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Overseas Remittances and Household Economy in the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong, China, 1986-2008

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ABSTRACT The Pearl River Delta of Guangdong province, China, a well-known region as the ancestral place of many Chinese transnationals, has witnessed dramatic socio-economic transformation in the last three decades. Historically it received enormous remittances from Chinese transnationals. Yet, few studies have been made on the influences of international remittances on the recipients' household economy in the last two decades. This paper, by analyzing data from a longitudinal survey of four waves conducted at five locations in the Pearl River Delta from 1986 to 2008, aims to fill in this literature gap. The findings show that overseas connections in and remittances to this region are characterized with intra-regional patterns, and increasing international remittances have had profound effects on the recipients' household income, economic strategy, and consumption capabilities in some parts of this region. The impact of overseas remittances on household economy is, indeed, a manifestation of the legacy of a "Chinese transnational mentality" in some emigrant communities – a deeply-rooted orientation combining elements of factors dealing with emigration, economic dependency on emigrants, and a social and cultural mix of Chinese and western factors.