

PRECARIOUS MIGRATION

VOICES OF UNDOCUMENTED CAMBODIAN MIGRANTS

Thailand

Bangkok

Cambodia



Precarious Migration Voices of Undocumented Cambodian Migrants

Artwork by Nicola Streeten

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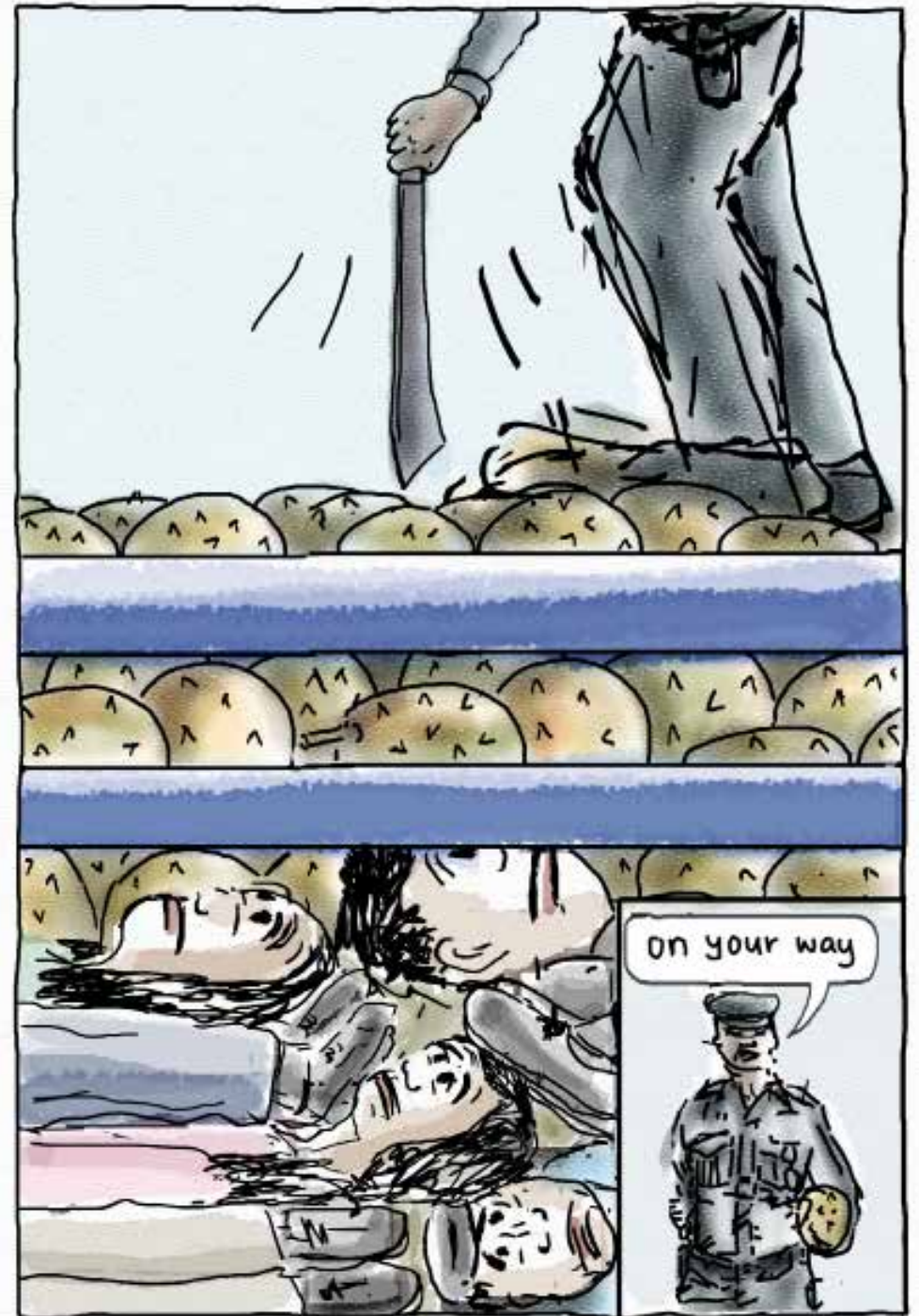
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WELCOME TO THAILAND



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We've arrived mama. How are the children?

What a relief! They're fine, sleeping... did you meet your brother ok?

We're in Lo's room. We met our cousin ok, she will stay with us. I miss my children

Lo never phones me! When can you start work? I'll look after your children darling, don't worry



We start work tomorrow I'll send money next week for Baba's milk ...when we're paid

I can use my savings til then. Be careful, don't make friends or mess around, just work ... and stay with your brother



This is a new site for me, I hope the boss is ok. The last site owner was very kind

But Lo, how will I know what to do?

You'll be painting walls, it's not difficult. Just follow the person next to you

One week later

Well little sister and cousin how have you liked your first week?

Good, my hands are blistered...but it's nice to have a shower with running water... and 24 hour electricity!

...and an electric rice maker is **so** much better than collecting wood to make a fire... collecting water from the pond...just to cook rice

Yeah everyday living is good, but I miss the village views... if that's mama will you answer

Mama?

Why doesn't Lo answer? That is his phone! Srey, I've run out of formula milk for Baba, can you send me money?

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I haven't had my wage yet. Lo said the last boss paid weekly, but he thinks this one pays monthly

I've got a bit of money from the market sales, but not too long eh?

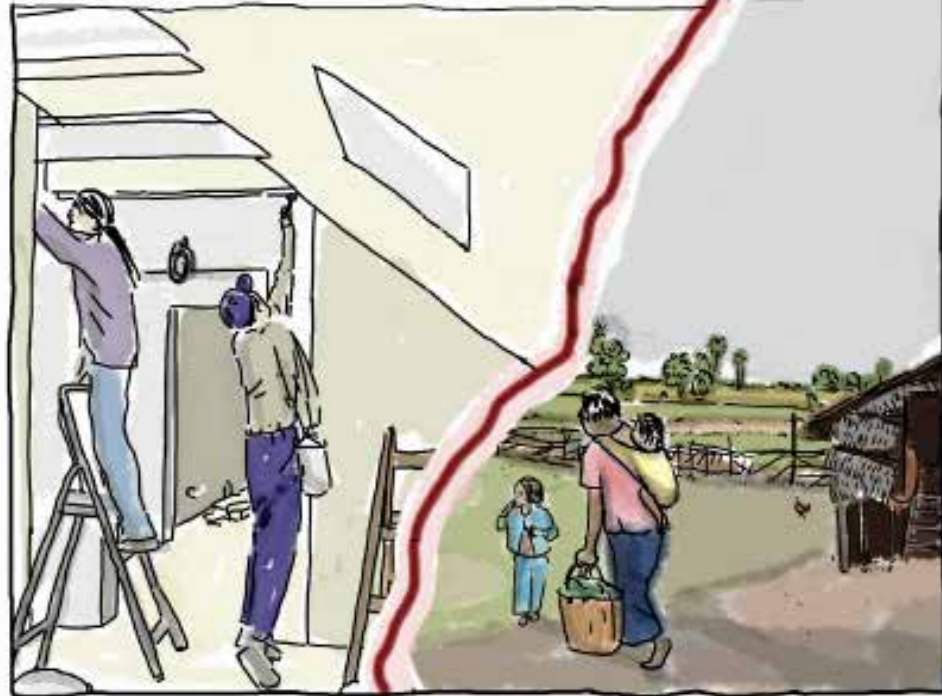
I'll give him rice milk instead... it's cheaper

I really want to make this work Lo! Phuong and her husband worked for just two years, paid back all the loans and saved enough to build a house in the village

Yes, but they had a good boss, who protected them from being arrested and treated them fairly

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4 weeks later



7



8

6 Weeks later Cambodian village market

How are Srey and her husband getting on in Thailand?

Good, but no money's come back yet...they haven't been paid for six weeks

And your son? I heard workers were shot dead when police raided a construction site

I don't sleep at night with worry...I think of the horror we knew during Pol Pot's regime ...I feel sick it's happening again



My son also hasn't been paid. Mind you, I haven't seen a penny from him in two years

Ahhh, he's a good boy, and that isn't true...he gives you money when he comes home



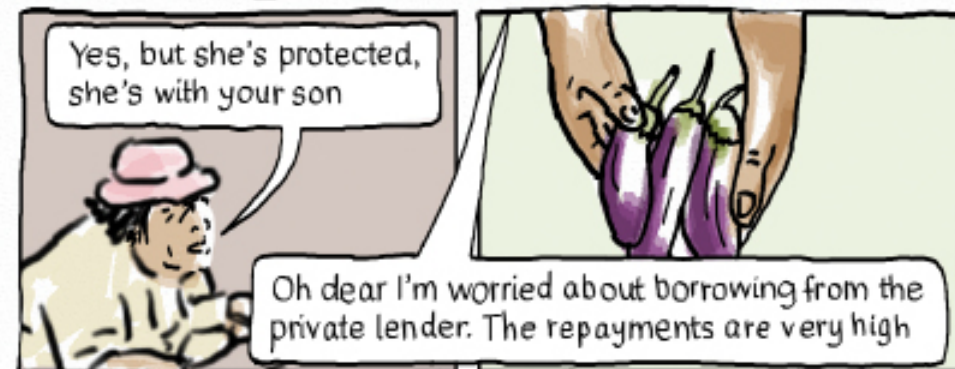
He should be married...He asked me to find him a wife...I found a lovely girl...Then he went away to work and when he returned he said he wasn't ready to marry. Now every time he comes home he's wearing make up. He shows no interest in marriage

Here! Feel this baby! Do you think he has fever?



That baby is burning up. He needs medicine quickly!





The next day



MAMA MAMA,
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHAT'S HAPPENED?

It's Baba...he's sick...I'm sorry...
I gave him medicine...I'm sorry

What's wrong with him?

He's got fever. Doctor
says it's a virus and he'll
be OK, but I'm so afraid

The next day



Can you transfer money to mama tomorrow Lo?...it's
not much though is it, after the boss deducted for rent.
He said it was included...

Yeah...he changed his
mind when we refused to
separate from our cousin

At least mama could buy
medicine and we can pay
back the debts soon enough

This boss seems ok, he's
offered cousin protection
if the site is raided

There's risk, but nothing like
Pol Pot, which is what mama
knew. We've **chosen** to come
here to get a better life

Oh Lo, it's so dangerous



We heard the Thai police were coming.
The boss told us to run away



We hid until after dark...

Don't you think we should just
run away back to the village?
I'm scared...

But the boss owes us money,
we haven't been paid for three weeks

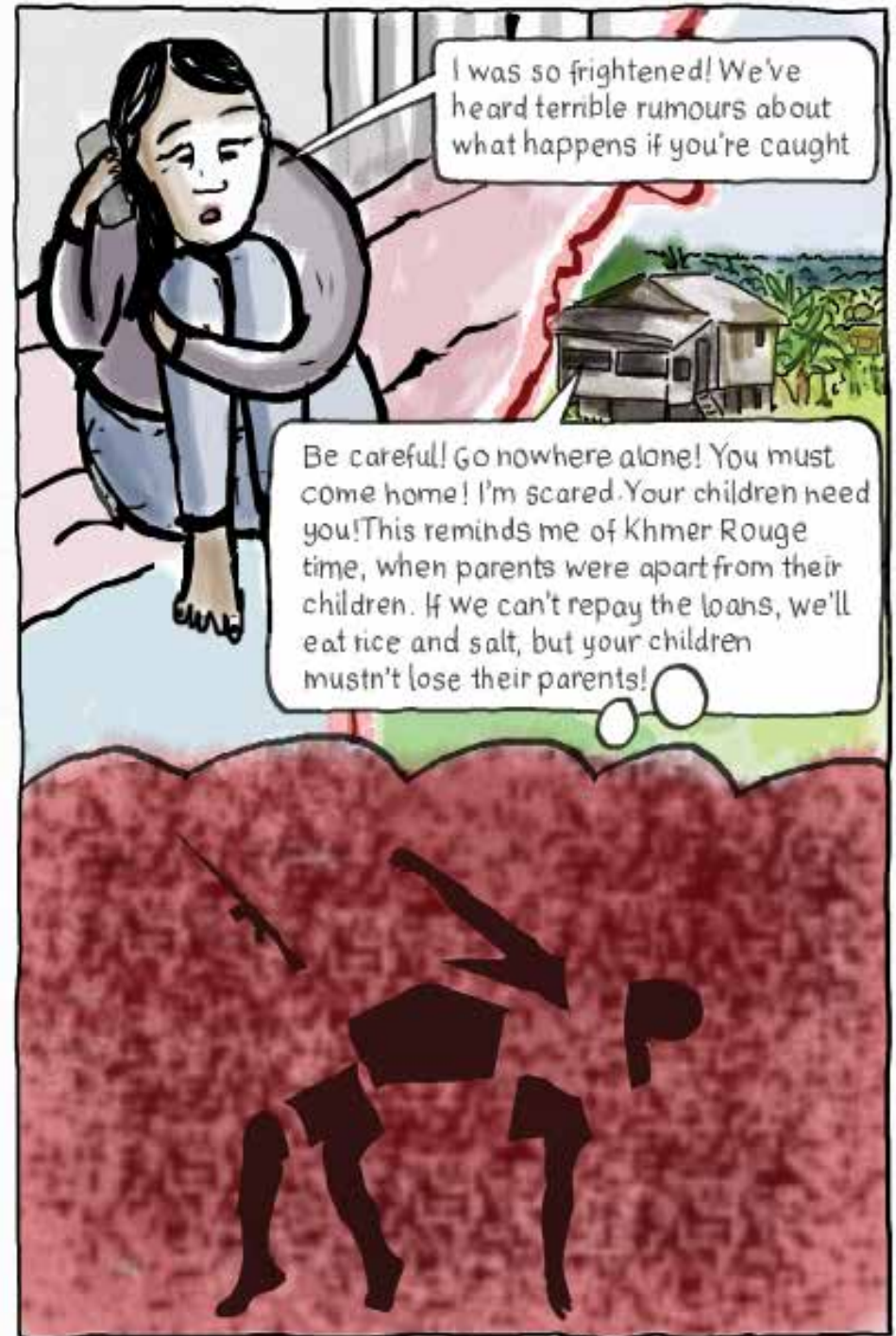
Boss said to come back
after dark, that he'd talk
to the police

Does that mean he'll pay the
police to leave us alone?

Huh, and deduct
the cost from our
wages, I bet

I heard that bosses call the
police to come and arrest us
so we run away and they
don't have to pay us

we returned to the site in the middle of the night



I was so frightened! We've
heard terrible rumours about
what happens if you're caught

Be careful! Go nowhere alone! You must
come home! I'm scared. Your children need
you! This reminds me of Khmer Rouge
time, when parents were apart from their
children. If we can't repay the loans, we'll
eat rice and salt, but your children
mustn't lose their parents!

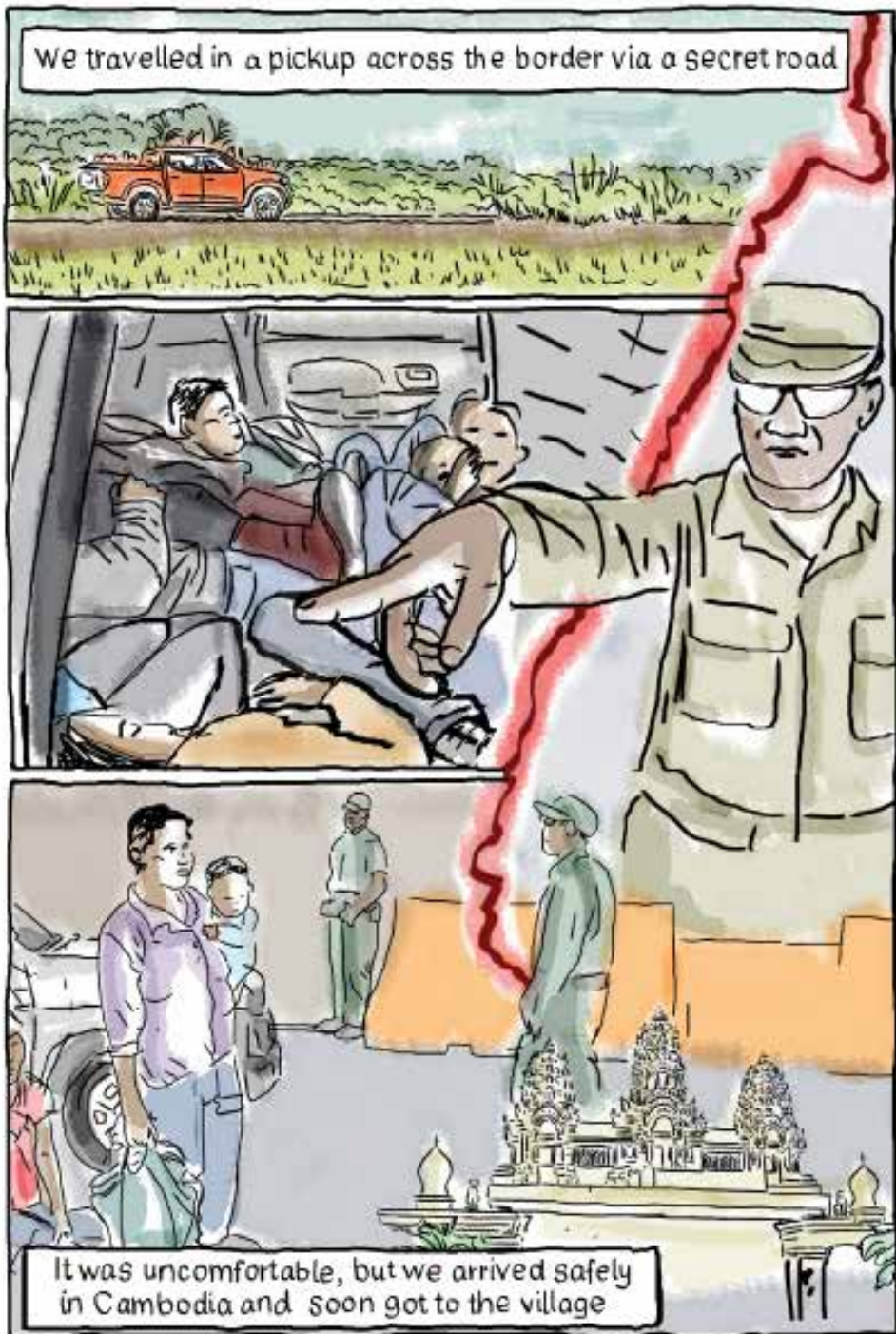


Very early the next day





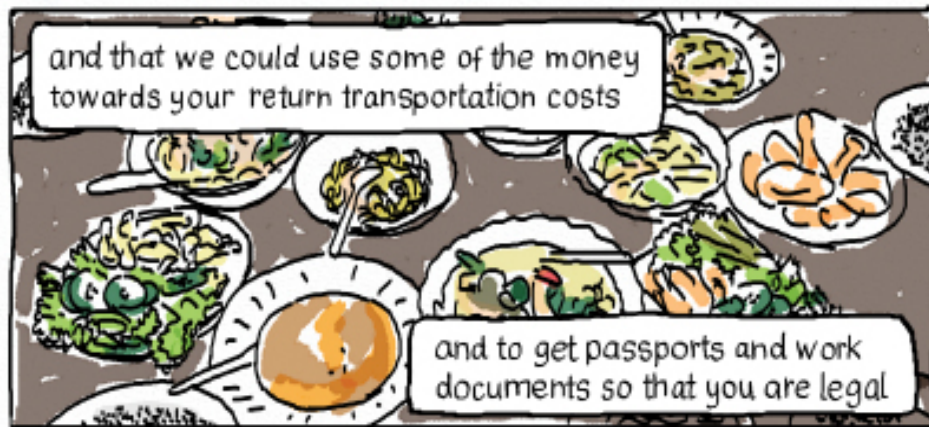
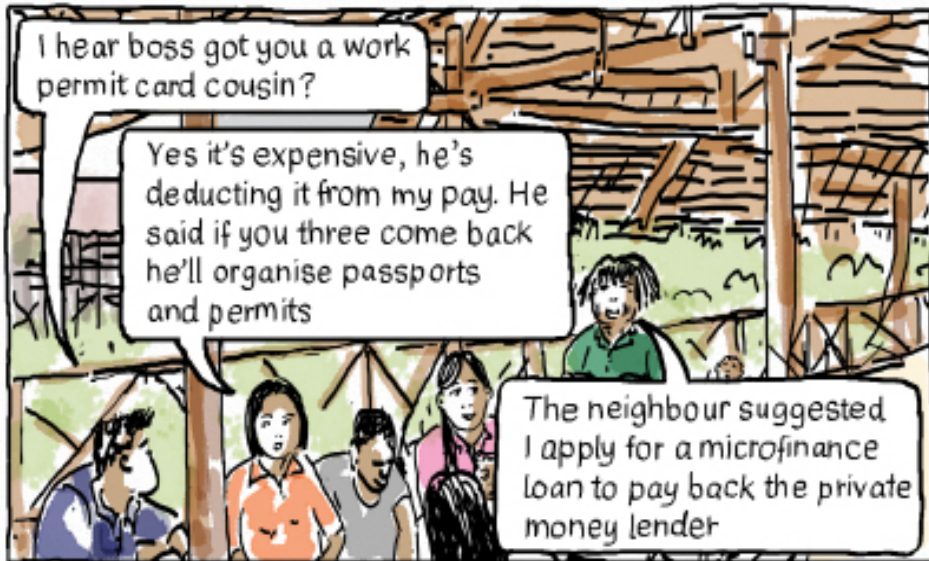




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About the Project

In May 2014 the Thai military initiated a coup and ousted the civilian government. In June that year, the new government issued a statement warning all undocumented migrants that they should leave the country or face arrest and deportation. In response to this, over a two week period in June 2014, it is estimated that close to 220,000 undocumented Cambodian migrants fled the country.

We had been working in Cambodian villages close to the Thai-Cambodian border since September 2013. We were struck by the number of families that had one or more members migrating in search of work to support their family. In discussing this phenomenon with colleagues in Cambodia and at the University of Sussex, a research proposal was developed that aimed to explore the dynamics of migration and relations within the household and the contribution that migration made to livelihoods. We were particularly interested in the impact that the involuntary return had on migrants and their families.

This comic represents one of the ways in which we share the stories of migrants and their families with a broad audience that goes beyond the academic community. We hope that this comic will contribute to readers' understandings of the challenges and opportunities that migrants face. We hope that this will stimulate discussion and raise awareness of the issues with governments, organisations working with migrants, and the wider public.

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migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk

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