

Abstract

Rural Industrialization and Return Migration: A Case Study of Female Factory Workers in Northeast Thailand

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This article focuses upon the role of small- and medium-scale rural factories with regard to the household economy and rural-urban migration. By conducting a survey of 202 female factory workers in Nang Rong, Buriram province, and focus group discussions with return migrants, we examine the contributions of factory employment that the workers perceive toward their household economy, as well as the potentiality that rural industrialization may reverse the rural-urban migration flow. We found that the rural residents appreciate the newly created job opportunities near their home villages and the majority utilize the income derived from their factory employment to supplement their parents' and husbands' income from the agricultural sector. Thus, the rural factory workers have begun to recognize the rural factory employment as an alternative to urban-bound migration in search of jobs. However, transcripts from focus group interviews also reveal that rural young women have other migration intentions than economically driven motives; they migrate to Bangkok with strong desire to experience the modern life style of the mega-city.