

CASE STUDY: Laos (LIDC with a limited influence on global migration)

***also an example of a South-South migration flow**

- Laos is a landlocked country in Southeast Asia. It is bordered by Thailand in the West and Vietnam to the North and East, as well as Cambodia and Myanmar. The Mekong river runs through the country.

Patterns of immigration and emigration

- Following the Laotian civil war and introduction of the communist regime, many Laotians fled the country to live in North America, France and Australia.
- Refugees consist of more than half of Laotian Canadians.
- There are around 200,000 Laotians in the US.
- After the Vietnam War, some Laotians moved to France and are generally well-integrated due to their economic success, high levels of education and cultural knowledge. This is because Laos is a former French colony.
- More recently, Thailand has become a popular destination for Laotians (see below). Now, there are 1.3 million Laotians living abroad, mostly in Thailand.
- 20,000 migrants live in Laos, the majority from Vietnam (but people also migrate from China, Thailand and Cambodia).

Factors that influence migration in Laos

- Laos has a net migration loss of 1.1 per 1,000 population.
- **Economic** - GDP per capita is \$1690 and 73% of the population are employed in agriculture. This suggests that living standards are low and there are limited economic opportunities. GNI per capita:
 - Thailand - \$18,200
 - Laos - \$7,090.
 - Vietnam - \$6,930.
- **Social** - Laos has a relatively small population of 6.8 million people, of which 36% are under 15. This suggests that there is a high birth rate and large amounts of youthful workers (who drive emigration). This also means that many people are vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.
- **Political** - Laos is a communist state but also a member of ASEAN. This freedom of movement has led to 1.3 million Laos migrants living abroad (2013), mostly in Thailand.

Causes of emigration out of Laos

Economic:

- Many Laotians are subsistence farmers so there is no promise of financial gain or personal independence.
- There is also a lack of alternative occupations in rural areas. *HOWEVER...FDI and the number of SMEs is increasing in Laos.*