

Chapter 5 International Labor Migration From China: Policy and Trends

Yin Hao

Director

Population Research Institute

Academy of Northeast Asia Study

Jilin University

China

Tel: 86-431-516-6071 Fax: 86-431-518-4603

E-mail: yinhao@public.cc.jl.cn

Contents

Abstract

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Labor Migration Policy

5.3 Availability of Data

5.4 International Labor Migration

5.5 Future Outlook

References

Tables

Abstract

In the just over twenty year period since it opened its doors to the outside world in the late 1970s, China has achieved sustained economic development and radically changed its socioeconomic structure. In the early period of reform, China commenced labor export to foreign countries. Twenty years after that period, with the gradual expansion of foreign trade and contacts, both domestic and international labor migration are increasing year by year.

Labor export from China is mainly carried out through two channels: contracted projects, and service co-operation on the basis of foreign economy co-operation. The

scale of labor export from China has increased greatly with the advance of foreign trade and economic cooperation since the country commenced its reforms and opened itself to the world. The total number of workers sent from China reached around 2,400,000 in total from 1978-2001, and foreign contracted projects and service cooperation have involved more than 180 countries (www.moftec.gov.cn).

The distribution of Chinese labor export by region has gradually changed. In 1990, 58,000 workers were dispatched; of these, 27,000 were sent to Asia, making up 46.9% of the total; 12,000 were sent to Africa, making up 20.7%; and more than 7,000 were sent to Europe, making up 12.7%. In 1999, the number of Chinese workers in Asia reached 280,000, or 73.3% of the total; the number of workers in Africa increased to more than 40,000, but the proportion of the total decreased by 10.5%; while the number of workers in Europe reached over 22,000, but the proportion of the total decreased by 5.9%.

From the 1970s to the 1980s, the beginning of the era of reform and opening, Chinese foreign contracted projects and labor export were concentrated mainly in Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq and Kuwait. However, from 1990 to 1995, after the Gulf War, the focus of foreign labor export shifted from the Middle East to Asian countries, mainly Hong Kong, Macao, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. At the end of 1999, Singapore took first place; the number of workers sent there reached 73,249, representing 26.2% of the Asian total; South Korea followed with 35,760, or 12.8%; Japan was just behind with 33,028, or 11.8%. The number of Chinese workers in these three countries represented almost half of the total for the whole of Asia. If we were to add in figures for Macao and Taiwan, the number would make up 70% of the Asian total.

Chinese labor export to Africa occurs mainly in connection with Chinese economic aid and contracted projects in Africa. China has carried out long-term economic aid to Africa and dispatched engineering technicians, workers and medical professionals. The dispatch of Chinese contracted workers to Africa commenced very early and mainly involved contracted projects. The greatest number of workers have consistently been sent to Mauritius. In 1999, the number of Chinese workers sent to Mauritius reached 13,522, one third of the total of number of Chinese workers in Africa. Until the latter half of the 1990s, numbers also steadily increased in Sudan, Liberia, Mauritania, and Lesotho.

In addition to Asia and Africa, many Chinese workers have been sent to America and Russia. As of the end of 1999, the number of Chinese workers in America reached 17,746. Projects in America are generally concentrated in Saipan and Guam. The number of Chinese workers dispatched to Russia increased greatly in the early half of the 1990s, but has gradually decreased since 1994, when Russia applied a visa system to Chinese workers.

China has enlarged its foreign currency reserves through foreign economic cooperation; foreign contracted projects have boosted domestic equipment and materials manufacturing. In the future, with change in the domestic and foreign environments, the scale of Chinese foreign labor export can be expected to continuously increase.

要 約

1978 年以降 20 年余りの改革・開放を経て、中国は持続的な経済成長に成功し、その過程において社会経済も大きな構造変動を伴ってきた。改革・開放初期から、中国では労働力輸出を始めていたが、それは、主として外国での各種工事請負プロジェクト及び外国の雇い主との契約に基づく労働者の派遣という二つのルートを通じて行われてきた。

このようにして始まった中国の国際労働移動は、この 20 年間増えつづけ、その規模も次第に大きくなってきた。1978 年から 2001 年まで、中国から外国に延べ約 240 万人前後の労働者を派遣しており、その派遣先は世界の 180 ヶ国に上っている。そして、2000 年末現在外国に送り出している労働者数は 42.5 万人（ストック）以上であり、さらに 2001 年末では 47.5 万人以上に達している。海外に派遣された労働者の地域別分布を見ると、1999 年末現在その 73%を占める 28 万人がアジア、そして全体の約 1 割の 4 万人がアフリカ、その残りがヨーロッパやラテンアメリカなどとなっている。アジアで一番多く中国人労働力を受け入れた国はシンガポールであるが、1999 年末にはその数は 7 万人を超えている。日本、韓国もシンガポールに次いで中国から労働者を多く受け入れている国であり、また台湾、香港、マカオなどの地域も多くの労働力を受け入れた。アフリカでは、一番多い国のモーリシャスで 1999 年末現在 1.3 万人以上であり、ほかにスーダン、リベリア、モーリタニア、レソトなどの国も相当数に上っている。アジアとアフリカ以外の地域では、アメリカとロシアに多く派遣されているが、アメリカ本土には少なく、主としてサイパンやグアムに派遣されている。一方、ロシアに派遣された労働者は 1999 年末に 1.3 万人以上上り、多くが農業に従事している。

今後、内外経済社会環境の変化の中で中国の国際労働移動は引き続き増加傾向にあり、移動規模もさらに大きくなるものと見られる。約 13 億の人口を有している中国の国際労働移動は、国際労働市場及び世界の移動動向にますます大きな影響を与えるようになると言えよう。