

The Relationship between International Migration to Thailand and Fertility Decline in Rural Laos

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Abstract

In last year's IGC, I presented how population growth gave impact to various aspects of the villager's livelihood changes, particularly to temporary international migration to Thailand, using results of a village survey in central Laos by PRELIC project funded by JSPS (Japan society for the promotion of science). High fertility rate which was one of the major causes of the population growth in the village had continued for long time, but since the 1990s it gradually declined. In this presentation I would like to examine how and why fertility rate declined that related to international migration.

Population growth in the village brought about reclamation of forests for paddy land. The paddy increase finished almost in the 1970s, although fertility rate has still remained in high level. In the 1990s, the villagers began to temporarily migrate to Thailand, and young families experiencing the migration could build new houses and buy paddy lands of mainly other villages, that enabled increased population to absorb in the village. At the same time international migration to Thailand forced to practice birth control to young people because it is difficult to have babies during their staying in Thailand. Was this migration the first cause of fertility declines in the village? The answer is no. It will be considered that first cause of fertility decline is development of market economy, and international migration to Thailand is a factor to accelerate the fertility decline.

Key words:

rural Laos; international migration; fertility decline; market economy; Thailand