



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR EMIGRATION**  
**FROM EASTERN FLORES INDONESIA TO SABAH MALAYSIA:**  
**A STUDY OF PATTERNS, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES**

by

**AYUB TITU EKI**

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree  
in Population and Human Resources,  
Department of Geographical and Environmental Studies,  
Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences  
The University of Adelaide

September 2002

## Abstract

The present study analyses the patterns, causes and consequences of international labour migration from eastern Flores, Indonesia to Sabah, Malaysia. This is part of the second largest undocumented international migration in the world after the Mexico – United States flow. It has been thus far subject to much less research attention than the Mexico – US flow and this study seeks to fill part of this gap. It is based largely on detailed field investigation in eastern Flores in 1998-1999 and interviews with 264 families from which people have moved to Sabah as well as in-depth case studies of migrant workers, non-migrants, return migrants and middlemen.

In analyzing the patterns of migration, it has found that migrant workers generally commence emigration in the late teenage ages and return after working up to fifteen years although some repeat emigration several times to the same work place until their sixties. Migrant workers are male dominant but the number of females is also significant, even a few wives have disobeyed their traditional customs to move alone while their husband and children stay at home. They have low levels of education and have limited skills on their departure but nearly all of them acquire new skills at the destination. The income earned overseas is high compared to the average income per capita earned in the home region. The movement is predominantly through strong kinship networks that have provided easier, cheaper and securer mechanisms for migration over many decades than the government system. Discussions of the causes of migration reveal that economic problems are the most crucial factor forcing labour migration out of the home region. Young people are encouraged to work beyond the home region and return to improve their household's economy. In the destination area, strong ties and mutual beneficial cooperation between the pioneer migrant workers and the new arrivals have been important. Senior workers usually accommodate, find a job, work together with, transfer skills to and supervise new arrivals. The consequences of the migration are prominent. Vast and constant labour emigration has caused a very low rate of population growth and sex ratios and forms a distinct hollowing out of young males in the local population pyramid. On economic impacts, the contribution of remittances in the form of cash sent to local banks in eastern Flores is exceedingly high. The amount sent home in 1997 was over four times higher than total regional government receipts in the same year. A large portion of the money sent home is used for investments (assets, education and banking accounts) rather than for daily consumption and debts. Savings in a local bank that belong to daily accounts of rural citizens rose by 93% in 1998 and this is likely to motivate more labour emigrations because remittances are still expected to remain the most important source for local household economies over the next decade.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Title Page</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Lists of Tables</b>	
<b>Lists of Figures</b>	
<b>Lists of Plates</b>	
<b>Glossary</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction	1
1.1. Aims and Objectives	2
1.1. International Labour Migration	3
1.1. International Labour Migration Theories	8
1.1. International Labour Migration Studies in Indonesia	12
1.1. Organization of the Thesis	15
1.1. Conclusion	17
<b>CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION                   IN INDONESIA</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1. Introduction	19
2.2. Factors Encouraging Labour Migration	20
2.2.1. Global Transformation	20
2.2.2. Indonesia's Labour Market	26
2.2.3. Indonesian Economy	31
2.3. Labour Migration Out of Indonesia	36
2.3.1. Labour Export	37
2.3.2. Undocumented Migration	41
2.4. Labour Migration Out of East Nusa Tenggara Province	45
2.5. Conclusion	49
<b>CHAPTER 3: EASTERN FLORES: THE SOURCE OF                   LABOUR EMIGRATION</b>	<b>50</b>
3.1. Introduction	50
3.2. Regional Structure	53
3.3. Physical Geography and Water Supply	55
3.4. Demographic Characteristics	62
3.4.1. Population Structure	62

3.4.2. Fertility	67
3.4.3. Mortality	69
3.4.4. Mobility	70
3.5. Economic Characteristics	73
3.5.1. Workforce	73
3.5.2. Prosperity	75
3.5.3. Sectoral Productivity	80
3.6. Social and Cultural Setting	83
3.6.1. The People	83
3.6.2. Social Structure and Mutual Cooperation	86
3.6.3. Adat Ceremonies	89
3.6.4. Education	91
3.6. Conclusion	93
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS</b>	<b>95</b>
4.1. Introduction	95
4.2. Data Sources for International Labour Migration in Indonesia	96
4.3. The Study Area	101
4.3.1. Selecting the Study Area	101
4.3.2. Selecting Village Samples for the Case Study	106
4.4. Primary Data Collection	109
4.4.1. Sampling Frame	109
4.4.2. Sampling Procedure	112
4.4.3. Data Collection Methods	116
4.4.4. Obstacles to Data Collection	119
4.4.5. Field Data Organization	121
4.5. Secondary Data Collection	123
4.6. Coding, Processing and Analyzing Data	125
4.7. Conclusion	126
<b>CHAPTER 5: CHARACTERISTIC OF MIGRANT WORKERS AND     THE MIGRATION PROCESS</b>	<b>127</b>
5.1. Introduction	127
5.2. Characteristics of Migrant Workers	128
5.2.1. Sex and Age Structure	128
5.2.2. Marital and Familial Status	136
5.2.3. Religion	139
5.2.4. Education	141
5.2.5. Occupation and Income	144
5.3. Recruitment and movement Processes	151
5.3.1. Recruitment Process: Migration Networks	151
5.3.2. Middlemen	158

5.3.3. The Movement Process	164
5.4. Conclusion	172
<b>CHAPTER 6: CAUSES OF LABOUR EMIGRATION</b>	<b>174</b>
6.1. Introduction	174
6.2. Local Constraints to Labour Emigration	175
6.2.1. Land Use and Income Sources	175
6.2.2. Natural Effects	184
6.2.3. Employment Opportunities	186
6.3. Decision Making Regarding Labour Emigration	195
6.3.1. Reasons to Move or Stay	195
6.3.2. Who Makes the Migration Decision	201
6.3.3. The Reason to Move to Sabah	203
6.4. Conclusion	208
<b>CHAPTER 7: NON-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF LABOUR EMIGRATION ON THE REGION OF ORIGIN</b>	<b>211</b>
7.1. Introduction	211
7.2. Demographic Aspects	
7.2.1. Loss of Population	212
7.2.2. Age -Sex Structure	213
7.2.3. Sex Ratio	217
7.2.4. Annual Population Growth	219
7.2.5. Fertility	222
7.2.6. Population Registration Data	225
7.3. Family Life	227
7.3.1. Living Arrangements	227
7.3.2. Family Harmony	228
7.3.3. The Roles of Women	232
7.3.4. Participation of Young Children in Work	239
7.4. Social Norms and Cultural Values	245
7.5. Conclusion	250
<b>CHAPTER 8: ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF LABOUR MIGRATION</b>	<b>252</b>
8.1. Introduction	252
8.2. Remittances Sent Home	253
8.2.1. Forms and Volume of Remittances	254
8.2.2. Mode of Sending Remittances	257
8.3. The Use of Remittances	261
8.4. Trickle Down Effects of Remittances	272
8.4.1. General Significance of Remittances in the Home Region	272
8.4.2. Capital Accumulation	272

8.4.3. Cash Circulation	279
8.4.4. Local Employment	282
8.4.5. Local Infrastructure	285
8.5. Human Capital Formation	288
8.5.1. Undertaking Formal Education	288
8.6. Household Economy	292
8.7. Conclusion	297
<b>CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>299</b>
9.1. Introduction	299
9.2. Some Major Findings	300
9.3. Theoretical Implications	306
9.4. Policy Implications	311
9.5. Recommendations for Further Research	315
9.6. Conclusion	317
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>APPENDIXES</b>	<b>343</b>
Appendix A. Percentage of Population below Poverty Line	344
Appendix B1. Departure Card	345
Appendix B2. Arrival Card	346
Appendix C. PJTKI Operating in Eastern Flores	347
Appendix D. Village Questionnaire	348
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	
Table:	
1.1. Types of International Migration	5
2.1. Labour Export and Import in Asia	25
2.2. Indonesia: Global Unemployed People, 1990-95	29
2.3. Growth rate of GDP percent per annum of selected Asian Countries	32
2.4. Indonesia: Numbers of the Documented Migrant Workers, 1969-2001	38
2.5. Indonesia: Estimated stock of Overseas Contract Workers Around 2000	39
2.6. East Nusa Tenggara: Numbers of Documented Migrant Workers by Sex and destination Countries, 1994-98	47
2.7. Numbers of Undocumented Migrants Departed from Sabah, January 1994 to June 1996	47
3.1. Some Major Characteristics of the population of Eastern Flores,	