People invariably move to places where they see better opportunities for themselves and their families. Hardships may also confront those who move to the city. Finding a job, high costs of living, informal housing and discrimination are just a few of the challenges that face some new city-dwellers. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that internal migration is enabling many to improve their well-being and make a significant contribution to national economies and city communities.

In pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 11, and in recognition of the New Urban Agenda’s commitment to ensuring social inclusion, sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity, and respecting the rights of all migrants, UNESCO, in partnership with UNDP, UN-Habitat and IOM, is investigating the experiences of internal migrants across Southeast Asia.

There is however no doubt that internal migration is enabling many people to improve their well-being and make a significant contribution to national economies and city communities. Southeast Asian citizens are on the move, often within their own country. Because these migrants do not cross borders, these movements are often difficult to track, though there is no doubt that internal migrants are a huge population: UNDESA (2016) cites the number of migrants moving internally to be over three times the number moving internationally. Although migration patterns differ in each country, rural to urban migration is the greatest type of movement and Southeast Asian cities are growing at an unprecedented rate, profoundly transforming societies and economies.

With a few exceptions such as Singapore, Southeast Asia is still a largely rural region with agriculture dominating rural livelihoods. Life can be tough making a living from farming, and educational, health and other opportunities are more limited in rural areas. Cities are places where life chances can be altered through access to employment and public services such as housing, water, and transport.
People invariably move to places where they see better opportunities for themselves and their families.

Internal Migration in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian citizens are on the move, often within their own country. Because these migrants do not cross borders, these movements are often difficult to track, though there is no doubt that internal migrants are a huge population: UNDESA (2016) cites the number of migrants moving internally to be over three times the number moving internationally. Although migration patterns differ in each country, rural to urban migration is the greatest type of movement and Southeast Asian cities are growing at an unprecedented rate, profoundly transforming societies and economies.

With a few exceptions such as Singapore, Southeast Asia is still a largely rural region with agriculture dominating rural livelihoods. Life can be tough making a living from farming, and educational, health and other opportunities are more limited in rural areas. Cities are places where life chances can be altered through access to employment and services unavailable in rural areas. People invariably move to places where they see better opportunities for themselves and their families.

Hardships may also confront those who move to the city. Finding a job, high costs of living, informal housing and discrimination are just a few of the challenges that face some new city-dwellers. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that internal migration is enabling many to improve their well-being and make a significant contribution to national economies and city communities.

In pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 11, and in recognition of the New Urban Agenda’s commitment to ensuring social inclusion, sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity, and respecting the rights of all migrants, UNESCO, in partnership with UNDP, UN-Habitat and IOM, is investigating the experiences of internal migrants across Southeast Asia.
Internal Migration in Southeast Asia

% of the Population who are Internal Migrants

1. Cambodia 28.9% (National Institute of Statistics 2015)
2. Myanmar 19.3% (Ministry of Immigration and Population 2015)
3. Timor-Leste 17.7% (National Statistics Directorate 2016)
4. Lao PDR 16.7% (Lao Statistics Bureau 2016)
5. Vietnam 13.6% (General Statistics Office 2016)
6. Thailand 9.4% (National Statistical Office 2010)
7. Indonesia 4.6% (Sukamdi and Mujahid 2015)
8. Philippines 2.8% (Philippines Statistics Authority 2012)
9. Malaysia 2.0% (Department of Statistics 2017)

Data sets may cover migrant numbers only for a limited time period and may underrepresent the total number of internal migrants.
Policy and Research Recommendations on Internal Migration in Southeast Asia

1. Recognise internal migration, distinct from international migration, as a trend fundamentally reshaping societies in Southeast Asia
2. Harmonize census definitions and standards across the region
3. Disaggregate census and national data to identify and address subgroup-specific concerns
4. Initiate or deepen research on the effects of climate change on internal migration and the effect of internal migration on family members who stay behind in rural communities
5. Improve coordination between national and local governments, civil society, migrant-led organizations, as well as the private sector
6. Mainstream migrant priorities into national and sub-national development plans, policies and strategies
7. Account for the irregular, semi-formal or informal aspects of internal migration when designing policy
8. Create channels of redress, assistance and consultation which are safe, legal, and accessible for internal migrants
9. Establish support schemes for internal migrants at pre-departure, departure, and post-departure stages
Internal Migration at a Glance

Top 2 Reasons for Movement:

**Vietnam:**
- 1 - Employment (34.7%)
- 2 - Family (25.5%)

**Cambodia:**
- 1 - Employment (85%)
- 2 - Education (13.2%)

**Myanmar:**
- 1 - Family (39.3%)
- 2 - Employment (38%)

**Lao PDR:**
- 1 - Employment (28%)
- 2 - Family (18%)

**Timor-Leste:**
- 1 - Family (52.9%)
- 2 - Education (22.8%)

**Thailand:**
- 1 - Employment (46.8%)
- 2 - Family (17.9%)

**Malaysia:**
- 1 - Family (44.4%)
- 2 - Environment (24%)

**Women are a large proportion of internal migrants**

- **Vietnam:** 52.4%
- **Cambodia:** 49.6%
- **Myanmar:** 53%
- **Lao PDR:** 59.2%
- **Timor-Leste:** 51.6%
- **Thailand:** 47.8%
- **Malaysia:** 48.3%
- **Indonesia:** 47.6%

*Who moved in the 5 years preceding the 2014 census*

**Internal migrants tend to be young**

- **Vietnam:** 76.2%
- **Cambodia:** 70.7%
- **Myanmar:** 70.6%
- **Lao PDR:** 54.7%
- **Timor-Leste:** 53.8%
- **Thailand:** 75.7%
- **Malaysia:** 80.4%
- **Indonesia:** 64.9%

*Aged below 35 years old*

---

**Sources:**
- Thailand: National Statistical Office 2010
- Myanmar: Ministry of Immigration and Population 2015
- Lao PDR: Lao Statistics Bureau 2016
- Cambodia: National Institute of Statistics 2013
- Indonesia: Sukamdi and Mujahid 2015
- Malaysia: Department of Statistics 2017

---

**Notes:**

- **These percentages only relate to migrants to Phnom Penh. Note that respondents could specify more than 1 reason for movement. For migrants to urban areas outside Phnom Penh the percentages were 75.1 and 20 respectively.**
Asia-Pacific Coalition of Cities Against Discrimination

APCAD’s 5 Priority Areas:

1. Affordable urban housing
2. Disability services in cities
3. Inclusive responses to migration
4. Combatting HIV related stigma
5. Inclusive city level responses to climate change and disaster risk reduction

In 2006 under the global initiative of the International Cities of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/fight-against-discrimination/coalition-of-cities), the Asia-Pacific Coalition of Cities against Discrimination (APCAD) was founded at a regional conference supported by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, United Cities of Local Government Asia-Pacific and UNESCO. The Coalition developed a 10-point plan of action and each two years, city and municipal representatives from across the region come together to discuss discrimination issues and the practices put in place by local government to tackle these. Over the years these conferences have examined the themes of HIV/AIDS, disability, education for sustainable development and climate change.

Membership of the Coalition is open to any municipal authority or city entity from the Asia and Pacific region. For further information please see: http://bangkok.unesco.org/content/asia-pacific-coalition-cities-against-discrimination
A UN partnership to better understand internal migration in Southeast Asia

Internal migration is a key megatrend across countries in Southeast Asia, but remains under-researched, with available data being sparse and noncomparable between countries. Governments hence face a lack of readily available data with which to engage in evidence-based policymaking. UNESCO, in collaboration with UNDP, UN-Habitat, and IOM, is publishing a set of policy briefs which aims to summarise currently available data on internal migration in 9 Southeast Asian states and provide easily accessible data to policymakers and researchers. Each country brief provides an overview of the national context, before exploring migrants’ characteristics, their working and living conditions, and the impact of internal migration on those who stay behind.

Based on the data gaps identified in the policy briefs, UNESCO and its partners are pursuing a research project across Southeast Asia aimed at understanding internal migrants’ experiences of inclusion/exclusion in urban centres, as well as their access to public services such as housing, water, and transport. The research project is currently being piloted in Cambodia with a survey of migrants in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, as well as a series of qualitative interviews with key actors in Cambodian civil society, economy, and government on their perceptions of internal migrants.
People invariably move to places where they see better opportunities for themselves and their families. Hardships may also confront those who move to the city. Finding a job, high costs of living, informal housing and discrimination are just a few of the challenges that face some new city-dwellers. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that internal migration is enabling many to improve their well-being and make a significant contribution to national economies and city communities.

In pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 11, and in recognition of the New Urban Agenda's commitment to ensuring social inclusion, sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity, and respecting the rights of all migrants, UNESCO, in partnership with UNDP, UN-Habitat and IOM, is investigating the experiences of internal migrants across Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asian citizens are on the move, often within their own country. Because these migrants do not cross borders, these movements are often difficult to track, though there is no doubt that internal migrants are a huge population: UNDESA (2016) cites the number of migrants moving internally to be over three times the number moving internationally. Although migration patterns differ in each country, rural to urban migration is the greatest type of movement and Southeast Asian cities are growing at an unprecedented rate, profoundly transforming societies and economies. With a few exceptions such as Singapore, Southeast Asia is still a largely rural region with agriculture dominating rural livelihoods. Life can be tough making a living from farming, and educational, health and other opportunities are more limited in rural areas. Cities are places where life chances can be altered through access to employment and

For further information on our joint UN initiative on internal migration, a series of 10 policy briefs have been developed summarising available information on internal migration. These policy briefs can be downloaded at http://bangkok.unesco.org/content/policy-briefs-internal-migration-southeast-asia

The policy briefs are a joint initiative of UNESCO, UNDP, UN-Habitat and IOM