March, 2019

KMSS

MC MAHT Net
Restoring Hope & Reclaiming Life

"Serving, Protecting and

Defending People's Rights"

UNDERSTANDING THE OBSTACLES TO PROMOTING SAFE MIGRATION IN MYANMAR

MCMAHT Net was seeded in the 1st April of 2014 and was born in 13th June of 2015. The Network was established under the guidance of Bishop Isaac Danu (Taungoo diocese) who is working for Episcopal Commission for Tourism and Migration is under CBCM (Catholic Bishops' conference of Myanmar). The Network was founded by Caritas Myanmar, Good Shepherd Myanmar Foundation, National catholic youth commission and volunteers.

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The opinions, findings, interpretations, conclusions, and views expressed in this research are only concerned with the authors from the technical research team and do not necessarily reflect the MCMAHT Net/KMSS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Community Watch Group	CWG
Government to Government	G2G
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
Information, Education and Communication	IEC
International Labour Organisation	ILO
International Organization of Migration	IOM
Karuna Mission Social Solidarity	KMSS
Memorandum of Understanding	MoU
Migration Resource Centres	MRC
Ministry of Labour Immigration and Population	MoLIP
Myanmar Catholic Migration and Anti Human Trafficking Network	MCMAHT Net
National Plan of Action	NAP
National Registration Card	NRC
Sustainable Development Goals	SDGs

Foreword

Dear Readers,

Even 2014 Myanmar Population Census reported 2 million people migrated to other countries, unofficial figures estimated that the Myanmar migrant population abroad is around 5 million.

As part of the collaborative program on migration and antihuman trafficking, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) and Myanmar Catholic Migration and Anti Human Trafficking Network (MCMAHT Net) organized this small research in four states and two regions of Myanmar capturing the obstacles to safe migration.

Findings of the research such as younger people in the migrant age group, majority undocumented migrants, equal number of women and men migrants, low skilled migrants with low education and push factor of economic hardship at home are significant enough to take necessary actions.
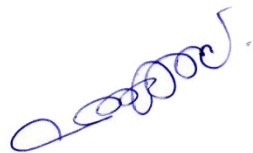
One striking aspect is both KMSS and MCMAHT Net is well connected and acquainted with the communities where the research took place.

I do believe that the finding will be the strong evidences in their future engagement with the respective communities and key stakeholders.

Addressing migration and antihuman trafficking is a long journey. This research is one of the mile stones that leads KMSS and MCMAHT Net to reach its goal of Serving, Protecting and Defending the people especially migrant workers.

May this research be a stepping stone to the assistance of migrant workers.

Regards,

Win Tun Kyi
KMSS National Director

The purpose of this study was to understand the patterns of migration in four states and two regions in Myanmar specifically at a township level. Oftentimes, migrants use undocumented channels of migration with the assistance of social networks and brokers to migrate either to Thailand, Malaysia or China. However, by using undocumented channels of migration, migrant workers are at risk of being trafficked, experiencing labour exploitation and other human rights violations. Therefore, this study sought out to understand at the township level, some of the drivers of undocumented migration and how to foster safe migration practices among migrants. . From this research study there are seven key findings highlighted below:

1. **The majority of migrant workers going abroad are mostly from the youth population and often migrate to Thailand, Malaysia, China and Singapore:** Based on the findings of this research report the majority of the respondents (30.7%) were aged between 21 - 26 years old.
2. **There is equally as much females as males migrating from some specific townships:** The specific cases that saw more female migrants than males, included Thandaunggyi Township in Kayin State and Thaton Township in Mon State. For example over 60 percent of the respondents were females in Thandaunggyi Township and upon further analysis of the qualitative data, it reflected that most of the females migrated to Singapore as domestic workers. This is an interesting point to consider when planning programs on safe migration how gender should be considered in order to target specific groups of migrants.
3. **Despite migrants going abroad in pursuit of work opportunities, these migrants are oftentimes low skilled workers with low levels of education:** The education levels indicated that a majority of the respondents had only completed middle school (37.7%). It means that migrants are low skilled with low levels of education. Moreover, this is an important point to consider as the Government of Myanmar needs to focus on increasing the education levels of not only aspirant migrants but also people in the labour force. This will go towards building an educated and productive labour force.
4. **There are key push factors that people to make the decision to migrate are low wages, lack of job opportunities, low agricultural productivity and generally the burden of the family size and having to provide for multiple family members. More specifically, families are living below the poverty line:** The findings revealed how 47percent of the respondents came from a family with 4 - 6 members indicating the burden of having to take care of multiple members despite limited resources. This is shown in how 43percent of the respondents were employed in the agriculture sector prior to migrating and only earned between 1,000-3,000 Kyats per day which was even lower

than the minimum wage. Despite the implementation of the minimum wage in Myanmar at 4,800 Kyats per day, not all sectors adhere to this.

5. **The role of brokers is important because potential migrants are more touchable with the local brokers who could provide regarding migration service than the government official the continuous use of undocumented migration channels which oftentimes lead to migrant workers being at risk of being trafficked, being in forced labour situations and having their rights violated:** One of the key reasons why aspirant migrants continue to use undocumented channels is more affordable way of migrating than acquiring official documents by themselves and waiting for job offer letters from employers abroad. Brokers, instead offer a convenient and affordable service. Despite the presence of safe migration resources, the social networks and brokers have much more influence in convincing people to use undocumented channels. Moreover, the presence of Community Watch Groups (CWG) is not always effective as people are often worried of sharing their migration plans with them because they will use undocumented channels. One of the highest cases of migration was found in Thaton Township in Mon State whereby 85percent of the respondents had used undocumented channels to migrate specifically to Thailand.

6. **Using undocumented channels increases the chances of undocumented migrant workers facing abuses abroad:** Despite the belief that migrating abroad will guarantee higher wages and a higher standard of living, when migrants use undocumented channels, they jeopardize their chances of being documented migrants with fully fledged rights. As an undocumented migrant worker is in abroad, there are higher chances of being paid lower wages, trafficked and abused. However, the research findings revealed that a higher proportion of migrants used documented channels to specific countries like Singapore which could reflect that some destination countries like Singapore are much harder to migrate to through undocumented channels.

7. **Remittances sent back to migrant households reflect both positive and negative aspects, in the sense that migrants are able to support their family by sending remittances. However, some struggle to send more money because of the debts from migration costs that they still need to repay:** According to the findings over half the respondents (63.7%) managed to remit between 100,001 – 300,000 Kyats per month using a highbred system that combined both the documented channels (bank) and undocumented channels (broker). Respondents outlined how this system is both convenient and money is sent over a short period of time. Through qualitative analysis, respondents admitted that despite sending remittances, they were still burdened by some debts that they still needed to pay off especially for the brokers who they owed for the migration costs. However, on a positive note, remittances contribute towards improving family's livelihoods and the income. Findings indicated how remittances contribute towards covering health (24%) and education (19%).

Figure - 1

Migration Trends Across Four States and Two Regions in Myanmar

1 **Top Cases of Undcumented Migrants**

Mindat
Chin State
(88.7%)

Hopong
Shan State
(88.3%)

Myeik
Tanintharyi Region
(91.7%)
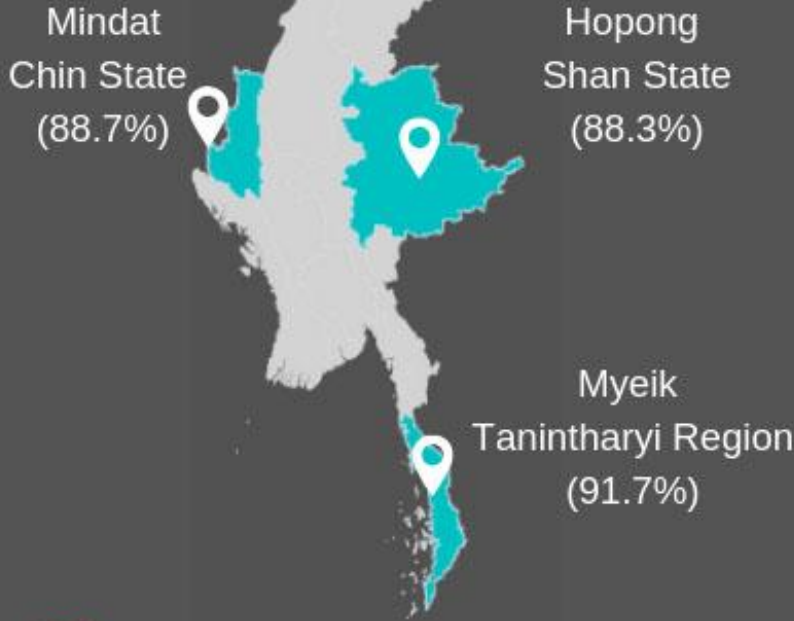
2 **Gender Perspective**

Migrant females (32%) are migrating as much as males (30%)

3 **Age of Migrants**

21-26 years

27 - 33 years

34 - 38 years
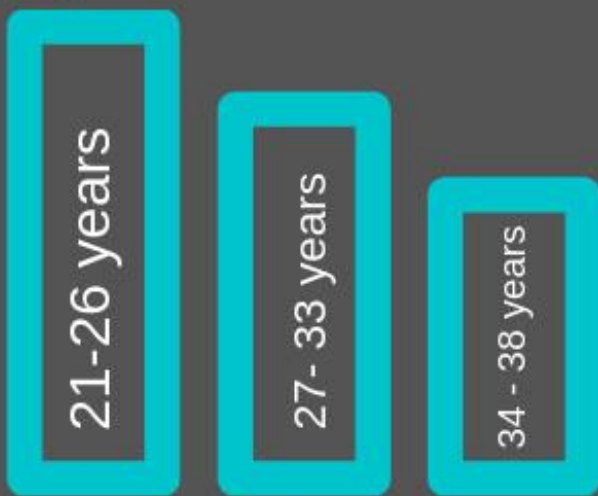
Highest number of migrants are aged between 21-26 years old

4 **Reasons for Migrating**

Low agricultural productivity

In search of job opportunities

$

Low wages
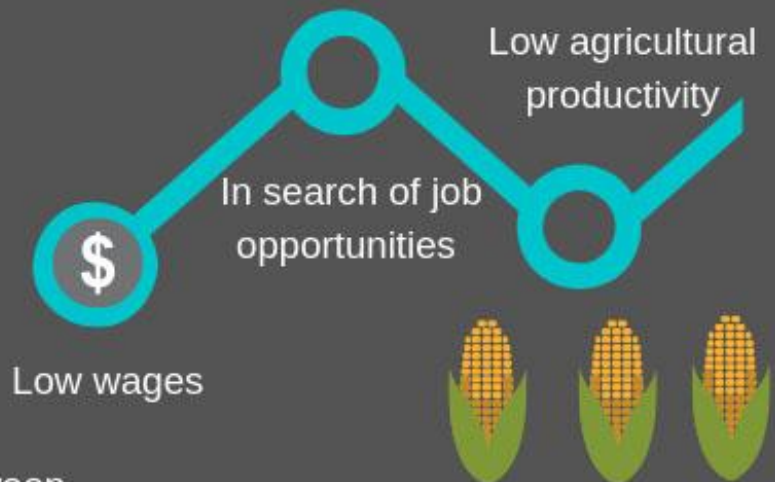
1. Introduction and Background

The heightened global patterns of labour mobility have demonstrated both the ease to which migrant workers seek opportunities in different countries as well as some of the immense obstacles they have to overcome. Migration is a means for migrant workers to access opportunities in destination countries that help them improve their social and economic status. There is a broad consensus that international labour mobility can contribute positively to development and poverty reduction under certain conditions (UNESCAP 2014). A migrant labourer or worker refers to all international migrants who are currently employed or are unemployed and seeking employment in their present country of residence (ILO, 2015). It was estimated that 150 million people globally were recognized as migrant workers. This estimate indicates the immense movement of migrant labourers and how significant it is to understand some of the complex patterns and push and pull factors of their movement. Moreover, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have recognized the importance of protecting migrant workers' rights and their immense contribution in their communities of origin and destination.

The Myanmar Population Census of 2014 reported that more than two million Myanmar citizens migrated abroad with around 70percent of the migrants in Thailand. This figure however does not account for the undocumented migrants which could increase the number significantly. Malaysia is the second highest destination, hosting an estimated half a million Myanmar nationals (representing 15% of Myanmar migrants abroad) and other destination countries include China (4.6%), Singapore (3.9%), United States (2%) and India (1%) (IOM 2016). Furthermore, Japan and the Republic of Korea are also known to host migrants from Myanmar. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), migration has been used as a survival strategy, for safe refuge and for livelihood not only supporting the migrant labourers but also the migrant households remaining in Myanmar who rely on remittances for their income (ILO 2019). However, some of the migration channels used by aspirant migrants are undocumented which put them at risk of being trafficked, trapped in debt bondage or classified as undocumented in their destination country. It is important to understand some of the challenges migrants face in the course of their migration process and how to promote the usage of documented channels and safe migration. The limited documented channels of migration available force the majority of those who move to use undocumented channels and the services of brokers and smugglers (IOM 2016). Therefore, understanding how to best foster the safe migration of Myanmar migrants is of uttermost importance.

This research study shall focus on the channels of migration and seek to understand some of the complexities of irregular migration. One primary objective is to investigate the causation of irregular migration in the study areas which took place in six different regions and states in Myanmar. Therefore, by carrying out research studies at a township level and engaging with multiple stakeholders this study shall demonstrate the factors perpetuating irregular migration.

1.1 International and National Migration Frameworks

When migrants use either documented or undocumented channels of migration, their rights at the countries of destination are not always respected. The rights of migrant workers are governed by three major international conventions which include; *(1) The United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990) (2) The ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)1 and lastly (3) The ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No.143)2.* There are more international conventions however, these are the earliest and are often cited in reference to the protection of migrant worker's rights. An important point to highlight is how the responsibility of protecting the rights and welfare of the workers is on both the sending and receiving countries. The lack of this protection results in cases of human trafficking, forced labour and grave cases of human rights abuses.

In response to the growing cases of migrant workers going abroad in the 1990s, the Government of Myanmar implemented legal frameworks to govern migration. The *Law Relating to Overseas Employment* was enacted in 1999 and addresses issues faced by Myanmar migrants abroad[1]. To further illustrate the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population's (MoLIP) commitment to migration, in 2013 the Ministry drew up a 5-year "*National Plan of Action (NAP) for the Management of International Labour Migration for 2013-2017.*" In 2018, MoLIP drafted the Second Five Year NAP for 2018 - 2022 in collaboration with international and local stakeholders, aimed at enhancing governance and safe of labour migration. The government has set up Migration Resource Centres (MRCs) in various parts of the country which were established by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security co-located in the Ministry's Labour Exchange Offices (LEO). The purpose of these offices is to help curb cases of human trafficking, help inform migrants on practicing safe migration and offering any advice on the migration process. Furthermore, the Government of Myanmar has been working with the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to strengthen the governance of migration. The IOM has been actively engaged in facilitating capacity building training for officials. In 2014 IOM trained about thirty labour officials who would be stationed in about six diplomatic missions including, Kuwait, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Republic of Korea. These officials were trained on labour migration management and on how to ensure workers are well protected. In addition, the official's primary responsibility is to respond to any requests, complaints and conduct inspections of workplaces and negotiate with employers when necessary. Finally, the IOM trained these labour officials to be able to combat human trafficking by learning how to identify cases. IOM was also instrumental in helping coordinate the rescue operation of the fishermen who had been trafficked to Malaysia and ensuring their safe return to Myanmar. This demonstrates Myanmar's commitment at a national level and its collaborative efforts to

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[1] *The Law contains provisions to ensure migrants have access to rights and privileges in accordance with Labour Laws in destination countries. Notably, the Law established the Overseas Employment Supervisory Committee to look into matters related to migration administration, security and protection of overseas workers as well as their access to compensation and benefits.*

ensure the protection and welfare of migrant workers as well as to build mechanisms for promoting safe migration.

1.2 Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants

This section shall highlight the demographical background of Myanmar migrants, the drivers of migration, the jobs they take up in their respective destinations, the process of migration as well as the impacts of migration. All these areas are intended to give a background of the migration patterns. As mentioned before, the top migration destinations for Myanmar migrants are Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and China. According to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, the gender gap between migrants has progressively been closing, with the proportion of male migrants (57%) migrating to Thailand equally as much as female migrants (42%) indicating the feminization of migration. The feminization of migration recognizes the previous migration flow of females, however the current trends reflect how females are migrating more independently in search of jobs as opposed to migrating as family dependents (Caritas Internationalis 2012). Moreover, female migrants make an equally significant contribution to the development of Myanmar thus their rights should be protected at all times (CESD 2017).

Some of the drivers of migration are described as, poverty, unemployment, discrimination and statelessness in areas of origin, and the desire to improve livelihoods by accessing better opportunities for employment in countries of destination (UNESCAP 2015). Despite economic factors being the primary drivers of migration, migrants do not always move to countries with the highest wages. Instead they choose places that are in relative proximity where they already have existing social networks and migration channels already established (UNESCAP 2018). Displaced persons and vulnerable migrants often resort to smuggler networks in order to cross borders. Hundreds of thousands of Myanmar migrants are smuggled each year to various destinations in South-East Asia and beyond – the majority to Thailand and Malaysia (IOM 2016). Moreover, it is said how, "Migration is part of Myanmar's jobs strategy" (World Bank 2018). This is reflective of how looking for job opportunities is one of the primary drivers of migration.

Myanmar migrants in Thailand take up jobs in the agriculture (fishery sector), construction and service (domestic services, trading and tourism) (Chantavanich 2012). Although Thai government regulations allow migrants to work in the country for a maximum of four years before they must return, one survey of Myanmar migrants found that the mean duration of stay in the country was 6.2 years (Chamratrithirong and Boonchalaksi, 2009). Historically and similarly to the case in Thailand, Myanmar migrants have been travelling to Malaysia since the 1990s to take up jobs in the agriculture sector (fishery and rubber industry), service sector (restaurants), construction and working in factories. Some of these jobs are for low skilled workers, with extremely low wages and poor working conditions. Migrant workers in Singapore and South

Korea are often skilled workers and migrate through government to government (G2G) programs. The Memorandum between Myanmar and South Korea in 2010 resulted in Myanmar being added to South Korea's Employment Permit System (CESD 2017). By understanding who Myanmar migrants are and which countries of destination they select, one can understand the likelihood of using documented or undocumented channels.

It is estimated that around 50 million of global international migrants are classified as irregular migrants (UNODC, 2010). There is an intrinsic link between the use of irregular channels and human rights abuses against migrants. Oftentimes, migrants will engage the services of brokers or smugglers to cross the border. Using undocumented channels is more affordable in comparison to documented channels. However, these migrants risk being subjected to cases of human trafficking. Another aspect to consider is the strength of social networks that disseminate information on which undocumented channels to use which also exacerbate irregular migration. Development is inclusive of ensuring that the security of migrant workers is guaranteed. Therefore, there is a need to curb out human trafficking cases, eliminate undocumented channels of migration and facilitate the documentation of migrant workers.

Migrants from Myanmar, for example, were previously able to migrate relatively easily to Thailand through porous borders. Although there were regular ways to migrate to Thailand through a memorandum of understanding between the countries, many migrants were not aware of this possibility or considered it too costly (UNESCAP 2018). As such, it was perceived as being easier for migrants to migrate through irregular channels and obtain a work permit ex post through regularization campaigns (Huguet 2014). The law has changed in recent years, which may also have an impact on the numbers of migrants coming to Thailand. There have been some examples of the severe consequences when migrants use irregular channels which highlight the importance of promoting safe migration. Between May and June 2015, approximately 5,000 persons from Myanmar and Bangladesh were stranded on boats on the Indian Ocean, having been abandoned by smugglers. While several countries refused disembarkation, and at least 70 migrants died (UNESCAP 2018). This show the dangers and risks migrants go through when using irregular channels.

One of the most cited impacts of migration is the remittances that are sent to migrant households in the country of origin and how they contribute to the household income. Remittances are generally perceived as contributing towards the economic growth and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. The Bilateral Remittance Matrix by the World Bank demonstrated how remittance flows into Myanmar contributed to 5% of GDP (World Bank 2017). In a study conducted in the Dry Zone in Myanmar, findings indicated how remittances from international migrants tend to be significantly larger than those from internal migrants (Knode 2017). Moreover, the destination countries also significantly benefit from migrant workers participating in their labour market and generating economic growth. The concept of

"brain-drain" is seen as a negative consequence particularly because migrants are often young people with potential. However, what has been described to offset this loss is the gains through return migrants who have the potential to share skills, knowledge and experience they acquired while working and living abroad (UNESCAP 2018). Therefore, understanding some of the dynamic aspects of migration is crucial when analysing the findings of this research study.

1.3 Methodology

This study combines descriptive and quantitative analysis in an attempt to display the root causes of irregular migration in the study locations. The descriptive approach presents the socioeconomic landscape of the respondents based on their responses. Then the quantitative analysis intends to investigate the determinants of irregular migration in the studied locations. Since the findings are descriptive findings that means government officials, partner organizations and relevant stakeholders can apply the results in their programs or employ it in their advocacy work and when implementing future migration programs.

Sampling Design

In this study, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS National Office), Myanmar Catholic Migration and Anti Human Trafficking Network (MC MAHT Net), and dioceses in the states and regions (targeted seven dioceses) have been implementing a "Safe Migration" project in the locations shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Safe Migration Project Locations

State/Region	Township	Number of respondents
Shan	Hopong	60
Ayeyarwaddy	Labutta	66
Chin	Mindat	62
Tanintharyi	Myiek	60
Shan	Pekon	60
Kayin	Thandaunggyi	62
Mon	Thaton	60
Total		430

Moreover, one of the initiatives of the project was the formation of the "Community Watch Group-CWG" in each village/ township. Their primary responsibility was to observe the migration patterns within their village/ township. Thus, the research team in this study conducted research training for the members of CWG and they were involved in the data collection process. Furthermore, the researchers from this study conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KII). As mentioned before, the study locations were defined by KMSS and MC MAHT Net, based on the organization's project.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The total sample size for this survey was 430 people (n) in seven townships in six states and regions. As a sub sampling, 60 respondents are selected in each township. Nevertheless, more than 60 respondents were collected in some studied locations, such as Labutta, Mindat, and Thandaunggyi Townships. Enumerators in this study interviewed the returnees in the selected townships or villages.

In this study, non-probability sampling is used because non-probability sampling approaches are more appropriate than probability sampling when the population size (N) is unknown and it is difficult to identify the respondents. In addition to the sampling approaches, the trained enumerators/ local senior staffs from KMSS are known in the local context, meaning that they know the situation of returnees in their village or township. The criteria of respondents in this survey are as follows:
- Aged 15 years and above
- Returned from work in Thailand, Malaysia, China and Singapore in at least two years
- No limitation on the type of jobs
- Equal gender composition
- Both documented and undocumented
- There were no overlapping respondents in the same household or family

Limitation of the Study

It is important to consider the limitations of the study such as the selection of study locations and sample distribution as well as field data collection. The studied locations are defined by KMSS because these are the organization's project locations. Furthermore, the organization desires to evaluate the impact of their project. The coverage of the study location was limited to these specific areas. In the data collection process, the volunteers from the "Community Watch Group-CWG", were involved as the enumerators.

Inya Economics had the opportunity to provide research training to the senior staff from KMSS. This information was then relayed to the enumerators which meant that Inya Economics could not directly work with the enumerators during the data collection. Moreover, this study should not be interpreted with statistical representation. This is an initial step to conducting a more in-depth study in each state and region.

2. Who are the Migrant Workers?

2.1 Demographical make up of surveyed migrants

The following section shall look at the demographical results from each of the seven townships that were surveyed for this research study based on the respondent's gender, age, and the migration channel that was used. Youth populations make up the majority of respondents who migrated abroad in search of work. Migrants aged between 21 years and 26 years were the highest age group (30.7%) that went abroad as shown in Figure (3).

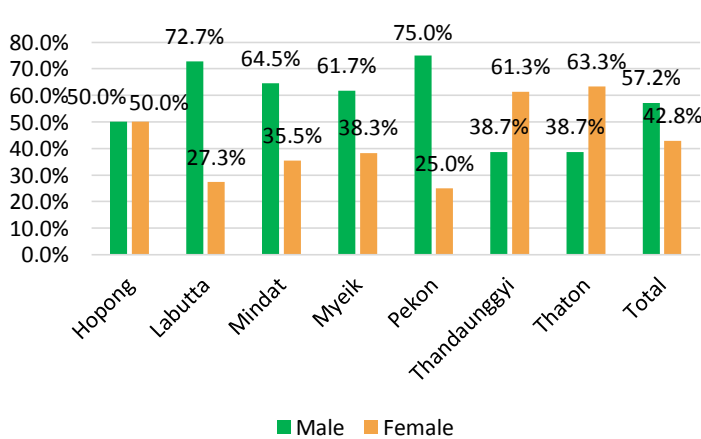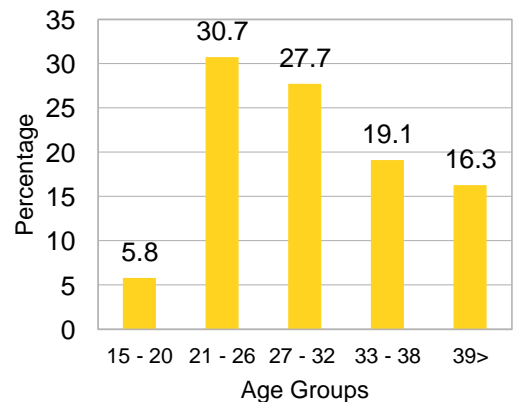**Figure 2: Age Groups of the Respondents**   **Figure 3: Gender Distribution by Township**

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The survey data also shows that there were also migrants under 20 years' old who migrated abroad. As shown in Figure (2), most of the migrants are male in Labutta, Mindat, Myeik and Pekon Townships. On the other hand, there were a higher number of female migrants in Thandaunggyi and Thaton Townships.

Table 2: Demographic Background and Channel of Migration of Respondents

Surveyed Townships	Hopong		Labutta		Mindat		Myeik		Pekon		Thandaunggyi		Thaton	
	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage
Gender														
Male	30	50%	48	72.7%	40	64.5%	37	61.7%	45	75%	24	38.7%	22	36.7%
Female	30	50%	18	27.3%	22	35.5%	23	38.3%	15	25%	38	61.3%	38	63.3%
Total	60	100%	66	100%	62	100%	60	100%	60	100%	62	100%	60	100%
Age														
Missing	0	0%	1	1.5%	1	1.6%	0	0%	0	0%	0		0	
15 – 20	6	10%	1	1.5%	3	4.8%	5	8.3%	0	0%	1	1.6%	9	15%
21 – 26	19	31.7%	23	34.9%	19	30.7%	14	23.3%	21	35%	18	29%	18	30%
27 – 32	21	35%	12	18.2%	18	29%	17	28.4%	18	30%	20	32.2%	13	21.7%
33 – 38	9	15%	16	24.2%	9	14.5%	9	15%	12	20%	12	19.4%	15	25%
39>	5	8.3%	13	19.7%	12	19.4%	15	25%	9	15%	11	17.8%	5	8.3%
Total	60	100%	66	100%	62	100%	60	100%	60	100%	62	100%	60	100%
Migration channel														
Documented*	7	11.7%	48	**72.7%**	7	11.3%	5	8.3%	55	**91.7%**	49	**79%**	8	13.3%
Undocumented**	53	**88.3%**	18	27.3%	55	**88.7%**	55	**91.7%**	5	8.3%	13	21%	52	**86.7%**
Total	60	100%	66	100%	62	100%	60	100%	60	100%	62	100%	60	100%
Sample Population(n) = 430														

** Asterisks indicate[2]

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[2] *Documented = Used documented channels, **Undocumented = Used Undocumented channels

Table 3: Migration Channel by Destination Country and Township of Origin

Townships	Migration	Thailand		Malaysia		Singapore		China		Total
		Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	Number of Migrants	Percentage	
Hopong	Documented	3	5%	4	6.7%	0	0%	0	0%	60(100%)
	Undocumented	52	**86.7%**	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.6%	
Labutta	Documented	44	66.7%	0	0%	3	4.5%	1	1.5%	66(100%) (Other 1)
	Undocumented	16	24.2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.5%	
Mindat	Documented	0	0%	0	0%	7	11.3%	0	0%	62/100%
	Undocumented	0	0%	55	**88.7%**	0	0%	0	0%	
Myeik	Documented	3	5%	0	0%	2	3.3%	0	0%	60(100%)*
	Undocumented	51	85%	2	3.3%	0	0%	0	0%	
Pekon	Documented	40	**66.7%**	12	20%	3	5%	0	0%	60(100%)*
	Undocumented	4	6.7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	
Thandaunggyi	Documented	23	37%	5	8%	21	34%	0	0%	62(100%)
	Undocumented	8	13%	5	8%	0	0%	0	0%	
Thaton[3]	Documented	2	3.3%	1	1.7%	5	8.3%	0	0%	60(100%)
	Undocumented	51	**85%**	1	1.7%	0	0%	0	0%	

[3] Note: * Two Missing value from two townships.

Figure 4: Ethnic Background of Respondents

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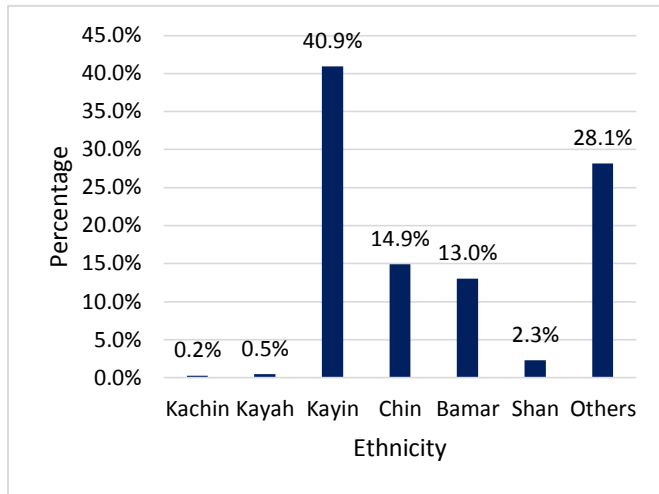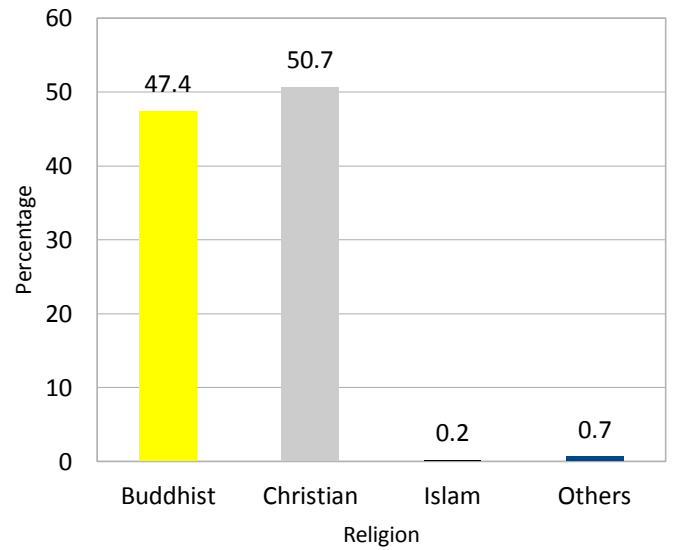## Figure 5: Religious Background of Respondents

Figure 5: Religious Background of Respondents

Kayin ethnicity (40.9%) made up for the majority of respondents, followed by others[4] (28.1%) then Chin ethnicity is 14.9 percent with Burmese at 13 percent (see Fig. 4).

On the other hand, in terms of religion, 50.7 percent of respondents are Christian and 47.4 percent are Buddhist while 0.2 percent of the respondents identified as Muslim (see Fig. 5).

According to Table 2 and Table 3, Hopong Township (Shan State) has an equal distribution between female and male migrants and most of the migrants (66.7%) are from the youth population aged between 21 and 32 years. Significantly, findings indicate that 88.3 percent of the sample population migrated by using undocumented channels and 86.7 percent of the respondents used undocumented channels to migrate to Thailand for their first time.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents from Latbutta Township (Ayeyarwaddy Region) were male migrants (72.7%) with over half of the migrants (53.1%) comprised in the age group of 21 to 32 years old. Interestingly enough more migrants used documented channels of migration (66.7%) with less migrants being undocumented (24.2%). However, an even lower proportion of migrants migrated to China using both documented (1.5%) and undocumented (1.5%) channels. Chin State is known as one of the poorest state among all the states and regions in Myanmar. Male respondents (64.5%) are nearly two times more than females (35.3%) and more than 50 percent of the youth between 21 and 32 years migrated. A tremendous amount (88.7%) of migrants from Mindat Township migrated by using undocumented channels. Surprisingly, the top destination was Malaysia with an overwhelming number of migrants using undocumented channels (88.7%) and no one (0%) migrated to Thailand and China. The highest number of migrants who were documented (11.3%) migrated to Singapore.

Respondents of Myeik Township (Tanintharyi Region) were characterized by 61.7 percent male migrants and 38.3 percent female migrants. Migrants from this township were in an older age range (27-32 years old) compared to other study areas. A significantly higher amount of respondents were undocumented with 85 percent of the migrants destined to Thailand. In Pekon Township (Shan State) an even higher proportion of migrants were male (75%) with only a quarter of the migrants being female. Nearly 65 percent of migrants were from the youth population (21 – 32 years old). Pekon had the highest cases of undocumented migrants (91.7%) among all the surveyed townships. The highest cases of documented migrants (66.7%) migrated to Thailand and 20 percent migrated to Malaysia.

In Thandaunggyi Township (Kayin State) there are actually more female migrants (61.3%) in comparison to male migrants (38.7%). Youth migrants (21 – 32 years old) accounted for over half of the migrants from this township. A greater proportion of migrants used documented channels (79%) while only 21percent used undocumented channels. The highest number of respondents from this township selected Singapore (34%) as their destination using documented channels and most of migrants were female (61.3%). This is based on the fact that a majority of females migrate to Singapore as domestic workers. Finally, over half of the respondents from Thaton Township (Mon State) were female (63.3%) and a higher amount of

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[4] *Others included Paoh ethnic (40.5%) from Hopong Township and Kayan ethnic (49%) from Pekon Township. Paoh ethnic (40.5%) occurred in Hopong Township respondents and Kayan ethnic (49%) included in Pekon Township.*

migrants used undocumented channels (85%) to migrate specifically to Thailand. Generally, one of the key findings is that there is no one who migrated to Singapore through undocumented channels indicating that there is less flexibility in becoming an undocumented migrant in Singapore.

2.2 Migrant's Household Conditions before migration

The following section aims to highlight some of the key findings of the migrant's household conditions before they migrated and how this impacts their decision to migrate in the first place and whether these factors determine whether they use documented or undocumented channels. According to the data collected, 64.4percent of the respondents were married before they migrated with only 32.6percent identifying as being single. From this sample 45.8percent of the married migrants met their spouses while in Myanmar whilst 18.6percent of couples met at abroad. Based on qualitative information, there is an expectation that when you marry someone who is working abroad you will have a better life however; this is not always the case. Therefore, this also indicates that Myanmar social networks abroad are close knit and there is a chance for young migrants to meet their future spouses who are also from Myanmar, abroad.

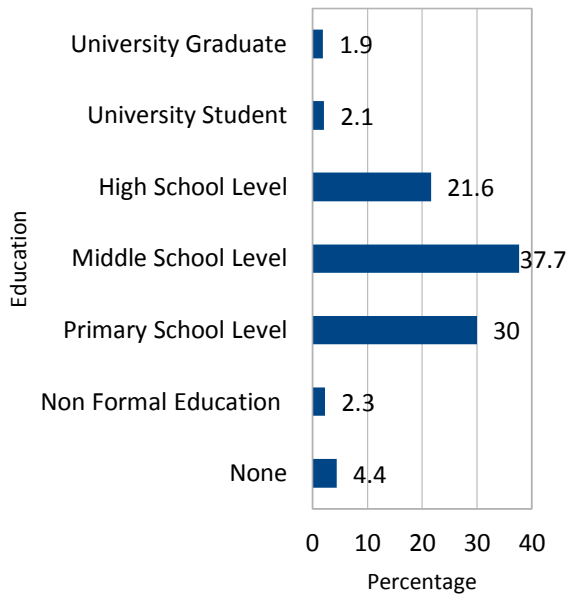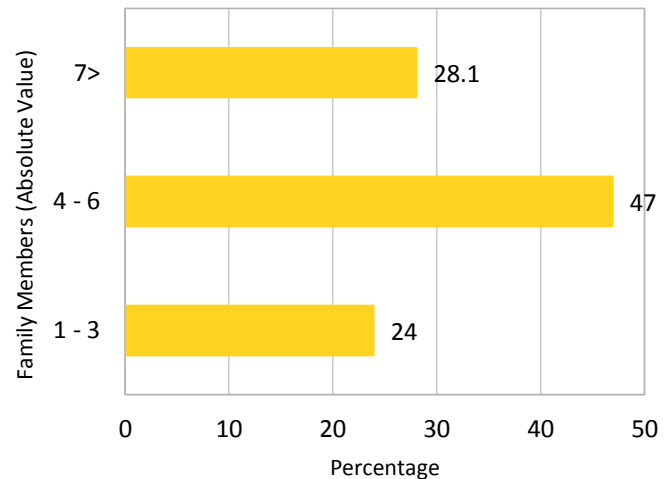### Figure 6: Education Level of Respondents

Figure 7: Family Size of Respondents

Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (MLCS 2018) also showed that Myanmar had the highest middle school dropout rate among ASEAN countries. The survey results also showed that the dropout rate difference between middle school and high school is 16.1 percent (Figure 6). This results in the youth population being pushed to the work place even when they are not of working age. The survey indicated the tremendous difference between high school level and university level (19.5%). This means that high schools were producing unskilled youth entering the labour market. That output will be burdening for the country in the long-run which will directly impact its development.

One of the push factors that were determined based on the findings was the size of the migrant's family. A large family was a motivating factor for an aspirant migrant to migrate abroad as a migrant worker. The majority of respondents (47%) indicated that they came from a family with 4-6 members (Figure 7). This indicates that the size of the family is a significant factor in whether a family member is going to migrate. This fact combined with the low levels of education among the youth could be reasons why migrants feel the need to move abroad to search for better work opportunities that will be able to support their families.

Figure 8: Daily Income from Previous Job before Migrating

Legend:
- 1000 - 3000Ks
- 3001 - 5000Ks
- 5001 - 7000Ks
- 7001Ks & >
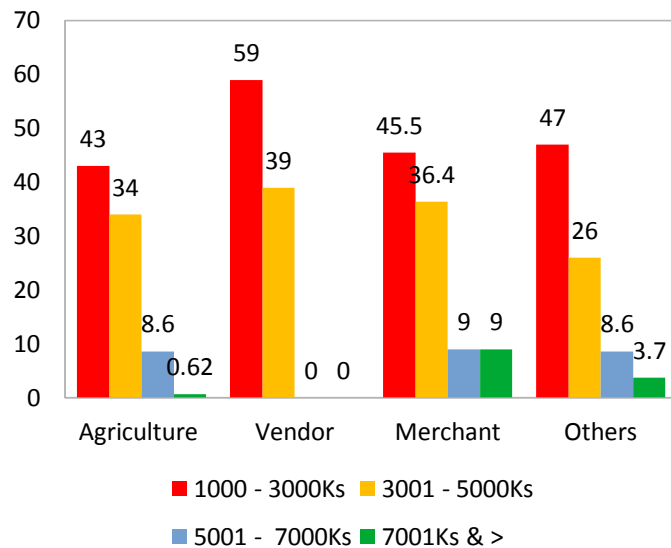
Figure 9: Respondents' Previous Job before Migrating
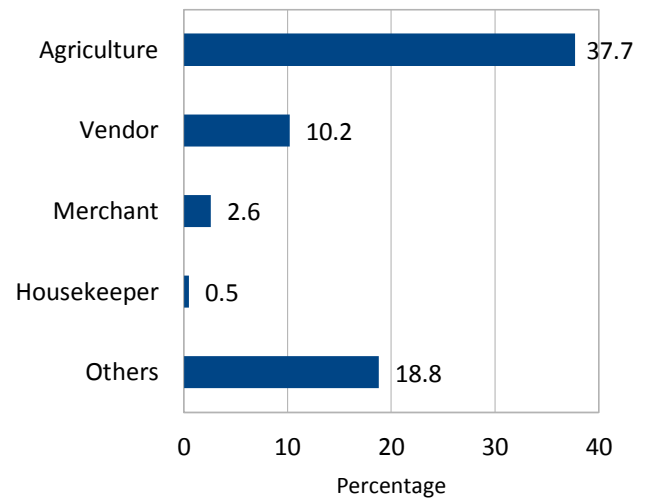
According to research findings, 71.2 percent of migrant workers had a job before migrating whereas 28.8 percent did not have a job. As Figure (9) shows, 37.7 percent of the respondents previously had jobs in the agriculture sector while Figure (8) shows that 43 percent of the migrants who worked in the agriculture sector received between 1000 and 3000 Kyats per day which is even lower than the current minimum wage in Myanmar of 4,800 Kyats per day.

Figure 11: Family's Main Source of Income

Mian sources of family income
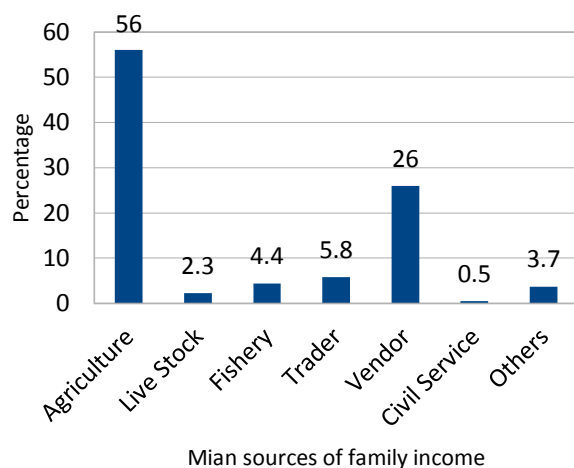
Figure 10: Monthly Family Income
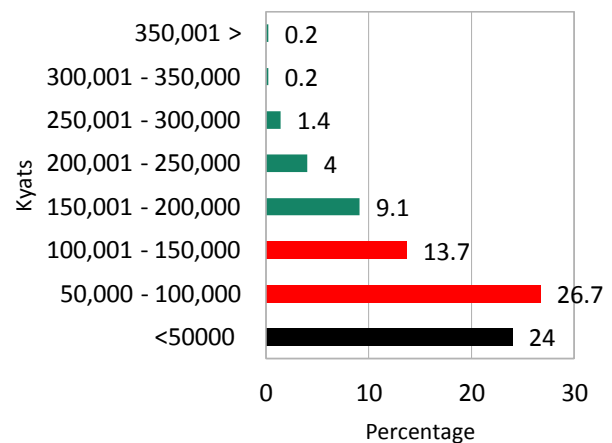
Within ASEAN Myanmar has the lowest minimum wage (4800 Kyats per day at 2018) to the extent that Thailand's minimum wage is twice as much (15,000 Kyats per day at 2018)[5]. The pull factor for migrating to other ASEAN countries is definitely the fact that they offer higher minimum wage. Figure (11) showed that the main source of family income was agriculture with 56 percent while vendor was 26 percent. That shows that most of Myanmar people still rely on agriculture yet they are in a low income trap.

According to Figure (10), 24 percent of the families are living near the minimum wage line. It means that, not only one family member but 4-6 members (Figure 6: Family members) depend on that income. Myanmar minimum wage does not allow families to escape from the poverty trap even with the enactment of the law, as it is not being enforced across all sectors. Therefore, these findings indicate that most of the respondents were living below the poverty line[6] before migrating abroad in pursuit for better opportunities. Another point to consider is the ownership of assets before the respondents migrated. As shown in Figure (12), 74 percent of the respondents owned a house followed by farmland (17%).

Figure 12: Respondent's Assets Prior to Migrating

Asset	Percentage
Other	6%
Farm equipments	3%
Car	0%
Trailer	1%
Bike	6%
Motorcycle	12%
Telephone	9%
Television	2%
Radio	6%
Livestock	5%
Farmland	17%
House	33%

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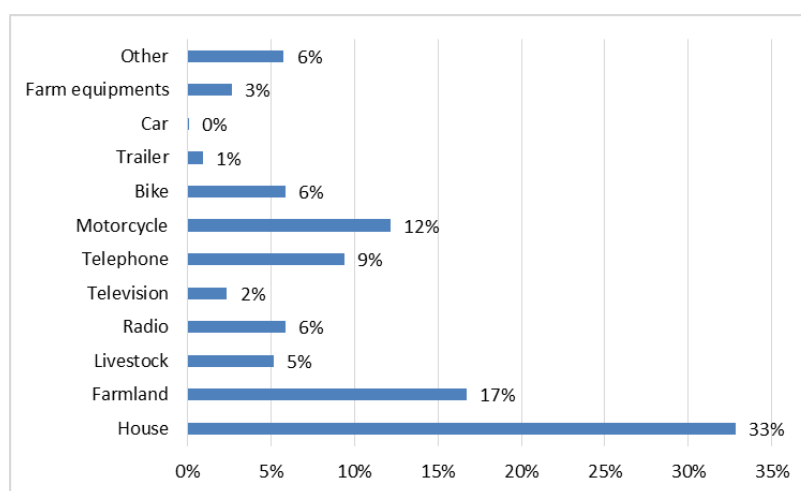
[5] *Thurein Lwin, "Difficulties of Fixing the Minimum Wage and its Impact on Inflation in Myanmar" Inya Economic Journal, 1(1):121-137, October 2017.*
[6] *World Bank defined poverty line less than $2/day which is 2,600 Kyats*

2.3 Reasons for migrating

Based on the findings of the study, the two key push factors of migration are low wages and less job opportunities in villages. The drivers of migration are represented in Figure 13 which indicate how low wages was the highest response particularly in Thandaunggyi (52%) and Myiek (51%). According to the FGDs, the respondents in the villages or townships have no permanent jobs and only get low incomes from their undocumented jobs such as being a vendor or general worker. Some village leaders suggested that, "If the local government creates potential job opportunities for local residents that would lessen the rates of both internal and international migration". More specifically, key respondents in Chin state explained how the local government department such as Rural Development Department had implemented a series of infrastructure projects such as the construction of roads and bridges in Chin state. However, the construction companies did not even hire the local labor in Chin state for unskilled labor positions. Even unskilled labourers had been imported from other states and regions. Based on responses from FGDs, respondents stated that they can have a quality life abroad making a regular and adequate income. Therefore, the local residents or labourers had no way of getting job opportunities in their own state or region.

Table 4: Push and Pull Factors of Migration

	Push factors	Pull factors
Economic	-Low productivity sectors [the productivity of agriculture sectors in studied locations has been decreasing dramatically] -Lack of access to the market [the agricultural products are not able to reach the market in a timely manner, and market information regarding the products or market demands could not be accessed easily as well as inadequate infrastructure become a barrier to enter the market] -Low income level [individual income level, they earned between 1000-3000 Kyats.) Monthly household's income is less than 50,000 Kyats and between 50,000-100,000 Kyats as well as the main source of income is agriculture sector] -Lack of job opportunities [the regular job that can earn adequate income in studied locations could not support the labour supply]	-High labour demand [various industries in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are labour intensive with a high demand for both skilled and unskilled labour] - Higher minimum wage [Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore's wages are higher compared to local daily minimum wages]
Non-economic	-Big family [increasing members of household, education, health and basic needs require to be provided as well as expenditure for each household members need more financial assistance] -Inspiration of other migrant households most respondents were inspired by neighbouring household members who had been working abroad. Hence, they followed to the ways of migration that were instructed by neighbouring household members]	-Family and friends/ relatives and networks [rely on family members, relatives and friends who have been working abroad, hence they follow their instruction to migrate] -Quality of life/ living standards [they anticipated good quality of life and decent living standards abroad] -Amenities [various factors such as technology and probably urban life style]

The second highest reason for migrating was to pursue job opportunities and the highest responses came from Thaton (38%) and Labutta (22%). Respondents from Pekon explained how the scarcity of job opportunities in the community was the main causation of migration. In general, findings indicated that the main reason for migrating in all studied locations is the lack of job opportunities and low wages in the villages. Lastly, the third most frequent answer given by respondents was the low agricultural productivity with the highest respondents in Hopong (27%). According to the World Bank, the low productivity of farming jobs translates into low incomes for rural areas hence driving migration (World Bank 2018).

Figure 13: Reasons for Migrating Abroad by Township

	Thandaunggyi	Labutta	Hopone	Thaton	Pekhon	Mindat	Myiek	total
Low wage in village	52%	39%	34%	38%	35%	28%	51%	38%
In search of Job Opportunities	6%	22%	14%	38%	17%	17%	9%	18%
Low Agricultural Productivity	18%	10%	27%	1%	17%	19%	12%	15%
Organized by friends	3%	1%	6%	7%	2%	16%	9%	7%
large family members	19%	7%	15%	5%	2%	15%	13%	11%
Wife or husband	1%	1%	1%	3%	5%	3%	4%	3%
others	2%	19%	3%	8%	21%	2%	1%	7%
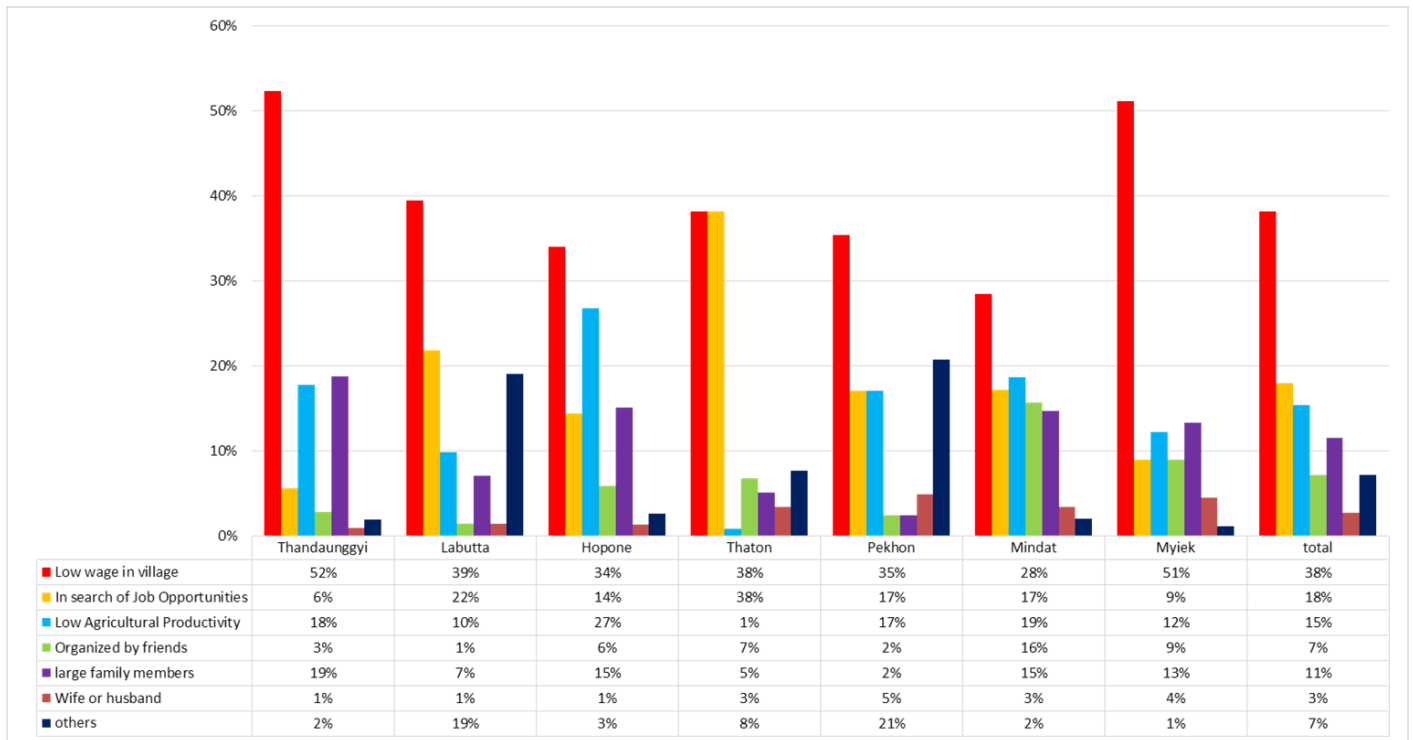
3. Channels of Migration

3.1 Being a Documented or Undocumented Migrant

In this study, most of the respondents migrated to Thailand, Malaysia and China through brokers using undocumented channels. A few migrants went through documented channels which mean that they went through Labour Recruitment Agencies to either Thailand or Malaysia. According to the contract agreement, the agent will take responsibility for their relocation and negotiating wages, leave days and any disputes that arise during the first six months. After six months, agents will not be responsible for the migrant workers. When the newly recruited migrant workers don't have sufficient funds to pay for their migration process to migrate all the way to the jobsites in Thailand and Malaysia they agree to pay a broker's fees from their wages when they begin working (Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University 2013).

The study found that the role of brokers is the key in understanding and promoting the safe migration process. The majority of migrants cannot afford to migrate using undocumented channels because attaining legal documents and going through the complex and time consuming procedures is costly and thus encourages them to migrate through undocumented migration

channels. Moreover, the application process (documented migration process) is more time consuming because of the need to get job offer letters. Therefore, the hired brokers are able to deliver services that allow migrants to access opportunities at a cheaper service fee than being a documented migrant. However, when migrants use undocumented channels, they are vulnerable to being trafficked, to labour exploitation, and have less of legal protection/ assistance, facing discrimination. Some of them are not aware about the documented channels of migration, hence they resort to being undocumented. Thus there is an urgent need for more safe migration promotion or pre-departure information sessions at the community level in various townships. Furthermore, there are existing online platform and community organizations that promote safe migration; nonetheless, for first time migrants they rarely use the resources available such as Facebook or other social media or civil society organizations. One problem is that the MRC and Civil Society Organizations do not always have a large coverage. On the other hand, the people from villages are not always willing to relay their plans to migrate and collaborate with civil society organisation (CSO)/ Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in order to consult on documented channels of migration. They do not provide the information and often they thought the safe migration activities of NGO/ CSO undermined their plan of migration.

3.2 Awareness of Safe Migration

The research study was also geared towards exploring respondent's level of awareness about the safe migration in all studied locations. One question about pre-departure training indicated that a majority of respondents had no pre-departure training before they migrated. Evidently, more respondents who had received pre-departure training migrated through documented channels in comparison to migrants who did not receive any training and resorted to using undocumented channels. This indicates that the level of awareness directly impacts a migrant's decision to use documented or undocumented channels when migrating. Table 4 shows a comparison between respondents who received and did not receive the pre-departure training. Generally, pre-departure trainings were provided for potential migrants by development organizations including KMSS and others in the specific studied locations.

In addition, most returnees responded that they had received no official information about migration whether they were documented and undocumented. One of the key findings is that they completely relied on the information and assistance provided by (unofficial) Labour Recruitment Agency, brokers. Therefore, the brokers play a key role in information sharing and the usage of undocumented channels. Some respondents said that they relied on the information and instructions provided by their family members and friends who were already working in the abroad. This indicates the importance social network plays in providing information on channels of migration. Therefore, raising awareness among these social networks is important in disseminating information on safe migration. The qualitative information about the pre-departure training also supports this idea as village leaders and key informants said that the local residents migrated for their first time without adequate pre-departure training and never informed

the local watch group about their migration plans, because they were concerned that their plan would be discouraged. Moreover, some of the first time migrants even when they received training, they did not apply the suggestions and guidance from pre-departure training. Thus, it is important to understand why there is still disconnect between migrants being aware of documented channels and yet still opting to use undocumented channels. This could possibly be explained by the costs of migrating as a documented migrant and how using undocumented channel still provides higher incentives.

Nevertheless, the group interviews and key informants pointed out that awareness raising such as pre-departure training and other information channels (such as Information, Education and Communication-IEC) require to be supported by the aspirant migrants. This is based on the fact that returnees demanded such assistance after they returned having suffered abroad. Most returnees in group interviews admitted the pre-departure training and IEC are necessary for the aspirant migrants.

Table 5: Number of Migrants who Received Training by Township

Study Location by Township	Documented migrant		Undocumented migrant	
	Received training	Did not receive training	Received training	Did not receive training
Hopong	5	2	5	48
Labutta	32	16	0	18
Mindat	1	6	1	54
Myiek	0	5	1	54
Pekon	47	9	0	4
Thandaunggyi	17	32	1	12
Thaton	3	5	1	51
Total	**75**	**105**	**9**	**241**

The study attempted to identify the determinant factors of undocumented migration. Evidence indicated that the majority of respondents said undocumented migration persisted based on the inaccessibility to information and government services, complex procedure, time consuming process for official documents, costly official documents. Moreover, the failure of border guards also made it easier to use these undocumented channels and the failure of the relevant government departments whose primary responsibility is to oversee the cases of undocumented migrants.

The Figure (14) below shows the determinant factors of undocumented migration based on the surveyed data.

Figure 14: Determinants of undocumented migration in this research
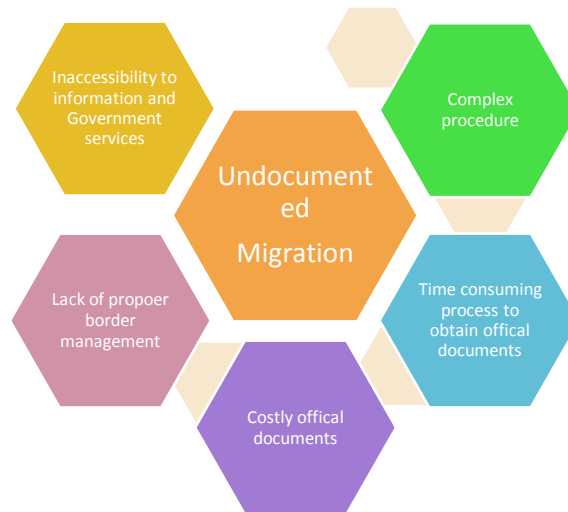
Inaccessibility refers to how hard it is to access official information regarding the services provided by the Ministry of Immigration as well as how to obtain official documents in order to work aboard. In this regard, the potential migrants, before they migrate, are willing to acquire the required documents or go through the documented process needed when migrating. This process includes renewing or applying for National Registration Card, household registration, and passport, if they do not have or have lost it. Nonetheless, they have no access to official information and cannot afford to travel to the capital of the state or region in order to access the government services.

Complex procedure refers to the process one needs to go through in order to be a documented migrant. The surveyed migrants admitted they did not know the procedures and the required documents. Most respondents complained about the required documents at every stage of the application process. Previously, the education level of surveyed migrants was presented and it indicated how most migrants had between primary and high school level of education. In addition, the amount of time it takes to acquire some of these documents is too long for them to wait. They then decide to approach brokers or undocumented agents for their services. Unfortunately, they are manipulated by undocumented agents (brokers) such as the costly services and fake documents including National Registration Card and passport. As a consequence, they could potentially be arrested while migrating thus; some of them did not succeed in their migration plans, and have to return home. However, oftentimes they attempt to migrate again through undocumented channels.

Time consuming process to obtain official documents means that people line up and spend a lot of time on the application process and the application of the passport. When they try to acquire the required documents for migration, through the relevant government departments, it is so tedious and a time consuming process. In terms of labour demand by industries and factories in host countries, they need to migrate to meet the labour demand at particular time; therefore, they need required documents immediately in order to travel. They are not willing to wait to issue the documents from the relevant government departments. Therefore, they approach the undocumented agents (brokers) for them to assist in obtaining the necessary documents. The undocumented agents (brokers) take advantage of the desperation of the aspirant migrants and thus end up charging extremely high rates.

Costly official documents refer to how people think the official process is expensive to complete. In addition, they cannot afford the travel costs to go through the application process. In actual fact, the official rate for passport is not too expensive and the unofficial rates might actually be more costly and yet the migrant is not aware of the official rates.

Lack of proper border management (Is there need any hightligh? Eg. Immigration) means the border system is failing to detect cases of undocumented migration and other undocumented channels. The responsible persons might not be as stringent in enforcing the rules or are corrupt; therefore, undocumented migrants end up using the border gates freely, traveling back and forth.

4. Conditions of Migrants while Abroad

4.1 Working and Living Conditions

In this section, living conditions and the working environment in the host countries will be presented. Most of the respondents said that the type of job sector could not be anticipated before migrating. As mentioned before most of the respondents migrated to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore having lived more than one year at the destination countries. However, during the course of their migration, they managed to travel back and forth the destination country and Myanmar. Most respondents explained how while abroad they received low wages and experienced labour exploitation from employers, or sometimes, their supervisors.

The surveyed migrants explained the type of jobs and sector they worked in while working abroad. Most respondents stated that they worked in the construction, agriculture livestock sectors and also worked as domestic and factory workers. The surveyed migrants who worked in construction, agriculture and livestock sectors had to work in indecent workplaces and conditions. These indecent workplaces and conditions were mainly experienced by the migrants from Labutta Township in Ayeyarwaddy Region and Mindat Township in Chin state. Furthermore, the surveyed migrants explained how most migrant workers facing various forms of abuse or violation did not complain or speak up on the violation of their rights. Findings indicated that they did not complain because the surveyed migrants did not know where and how to lodge complaints. Additionally, information from qualitative interviews indicate how working conditions in the host countries such as Thailand and Malaysia are bad and unfavourable as well as working hours are more than 8 hours without additional pay.

A smaller proportion of surveyed migrants said Myanmar Embassy in Thailand is the most reliable institution for complaints and are not aware of other institutions that can assist them. The migrants responded that undocumented migrants did not submit any complaints especially the ones that infringe on their rights because of their undocumented status as they fear any detrimental consequences. The employers are aware of these issues however they manipulate the situation for their business interests. For this reason, undocumented migrants changed jobs frequently in order to look for better and secure jobs. It is evident that undocumented migrants in host countries are less secure and have less benefit than documented migrants. The conditions of migrants in the host country can still be assisted by the government of the countries of origin, through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and having more awareness on registration procedures when abroad. However, the concrete prevention plans for undocumented channels of migration is through awareness raising.

Daily wages in host counties, average 35,000 Kyats which can be generally earned in various job sectors, construction, factories, agriculture and working as a domestic worker. As mentioned before, the amount of wages earned abroad are more than the wages earned in the migrant's villages and townships in Myanmar. This is one of the greatest motivating factors for locals to migrate in the first place whether through undocumented or documented channels. Nonetheless, the question at hand is how to promote safe migration. Some recommendations from qualitative interviews indicated that if job opportunities could be created, migration can be safer in general. The reason behind this recommendation is that when job opportunities can be created in the villages, the local residents will be able to afford the cost of migration, using documented channels.

Figure 15: Steps to getting a passport

Pathway to Formal Migration: Steps to getting a passport

1 **National Registration Card (NRC) and Household Registration**

The aspirant migrant needs to ensure that they have a copy of their NRC when applying for a passport and household registration detailing family members and parents

2 **Recommendation Letter from Village/ Township Ward**

The original letter of recommendation is required from either the village or township ward

3 **Visit your regional Ministry of Labour Immigration and Population Office**

When you visit the local MoLIP office you will fill out an application form indicating which country you intend on visiting . Provide 2 passport photos

4 **Application Fee**

Application fee is 30,000 Kyats and the passport is processed in approxiately ten days

A significant finding is how a large number of undocumented migrants said that choosing undocumented channels was based on the cost of migration (documented channels). In addition, the cost of migration is not affordable for migrants, at least the initial capital. Therefore, making documented channels of migration more affordable or raising awareness on the actual costs of documented migration is still the main key to lowering incidences of undocumented migrants.

Based on the qualitative data collected, most respondents explained how they acquired their passports through the assistance of a broker and then some mentioned getting assistance from the IOM office in their township. However, most of the respondents were unaware of the legal documents for obtaining a passport. Most cited needing the National Registration Card (NRC), household registration and educational background (see Fig.15). When asking about the cost of migrating through a broker, respondents from Labutta mentioned paying between 300,000-700,000 Kyats to migrate to Thailand. However, to migrate to China was even cheaper only paying 100,000 Kyats. The respondents that paid the most were from Pekon estimating costs to be ranging from 700,000 – 2,000,000 Kyats however; these figures would also be inclusive of the broker organizing a job for the aspirant migrant.

4.2 Remittances

The following section shall present findings on some of the impacts of migration seen through the remittances sent by migrants to their families. It is important to understand the amounts that are sent, the channels used and how remittances are then used at a household level. According to Figure (16), 63.7percent of migrant workers send remittance between 100,001 Kyats to 300,000 Kyats per month while abroad.

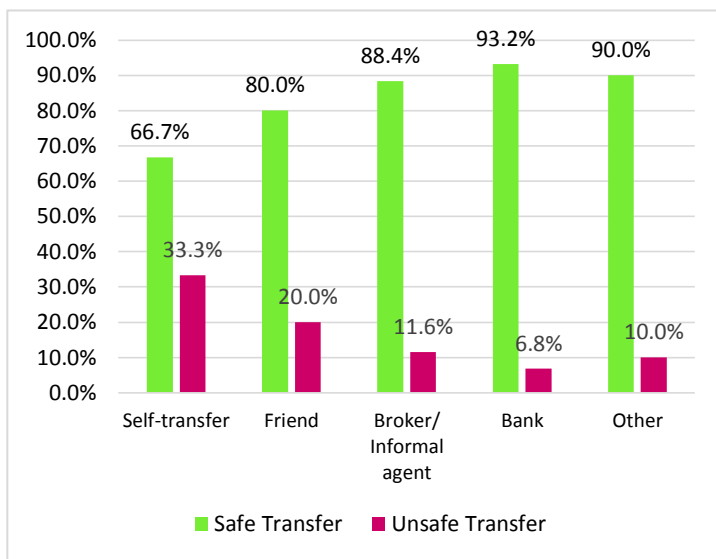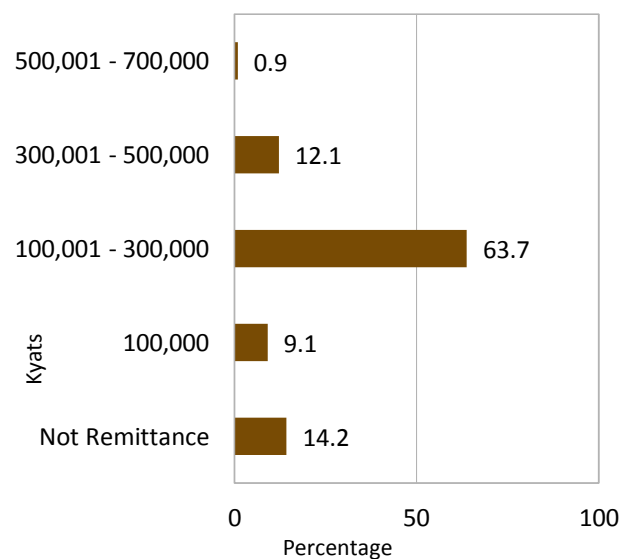**Figure 17: Channels Used to Send Remittances and Safety Levels**

Figure 16: Amount of Remittances Sent by Respondents

Migrants who did not send remittances (14.2%) were the second largest respondents thus the question is why were some migrants not able to remit back to their families? This can be based on various reasons such as still paying off debt for the migration cost, high living costs in destination country, low wages for unskilled job or saving money.

However, an important point to highlight is that 300,000 Kyats per month of remittance money is net amount of money after the living costs. This amount is two times higher than Myanmar's minimum wage. When asked about how they transfer remittances, one would think that banks are the safest way (see Fig. 17).

The most unsafe way to transfer is self-transfer, the most respondents think. Looking at the remittance channels by the bank is not working very well because of time limitations. The following figure can explain very well. Transferring the remittance through an undocumented agent is 13.5percent faster than bank channel as this takes places within one day (Figure 19). That is the surprising point for banking sector and there might be a need for more branches in rural areas.

> **Box 1: The Burden of migration debt**
>
> *A significant finding in all the studied townships is the debt burden over the migration costs. The majority of respondents who migrated were only able to afford the costs of migrating by borrowing the money from other sources, and repaying the debt after they secured a job abroad. The brokers paid migration expenses at every stage, then compensated with extra money from the migrants. However, migrants did not receive salaries at the beginning and up to four months because that directly went to the brokers. Therefore, some of them are not able to account the actual costs of migration where it is expensive or not.*
>
> *Another form of debt migration is how migrants borrowed from undocumented moneylenders and financed themselves at every stage such as paying for broker charges, travel costs as well as accommodation. The migrants repaid off the debt with undocumented interest rate that is probably higher than official financial sector such as microcredit and bank. Different rates were observed in different studied regions and states. Most migrant who borrowed money from moneylenders, repaid the debt from their salaries in the first three months. This similar case of debt burden was found in all studied locations as well as both undocumented and documented migrants. The cost of migration is actually higher than the costs incurred by those who migrated independently abroad (Thailand and Malaysia), and a few migrated themselves through the instruction of their member of family and friends.*

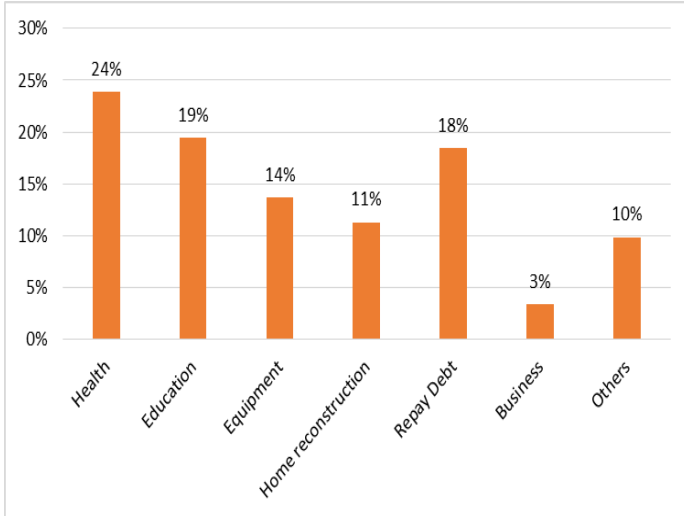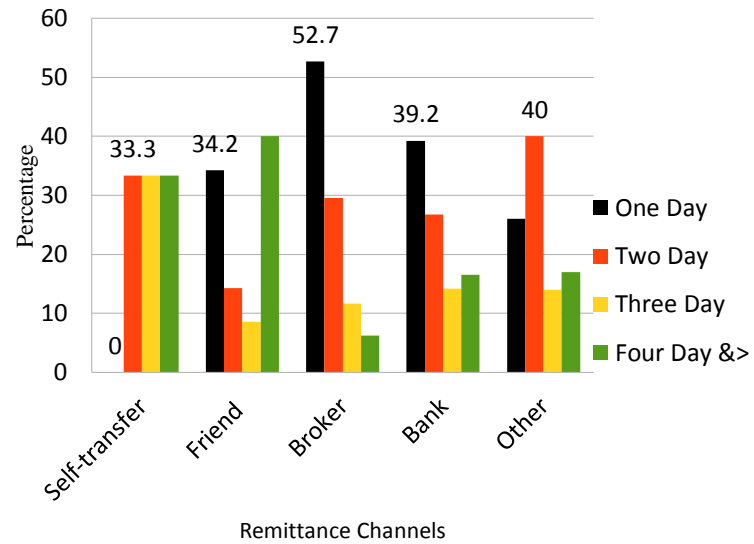**Figure 18: Expenditure of Remittances by the Migrants Family**

Figure 19: Remittance Channel and the Rate of the Transaction

As shown in Figure (18), remittances were mainly used for health (24%), education (19%) and to repay debt for migration cost (18%) by the migrant households in surveyed areas. However, the lowest amount of remittance was used for business (3%). As explain in Box 1, migration debt is important to explain because most the migrants were initially not able to pay money for the cost of official or unofficial migration process. That's why they borrowed money from brokers (mostly) thus they have no money to pay towards the migration cost except debt for migration and interest rate to broker.

Table 6: The Obstacles of the Migration Process

Pre-departure	During departure	Post departure
- Most respondents from all studied locations, except Thandaunggyi and Thaton Townships said that they did not receive pre-departure training	- For their first time migrating, most respondents experienced the manipulation by labour recruitment brokers	-A majority of the respondents mentioned working in different job sectors and under various job conditions in destination countries that were offered by brokers.
- Most respondents preferred to migrate through undocumented channels for their first time migrating	- A smaller proportion of undocumented migrants returned to Myanmar before completing their travel to their destination country, due to unexpected risks	-Most undocumented migrants in destination countries faced labour exploitation such as overtime without additional paid, salary was not paid monthly by their employers, indecent workplace and lived with inadequate health and social support.
- A majority of respondents stated that they did not do adequate enquiry or planning for their migration process especially regarding destination counties.	-The most significant findings were in Chin state where the majority of respondents faced terrible experience while traveling to the destination country, Malaysia. They said they hid and travelled unable to be visible to the border guards of Thailand and Malaysia	-The majority of undocumented migrants in construction and agriculture sectors in Thailand faced human rights abuse and violation by their employers
- A majority of the migrant acquired loans with various interest rate and unfair rate for repay off. Thus, resulting in a debt burden situation.	-Few respondents migrated to Thailand through undocumented channels, but they made an effort to obtain the official documents on the border of Thailand, hence they became documented migrants.	-Most documented migrants had their passport kept by their employer during while they were employed in that factory
-A greater percentage of respondents stated that they were not able to afford to obtain official documents		-Most migrants cited the Myanmar Embassy in Thailand as the most dependant complaint source for Myanmar migrants.
		-The majority of respondents were not aware of non-government source of complaints and the most undocumented migrants did not complaint, owing to their legal status.
		-The majority of respondent were able to remit between 100,000-300.000 Kyats per month to their family
		-The vast distribution of remitted money was used for health, education and debt pay off. Few people used it for investment (income generation activities)
		-Some of the challenges they faced abroad included cultural, linguistic and legal barriers to access health services

5. Conclusion and Way Forward

This report has demonstrated some key findings that are essential in understanding some of the complexities of migration in Myanmar and the challenges to promoting safe migration. First and foremost, the characteristics of the migrants reflect that a majority of migrant workers are from the youth population. Moreover, these young migrant workers are often low skilled workers because they possess low levels of education, in most cases possessing only middle school education. It is important that policy makers and project implementers are aware of this dynamic because this will have a detrimental impact on the future labour force of Myanmar if they are not educated and most of the young people migrate abroad.

One of the most interesting findings was how some townships had more female migrants than males which points to the feminisation of migration in some parts of Myanmar in the sense that females are not migrating as dependents but are seeking out job opportunities abroad independently. Upon further analysis, the findings highlighted how these females mostly migrate to Singapore as domestic workers. This means that gender inclusive programming needs to be implemented and policies protecting female migrants are essential particularly the domestic workers and current efforts are highly encouraged.

The key drivers of migration are interlinked and most respondents stated that low wages, lack of job opportunities and low agricultural productivity is what drove people to migrate. The need to create more job opportunities particularly at the township levels is needed now more than ever and will determine whether more young people will continue to leave for abroad in search of better opportunities. As mentioned in the report, even when infrastructural projects are taking place in specific states or regions it is important to consider the local labour force before importing it from somewhere else in order to promote local job opportunities. The overwhelming responses on the challenges in the agriculture sector and the low productivity are seen despite a majority of people still depending on it for a source of income. Therefore, more efforts need to be made towards revitalizing this sector.

Safe migration is the key to ensuring that Myanmar migrant workers while working abroad can avoid human rights abuses and be effective in the jobs that they do. The undocumented migration channels are more appealing based on the fact that brokers offer more affordable and convenient services as opposed to migrating as a documented migrant which is oftentimes expensive, complicated and time consuming. If safe migration is to be promoted, the social networks in which information is shared and the brokers are the starting points where safe migration should be promoted. Efforts such as the Community Watch Group should be strengthened and more trust should be created. Lastly, remittances are a means to alleviating households from their cycle of poverty and the fact that the two top expenditures are health and education is important. Education is particularly significant in the sense that families will have more money to help their children go through all the levels of education thus keeping young people from migrating at a younger age with lower levels of education. Moreover, in this study,

one of the concerns was how few migrant households were able to save money or invest as a means for income generation. This indicates that not only have the migrants been working in risky environments, but their future and the security of their future is uncertain. Overall this report has demonstrated the need to have continued efforts geared towards promoting safe migration.

Way Forward

In this study, three phases of migration were highlighted which include, pre-departure, during departure and post departure. According to the findings, most respondents have not had access to information on safe migration in the respective studied locations. Each stakeholder in each studied location should continuously make efforts to ensure that the dissemination of information on safe migration is wide spread.

Obviously youth aged between 21 and 32 years of age accounted for the majority of respondents in this study. The stakeholders such as development partners and subnational governments should direct their efforts on this age group. The age group has the capacity to be engaged in intensive labour activities for the economy, therefore, job opportunities should be created inside the states and regions. Alternatively, vocational trainings should be created and connected to labour demands. In addition, responsible investment should be encouraged in order to generate more job opportunities.

The main income source of the migrant households has been from the agriculture sector in the studied locations. The market information should be supported and be reachable to market, in a timely manner and the construction barriers are necessary to be resolved. In order to sustain the agriculture economy of migrant's household, financial loans or microcredit programs should be extended. If it has not been in existence, it should be established.

Most respondents are not able to save the money remitted or invest it to regenerate their income. Therefore, respective development partners should consider a form of saving groups to regenerate migrant household's savings. It should also meet the concept; local context, be sustainable, reliable and simple.

Moreover, migrants abroad, need the information on complaint mechanisms when they face human rights abuses and violations in their workplace, when and how to complaint. The qualitative information reflects how migrant workers can complaint to Myanmar CSOs and NGOs inside the respective countries, nonetheless, the respondents in this study are not aware of that. Therefore, integrated actions for safe migration information should be emphasized. Most rely on Myanmar Embassy in each host country, they pointed out that the procedure is complicated and the process can be delayed.

A causation of undocumented migration found that the procedure of Ministry of Immigration and Labour is complicated and it should be resolved through coordinated actions. In addition, the larger percentage of respondents said the government service is very expensive to get the official documents for migration as well as the time consuming process to obtain official

documents. Therefore, an easier application process should be created and electronic services should be introduced to mitigate time consumption.

Lastly, among some of the surveyed areas, there were a higher percentage of female migrants than male migrants. Therefore, safe migration programs should be gender sensitive and consider how to protect women rights as well as their safety. In order to have collective advocacy approach, the programs and implementing organizations both inside and outside of the country should be all integrated so as to have effective results.

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