETNAM		
ESTIMATED STOCK: MIGRANTS IN THE COUNTRY		
TOTAL		
a. By visa status	Documented migrant workers*	-
	Emigrants/residents	-
	Undocumented migrants**	-
	Refugees***	-
b. By sex	Male	-
	Female	-
c. Top countries of origin	1. China	6.
	2. Cambodia	7.
	3.	8.
	4.	9.
	5.	10.

*** As defined by the government, or in accordance with the UN refugee convention.

B. Annual Socio-Economic Data and Migration Flow

Annual indicators	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Population (million; mid-year estimate)	83.54		81.4	81.1	79.9	78.8
% population living below poverty line				28.9		
% population living in rural areas					75.5	
Economic growth: real GDP (%)	7.6	7.7	7.2	6.0	5.2	6.8
Per capita GDP (US\$)			482.0		411	
Per capita GDP: purchasing power parity (US\$)	3,000	2,700	2,500.0		2,070	
Inflation rate: CPI (%; annual ave.)	8.0	9.5	3.1		(0.3)	(1.6)
Exchange rate (Dong per US\$; annual ave.)	15,855	15,787	15,279.5	15,085	14,725	14,168
International reserves (US\$ billion; yearend)				
Foreign direct investments: actual (US\$ billion; yearend)					1.50	1.30
Trade balance (US\$ billion; yearend)						
Foreign (total external) debt (US\$ billion; yearend)	19.170	16.550	14.690			12.787
Foreign (total external) debt as % of GNP						40.8
Budget balance (US\$; yearend)						
Budget deficit as % of GDP						
Labor force (million)	44.03	42.980	43.0			
Women as % of labor force			49			
Number unemployed						
Unemployment rate (% of labor force)	2.4	1.90				
Underemployment rate (% labor force)						
Women unemployment rate (% of labor force)						
Average income (US\$/month)						
Average income: women (US\$/month)						
Adult literacy rate (% of age 15 & above who can read/write)				90.3	92.7	
Net migration rate (net # of migrants per 1,000 popn)	(-0.43)	(-.45)	(-.46)	(0.47)		(0.51)
Annual outflow/deployment of MWs						
% women in the annual outflow						
Annual inflow of MWs						
% women in the annual inflow						
Annual migrants' remittance (US\$ billion/yr)						
Reported # of migrant deaths during the year						
Estimated # deported during the year						
Jailed/detained during the year						
HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate (adult PLHA as % of adult popn)		0.40		0.30		
# People living with HIV/AIDS (thousand)			220.0		220.0	
# AIDS deaths during the year (adults+children)			9,000			
Cumulative #: HIV/AIDS cases among migrants (living+died)						

Sources: CIA World Factbook, UN/ILO/UNDP statistical yearbooks/websites.

AMIC Information Bank



Courtesy of MMIN

Vietnamese women make traditional straw hats on a boat.

VIETNAM

This report was compiled with the assistance of information provided by the Mekong Migration Network.

Political and Economic Update

The Vietnamese government continues to prioritize economic development and poverty reduction, while making little to no progress in political freedoms and freedom of the press. Despite international criticism of the government's repressive measures against protesters, such as the peaceful anti-government protests which met with violent, swift reprisals in Easter 2004, the government continues its crackdown against these groups. Ethnic minority groups, particularly those from the Central Highlands area, have accused the government of confiscating their lands, religious restrictions and general repression.

In July 2005, nine people were sentenced to jail terms ranging from 8 to 13 years upon being found guilty of organizing the Easter 2004 protests. In November 2005, six Montagnards were sentenced to long jail terms for inciting protests.

Trouble with this group has spilled over to Cambodia, as people from Central Highlands ("Tay Nguyen") ethnic minority groups have fled to Cambodia. In January 2005, Vietnam, Cambodia and the UNHCR signed an MOU addressing the issue. The agreement states that the approximately 750 Tay Nguyen migrants currently in Cambodia will have a choice either to return to Vietnam or to be resettled in a third country. The fate of those who arrive after the date of the MOU, however, will be subject to Cambodia's discretion; Cambodia could decide to hand them over to Vietnam, or to arrange resettlement in a third country. While the option for resettlement in a third country may be beneficial to those currently in Cambodia,

the agreement may set a bad precedent for those who go to Cambodia in the future, as the MOU states that “those Tay Nguyen illegal migrants did not run to Cambodia because of repression at home.”¹ In July 20, 2005, the Cambodian government handed over 107 Vietnamese Tay Nguyen to the Vietnam government.

Vietnam has followed China and others in its battle to restrict the Internet. The government implemented a law in 2004 requiring Internet cafes to keep records of the personal information of customers, and launched a major offensive against two news and entertainment websites. The websites had both published content criticizing the government’s import of expensive limousines. One site was shut down, while the editor-in-chief of the other was fired.

The country continued to battle the recurring outbreaks of bird flu; more people in Vietnam have died of the bird flu virus than in any other country.² In late 2005, there was another outbreak in northern Vietnam. The government responded strongly, announcing plans for the inoculation of all 260 million birds in the poultry industry with vaccines from China. Vietnam also plans to produce Tamiflu, a bird flu drug.

In September 2005, typhoon Damrey, which had already hit China’s Hainan island, caused considerable damage in Vietnam. The typhoon killed 68 people, and forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of others. It was said to be the most powerful typhoon to hit northern Vietnam in over ten years.

Vietnam continues to be a model for poverty reduction, with successful programs making progress, albeit in slow steps. According to the Vietnam government, from 1998 to 2005, the incidence of household poverty fell to 7%, the incidence of malnourished children dropped to 25%, and 62% of the rural population had access to clean water. Vietnam’s HDI ranking rose from 112 in 2004 to 108 out of 177 countries in 2005.³ The phenomenon of urban

to rural phenomenon migration has put pressure on the urban population, however. The total number of urban inhabitants increased 18.8 million in 2000 to 21.6 million in 2004, and it is estimated that in reality the real number of residents may be as much as three times higher than the official figures.⁴

The country’s steady economic growth has helped it carry out development programs. According to the General Statistics Office, Vietnam’s economy grew 7.7% in 2004, and another 8.4% in 2005. Foreign investment has steadily increased to record levels in 2004, hitting USD4.1 billion.⁵ The industry and construction sectors grew 10.6% in 2005, while the service sector was up 8.5%.⁶ Trade and exports also grew significantly. Migrants’ remittances also contributed to the economy; in 2005, official remittances from overseas Vietnamese migrant workers amounted to USD3.8 billion.⁷ In addition, working overseas helps provide much-needed employment, as it has been estimated by the World Bank that as many of 60% of the work force is unemployed or underemployed.

Vietnam also moved closer to WTO membership. In 2005, the National Assembly and the National Assembly Standing Committee approved many laws necessary for Vietnam to fulfill its WTO membership obligations, such as laws related to international treaties, import and export taxes, commerce and enterprises. The government is working to push through membership, despite ongoing objections to how the WTO functions and debates as to pro and cons to WTO accession.

Migration Update

Internal Migrants

Vietnam’s *hou khau* system, similar to China’s *he kou* system, requires citizens register in order to be able to access basic services. Due to state controls, it is often difficult for rural to

urban migrant workers to get such registered status. Without permanent resident status, studies have shown that internal migrants have more difficulty finding housing and employment, and have to pay higher fees for water and electricity. Migrants’ children have to pay higher tuition fees and have trouble getting into good schools, while migrant workers are forced into the informal job sector where they face poor or dangerous working conditions and are extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Accordingly, internal migrants generally have similar issues and needs to international migrants.

While the government has recognized the problem and attempted some redress mechanisms, these have been largely inadequate. For example, it was reported that a government decree in August 2005 would allow some internal migrants to obtain permanent residence if they satisfied certain criteria. Of over 1,000 applicants, however, only 26 met all of the criteria.⁸ An enquiry conducted by the National Assembly’s Social Affairs Committee into the impact of Vietnamese laws on internal migrants found that many city and provincial regulations often infringed on migrants’ rights and violated national laws.⁹

Migrants in Vietnam

In addition to merchants and other less vulnerable migrant workers in Vietnam, there are a number of Cambodian migrants – including children – who come to beg in Vietnamese cities. Most Cambodian children beggars in Ho Chi Minh City and some surrounding provinces such as Binh Duong and

Dong Nai are from the provinces close to the border between Vietnam and Cambodia such as Svay Rieng and Kandal. More information can be found in the Cambodia Country Report on pp.93.

The Social Protection Section of the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) manages shelters for the homeless and others in difficult situations, including beggars. UNICEF, IOM and the Vietnam Women’s Union also provide direct support to Cambodian beggars, with related activities such as documentation, food provision, coordination with Cambodian side, management fee provision, etc.

Vietnamese Migrants Overseas

The number of Vietnamese deployed abroad has been increasing, particularly in the past few years, as the government recognizes the huge power of migrant workers in bringing in foreign exchange earnings. The Vietnam government appears to be increasingly proactive in promoting overseas migration for both skilled and unskilled workers. This has had both positive and negative impacts for migrant workers, as the government plans to implement training programs for outbound workers, but also to impose/increase penalties on absconded workers.

The government’s target is to send 100,000 Vietnamese migrant workers annually, including more workers to developed countries such as the United States, Italy and Australia. In the meantime, Vietnam continues to send large numbers of workers to its more traditional markets including Malaysia, South Korea,

ANNUAL DEPLOYMENT FIGURES					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Migrants deployed abroad	36,000	46,000	75,000	67,447	70,600

Source: Compiled from online reports as cited in Endnote 10 and Reference 2.



Courtesy of MMN

Vietnamese women working in the rice field.

Japan and Taiwan; 80% of deployed migrant workers went to those four countries in 2004. 67,447 Vietnamese migrant workers were deployed overseas through official channels in 2004, according to the Department for Authority of Foreign Employed Labor (Dafel), with a deployment target of 70,000 workers for 2005.

Vietnamese migrants perform jobs in a wide range of occupations, ranging from mechanics, construction, electronics assembly, textiles and domestic work. 35% of the estimated stock of 400,000 migrants currently working overseas are said to be working in skilled professions. Taiwan and Malaysia are popular destination countries for Vietnamese migrant workers, despite lower wages. According to Dafel, wages for Vietnamese workers vary by job, employer and host country, ranging from USD300 – 1,000 per month. Generally, Vietnamese workers can earn more in Japan

and South Korea (salaries of USD700 – 1000 per month), while workers in Taiwan and Malaysia can earn around USD300-500 weekly. The Vietnamese government has been active in promoting deployment in Thailand and Malaysia, entering into MOUs with the two countries to facilitate deployment.¹⁰ The Vietnamese government is also said to be working to increase pre-migration training for migrant workers, with an aim to conduct skills training for at least 70% of those deployed annually.

The number of Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan had been increasing during 2003 and 2004 (the stock went from almost 30,000 Vietnamese migrants in 2002 to over 90,000 in 2004), but then dipped slightly in 2005 to 84,185. South Korea's government signed an MOU with Vietnam in 2004 to import Vietnamese migrant workers under its new Employment Permit System. In 2005, there

Vietnam Significant Events July 2004 - December 2005

2004

August

(20) A three-day National Children's Forum sponsored by the ILO, UK, UNICEF, and UNIAP is held as part of government initiatives to raise public awareness of child trafficking and child labor; over 150 teenagers attend the forum to speak of their experiences.

October

A 100-million-barrel oil field is discovered off the shores of Hai Phong in a joint venture by foreign and Vietnamese companies, adding to its 600-million-barrel oil reserves.

(5) The European Union (EU) and Vietnam sign a bilateral agreement on Vietnam's accession to the WTO; negotiations with the United States, Canada and others are still ongoing.

December

Vietnam reports a 7.7% economic growth in 2004, the second fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia.

(9) US-Vietnam relations continue to improve, as the two countries reinstate air links with the first

commercial flight to touch down on Vietnamese soil since the end of the Vietnam War.

2005

January

(5) In another blow against freedom of the press, the government charges journalist Lan Anh with "appropriating state secrets" for her reporting on the foreign monopoly of Vietnam's pharmaceutical market which caused the price of generic drugs to rise.

(15) Vietnam signs a tri-party MOU with Cambodia and the UNHCR regarding the return of 750 Tay Nguyen (Central Highland) ethnic minority refugees who had fled to Cambodia.

February

The Vietnam government announces that more than 8,000 prisoners, including political prisoners, will be released during the Lunar New Year as a gesture of amnesty. Prime Minister Phan Van Khai issues a decree banning forced renouncement of faith, and lessens restrictions on Christian organizations.

were 19,210 Vietnamese documented migrant workers in South Korea; they were classified by the government as working in "non-skilled" jobs. Also, MoLISA worked out a scheme with South Korea whereby skilled workers in biotechnology, nanotechnology, IT, etc., could apply for three-year working visas.¹¹

Within the Mekong region, there are reports that approximately 10,000 Vietnamese are working in Lao PDR, most of whom are immigrants.¹² The majority are living in urban areas, working jobs such as construction work, service providers (tailors, salons, massage parlors), and small commerce. There are also large numbers of Vietnamese in Cambodia, where they perform jobs such as fishermen,

craftsmen, and sex work (See Cambodia Country Report for additional information).

Vietnam also faces a large incidence of international marriages, some of which may be considered fraudulent. Many marriages are being arranged through illegal brokerage services and websites which advertise "mail order brides". Most women go to South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and China in the form of marriage. Between 2003 and the first quarter of 2005, there were 31,800 Vietnamese who left the country for marriage; of these, 70% went to Taiwan. In recent years, the number of international marriages with Korean men is said to have unexpectedly increased. As of 2005, there were 7,218 registered Vietnamese

March

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai issues a directive to crack down on broker organizations and individuals involved in arranging marriages between Vietnamese women and foreign men.

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai signs Decree 38/1005/ND-CP, placing new restrictions on the freedom of assembly.

May

(6) Chang Chang-Hsin, a Taiwanese man who cheated 44 Vietnamese of false promises of work in Taiwan and Japan, was sentenced to 15 years of jail.

June

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai visits the United States, the first Vietnamese leader to do so since the end of the Vietnam War.

July Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee institutes a new registration system for tracking migrant workers from the provinces seeking work in the city.

August

(4) Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu, head of the National Assembly's Committee for Social Affairs, introduces

a draft decree that would fine and imprison overseas Vietnamese workers who abscond from their jobs.

September

(16) At a meeting with the Youth Union Central Committee's First Secretary Dao Ngoc, migrant laborers that have worked in Binh Duong province for years demand permanent residency to send their children to school.

November

Out of the 1,000 applicants by migrant workers from the provinces who have applied for permanent residential status in Vietnam's major cities, only 26 were granted permanent status. Applicants complain of inconsistencies in the process.

December

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai approves four projects for 2006-2010 to raise public awareness of human trafficking and to assist victims of trafficking.

Sources: BBC, Scalabrini Asian Migration News, Economist, VOA, Human Rights Watch, International Reports, VnEconomy, Dow Jones Newswires, Amnesty International, Thanh Nien News

spouses living in South Korea; where research has found high levels of spousal abuse. (See South Korea Country Report pp.175 for further details)

Responses

In late 2004, the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) proposed a bill on migrant workers which would, in part, establish a vocational training program for migrant workers. It is also intended to monitor recruitment agencies and work to prevent fraud and export violations.¹³ It was reported that the Vietnamese government has set up labor attaches

in nine receiving countries, and has increased oversight of labor export companies.¹⁴

At least partially in response to the strongly expressed concern in host countries such as Taiwan and Malaysia on the issue of irregular migrant workers, particularly workers who abscond from their original employers, in August 2005 the government introduced a draft decree imposing harsh punishments on absconding workers. According to the proposed decree, runaway migrant workers could face jail sentences of up to two years and fines of VND50 million.¹⁵ This law, intended at least in part to mollify host countries and facilitate increased deployment of Vietnamese migrant workers, actually works to exacerbate



Courtesy of MMN

the already-harsh conditions faced by migrant workers. Restrictions on the ability to change employers make migrant workers extremely vulnerable forcing them to endure employers who exploit them. To impose punishment in the home country on migrants who may be forced to flee from dangerous conditions only adds to their burdens.

The Vietnam government took a number of actions to combat trafficking. On 14 July 2004, the Prime Minister signed his Approval of the National Plan of Action Against Crime of Trafficking in Children and Women during the period of 2004-2010. The law includes measures to raise awareness through community education, to fight trafficking, and to provide support to trafficking victims, among others. The Vietnam government was also part of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) process in Yangon, Myanmar in October 2004. The six GMS countries, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR,

Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in the GMS. Vietnam also signed the ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons Particularly Women and Children, which sets out the means and areas for cooperation on trafficking prevention.” In October 2005, Vietnam signed an MOU on bilateral cooperation with Cambodia on anti-trafficking efforts.

The Vietnam Women’s Union (VWU) has been active in its anti-trafficking efforts, particularly on awareness raising and education, as well as assisting returnees to reintegrate into their communities. The government also collaborated with a number of IGOs in its anti-trafficking efforts. IOM, ILO, Save the Children-UK, UNICEF, UNIAP, Oxfam-Quebec and the Asia Foundation have all worked in the country to raise awareness and carry out trafficking prevention activities.

More detailed information on the government's anti-trafficking efforts can be found in several sources, including www.humantrafficking.org.

In addition to trafficking prevention, the government attempts to assist in the return and reintegration of trafficking victims. VWU is helping some returnees to earn some incomes, not stigmatize or discriminate them that they were sex workers by voluntary ways or by trafficking, by providing them some loan for a small business. IOM Vietnam cooperates with the Provincial Woman Union of Mekong Delta on a reintegration program for returnees from Cambodia, providing small loans. AusAid is running a pilot program in An Giang province to support small businesses, which can also be of assistance both to returnees and would-be migrants.

NGOs that help migrant workers include CARAM Vietnam, as well as other organizations that combat HIV/AIDS.

Endnotes

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Courtesy of IMN

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3. *Scalabrini Asian Migration News*