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Migration in Asia after the Economic Crisis: Patterns and Issues

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The economic downturn will not have as great an impact on international migration flows as initially expected

The economic crisis in parts of the Asian region, which began in the middle of 1997, has altered the migration patterns that emerged during the first half of the 1990s, but perhaps not in the ways most commonly thought. Initial examinations of the immediate impacts have appeared in a special issue of the Asian and Pacific Migration Journal (APMJ, 1998) and Battistella and Asis (1999), mainly on a country-by-country basis. This article will seek a broader, regional and up-dated assessment. While data on the social impact of the crisis, including its impact on migration, are as yet weak or difficult to obtain, the economic consequences have been abundantly clear. If the analysis in a popular economics journal is to be accepted, the economic downturn in Asia, 1997-2000, is in the same order of magnitude as the Great Depression in the United States of America between 1929 and 1933, when output fell by 30 per cent (The Economist, 25 April 1998, p.15). Out of the Great Depression grew a whole culture of migration in the United States based around the hobo, which was intensified by the environmental problems of the "dust bowl" of the farther mid-western states as people in desperation moved to survive. The combination of economic slump in Asia and environmental problems brought on by the El Niño effects in South-East Asia engender uncomfortable parallels. Even more uncomfortable are the political implications of economic downturns. Out of the Great Depression came the culminating phase of what the British historian, Hobsbawm (1994), termed the "Age of Catastrophe", i.e. the Second World War and the Spanish Civil War in Europe and the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War in Asia. Although it is dangerous to search for future implications of current difficulties in past events, already the crisis in Asia is causing us to rethink many ready assumptions about development in Asia. While much of the following analysis must still be speculative as data are unavailable, the general characteristics of the impact of the crisis on migration are emerging.

The "Asian miracle", the "Asian values" that have contributed to the rapid economic development in East Asia and parts of South-East Asia, and now the "Asian crisis" — these terms all seem to affirm that Asia is in some way unique and at the centre of a particular form of development in today's world. However, for the sake of debate, it is worth beginning with an apparent conundrum in order to understand what is going on: "Asia" is at the same time too small and too large an entity for meaningful analysis. It is too small because, in an era of globalization, the forces generating the crisis (and the "miracle") lie as much outside the region as within it; it is too large because the areas profoundly affected by the crisis (and which experienced the miracle) represent, thus far at least, a relatively small part of the whole Asian region.

It is necessary to place the regional economic downturn firmly in a broad economic context. Periods of growth and decline, often precipitated by "crises", are a normal — some would argue even necessary — part of development in the capitalist system. "A basic feature of the capitalist mode of production is the lack of any overall control, political or otherwise" (Taylor, 1993:14). Thus, the current crisis in Asia should not be seen as being in any way abnormal. The periods of growth and stagnation have been systematized into a series of cycles — Kondratieff cycles or their ilk — and if there is substance to these ideas it may be that we are currently approaching the end point (low point or crisis) between one cycle and the next. (For an incisive discussion of Kondratieff cycles and political change, see Taylor [1993].) Perhaps most worrisome is the fact that the world economy has experienced, with varying degrees of intensity, a continuous process of integration, or "globalization", since the period 1945-1950. Such periods are often followed by a period of disarticulation of local economies, or reversals of globalization, as states fall back into narrower nationalistic attitudes.

The other side of the coin, however, is that to speak of an "Asian crisis" ignores the very real fact that the difficulties are unevenly spread across the region. The crisis has been concentrated, so far at least, in the economies of East and South-East Asia. The economies of South Asia have remained relatively unscathed while those in Central Asia even appear to have reversed the decline that characterized them through the 1990s, even if some remain extremely weak.

The crisis: the economic fundamentals

The rapid growth of the East and South-East Asian economies suddenly came to an end in 1997. The World Bank's East Asian "miracle economies" — namely Japan, the four "tigers" of Hong Kong, China;

the Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Taiwan Province of China, together with the economies of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, which grew at perhaps the highest and most sustained rates in history — appeared to have gone into reverse. Between 1960 and 1985, these economies had demonstrated a growth in gross national product (GNP) per capita of 5.5 per cent per annum, with double-digit growth in some years being not uncommon for particular countries. In 1998, the majority of the East and South-East Asian economies entered into recession with negative GDP growth (table 1). The recession was deepest in Indonesia and Thailand and has been most persistent in Japan. Regional currencies have depreciated significantly; the Indonesian rupiah dropped by over 60 per cent in 1998 alone. Regional stock markets have plunged, and banks and financial institutions in the Republic of Korea and Thailand have failed on an unprecedented scale. Yet, despite the depth of the recession, most of these economies are forecast to recover by the year 2000.

Table 1. Growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP), 1997-2000, East and South-East Asian economies

Country/area	**1997 (actual)**	**1998 (estimated)**	**1999 (forecast)**	**2000 (forecast)**
East Asia				
China	8.8	7.8	8.2	8.4
Hong Kong, China	5.3	-5.1	-1.0	1.5
Taiwan Province of China	6.8	4.8	4.5	4.8
Japan	-0.7	-2.1	-0.7	-0.8
Republic of Korea	5.5	-5.8	5.0	4.0
South-East Asia				
Indonesia	4.9	-13.7	-1.8	2.4
Malaysia	7.8	-6.8	2.0	3.9
Philippines	5.2	-0.5	2.4	4.0
Singapore	8.0	1.5	2.5	4.0
Thailand	-1.3	-8.0	-0.5	2.2

Source: Far Eastern Economic Review, 29 July 1999.

Social impact of the crisis

The outward signs of financial crisis may be clear enough, but the implications for social change are not so obvious. Unemployment unquestionably rose rapidly, with data (despite all their limitations) indicating a doubling in Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; and Thailand, a tripling in the Republic of Korea, and a yet more dramatic increase in Indonesia by mid to late 1998 (E. Lee, 1998:39-43). Labour force data from Thailand show that, although the number of unemployed actually decreased from around 354,000 in 1996 to 292,000 in 1997, their number increased markedly in 1998 to 1,138,000. Even though the figure is large, it still represents only 3.4 per cent of the labour force (Gray, 1999). Using different estimates, the International Labour Organization (ILO) expected unemployment in Thailand to exceed 1.9 million by early 1999, up from 1.6 million in May 1998. The number of unemployed was just under 700,000 before the crisis began, according to figures cited in E. Lee (1998:40). The total number of unemployed in Indonesia has already probably reached almost 15 million and must surely be a factor in the unrest in that country. Even in Hong Kong, China, an economy which had one of the tightest labour markets in Asia, unemployment in the second quarter of 1998 was estimated at 4.8 per cent, the highest level in two decades.

The incidence of poverty in Thailand declined steadily from 32.6 per cent of the population in 1988 (representing 17.9 million people) to 11.4 per cent in 1996 (representing 6.8 million); however, it increased to 12.9 per cent in 1998 (NESDB, 1999: 4). The crisis was estimated by the same source to have been directly responsible for an increase of 1.5 million in the number of poor, the total of which reached 7.9 million in 1998. The increase in poverty in Indonesia has been much greater. Having declined from about 54.2 million in 1976 through 30 million in 1987 and 22.5 million in 1996, the number of poor rose to some 80 million in 1998. ILO estimates place the number of poor in that country at a much higher level, i.e. almost 99 million, although that estimate is not comparable with the numbers for earlier periods (Feridhanusetyawan, 1999:76).

Changing patterns of migration in East and South-East Asia

Before attempting to assess what impact the crisis may have had on population migration in East and South-East Asia, some background to the major shifts that have occurred in the patterns of movement in the region before the crisis is necessary. It is important to realize that the movement of peoples is not new in Asia; throughout the region's long history, population movement has brought about a mixing of cultures. There have been, however, significant fluctuations in the volume and direction of those population movements in the past and we can surely expect further fluctuations in the future. It has been argued that our time is "the age of migration" (Castles and Miller, 1993) and while international movements in Asia and elsewhere have unquestionably become a major concern as the twentieth century comes to a close, the actual proportions of the population which are moving neither appear to have increased markedly over the recent past nor seem unduly large when compared with previous "ages of migration" (see Zlotnik, 1998). Some even argue the real migration question of our current global era is: "Why is it that more people do not move?" (Hammar and others, 1997). Certainly, on a per capita basis, the volumes of movement from Asia today are still low when compared with the proportions leaving European populations a century ago. In considering the implications of the current crisis affecting Asia, it should not be forgotten that such crises are not new.

Although the movement of labour has long been a ubiquitous feature of Asian societies, there has been considerable variation from one part of that vast area to another. The movement of indentured labour, for example, affected only a few areas around the periphery of the continent where colonial or foreign penetration and influence were most intense. The emigration of the Chinese was essentially from two provinces in southern China, Guangdong and Fujian; indeed, it was particularly heavy from specific districts within those provinces (see Pan, 1998). Similarly, the emigration from India came from a number of clearly defined source areas rather than being evenly drawn from the Indian population as a whole (see Clarke, Peach and Vertovec, 1990:12). As we shall see below, the more recent migrations in Asia have also been concentrated in space and there is considerable variation in the volume and types of migration from one part of the region to another.

There was little international migration either within or from Asia from the early 1950s to the early 1970s. One of the earlier major flows during the past quarter-century was of contract labour migrants, primarily to the oil-rich countries of the Middle East. The evolution of this system from dependence upon regional sources of Arab labour, through to the countries of South Asia, and then to the countries of East and South-East Asia has been well told elsewhere (Arnold and Shah, 1986; Gunatilleke, 1986; Findlay, 1994, ch 5). From the late 1980s, and accelerating after the Gulf conflict of 1990/91, there was a shift in direction of labour migration towards destinations within Asia itself and particularly towards those economies that had exhibited rapid and sustained economic growth — Japan and the previously mentioned four "tiger" economies as well as those of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand.

Associated with the economic growth in these economies was a transition to lower fertility. The rapid employment creation and the slowing in growth of the labour force in several of these countries saw a transition from labour-surplus to labour-deficit economies and a shift from labour export to the importation of labour in what has been called a "migration transition" (see the essays in Abella, 1994, especially that by Fields). While the search for specific "turning points" might prove elusive, the general shift from participation in systems of labour emigration to labour immigration is particularly clear for the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China. Thailand has emerged as a country of major immigration as well as emigration.

It is worth pointing out that the centrally planned economies of China and Viet Nam followed a different path. There, workers went to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the countries of Eastern Europe where some still remain, although, with the demise of the USSR and the opening up of the Chinese and Vietnamese economies, migrant labourers have increasingly being going to capitalist countries and competing with the more traditional source areas of Asian migrants.

The magnitude of the change in destination is clearly seen for the three major exporters of contract labour in the South-East Asian subregion: Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. In 1980, 84 per cent of overseas contract workers from the Philippines went to the Middle East, with only 11 per cent going to other Asian countries. The corresponding figures for Indonesia were 74 and 8 per cent, and for Thailand 97 and 3 per cent respectively (data cited in Hugo, 1998b). By 1994, Asian countries were the destination of 36 per cent of overseas contract workers from the Philippines, 36 per cent of those from Indonesia and 89 per cent of those from Thailand. The switch for Thailand is most dramatic and occurred in the late 1980s. Part of the reason for the more rapid shift for Thailand was political, with Saudi Arabia barring the recruitment of Thai workers because of a theft by a Thai worker of jewels belonging to Saudi royalty, a case which illustrates the fragility of the overseas contract labour market and the extent to which political considerations can affect flows. In both the remaining labour movements to the Middle East and in the regional flows to Asian destinations, an increasing feminization of the flows is taking place consequent upon the rising demand for labour in service occupations in a broad range of activities, including domestic workers, nurses and entertainers of all sorts (see, for example, Skeldon, 1999).

The numbers involved in the contract labour migrant system are large. In 1994, the annual number of contract workers going overseas from Indonesia was 141,287, from the Philippines 555,226 (plus another 154,376 based at sea), and from Thailand 169,764 (Huguet, 1995). Perhaps more impressive, however, has been the growing number of migrants in Asian countries. Accurate numbers are impossible to ascertain at this stage owing to the importance of undocumented migrants, who may indeed account for the greater proportion of total workers. ILO has attempted to make sense of a complex situation (ILO, 1998). There were, before the crisis, probably some 2.5 million foreign workers in Malaysia, including at least 1.4 million who were undocumented, perhaps over 1 million in Thailand, although the estimates fluctuate widely, 1,350,000 million in Japan and 450,000 in tiny Singapore. The greater part of the build-up in these numbers took place in the 1990s, with the number of workers in Malaysia doubling in the five years from 1992.

Migration and the crisis: the issues

The core issue of the crisis relates to what will become of the recent labour migrants in Asia in the face of increasing domestic unemployment. The ready solution would be to expel them and to replace them with domestic workers recently made redundant by the crisis. This solution might appear to be not only economically rational but also politically desirable as it would relieve domestic pressures that might have built up from the unemployed. That the solution cannot be so simple will become apparent below, but the fact that many countries are proposing such an approach raises the very important issues of migrant protection and migrant rights, particularly in the case where significant numbers of migrants are in a country illegally.

Large numbers of migrants are in vulnerable positions and gender issues may exacerbate the problem. As mentioned above, one of the characteristics of the recent migrations in Asia has been the increasing participation of women in the migration flows, and these women may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation both in the formal labour market and in the informal "black economy". Trafficking of young women as well as children of both sexes to overseas destinations, through criminal networks, may increase as prospects for employment for new entrants to domestic labour markets decline.

Will the crisis prove to be a "turning point" for migrant communities in the region and bring about a stabilization similar to that resulting from the impact of the 1973 oil crisis on migrant labour in Europe? There, the further importation of labour was curtailed but the numbers of migrants continued to increase as those workers already in Europe were allowed to bring in their families.

While the deportation of foreign labour, both legal and illegal, may be a ready response to the crisis, so too is the temptation to "export" domestic unemployment overseas. Governments may seek to place newly redundant labour in more dynamic economies, which may play into the hands of unscrupulous brokers who may exploit those who wish to go overseas. If overseas destinations are not a viable option for the newly unemployed, will they return to home areas in the rural sector or enter the informal sector as a substitute for migration either back home or to some other destination? Thus, the issue of migrant protection refers to both sending and receiving countries.

The return of migrants to their home countries raises the issue of their reintegration into the domestic economy at precisely the time when that economy is contracting because of the crisis. Overseas contract workers are used to earning wages far in excess of those that can normally be earned at home, and suddenly to be thrust back into a stagnant economy may be a cause for frustration that finds its outlet in political activism and demands for change.

All these issues relate to the overall question of the management of migration and how governments in the region need to coordinate their efforts to plan for the expected population flows. At issue here, too, is the role of international agencies and the role that they can play in supporting governments in the region and, most critically, in protecting migrants and potential migrants. Central to the topic is the human side of the equation: migration must not be seen simply as a response to an economic crisis, but rather as flows of individuals with rights to basic needs and protection.

Migration and the crisis: the reality

It is abundantly clear that the impact of the crisis has been uneven throughout the region. Even where economies showed clear signs of a slowdown, the impact on migration was likely to have been highly variable. There was a major difference by level of development of the country concerned. The evidence from the more developed countries in East Asia, plus Singapore in South-East Asia, suggests that the impact of the crisis upon migration may not have been as significant as might at first have appeared.

East Asia

Foreign residents represent a very small proportion of the populations of the developed economies of East Asia. The number of migrants can be large in terms of absolute figures, as in the case of the 1.4 million migrants in Japan, but these account for just over 1 per cent of that country's total population. Of this not insignificant absolute number, fully 46 per cent come from the Republic of Korea, that traditional area of migration to Japan, and a further 17 per cent come from China, including Taiwan Province of China. Thus, the number of recent foreign labourers, even accepting that the data exclude quite large numbers of overstayers, represents a very small proportion of Japan's total labour force. Similarly, in Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea; and Taiwan Province of China, foreign workers represent small proportions of the total labour forces. The figures for total proportions are somewhat deceptive as foreign workers are often concentrated in specific neighbourhoods and are highly visible, giving the impression that they are more important overall than they really are. This distributional effect is one factor in explaining the strident public and official reactions to foreign labour in these economies.

Small in proportion does not necessarily mean that the foreign workers make an insignificant contribution to their host economies, however. They tend to undertake jobs that are low-paid and that local workers find undesirable, and they fill important "niche" activities in local economies. Some foreign workers have indeed not had their contracts renewed and are having to leave the developed economies of East Asia, but this situation should not necessarily be related to the economic crisis in Asia. In Taiwan Province of China, for example, structural shifts in the nature of the economy have reduced the demand for construction workers while increasing demand in other sectors. Thus, it is virtually impossible to separate the effects of these long-term structural shifts in the economy from the more short-term effects of the crisis in these developed economies.

Where the crisis may have an impact on the more developed economies is in the increasing number of job-seekers from more seriously affected parts of Asia coming without contracts to try to find work illegally. However, tight border controls characterize all the developed economies of East Asia, so illegal immigration through such channels is not a significant problem. Job-seekers usually enter a country legally as tourists, students or trainees but then stay on after the expiration of their visa thus becoming "overstayers". The numbers of overstayers in Japan and Taiwan Province of China remained fairly constant through the crisis at between 285,000-277,000 and 6,600-6,900 respectively, while those in the Republic of Korea declined by about one third between December 1997 and June 1998 (see Watanabe, 1998:246; J.S. Lee, 1998:164; and Park, 1998:228).

Of all the economies of Asia, Taiwan Province of China has remained relatively unaffected thus far and is perceived as offering opportunities for governments such as Thailand's that may wish to export their domestic unemployed. Certainly, the number of migrants in Taiwan Province of China increased throughout the years of the crisis from 230,000 in June 1997 through 250,000 in June 1998 to 271,000 in May 1999. Almost half of those workers come from Thailand. With domestic unemployment at around 3 per cent, or about 280,000 people, Taiwan Province of China sought initially to halt labour imports. However, in that society, many of the domestic unemployed are supervisory or technical staff who are unwilling to undertake labouring jobs. Employers in Taiwan Province of China in early 1999 estimated that some 200,000 positions were vacant in manufacturing jobs. The importation of labour has continued, with almost a 40 per cent increase in the number of foreign workers in manufacturing from 1997 to 1998, i.e. about 71,000. Currently, Taiwan Province of China is considering extending employment contracts from three to six years and to allow workers to change employers. It would thus appear that the labour market there is becoming more, rather than less, open to foreigners. In early 1999, Taiwan Province of China was diversifying its sources of recruitment to include workers from Viet Nam, which was expected to supply between 5,000 and 10,000 workers by the end of that year.1/

The principal issues involving migration to the most developed Asian economies relate more to long-term structural change in the nature of their economies than to anything that can be attributed directly to the crisis itself. Construction workers may be replaced by those with skills in manufacturing, for example. The critical issues in the more developed economies revolve not around the deportation of workers but around questions of the protection of migrant workers, particularly those who fall into the "grey" area of entering as trainees, but who participate fully in the labour force, and those women who are in isolated or vulnerable positions in the service sector.

South-East Asia

The situation in the economies of South-East Asia is somewhat different from that described above. In Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, foreign workers play a much more important role, both absolutely and relatively, than in East Asia. Singapore, with a total population of 3.7 million, has a total foreign population of 633,200 including dependants. The number of foreign workers is around 450,000, which accounts for 27 per cent of the labour force. Although the real number of foreign workers in Malaysia appears closer to 2.5 million (ILO, 1998:28), let us accept the official figure of 1.7 million foreign workers (Pillai, 1998:264) which, in a country with a labour force of 8.6 million in a population of almost 21 million in 1997, accounts for just under 20 per cent of that labour force. In Thailand, however, the 1.3 million foreign workers account for only about 4 per cent of the total labour force in a country whose population is 61.8 million in 1999.

The implications of the large number of foreign labourers in South-East Asian countries do have to be tempered somewhat by the fact that many of the transnational migrants belong to peoples of similar ethnic backgrounds separated by modern state boundaries. Although international boundaries in Asia are much more meaningful as a guide to countries than they are in many parts of Africa, for example, there are often large "grey" areas along the borders where the populations are ethnically quite distinct from those forming the dominant "core" nationality. This situation would apply along the Thai-Myanmar border, where substantial numbers of the migrants from Myanmar to Thailand would not be ethnic Burmese but minority peoples. Similarly, although not considered further here, much of the movement from Viet Nam to Cambodia is of peoples moving within traditional circuits of mobility.

In Indonesia, Hugo (1998a) has identified two quite separate systems of international migration: one essentially based in Sumatra and Java towards Peninsular Malaysia and the other from Nusa Tenggara towards East Malaysia in Sabah and Sarawak. Both of these flows, in different ways, have strong ethnic dimensions and are influenced by kinship ties and traditional fields of mobility. Much of the movement from the Lao People's Democratic Republic into the north-eastern part of Thailand (Isan) can also be seen in this light where Lao-Isan cultural ties are traditionally closer than those between Isan and the central Thai people. Despite these caveats, labour migration is unquestionably of great relative and absolute importance in the countries of South-East Asia.

Given the importance of foreign labour in the economies of this region, the question must be asked whether the observed rising levels of unemployment are to be found disproportionately among the migrants. The reverse, however, is suggested, with retrenchments occurring in those sectors where foreign labour is least concentrated. In Malaysia, only 12 per cent of those retrenched during the first quarter of 1998 were foreign labourers (Pillai, 1998). In Singapore, in the final quarter of 1997, the vast majority (almost 80 per cent) of those retrenched were in the manufacturing sector, with the construction industry — a sector which employs large amounts of foreign labour — actually expanding during 1997, albeit at a slower rate than previously (Hui, 1998).

In both Malaysia and Thailand, there have been loud calls to expel large numbers of foreign labourers (unskilled foreign labour is implied here) either because they have become unemployed or because they are taking jobs from local labour. As suggested above, the reality is somewhat different. Unskilled foreign labour is not found primarily in those sectors most affected by the crisis thus far. There are other strong reasons to suggest that the impact of the crisis will not result in mass expulsions. First, foreign labour, as in the economies of East Asia discussed above, tends to carry out jobs that local labour is unwilling to undertake: in the plantation sector in Malaysia and in the fishing and rice-milling industries in Thailand, for example. Thus, there is a mismatch between the skills of the newly redundant local labour and what is required for the positions occupied by migrant labour. Second, the presence of foreign labour exerts downward pressure on wages, which is to the benefit of local entrepreneurs. As the latter are often either local political leaders themselves or closely allied with that class, they would be unlikely to implement policies not in their own best economic interest. Third, it is much easier to maintain a compliant foreign labour force, particularly if it is illegal, than to employ indigenous labour which can seek political support in the local community and insist on minimum wages and other entitlements. Fourth, there is a mismatch in the location of the newly unemployed. For example, in Thailand they are to be found primarily in Bangkok and its periphery. However, the regions where foreign labour is employed tend to be primarily in peripheral regions of the country, as is the case in Thailand. Thus, entrepreneurs are faced with the expense of transporting the unemployed to areas where these may not wish to live, which increases discontent. Fifth, the situation in the countries of origin of the majority of the migrants is worse than in thei host economies. Governments of countries where migrants originate may bring political pressure to bear on host governments not to exacerbate the economic situation in the countries of origin by expelling tens of thousands of workers. In the interests of regional solidarity, host governments may comply, which seems to be the case in Malaysia with regard to its treatment of the majority of migrants from Indonesia, and in Thailand with regard to its attitude towards Laotians, and possibly some of the migrants from Myanmar.

Expulsions of migrant labour, particularly of illegal workers, have taken place. The number of expulsions frequently reported in the press in Thailand is 300,000 and the number of foreign workers in the country is now usually reported to be around 700,000 rather than the 1 million commonly cited before the crisis. However, there is no independent and objective way of verifying the figures. The 700,000 may refer to illegal workers only, with a further 290,000 with legal work permits (Bangkok Post, 19 July 1999). The astonishingly precise figure of 90,911 foreign workers was registered as of 31 January 1999.

Large numbers of illegal workers are indeed likely to have been returned across the border, some surely as part of the normal circulation of labour after they have achieved their work goals, and others who perhaps have failed to pay appropriate "tea money" that would encourage the authories to ignore their presence. In the case of Thailand, there is pressure on local authorities to show that something is being done to protect the integrity of Thai workers. However, an absolute ban on foreign labour is met with resistance from Thai entrepreneurs, particularly in industries such as rice milling and fisheries which are dominated by foreign labour. There is no information about the number of migrants who may have entered the country during the period of the exodus of the 300,000, the assumption being that the exodus represents one-way traffic out of the country.

All illegal foreign workers were supposed to have left Thailand by 4 August 1999 as stated in a newspaper headline: "Strictly no illegals after the deadline" (Bangkok Post, 9 July 1999). Yet, only a few days later this resolve appeared to be weakening as on 16 July 1999, a headline in that same national newspaper trumpeted: "Ban on foreign workers to be eased soon". As in 1996, it may perhaps be expected that the regulations governing foreign labour in Thailand will be relaxed in 43 provinces (out of 76), mainly border provinces, and in 11 sectors of industry. As in Taiwan Province of China, the unemployed in Thailand do not wish to undertake jobs at the bottom end of the skill spectrum. For example, as of this writing, Thai rice millers are once again petitioning that the work permits for foreign labour be extended for another five years. The number of foreign workers in the milling industry is estimated to be around 10,000, not 3,700 as recognized by the government.

Malaysia has also resorted to deportations, with about 160,000 having been returned to Indonesia during 1997 and 1998. However, at precisely the same time that deportations are proceeding, the recruitment of additional labour is going ahead in response to the acute labour shortage in the country. In late 1998, the government reported that employers had been given permission to import 220,000 additional foreign workers (Migration News 5(12), 1998). In February 1999, the Malaysian Immigration Department announced that 109,425 Indonesian and Thai workers could enter the country (presumably as part of the 200,000 already authorized) and that temporary work permits for 380,773 foreign workers would be extended (Migration News 6(3), 1999). What is occurring in Malaysia appears to be more a drive to regularize the status of foreign workers rather than a move to reduce their numbers. If anything, the numbers of migrants may have increased.

The Philippines may be considered the country of emigration par excellence, with 2.7 million overseas contract workers and another 1.9 million undocumented workers outside the country at the end of 1996. Bohning (1998), in an analysis of the worst-case scenario, found that the impact of the crisis on the movement of workers from the Philippines was not likely to be as profound as might have been thought previously: perhaps fewer than 50,000 out of many hundreds of thousands would return to the Philippines. Similarly, the impact of the crisis on international migration is likely to be more apparent than real in the case of Thailand. There is unlikely to be any immediate and dramatic change in the fortunes of the perhaps half million Thais working abroad, primarily because the principal destinations in Asia for workers from Thailand (as well as for the Philippines) are not among those most severely affected by the crisis (namely Hong Kong, China; Singapore; and Taiwan Province of China). Also, as previously suggested, the workers from those countries occupy niches in the destination economies that local workers are unwilling or unable to fill. Hence, mass repatriations are unlikely from these areas.

Thus, in terms of its impact on the actual volume of international flows, the crisis is unlikely to have a major effect. Certainly, there will be "show" deportations in order to demonstrate that governments are working in the best interests of local workers, but there are unlikely to be mass expulsions with any real impact on the overall numbers.

The above conclusions should not imply that the crisis will have no impact on foreign labour. It appears highly likely that the position of foreign labourers in regional economies will become increasingly tenuous. Levels of exploitation may increase as employers seek to take advantage of the illegal status of foreign workers in the context of the economic slowdown. Some workers may be forced to become illegal migrants after terminating their contracts, and they then become more manipulable. Few will want to be sent back to even more depressed economies at home. The opportunities for abuse, for corruption by local officials, and for criminal gangs smuggling virtual slave labour are all likely to increase. Thus, the issues of migrant protection and migrant rights loom large, and increased illegal movements appear likely to be a significant fallout of the crisis.

The crisis certainly will have an impact on one group of migrants, small in terms of absolute numbers but large in terms of that group's role in regional economies: the skilled migrants who are representatives of transnational corporations, both regional and global. Precise figures are not available, but many will be from western companies and the majority perhaps come from the Asian region itself as corporations based in Hong Kong, China; Japan; Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Taiwan Province of China reduce, or even close, their overseas plants. These firms will be among the first to respond to any economic downturn as, ultimately, they must act in the long-term interests of their principal shareholders in balancing short-term losses against the potential for more long-term gain. Plant closures or reductions in production are directly the result of the contraction of regional demand for such goods as automobiles, electronic goods and even lower-cost consumer goods such as shoes and clothes. It is still too early to say how many corporations are scaling back production and reducing personnel, although the numbers are likely to be substantial. The impact upon migration is likely to be in three areas: first, in the departure of a number of highly paid expatriates; second, in the indirect effect of this exodus of expatriates upon the demand for services — domestic servants, restaurateurs and so on — and third, the direct impact on the workers who are laid off through cutbacks in production.

The workers who are laid off through the departure of the "new labour aristocracy" (Waldinger, 1992) will be in both manufacturing and services. They will be primarily internal migrants to the largest cities in the region. Many of these will be women. However, it could be emphasized that the data from the labour force surveys of Thailand suggest that women have not been disproportionally affected by the crisis in terms of lay-offs. Quite the reverse: male unemployment in urban areas rose much more sharply than that for women between 1997 and 1998, and was indeed higher than that for women in 1998 (Gray, 1999).

What happens to the laid-off workers, both male and female, is a matter for conjecture. Will a return to the rural sector remain a viable alternative? For a generation raised in the relative prosperity and material culture of the city, this alternative may be unappealing, even if the villages can indeed absorb the large numbers that are the result of previous patterns of high fertility. There is some evidence that substantial numbers have indeed returned to the villages in Indonesia (Hugo, personal communication, July 1998). For Thailand, the preliminary results of a study supported by the Asian Development Bank and the National Economic and Social Development Board (Bangkok Post , 26 September 1998) suggest that agriculture will be the safety net, absorbing as many as 630,000 workers who will move from the urban to the rural sector. However, a more recent analysis based upon a regular series of labour force surveys (Gray, 1999) suggests that a return to the village economy is not a realistic proposition and that no significant increase in the proportions of return migration has been observed. The majority of laid-off workers have no wish to return to villages after tasting city life in Bangkok; the majority opt for survival in the informal sector of the capital city. Moreover, little of the money put aside for job creation reaches the rural sector but is allocated to metropolitan areas or tied up in urban bureaucracies (Crispin, 1999).

Larger numbers of displaced workers, however, may either be first-time entrants to, or come to depend upon, the informal sector for their survival. Not too clear a distinction between formal and informal sector employment must be drawn; in many of the economies under consideration, those workers in so-called formal sector jobs have always maintained simultaneous informal sector incomes. The crisis simply forces them to switch their attention from the former to the latter. Perhaps the most critical research area on the social impact of the crisis relates to these two areas: the absorptive capacity of the rural economy for retrenched urban labour on the one hand, and the viability of the urban informal economy on the other.

One final group of migrants which is likely to be adversely affected by the crisis is students. The reduced purchasing power of the emerging middle class in countries such as Malaysia and Thailand is forcing children who had been enrolled in expensive private schools in North America, Europe and Australia to return home to attend local schools.

Conclusion and policy implications

Domestic political pressures in Malaysia and Thailand for the deportation of undocumented workers are intense. However, there are also intense, but less visible, domestic and international pressures to limit the extent of any deportations. Both political and economic considerations are important in a complex matrix of analysis of the issues. Those favouring the expulsion of undocumented workers argue — understandably — that, in a time of increasing domestic unemployment, work should be provided for domestic labour rather than for foreign labour. On the opposing side, there is still considerable doubt about the extent that domestic labour can, or will, want to substitute for foreign labour. In the rapidly evolving free market economies of the region, local entrepreneurs do not wish to pay the higher wages that would result from the limitation or reduction of foreign labour. As these same entrepreneurs tend to be closely linked to the evolving political systems, attempts to limit or control the flows may reflect rhetoric rather than reality.

There are more basic economic reasons why it is difficult to carry out deportations. Differences in desired income, skill levels, location and that amorphous concept "tastes" all mean that complete substitutability of newly unemployed labour for illegal foreign labour will not be possible. Thus, the expulsion of foreign labour, legal or illegal, could actually harm economic performance and aggravate the crisis. In addition, countries of origin, most of which are neighbours, may not want to see the sudden return of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of workers. All these factors give substance to the hypothesis suggesting that the economic downturn will not have as a large an impact on international migration flows as initially expected. The impact may be concentrated on internal migrants returning to the rural sector where this remains a viable option in the face of rising unemployment. Even here, however, the impact may not be so pronounced as first thought. The urban informal sector is likely to play the major role in absorbing the newly unemployed although the whole relationship between the crisis and internal migration requires careful examination.

It might be expected that the numbers of new undocumented migrants would decline as demand for workers is reduced. Such a scenario has to be balanced against a possible rise in illegal migration as the newly unemployed search desperately for employment overseas. Unscrupulous brokers can be expected to increase their level of activity to take advantage of the rising local demand to find work abroad. There is likely to be a period when economic downturns in sending countries put greater pressure on workers to migrate to neighbouring countries, but the lack of regional employment opportunities may eventually act to reduce the flows if backed by adequate policy measures.

Finally, in any consideration of migration in Asia, much will revolve around what happens in two of the demographic giants of the region, China and Indonesia. China has apparently avoided the worst effects of the crisis so far, although every percentage point decline in the economic growth rate of that vast country creates between 2 and 4 million more unemployed (The Economist, 2 May 1998). Declining regional markets for goods priced in the Chinese yuan renminbi, one of the few regional currencies not to be devalued yet, create tensions in the economy which, together with the much-needed reform of state-owned enterprises, are likely eventually to precipitate a crisis of their own. The existence of 80-100 million "floating migrants" within its borders is a major security concern for China.

The situation in Indonesia clearly shows that the crisis in Asia is not over. The current events are equally clearly not simply a consequence of the economic shocks dating from July 1997, but are more directly associated with issues related to political succession, compounded by the events in East Timor; however, they have been exacerbated by the rising unemployment in that country. Past programmes of transmigration of Javanese to outer islands, which involved 1.5 million people between 1979 and 1984 alone, have created an ethnic mix in several parts of the country which could become explosive during an economic downturn. Should inter-ethnic conflict intensify, very large numbers will be seeking refuge in neighbouring states, intensifying a sense of crisis in these areas.

These realms of speculation aside, the economic crisis in Asia thus far may be more a catalyst for change throughout the region, reinforcing existing pressures, than generating a completely new set of conditions. Whether the crisis is a turning point for the Asian migrant communities in a historical parallel with migrant communities in Europe following the 1973 oil crisis remains a moot point. A few signs are emerging in the more developed economies of East Asia such as Hong Kong, China; Japan; and Taiwan Province of China that legal provisions for longer-term migrants are being seriously considered for certain groups of migrants. However, no country or area in the region is willing to plan for the permanent immigration of non-nationals.

A key difference lies in the nature of the social and political systems in Asian societies. Social welfare and social democratic institutions remain weakly developed. A contradiction in the whole debate on "Asian values" is that authoritarian governments, perceived as a positive requirement of Asian models of development, are unlikely to favour the integration of aliens — Asian brothers or sisters though they may be. The crisis is more likely to foster nationalism, if anything, which will keep the foreigner, although a critical economic necessity, in a vulnerable position and, as argued above, promote more, rather than less, illegal movement. It will be some time yet before we see the evolution of the kinds of institutions that will foster the development of stable foreign migrant communities which will have the same rights as citizens in the majority of Asian countries. The challenge, nevertheless, is to work towards the creation and implementation of these institutions in the face of an economic reality that demands foreign labour.

It should be clear from this analysis that governments need to avoid spontaneous reactions to economic events in implementing migration policy. The expulsion of foreign labour is unlikely to resolve the issue of domestic unemployment but it is likely to aggravate the situation by favouring increases in illegal migrants and in illegal workers, and in maintaining foreign labour in vulnerable situations. Given the mismatch between recently unemployed domestic labour and employed foreign labour in terms of skill and location, any policy to replace foreign labour with local labour seems unlikely to succeed.

The need for foreign labour is not going to disappear, even at a time of crisis. Governments should not be tempted to opt for short-term solutions, which are likely to be ineffective, at the expense of designing long-term policies to manage population migration in the region more effectively. In this regard, the Bangkok Declaration, signed by 19 countries and regions in Asia and the Pacific in April 1999 (see IOM, 1999), may be one step towards reaching a consensus on the types of policies that might better manage regional population flows, irrespective of any crises to come.

Endnote

1. The information in this paragraph is taken from various issues of Migration News in 1998 (vol. 5) and 1999 (vol. 6). Migration News, published by the University of California at Davis, is available electronically at http://migration.ucdavis.edu

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Permanent and Temporary Migration in Viet Nam during a Period of Economic Change

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Migration patterns and selectivity will probably parallel those in other developing countries of Asia and Africa

Over the past decade, many countries have experienced dramatic changes in their economic, demographic and social situations. Included among the consequences have been sharp increases in internal migration and the rate of urban growth. Large numbers of persons have moved from rural areas to cities, often as unauthorized residents, for varied lengths of time, stimulated by the increasing rural pressures on resources and the perceived, as well as actual urban opportunities. Many of these migrants move only on a temporary basis; some circulate between rural and urban or between urban places. In the process, they help to transform the labour force from one that is overwhelmingly agricultural to one much more heavily involved in the secondary and especially tertiary sectors of the economy.

A multiplicity of factors are involved in determining who moves, the choice of destination and the type of move undertaken, and these factors are closely tied to the local and national context in which they are occurring (Massey and others, 1987; Findley, 1990). Moreover, no single definition of temporary migration can fit the great variety of movements identified (Chapman and Prothero, 1985); nor can one be certain that what was initially intended to be temporary does not, over time, become a permanent change in residence. Temporary migrants generally consider their usual place of residence to be somewhere other than the place in which they were living and working at the time they were surveyed. By engaging in such mobility, they are able to maintain their ties to place of origin and mitigate the risk that moving to a new environment may entail. The complexities of the role of permanent migration are therefore compounded by the simultaneous flow of temporary migrants (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1996; Standing, 1985; Prothero, 1987). In some situations, one form of mobility may serve as the stimulus for the other; in other situations, one may substitute for the other (Hugo, 1982; Skeldon, 1990).

Under conditions of strict control on mobility through a registration system (such as exists in some socialist countries such as China and Viet Nam), temporary migration may be defined as movement without a change in registration and therefore without official sanction (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1990). In such cases, we would expect temporary migration to increase dramatically once restrictions on movement are eased. The rural population reservoir of potential migrants, large even in countries with free migration, would be even larger in those countries where some adjustment, through out-migration, to changing urban-rural conditions and opportunities had been prevented. More specifically, changing economic conditions, such as a boom in construction, might make cities especially attractive to that segment of the rural population willing and able to provide unskilled or semi-skilled labour, or to satisfy the growing urban demand for services.

While researchers and policy makers have increasingly recognized the importance of temporary migration (Skeldon, 1990), little systematic research has been undertaken to study the differences between those migrants who change residence permanently, those who move on a temporary basis, and the non-migrants. To fully understand the dynamics of migration and its relevance to development policy, it is necessary to understand the special role of temporary migrants in the overall redistribution process, their special adjustment problems in places of destination (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1996) and the impact of their movement at places of origin. Yet, the data to do so are often non-existent owing to the difficulty in identifying and surveying temporary migrants, most of whom are not identified separately, if at all, from permanent migrants in censuses and surveys. Exceptions exist in countries such as Thailand, where the National Migration Survey distinguishes "single move", "seasonal" and "repeat migrants", and China, where some temporary migrants are identified in the census and some national surveys. But many countries have not yet come to recognize the importance of temporary movement in the redistribution process and a number of countries lack the expertise to undertake such research.

The situation is slowly changing as national and international agencies begin to fund projects focusing on issues of population redistribution and its consequences. In fact, the data reported here for Viet Nam are derived from a UNFPA-funded project covering three countries -– Ethiopia, Guatemala and Viet Nam; a fourth country, South Africa, is conducting a similar study under funding from the Mellon Foundation. The surveys undertaken as part of each country's project seek to gain an understanding of the relationship between and among migration, economic development, reproduction, women's status and health in countries undergoing economic, political and demographic transitions. In each case, the transitions have triggered increased levels of population mobility. Viet Nam is the first of the four countries for which data have become available. They are used in this article to analyse differentials between permanent and temporary migrants and, where appropriate, to compare them to non-migrants.

Historical context of migration in Viet Nam

Migration in Viet Nam has been significantly affected by the restructuring of the economy (Doi Moi) which began in 1986. The restructuring shifted the country's socio-economic organization from a centrally planned economy based on public ownership of the means of production to a mixed economy that initially encouraged individual entrepreneurship and, after 1994, foreign investment. Before Doi Moi, most migration in Viet Nam was organized and sponsored by the government. Furthermore, wartime conditions, which had lasted some 10 years (1964-1975), greatly affected internal migration (Dang, Goldstein and McNally, 1997). Many people were evacuated from combat areas, and a large number of males were recruited to serve in the army. After the war, the large majority of these men were demobilized and repatriated, thus raising the number of migrants in the population, especially in rural areas, and contributing to sex differences in the migration patterns observed today. Other government-controlled migration involved resettlement of persons into newly developing rural areas — the new economic zones — and migration in connection with job relocation.

The situation changed dramatically with the introduction of Doi Moi. Although rural-to-urban migration had never been very strictly controlled, migration unplanned by the government increased significantly as rural people flocked to urban places to engage in petty trade and provide a variety of services. Because these people moved outside government auspices, they did not change their place of registration and were therefore considered temporary migrants. Urban areas such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have been particularly concerned about the impact of large numbers of such migrants on the infrastructure and quality of life (Doan, Henaff and Trinh, 1998; Tran, 1998; Truong and others, 1996).

In this article, we shall focus on the extent to which the characteristics of permanent and temporary migrants differ, especially with respect to gender and motivation for movement. Multivariate analysis will be used to assess the relative importance of a variety of characteristics on the likelihood of becoming a permanent or temporary migrant or remaining a non-migrant. A particularly salient question is whether the changes experienced by Viet Nam in its transition from a centrally planned to a market economy are parallel to changes experienced in other countries with similar political and economic orientations, such as China. The article will therefore conclude with a broad comparison of the patterns found for Viet Nam with those identified in an earlier investigation in Hubei Province, China, undertaken about 10 years after China's economic transition (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1996).

Data and methods

The research in Viet Nam is based on a survey undertaken in 1997 in four urban and two rural locations in different regions of Viet Nam. It was designed to explore the migration situation about 10 years after economic reforms were introduced, with particular attention being paid to differentials among the various migrant segments of the population, their adjustment and their impact on places of origin and destination. The specified locations were chosen to provide representation of metropolitan centres, large cities, medium-sized cities, small towns and villages. Within the urban locations, a multi-stage selection process was used: sample areas and households within them were randomly selected.

Within households, individuals were classified into one of three migrant categories: non-migrants, permanent migrants and temporary migrants. Non-migrants were persons who were born in the place of interview and who held official government household registration at that place. Permanent migrants had been (a) born elsewhere, but were registered as legal residents at the place of interview, or (b) born in the place of current residence and registered there, but had been away from the place of interview for at least six months since age 13. (In Viet Nam, a large percentage of permanent migrants in rural areas were in fact return migrants — persons who had been either mobilized into the army or displaced during the many years of war.) Temporary migrants were born elsewhere than at the place of interview and held permanent registration in a place other than the interview location. Individual respondents were then selected for interview under guidelines designed to ensure, for the total sample, an adequate number of respondents in each migration category to enable comparative analysis by migration type.

In the absence of prior information on the distribution of the population among the three migrant categories within the randomly selected housing units, the respondents in each migration category had to be sampled purposively; the ultimate total number of respondents in each category was set by quota. As a result, the data cannot provide estimates of the relative numbers of each kind of migrant. Our focus, therefore, is on the comparative differentials by migration status and sex. A total of 1,847 households were covered in the household sample; within each household, up to three individuals were interviewed in depth about their migration experiences. The decision on the number of individual respondents to be interviewed was based on guidelines designed to ensure adequate representation of persons with different types of migration experience. In total, 2,502 individuals were interviewed, among whom 1,864 were living in urban areas and 638 in rural places.

Characteristics of the sample

Timing of migration

The patterns of migration over time for both permanent and temporary migration are closely related to the timing of economic change (table 1). Permanent migrants are heavily concentrated in the pre-reform period, when spatial mobility was constrained, and when the government provided socio-economic assistance to authorized migrants. In Viet Nam, some 60-75 per cent of permanent migrants had moved before economic reforms were introduced, and as many as 90 per cent had moved more than three years before the survey, partly reflecting the return migration of persons displaced by war.

Temporary migration became a major form of spatial mobility only from the late 1980s, after the introduction of Doi Moi. In fact, a large percentage of temporary migrants came only during the three years preceding the survey, suggesting that much of temporary migration is short term, with the migrants returning to their place of origin or moving on to another destination. Only in the cities outside Hanoi were temporary migrants as likely to have arrived during the period 1987-1994 as during 1995-1997.

Table 1. Recently of arrival by migration status, place of residence and sex, Viet Nam

Current residence	**Permanent migrants**					**Temporary migrants**				
	Before 1987	**1987-1994**	**1995-1997**	**Total %**	**Total Number**	**Before**	**1987-1994**	**1995-1997**	**Total %**	**Total Number**
Males										
Hanoi	59.8	32.6	7.6	100.0	92	1.6	33.9	64.5	100.0	62
Other cities	73.2	21.0	5.8	100.0	138	16.9	50.0	33.1	100.0	148
Towns	62.1	27.6	10.3	100.0	58	3.0	19.0	78.0	100.0	100
Rural	62.0	25.4	12.7	100.0	276	–	–	–	–	–
Females										
Hanoi	61.0	35.0	4.0	100.0	100	5.7	44.3	50.0	100.0	70
Other cities	71.7	23.9	4.3	100.0	138	13.4	40.2	46.3	100.0	164
Towns	75.4	23.1	1.5	100.0	65	5.0	23.3	71.7	100.0	60
Rural	68.2	24.2	7.6	100.0	66	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual data file.

Note: Total percentages may not add up to 100 owing to rounding. Temporary migrants in rural areas are not included because of the small number of cases.

Migrant origins

Males, and especially females who were permanent migrants to Hanoi, came primarily from other cities (table 2). Permanent migrants to other urban locations in Viet Nam, especially female migrants, were more likely to originate in rural areas. Temporary migrants, regardless of their destination, were drawn heavily from rural areas.

Table 2. Origin of last move of respondents, by migration status, place of residence and sex, Viet Nam

Current	**Permanent migrants**	**Total**	**Temporary migrants**	**Total**

residence	City	Town	Rural	%	Number	City	Town	Rural	%	Number
Males										
Hanoi	41.6	28.1	30.3	100.0	89	37.1	6.5	56.5	100.0	62
Other cities	35.1	16.0	48.9	100.0	131	16.2	14.9	68.9	100.0	148
Towns	20.7	24.1	55.2	100.0	58	9.0	8.0	83.0	100.0	100
Rural	18.9	22.2	58.9	100.0	270	–	–	–	–	–
Females										
Hanoi	62.2	14.3	23.5	100.0	98	36.6	18.3	45.1	100.0	71
Other cities	27.7	17.5	54.7	100.0	137	23.9	11.0	65.0	100.0	163
Towns	10.8	12.3	76.9	100.0	65	6.7	8.3	85.0	100.0	60
Rural	24.6	16.9	58.5	100.0	65	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual data file.
Note: Total percentages may not add up to 100 owing to rounding. Temporary migrants in rural areas are not included because of the small number of cases.

Age differentials

Examination of the current age of non-migrants, permanent and temporary migrants shows the impact of the timing of migration on the age profile (table 3). Permanent migrants comprise the oldest groups, because so many had moved to their current residence many years in the past. By contrast, temporary migrants are much younger than either permanent migrants or non-migrants (with the exception of temporary migrant males in Hanoi), reflecting their more recent arrival at the destination, the likelihood that they stay at the destination only a limited time, and the selectivity of younger, often single, men and women to engage in such mobility.

Table 3. Median age of respondents, by migration status, place of residence and sex, Viet Nam

Current residence	Non-migrants		Permanent migrants				Temporary migrants			
			At time of move		Current		At time of move		Current	
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hanoi	27.0	34.0	27.5	25.5	45.0	43.0	26.0	23.5	29.0	28.0
Other cities	31.0	31.5	24.0	24.0	39.0	38.0	23.0	23.0	30.0	27.5
Towns	36.0	38.0	25.0	23.0	40.5	40.0	23.0	20.5	24.0	22.5
Rural	41.0	37.0	26.0	24.5	41.0	44.5	–	–	–	–

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual data file.
Note: Temporary migrants in rural areas are not included because of the small number of cases.

When age at the time of migration is compared, the sharp differentials between permanent and temporary migrants largely disappear. As in most areas of the world, young adults were the most mobile segment of the population regardless of the type of migration in which they engaged. Nonetheless, temporary migrants continued to be younger than permanent migrants, but the difference is only one or two years. For example, the median age of both male and female temporary migrants to cities was 23 at the time of move, compared with 24 years for permanent migrants. Women moving as temporary migrants to Hanoi and towns did so at somewhat younger ages than men, possibly because their temporary migration occurred before marriage, when they did not yet have family responsibilities to tie them down at the place of origin.

Educational attainment

Some striking differentials appear in the educational attainment of the migrant categories, mediated by the type of destination of the migrants (table 4). Among males, more permanent migrants to Hanoi have had an education at the high school or higher level than did either the non-migrants or temporary migrants in the capital city. The kinds of opportunities available there, including government positions and advanced industrial work, apparently drew persons with more schooling. However, temporary migrants were less likely than non-migrants and permanent migrants to have only primary education or less. In fact, male temporary migrants to any urban location were more likely to include fewer men with very little education than was the case for permanent migrants. The difference is especially notable among migrants to towns.

Table 4. Educational level of respondents, by migration status, place of residence and sex (standardized for age), Viet Nam

	Primary or less (<6 years)	Middle school (6-9 years)	High school (10-12 years)	Higher (13+ years)	Data not available	Total percentage
Males						
Hanoi						
Non-migrant	9.5	30.5	27.3	32.6	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	13.8	15.0	26.2	45.1	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	7.3	41.4	15.5	28.8	7.1	100.0
Other cities						
Non-migrant	11.2	28.1	51.6	9.0	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	16.1	38.3	34.9	10.7	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	13.1	32.4	41.1	13.4	0.0	100.0
Towns						
Non-migrant	38.9	45.5	13.5	2.1	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	44.1	15.5	33.2	7.1	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	14.9	38.3	35.1	5.2	6.5	100.0
Rural						
Non-migrant	28.9	66.8	4.3	0.0	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	31.0	51.5	15.1	2.4	0.0	100.0
Females						
Hanoi						
Non-migrant	7.2	27.7	34.1	31.1	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	9.7	13.2	53.1	23.9	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	8.3	21.5	30.2	32.5	7.5	100.0
Other cities						
Non-migrant	18.9	39.6	30.9	3.5	7.1	100.0
Permanent migrant	9.5	30.6	51.4	8.6	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	17.5	43.7	33.1	5.8	0.0	100.0
Towns						
Non-migrant	52.9	27.2	14.8	5.0	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	48.2	20.8	25.3	5.6	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	22.8	31.1	26.7	0.8	18.6	100.0
Rural						
Non-migrant	27.7	60.0	9.5	2.7	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	13.5	49.9	32.2	4.4	0.0	100.0

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual and household data files.
Note: The standard population is the total household population for each sex, using age groups 15-24, 25-

34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. Temporary migrants in rural areas are not included because of the small number of cases. Total percentages may not add up to 100 owing to rounding.

Females generally were found to have a smaller percentage among the highly educated than did males, but female permanent migrants to Hanoi and other urban places included a much higher percentage with at least a high school education than did female non-migrants and temporary migrants in these locations. As with males, female temporary migrants to towns were found to have a strikingly low percentage classified in the lowest educational category while the opposite was the case for permanent migrants and non-migrants. These rapidly growing urban locations apparently provide opportunities for both men and women with a medium level of schooling, but may also be attracting persons from adjacent rural areas who prefer to maintain their rural ties.

Among both men and women, the educational attainment of migrants is substantially higher than it is among the non-migrant rural population from which many came. These data therefore suggest that out-migration may serve to lower the overall educational profile of rural places. At the same time, in-migration may raise the average educational level of the town population, but it does not have a consistent effect on cities, including Hanoi.

Occupational differentials

In large measure, the occupational profiles of the various migration status groups reflect their educational levels and differences by sex, but they are also reflective of economic development and government policies.

Table 5 shows that, among males, permanent migrants to Hanoi were disproportionately technical/office and cadre workers; smaller cities tended to draw male permanent migrants as workers in their burgeoning industries. In towns, service workers predominated among permanent migrants, although a notable percentage still would be identified as peasants. Not surprisingly, a vast majority of rural residents, both non-migrants and permanent migrants, were engaged in agriculture.

Table 5. Occupational distribution of respondents, by migration status, place of residence and sex (standardized for age), Viet Nam

	Worker	**Peasant**	**Technical/ office & cadre**	**Profe-ssional**	**Comm-erce**	**Service**	**Other**	**Data not available**	**Total percen-tage**
Males									
Hanoi									
Non-migrant	16.1	0.0	14.7	8.5	17.2	41.5	2.0	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	5.9	0.0	32.2	9.2	19.0	29.4	4.3	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	1.8	0.0	3.8	10.5	15.3	48.7	12.8	7.1	100.0
Other cities									
Non-migrant	12.4	21.3	3.9	5.8	21.1	26.0	2.9	6.5	100.0
Permanent migrant	41.0	12.9	9.6	6.2	6.2	20.3	3.9	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	12.0	15.6	13.9	3.8	7.2	46.7	0.8	0.0	100.0
Towns									
Non-migrant	19.0	13.0	13.7	11.0	10.8	19.0	0.0	13.5	100.0
Permanent migrant	10.5	27.0	9.0	1.6	11.8	36.7	3.5	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	37.8	6.5	1.1	5.5	2.2	32.3	1.1	13.5	100.0
Rural									
Non-migrant	0.0	92.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	0.3	75.1	5.3	0.6	3.4	14.0	1.4	0.0	100.0

Females									
Hanoi									
Non-migrant	5.0	0.0	20.9	15.9	26.4	27.9	3.9	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	3.2	0.0	9.9	9.8	50.0	26.3	0.8	0.0	100.0
Temporary migrant	17.5	0.0	18.5	6.7	24.6	19.6	5.6	7.5	100.0
Other cities									
Non-migrant	25.2	11.6	2.7	7.5	15.8	28.8	1.4	7.1	100.0
Permanent migrant	5.3	19.1	8.6	4.5	17.7	13.5	3.5	27.8	100.0
Temporary migrant	27.9	14.2	4.6	0.6	26.4	21.8	4.4	0.0	100.0
Towns									
Non-migrant	9.0	14.8	4.4	15.1	9.0	40.8	0.0	7.1	100.0
Permanent migrant	10.8	4.9	9.4	10.3	7.9	48.1	1.0	7.5	100.0
Temporary migrant	40.5	1.7	6.2	1.7	4.5	25.0	1.8	18.6	100.0
Rural									
Non-migrant	0.9	83.9	0.0	1.6	7.7	5.6	0.3	0.0	100.0
Permanent migrant	0.0	79.4	2.2	2.9	9.2	6.3	0.0	0.0	100.0

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual and household data files.
Note: Total percentages may not add up to 100 owing to rounding. Temporary migrants in rural areas are not included because of the small number of cases.

Women in all but one of the migration status categories were concentrated among commerce and service workers, as was also generally true of male temporary migrants. An exception was the category female temporary migrants to towns, who, like males, were heavily concentrated in industrial work. Again, towns seem to offer special opportunities for persons from rural areas who may wish to maintain strong rural connections while still taking advantage of urban employment. For Hanoi and other cities, it is largely the informal sectors represented by commerce and service work that hold the greatest attraction.

Reasons for movement

Like educational and occupational differentials, migration motivations are closely linked to gender and type of move (table 6). Job assignment and family-related moves, including marriage, were found to be important factors in permanent mobility to urban places, while improved economic and quality-of-life opportunities motivated much of temporary movement. Their importance varied, however, by gender. In Viet Nam, both the historical context — war and the division of the country for many years into North and South — and the changing economic situation are reflected in migration motivations. Among male permanent migrants, job assignment, family-related moves and moves in connection with military service were especially prominent. Job assignment was found to be important, especially in other cities, and return migration was the overwhelming motivation in rural areas, with 72 per cent of the males citing this reason. Most were men who had been demobilized from military service.

Table 6. Reasons for last move of permanent and temporary migrants, by place of residence and sex (standardized for age), Viet Nam

	Permanent migrants				**Temporary migrants**		
	Hanoi	**Other cities**	**Towns**	**Rural**	**Hanoi**	**Other cities**	**Towns**
Males							
Job assignment	10.1	23.0	11.8	0.9	4.5	4.4	2.8
Better economic prospects	1.1	7.9	5.7	0.7	44.1	32.3	61.5
Better housing and services	9.4	4.1	1.6	0.0	12.8	14.0	4.0

Better education/training	0.9	3.2	0.0	0.0	13.1	20.6	1.2
Family-related moves	29.6	16.0	21.8	2.5	7.5	10.1	0.0
Military-related moves	22.7	25.3	44.6	23.9	6.5	4.9	7.1
Marriage	2.9	1.2	0.0	0.0	4.5	5.2	9.4
Return migration	22.8	17.3	14.5	71.8	0.0	1.7	7.1
Other	0.5	1.9	0.0	0.2	0.0	6.7	0.5
Data not available	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	0.0	6.5
Total percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	92	138	58	276	61	148	100
Females							
Job assignment	6.1	15.4	6.2	6.9	2.3	1.1	0.0
Better economic prospects	4.1	17.1	4.2	0.0	30.2	40.0	42.9
Better housing and services	10.3	2.1	0.0	0.0	17.4	12.1	2.2
Better education/training	0.4	3.8	0.0	0.0	11.7	9.5	1.6
Family-related moves	9.8	27.8	26.9	4.2	18.2	26.1	14.7
Military-related moves	1.9	6.7	4.6	1.8	2.1	3.5	0.0
Marriage	63.3	16.4	17.9	15.9	8.6	3.1	17.3
Return migration	0.9	9.6	36.0	71.3	0.0	1.0	0.0
Other	3.2	0.9	4.1	0.0	2.1	3.5	2.7
Data not available	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.5	0.0	18.6
Total percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	100	138	65	66	71	164	60

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam , 1997, individual data file.
Note: Total percentages may not add up to 100 owing to rounding. Better housing and services includes initial coding for better accommodation, better social services and attraction of urban area. Family-related moves include two initial codings: move with family and join family or relatives. Military-related moves include the following initial coding: join or leave army, repatriation and war evacuation. The other category includes government resettlement, spontaneous settlement and others.

Female permanent migrants were much more likely to move for family reasons; marriage migration was especially prominent only in Hanoi, perhaps because this factor has been a means for obtaining permanent residence in the capital. Job assignment was much less important for females, but, as among males, it was especially prominent for movement to other cities, which generally seem to attract females seeking better economic opportunities. Among females, return migration was an important reason for moving only in towns and rural areas.

In sharp contrast, temporary migrants, both male and female, overwhelmingly move for economic reasons and general betterment. Obtaining a better education was an important reason for temporary movement to Hanoi and other cities. Such mobility is in direct response to the changing economic situation that has made private initiative a feasible and attractive way to make a living and that provides increasing opportunities for persons with more than a middle school level of education. Women are also likely to cite family reasons, since many join their husbands in such mobility.

Determinants of migration

The preceding descriptive analysis suggests that non-migrants, permanent migrants and temporary migrants in Viet Nam have distinctive socio-demographic characteristics. To further understand such differential patterns, we examine the relationship between the respondents' background characteristics and migration status in multivariate models. Because the three migrant categories, namely non-migrants, permanent migrants and temporary migrants, were selected through a purposive, quota sampling design, our analysis proceeds by comparing subsets of the study populations.

In the first subset, which includes non-migrants and permanent migrants, we examine the likelihood of being a permanent migrant versus remaining a non-migrant. In the second subset, which is restricted to migrants, we analyse the risk of being a temporary migrant versus being a permanent migrant. We omit discussing the comparison of non-migrants with temporary migrants since the patterns are essentially similar to those characterizing the non-migrant/permanent migrant differentials. All the multivariate analyses are undertaken in the form of logistic regression equations in which the dependent variable takes the value of 1, indicating the occurrence of the event, and 0 otherwise. We analyse males and females separately because of the differential patterns by sex identified in our earlier analyses.

Permanent migrants versus non-migrants

The comparison of permanent migrants and non-migrants in table 7 shows sharp differences between the two groups. First, for both males and females, the likelihood of being a permanent migrant increases with age, reaching its peak in age-group 45-54, and decreasing slowly thereafter. Permanent migrants tend to be older than non-migrants because, as noted previously, a large proportion of them moved to their current residence many years in the past.

The impact of current residence on the risk of being a permanent migrant versus remaining a non-migrant is different for males and females. Among males, living outside Hanoi clearly increases the chance of permanent migration. The coefficients for males in table 7 suggest that, compared with their non-migrant counterparts, permanent migrant males live mostly in less urbanized places and especially in rural areas. The high percentage of men demobilized or relocated after the war who returned to their rural areas of origin helps to account for this finding. The pattern is somewhat different for females. For the latter, only residence in other cities significantly increases the chance of permanent settlement over non-migration. In addition, females who live in rural areas are mostly non-migrants.

Table 7. Logistic regression analysis of permanent migrants versus non-migrants, Viet Nam

	Model for:			
Variable	**Males**		**Females**	
	Coefficient	**Standard error**	**Coefficient**	**Standard error**
Age				
15-24	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
25-34	1.303[a]	0.300	1.655[a]	0.376
35-44	2.010[a]	0.303	2.182[a]	0.369
45-54	2.584[a]	0.348	2.996[a]	0.398
55-64	2.420[a]	0.408	2.925[a]	0.441
65+	1.267[a]	0.384	2.739[a]	0.458
Place of residence				
Hanoi	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Other cities	0.664[b]	0.224	0.566[b]	0.214
Towns	0.917[b]	0.297	0.373	0.254
Rural	2.991[a]	0.332	-0.640[c]	0.282
Education				
Primary or less	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Middle school	0.151	0.261	0.530[c]	0.232
High school	0.461	0.283	1.305[a]	0.256
Higher	0.646	0.370	1.438[a]	0.353
Occupation				
Worker	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Peasant	-0.916[b]	0.289	-0.256	0.262
Technical/office and cadre	0.049	0.364	-0.266	0.341
Professional	-0.661	0.415	-0.393	0.353
Commercial	-0.629[c]	0.308	0.058	0.254
Service	-0.532[c]	0.253	-0.348	0.235
Other	0.466	0.586	-0.211	0.623
Marital status				
Married	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Never married	-1.202[b]	0.381	-0.477	0.374

Other	-1.020[c]	0.417	0.265	0.242
Constant	-2.034	0.392	-3.197	0.433
-2 log likelihood	905		1,069	
Number of cases	923		964	

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual and household data files.
a $p< 0.001$
b $p< 0.01$
c $p< 0.05$

These findings suggest that, for both males and females, permanent movement to smaller urban locations was easier than moving to Hanoi, either because of the greater legal restrictions placed on movement to the capital or because economic opportunities were perceived to be better in smaller locations. In addition, while males clearly returned to rural areas, women appear to have used migration as a way to marry out of rural settings and relocate in urban areas. At the same time, for both men and women, movement on a permanent basis to the capital city is difficult.

Our descriptive analysis indicated that permanent migrants on average had higher education than non-migrants. A similar pattern is found in the regression model, although it is statistically significant only for females. Women who have more education tend to relocate permanently away from their place of birth.

Occupation at destination appears to have little significant impact on the likelihood of being a permanent migrant rather than a non-migrant for either males or females, although the effect is noticeable in selected categories for males. For males, being a peasant, or a commercial or service worker lessens the likelihood of being a permanent migrant. Being a technical or office worker shows a positive relationship to male permanent migration status, but not at a significant level. For females, all but one occupational category (commerce) are less likely to include permanent migrants than workers. This finding suggests that, for women, obtaining employment in an industrial enterprise is more likely to result in permanent migration than is any other kind of occupation.

Marital status indicates that those who are married are more likely to be permanent migrants than those not in a marital union, although the coefficients are significant only for males. These results suggest that permanent migration may be associated with an improved economic situation, making it easier for permanent migrants to support a family. Policy that allows for family reunification may also account for these patterns.

Temporary migrants versus permanent migrants

We turn next to an examination of differences between temporary and permanent migrants (table 8). Such an analysis is particularly salient because distinctions between the two groups are often ignored and, as our previous analysis has indicated, temporary migrant characteristics are often quite distinct from those of permanent migrants.

Table 8. Logistic regression analysis of temporary migrants versus permanent migrants, Viet Nam

	Model for:			
Variable	**Males**		**Females**	
	Coefficient	**Standard error**	**Coefficient**	**Standard error**
Age				
15-24	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
25-34	-1.202[a]	0.363	-2.054[a]	0.437
35-44	-2.596[a]	0.397	-3.477[a]	0.457
45-54	-2.960[a]	0.443	-3.749[a]	0.505
55-64	-3.132[a]	0.563	-3.720[a]	0.581
65+	-3.032[a]	0.655	-3.472[a]	0.636
Place of residence				
Hanoi	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Other cities	0.257	0.275	0.234	0.257

Towns	0.058	0.342	-0.611	0.335
Rural	-4.235[a]	0.623	-3.578[a]	0.869
Education				
Primary or less	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Middle school	0.589	0.351	-0.330	0.320
High school	0.228	0.355	-1.054[b]	0.331
Higher	-0.216	0.481	-1.202[b]	0.441
Occupation				
Worker	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Peasant	0.463	0.371	-0.476	0.402
Technical/office and cadre	0.032	0.439	-0.267	0.402
Professional	0.893	0.523	-0.739	0.567
Commercial	-0.009	0.418	-0.344	0.303
Service	1.200[a]	0.283	0.019	0.288
Other	0.083	0.590	0.509	0.613
Marital status				
Married	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Never married	1.809[a]	0.418	0.907[c]	0.414
Other	1.045	0.662	-0.537	0.386
Constant	0.762	0.508	3.257	0.548
-2 log likelihood	608		598	
Number of cases	879		666	

Source: Migration and Health Survey, Viet Nam, 1997, individual and household data files
a $p< 0.001$
b $p< 0.01$
c $p< 0.05$

The likelihood of being a temporary versus a permanent migrant is strongly and negatively associated with age. Thus, compared with permanent migrants, male and female temporary migrants are usually younger. Moreover, probably because of the gender differences in age at marriage and in the occurrence of other important life-cycle events, the lowest likelihood of temporary migration of females is observed at a somewhat younger age (45-54) than of males (55-64).

Compared with their counterparts who reside in Hanoi, both males and females in rural settings were far less likely to be temporary migrants. That is, migrants who move to rural areas tend to settle there more permanently than those who go to more urbanized places. This is partly due to the high proportions of return migrants among permanent migrants in rural areas. It also reflects the fact that many people in Viet Nam move to Hanoi and other urban places on a temporary basis — that is, without a change in household registration — to take advantage of newly available opportunities for improving both their skills and their economic situation.

Somewhat surprisingly, education has no significant effect on differentiating between male permanent and temporary migrants, once other characteristics are controlled, although the relationship is negative for those with higher education. By contrast, female migrants who have higher educational attainment were significantly less likely to be involved in temporary migration. This result suggests that, when they move, highly educated females tend to live permanently at the destination, probably because such females are more likely to get good jobs or to marry professionally and economically secure males who do not migrate. This may be the case because, once education is excluded from the logistic regression model of female temporary versus permanent migrants (results not shown), professional and skilled occupations become significantly associated with permanent residence. Education thus captures the differentiating factor in female migration status.

In general, occupation has little effect on the likelihood of being a temporary versus a permanent migrant, especially among females. Nonetheless, for males, only those in commerce are less likely to be temporary migrants. Only service work is significantly associated with being a temporary migrant. This association suggests that male service workers are relatively low skilled employees involved in seasonal or short-term jobs. For females, no occupational category has a significant relationship with temporary migration status, although the coefficient is largest — and negative — for professional women.

Both male and female migrants who are married move less frequently as temporary migrants than their counterparts who are single. Temporary absence from home is clearly easier for single persons than for the married ones. In household economic strategy, the non-married may well be designated to leave home on a temporary basis to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. Once married, familial obligations impede temporary mobility.

Discussion

These data for Viet Nam reveal patterns very similar to those found in a survey undertaken in Hubei Province, China in 1988 — about 10 years after the introduction of economic reforms in that country. Both sets of data indicate the importance of taking government policy into consideration when analysing migration patterns. Authorized migration has been an important feature of population distribution in both countries, but is largely selective of specific segments of the population — those who are more educated and whose occupations involve government work. The introduction of economic reforms that allow for individual initiative in economic activities, coupled with more efficient rural production and the concomitant freeing of large numbers in the rural labour force, have both stimulated movement and made possible more general mobility. Individuals who perceived better economic opportunities in urban places were able to act on their perceptions, even though the move might be simply to engage in service work or petty trading. The large number of rural residents who took advantage of their new-found freedom vastly outnumbered the officially transferred individuals, so that migration in the decade following economic reform in both China and Viet Nam consisted heavily of "temporary" movement from rural to urban places, that is, movement without an official change in household registration (cf. Scharping, 1997).

Temporary migrants in both countries have therefore been relatively recent arrivals at their destinations and have come heavily from rural areas. They are also selective of young, unmarried persons who move more for economic improvement than for family-related reasons or marriage. Not surprisingly, permanent migrants are selective of the more educated members of the population, but temporary migrants are also likely to be more educated than the rural population at their points of origin. That these differentials appear in the data sets for both China and Viet Nam indicates that the overall patterns are strongly related to the shift from a centrally planned economy to one more open to market forces, and from a situation of greater to fewer restrictions on migration.

At the same time, the specific historical context within which the changes occur is also important. The differentials are sharper for China than for Viet Nam, suggesting that the stricter enforcement of migration and economic controls in the pre-reform period in China influenced both the broad range of job opportunities that became available and the selectivity of persons who were willing to take advantage of them. In Viet Nam, where migration controls had not been as strictly enforced, and where residential disruptions had been caused by military activities in the years preceding Doi Moi, temporary migration was not as strongly selective.

Taken together, in Viet Nam, as has been true in China, permanent migration and temporary migration in the years after economic reform have served to complement each other, and in combination have come to resemble more closely migration patterns in developing countries where such movement is unrestricted by government policy. Yet, the data also suggest that contextual factors beyond government policy are important in determining who moves and the outcome of the mobility. In Viet Nam, cities are particularly attractive as destinations for temporary migrants engaged in trade and service work. In those towns where industrial enterprises are flourishing and where an appropriate labour force may be in short supply, both male and female temporary migrants from surrounding rural areas can take advantage of new opportunities.

Gender differentials are also clear. In part, they are the result of the higher educational levels of men compared with women. Migrants therefore are more likely to be male — the people who possess the necessary skills to succeed in a new environment and who in the process of family decision-making are also considered the more appropriate persons to move away from home. Especially among women classified as permanent migrants, the move is often in connection with marriage or to accompany other family members. Those who are temporary migrants, and are therefore often moving for economic reasons, are more likely than men to depend on networks of family and friends at destination (Dang, 1998). Nonetheless, such temporary migration may be the vehicle through which women are able to leave agriculture and enter into non-agricultural employment in the urban sector.

Finally, the analysis makes clear that full understanding of the redistribution process and its role in development requires that attention be paid to both permanent and temporary migration. Censuses and surveys that assign persons to their usual (official) place of residence fail to identify a large segment of the population living elsewhere on a "temporary" basis and fail to appreciate the fluidity and dynamics of the migration process. Economic development, the transformation of the labour force from agricultural to non-agricultural, changes in gender roles and status, and related changes in fertility and health are closely tied to the total migration patterns in a given country. As restrictions on migration are relaxed further, it seems likely that migration patterns and selectivity in China, Viet Nam and other socialist countries undergoing transition from a centrally planned to a market economy will parallel those in other developing countries of Asia and Africa. Factors associated with the national market forces, the impact of the global economy and individual motivations to achieve a higher quality of life together will make an important contribution to the processes of population redistribution and urbanization.

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Family Planning, Work and Women's Economic and Social Autonomy in Indonesia

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The population programme should cater to the time constraints that women face and try to reduce their double burden caused by the inequitable division of domestic responsibilities

In Indonesia, a commonly held social view is that women's primary role in the family is reproductive and that women's productive role is primarily related to domestic tasks. Society considers men to be responsible primarily for economic support of the family (Woodcroft-Lee, 1983; Raharjo and Hull, 1984; Niehof, 1994). The image of the ideal woman as the dependent and obedient wife influences even the government's view of the place and position of women in social life. "On the one hand, women are called upon to dedicate themselves to `the development of the nation,' by pursuing education, participating in the labor market, and sustaining economic development and modernization. On the other hand, it is emphasized that their participation in the process of national development should concentrate on the domains which `best correspond with their female nature and their biological constitution'," report Slaats and Portier (1994:36). Men's and women's roles are even specified in the national marriage law of 1974. Does this gender division of labour result in unequal gender relations in the family? Economic dependence on their husbands may put wives in a subordinate position, with less power than their husbands.

Women who work for an income are hypothesized to be more economically and socially autonomous than those who do not, although this point has been widely debated. Most studies on women's status in Indonesia have been conducted in rural areas of the country. Stoler (1977) found that poor rural Javanese women had access to more kinds of employment opportunities, albeit menial labour, than wealthy women and therefore more access to a regular source of income which might also allow more autonomy. Wealthier village women gained autonomy through access to resources, which led them to have more equal relationships with their husbands and to have more control over the activities (including labour force participation) of other household members. Wolf (1992) found that when decisions were made by couples with unequal power relationships, women were generally disadvantaged (also see Sadli, 1995). Hull (1980), in a study of the status of women in rural central Java, argued that social class had a complex impact on the relationship between women's work and female autonomy. In her village study, many of the lower class women had greater autonomy than the more privileged upper class women. This was because the poor women were more likely to use divorce as a tool to rid themselves of an unwanted spouse, while the well-to-do women were often tied to unhappy unions by financial dependence on their husbands.

Economic and social autonomy should allow wives to be involved in the process of negotiations with their husbands on important matters such as making purchases and exercising their reproductive rights. Having more autonomy should free women from the ideology of "gender and maternal altruism" (Whitehead, 1984) through which Indonesian women are expected to put the needs of all family members (particularly males) ahead of their own needs.

For more than 25 years the Indonesian government has promoted family planning as a means of improving family welfare and the lives of women by freeing women's time for other activities (Hull and Hull, 1997). As a result, the total fertility rate has fallen from 5.2 children per woman in the 1970s to 2.9 in 1994 (CBS, 1995). Virtually all (95 per cent) contraceptive users are women. One way in which the use of family planning may improve family welfare and the lives of women is through women's employment. Women may enhance their opportunities to secure employment and progress in their careers by controlling their fertility through the use of contraception. Women may also gain social autonomy in the household if they gain self-confidence through the ability to control their reproduction.

This article explores women's economic and social autonomy in the household and describes the effects of contraceptive use and working outside the home on women's autonomy in two urban areas of Indonesia. The article uses data collected through a 1996 study1/ conducted under the auspices of the Women's Studies Project of Family Health International.

Data and methods

The study included a survey of 770 women and 30 in-depth interviews with women and their husbands, conducted in two urban areas of Indonesia: Jakarta (the national capital, which is located on the island of Java) and Ujung Pandang (the capital of the province of South Sulawesi). In Jakarta, the study areas included two mixed social class residential areas in South Jakarta. The two residential areas chosen in Ujung Pandang were also meant to have a mixture of social classes, but once fieldwork had begun the researchers discovered that one area was inhabited predominantly by civil servants, who were more well-to-do than their neighbours. However, since the study is not a direct comparison of communities, but rather an investigation of the situation of women in contrasting urban communities, this did not present problems in analysis.

In Jakarta, the sample included 400 women. In Ujung Pandang, the target sample was 400 women, but 30 women had to be dropped from the analysis because they fell outside the age range for the study. The samples of women from the selected neighbourhoods were drawn through multi-stage probability sampling from all women in the neighbourhoods who were married and between the ages of 30 and 45 years. Fieldwork for the survey in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang lasted from July through December 1996.

In-depth interview participants were chosen to represent women with a variety of contraceptive use histories and employment experiences. The in-depth interview participants, a subset of the survey respondents, were selected purposively and were not intended to be representative of all women in Jakarta or Ujung Pandang, or even representative of all women in their respective neighbourhoods. We expected to conduct in-depth interviews with 18 couples in each city. However, in Jakarta, only 12 couples could be interviewed.2/ Female researchers interviewed the wives, and male researchers interviewed the husbands. Wives and husbands were to be interviewed separately; however, in some cases, the spouse or another family member was unavoidably present. (For more information on the methodology and sampling for this study, see Amal and others, 1997).

Economic autonomy was measured by home ownership (whether the wife or her family owned the respondent's home), the husband's influence over the respondent's work (as reported by the respondents), and the woman's participation in contributing money to the household. To understand the woman's role in the household, respondents were also asked who participated in a variety of daily tasks, including cooking, cleaning, caring for children and making house repairs. Women were also asked the extent to which their wishes prevailed in decision-making on various economic issues, such as buying and selling family property and purchasing major appliances. Aspects of women's social autonomy in the household measured in this study encompassed husband and wife communication on subjects such as family planning (whether the wife had spoken to her husband about family planning and whether she had asked her husband to use family planning), and spousal agreement on the number of children the couple has or wants to have. Finally, women were asked the extent to which their wishes prevailed in decisions on various social issues, such as taking an ill child to the doctor, having another child, sending children to school and a woman's own travel outside the community.

The data from the survey were analysed using the SPSS software package for microcomputers. Data analysis consisted of frequency distributions and cross tabulations with chi-squared tests of significance where relevant. Examined in the study were the bivariate relationships between the independent variables of interest, family planning and work, and aspects of women's economic and social autonomy. The findings are presented separately for Jakarta and Ujung Pandang, and the statistical differences between the two are not tested. The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim from the tape recordings by the interviewers themselves. Then, narrative summaries of each of the 60 interviews were written. The data were organized according to pre-defined themes and a principal investigator conducted the analysis. Direct quotes from women and men are used in this article to illustrate points frequently made or representing commonly expressed views.

Results

Background characteristics of the women

The Jakarta community comprised a more mixed economic setting and was less well-off than the Ujung Pandang community. This is reflected in the social, cultural and educational characteristics of the women.

All the women were married at the time of the study, and 11 per cent of the women in both cities had been married more than once. The women in this study were between the ages of 30 and 45; in both provinces, the mean age of the respondents was 36 years (table 1). Women in Jakarta had an average of 4.3 births compared with 3.3 births for women in Ujung Pandang.

Women in the Ujung Pandang community were more likely to have completed senior high school and to have gone on to university than those in Jakarta. Women in Ujung Pandang were more likely to be living in households with high socio-economic status, as defined for this study, than those in Jakarta (38.8 and 29.7 per cent respectively).

Table 1. Background characteristics of the Indonesian women surveyed

(per cent)

Item	**Jakarta**	**Ujung Pandang**

Age		
30-34 years	39.1	37.0
35-39 years	34.4	34.2
40-45 years	26.8	28.8
Number of cases	(400)	(370)
Mean number of children	4.3	3.3
Number of cases	(394)	(362)
Education		
No schooling	6.8	6.8
Elementary or less	42.3	15.1
Junior high school	20.3	13.7
Senior high school	25.0	39.2
Academy graduate	3.0	9.3
University graduate	2.8	15.9
Number of cases	(400)	(365)
Socio-economic status index [a]		
Low		
0-5	5.1	5.0
Medium		
6-10	29.9	28.5
11-15	35.9	27.7
High		
16-20	18.6	22.3
20-25	11.1	16.5
Number of cases	(400)	(369)

a Designations of low, medium and high socio-economic status refer to this study and are not necessarily representative of Indonesia as a whole. The index of socio-economic status is a compilation of the household's wattage of electricity, toilet facilities and ownership of consumer goods, namely radio, television, refrigerator, bicycle, motorcycle and car. Each item in the index was weighted (for example, a radio received a weight of 1 point, whereas a car received a weight of 6 points).

Family planning use

Not surprisingly, given Indonesia's strong family planning programme, most of the women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang said that they had used family planning at some time in their lives (78 per cent in Jakarta and 62 per cent in Ujung Pandang) (table 2). At the time of the survey, almost 70 per cent of women in Jakarta and 62 per cent of women in Ujung Pandang were using contraception, most notably, oral contraceptives, IUDs and injectables.

Table 2. Percentage of past and current use of family planning among the Indonesian women surveyed and percentage distribution of current use of family planning

Item	**Jakarta**	**Ujung Pandang**
Ever used family planning?		
Yes	77.6	62.2
Number of cases	(393)	(357)
Current use of family planning	69.5	62.3
Number of cases	(400)	(350)
Percentage distribution of current use of family planning		
Oral contraceptives	28.1	25.2
IUD	22.3	29.2
Injectable	29.5	19.0
Female sterilization	7.6	9.3
Periodic abstinence	5.4	5.4
Condom	3.6	4.0
Other	3.6	7.8

Total	100.1	99.9
Number of cases	(278)	(226)

According to the respondents who were interviewed in depth, the decision to delay or to stop childbearing was not the woman's decision alone. The opinions of the husband, regarded as the legal and economic head of household, were influential. To the husbands, delaying or stopping childbearing was seen as a way to reduce their burden as the main economic providers in the family, either by having fewer children to support or by enabling their wives to work outside the home.

In Jakarta, a husband of a family planning user who worked said: "[My wife is] using contraception because my income is insufficient". A family planning user who was working added: "It would be difficult for me to quit work because relying only on my husband's income is not enough".

In Ujung Pandang, husbands had various opinions. According to the husband of a user who worked, "My wife is using contraception because both of us are working, and it was my wife who was bearing the burden. Apart from that, it was also due to economic considerations". The husband of a user who was a housewife remarked: "The phrase `many children, more economic fortune' is out of date. Today, many children means lots of problems, lots of responsibility".

Women's reasons for spacing births or ending childbearing were also largely economic. However, some women also gave reasons linked to their reproductive health and rights, and their own well-being. A user in Jakarta who was not working said: "If I have to stay at home, it's unbearable for me. Before using contraception, I could not participate in community activities because the children were small". In Ujung Pandang, some women also expressed personal motivations for using family planning, such as one woman who uses family planning and works: "I have had many children. I was concerned about my own health".

Women's work experience

Women in Ujung Pandang were much more likely to report that they were working for pay than were women in Jakarta (41 and 26 per cent respectively) (table 3). In part, this situation reflected the more "middle class" nature of the community sampled in Ujung Pandang. The most notable difference in the jobs that women in the two cities held was that 23 per cent of women in Ujung Pandang worked as civil servants, whereas only 4 per cent of women in Jakarta worked as such (table 3).

Table 3. Current occupation of the Indonesian women surveyed

(per cent)

Occupation	Jakarta	Ujung Pandang
Not working outside the home	74.3	59.1
Civil servant	4.0	22.8
Entrepreneur	11.6	12.1
Other	10.1	6.0
Number of cases	(400)	(364)

Work and family planning

In Jakarta, 74 per cent of working women and 68 per cent of non-working women were currently using family planning. In Ujung Pandang, 65 per cent of workers and 61 per cent of non-workers were currently using family planning (table 4). Thus, working women do have a slightly higher level of contraceptive use than non-working women; however, the difference is not significant.

Table 4. Percentage of family planning use among working and non-working women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang, Indonesia, 1996

Current family planning use	Jakarta [a]		Ujung Pandang [b]	
	Currently working	Not working	Currently working	Not working
Currently using family planning	74.2	68.0	64.6	61.0
Not using family planning	28.8	32.0	35.4	39.0
Number of cases	(97)	(303)	(144)	(205)

a X2 for Jakarta = 1.35 (p = .245).
b X2 for Ujung Panjang = .47 (p =.493).

Husband's influence on the decision to work

About half of the women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang were married when they first started working. Among the women who had ever worked, 81 per cent in Jakarta and 58 per cent in Ujung Pandang had asked their husbands if they could start working, or continue working in the case of the women who had been working when they got married (data not shown in tables). Similarly, the majority of women (77 per cent in Jakarta and 67 per cent in Ujung Pandang) reported seeking their husband's permission to take (or keep) their current job. Virtually all of the women who worked said their husbands liked them to work. However, among the women who worked, 14 per cent in Jakarta and 5 per cent in Ujung Pandang said their husbands at some time had tried to prevent them from working.

Reasons for working or not working

Among the women currently working in Jakarta, most said they started working because they needed the money (40 per cent) or for personal satisfaction (31 per cent) (data not shown in tables). Among working women in Ujung Pandang, those reasons were reversed: nearly 44 per cent said that they started working for personal satisfaction, while 34 per cent said that they did so for the income.

Among the women who had never worked or had stopped working, child care was the main reason the women gave for not working (47 per cent in Jakarta and 30 per cent in Ujung Pandang) or for stopping work (38 per cent in both cities) (data not shown in tables). The other predominant reason that women cited for stopping work was their husband's request that they stop working or not work (23 per cent in Jakarta and 31 per cent in Ujung Pandang).

Among the women who had never worked, not having enough skills or education to get a job was often cited as a reason for not working (23 per cent in Jakarta and 30 per cent in Ujung Pandang) (data not shown in tables). In addition, 16 per cent of women in Jakarta and 22 per cent of women in Ujung Pandang who had never worked said that they did not want to work. Some women (10 per cent in Jakarta and 15 per cent in Ujung Pandang) said they did not work because their husbands did not want them to work.

Desire to change work status

All women in the survey were asked if they would like to change their work status. Women in both cities tended to want to maintain their current work status (table 5). Among the women in Jakarta, however, 18 per cent of the non-working women said that they would like to work, while only 4 per cent of working women said that they preferred not to work. In Ujung Pandang, the results were similar: among women not working, 25 per cent wanted jobs, while fewer than 3 per cent of working women said that they would rather not work. Women who worked in both provinces had similar desires about changing (or maintaining) their work status.

Table 5. Desired work status, by current work status, for women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang, Indonesia, 1996

	Current work status			
Desired work status	**Jakarta**		**Ujung Pandang**	
	Working	**Not working**	**Working**	**Not working**
I want to work [a]	93.8	17.8	95.3	25.4
I do not want to work	4.1	75.9	2.7	73.2
Other	2.1	6.3	2.0	1.4
Number of cases	(97)	(303)	(149)	(213)

a This category includes women who would like to change jobs, but still want to work.

Failure to use family planning did not appear to be a factor that kept women from working. In fact, women who were not working but wanted to work were more likely than others to be using family planning. Among non-workers who wanted to work, 76 per cent in Jakarta and 66 per cent in Ujung Pandang were using family planning (data not shown in tables). In comparison, among the overall study sample, the contraceptive prevalence was 78 per cent in Jakarta and 62 per cent in Ujung Pandang. The non-working women who said that they wanted to be working tended to be younger, on average, than the women in the study populations in each city.

Women's economic autonomy in the household

Home ownership status

In both cities, home ownership tended to be in the name of the husband or the husband's family. In over half the households, the husband or his family owned the house in which the respondent lived (63 per cent in Jakarta and 54 per cent in Ujung Pandang) (data not shown in tables). In 20 per cent of households in Ujung Pandang and 26 per cent of households in Jakarta, women said they or their parents owned the house in which their family lived. About one in five families in both cities (17 per cent in Jakarta and 20 per cent in Ujung Pandang) rented their house, were supplied housing through work, or had some other living arrangement.

Division of labour in the household

The survey findings indicate a fairly traditional gender-based division of labour. With the exception of making house repairs, fewer than 4 per cent of men were the household members primarily responsible for any household activity (table 6). Women were overwhelmingly responsible for cooking and caring for children. In general, larger percentages of women in Ujung Pandang than in Jakarta relied on others to help them with household tasks. This situation is probably because middle class households that could afford household servants were more often included in the Ujung Pandang sample.

Table 6. Percentage of participation in household activities reported by women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang, Indonesia, 1996

	Jakarta					**Ujung Pandang**				
Task	**Only/ mostly wife**	**Only/ mostly husband**	**Both**	**Others**	**Number of cases**	**Only/ mostly wife**	**Only/ mostly husband**	**Both**	**Others**	**Number of cases**
Daily cooking	90.1	0.8	1.0	8.3	(400)	82.7	0.8	1.4	15.2	(369)
Cleaning the house	66.3	1.3	5.3	27.3	(400)	63.5	0.3	8.2	28.1	(367)
Clearing the yard	67.1	1.3	5.0	26.8	(400)	45.7	4.1	10.6	39.7	(368)
Caring for children	87.0	0.8	8.4	3.9	(393)	71.1	2.3	20.9	5.6	(359)
Washing clothes	64.6	1.8	4.8	29.0	(400)	56.3	1.6	4.3	37.8	(368)
Making house repairs	6.1	51.8	3.3	39.0	(400)	1.4	50.6	4.1	44.0	(368)

The in-depth interviews also revealed that, in both cities, the division of labour in most households was gender-based. Neither women's contraceptive use status nor their work status appeared to influence the household division of labour. While women were considered responsible for household tasks, men sometimes said they "helped" their wives with housework and child care because they recognized that their wives were tired and busy, especially if the wives also worked outside the home.

In Jakarta, the husband of a family planning user who was working said: "Women are more tired than men. They look after children, wash clothes and dishes, prepare meals for us and the children. We just appreciate what they have done for us. I realize that, so I help her by washing the dishes". In Ujung Pandang, men said similar things. The husband of a former family planning user who was working said: "Yeah [I would help] if the situation pushed me to help her. If I have time, I do clothes and dishwashing, feed the children".

Women's participation in earning money and contributing towards household expenses

In most families, only the husbands supported the family financially (76 per cent in Jakarta and 62 per cent in Ujung Pandang) (data not shown in tables). The wife was the only (or the predominant) source of income in less than 3 per cent of families. In the remaining families, both wives and husbands earned money for the family. As shown in table 7, in Jakarta, both working husbands and working wives tended to contribute more than half of their incomes for household expenses (86 and 79 per cent respectively). In Ujung Pandang, while 84 per cent of husbands contributed more than half of their earnings for household expenses, only 57 per cent of working women did so. When asked what they did with the income which they did not contribute to household expenses, most women said that they saved it — for their children, the family, relatives or for emergencies. Some women put the money towards business expenses. Very few women said that they used the money for themselves.

Table 7. Proportion of income contributed to household by working Indonesian women and men

(per cent)

Amount	**Jakarta**		**Ujung Pandang**	
	Respondent	**Husband**	**Respondent**	**Husband**
None	3.1	0.3	2.0	1.1
Less than half	4.1	0.5	8.0	1.1

About half	13.4	12.0	33.3	14.3
Almost all	47.4	30.0	36.0	36.3
All	32.0	56.0	20.7	47.4
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Number of cases	(97)	(395)	(150)	(370)

Women's say in economic decision-making in the household

To assess further their autonomy in the household, women were asked in the survey whose wishes prevailed in economic decision-making. On decisions related to purchasing and selling family property and purchasing major appliances, women in both cities, with few exceptions, said they made the decisions by themselves or jointly with their husbands (data not shown in tables). Women in Ujung Pandang were far more likely to report joint decision-making on economic issues than were women in Jakarta.

Association between family planning and work status and women's economic autonomy

In Jakarta, family planning use was not significantly associated with the aspects of economic autonomy measured in the survey (table 8). In Ujung Pandang, family planning use was significantly, but negatively, associated with only one aspect of economic autonomy: family planning users in Ujung Pandang were less likely to be contributing money to the household income.

Current work status was positively associated with three aspects of women's economic autonomy. In both cities, women who worked were, predictably, significantly more likely to participate in earning money for the household and to contribute to household expenses than non-working women. Unexpectedly, in Jakarta only, women who worked were less likely to report that their wishes prevailed with regard to purchasing major appliances for the family.

Table 8. Relationship between Indonesian women's work and family planning status and aspects of women's economic autonomy

(per cent)

Economic autonomy item	Currently using family planning						Currently working					
	Jakarta			Ujung Pandang			Jakarta			Ujung Pandang		
	Yes	No	X^2/(p)	Yes	No	X^2/(p)	Yes	No	X^2/(p)	Yes	No	X^2/(p)
Home owned by woman or her family	21.2	21.3	1.72 (.189)	24.7	28.8	.723 (.395)	21.6	18.8	.377 (.539)	25.3	26.4	.051 (.820)
Woman earns money for household	24.8	21.3	.581 (.747)	36.4	40.3	6.13 (.047)	91.7	2.0	327.11 (.000)	86.1	4.0	253.01 (.000)
Woman contributes some of her income to family expenses	25.5	18.8	4.84 (.089)	41.2	37.1	2.38 (.304)	96.9	0.0	383.83 (.000)	96.7	0.0	348.82 (.000)
Woman's wishes prevail in economic decision-making on:												
Buying/selling family property	56.1	50.8	.959 (.327)	5.4	8.5	1.30 (.253)	46.4	57.1	3.39 (.065)	8.2	4.7	1.93 (.164)
Buying major appliances	55.4	54.1	.057 (.810)	16.6	21.8	1.60 (.205)	43.3	58.7	7.08 (.008)	17.7	19.6	.226 (.634)

Women's and men's views on women's economic autonomy from the in-depth interviews

According to the in-depth interviews, women in Jakarta, regardless of their family planning use or work status, said that much of the family's economic decision-making was in the hands of their husband, although women were expected to maintain the family budget for daily purchases and activities. The husbands usually made expenditure on large items.

Husbands in Jakarta gave a range of responses regarding controlling the family's money. The husband of a non-user who was an unpaid family worker stated: "Every morning I give her [money] for that day's expenses... If that amount of money is not enough, she can ask for some additional money. For her own needs, she asks too.... Most people here in this neighbourhood do the same thing as me". The husband of a non-working woman who formerly used family planning said: "I am a poor person. I am the only one who works. I trust her to manage and control the money.... The important thing is trusting each other. Otherwise, why raise a family?"

Similarly, several women interviewed in Jakarta said they controlled money for everyday expenses and had to request money and permission from their husbands for any larger expenditure. In general, working women in Jakarta seemed to have more discretion in economic decision-making for their personal needs than Jakarta women who did not earn any income. However, they tended to focus on the needs of their families, particularly their children, before their own personal needs. A user who owned a small business with two employees reflected: "Yes, you could say that I am free to spend the household income, but I myself do not have many personal needs. What I am thinking about now is how can we have our own house, how can I give a better education to my children". A non-user who was an unpaid family worker said: "I am helping my husband to earn a living. It is my husband who controls the money. He gives me some money every morning for that day's expenses. The electricity bill, the children's tuition fees are my husband's responsibility. I never take money for myself.... If I want to buy something for myself, I ask him".

Working women from Ujung Pandang tended to have more flexibility than women with their own incomes in Jakarta, but working women in both cities were more concerned with their families' needs than with their own personal needs. As in Jakarta, both working and non-working women seemed to be responsible for managing daily household expenses. A working woman in Ujung Pandang who did not use family planning noted: "Although I am free to use the household income, I am only free to manage the daily household expenditure. We pool our incomes, but I have to divide it according to our needs. I also put aside some amount of money whenever I can, as savings".

Most husbands from Ujung Pandang said that their wives, working or non-working, were responsible for managing the household finances and making the available money stretch to meet the family's needs. The husband of a non-user of family planning who was not working said: "The money she asks for is for the children's needs, not for herself.... So, since she really uses it for the children, there is no point in my controlling the money".

Women's social autonomy in the household

Spousal communication

An important part of women's autonomy is their ability to communicate with their spouses on a number of issues. Women in both cities reported that their communication with their husbands was good. Women said that they could talk freely with their husbands about economic issues (daily household expenses and expenditure on expensive consumer items, and financial problems), on the division of household labour, on social issues (problems their children were having, the children's schooling), and on personal problems (marital problems, sex, the extended family and job problems). With the exception of personal problems, over 95 per cent of the women in both cities said that they could talk freely with their husbands (data not shown in tables). Sex was the most difficult issue to discuss; yet 87 per cent of women in Jakarta and 83 per cent of women in Ujung Pandang said that they could talk freely with their husbands about sex. Less than 3 per cent of women in either city said that their husbands did not respect their opinions on these topics.

Women were asked if using family planning had made any difference in their communication with their husbands. Among the women who used family planning, women in Ujung Pandang were much more likely to say that their husbands had become more receptive to their opinions since they started using family planning (57 per cent) than were women in Jakarta (27 per cent) (data not shown in tables). Most women in Jakarta (71 per cent) said using family planning had made no difference in how responsive their husbands were to their opinions compared with 41 per cent in Ujung Pandang.

Husband's involvement in family planning and family size decisions

One aspect of social autonomy measured on the survey was women's ability to discuss family planning and negotiate contraceptive use with their husbands. The large majority of women (64 per cent in Jakarta and 69 per cent in Ujung Pandang) said that they had asked how their husbands felt about family planning: 87 per cent of the women in Jakarta and 83 per cent in Ujung Pandang said that their husbands approved of family planning. However, relatively few women (21 per cent in Jakarta and 15 per cent in Ujung Pandang) said that they had asked their husbands to use family planning, indicating that family planning is considered to be a woman's responsibility.

More than three-quarters of the women in both cities (76 per cent in Jakarta and 79 per cent in Ujung Pandang) said that they were in agreement with their husbands about the number of children they either had or wanted to have. Among the spouses who had disagreed on the number of children to have, husbands in both cities were more likely to want more children than their wives (64 per cent in Jakarta and 75 per cent in Ujung Pandang).

Women's say in social decision-making in the household

Women were also asked in the survey whose wishes prevailed in decisions on social issues. As with decisions on economic issues, women in both cities, with some exceptions, said that social decisions (such as taking an ill child to the doctor, having another child, sending children to school and the woman's own travel outside the community) were made either by themselves or jointly with their husbands. Again, women in Ujung Pandang were more likely to report joint decision-making on social issues than were women in Jakarta. Interestingly, in Jakarta, 56 per cent of women reported that their husbands' wishes prevailed when making the decision to have another child; only 16 per cent said that the decision would be made jointly (data not shown in tables). On the other hand, in Ujung Pandang, 77 per cent of the women said that they made decisions on childbearing together with their husbands.

Association between family planning and work status and women's social autonomy

In both Jakarta and Ujung Pandang, women who used family planning were significantly more likely than women who did not use family planning to have asked their husbands how they felt about family planning (table 9). In addition, in Ujung Pandang only, women who used family planning were significantly more likely than non-users to have asked their husbands to use family planning.

Table 9. Relationship between Indonesian women's work and family planning status and aspects of women's social autonomy in the household

(per cent)

Social autonomy item	Currently using family planning						Currently working					
	Jakarta			Ujung Pandang			Jakarta			Ujung Pandang		
	Yes	No	X^{2}/(p)	Yes	No	X^{2}/(p)	Yes	No	X^{2}/(p)	Yes	No	X^{2}/(p)
Woman has asked husband how he feels about family planning	69.1	51.6	11.14 (.001)	79.8	52.7	28.1 (.000)	68.0	62.4	1.02 (.312)	74.2	65.3	3.28 (.070)
Woman has asked husband to use family planning	21.9	17.2	1.16 (.281)	20.2	7.0	10.92 (.001)	22.7	19.8	.374 (.541)	20.0	10.7	6.16 (.013)
Spouses agree on number of children	75.2	78.7	.576 (.448)	78.0	78.6	.016 (.900)	74.2	76.9	.289 (.590)	80.1	77.8	.285 (.594)
Respondent participates in community activity	68.8	73.3	.489 (.484)	63.7	54.2	1.59 (.207)	22.6	33.3	3.17 (.075)	43.7	25.0	6.43 (.011)
Woman's wishes prevail in decisions on:												
Taking child with fever to the doctor	22.7	30.4	2.63 (.105)	24.7	29.9	1.17 (.280)	18.9	26.8	2.40 (.121)	29.7	24.3	1.40 (.237)
Having another child	29.5	24.6	1.01 (.314)	9.1	11.4	.510 (.475)	27.8	28.1	.001 (.967)	7.4	11.8	2.03 (.154)
Sending children to school	54.0	54.8	.022 (.881)	14.1	21.4	3.19 (.074)	42.1	58.1	7.38 (.007)	15.9	16.4	.013 (.906)
Her own travel outside community	59.7	55.7	.551 (.458)	12.6	16.9	1.32 (.250)	50.5	61.1	3.36 (.067)	18.5	9.9	6.07 (.014)

Current work status was positively associated with four aspects of women's social autonomy (one in Jakarta and three in Ujung Pandang). Unexpectedly, in Jakarta only, women who worked said that they had less direct say in sending their children to school than did women who did not work. In Ujung Pandang only, working women were more likely to say that they had asked their husbands to use family planning, had participated in community activities and that their wishes prevailed regarding their own travel outside their communities.

Women's and men's views on women's social autonomy from the in-depth interviews

While the survey findings indicated that women play a major role in family decision-making, many women in Jakarta who participated in the in-depth interviews indicated that they had little or no influence in social decision-making. Both wives and husbands agreed that husbands dominated decision-making on a variety of social issues. Women seemed to have independent opinions, but they did not act independently. This tended to be true regardless of women's family planning or work status, suggesting that many women have little bargaining power in the household. Women in Ujung Pandang tended to report more joint decision-making with their husbands than women in Jakarta.

Women who never worked outside the home and never used contraception seemed to have the least ability to make independent decisions. In Jakarta, the husband of a non-working family planning user said: "She is not free to decide anything by herself. She has to ask my permission". A non-user, who was an unpaid family worker, added: "No, no everything I want to do I have to ask his permission. I cannot decide everything for myself.... He will be angry".

In Ujung Pandang, the statements of women who worked or used family planning (or both) indicated that they had a significant role in social decision-making. A family planning user who was not working said: "He never forbids me to participate in activities". A non-user who was working stated: "In household life, I can choose whatever I like, whatever I want to do. However, I have to ask my husband first what his opinion is because I want to have communication with him. I have a husband, and I appreciate his opinion. He usually says it's up to me. If we make ends meet, he feels content. That is an honest family". According to the husband of a woman who used to use contraception and who was not working, "I never limit her from doing anything. If she thinks it is good for her, it's okay with me". A non-user who was not working said simply: "I think I do not have any freedom to do everything". A husband of a non-user who was not working said: "The husband's decision-making is very important. The wife cannot make any decision".

Perceived benefits and negative aspects of family planning

In addition to the effects of family planning on women's economic and social autonomy described above, in the survey, women specified a number of ways in which family planning had benefited their lives (table 10). Women first mentioned the ability to space births (37 per cent of women in Jakarta and 28 per cent in Ujung Pandang). Second, women mentioned the ability to earn money (for children's education and for the household).

Most women who had used family planning could not think of any negative effects on their lives (68 per cent in Jakarta and 71 per cent in Ujung Pandang). The most significant negative effect noted was the experience of side-effects from contraceptives, noted by 30 per cent of women in Jakarta and 27 per cent of women in Ujung Pandang.

Table 10. Perceived benefits of family planning reported by women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang, Indonesia, 1996

(per cent)

Benefit	Jakarta	Ujung Pandang
Ability to space births	37.3	27.6
Ability to earn money	15.6	20.3
Having more time	14.5	16.5
Other (various)	16.3	15.5
None	16.5	20.3
Number of cases	(346)	(261)

Discussion and policy recommendations

Given the pervasiveness of Indonesia's family planning programme and the high rates of contraceptive use in these two study areas of Jakarta and Ujung Pandang in 1996 when the study was conducted, it is not surprising that no statistically significant associations were found between family planning use and work status. Nor was family planning use a determinant of many aspects of women's economic and social autonomy measured in this study. This study suggests that family planning, while perceived as beneficial by women, has not made gender roles among the sample of women in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang more equitable. These findings support those from other research on gender relations in Indonesia. Most women and their husbands in this study reportedly adhered strongly to gender divisions of labour, regardless of the women's family planning or work status. Even with the opportunity to work, which women defined as "helping" their husbands to support the family, the women in both Jakarta and Ujung Pandang were faced with domestic duties at home, with only a little "help" from their husbands.

Still, work was positively associated with six of 14 aspects of women's economic and social autonomy and negatively associated with two aspects of women's autonomy. Women in Ujung Pandang seemed to have derived more autonomy from working than had women in Jakarta. This was probably because the women in Ujung Pandang were of a higher socio-economic status than were the women of Jakarta in this study. It is also important to remember that this study was conducted among women who were 30 to 45 years of age. It is possible — indeed likely — that gender relations among younger women and their husbands are more egalitarian.

It is interesting to note the differences between the findings of the survey and the in-depth interviews. On the questionnaire, women said that they communicated well with their spouses on a variety of issues and that their wishes prevailed, or that they made joint decisions with their husbands on a number of economic and social issues. On the other hand, in the more informal setting of the in-depth interviews, gender relations tended to be portrayed by both women and men as more rigidly conveying both economic and social power to husbands.

Based on this study, it is not possible to conclude whether the survey or in-depth interview findings more accurately depict familial gender relations. It is possible that women and men in the in-depth interviews were actually giving answers based on social norms of gender roles rather than purely on their own experiences. Since the in-depth interviews did not always take place in private, women and men might have been hesitant to indicate that their relationships with their spouses were more egalitarian than socially constructed gender norms would dictate. Whatever the explanation, this study highlights the difficulties of uncovering "personal" or "individually" held beliefs in a society which is highly group-oriented in its norms and organization.

Although family planning use was not significantly associated with work and was associated with only a few aspects of women's economic and social autonomy, women did perceive that they gained benefits from practising family planning.

Work is clearly seen as the factor that provides women with more autonomy rather than use of family planning per se. If they could, more women would be working than were doing so at the time of the study. Younger women who are somewhat more likely to be using family planning are the ones who would like to work if they could. The burden of caring for young children, in addition to lack of appropriate employment opportunities, probably made it more difficult for these women to engage in income-generating activities.

This study was conducted prior to the economic crisis in Indonesia, and thus women's economic and family lives, in addition to family planning use, were far more stable then than they have been since the crisis that began in 1997. Still, the results of this study will be valuable to advocates and policy makers trying to increase further gender equity in Indonesian families. The family planning programme should address women's multiple responsibilities and promote services and programmes to cater to the time constraints women currently face, while simultaneously working to reduce the double burden caused by the inequitable division of domestic responsibilities. Women in this study — even before the economic crisis — were very concerned about making financial ends meet in the household, and particularly about the cost of educating their children. Women are expected to manage the daily expenses for the family and be responsible for using family planning, and yet must defer to their husbands' wishes regarding family size. Therefore, the family planning programme should strengthen its efforts to encourage husbands to support women's economic and social autonomy. The programme should also continue its efforts to support women's reproductive rights, including the woman's right to decide how many children she wants to have and can support.

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Endnotes

1. Indonesia's economic crisis occurred early in the second half of 1997; thus, the study was undertaken at a time when the economy was relatively buoyant.

2. Only the wife could be interviewed for one couple and only the husband for another couple. Four other couples could not be interviewed for various reasons, and the timing of the fieldwork did not permit the researchers to identify other couples to participate in the in-depth interviews.

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Adolescent Childbearing in Bangladesh (Demographers' Notebook)

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In recent decades, adolescent childbearing has emerged as an issue of increasing concern throughout the developing and the developed world (Jones, 1997; Shaikh, 1997; Islam and Mahmud, 1996). There is a growing awareness that early childbearing is a health risk for both the mother and the child. Also, it usually terminates a girl's educational career, threatening her future economic prospects, earning capacity and overall well-being (United Nations, 1995). Thus, adolescent childbearing has significant ramifications at the personal, societal and global levels. At the personal level, childbearing at an early age can shape and alter the entire future life of an adolescent girl. From the perspective of societies and governments, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing have a strong and unwelcome association with low levels of educational achievement for young women, which in turn may have a negative impact on their position in and potential contribution to society. Usually, in both developed and developing countries, the rates of population growth are more rapid when women have their first child before they are in their twenties (Senderowitz and Paxman, 1985; Mazur, 1997). The period of adolescence encompasses the transition from childhood to adulthood during the second decade of life. It is one of the most crucial periods in an individual's life, because during adolescence many key social, economic, biological and demographic events occur that set the stage for adult life.

Although the social and economic consequences for an adolescent of having a baby will depend on her particular culture, familial and community setting, the physical or health consequences for the mother and her child are more universally recognized as problematic (Buvinic and Kurz, 1998; Acsadi and Johnson-Acsadi, 1986). Adolescent pregnancies are usually problematic, because they occur before a young woman has reached full biological, physical and emotional maturity. As a consequence, adolescents face a number of problems, which include anaemia, retardation of foetal growth, premature birth and complications of labour. Pregnancy of a girl who is still growing means an increase in nutritional requirements, not only for growth of the foetus but also for the mother herself (Friedman, 1985). Teenage mothers have a higher incidence of low birth-weight babies, who are associated with birth injuries, serious childhood illness and mental and physical disabilities (Islam and others, 1995). Children born to teenage mothers are also at higher risk of infant and child mortality (Mahmud and Islam, 1999).

The age below which the physical risks of childbearing are considered to be significant varies depending on general health conditions and on access to good prenatal care. In societies where anaemia and malnutrition are common and where access to health care is poor, childbearing among teenagers involves enormous health risks. However, in societies with good nutritional levels and widespread access to high quality prenatal care, the physical risk of having a child during adolescence may not be considered quite so serious (Makinson, 1985). The severity of the social and personal consequences of adolescent childbearing is also likely to be greater the younger the mother is at the time she gives birth.

Early marriage associated with low levels of contraceptive use leads to the beginning of childbearing at very young ages in most of the developing countries where this occurs. The age at which childbearing starts has important consequences for the overall level of a country's fertility as well as the health and welfare of the individual mother and child. Early initiation of childbearing is generally a major determinant of large individual family size and rapid national population growth, particularly in countries where family planning is not widely practised.

Among the Asian countries that have participated in Demographic and Health Surveys, Bangladesh is at one extreme in terms of high teenage fertility, with Sri Lanka being at the other extreme of low adolescent fertility (Singh, 1998). According to the 1996/97 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS), female adolescents aged 10-19 constitute one fourth (25.1 per cent) of the total female population and 40 per cent of the total female population aged 10-49. In Bangladesh, the average age at first marriage for females is only 14.8 years (Mitra and others, 1997). As a result, a great majority of newlywed couples are adolescents. Because they constitute the fertility-potential cohort, their fertility behaviour has to be regulated effectively if national demographic goals are to be achieved on time. In view of the negative health, social and economic consequences of early childbearing, it is important to have a clear understanding of the fertility behaviour of adolescents in order to design interventions to improve the situation. This study examines the levels, trends and differentials of adolescent childbearing in Bangladesh. The findings of the study may have important policy implications for further reducing fertility.

Data and methodology

The data for the study come from the 1996/97 BDHS, the details of which are available elsewhere (Mitra and others, 1997). Although the 1996/97 BDHS was not designed especially for surveying adolescents, it did collect information through a nationally representative sample of 9,127 ever-married females aged 10-49. Within that group, we singled out two cohorts: 1,418 ever-married females aged 10-19 whom we called married adolescents and 7,709 ever-married adult women aged 20-49. Such a large data set provides a unique opportunity to study various aspects of adolescent fertility. The 1996/97 BDHS covered 8,682 households, which accounted for a total population of 44,599, of whom 22,526 were female.

To study adolescent fertility, only the adolescents aged 15-19 years were considered, so that the results could be compared with the results from other studies of respondents aged 15 to 49 years. Among the 1,418 sampled ever-married adolescents aged 10-19 years, 1,272 were aged 15-19 years, who are considered the study population. Among the 1,272 ever-married adolescents aged 15-19, 1,252 were currently married. The household data show a population of 2,592 women aged 15-19, both ever-married and never-married.

Two measures of early childbearing are used: the age-specific fertility rate for females aged 15-19, and the proportion of females who have had a child by a given adolescent age, for example, by age 15, 18 and 20, based on responses from women who have completed their adolescence (that is, women aged 20-24 or older). The first measure is commonly used to describe the current incidence of childbearing in a recent period of time (usually in the three years prior to the survey) for females aged 15-19. The second measure has the advantage of describing more exactly the timing of early childbearing, because it simply measures the number of those having one or more births by a given age. The second measure is presented only for women aged 20-24 or older, because such age groups enable the description of childbearing for the complete period of adolescence (up to age 20). However, most of the results presented here are for the age group 20-24, because this measure includes experience to age 20, i.e. for the whole of the adolescent period, and for the most recent possible period of time.

Results

Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood

Table 1 shows the percentage of all females (never-married and ever-married) aged 15-19 who were mothers or pregnant with their first child, according to some selected background characteristics. It may be observed that 31.0 per cent of all those in this age group were mothers and another 4.6 per cent were pregnant with their first child. This indicates that more than one third of the adolescents (35.6 per cent) started childbearing by age 19. As expected, the percentage who have started the reproductive process increases with age owing to longer exposure to coitus. For example, the percentage who had begun childbearing increased from 14.1 of 15-year-olds to 57.7 per cent among those aged 19. Table 1 further shows that overall teenage parenthood is higher among rural females (36.7 per cent) than their urban counterparts (24.8 per cent). However, in our study there were some regional variations in teenage childbearing. Teenagers from Sylhet Division were the least likely to have started childbearing (24.1 per cent) followed by those in Chittagong Division (31.1 per cent), while females from Rajshahi Division were more likely (43.8 per cent) to have started childbearing than those in any other division. As expected, education has a strong negative effect on childbearing. Only 18.7 per cent of teenagers who had a secondary and higher level of education had begun childbearing, compared with 54.0 per cent of those with no education. This relationship is partially due to regulations that dictate the automatic discontinuation of schooling for pregnant women.

Table 1. Percentage of all females (ever-married and never-married) aged 15-19 who are mothers or pregnant with their first child, by selected background characteristics, Bangladesh, 1996/97

Background characteristics	Percentages who are: Mothers	Percentages who are: Pregnant with first child	Percentage who have begun child-bearing	Number of women [a]
Age				
15	8.5	5.5	14.1	540
16	23.5	5.2	28.7	635
17	32.6	3.7	36.4	478
18	43.2	4.7	48.0	525
19	54.6	3.1	57.7	414

Residence				
Urban	20.3	4.5	24.8	329
Rural	32.2	4.5	36.7	2,263
Division				
Barisal	28.4	5.1	33.5	190
Chittagong	27.4	3.8	31.1	599
Dhaka	31.7	3.6	35.3	769
Khulna	30.9	5.2	36.1	296
Rajshahi	37.9	5.9	43.8	598
Sylhet	18.6	5.5	24.1	140
Education				
No education	48.2	5.8	54.0	767
Primary incomplete	33.7	5.2	38.8	494
Primary complete	35.8	3.7	39.5	317
Secondary/higher	15.1	3.6	18.7	1,024
Total	31.0	4.6	35.6	2,592

a Women include both ever-married and never-married adolescent girls based on household data.

Current level of adolescent childbearing

The current age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) are estimated for the three-year period preceding the survey date, which corresponds approximately from 1994 through 1996. The results are given in table 2. The estimated total fertility rate (TFR) indicates that a Bangladeshi woman would bear almost 3.3 children by the end of her reproductive lifetime if she experienced the current age pattern of fertility. The annual age-specific fertility rate for adolescents aged 15-19 is 147 births per thousand women, which accounts for 23 per cent of the overall TFR. Adolescents have a higher ASFR (0.147 birth per woman) than women aged 30 and older (0.006 to 0.096 birth per woman) but have a lower ASFR than women aged 20-29 (0.150 – 0.190 birth per woman).

Table 2. Age-specific fertility rates for three years preceding the Demographic and Health Survey (1994 through 1996), Bangladesh, 1996/97

Age group	**ASFR per 1,000 women**
15-19	147
20-24	192
25-29	150
30-34	96
35-39	44
40-44	18
45-49	6
Total fertility rate	3.27[a]

Note: Rates are for the period 1-36 months preceding the Demographic and Health Survey. Rates for the age group 45-49 may be slightly biased owing to truncation. Numerators of the age-specific fertility rates (ASFR) are the number of live births that occurred in the period 1-36 months preceding the Survey and the denominators of the rates are the number of all women obtained from household data.
a Children per woman.

Table 3. Percentage of women a in different age cohorts (20 and older) who had a child by specified ages, Bangladesh, 1996/97

Current age group	**Had a child by age:**			**Median age at first birth**
	15	**18**	**20**	
20-24	14.7	46.5	63.3	18.4
25-29	16.0	57.0	74.8	17.4

30-34	15.9	61.6	78.7	17.2
35-39	19.3	59.2	77.5	17.3
40-44	20.9	69.4	84.1	16.6

a The data are based on all women, including those who have never married.

The proportion of all women (including those never-married) in different age cohorts who had a child by a given age during adolescence indicates a high incidence of very early childbearing in Bangladesh (table 3). In most cases, the first birth occurs between ages 15 and 18; the median age at first birth is 17-18 for all women aged 20 and older. There is an indication that the median age at first birth has increased slightly from around 17 years for older cohorts of women to around 18 years. This is also reflected in the age distribution of age at first birth by current age of the women, which shows that the age at first birth at the lower ages is gradually declining among the younger cohorts of women compared with their older counterparts. Results in table 3 indicate that, among the young women aged 20-24 who have just completed adolescence, around 15 per cent had a child by age 15 and 46.5 per cent had a child by age 18. Also, the proportion having children by age 15 and 18 is higher among the older cohort. For example, the proportion of women who had their first birth by age 18 has declined steadily from 69.4 per cent among women aged 40-44 to 46.5 per cent among women aged 20-24.

A useful summary measure of childbearing during the whole of the adolescent period is the proportion who had a child by age 20. Almost two thirds (63.3 per cent) of the women in the age cohort 20-24 had a child by age 20. The proportion of women who began childbearing as adolescents is higher for the older cohorts.

Trends in adolescent childbearing

Table 4 presents ASFRs for the 15-19 age group at various periods between 1974 and 1996/97 in order to provide an understanding about trends in fertility among adolescent females. Because of the different nature and quality of data and varying methodology used, any comparison of fertility is difficult. However, a closer inspection of the ASFRs among the adolescents indicates that, with some fluctuation, the rates show a declining trend with narrow amplitude. The observed fluctuation in adolescent fertility at different points in time may be due to sampling errors.

Table 4. Age-specific and total fertility rates among females in Bangladesh from 1975 to 1996/97 (selected sources)

	Survey and approximate time period:				
Age group	**1975 BFS[a]**	**1989 BFS[b]**	**1991 CPS[c]**	**1993/94 BDHS[d]**	**1996/97 BDHS[e]**
	1971-1975	**1984-1988**	**1989-1991**	**1991-1993**	**1994-1996**
Age-specific fertility rates					
15-19	109	182	179	140	147
20-24	289	260	230	196	192
25-29	291	225	188	158	150
30-34	250	169	129	105	96
35-39	185	114	78	56	44
40-44	107	56	36	19	18
45-49	35	18	13	14	6
Total fertility rates	6.3	4.9	4.6	3.44	3.27

Note: For the 1975 and 1989 Bangladesh Fertility Surveys, the rates refer to the five-year period preceding the survey; for the other surveys, the rates refer to the three-year period preceding the survey. The two Fertility Surveys and the Demographic and Health Surveys utilized full birth histories, whereas the 1991 Contraceptive Prevalence Survey used an eight-year truncated birth history.

a Source of data for 1975 Bangladesh Fertility Survey: Ministry of Health and Population Control (1978). Bangladesh Fertility Survey 1975: First Country Report (Dhaka, Government of Bangladesh and the World Fertility Survey), p. 73.

b Source of data for 1989 Bangladesh Fertility Survey: N.M. Huq and J. Cleland (1990). Bangladesh

Fertility Survey 1989: Main Report (Dhaka, National Institute of Population Research and Training), p.103.

c Source of data for 1991 Contraceptive Prevalence Survey: S. N. Mitra, Charles Lerman and Shahidul Islam (1993). Bangladesh Contraceptive Prevalence Survey 1991, Final Report (Dhaka, Mitra and Associates), p.34.

d Source of data for 1993/94 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey: S. N. Mitra, M .N. Ali, S. Islam, A. R. Cross and T. Saha (1994). Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 1993-94 (Calverton, Maryland and Dhaka, Bangladesh, National Institute of Population Research and Training, Mitra and Associates, and macro International Inc.), p.24.

e Source of data for the 1996/97 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey: S. N. Mitra, Ahmed Al-Sabir, A. R. Cross and K. Jamil (1997). Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 1996-97 (Dhaka, Mitra and Associates).

The trends in adolescent childbearing can be examined from a different perspective by using the proportion of women who had a child by age 20 (table 3), and comparing women aged 40-44 with women aged 20-24 at the time of interview, that is, comparing young women with women who are about one generation older. The results show that 84.1 per cent of the older generation (i.e. those aged 40-44) had had a child by age 20, which declined to 63.3 per cent among the younger generation (i.e. those aged 20-24). In other words, adolescent childbearing among the young generation declined by 20.8 percentage points over that of the older generation.

The contrast between the amount of change in adolescent childbearing compared with overall fertility should be noted. It is evident from table 4 that the declines in childbearing among adult women have been much greater than declines in childbearing among adolescents. The declines in the overall TFR are extremely steep over the past 20 years; TFRs have declined from 6.3 births per woman in 1975 to 3.3 births per woman during the period 1996/97. This decline in childbearing is mainly due to the decline in age-specific fertility among adult women aged 30 and older.

Birth interval

Table 5 presents a life-table analysis of birth spacing among ever-married adolescents. The results show that just over 10 per cent of ever-married adolescent females gave birth within a year of marriage and 52 per cent did so within two years. The median interval from the time of marriage to first birth is just under two years. In contrast, about 7 per cent of ever-married adolescent females had a second birth within one year of the first birth and about 40 per cent within two years. The median interval from the time of the first birth to the second birth is 2.1 years for adolescent mothers.

Table 6 shows the percentage distribution of non-first births that occurred in the five years before the 1996/97 BDHS by the number of months since the previous birth. The results indicate that adolescent mothers have, on average, shorter birth intervals than their adults counterparts. This is possibly because married adolescents aged 15-19 are more fecund, and they may have higher fertility desire and a lower contraceptive use rate. Only one third of the adolescents aged 15-19 use contraceptive methods compared with 43 and 63 per cent among adult women aged 20-24 and 30-34 respectively (Mitra and others, 1997:49). The overall contraceptive use rate in Bangladesh is 49 per cent; the median birth interval for adolescent women aged 15-19 is 25 months, compared with 40 months for women aged 30-39. Among adolescents, 43.2 per cent of non-first births occur within two years of the previous birth. The corresponding figure for adult mothers aged 20-29 is only 18 per cent. Overall, the birth intervals are generally long in Bangladesh, as more than half (52 per cent) of non-first births occur three or more years after the previous birth.

Table 5. Life table cumulative probability of having a birth among ever-married adolescents, Bangladesh, 1996/97

Interval start time (year)	**Cumulative proportion surviving at end:**	
	Marriage to first birth	**First to second birth**
0-1	0.8969	0.9290
1-2	0.4844	0.5966
2-3	0.2043	0.2327
3-4	0.0867	0.0714
4-5	0.0289	0.0188

5-6	0.0129	0.0188
6-7	0.0022	0.0000
7-8	0.0000	
8-9		
Median interval	1.98	2.11

Table 6. Percentage distribution of subsequent births (non-first births) in the five years preceding the survey by number of months since previous birth, according to age of mothers, Bangladesh, 1995/96

Number of months since previous birth	**Age of mother**				**Total**
	15-19	**20-29**	**30-39**	**40+**	
7-17	23.3	6.8	5.9	4.1	7.1
18-23	19.9	11.3	8.1	6.4	10.6
24-35	36.7	31.6	26.9	27.5	30.3
36-47	13.3	24.2	22.8	18.7	23.1
48+	6.8	26.0	36.3	43.3	28.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Median number of months	25.3	36.1	40.0	44.4	36.6
Number of births	194	2,857	1,087	212	4,550

Determinants of adolescent childbearing

Table 7 presents the percentage distribution of all adolescents and currently married adolescents aged 15-19 by number of children ever born. Among the currently married adolescents, 48.3 per cent had one child and 14.2 per cent had two or more children. The corresponding figures for all adolescents are 24.1 and 6.8 per cent respectively. The proportion decreases with the number of children ever born. The mean number of children ever born to currently married adolescent females is 0.78, while it is 0.39 for all adolescents.

It has been observed that more than one third (37.5 per cent) of the currently married adolescents did not have any child at the time of the survey. This may be due to the fact that most of them were newly married, and/or had short exposure to childbearing. Some of them were pregnant and some were using contraception. To some extent, adolescent sub-fecundity, rather than infertility, may also be responsible for not having any child during adolescence. According to the 1996/97 BDHS, there was no reported case of infecundity (inability to have more children) among the adolescents. The proportion who reported themselves to be unable to have more children (infecund) was 1 per cent among women aged 30-34, rising to 26.7 per cent among women aged 45-49 (Mitra and others, 1997). Overall, 3.4 per cent of ever-married women of reproductive age were reported to be infecund in Bangladesh.

A variety of socio-economic and cultural factors may influence fertility. To examine the differential patterns of mean number of children ever born among married adolescents, the well-known Multiple Classification Analysis is employed (table 8). The results indicate that respondent's education, socio-economic status, working status and husband's occupation are important determinants of children ever born among married adolescents.

Table 7. Percentage distribution of adolescent mothers (aged 15-19), by children ever born, Bangladesh, 1996/97

Children ever born	**All adolescents**	**Currently married adolescents**
0	69.0	37.5
1	24.1	48.3
2+	6.8	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0
N	2,592	1,252
Mean number of children ever born	0.39	0.78

Table 8. Mean number of children ever born among currently married adolescents aged 15-19, by selected socio-economic characteristics, analysed by Multiple Classification Analysis

Explanatory variables	Adolescents (15-19 years)			
	Unadjusted mean	Adjusted mean	Correlation ratio	
			η	β
Respondent's education			0.20	0.17
Illiterate	0.91	0.89		
Primary	0.80	0.80		
Secondary+	0.55	0.58		
Husband's occupation			0.05	0.07
Cultivator	0.80	0.75		
Labourer	0.78	0.78		
Professional worker	0.71	0.86		
Businessman	0.78	0.85		
Others	0.56	0.64		
Socio-economic status			0.14	0.07
Poor	0.89	0.84		
Middle	0.70	0.73		
Upper	0.61	0.72		
Current residence			0.00	0.01
Rural	0.79	0.80		
Urban	0.74	0.78		
Currently working			0.09	0.08
Yes	0.91	0.89		
No	0.75	0.75		
Grand mean	0.78			
Multiple R^2	0.06			
Multiple R	0.23			

Among the selected factors, the respondent's education is the most effective (= 0.20 and = 0.17). As expected, education has a negative effect on children ever born. The mean number of children ever born is 0.89 for currently married adolescents who are illiterate and 0.58 for those who have a secondary or higher level of education.

The socio-economic status of the respondents, which was constructed by combining the answers to questions on ownership of household amenities, materials used for the floor, roof and walls of their house, and the availability of public services obtained at the household level, is the next most important influential factor for adolescent childbearing (= 0.14 and = 0.07). Socio-economic status also shows a negative effect on childbearing. Adolescents with low socio-economic status have a higher average number of children than middle class and upper class couples.

It is often observed in developing societies that the husband's occupation is closely associated with social status; it shows a moderate effect on children ever born (= 0.05 and = 0.07). Adolescents whose husbands are professional workers or businessmen tend to have higher fertility (0.85-0.86 children ever born) than labourers (0.78), cultivators (0.75) and others (0.64).

The work status of adolescents also shows a substantial effect on childbearing. Adolescents who were involved in income-generating activities had a higher average number of children ever born (0.89) than their non-working counterparts (0.75). The higher average number of children ever born among working adolescents (probably mostly low-paid garment workers) may be due to the fact that they have low socio-economic status. Although adolescents from rural areas have higher fertility than their urban counterparts, place of residence becomes unimportant when other socio-economic factors are controlled.

Is early childbearing planned?

To examine whether the most recent birth occurred in a pre-planned manner and/or was a desired one, women (ever-married) were asked whether their last birth was wanted later (in other words, was it mistimed), or was it wanted at all (unwanted). The results are presented in table 9. It can be seen that more than one fifth (22.1 per cent) of the last births of adolescent mothers were unplanned (either unwanted or mistimed). Adolescent mothers were less likely to report that their most recent birth was unplanned compared with adult mothers, which indicates that adolescent childbearing and motherhood are highly valued in Bangladeshi society. Table 9 shows that adolescent mothers are much more likely to say that their most recent birth was mistimed — not wanted at the time of conception, but wanted later in their lives — than to say that a birth was unwanted.

Table 9. Percentage of ever-married females whose most recent birth occurred within the previous five years, by whether the birth was wanted or unwanted, Bangladesh, 1996/97

Birth was wanted or unwanted	Females aged: Below 20	20-24	25+	Total
Wanted	77.9	73.4	60.3	66.8
Mistimed	21.8	23.0	17.9	20.0
Unwanted	0.3	3.6	21.8	13.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Conclusions and policy implications

This study demonstrates a very high incidence of teenage childbearing in Bangladesh, which is detrimental to national efforts to produce a further decline in the overall fertility rate in order to achieve the replacement level of fertility within a short period of time. According to a recent study, Bangladesh has the highest rate of adolescent childbearing among Asian countries; the country's characteristics in this regard are similar to sub-Saharan African countries (Singh, 1998). Data show that adolescent childbearing and motherhood are highly valued in Bangladeshi society since 78 per cent of the births to adolescents were wanted births. However, there is some indication of a declining trend in adolescent fertility in Bangladesh. This decline may be attributed to the social changes that have been taking place during the last two decades, including the slow but steady increase in age at first marriage and the practice of contraception, an increasing rate of urbanization and a shift away from agricultural jobs towards industrial and service-sector ones. The findings show that the median age at first birth is between 17 and 18 years. Overall, 31 per cent of female adolescents became mothers by age 19 years and another 4.6 per cent became pregnant by that age. Rural and illiterate females are more likely to become mothers during adolescence. On average, each currently married female aged 15-19 has 0.78 births. The annual age-specific fertility rate for adolescents aged 15-19 is 147 births per thousand females, which accounts for about 23 per cent of the overall TFR. This suggests that at least one fourth of the fertility level could be reduced by increasing the female age at first marriage to 20 years, which is common in many countries of the region. A woman's education, occupation and socio-economic status appear to be important as determinants of adolescent childbearing.

Bangladesh has a long tradition of early marriage. In this traditional rural society, there are many social pressures to "marry off" pubescent teenage girls (Aziz and Maloney, 1985). The 1996/97 BDHS suggests that, among the 9,127 sampled ever married women aged 10-49 years, about 96 per cent were married when they were below age 20, yielding an average age at first marriage of just 14.2 years (Mitra and others, 1997:82). A recent study shows that there is a clustering of marriage soon after the onset of menstruation, which occurs at an average of 13.4 years (Islam and Mahmud, 1996). It is evident from the 1996/97 BDHS that the contraceptive prevalence rate among teenage married females is relatively low (31.4 per cent) compared with adult women aged 20 and older (52.6 per cent). As a result, childbearing starts at a very early age in Bangladesh, with the large majority of women becoming mothers during adolescence.

The international community and most governments view adolescent childbearing as undesirable because of its negative consequences, and increasingly parents and adolescents themselves share this view (Maina, 1995; Senderowitz, 1995). The International Conference on Population and Development held at Cairo in 1994 also placed importance on reducing the level of childbearing among adolescents (United Nations, 1994).

In view of the high incidence of adolescent childbearing in Bangladesh, appropriate policy and programmatic measures should be undertaken immediately to reduce the incidence of early childbearing that can have negative health, social and economic consequences, including the curtailment of education and job prospects of young mothers. In order to reduce the rate of early childbearing, adolescents, their parents and community should be made more aware of the negative health, social and economic consequences of early marriage and early childbearing. Such awareness could be created through social mobilization, and information, education and communication campaigns. Early childbearing can be postponed by delaying early marriage. However, there is little historical evidence that legislating the age at marriage is effective in delaying early marriage owing to the prevailing cultural and social norms favouring early marriage. However, there are other avenues such as policies and programmes to increase the opportunities for education, empowerment in decision-making and employment outside the home for young women, all of which are likely to result in delayed marriage. More important is the need to extend the interval between marriage and first birth, thus delaying the timing of the first birth through the effective use of family planning methods. There is evidence that, in most developing countries, adolescents face difficulty in obtaining family planning methods owing to a lack of knowledge and limited access to family planning services (Blanc and Way, 1998). This situation suggests the need for a more concerted family planning programme effort focused specifically on newly married adolescent couples.

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