

INTER-ASIA ROUNDTABLE 2010

Transnational Migration and Children in Asian Contexts

2 - 3 August 2010

EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION TEAM

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PREFACE

The ARI Inter-Asia Roundtable series, which explores key cross-cutting trends in Asia and makes intra-Asia comparisons and connections, is the annual flagship event of the Asia Research Institute (ARI) of the National University of Singapore. The first Roundtable, which focused on *Gender Relations in the 21st Century Asian Family*, was organized by the Changing Family in Asia Cluster in 2009 (ARI 2009). *Transnational Migration and Children in Asian Contexts* is the theme of the second in the series. Held on 2-3 August 2010 by ARI's Asian Migration Cluster, the event's organisation was led by Lai Ah Eng, Hoang Lan Anh, Melody Lu, Theodora Lam and Brenda Yeoh, and assisted by Sarahah Abubakar together with Alyson Rozells and ARI's Events team.

Why the theme of transnational migration and children in Asian contexts? Transnational migration has long affected the lives of Asian children in complex and multi-faceted ways, altering the shapes and structures of family relationships throughout the region. Under the most recent waves of globalization and in the aftermath of global recession, the speed, volume and flows of Asian migration have increased tremendously. Migration has become part of the childhood experience of many of the region's children. Yet there has been relatively little academic interest in the phenomenon as it relates to Asian children and childhoods. This Roundtable is an attempt to address this imbalance and to point to ways of understanding, researching and impacting Asian children involved in complex migratory processes.

At the same time, given the wide ethnic, cultural, social, political and economic diversity of the Asian region, it is not possible to construct a unitary regional understanding of children's experiences in migratory contexts. Instead, the Asian region provides wide-ranging contexts—from poor underdeveloped nations to wealthy developed economies, from the rural to the urban, from areas of conflict to those of reconstruction, and from relative isolation to globalised settings—to build new perspectives on the different ways children are caught up in multiple streams of human mobilities in an age of migration.

The *Inter-Asia Roundtable on Transnational Migration and Children in Asian Contexts* takes up the challenge of developing critical accounts of children in migratory circumstances which capture the diversity of regional experiences, and in so doing, destabilises the intellectual and practical hegemony of well-honed western models of children on the move. While giving serious

consideration to the view best developed in western-based research that children have social agency and can no longer be treated as adults-in-waiting, the Roundtable also emphasizes the interplay between structural construction of children's identities and agency on the one hand and situated practices in real-world contexts on the other.

The 2010 Roundtable featured five thematic panels, each focusing on a different group of children who are involved in Asian transnational migrations:

- Left-behind children of migrant parents;
- Children migrating for education;
- Children migrating for work;
- Trafficked children;
- Children adopted across national borders.

A special concluding session on Policy was also included, given the significance of policy recommendations and implications of child migration.

The ARI Inter-Asia 2010 Roundtable employed innovative working methods to ensure that all key issues were given sufficient consideration, through a combination of formal presentations and intensive discussions. In each panel, an expert presentation was made by an invited speaker followed by an expert commentary, each with two rounds of lively discussion in which invited discussants and participants from academia, non-governmental organizations, government institutions and other interested bodies provided stimulating contributions and interventions based on their expertise and experience (see Programme and Appendice for details).

This Policy Brief is one of three publication outcomes of the Roundtable. With its contents and insights distilled from the numerous discussions and concluding Policy session, it is written by child migration expert Judith Ennew and is issued as an in-house publication of the ARI Inter-Asia Roundtable Series. The second publication is the 'Conference Report: Inter-Asia Roundtable on Transnational Migration and Children in Asian Contexts' (in the Viewpoint section of *Children's Geographies*; submitted in November 2010, forthcoming 2011 or 2012), written by Brenda S.A. YEOH, LAI Ah Eng, Cheryll ALIPIO, HOANG Lan Anh, Theodora LAM, and Melody C.W. LU. The third publication consists of revised presentation papers in a Special Issue on Transnational Migration and Children in Asian Contexts (in *Children's Geographies*; submitted for review in March 2011), guest edited by Melody C.W. LU, Cheryll ALIPIO and Brenda S.A. YEOH.

The organizers of the ARI Inter-Asia Roundtable 2010 wish to thank all paper presenters and discussants for their valuable insights and contributions towards the contents of this Policy Brief. They are: Brenda S.A. YEOH, HOANG Lan Anh, Theodora LAM and Elspeth GRAHAM with Cheryl ALIPIO as the discussant for the Panel on Left-behind Children of Migrant Parents; Johanna WATERS with Shirlena HUANG as the discussant for the Panel on Children Migrating for Education; Harriot BEAZLEY with Roxana WATERSON as the discussant for the Panel on Children Migrating for Work; Susan KNEEBONE with Sallie YEA WILTON as the discussant for the Panel on Trafficked Children; and Peter SELMAN with Jayashree MOHANTY as the discussant for the Panel on Children Adopted Across National Borders. They also wish to especially thank Judith Ennew for agreeing to write this Policy Brief.

It is hoped that this Policy Brief will contribute towards both the understanding of Asian children drawn into the migratory processes that so profoundly impact their lives and the policies of key actors aimed at improving them.

Lai Ah Eng

Editor

Inter-Asia Roundtable 2010:

Transnational Migration and Children in Asian Contexts

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

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TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND CHILDREN IN ASIAN CONTEXTS: A POLICY BRIEF

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INTRODUCTION

Transnational migration has long affected the lives of Asian children in complex and multi-faceted ways, altering the shapes and structures of family relationships throughout the region. Under the most recent waves of globalization, and in the aftermath of global recession, the speed, volume and flows of Asian migration have increased tremendously. Migration has become part of the childhood experience of many of the region's children. Yet there has been relatively little academic interest in the phenomenon as it relates to Asian children and childhoods. Moreover, studies have tended to follow, rather than engage with, the literature of Europe and North America. By focusing on Asian children, the ARI Inter-Asia 2010 Roundtable takes into consideration the potential for Asian research on children as social agents rather than as 'human beings' or 'adults-in-waiting' as in the three decades of European-based conceptualization of children (Qvortrup 1991).

The choice of topic for the 2010 Roundtable thus reflects wider debates and sets clear objectives:

- To develop critical accounts of the transnational migration of children in Asia;
- To challenge 'Western'-based models and understandings of children on the move;

- To consider, and seek to understand, the social agency and identity of migratory children in Asia;
- To build understanding of the interplay between structural constructions of children’s identities and agency and situated practices in Asian real-world contexts.

The 2010 Roundtable featured five thematic panels, each focusing on a different group of the children that are involved in Asian transnational migrations:

- Left-behind children of migrant parents;
- Children migrating for education;
- Children migrating for work;
- Trafficked children;
- Children adopted across national borders.

In each panel, expert presentations were followed by lively discussion opportunities in which invited discussants and participants from academia, non-governmental organizations, government institutions and other interested bodies provided stimulating contributions and interventions based on their expertise and experience. This format and approach ensures that all key issues are given sufficient airing and consideration.

Section 1 of this Policy Brief considers each of the five themes, focusing particularly on policy concerns, with ‘Headlines’ at the end of every section, indicating some of the key ‘take aways’ from each panel. Section 2 focuses on wider policy implications, including research agendas, and identifying the responsibilities of key actors in both government and civil society in Asia.

ROUNDTABLE PANELS

While the 2010 Roundtable focused on children in Asia, participants were aware of the global backdrop driving Asian migration flows. The first two panels – left-behind children of migrant parents and children migrating for education - investigated families in which key members of nuclear-family units are dispersed across international borders—sometimes between continents. This raised issues for and about family life, which vary according to whether it is parents or children who migrate. Dispersed transnational families are becoming increasingly common in Southeast Asia, which is a major exporter of labour migrants, perhaps especially women (Hoang *et al.* 2010). In East Asia, the demand for better educational credentials leads to children migrating to promote personal and family economic advancement

(Waters 2010). Both these panels also raised issues of gender and the changing roles of mothers and fathers, often drawing attention to the increased burdens borne by mothers. In this context, basic and deep-rooted notions of family values and traditions in Asia (see Stivens 1998) were also examined.

As these first two panels demonstrated, gender and socio-economic class are key factors in migration opportunities, choices and experiences. Migration is a family strategy. Often, the investment of an entire extended family is necessary to pay the comparatively huge cost for a single family member to migrate, including transport, visas and initial accommodation in the destination country. Migration entails both costs and benefits for men and women. Men left at home when wives migrate may have to cope with additional traditional 'female' tasks when wives migrate. Women left behind when husbands migrate may have to tackle increased responsibilities and heavier physical tasks. Both fathers and mothers, whether migrating or left behind, experience some loss of home life. All these factors impact directly on children's experiences of childhood.

The third and fourth panels - on children migrating for work and on child trafficking - shared some common preoccupations. Both explicitly raised the question of children's agency. The presentation on children who migrate for work (Beazley 2010) emphasized that some children make independent decisions to migrate, and used this to argue for research in which children themselves are at the forefront of enquiry, sharing their ideas and experiences. This challenged the assumption, by some participants in the first panel, that children are not capable research participants. Providing a mirror image to the counterclaim that children are competent actors in their own lives (Beazley 2010), the presentation on trafficking (Kneebone 2010a) problematized theoretical constructs in the field, which not only deny children's subjective agency but also reduce them to 'vulnerable' objects of concern. In contrast, the final panel on international adoption underlined the absolute lack of agency for children who are circulated between birth and adoptive parents across national borders. The presenter (Selman 2010) revealed that, when children explore their identity in later life, they may resent earlier decisions made on their behalf by adults.

LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN OF MIGRANT PARENTS

Migration studies no longer concentrate solely on the person who migrates but also highlight the people left-behind, especially with respect to an increasing 'feminization' of migration. Although female migration is not new, a recent topic of concern is migrating *mothers* and the potential 'crisis of care' for the children they leave behind. The care arrangements made for such children, as well as their ongoing relationships with biological parents, were the topic of the first panel, raising policy-related issues that featured throughout the Roundtable, including Asian diversity, gender, communication, social reproduction and the meaning of 'family'.

WHO CARES FOR LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN?

Presenters on care arrangements for left-behind children, Hoang Lan Anh, Theodora Lam Brenda S. A. Yeoh and Elspeth Graham, reported on the findings of the Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia (CHAMPSEA) study;¹ a large-scale, multi-method investigation of the health of children of migrant parents. Data were collected through quantitative surveys of over 4,000 households in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, supplemented by case studies, which illustrate the complex nuances of care arrangements for children in both migrant and non-migrant households (Hoang *et al.* 2010).

In CHAMPSEA, care is defined as 'the act of seeing to a person's physical, psychological, emotional and developmental needs' (Standing 2001). The presentation challenged key assumptions by pointing to both positive and negative effects on family members. When fathers migrate, mothers continue in their expected role as nurturant carers, also assuming the tasks and responsibilities usually ascribed to men. Although this may mean increased workloads and responsibilities, it can also result in greater confidence and autonomy, as well as more active involvement in family decisions. When mothers migrate, there are likely to be considerable changes in the living and care arrangements for children, perhaps involving extended family members. Grandparents, aunts and older sisters, together or separately, absorb some or all of the migrant mother's childcare tasks.

Left-behind fathers vary in the extent to which they take on a caregiving role, often delegating some chores to female relatives. Even if they do assume responsibility for childcare and housework, they may be reluctant to

¹ Funded by the Wellcome Trust UK.

admit this publicly, so there could be a higher level of male participation in childrearing than currently reported. Nevertheless, husbands' involvement may be short-lived, and can cease altogether when wives return. If men refuse to act as caretakers, children who already miss their mothers may become emotionally distanced from their fathers. Long-term migration may open an unbridgeable emotional chasm between parents and children. CHAMPSEA case studies (Hoang *et al.* 2010) revealed children with feelings of estrangement, confusion and deprivation, yet also provided examples of the resilience of parent-child bonds over time. Migrant mothers not only remit funds to ensure their children's material welfare and access to education, but also continue distance management of childcare and family relationships through phone calls, letters and, increasingly, the internet, but there is a lack of research with left-behind children to explore their views on and experiences with distance mothering.

If both parents migrate, together or separately, grandparents often provide substitute family affection, while being financially supported by remittances. Intergenerational tensions may develop, however, over different views of childcare practices, while the additional burden on grandparents can lead to stress and poor health. In the long run, children may have to provide care for elderly or ailing grandparents, while their own needs are not met.

According to CHAMPSEA data, fathers are the majority of carers in mother-migrant homes in all four study countries, although mothers are the main carers when both parents live at home (89%) or only the father migrates (95%). The mother-carer model remains a resilient factor in Asian family life. In just over two-thirds (67%) of households where mothers have migrated, fathers take on care duties. In the remaining households, children are cared for by non-parental carers, with extended family members assuming a key role, although cultural traditions affect whether it is the maternal or paternal relatives who are expected to assume responsibility.

In addition to extra household tasks, the left-behind spouse sometimes has to manage the conflicting demands of caring and employment. More left-behind fathers are economically active in general, so less likely to have a major input to caring. Nevertheless, in Vietnam, where most left-behind mothers *and* fathers are employed, fathers do take on caring roles. On the other hand, the nature of mothers' employment tends not to remove them entirely from childcare activities.

POLICY HEADLINES

Although the mother-carer model is durable in Asia, the increasing feminization of migration for work by adults inevitably means that more mothers are leaving children behind, with implications for fathers' roles as well as challenges to traditional family dynamics.

There are policy implications of the impacts on children when informal childcare arrangements are made with extended family members, including the burden this places on grandparents and the consequent risks for child development.

Discussion participants pointed out that 'left-behind' does not always imply migrating parents. Some differentiation—indeed some comparison—is needed between these children and the care arrangements for children of non-migrant families who may be orphaned, abandoned, given up for adoption, sent away to boarding school or otherwise separated from parents.

CHILDREN MIGRATING FOR EDUCATION

Parents migrating in search of employment tend to be of lower socio-economic status compared to the parents who arrange for their children to migrate in search of education, in order to fulfill ambitions of increased future income and status for the whole nuclear family. Whereas the key issue for left-behind children is how they are to be cared for in the absence of one or both parents, the practical conundrum for families with children who migrate transnationally for education is how to maintain continuity of family life and childcare from a distance, when one or both parents are left-behind. According to information discussed during the panel, extended family members appear not to be part of the solution.

Children who migrate across borders seeking educational opportunities fall 'below the line' of development-aid concerns, which may be why relatively little academic work has explicitly researched this topic. In contrast, Asian media have a consistent interest in this phenomenon, stressing the 'life-or-death' status of school examinations, pressures on children to achieve 'straight As' and the vital role played in students' lives by private tuition. The presenter in this panel, Joanna Waters (2010, p. 2) commented that a 'culture and practice of migration for education has developed, coinciding with the growth of education-related services and industries providing parents with the means and ways of relocating family members'. Such organizations are characterized by fabricated 'rankings' and

'league' tables' of schools, which meet parents' demands for information to guide their migration decisions.

CONCEPTUALIZING EDUCATIONAL MIGRATION

Drawing on her own research on children from Hong Kong and Taiwan in schools and universities in Canada, Waters (2010) linked migration for education to theories of cultural capital and social reproduction, sketching an emergent typology of transnational family forms. Educational migration is relatively new for countries of East Asia, where education has developed unparalleled meaning and significance, amounting to an obsession that idealizes formal schooling (Seth 2002). Ong (1999, p. 95) suggests that, for ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, migration for education may be less a matter of wanting the best for one's children and more a strategy of 'accumulation [beginning] with the acquisition of a Western education'. Uniting a range of 'push and pull factors' is 'one overwhelming concern—the *compulsion for credentials*' (Waters 2010, p. 5). An English-medium, 'Western-style' education is the goal because it provides a mode of accumulating cultural capital, which is 'necessary to ensure the inter-generational reproduction of a family's social and economic status' (ibid, p. 6).

The idea of cultural capital is rooted in the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1986) who identified the key role of education systems in the self-perpetuating reproduction of social stratification and social status. Cultural capital can be converted to economic capital, in the form of educational credentials and qualifications and has 'long been recognized as vital to the reproduction of the middle classes' because it ensures access to stable, professional employment (Brown 1995, p. 33).

Research has shown that the theory of cultural capital can be applied outside the European context—albeit with an East Asian twist. The financial and economic crisis in the region, which followed the collapse of the Thai baht in 1997, led to increased unemployment, coinciding with local educational reforms at secondary level. This increased competition for university places. As Bourdieu (1986) might have predicted, this led the middle classes to intensify their investment in education by seeking international credentials (Waters 2006). Thus, Asian children who migrate for education can be conceptualized, as Katz (2009) points out, as 'sites of accumulation' for families. Childhoods of educational migrants are managed to fulfill adult objectives, even if the name of the game is 'best interests of the child'.

TYPOLOGY OF DISPERSED FAMILIES

Waters (2010) identified a typology of ways in which family life is sacrificed in favour of children's educational migration, and the physical separation of family members is managed:

- 'Wild geese' (or *kirogi*) families, typified by South Korean child migration to a narrow range of destination countries, or to cities in the United States. *Kirogi* mothers migrate with their children, while fathers remain at home, working to pay for both migration and education;
- 'Astronaut' families whose children migrate principally from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China. In the first instance, the entire household migrates to destinations in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Fathers, who tend to be both educated and skilled, return later to employment in the country of origin;
- 'Satellite/parachute kids' are accompanied to their destination country by one or both parents, who then return to the country of origin, leaving children living alone in large houses in affluent neighbourhoods. Some research data indicate social problems, such as truancy and drug use, as well as school failure among such children.

The recorded effects of educational migration on children include the fact that, for 'satellite kids', daily interaction with adults may be limited to teachers, who may not know that children are living alone; routine lying to teachers, truancy, and behavioural problems, including involvement in gangs. The net result can be educational failure; the worst possible outcome for everyone—but definitely worst of all for children.

POLICY HEADLINES

Education appears to be overvalued by East Asian middle class families for potential economic gains, rather than for its intrinsic value for holistic child development, which is a universal human right.

Education policy makers need to address the moral challenge of educational pressures, using public education to persuade parents and children that the true goal of education is development of human potential and not the pursuit of material advantages.

Research is needed on the short- and long-term outcomes for children who have migrated across borders for education; including children's own views about the pressures involved and their part in the decision to migrate.

CHILDREN MIGRATING FOR WORK

The concerns of international child welfare agencies drive customary assumptions that children who migrate for work are passive victims of exploitation, 'trafficked' or forced to migrate for work, driven by poverty (Hashim 2006). Yet a variety of factors, such as class, gender, age, labour markets and social networks, play significant roles, while research *with* children reveals that, far from being forced to work, children can be active agents, making decisions about both working and migration. Through concentrating on children's independent migration, particularly street and working children in Indonesia, the presenter in the third panel, Harriot Beazley (2010), raised questions not only about children's agency and identity, but also of research methodology.

SCHOOL AND THE REASONS FOR MIGRATING

In Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, a number of causes lead children to migrate for work (Beazley 2007; Hashim 2006; Punch 2007; Thorsen 2005). Family factors, including economic necessity, are only part of the picture. According to Bessell's (1998, p. 67) study of child labour in Indonesia, 'poverty is not the only or necessarily the most significant factor in determining whether children enter the workforce'. From children's perspectives, homes may be unpleasant or restrictive places which they desire to leave (or escape from) because of discrimination, discomfort, violence and neglect (Valentine *et al.* 1998; Sibley 1995a, 1995b). Children who migrate for work have a different relationship with education compared to those who migrate in search of credentials. International agencies tend to share the misapprehensions that, if given the opportunity, children will always prefer school, and that the most successful policy approach to eliminating child labour is the provision of formal schooling. This position ignores the dire quality of most schooling provided for poor children in the guise of education, fails to consider the difficulties of combining study and work, does not take into account the multitude of children who drop out of school because of teacher apathy or violence, and the costs of school books, uniforms and transport. Millions of children in the informal workforce cannot attend school because they are undocumented.

Globalization has led to increased individualism and consumerism at all levels of Asian societies. Children and young people in the region live in constantly modifying environments, characterized by profound changes in mobility, technology, international economic relations and living conditions. The argument that young people's agency is constrained by poverty implies that poor people are unable to read, desire or seek the signs of modernity, or the status attached to mobilities, which are an essential prerequisite for modern life (Jensen 2004). Beazley (2010) argued that young people in Southeast Asia consider themselves to have the right to be mobile as they grow up with a global spatial awareness, fostered by travel of the imagination and virtual travel on the internet and mobile phones. Even children from the poorest homes, and even children living on the street, consume media images of 'modern', 'free' lifestyles (Jones 1997, p. 39). Although poor children are excluded from the benefits of global capitalism they are not unaffected by its attractions.

Freedom and adventure are motivating factors in children's independent migration decisions, seeking to earn their own money, to spend it as they please, and to be able to refuse help. Street children repeatedly cite the value of freedom and independence, comparing themselves favourably with 'village children', and referring to the attraction of street-child subcultures (Beazley 2010) and what Thornton (1995) called the accumulation of 'sub cultural capital'. In some societies, migration is viewed as a stage in the life cycle (Bangyai *et al.* 2008; Bastia 2005) or a rite of passage that may be combined with traditional ideas of 'wandering' (Anderson 1972; Naim 1976). Thus, in some contexts, children are socialized to prepare for, and develop aspirations about, migration (Asis 2006; Beazley 2007; Camacho 2007). Yet emphasizing children's agency and independence implies neither that migration is always a pleasant experience, nor that children who migrate independently are unaware of the risks.

RESEARCH WITH MIGRANT CHILDREN

Concern with children's agency has methodological consequences, which Beazley (2010) described in some detail, with examples of the methods that can be used to engender robust, scientific results. This was the main topic of panel discussions. Rights-based research with children has transformed children from objects of concern to research participants, whose human rights, dignity and opinions are respected (Beazley *et al.* 2006, 2009; Ennew & Plateau 2004).

POLICY HEADLINES

International agencies place the main emphasis on children's 'vulnerability' and the extreme situations some children experience when they migrate.

Researchers are increasingly challenging the dominant assumption in migration studies and international child welfare practice that children who migrate for work are forced to do so by their parents or lured and captured by 'traffickers'.

The only way to examine and understand diverse children's migrations, and thus be in a position to construct viable policies, is to include children's ideas and experiences in migration studies.

TRAFFICKING IN CHILDREN

'Trafficking' is a blanket term for a broad range of child-migration practices, ranging from autonomous child migration for relatively acceptable work, assisted by informal brokers (who are then deemed 'traffickers') to unacceptable forms of forced migration in the 'worst forms of child labour'.² Reality is more complex. The panel on trafficking in children linked, on the one hand, with academic debates about children's agency and, on the other, with heated (and unresolved) definitional disputes about the agency of women and children prior to the adoption of the so-called Palermo Protocol on trafficking³ in 2000. The crux of Susan Kneebone's (2010a) argument in this panel is that, in the current context, 'child trafficking' is best analysed as a discourse, rather than studied as a practical issue in migration research. Her presentation directed attention to the need to effect 'more degrees of separation' between women and children, arguing that the 'amalgam' term 'women-and-children' (often including girls and excluding boys) is a 'global entity' driving a discourse on trafficking that constructs a particular notion of vulnerability, while at the same time denying children's agency. Thus, discussions of child trafficking are often more about female sexuality and less about the experiences, views and rights of girls and boys. Trafficked persons, adult or child, male or female, are routinely referred to as 'victims', who lack the power to act or control their destinations and destiny and are

² Defined in *ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*. Available online at <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convisp1.htm>

³ The correct title is *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime* (2000). Available on line at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/protocoltraffic.htm>

thus in need of rescue by those with the power and will to take action (Kneebone 2009). This panel thus contributed to the ongoing Roundtable discussion on children's agency, emphasizing the importance of re-examining key terms, in particular, trafficking, child and vulnerability.

'TRAFFICKING' DISCOURSES

Kneebone (2010a) identified three broad genres in the literature on trafficking of children in Asia: the sexual exploitation of (mainly) girls, child labour and advocacy for children's rights. Referring to good practice guidelines published by the UNICEF Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Regional Office (2006) she showed how, although these guidelines are not part of international legislation, they operationalize the legal definition in the Palermo Protocol, by emphasizing that the governing principle of trafficking is the *exploitative purpose* rather than the process of migration, as in the Palermo Protocol. A comprehensive list of exploitative practices is then included in this UNICEF operational definition:

... exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services. Slavery or practices similar to slavery or servitude, the removal of organs, use of children associated with armed groups or forces, begging, illegal activities, sport and related activities, illicit adoption, early marriage or any other forms of exploitation

(UNICEF 2006).

As Kneebone (2010b) states, the stress on exploitation pre-supposes the vulnerability of children and acts as a stimulus to policies of rescue. Thus, this definition does not break entirely with the implications of the Palermo Protocol, although it does effect a degree of separation from the idea that traffickers are largely involved in providing workers in the commercial sex field. There are also, as Beazley (2010) pointed out in her presentation, implicit links to the International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999),⁴ which includes trafficking in the definitional list of 'worst forms', even though trafficking is not, properly speaking, a form of labour, but rather a form of *organization* of labour (Ennew *et al.* 2005).

⁴ *Convention 182 International Labour Organization – Worst forms of Child Labour.* Available online at <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp.htm>

'CHILD' DISCOURSES

Kneebone (2010a) also suggested that problems in the definition of child trafficking are related to a failure to engage with the meaning of 'child' or the notion of 'childhood' in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). Both presentation and some discussion in this panel challenged the definition of a child, for legal purposes in the UNCRC, as less than 18 years of age on the grounds that childhood is disaggregated in practical terms into culturally diverse stages such as infancy, school-aged and adolescent. This led to references to 'Western' and 'Asian' concepts of 'child'. Nevertheless, the force attributed to either 'Asian' and 'Western' practices and values can be ambiguous. In the Greater Mekong Sub region, for example, sex tourism has been described *both* as the result of Western influence *and* as the outcome of local cultural traditions: 'Too often the same general explanations ... given for child trafficking are trotted out with few detailed studies of the specific circumstances which led to the child being trafficked' (Kneebone 2010a, p. 6).

'VULNERABILITY' DISCOURSES

Finally, Kneebone (2010a) turned to 'vulnerability', which is not an inherent quality of children but a socio-cultural construction, in which gender is a factor that combines with other variables, such as wealth, status, statelessness, ignorance, family, age and birth order. The current discourse on vulnerability is related to notions of victimhood and policies of rescue, in which children's agency is so repressed that they may not be asked if they were actually exploited or if they want to be rescued.

Programmes and policies for return and reintegration of children can be complicated by the fact that their own families and communities may have been implicated in their 'trafficking'. Rescue scenarios tend to reinforce any vulnerability or victimhood by the extensive use of 'protective' detention. Although abused and exploited children have the right to sensitive rehabilitation under article 39 of the UNCRC, they also have the right to be consulted in decisions made on their behalf (article 12). Such rights are almost always violated in systems of alternative care, which are often tantamount to imprisonment. A study of trafficked persons in shelters in Thailand (Gallagher & Pearson 2008) found that children were detained for longer periods than adults. The reason given for this discrimination is the greater 'vulnerability' of child 'victims', but the reality is that rescued children are treated in ways that differ little from the detention of juvenile delinquents (Kneebone 2010a).

POLICY HEADLINES

The merging of women and children in practical policies does not serve the interest of either group, and denies both the status of active human subjects.

The issue of child trafficking should be separated in policy as in academic discourse from discussions of trafficking in women.

The discourses on trafficking, children and vulnerability of children need to be revisited and reexamined.

TRANSNATIONAL CHILD ADOPTION

The final panel focused on the movement of children across national borders for adoption, a topic that is not often thought of as a migration flow. UNCRC articles 20 and 21 relate to adoption, but the guiding legislation on transnational adoption is the Hague Convention of 1993,⁵ to which Peter Selman, the presenter in this panel, made frequent reference (Selman 2010). Hague Conventions are the product of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, established in 1893 and responding to global issues in various areas, making bridges between different legal traditions and systems.⁶ The Adoption Convention aims to ensure that transnational adoptions are made in the best interests of the child (article 3 UNCRC) to protect children, birth and adopting parents against the risks of illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared inter-country adoptions, as well as to prevent trafficking in children taking place in the guise of adoption. By August 2010, 81 states (only five of which are Asian) had ratified or acceded to this Convention.

TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION FLOWS FROM ASIA

Transnational adoption 'emerged out of war' and has only in recent years 'become a significant way of forming a family for those who cannot have children' (Marre & Briggs 2009, p. 1). As Selman pointed out, although transnational adoption began in the 1950s with adoption of mixed-race children from post-war Korea, there are no comprehensive global statistics. The only country with a long sequence of reliable statistics is Korea (1953-1990).

⁵ The full title of the Convention, which came into force in 1995, is *Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption*.

⁶ http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=text.display&tid=26

Estimates show changes in global adoption flows between countries, but these are neither continuous nor consistent. Overall the decade between 1999 and 2009 shows a clear rise and fall in the number of children crossing borders as international adoptees. Adoptions from Asian countries represented the majority of all transnational adoptions until the mid 1980s, but in twenty-first century Asia accounts for only 40 per cent (Selman 2010). Adoptions from India and the Philippines began in the 1960s, and from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam in the 1970s. Since the 1990s, China has become the most important sending country worldwide, the source of over 120,000 adoptees.

The current global situation of transnational adoption reflects patterns of inequality 'shaped by the forces of colonialism, the Cold War and globalization' (Marre & Briggs 2009, p. 2). Although private arrangements are sometimes made directly between birth and adopting parents, the transaction is usually brokered by a lawyer, or government agency, or an international private organization, often working through local agencies. Since the 1990s, the internet has become a market force within the field of transnational adoption by providing information and contacts for prospective adopters,

LEGAL CONCERNS AND OUTCOMES

The Hague Special Commission on Adoption meets every five years to examine the working of the 1993 Convention. Selman (2010) reported that three themes dominated the 2010 meeting: abduction, trafficking and hasty transnational adoption as a mistaken response to disaster situations. Emphasis was placed on the importance of free and informed consent of birth parents as well as on co-operation and communication between the relevant authorities of sending and receiving countries. The market aspects were also discussed in the context of a falling supply of children for adoption as the demand from rich, childless couples continues to rise. The dependence of some orphanages on funds from inter-country adoptions was also noted.

Irregularities have been exposed in several Asian countries, affecting the rate of transnational adoptions. For example, as the Vietnam-USA war was ending in 1976, more than 2,000 children were airlifted out of Saigon, in the much-criticized 'Operation Babylift' (Martin 2000). Original adoptions, of mixed-race children, ceased in the 1980s, but the flow resumed in the 1990s with around 20,000 Vietnamese children adopted in France, USA and the Nordic countries. Nevertheless, the recognition of significant irregularities

led to a virtual halt in 2003-4, although numbers are now rising again, due to new bilateral agreements. Likewise, transnational adoption from Cambodia dates back to the 1990s, around a decade after the end of the Pol Pot regime, with children largely sent to France and the USA. However, both countries called a halt from 2003 onwards as evidence of corruption emerged. Despite the fact that Cambodia acceded to the Hague Convention in 2007, and passed a new domestic law in 2009, the USA and other countries do not currently allow adoptions from Cambodia.

Progress in stemming irregular transnational adoption was nevertheless shown when the Indian, Indonesian and Sri Lankan governments, backed by UNICEF and the US State Department, refused to consider the flood of foreign offers to adopt 'orphans' after the 2004 Asian tsunami. Inter-country adoption is no longer seen as an appropriate response to post-disaster or post-war situations, although irregularities still occur, as in the case of widely-reported arrests of would-be adoption facilitators in Haiti, after the 2009 earthquake (Selman 2010).

With or without adoption irregularities, most birthmothers of adopted children are still alive, and are likely to have come under pressure to relinquish their babies due to poverty, or the stigma of unwed motherhood. Domestic adoptions are relatively rare. In 2007, there were more domestic than inter-country adoptions in South Korea, but the rate of transnational adoption remains high considering that this country is now rich and has the lowest fertility rate in Asia. The tendency is for children to be placed in orphanages. In addition to the stigma of illegitimacy, adoption is also a source of shame for those who have been adopted.

Although there is a movement in both domestic and transnational practice towards 'open' adoption, with continuous contact between birth and adopting families, a balance needs to be maintained between birth mothers' right to confidentiality, their right to know what has happened to their children, and their children's rights to know their origins. The debate on this is being fuelled by an emerging literature of personal testimony from both birth mothers and adopting families (see for example Johnson 2004; Roby & Matsumara 2002; Dorrow 1999).

Research evidence seems to indicate beneficial outcomes for most children adopted from overseas, although this often involves considerable developmental catch-up. A high proportion need special educational support, and those who have endured institutional deprivation can suffer from disinhibited attachment. Selman (2010) reported that some recent

follow-up studies of outcomes for children from different countries found significantly better outcomes for adoptees from Korea and China, especially in areas of education and social competence. On the other hand, a study by Hjern and colleagues (2002) compared over 10,000 young adult transnational adoptees in Sweden with the wider population of the same age and found that adoptees were four times more likely to attempt or to commit suicide; five times more likely to be substance abusers, and between two and three times more likely to commit crimes or abuse alcohol, regardless of their country of origin.

As yet there is no significant literature on the perspectives of transnational adoptees, although concerns about identity in adult life are reflected in the increasing number of organized homeland visits and heritage tours for both adoptees and adopters. Adoptees are returning to their countries of birth and in many cases seeking their birth families, revealing rigid notions of cultural identity. McGinnis *et al.* (2009) have reported identity problems in Korean international adoptees, including anger at both the country of origin and its treatment of birth mothers.

POLICY HEADLINES

All Asian countries should be encouraged to ratify and implement the Hague Convention on Adoption, if they have not already done so.

Birth mothers have been under-researched, with respect to the pressures to give up their babies and the outcomes of doing so. Research should examine the alternatives of support for mothers to keep their children, ways to reduce stigma and the advantages and disadvantages of 'open' adoption.

Pre- and post-adoption services should be both improved and better regulated, while the idea of transnational adoption should be better understood in receiving countries.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS IN ASIA

Previous migration research has explored the economic impact of migrant earnings on 'remittance' societies, as well as changes in agricultural production and social relationships for left-behind rural families in which women, children and the elderly cope with additional work. Migration studies no longer concentrate exclusively on the person who migrates, but also focus on the people left behind. This is not entirely new but a focus on children provides a potentially new vision. In Inter-Asia Roundtable 2010, this was combined with a specific concern with female migration, and the sacrifices and burdens for mothers. As some discussants pointed out, this tends to obscure the sacrifices and burdens for children caused by their parents' migratory decisions and practices. Not for nothing did the presenter in the panel on trafficking call for a 'greater degree of separation' between the analysis of women's lives and that of children (Kneebone 2010a). Two key dichotomies linked all Roundtable panels:

- Women and (girl) children versus Children as a group (including boys), and
- Women's Burden versus Children's Invisibility

In both cases, children's status can be described as 'muted; they are silenced by the existing cultural hierarchy (Ardener 1975). Ironically, 'muted' is a term that is commonly used with respect to the position of women, or occasionally to ethnic groups, but seldom to children.

Nevertheless, a focus on children provides a new lens for viewing children who cross national borders (alone, with parents, with others) or are left behind by migrating parents. All migration events have profound effects on children's experiences of childhood, as well as on the life course as a whole, particularly if children have had no input to the migration decision. This is related to identity formation, in particular in the case of transnational adoption of babies, but also in the case of educational migrants seeking credentials and 'embodied-English'.

Education, which is a social institution particularly associated with childhood, was a repeated focus of panel discussion. The meanings and values of education in Asian contexts were recognized as having key relationships to children's migrations. In the most obvious example, children are used as 'sites of accumulation' (Katz 2009) for families seeking increased social capital. A less apparent link with education is found in children migrating to seek work (Beazley 2010), in the context of the widespread

UNICEF/UNESCO 'Education for All' campaign and the ILO/World Bank promotion of enrollment in (usually poor quality) basic schooling for five years only. This leaves children with minimal skills, too young to enter legal employment, ripe for making an independent decision to migrate in search of money and adventure (Beazley 2010; Ennew *et al.* 2005). Either way, children are economic pawns in adult games, rather than persons in their own (human) right.

SOME KEY ISSUES

VALUES IN DIVERSITY

Pre-Roundtable documents, panel presentations and discussions frequently alluded to Asian 'diversity', a term that was sometimes problematized, but never defined. In the Roundtable discussions it seemed to have less to do with the currently popular notion of bio-diversity in environmental sciences, and more with the idea of cultural variations in the literature on multiculturalism, implying different cultural groups living and working together with mutual respect. Yet, the 'diversity' referred to in the panels seemed to imply recognition of 'difference', rather than any notion of peaceful coexistence. As pre-conference documents indicated, the wide ethnic, cultural, social, political and economic diversity of Asia makes a unitary regional understanding of children's migration improbable. The region presents a wide range of socio-economic contexts—from poor, underdeveloped nations to recently liberalized socialist economies and thriving developed economies. Environments vary from remote rural areas to sophisticated cities; from areas steeped in conflict to those in reconstruction; from states that are relatively isolated to some fully involved in, and perhaps leading, global processes. Such diversity offers exciting opportunities for constructing 'new perspectives on the different ways children are caught up in multiple streams of human mobilities in an age of migration' (ARI 2010, p. 2). The Roundtable thus fulfilled the intention of providing 'a crucible for developing understandings of children's migrations in Asia, with implications beyond the region', recognizing from the start that 'this reprise of Asian perception is likely to destabilize the intellectual and practical hegemony of well-honed Western models of children on the move' (ibid).

CHILDHOODS EAST AND WEST

One challenge to apparently hegemonic Western models appeared in the recurrent contrast made during the Roundtable between Western and Asian definitions of 'child' and 'childhood', as well as frequent mention of the 'Asian family', implicitly different from families in other geographical areas, principally 'the West'. Yet there is an inherent contradiction between such reifications and the emphasis placed at other times on 'Asian diversity'. Thus it was not surprising that participants also called for deconstruction of such taken-for-granted and contradictory terms. Diversity and Asian values are difficult ideas to hold at the same time in scientific discourse, yet both permeate the literature, for example, as Kneebone (2010a) commented, in the 'blame game' with respect to trafficking. Both 'Western' and 'Asian' values are blamed at various times for trafficking in children or the commercial sexual exploitation of children. As Kneebone (ibid) pointed out, such different political viewpoints, present obstacles to effective action against these practices. Realistic policies, which can be implemented and evaluated, should be based on accurate data from detailed real-life situations, as the results of comparative research in the CHAMPSEA study clearly demonstrate.

The global dominance of 'Western' academic discourse on children is due in part to the non-existence of an Asian discourse on children and childhood. But the very idea of a singular contrast between West and East indicates both a search for a post-colonial or post-imperial identity in many Asian countries (or perhaps post-socialism in others) as well as 'valiant attempts' to find a secure place in globalized structures (Bauer & Bell 1999, p. 12). As is the case with similar debates in Africa (An Na'im 2003), 'Asian values' are said to be concerned with family and social harmony, rather than individualism, within implicit and explicit criticisms of a particular construction of 'Western' values and society. Yet, paradoxically, the construction of singular notions such as 'Asian values', 'Asian family', and 'Asian childhood' can be argued to be the offspring of 'Western' cultural imperialism (Said 1979). Others question the idea that there can be a single construction of 'Asian values', asking exactly who might be qualified to be the legitimate spokesperson for 'Asian tradition' (Bauer & Bell 1999). In a globalized world, the common threads between East and West may be more numerous than discernable differences in values (Katz 2009;). Family is important in all parts of the world, whatever forms it takes (Naisbitt 1997) although conceptualized in many different ways between and within societies. 'The West' is no more singular than 'The East'. It is only in socio-

cultural (and sometimes political) constructions that they appear to be opposites so different that they can never meet.

It was from within this framework, however, that Kneebone (2010) asked if children should be seen ‘through a Western lens’ as being situated ‘between vulnerability and deviance’ (Giner 2006, p. 6). This is a United Kingdom approach to children outside parental care, which is related to long-term social work practice in which orphans and abused children are placed in the same facilities as children in conflict with the law. Although this course of action is followed in many other countries, including within Asia, the blurred distinction between vulnerable child and juvenile delinquent is a historically specific feature of United Kingdom social work; no single nation state can be made to stand for ‘the West’.

A similar consideration applies to criticisms that the legal definition of ‘the child’ as less than 18 years of age—in Article 1 of the UNCRC—is a Western definition that does not recognize childhood’s many stages. Yet there is no single Western childhood, and stages within childhood are culturally distinct between and within European nations, as they are between, say, Singapore and Mongolia. In the UNCRC, the different developmental stages of childhood are acknowledged by frequent references to ‘evolving capacities’ and ‘age and maturity’ (Lansdown 2005). The legal definition, without which no comparison of children’s rights between nations would be possible, was agreed over ten years of drafting by countries of Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia (Detrick 1992).

AGENCY AND INTERGENERATIONAL DECISION MAKING

A specific objective of the Roundtable was to illuminate the extent to which the idea of children as social agents - a key feature of European scholarship within the new sociology (or social studies) of childhood - challenges the idea that children are incompetent social actors and passive victims of exploitation. All five panels addressed this issue to some extent, the presentations on children migrating for work (Beazley 2010) and trafficking in children (Kneebone 2010a) doing so explicitly. In other panels, the topic was not specifically addressed even though it was often implicitly present. Yet, the extent to which children are involved in decisions concerning their own lives is crucial for human rights (Article 12 of the UNCRC) and often for the development of secure identity. Children’s voices are muted by the lack of interest in their opinions shown by researchers, many of whom either

focus on the burdens on and sacrifices made by mothers, or ask adults, rather than children, about children's lives.

When parents of 'satellite-kid' migrants, leave their sons and daughters in a foreign country, the result may not always be damaging for the child, who may recover the agency that was likely to have been withheld or negated when decisions were made to migrate, where to migrate and which school to attend. Even (and perhaps especially) if migrant children from all the dispersed-family structures described by Waters (2010) become educational high achievers, they may turn out to be not only capable of communicating in 'embodied English' but also competent 'cultural citizens' (Mitchell 1997, p. 228). Parents may subsequently lose some degree of control over the particular cultural capital their children acquire as 'children construct their own *personal* goals' (Waters 2003, p. 174). In contrast, it can be argued that children who migrate for education under parental pressure are effectively child labourers (Orellana *et al.* 2001).

With respect to child work, economists identify parents as the main decision-makers in whether children work, migrate or go to school, even suggesting that the 'decision' to produce more children is directly related to the economics of child work in subsistence agriculture (see for example ILO 1996). The increasing evidence of children-centred research cited by Beazley (2010) shows that, on the contrary, such unrealistic accounts of family decision-making dynamics fail to consider that children can, and often do, make their own choices (Bessell 2004). As Dobson (2009, p. 356) comments, adult-focused migration studies treat children who migrate looking for work as 'luggage' and 'things transported by adults: objects that ... are unable to look after themselves; and non persons lacking both feelings and agency of their own.'

Trafficking is also an area in which children's agency is denied and their voices muted. But in this case, considerable ideological pressure turns denial into rejection and muting into absolute silence. A 'pivotal' role in pre-Palermo debates 'was played by contrasting views of the agency of women (and, by extension, of children, especially girls) (Doezema 2002). The proponents in the debates tended to assume that trafficking always takes place in the context of sexual exploitation. Human-rights activists asserted that force or deception must be the key criterion for defining trafficking, meaning that women who have not been forced or deceived into sex work can be said to have consented to 'migrate'. The contrasting perspective is that sex work is, in itself, violence, so that 'neither women nor children can be said to 'consent' to travel for work in the sex industry' (*ibid*),

perpetuating the assumption that both women and children have a 'common dependency and inferiority' (Bhaba 2003, p. 203). Thus, within these debates, some 'opposed the attempts to define trafficking in women and children as essentially the same', arguing that this patronizes women and reduces them to the status of children (ibid). In the end, the Palermo Protocol recognized prostitution as work, and included force or coercion as essential elements in the definition of trafficking.⁷ The issue of conceptual and practical differences between the agency of women and that of children remains unresolved.

As both Beazley (2010) and Kneebone (2010a) pointed out, although trafficking discourses tend to focus on commercial sexual exploitation, the actual patterns of child trafficking in Asia also encompass children trafficked for work (including begging), forced labour, early marriage and adoption. Girls are not the only 'victims' of trafficking. Trafficking flow patterns are the outcomes of other social differences: not only gender but also religious, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural differences. In South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) caste is an important determinant, while boys are trafficked from Vietnam to China both as labourers and for adoption. Perhaps the most marked differences of status are those between adopters and birth parents in international adoption, with respect to flows out of Asia.

Although it is conceivable (and indeed recommended) that older children should be consulted in decisions about their adoption by a non-birth family, transnational adoption usually involves babies and neither considers nor conceptualizes children's agency. Decisions are taken by adults, and benefit adoptive parents who are likely to enjoy higher levels of financial, economic and social status than the birth parents. Birth mothers may barely be involved in the decisions, or may be under such pressures of deprivation, poverty, lack of marital status, religious rules and stigma that the decision to 'give up' their babies is taken for granted.

Despite the objective of challenging the hegemony of Western research's idea of children's agency, discussion never actually focused on conceptualization of agency, but concentrated instead on the

⁷ United Nations (2000) *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. Available online at http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf

methodological outcomes in rights-based research. The overall message of rights-based research is that children's perspectives and understandings of their lives must be considered seriously if policies are to be children-centred, context-appropriate and sustainable (Bessell 2010). This is no less true for children who migrate than for other children, yet literature on children's lived experiences of migration is currently sparse within Asia.

GENDER AND GENERATION

Women's place in child-migration flows was the single theme dominating the Roundtable, at times threatening to obscure the fact that the focus was children. This is not unusual in both research and policy. As the presentation on child trafficking made clear, a greater conceptual distance needs to be developed and maintained between women and children. The key issue is whether migration is, in fact, becoming increasingly feminized—especially if this means that an increasing number of mothers migrate. This raises two questions. On the one hand, the developing concern about mothers migrating and thereby causing a 'crisis in care' may be closely related to family and gender expectations that are specific to Asia, so that migrating mothers are effectively demonized. On the other hand, comparisons might usefully be made with other regions in which maternal migration has long been the norm, with various traditional, intra-familial fostering practices solving the problem of care arrangements, for example in West Africa and the matriarchal societies of the Caribbean (see for example Goulbourne 1999; Thompson & Bauer 2001; Bryceson 2002).

Female migration is not especially new. Young, unmarried women have migrated alone or in groups within specific labour markets, varying from the seasonal migrations of 'herring girls' in the Scottish Highlands and Islands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Ennew 1978) to young unmarried Mexican women employed in outsourced factories (*maquiladoras*) on the border with the USA (Sklair 1989). Historically, as now, young domestic workers migrated from rural to urban areas worldwide—and one should not forget the decades-long migration of Thai women from the impoverished North-Eastern provinces of Isan to Bangkok. But the recent, novel concern with female migrants is with migrating *mothers*.

While mothers increasingly participate in labour migration, the transfer of mothering tasks to other family members is raising concerns about the continued health of family life and child care (Horton 2008). Labour markets are always gendered, but the gender differentiation of transnational

migrations implies not only 'a redefinition of the economic role of women in the society and within their family' but also 'the redefinition of the traditional family' (Tobin 2008, p. 1). One result is that households function differently, because family relationships and the dynamics of patriarchy are altered in both sending and destination countries.

Feminization (or maternalization) of migration has consequences for care patterns globally, being linked, according to many researchers, with the 'feminization of survival', in which women migrating from Southern countries are becoming a new global proletariat, providing cheap domestic labour for the working mothers of Northern capitalist countries (Sassen 2000; Dobrowolsky & Tastsoglou 2006). In developed economies, with high female labour force participation, housework and childcare in double-income households are increasingly performed by female transnational migrants. Hochschild (2000, p. 132) describes this as the 'global care chain'. Poorly-paid female workers, who will frequently be the mothers of left-behind children, form a pool of cheap labour that replaces the household and childcare functions of women who have joined the salaried labour force. In this circular chain, encompassing gender, nationality and class, two sets of children are left-behind when their mothers go out to work.

The Roundtable discussions about children migrating for education also raised gender issues by referring to maternal sacrifices and burdens. As in maternal labour migration, some deprivation of family life is also experienced by fathers and children. But, in the case of migration to further their education, children surely bear the burden of expectations of educational success and concomitant fear of failing the entire family. Families that have invested material resources in children in order to achieve adult-defined ambitions place a weight of expectation on children to be educational high-achievers, so that the entire (nuclear) family can enjoy future benefits.

The highest cost, however, is surely paid by birth mothers who 'give up' their babies for transnational adoption, and may never have the opportunity to perform any maternal role. Transnational adoption can be conceptualized as circulation of children on a global scale, with the added significance that children who are adopted are, more often than not, social orphans, rather than actually lacking one or both parents. Childcare is transferred to another family along with parental responsibilities and rights. Rich women oppress poor women by outsourcing pregnancy, and splitting biological reproduction from social reproduction (Marre & Briggs 2009).

Migration is not only gendered, but also a bearer of age differences. Although many references were made to mother's 'burdens', the term was neither quantified nor defined in the Roundtable panels. Nevertheless, it was recognized that it is not women but *children* who bear the major burdens of the accumulation strategies of educational-migrant families despite the gender focus of much of the literature playing down and silencing the experiences and views of children (Bushin 2008; Dobson 2009; Skelton 2009). In addition, the costs to the elderly of caring for left-behind grandchildren tend to be mentioned but neither detailed nor quantified. Sacrificial grandmothers are subsidiary concerns compared to sacrificial mothers. And there are also sacrificial burdens and costs for left-behind children, when grandparental health breaks down and the cared-for end up being the carers.

BEYOND THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

Understanding the roles played by extended family members, such as grandparents, requires consideration of the factors that may shape their involvement, such as economic and employment status, housing, health and, not least, the local cultural understandings of 'childcare', parental responsibilities and parenting. Care work is more complex than surveys tend to report, because family dynamics are usually not systematically studied (Hoang *et al.* 2010). There are major gaps in the information such as who identifies the substitute carer(s), and the parameters of choosing who migrates and which parent stays at home.

Actual care arrangements involve a variety of people at different levels of intensity. The CHAMPSEA study challenged 'Western' exclusive focus on the nuclear family as the unit of observation and analysis in migration studies. Extended family members—especially grandmothers and aunts—often become the main (or only) carers of left-behind children, yet such substitute parents do not usually attract policy makers' attention. In many cases, transnational labour migration cannot take place if extended family members are unavailable or unwilling to be substitute caregivers. Because such arrangements are informal and more complicated than current research would have us believe, the welfare of both left-behind children and their carers is easily compromised if conditions in both sending and receiving countries change.

Little is known about the impact of migration on left-behind elderly family members, despite a specific call for more information at the 30th session of the Commission on Population and Development in 1997 (Hoang

et al. 2010 citing NGLS 1997). Likewise only sparse information is available about children-headed households, or about the extra tasks assumed by older children, principally daughters.

POLICIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Migration has always taken place; the main question raised by the Roundtable is how a focus on children in the five thematic panels might change policy perspectives and result in practical policies, implemented on the ground by either governmental agencies or civil society.

The duties of governments with respect to the policy issues identified in the Roundtable are sited in three locations: within domestic laws, policies and their implementation; in vigilance against corruption at the borders crossed by transnational migrants; and within intergovernmental organizations and agencies. In a globalized world and in the context of transnational migrations that by their very nature involve more than one nation state, all Asian nations should have ratified or acceded to the key, relevant intergovernmental legal instruments: the United Nations Convention on Migration (1990),⁸ United Nations instruments on trafficking (of which there are many), and the 2000 Convention against Transnational Crime (together with the Optional Protocol on Trafficking), and the Hague Convention on Adoption (1993). Even if states are not party to any of these instruments of international law, all Asian governments are party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, many articles of which are specifically relevant to the topics of the five panels.⁹ Thus, whether or not a state is a party to the major treaties that apply to adults and children, all Asian governments have assumed the responsibility of protecting children from all violations of their rights that arise from their involvement in transnational migration.

Within civil society, the main responsibilities lie with non-governmental organizations and with academic bodies, although some actors in the

⁸ *OHCHR (1990) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Available online at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm>*

⁹ For example: article 3, best interests of the child; article 12, opinion of the child; article 5, respect for families, including extended family members; article 8, preservation of identity and nationality; article 9, non-separation from parents; article 10, family reunification; article 11, illicit transfer abroad; article 18, common responsibilities of both parents and state support in these duties; article 21, adoption; articles 28 and 29, education; article 32, against economic exploitation; article 35, against trafficking; article 39, for rehabilitation.

commercial sector, not least the media, are accountable for the effects of their profit-oriented activities on children. Many responsibilities, like the panel topics themselves, cut across considerable swathes of the diverse fabric of Asian societies. Non-governmental organizations have long assumed the role of whistle-blower on issues that threaten children's healthy development, and have already themselves developed skills in advocacy in this area, although all too frequently relying on unscientific and sensational data. All sectors of society have responsibilities for raising awareness of and taking action for the long-term effects on children left behind and/or migrating, especially in high-migrant sending and receiving areas.

LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN

The CHAMPSEA study suggests that 'sending' societies need to provide support for extended family members who take on the tasks of caring for and nurturing left-behind children. This might include, for both government and civil society:

- social-welfare payments to non-nuclear family members who care for left-behind children, especially in cases where parental remittances fall short of needs or cease altogether;
- subsidies and even housing support for grandparent carers—learning from AIDS-orphans programmes;
- facilitating communication between migrant parents and left-behind children—such as improving telephone and internet connections and access in sending communities;
- community care facilities, including places where elderly carers can share problems and solutions as well as learn about modern childcare practices;
- support for children who care for elderly, ailing grandparents;
- community awareness programmes, including pre-departure training.

More also remains to be done at the policy level to support men as fathers, and grandparents as parents in communities characterized by heavy, or increasing, female out-migration.

CHILD EDUCATION MIGRANTS

Better education policies and provision in current sending countries, aiming to keep children within their home education systems, should encourage schools to promote holistic notions of true educational achievement, rather than foster the 'straight As in academic subjects' philosophy. Public awareness that children are human beings and subjects with rights should aim to educate parents that children are not objects for accumulation of cultural and financial capital. Governments should seek to regulate the activities of agencies in receiving countries from manufacturing and using league tables, which promote the notion that children only have value insofar as they are educational 'successes'.

It is clear that as a relatively new field of study, the migration of Asian children to 'the West' in search of education and consequent family financial and status enhancement provides ample opportunities for further research. Longitudinal studies and studies of outcomes for children, families and local cultures are possibly the most urgent in policy-related research, particularly the consideration of how children can develop a secure personal identity when they are left swinging between home and destination cultures.

CHILDREN WHO MIGRATE FOR WORK

Civil society should question the policies of intergovernmental organizations based on a one-way, simplistic relationship between child work and schooling. Contrary evidence exists and should not be ignored. As in other research with migrating children, they should be conceptualized and respected as people who are capable of making decisions, rather than being treated as baggage carried by adults.

TRAFFICKING IN CHILDREN

There is no single policy approach to trafficking. Policy issues for government relate not only to practical actions, but also to the trafficking nexus of policing, especially at international border crossings, as well as to detection, sentencing and rehabilitation pursued by states. The actions of civil-society organizations and the media require regulating, particularly with respect to policies of rescue and rehabilitation that amount to little more than juvenile detention.

Conceptual issues have the greatest policy implications within the field of child trafficking. In particular, discourses on child trafficking seem not to be about children, who tend to be subsumed under debates that may be children-relevant but are seldom children-centred.

TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

The Hague Commission has admitted that it has to reconsider how to deal with post-disaster orphans. A complete ban on transnational adoption is no more in the best interests of the child than a hasty adoption. More information is required about the processes involved in adoption, such as when money changes hands, and consideration should be given to when it is legitimate for adopters to pay costs.

Governments should not only ratify (or accede to) the Hague Convention (which is possible for non-member states) but also regulate their practices with respect to the domestic legal and social situations of 'orphans'. Urgent action is required to support unmarried birth mothers and remove public stigma associated with illegitimacy and adoption.

Non-governmental organizations, in collaboration with academic researchers and responsible media, have a role to play in advocating for legal, rights-based international adoption, including making the public aware of the work of The Hague Commission in this area. Transnational adoption is not an appropriate response to emergency situations and orphanages are at best expensive, dehumanizing options and, at worst, tantamount to child imprisonment.

Because Asian countries have longer experiences of transnational adoption, good information should be better documented in order to improve the practices elsewhere. This should be augmented by research on how the interests of children, birth mothers and adopting parents intersect and on the contradictions that need to be identified and resolved.

CONCLUSIONS

The Roundtable provided a unique opportunity for migration researchers to share their perspectives on transnational migration in Asia, demonstrating the value of including research on children's involvement in migrations. This additional viewpoint added a new dimension to the understanding of the inequalities and imbalances between social groups and between countries. Among issues that proved to be cross-cutting, such as gender, economic status, education and ethnicity, the inclusion of children provoked understanding of the inequalities of power between adults and children,

which are at the heart of patriarchy but usually obscured by attention to inequalities based on gender. The need to uncouple the amalgam term 'women and children' was identified as a movement towards better understanding of patriarchy, particularly as it takes on new forms in dispersed transnational families. Thus a key policy consideration is the interplay of gender and generation in revised forms of patriarchy and a focus on the effects on children, which requires longitudinal studies which take into consideration children's age as well as family factors such as education, social class, education and ethnicity.

One key realization from this child-lens approach to transnational migration in Asia is the muted status of children, shown in their inability to exercise social agency in decisions made on their behalf by adults. This led to considerable discussion of the need to improve understanding of Asian transnational migrations in all their forms by including children's opinions and experiences in research protocols, using methods that can facilitate children to overcome the obstacle of their muted status. Researchers should respect children's decisions and the value of their inputs to society (including their work) by asking children about their lives and opinions, rather than imputing attitudes to them. Children-centred, rights-based research recognizes children as social actors and active agents (rather than passive victims) and begins with a position of respect for children as worthy subjects of research in their own right. Research on and about children is increasingly being replaced by research *with* them (Bangyai *et al.* 2008; Beazley 2003; Beazley *et al.* 2009; Bessell 2009; Camacho 2007; Chakraborty 2009; James & James 2001).

Participants also commented on the limited understanding of children-focused research in current official agencies and their practices. Policies are being drawn up on the basis of incorrect, or non-detailed data, often biased by their positioning in discourses that privilege 'women-and-children' – an amalgam that needs uncoupling.

Finally, both researchers and policy makers need to problematize taken-for-granted abstractions and reifications, such as 'the West', 'poverty' and 'push and pull factors'. Although policy-related research often uses both abstractions as explanations, like 'poverty' these are oversimplifications of a vast array of factors that may or may not come into play in individual, or family migration decisions. Roundtable discussions suggest that more sensitive vocabulary and scientifically-viable concepts are required if research is to reflect on-the-ground realities.

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Susan KNEEBONE is a Professor of Law and a Deputy Director of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law at the Faculty of Law, Monash University, Victoria, Australia. Susan teaches Forced Migration and Human Rights, International Refugee Law and Practice, and Citizenship and Migration Law. She has organized many conferences and workshops on these issues, made submissions to public enquiries and frequently handles media enquiries. She is the author of many articles on these issues and co-author and editor of several books: *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and the Rule of Law: Comparative Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), *New Regionalism and Asylum Seekers: Challenges Ahead* (Berghahn, 2007, with F. Rawlings-Sanaei); and *The Refugees Convention 50 Years On: Globalisation and International Law* (Ashgate, 2003). Susan is currently a sole Chief Investigator on two Australia Research Council (ARC) projects: *Law, Governance and Regulation of Intra-regional Labour Migration in South East Asia: An Agenda for Protection and Development* (ARC Discovery Project) and *Delivering Effective Protection to Victims and Prevention of Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region* (ARC Linkage Project). The Partner Organisations on this project are AusAID, the United Nations Intra-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP), and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Susan is currently completing a book titled *Transnational Crime and Human Rights: Responses to Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)* to

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Theodora LAM is a PhD candidate in the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore, and Research Associate in the Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis. She is also the Research Assistant for the project titled CHAMPSEA (Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia) analyzing the impact of parental absence due to migration on the health and well-being of left-behind children. Her research interests cover transnational migration, children's geographies and gender studies. She has co-edited two special journal issues, *Asian Transnational Families in Transition: The Liminality of Simultaneity in International Migration* (2008, with Shirlena Huang and Brenda Yeoh) and *Asian Transnational Families in Global Networks* (2005, with Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang), and is also the co-author of articles in *International Development Planning Review* (2006, with Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang); and *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* (2004, with Brenda Yeoh).

PROGRAMME

PANEL 1

LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN OF MIGRANT PARENTS

Chairperson: LAI Ah Eng,

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND CHANGING CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR
LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Brenda S.A. YEOH, *Asia Research Institute, Department of Geography &
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore*

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Elsbeth GRAHAM, *School of Geography & Geosciences, University of St.
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ROUNDTABLE 1

Discussion Leader: Cheryll ALIPIO

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PANEL 2

CHILDREN MIGRATING FOR EDUCATION

Chairperson: Francis Leo COLLINS

Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

EDUCATIONAL IMPERATIVES AND THE COMPULSION FOR CREDENTIALS:
MIGRATION AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN EAST ASIA

Johanna WATERS, Department of Geography, University of Liverpool, UK

ROUNDTABLE 2

Discussion Leader: Shirlena HUANG

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PANEL 3

CHILDREN MIGRATING FOR WORK

Chairperson: Jean YEUNG Wei-Jun

*Asia Research Institute & Department of Sociology,
National University of Singapore*

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, MULTIPLE REALITIES: CHILDREN WHO MIGRATE FOR
WORK IN INDONESIA AND VIETNAM

*Harriot BEAZLEY, School of Social Work & Human Services, University of
Queensland, Australia*

ROUNDTABLE 3

Discussion Leader: Roxana WATERSON

Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

PANEL 4

CHILD TRAFFICKING

Chairperson: Mika TOYOTA

Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

TRAFFICKING IN CHILDREN IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA: MORE DEGREES OF SEPARATION NEEDED

Susan KNEEBONE, Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Faculty of Law, Monash University, Australia

ROUNDTABLE 4

Discussion Leader: Sallie YEA WILTON

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PANEL 5

TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION OF CHILDREN

Chairperson: Melody LU Chia Wen

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION OF CHILDREN FROM ASIA IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Peter SELMAN, School of Geography, Politics & Sociology, Newcastle University, UK

ROUNDTABLE 5

Discussion Leader: Jayashree MOHANTY

Department of Social Work, National University of Singapore

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Judith ENNEW, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya

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