



The Right to Adequate Housing of Cross-Border Vietnamese Migrant Workers: A Case Study in Cambodia

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Abstract

Increasingly viewed as a commodity, housing is most importantly a human right. Under international law, to be *adequately* housed means having secured tenure – not having to worry about being evicted or having home or lands forcefully taken away. To be adequately housed means living somewhere that is in keeping with culture, and having access to appropriate services, schools, and employment. Despite the numerous studies on violation of migrant workers’ rights, exploitation, and harsh working conditions, little is known about the women migrant workers and their family’s housing conditions and rights; as well as those factors that shape their choice of housing. This research aims to explore and assess Vietnamese women migrant workers’ and their family’s housing conditions and rights in Cambodia, and the factors that determine their housing choices. The right to adequate housing is a part of the right to an adequate standard of living for an individual or a family. The survey on 60 Vietnamese women migrants, 15 in-depth interviews, and 3 focus group discussions were applied in this research in three different locations in Phnom Penh city. The study revealed that women migrants and their families currently compelled to live in impoverished, unacceptable, and sub-human housing conditions. Women migrant workers, who have been found to be mostly low income earners, involuntary staying in houses without regulations, most of the houses do not have rental agreements by which the tenure of security becomes burdensome; there is no real choice of houses. Migrant workers’ children cannot easily and readily access to proper or even basic education because of the location of their houses. This research is a feasibility study for responsive policy makers in the region to develop course(s) of action to arrest this trend.

Key words: Migrant workers, Cambodia, housing right, security.

1. Introduction

A home is a center of the social, emotional and economic lives. For housing to be adequate, it must, *at a minimum*, meet the criteria of *security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy* (CESCR General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant).

International human rights law recognizes equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing and participation in housing-related decision-making process; such openings can contribute to a higher level of stability, peace, security, freedom and dignity for an individual or a family. The right to adequate housing is a part of the right to adequate standard of living for an individual and his family (Article 12(1), Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN-HABITAT).

At the regional level, in Southeast Asia, ASEAN Declaration on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers places an obligation on receiving countries to “... *promote fair and appropriate employment protection, payment of wages, and adequate access to decent working and living conditions for migrant workers* (ASEAN Declaration, 2007, Article 8).

However, in housing related matters, discrimination can take the form of discriminatory laws, policies or measures, zoning regulations, exclusionary policy development, exclusion from housing benefits, denial of security of tenure, lack of access to credits, limited participation in decision-making, or lack of protection against discriminatory practices carried out by private actors (UN-HABITAT, p.10).

Migrants are people on the move. Economic boom in 1990s in Cambodia has attracted immigrants from more than 25 countries; majority of them from Vietnam. They are lured into the Kingdom by jobs prospects and business opportunities, in search of availing better living conditions for themselves and for their families. Vietnamese census indicates that there were 70,000 Vietnamese migrants living in Cambodia from 2002 until 2009. Another report indicates that there were 103,961 ethnic Vietnamese already inhabited 16 of Cambodia’s 24 provinces during 1999. This number had increased to 160,000 from 2010 to 2014. Every day more than 100,000 Vietnamese come to work across the country. Another study indicates that 15–32% of sex workers in Cambodia are of Vietnamese origin (Derks, et al. 2006 as cited in UNIAP, 2008).

Undocumented migrants are particularly vulnerable to a range of human rights violations, including violations of the right to adequate housing. In 2014, there were 2,800 Vietnamese found without proper documents (Sokhean, 2015). In June 2015, more than 100 Vietnamese workers were detained for deportation. Large numbers of Vietnamese have migrated to Cambodia, whose children remain largely stateless and more vulnerable to exploitation (UNIAP, 2008).

Women and girls particularly face severe discrimination regarding security of tenure. Regardless of its form, tenure is often understood, recorded or registered in the name of men, leaving women dependent on their male relatives for security of tenure. Moreover, while collective forms of tenure can include women, the decision-making process are often dominated by men.

Lack of adequate housing also impacts children with respect to their specific needs, such as their growth, development and recreation, as well as their right to education, health, and personal security.

While a fairly substantial body of literature has probed into migrant workers' working conditions, abuse and exploitation, insufficiently less research has been conducted on migrant workers housing rights and other factors that shape the choice of selecting ones dwelling place. Moreover, migrant women and girls living in slum-like overcrowded and insecured housing conditions can be subject to sexual and gender-based violence, because almost no enough attention is paid to their specific needs and vulnerabilities. Therefore, this research aims to explore and assess Vietnamese women migrants housing conditions and rights in Cambodia, and the factors that determine their housing choice. Thus, to achieve this aim, following research questions and research objectives have been formulated.

1.2. Research Questions

- What are the housing conditions of cross-border migrant workers in Cambodia?
- What are the reasons that migrant workers decide to live in the present place?
- What are the factors that shape the choice of housing?
- To what extent women migrant workers have been able to exercise relevant agencies to improve their housing conditions (housing standard, housing environment, household assets, etc. for themselves)?

1.3. Research Objectives

Overall Objective

The overall objective of the study is to assess and explore migrant workers housing conditions and rights in Cambodia, and the factors that determine their housing security.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are:

- To describe housing access and conditions of migrant workers.
- To analyze the reasons why migrant workers decided to live in the present place.
- To identify factors that shape the choice of housing.
- To explore how migrant workers are exercising their agencies to improve housing conditions (housing standard, housing environment, household assets) for themselves.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Right to Adequate Housing in International Law

The right to adequate housing is recognized as part of right to adequate standard of living in international human rights law as shown in article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHABITAT, n.d. p.10). It refers to the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions as shown in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). In Cambodia, the government signed in the ICESCR in 1992, and the Cambodian Constitution makes this international law as a part of Cambodian Law, as stated in article 31. Referring to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 4, 1991, there are several aspects that need to be taken into account in order to identify the form of adequate housing which includes:

- *Habitability*: The house must have enough space, privacy and protection from the weather and from intruders.
- *Affordability*: The cost of housing must not be too expensive.
- *Legal security of tenure*: People must have security of land tenure to be protected against forced evictions.
- *Accessibility*. Everyone has the right to live in adequate housing without discrimination.
- *Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure*. The house must have access to basic services, such as water and sanitation.
- *Location*. The house must be in an appropriate location, near such things as schools or hospitals and in an unpolluted area.
- *Cultural adequacy*. The house must be built in a way that respects people's culture and traditions (CESCR General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant).

The right to adequate housing contains freedom which includes the right to be free from arbitrary interference with one's home, privacy and family, and the right to choose one's residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement (UNHABITAT, n.d. P.3). It also contains entitlements which includes security of tenure, housing, land and property restitution; equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing, participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels. Furthermore, it should meet some of the criteria such as security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure. Housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards. Moreover, housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centers and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas. It is also not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity (UNHABITAT, n.d. P.3). Moreover, some other international human rights treaties that recognize the right to adequate housing are given as below (UNHABITAT, n.d. p.11).

- The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (art. 21).
- The International Labour Organization's 1962 Convention No. 117 concerning Basic Aims and Standards of Social Policy (art. 5 (2)).
- The 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (art. 5 (e) (iii)).
- The 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 17).
- The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (arts. 14 (2) and 15 (2)).
- The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 16 (1) and 27 (3)).
- The International Labour Organization's 1989 Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (arts. 14, 16 and 17).
- The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (art. 43 (1) (d)).
- The 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (arts. 9 and 28).

2.2. The Right to Adequate Housing Apply for Specific Groups

In housing, discrimination can take the form of discriminatory laws, policies or measures; zoning regulations; exclusionary policy development; exclusion from housing benefits; denial of security of tenure; lack of access to credit; limited participation in decision-making; or lack of protection against discriminatory practices carried out by private actors (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.10). Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental human rights principles and critical components of the right to adequate housing. The ICESCR, in its article 2(2), identifies the following non-exhaustive grounds of discrimination: race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, and birth or other status. According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “other status” may include disability, health status (e.g., HIV/AIDS) or sexual orientation. The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing has also emphasized that discrimination and segregation in housing can result from poverty and economic marginalization (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.10). The impact of discrimination is compounded when an individual suffers double or multiple discriminations, for instance, on the basis of sex *and* race, national origin or disability.

As the result of who they are, discrimination or stigma, or a combination of both factors, some groups or individuals have a hard time to exercise their right to adequate housing (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.16). In such cases, States should adapt policies in favour of those who are in need, rather than merely targeting majority groups.

Women and Children

According to (E/CN.4/2005/43, paras. 59–61) as quoted in UNHABITAT (n.d.) women and girls face entrenched discrimination in inheritance, which can seriously affect their enjoyment of the right to adequate housing in many parts of the world, just because they are women, or because of other factors such as poverty, age, class, sexual orientation or ethnicity (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.17). Women face severe discrimination regarding security of tenure. Regardless of its form, tenure is often understood, recorded or registered in the name of men, leaving women dependent on their male relatives for tenure security. Moreover, while collective forms of tenure can include women, the decision-making processes are often dominated by men (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.18). Lack of adequate housing also impacts children due to their specific needs such as affecting their growth, development and enjoyment, affect to their right of education, health, personal security, (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.18).

Locality of the house is one of a vital factors to ensure the children's access to childcare, schools, health care and other services (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.20). If the houses are far from schools, health care or transport is not existing or too expensive, it is hard for children to get an education or health care. Moreover, access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is fundamental to ensuring children's health. Lack of safe drinking water within or close to the home can lead to a long distance for women and girls to collect water along with the risk of being subjected to harassment and other threats along the way (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.20).

The right to adequate housing also is reflected in *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* article 14(2) and article 15(2), and *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* article 16(1) and article 27.

Migrants

Migrants, being on the move, are particularly vulnerable to a range of human rights violations, including violations of the right to adequate housing (UNHABITAT, n.d.25). Migrants also often end up living in precarious and unsafe conditions in cities and urban areas. Employers may oblige migrant domestic workers or factory workers to live at their place of work. Many will end up living in overcrowded dormitories, sleeping in shifts and without access to adequate sanitation. Domestic workers can be made to sleep in poorly ventilated rooms, storerooms or common living areas with no regard for their dignity, privacy or personal security (UNHABITAT, n.d.25).

Undocumented migrants are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses, including violation of their right to adequate housing. Irregular migrants are often homeless, as an inability to pay rent usually results in immediate eviction. Their lack of legal status, and the criminalization of irregular migration in many countries, means that most will be unable or unwilling to challenge discriminatory or otherwise abusive rental practices and seek legal remedies. National housing strategies rarely include migrants, and will practically never include irregular migrants (UNHABITAT, n.d.p.25).

2.3. Trends of Vietnamese Migrants to Cambodia

Christine Leonard (as cited in the Phnom Penh post 2000) identified three different categories of Vietnamese residents/migrants to Cambodia. The first group were Cambodian-born Vietnamese whose parents and grandparents were also born in Cambodia. They speak, read and write Khmer fluently and see Cambodia as their motherland and feel well integrated into Khmer society. The second group were Vietnamese who came to Cambodia between 1979 and 1989. They can usually speak some Khmer, although not fluently. Some married Cambodians and settled in Khmer communities. The third group were drawn to Cambodia by the lure of jobs following the economic boom in Cambodia in the 1990s. Most of them either do not speak Khmer at all, or speak only very basic Khmer. They came here for business purpose.

According to Pov Sottan (2007) currently, there is not a single region that is not touched by immigrants, especially Vietnamese immigrants, whether they are legal or illegal. Vietnamese cross into Cambodia from Vietnam by boats, and most of them claim that it was to find a better living condition by living on the (Tonle Sap) Lake inside Cambodia. This allowing them to avoid the costs and legal problems associated with purchasing or renting property on dry land, (the Phnom Penh post, 2000). There were 70,000 Vietnamese migrants living in Cambodia from 2002 until 2009 based on the Vietnamese census. The number has increased to more than 160, 000 from 2010 to 2014. In 2014, the National Police found 1,800 Vietnamese without proper documents. Only 20 to 30 percent of Vietnamese were crossing through official international checkpoints, (Odom, 2015). According to Prok Saroeun, Chief of Immigration Police at the Ministry of Interior (as quoted in the Phnom Penh post 2000), 103,961 ethnic Vietnamese inhabited 16 of Cambodia's 24 provinces during the last nine months of 1999. Large numbers of Vietnamese have migrated to Cambodia, whose children remain largely stateless and more vulnerable to exploitation, (UNIAP 2008). According to General Director of the Immigration Department, the number of Vietnamese migrant in Cambodia had risen significantly since 2009, (Odom 2015).

Every day more than 100,000 Vietnamese residents go to work across the country, many of them work as skilled or semi-skilled labors in construction and manufacturing sectors. Other occupations include fishing and prostitution, (the Phnom Penh Post). Studies indicate that 15–32% of sex workers in Cambodia are of Vietnamese origin, (Derks, et al. 2006 as cited in

UNIAP 2008). Individuals enter prostitution either voluntarily or by force, however, bonded labor is particularly prominent among Vietnamese sex workers in Cambodia, (UNIAP 2008).

For illegal immigration one person is required to pay 250,000 riel or about 60USD to receive immigration certificates for two years and after two years, they must renew it (Sovuthy & Dara 2014).

However, in June 2015, more than 100 Vietnamese workers were detained for deportation after they were found to be working in the country illegally in construction sites in Phnom Penh's Koh Pich Island; this exercise was part of the Interior Ministry's seemingly arbitrary enforcement of the immigration law (Dara and Blomberg 2015). Among those, just three of them had valid passports and visas, while 33 were found to be working on tourist visas and the remaining 95 with no passports at all. Additionally, the same year in September, the Chief of Investigations at the Interior Ministry's Immigration department found 57 Vietnamese workers, carpenters and carvers lacked the necessary documentation (Sokhean 2015). Among those, only six of them had a passports, and four others had visas, but no work permit, 10 were sent to the immigration department for further questioning and required to pay for work permits and visas. Since July 2014, immigration police have arrested more than 3,000 foreigners from 46 countries including 2,800 from Vietnam who were found to be in the country illegally (Sokhean 2015). According to Odom (2015) only 20 to 30 percent of Vietnamese were crossing through official international checkpoints, and in the first six months of 2015, 1,200 illegal migrants (of which 98% were Vietnamese) were deported.

According to Thmey Thmey News (2016), the governments' update by the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Interior covering the period between March 2015 to August 2016, reported that there were 25 nationalities of immigrants living in Cambodia, the number totaled to 160,872, equivalent to 46.516 families; those of Vietnamese Nationality was 99.49%, equaling to 160,000 of the total immigrants.

2.4. Discrimination against Vietnamese Migrants

About 5 percent of Cambodia's 15 million people are ethnic Vietnamese. Most have lived here for generations and identify themselves as Cambodians, yet they do not hold citizenship and are barred from access to basic rights (IRIN 2013). They do not have rights like other Cambodians,

and people think that they are illegal immigrants (Mueller & Narim 2015). Without national identity cards, they face challenges to find jobs and do business. Most Vietnamese children in Cambodia are not allowed to attend public schools because they do not have birth certificates (Mueller & Narim 2015). However, in some villages, such as Kandal, local officials provide letters that provisionally recognize these children as residents, thus allowing them to attend public schools in the village (Mueller & Narim 2015).

Cambodia's 1996 Law on Nationality states that in order to qualify for Cambodian citizenship, applicants must be able to read and write Khmer, demonstrate an understanding of Cambodian history and prove that they have lived continuously in the country for at least seven years (Mueller & Narim 2015).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Type of Research, Research Design, and Unit of Analysis

The study was an exploratory descriptive research, aiming to describe housing rights, access and conditions of migrant workers, identifying the factors that shape the choice of housing and the reasons why migrants decided to live in the present locations. In addition, the study also aimed to explore how migrants are exercising their agencies to improve housing conditions (housing standard, housing environment, household assets) for themselves. The unit of analysis in this study was individual level.

3.2. Selection of the Study Areas

The study was conducted in 3 different locations in Phnom Penh city. The selection of the locations for the study were made where most Vietnamese migrant workers live after the reconnaissance survey.

- The houses located along the street 97, Sangkat Boueng Trabek, Khan Chamkar Morn, Phnom Penh City.
- Village No. 4, Group 25, Street 101, Sangkat Phsar Derm Thkov, Khan Chamkar Morn, Phnom Penh City.
- Derm Chan village, Sangkat Chhbar Ampov II, Khan Chhbar Ampov, Phnom Penh City.

3.3. Sampling Design

Sampling Procedure and Methods: A snow ball sampling was applied to select the respondents from the study areas for questionnaire survey, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion.

- **Sample Size:** Sixty Vietnamese women migrant workers were selected for administering the questionnaire survey, whereas 15 of them were selected for in-depth interviews. Moreover, five women from each of the three locations: (1) Street 97, Sangkat Boueng Trabek, Khan Chamkar Morn, Phnom Penh City, (2) Village 4, Group 25, Street 101, Sangkat Phsar Derm Thkov, Khan Chamkar Morn, Phnom Penh City, and (3) Derm Chan village, Sangkat Chhbar Ampov II, Khan Chhnbar Ampov, Phnom Penh City, were invited for group discussion.

3.4. Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

Primary Data: Data collection started from September 2016. Primary data was the main information for the research, which were gathered through questionnaire survey, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion.

Secondary Data: Secondary data was collected from various sources, such as academic journal articles, daily newspapers, and policy reports.

Data Analysis Techniques: Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were applied. For quantitative data analysis, statistical techniques were applied by using the software SPSS 21st edition.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Profile of Respondents

The respondents were selected from different backgrounds, various occupations, and different years of arrival in Cambodia. The study mainly focused on Vietnamese women migrant workers to respond to the objectives.

4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Year of Arrival in Cambodia: According to the responses received from respondents, the years that female migrant workers arrived in Cambodia were categorized into five periods, applying grouped frequency distribution: From 1980 to 1985; 1986 to 1991; 1992 to 2000; 2001 to 2010; and 2011 to 2016.

Table 4.1 shows that a substantial number of Vietnamese female migrant workers have been living in Cambodia for more than a decade. Data indicates that 30% of them arrived in Cambodia between the year 1992 and the year 2000 due to the economic boom in 1990s. Followed by about 28% came to Cambodia between the year 1980 and 1985 after the collapse of the Pol Pot regime. This group of migrants have been living in Cambodia for more than two decades. Some of their children were born in Cambodia as well. The trends of migrating to Cambodia also continued, as 20% of them came during the period of 2001 to 2010, and about 18% of them came during 1986 to 1991. The small percentage of 3.3% came between the year of 2011 and 2010. This indicates that Vietnamese female migrant workers had not arrived just recently to make a living in Cambodia, but they have been living for a long time; they have extended into their second generation in Cambodia. Majority of women migrants live in Cambodia with their husbands and young children; while some keep their children in Vietnam with their relatives or with their siblings. They visit Vietnam once a year. However, they stated that they never send money to their siblings or children; that which they earn in Cambodia is hardly enough for their own survival.

Table 4.1 Year of Arrival in Cambodia

Year of Coming in Cambodia	F	%
1980-1985	17	28.3
1986-1991	11	18.3
1992-2000	18	30
2001-2010	12	20
2011-2016	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

Age Groups of Respondents: Table 4.2 shows that about 46% of the respondents were above the age of 45 years. Followed by 25% of respondents with ages between 36 to 45 years, and about 21% of ages between 26 to 35 years. Referring to Table 4.1, some of the female Vietnamese migrant workers had arrived in Cambodia more than two decades ago. Therefore, it can be

concluded that majority of respondents were elderly people. Very few of the female migrants were young; age ranging from 18 to 25. This consisted of 6.7% of the age groups who had come into Cambodia by following their parents. Whereas other age groups came to Cambodia with their spouses for the purpose of making a living.

Table 4.2 Age Groups of Respondents

Age group of Respondents	F	%
18-25	4	6.7
26-35	13	21.7
36-45	15	25
More than 45	28	46.7
Total	60	100%

Source: Field survey 2016

Marital Status of Respondents: According to Table 4.3, majority of female migrant workers, which comprises of 63.3%, are married and living with their husbands and children. Whereas 10% of them were married but living separately from their husbands. This is due to their husbands left them and started living with other women (second wives). They know about their husbands' relationship with their second wife, but they did not want to file any official divorce because they were Vietnamese migrants. On the other hand, they were married in Vietnam and came to Cambodia together. However, unfortunately, they could not succeed in their married life and forced to live separate in order to secure their children from their husbands' abuse (physical violence).

Widows were also in a high percentage, which consisted of 25%, as compared to divorced and living separately. This was due to their husbands passed away. Only one respondent was found single which equals to 1.7% of the survey.

Table 4.3 Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status of Respondents	f	%
Married and live together	38	63.3
Married but live separate	6	10

Single	1	1.7
Widow	15	25
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

Occupation of Respondents: Occupations of respondents were categorized into 6 groups such as nail polish, small business which includes coffee and soft drinks stalls, grocery at home, and fry banana cake; scavenger, purely house wife, Vietnam lottery sellers, and employed by others as domestic maids.

Table 4.4 shows that about 31% of Vietnamese female migrant workers have set up their small businesses to earn their living. Few of them sell coffee and soft drinks in front of their homes, whereas minority of them walk door to door to sell the coffee and soft drinks. Some of them have their grocery products in their houses combining with their child care and household chores. Besides this, a few of them make cake such as fry banana cake to sell at markets. They go early in the morning around 7 o'clock and return home when their cakes are sold. They can earn a profit from 4USD to 6USD per day after deducting all expenses.

About 21% of them are purely house wives. They do not work for others and are not doing any business at home. This is due to their husband's commitment, they do not allow them to work. They just ask them to stay at home looking after children and do their household chores. These groups of women's husbands can earn and support all the members in family. Mainly their husbands work as skilled carpenters, from which they can earn enough money for house rental and household expenses. Their husbands can earn around 70 USD per week.

Another similar group of women migrant workers (21.7%) have to work as scavengers in collecting plastic bottles and drink tin cans. Majority of these groups are widows and old age. They do not have permanent jobs and places to live in. Early in the morning, they have to walk along the roads from one place to another place to collect the discarded items. They return home at around 4 PM to sell what they have collected to get some money for their food and save a part for room rent, supplies and paying bills. They can earn in the range of 4 USD to 5 USD per day.

Study found that there were about 11% of respondents working for others to peel garlies and work as domestic maids. For those who work as garlic peeler can earn from 5 USD to 10 USD per day. They do not want to work as domestic maids. They think that work as maids at other's home is a kind of work that has no freedom. While working as garlic peeler, they can work in groups with other friends and it is considered as relax able work. The contractors or middle men deliver the garlic bags for them at their homes and come to collect by themselves. Women are responsible only to peel the garlies. Whereas some women prefer to work as domestic maids. They do not stay with their employers. They leave their homes in the early in the morning, and return home in the evening at around 5 o'clock. They go by *motor dop* by spending 0.5USD per day. They have one day off on Sunday. They decided to work as domestic maids because they have some benefits besides their salary; such as free lunch, some clothes, and some tips from their employers. They get a fixed salary ranging from 100.00USD to 120.00USD per month.

The nail polishers consisted of 10%. They do not go far from their homes. They set up a box of nail polishing material alongside the roadside. Customers, especially women, come to their places for nail beautification. In Cambodia, current modern women and men like to have beautification which provide an opportunity for Vietnamese women migrants to earn income from this service. Male customers also come to clean and cut their nails, even though, they are not quite often, like women customers. This group of women migrants can earn 5 USD to 10 USD per day. However, it is not regular earning as well. Sometimes they do not get even one customer in whole day. Moreover, there is also a competition and challenge, because of the increasing number of migrant women providing this service/business. Whereas, very low percentage of 3.3% of women migrants sell Vietnamese lottery. They go by cycling to the target places. They earn about 5USD to 8USD per day, if they can sell more they earn bonus from the company.

Table 4.4 Occupation of Respondents

Occupation of Respondents	f	%
Nail polisher	6	10
Small business and employed for others	19	31.7
House wife	13	21.7
Scavenger	13	21.7

Sell Vietnam lottery	2	3.3
Domestic maids	7	11.7
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

Khmer Language of Respondents: Data in table 4.5 shows that, 45% of Vietnamese female migrants speak very little Khmer language. This is also one of the reasons why they decided to choose such places to live. They prefer to live nearby their Vietnamese friends. Additionally, about 26% of them can speak Khmer as needed in daily conversation. While other 25% of them speak Khmer language fluently due to their long living in Cambodia and the interaction with Khmer people in terms of their business. Language for communication is a must for them to communicate and sell their products and provide services. A very low percentage 3.3% of respondents cannot speak Khmer at all due to their recent arrival in Cambodia. Even though, majority of Vietnamese women migrants have lived in Cambodia for a long time; yet, they cannot write Khmer language at all. They can do only verbal communication for their daily interaction. This is also one of the reasons that they prefer to live nearby their Vietnamese friends. They speak Vietnamese among the migrant friends, and family members.

Table 4. 5 Khmer Language of Respondents

Khmer Language	f	%
Speak fluently	15	25
Only for daily communication	16	26.7
Little	27	45
Cannot speak at all	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

Vietnamese Language of Respondents: Table 4.6 shows that majority of them can only speak their own language, but cannot write at all which consist of about 53%. These women never attended school due to their family financial conditions when they were young. They had to work from their young age to support their families. About 31% of them can read and write

Vietnamese language. They attended schools only up to the primary level. They stopped studying and got married and started their family lives. Whereas, 10% of them can read a little bit of Vietnamese language.

Table 4.6 Vietnamese Language of Respondents

Vietnamese Language of Respondents	f	%
Only speaking	35	58.3
Can read a little bit	6	10
Can read and write	19	31.7
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

Legal Documents held by Respondents: Table 4.7 shows that all Vietnamese women migrant workers arrived in Cambodia without passports or official documents. They came to Cambodia a long time as shown in Table 4.1. They also do not have work permits because most of them work at home or self-employed. Their main income source is from their husbands' earning. Only widows have to earn their income by themselves. There was a census conducted by General Department of Immigration under the Ministry of Interior to record the immigrants in Phnom Penh city. Starting from the year 2000, migrants began to register their presence by paying the registration fee of 250,000 riel or about 60 USD for two years. They have to renew it. After census, migrants received a card to be recognized as registered immigrants in Cambodia. Of all 60 respondents in this study, only 14 of them (23.34%) did not possess this identity cards. They were worried about their residing in Cambodia. They stated that they will go back to their home country anytime if Cambodian government deports them. Presently, they will just continue to live in Cambodia. Most of the respondents said that they do not know after how many years the immigration office conducts the census or registration. When the authority comes to inform them, they go to register and pay the fee.

Table 4.7 Legal Documents held by Respondents

Legal document held by respondents	f	%
No documents	14	23.34
Census blue card by immigration office	46	76.66

Work permits	0	
Passports	0	
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

5. Housing Access and Conditions of Migrant Workers

According to the findings, Vietnamese women migrants live independently with their family members. For those whose husbands are the breadwinners, they move from one place to another place due to their husbands working conditions or work place. For those who work as self-employed tend to live nearby the place where they can do their businesses. They prefer to live among their own nationals. They feel secured when they have many Vietnamese friends and relatives to live nearby them. Women migrants pay all water supply and electricity bills.

Housing conditions of Vietnamese migrants were divided into two categories, such as rooms for rent, and wooden houses. The owners have big lands and built many rooms for renting. Different locations have different design and prices. The roofs of houses are made of zinc and the supporting walls made of wood.

Table 5.1 Housing Conditions of Migrant Workers

Housing Condition	F	%
Rent a room	48	80
Rent a house	12	20
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey 2016

Table 5.1 shows that 80% of women migrant workers live in renting room category, while only 20% of them rent wooden house for their living. In both cases, they have to buy all their household materials such as beds, furniture, kitchen wares, etc. for staying by themselves. The rented premises are unfurnished.

Table 5.2 Rental Costs

Rental Cost per Month	f	%
10-25 USD	30	50
30-40 USD	8	13.3
45-55 USD	7	11.7
60-70 USD	15	25
Total	60	100

Rental price 10-25 USD: In this price category, the cost of renting room and house varies in the range of 10-25 USD according to the conditions of the rooms and houses, majority of respondents (50%) can afford only the least category of house. Mainly, widows, and the migrants who work as scavengers, domestic maids, and small business such as selling fry banana cake, boil banana, and street coffee sellers live in this category.

Rental price 35-40 USD: The room which costs 35-40 USD per month is an empty room with an attached bathroom inside the room, which helps migrants in using their private toilets. There is no separate cooking space or sleeping place. Migrant women have to arrange cooking space, and sleeping areas within the room. Each room has a window, majority of them are never opened. Habitually, migrants buy a small gas stove for cooking food, and an electric rice cooker. The roofs and walls of this type of rooms are made of tin zinc.

Rental price 60-70 USD: It is a bit bigger and newer room than others rooms as have been described above. There is a ground floor where some women migrants can do their businesses such as selling groceries. Moreover, for those who are fully house wives that their husbands do not allow them to do other work besides looking after children and household chores, this area is their living room. They can watch TV and feeding their children. Their bedrooms are up-stairs.

6. Reasons Migrants Decided to Live in the Present Place

There were 14 different categories of reasons that influenced migrant workers decision to live in their current locations.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Near to workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Near to market | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Near to other family members | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Near to other friends | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Vietnamese migrants live nearby | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Near to school/nursery for children | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Convenience for public transports | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Room with kitchen | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Room size | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Rent (price) | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Environment (noise, smell) | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Stability of rent | <input type="checkbox"/> very important, <input type="checkbox"/> less important, <input type="checkbox"/> unimportant |
| Others (specify)..... | |

The six main consideration which conditioned their choice of housing type and location are: nearness to working place, stability of rent, nearness to markets, rental rates, safety, and closeness to other Vietnamese migrants. Nearness to the working place of their husbands is their first priority. Most of them find the place through their friends where their husbands and/or themselves working with. Majority of the decisions are made by their husbands; only those who have been separated from their husbands or those who are widows can make decision by themselves. The widows and those who have small businesses preferred the places close to markets where they can have access to sell their products. The rental price and the stability of rents also are very important aspects for them to make decision. Affordability and stability of rental rates actually dictated their choice of renting rooms or houses. Another pressing reason

found in study is the surrounding; it is the feeling of safety and security in communal ties that bring them together – “birds of the same feathers flock together”. Common language and cultural identities caused them to be closely knitted.

Place near to school or nursery for children, near to other friends, and environment are less important for them. Near to schools is only for the purpose of doing their business, since their children cannot access to Cambodian public schools. Their children have to go to Vietnamese schools which are supported by their Associations or Religious Organizations. Thus, living near the school or nursery for children is considered as less important. Living in a good environment is important for their health, however, they think this as less important because they cannot afford the rent if they consider good environment as their preference. The whole concept is that living should be where they can make business and/or their husbands have jobs is the most important and considered as their first preference.

Room size, room with kitchen, and convenience in terms of public transports are not important for migrants. Majority of them have more children, however, some of their children live in Vietnam with their grand-parents or relatives. The younger children live with them in Cambodia. Thus, with current rooms or house, they can live with this small family. Once a year, they visit their children in Vietnam. Since they do not have documents, many of them request to the immigration police from both borders, Vietnam and Cambodia, to allow them to go to Vietnam. After visiting their children, they return to Cambodia for their businesses. Room with kitchen is not important for those who work as scavengers and are self-employed. They can manage the space for their cooking. Only cheap rental price is the most important for them. With the earning, they cannot afford to pay for the good rooms that have space for separate cooking. Public transport is not common yet in Cambodia, even though government has introduced the public transport service. Their husbands go to work by motorbikes or go with friends, whereas most women migrants do business at homes that they do not need transportation. For those who work as scavengers, they have to walk every day to the target places; they do not need transportation. The Vietnamese lottery sellers cycle every day from door to door or their target places to sell the lottery tickets. They all do not use transportations. Sometimes when they are tired they use *motor dop* which is most common and convenience for them. They spent in the range of 1500 riel to 2000 riel for one way. Therefore, public transports is not important for them.

7. Factors that shape the choice of housing

The study found five common main factors that shape women migrants' choice of housing in the three different locations. Majority of them have been living more than five years in their current locations. They kept on shifting until they found a suitable and affordable room or house for themselves and for their families; especially their husband's occupations had a bearing. The husbands made the decision on their housing choice; however, they also consulted with their wives. Majority of women, as wives, also supported their husbands' choice as their earnings were usually lesser in amount, considered as extra income rather than they stay at home and do nothing. The main income is from their husbands' work. Only those who are widows make decision by themselves, as they are the head of the families.

The first factor is the rental arrangements without agreement or contract. All rentals, whether rooms or houses, rented without any agreements or contracts are preferred the most. The required payment is only one month advance prior to moving into the facility/room. The subsequent payments are made at the beginning of every month.

The second factor is the non-requirement of payment as advance deposits; this leniency on the part of the house-owners has been a great help in concluding rental arrangements, as the migrant workers' meager income makes it practically impossible to pay deposits.

The third factor is the non-requirement of any documents such as family books, identity cards, or passport copies. These non-requirements are helpful to Vietnamese migrant workers because, majority of them live without passports or proper documents.

The fourth factor is the non-requirement of putting any name in the rental agreements, since there is no any contract or filling of any forms/documents. The house-owners come to collect money once a month. Husbands or wives, who ever is available, can make a payment.

The last factor is those house-owners who can accept late payment up to three to four days based on real situation of women migrants. Sometimes the women migrants can make payments on daily basis, especially those who work as scavengers.

“It is fine for me with this room because it is cheap and I can collect a lot of trashes. I pay daily rental to the house-owner after I sold my trashes”.

For those who live in Derm Chan village, they can save the cost of water supply. Majority of them use the water from Mekong River for their supply. They spend only on electricity. Whereas, migrants who live in Sangkat Beoung Trabek and Phsar Derm Thkov have to pay for water supply and electricity bills. On the average, they spend about 60,000 riel or 15 USD for electricity, and about 20,000 riel or 5 USD for water supply for every two months.

8. Migrants exercise their agencies to improve housing conditions

Since all living conditions are acceptable for the women migrants, majority of them do not request any other extra services from the house owners. Migrant workers concern of losing the opportunity of living in those rooms or houses if they demand too much from the owners. They may find it difficult to get a room or house without any conditions like these locations. On the other hand, it seems they do not have any contracts if the owners got angry and stop renting the houses to them they also cannot make any complain or claim, because they do not have any agreements or rental contracts.

Only in the case of flood due to heavy raining, for example, experienced by women migrants at Phsar Sangkat Derm Thkov in 2013; they requested the owners to manage to fill the land for them. In this case all tenants in that particular location made a request to the owners to fill the low areas. As the result, the owners agreed and filled the soil to raise up the location.

In living in these current locations, they do not face any problems regarding security, for example, youth gangsters. They have good relationship with their neighbors. Regarding the housing conditions for those who live in the wooden houses face some difficulties due to lack of private bathroom and toilet, they have to use common toilet with neighbors. Many of women migrants and children choose to take bath and toilet in the river. They are not secure in the houses when there is rain. Raining causes flooding and roof leaking, which lead them find difficulty to sleep. Living environment; even though, surrounding environment is smelly due to trashes, but they stated that they can tolerate because they are habitual with this environment. They tolerate all these matters. The only concern is that they are afraid that they cannot earn money to pay electricity bill and rental cost on time which they are afraid of losing the house or rooms.

One of the respondents in Derm Chan village stated that *“it is easy for me to live in this room because I do not need to provide any documents. If the house owner asks for documents I cannot live in this room. I do not have any documents. However, I face a lots of problems such as no water supply connection, no toilet, and no bathroom. I have to go to the river for bathing and toilet.”* (# No. 10)

Concerning with the question, if they have problems where they can seek for help. Most of them responded that they do not know where they can seek for help. When they lack of money they borrow from parents, however, their parents also poor who cannot help them always. Moreover, they do not dare to seek for help from their Association or their Embassy. They do not want their issues reach to the Vietnamese authorities or Cambodian authorities.

The last suggestions and also request for proper house to live in is that they need security about their places to live in. Now, they are always worried about losing the houses or rooms if they cannot manage to pay the rental cost.

“I worried only when I cannot earn enough money to pay rent, then my family have to get out of the house. I wish to have a good health so that I can go to collect the trashes for my whole family’s survival.” (# No. 6)

9. Conclusion

In conclusion Vietnamese migrant women workers and family members face many challenges with their current housing conditions such as the houses or rooms are too small for their whole family. They are living in an unhealthy environment (no trash collection arrangement, mostly locations have no drainage system to flow the rain-water when raining causes flooding in the areas, and roof leaking). For the vulnerable groups of the low income earners, especially widows, are living in unhealthy environment, both inside household and surrounding environment, which easily causes sickness. The low cost group rooms and houses do not have private toilets and bathrooms facilities, which can lead migrant workers to face a high risk such as sexual harassment and/or raping for women and girls while they take bathe and toilet in the river.

Women migrants cannot fully exercise their agencies to improve housing conditions, such as housing standards, housing environments, and household assets for themselves. Their houses are usually without basic services and facilities. When there is raining, some migrants who live in

the low cost renting cannot request to the house-owners to repair the roofs, if it is leaking. Because of they are limited with the renting cost they tend to be happy and adopt with the current conditions. There is no choice of housing, they are forced to live with the current houses which they can afford for the cost. They are not secured about their living. Whenever they cannot make rental payments they have to leave the rooms or houses.

Additionally, the location of the houses or rooms are far from schools or hospitals or other facilities. This is the reason some of them choose not to send children to school or children decided to stop while they move to next level. Their children end up with low education, whereas some of their children also start working the same occupations. They are trapped in vicious cycle of poverty for generations, and will end up with same conditions of poverty they are facing currently.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, below are the recommendations made for different stakeholders:

► To local authorities and other related agencies:

- Should pay attention to Vietnamese women migrants to ensure and provide them and to their families with legal protection to live in Cambodia, following migrant workers' rights and laws.
- Should create awareness or educate them to register in order to get immigration cards, so that they are aware of the rules and regulations for living in Cambodia.
- Provide education service nearby their community.
- Provide education on basic health care and form a volunteer group to educate their friends on basic health needs and sanitation.

➤ To women migrants

- Should take initiative on cleanliness and sanitation in their communities.
- Should make good relationships with neighbors and collaborate with local authorities for security purpose.
- Should invest in their children's education, which will help them to get out of vicious cycle of poverty in the future.

➤ To house owners

- Should pay attention to maintain their services to tenants as well.

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