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Rural-Urban Migration in Vietnam

 Springer

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Preface

Following the remarkable economic growth in the past few decades, Vietnam has experienced rapid urbanisation. In 1986, Vietnam had fewer than 13 million urban residents. From 2000 to 2010, its urban population increased by about 8 million, representing an annual growth rate of over 4%. This was one of the fastest growth rates recorded in East Asia (World Bank 2015).¹ By 2014, Vietnam’s urban population had already reached 30 million—more than double its low base in 1986 (see chapter “Rural–Urban Migration in Vietnam: Trend and Institutions”). Urban expansion in Vietnam is particularly notable in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. In 2000, the urban population was about 8 million in Hanoi and 6 million in Ho Chi Minh City. Both cities have experienced a faster rate of growth (about 4% annually) than urban areas in many other countries in the region, except China (World Bank 2015). Given this rapid expansion, by 2020, these cities are expected to double their size from the level in 2000. Not surprisingly, they are the urban centres that attract many rural–urban migrants (see chapter “Rural–Urban Migration in Vietnam: Trend and Institutions”).

Typically, urbanisation and rural–urban migration go hand in hand. On one hand, people are drawn to cities by new economic opportunities unleashed by the rapid development of manufacturing and service sectors. On the other hand, factors such as poverty and lack of opportunities also drive people to leave their home village and migrate to cities. Rural–urban migration is the population movement experienced by most countries in their development process, and Vietnam is no exception.

According to the Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2009, 9.2% of the population aged over five migrating internally in 2009 were rural–urban migrants—an increase of 2% from 1999 (See General Statistics Office (GSO) (2011). *Migration and*

¹World Bank (2015). *East Asia’s Changing Urban Landscape: Measuring a Decade of Spatial Growth*. The Urban Development Series. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Urbanisation in Vietnam: Patterns, Trends and Differentials—Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2009. Hanoi: Ministry of Planning and Investment, General Statistics Office).² Rural–urban migration will continue to grow as the Vietnamese economy develops. This inevitable development process will bring many opportunities and challenges for local and national governments. Ensuring the internal migration process and, hence, the urbanisation process proceed in an economically efficient, sustainable and inclusive manner will require critical rethinking. To this end, understanding the impacts of rural–urban migration in the destination cities, in sending communities and on migrants themselves—their welfare and assimilation—is crucial. Choosing the right policy is extremely important to avoid adverse social and economic outcomes (for instance, creation of city slums, urban poverty and lack of physical and social infrastructure) that could undermine Vietnam’s economic growth in the long run.

Seizing the opportunity to be part of the recording of the acceleration of rural–urban migration in Vietnam, the Rural–Urban Migration in China and Indonesia (RUMiCI) project at Australian National University took on the important task of conducting the VRUMS in 2013.

The VRUMS2013 adopts the questionnaires of the RUMiCI project and offers a unique platform for future comparative studies of rural–urban migration in China, Vietnam and Indonesia. The VRUMS2013 is also linked to the large-scale nationally representative Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2012 (VHLSS2012), which provides unique opportunities to study migrants’ families not only in rural areas but also in cities. In addition, the volume also draws on other widely used data sources to provide a more comprehensive picture of rural–urban migrants in Vietnam.

All these innovative features allow researchers to explore rural–urban migration more fully and to formulate more effective rural–urban migration policies in Vietnam, as well as to serve as lessons for other transitional/developing countries in the region such as Laos and Myanmar.

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²The Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2009 data show that 7.2% of the population aged over five who migrated internally in 1999 were rural–urban migrants. This number rose to 9.2% in 2009 (GSO 2011).

Acknowledgements

This book is the first major publication of the ‘Study of Rural–Urban Migration in Vietnam with Insights from China and Indonesia’ project, which was sponsored by AusAid through its Public Sector Linkages Program. This edited volume provides a comprehensive source of information on rural–urban migration in Vietnam based on the new data from the Vietnam Rural–Urban Migration Survey (VRUMS), as well as other widely used data sources.

The VRUMS was led by Professor Xin Meng. The survey was conducted and coordinated by the Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM) of Vietnam and RTA Limited, a professional consulting firm in Vietnam, with guidance from Professor Xin Meng and Australian National University (ANU) technical team. The success of the survey relied heavily on their efforts. Professor Meng, together with Dr. Duc Anh Dang and Dr. Nguyen Minh Hai, led the VRUMS work in Vietnam throughout the pilot and formal data collection activities carried out in 2013. Australian National University and the CIEM hosted the workshop in January 2015 in Hanoi, and most chapters in this book were presented during that workshop. Comments from both the discussants and the participants at the workshop were very useful and beneficial for the revised work.

We would like to acknowledge the financial support for our work of the Australian Research Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The whole process of writing, reviewing, rewriting, editing and proofreading is a time-consuming process; we are grateful to all the contributors for their time and effort devoted to this book.

Amy Y. C. Liu
with
Xin Meng
2018

About the Book

The book comprises two main parts: general rural–urban migration in Vietnam and the VRUMS methodology and research findings of the VRUMS project.

In chapter “Rural–Urban Migration in Vietnam: Trend and Institutions”, Duc Anh Dang and Amy Liu introduce the institutional settings, historical background and current migration trends in Vietnam. Like many former planned economies, Vietnam officially established a household registration system (*ho khau*), in the early 1960s in the north of the country, to control the migration process. This system has undergone several reforms since it was first adopted, but it was still playing a role in restricting rural workers moving to cities at the time of the survey.

Chapter “Study of Rural–Urban Migration in Vietnam: The Survey” by Minh Hai Nguyen, Duc Anh Dang and Amy Liu provides a detailed account of the VRUMS methodology and its implementation procedure in Vietnam. Subsequent chapters examine various important issues of rural–urban migration in Vietnam.

From chapter “Internal Migration in Vietnam, 2002–2012” onwards, the book utilises VRUMS and other available household survey data to examine different aspects of rural–urban migration in Vietnam.

Chapters “Internal Migration in Vietnam, 2002–2012” and “Migration Duration and Migration Outcomes” are dedicated to understanding the complexities of rural migrants’ decision-making in relation to migration and migration duration. In chapters “Internal Migration in Vietnam, 2002–2012”, Ian Coxhead, Viet Cuong Nguyen and Linh Hoang Vu investigate factors influencing migration decisions using the VHLSS. Using the two rounds of the VHLSS—2010 and 2012—enables the authors to investigate the migration decisions of recent migrants for work and non-work purposes, as well as their choice of destination. As the VRUMS only completed the first round, the VHLSS is more suitable for the task. The results suggest that age is an important factor in migration decisions for work and non-work purposes. The authors also find ‘push’ factors—such as household assets and land endowments in the home village—encourage outmigration from rural areas. Furthermore, for the recent migrant cohort, migration from rural areas is positively selected to the level of education.

Chapter “Migration Duration and Migration Outcomes” examines the factors associated with migration duration and how these may relate to the migration outcomes of

rural–urban migrants in Vietnam. The VRUMS data include temporary, as well as permanent, migrants. Using this rich data source, Ha Trong Nguyen compares the decisions around migration duration and migration outcomes between different groups of migrants, as well as measuring migration duration.

Chapter “Occupational Wage Differential Between Urban Workers and Rural Migrants in Vietnam” provides a descriptive picture of occupational attainment and the earnings of migrant workers and urban residents. Are migrants paid less than their urban counterparts? What are the factors, including occupation, that contribute to the lower pay of migrants? These are some of the important questions the chapter seeks to explore. Amy Liu applies the decomposition method of Brown et al. to account for the difference in occupational distribution. (See Brown, R.S., Moon, M. and Zoloth, B.S. (1980). Incorporating occupational attainment in studies of male–female earnings differentials. *Journal of Human Resources* 15(1)(Winter): 3–28.)

A lack of information about the urban labour market is a challenge that migrants often face; however, little is known about the causal relationship between social networks and migrants’ wages. Chapter “Social Networks and Employment Performance: Evidence from Rural–Urban Migration in Vietnam” investigates this important aspect of migration, with Duc Anh Dang examining the effects of social networks on the income and employment dynamics of rural–urban migrants in Vietnam. Estimation of a causal effect is challenging because unobserved factors affect both employment performance and social networks. He addresses this endogeneity problem by using the instrumental variable method.

The next few chapters examine the welfare impacts of rural–urban migration on migrant families in the sending villages and host cities. Often, migrants send money to support their families back home, while migrant families in the cities tend to spend little on the essentials.

In chapter “Rural–Urban Migration and Remittances in Vietnam: Evidence from Migrant Tracer Data”, Diep Phan and Ian Coxhead depict the determinants of migration and remittances, considering selection into migration. They also investigate the impact of net remittances on per capita income in origin households, correcting for potential endogeneity of remittance flows.

Chapter “Differences in Consumption Patterns Between Urban and Rural Migrant Households in Vietnam” studies the consumption patterns of migrants in the cities and compares them with those of urban residents, with a particular focus on food and non-food consumption. Thi Huong Giang Nguyen uses both the VHLSS2012 and VRUMS2013 to explore whether the overall consumption level—as well as food and non-food consumption—is considerably lower in migrant households without urban *ho khau*. She also investigates the channels through which the observed consumption disparity between the two groups could be affected.

Finding appropriate accommodation in the cities is often a major challenge for many migrants. Chapter “Housing Gaps Between Rural–Urban Migrants and Local Urban Residents: The Case of Vietnam” addresses this important issue, which often affects the welfare of migrants and their families. Hai Anh La, Thi Bich Tran and Uyen Nguyen examine the gaps in homeownership and housing conditions between migrants and urban residents using the VRUMS2013 and the VHLSS2012.

Migration affects not only adults but also migrants' children. Chapter "The Children of Migrants and Their Schooling" therefore investigates the well-being of migrants' children in cities and those who are left behind in the home village, with a focus on their education. This chapter, by Ngan Vu Trang Dinh, goes beyond the VRUMS2013 and uses other existing survey data such as the Migration 2011 survey and the Urban Poverty Survey (UPS) 2009 to investigate how parents' migration decisions might affect their children's education prospects.

The concluding chapter highlights the purpose of the VRUMS project and summarises in detail the findings of the book. It also presents policy conclusions and suggestions for the future research agenda.

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