Leveraging Migration for Development: A Review of Literature on Patterns and Movements in Myanmar

WORKING PAPER

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CESD	Centre for Economic and Social Development
DfID	Department for International Development
DRD	Department of Rural Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITD	Italian-Thai Development Co.
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
MDRI	Myanmar Development Resource Institute
MMK	Myanmar Kyat
MOIP	Ministry of Immigration and Population
MOLES	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
QSEM	Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SPPRG	Social Policy and Poverty Research Group
THB	Thai Baht
UK	United Kingdom of Greater Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
WBG	World Bank Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2011, Myanmar has witnessed a slow, but steady political and economic transformation in a bid to begin its re-integration into the international community after decades of isolation. Over a period of five decades, between 1962 and 2011, the country grappled with issues of ethnic conflict, widespread poverty, minimal trade, and a massive reduction in the scope of economic opportunity available to its citizens. With the gradual opening up of Myanmar's borders to foreign trade and investment, along with a promising transition of political power following the November 2015 elections, the country's economy is now expected to grow 8.4% in 2016 and early 2017.[1]

In this dynamic environment, migration is considered to be one of the most important issues for Myanmar, with the levels of both internal and international migration expected to increase across all states and regions in the next decade. However, the phenomenon of internal movement as well as movement across its extensive borderline is not new to Myanmar. Nonetheless, the country stands at a critical moment wherein it is now possible to understand migration, particularly labour migration, and consequently leverage it for development.

The purpose of this working paper is to inform donors, aid agencies, government ministries, and other key stakeholders interested in migration patterns and movements in Myanmar. In these times of rapid transition, it is hoped that this paper can provide interested groups and individuals with necessary facts about migration, especially labour migration, in the broader context of development in Myanmar. The working paper is divided into seven sections focusing on a legal and operational definitions, a brief migration profile of Myanmar, international migration, internal migration, remittances, safe migration knowledge and practices, and a fact sheet for quick reference.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper has been written with the overall objective of informing relevant stakeholders, including donors, aid agencies, government ministries, and other interested individuals and/or groups who wish to learn more about migration dynamics in Myanmar. It combines quantitative data from a variety of different sources, as well as qualitative information which serves to provide context to the former.

The paper also serves a few specific objectives:

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[1] "What's the Fastest Growing Country in Asia? Surprise! It's Myanmar". Asian Development Bank (ADB). 14 April, 2016. Web.

1. To provide specific insight into available data and knowledge on labour migration in Myanmar.
2. The methodology used (described below) serves to extract the most *reliable* and *readily available* data on the region to ensure validity.
3. To provide the most up to date information that is currently available, within the parameters of reliability and validity.
4. The paper however, is not designed to be prescriptive. It is instead hoped that the data presented here can be used to aid any prescriptive exercise in the future.
5. The paper does not intend to reflect the views and opinions of any particular organisational/institutional entity, and tries to achieve this through a mix of information drawn from the UN and other international organisations, government, independent research, news media, and international and local NGO sources operating in the region.

This working paper has been visualised as a document that shall remain ‘work in progress’ as more research and data becomes available, especially on internal migration and remittance flows. For this reason, we welcome continued feedback from all interested parties.

METHODOLOGY

The working paper is designed to ensure reliability and validity, and relies on a broad-based literature review of relevant publications from different sources. The sources used include government reports, publications produced by think tanks, research institutes, international organisations and local NGOs, and international and local news media. The choice of sources was guided by the reliability of the source (organisational as well as individual in the case of news media), and the time frame within which a particular publication was made available to the public. Where possible, this paper has tried to use the most recently available statistical data, while at the same time ensuring that the reliability and validity of the source is not compromised. This paper does not make use of any primary data collected by the author.

One of the main aims of the chosen methodology is to present the data as it appears in the source, and subsequently attempt to provide relevant insight into any significant variations that exist (particularly statistical variations among sources). The overall methodology however, is not guided by an aim to be prescriptive. It should be noted that since information has been extracted from sources that were based on different individual methodologies of their own, terminological and statistical differences often arise within this paper. Where possible, such differences have been highlighted in the footnotes. However, it is not an aim of this paper to account for these differences.

Although a key aim of this paper is to help the readers make comparisons with available data, the aforementioned variation in source methodology might limit the extent to which this is possible. Nonetheless, we have tried to ensure that where comparisons are made, data is drawn from the same source, or sources that have been produced in a similar time frame.

A key limitation that directly affects the twin aim of reliability and validity is the dependence on government sources for important census data. It should be recognised that currently available data from the Government of Myanmar excludes a section of the population (classified as non-enumerated in census reports). This paper tries to overcome this by presenting information from other sources, wherever possible and desirable.

We also recognise that there still exists a wealth of information on the subject that has not been incorporated into this paper, and it is hoped that readers might find the section on *Further Reading* useful in this regard.

MIGRATION IN MYANMAR: FACT SHEET

Population: 51, 486,253[2]

- **Male**: 24, 824,586 (48.22%)[3]
- **Female**: 26, 661,667 (51.78%)[4]

Percentage of urban population: 30%[5]

Net Migration Rate (2015-2020): -0.2 migrants/1,000 population[6]

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Number of Myanmar nationals living abroad: 2, 021,910[7]

Main host countries (by percentage of Myanmar nationals living abroad): Thailand (70.2%); Malaysia (15%); China (4.6%)[8]

Major Corridors:

- **Major source regions**: **to Thailand** (Mon, 27.2%; Kayin, 21.5%; Tanintharyi, 13.2%; Shan, 12.6%; Bago, 9%); **to Malaysia** (Yangon, 15%; Mon, 11%); Mandalay, 10%; Magway, 10%; Bago, 9%; Rakhine, 9%; Sagaing, 9%; Chin, 9%); **to China** (Shan, 46%; Magway, 12%)[9]

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[2] 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015. *Note: The total population figure includes both the enumerated and non-enumerated populations, however figures on other indicators drawn from the census are based only on the enumerated population.*

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2015. *Note: Net migration is the net total of migrants during the period, that is, the total number of immigrants less the annual number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens. Data are five year estimates. A positive value represents more people entering the country, while a negative value represents more people leaving than entering the country.*

[7] 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015. *Note: The Ministry of Immigration and Population (MOIP) considers Census data as being underreported and has provided a new estimate of 4.25m Myanmar nationals living abroad. The new estimate was presented by MOIP during Census Data Users Consultation Workshop in February 2016. The figure was reported by IOM for the DFID Rapid Migration Assessment for Myanmar.*

[8] Ibid. *Note: All data taken from Census.*

[9] Ibid.

- **Major destinations**: Thailand (70.2%); Malaysia (15%); China (4.6%); Singapore (4%); USA (1.8%)[10]

Assistance/Support in Migration (% of migrants by source of assistance/support): Family/friends (43.3%); Brokers (37.7%); On their own (18.5%); Formal recruitment process established in MoU b/w Myanmar and Thailand (0.5%). *Data only available for Thailand.*[11]

Major Occupational Sectors (by gender): **Female** (domestic work, garment production and sales, fishery related, construction, other manufacturing); **Male** (construction, other manufacturing, agriculture and husbandry, garment production and sales, fishery related). *Date only available for Thailand.*[12]

Migrant levels of income (mean monthly income by gender): 219 USD (female migrants); 235 USD (male migrants). *Data only available for Thailand.*[13]

INTERNAL MIGRATION

Number of Migrants: 9, 391,126[14]

- Male: 4, 453,017[15]
- Female: 4, 938,109[16]
- Population with usual residence in state/region different from state/region of birth: 4, 834,345 (10.1% of total Myanmar population)[17]

Main Reasons for Movement (from place of previous usual residence): Followed family (40.8%); Employment/searching employment (34.3%); Marriage (15.7%); Other (5.9%); Education (2.2%); Conflict (0.7%)[18]

***Geographical patterns (by migration across/within a state/region)**: Migration for work across state/region (62%); migration for work within state/region (38%)[19]

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[10] Ibid.
[11] International Organization for Migration (IOM). Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and their Impacts on Thailand. 2013.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid. *Note: The minimum wage in Thailand is THB 300 per day. Mean income data is based on the exchange rate of 1 USD = 35 THB.*
[14] 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015. *Note: This figure excludes seasonal migration of less than 6 months and intra-township migration. The Census defines internal migration as inter-township movement of more than 6 months.*
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid. *Note: All figures taken from Census.*
[19] International Labour Organization (ILO). Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour. 2015. *Note: The ILO study is based on a sample size of 7,295 internal labour migrants. The ILO study uses a non-probability sampling method, and statistical findings related to this study cannot be said to represent the entire population.*

***Major Occupational Sectors**: Construction (28%), manufacturing (25%), agriculture (11%), mining (10.5%), domestic services (5.7%), wholsale/retail trade (4.5%), fishing (4%), transportation (3.3%), food/beverage services (2.5%), forestry (2.2%), building/land services (0.7%), amenity services (0.6%), hotels (0.4%), and sex services (0.08%)[20]

***Assistance/Support in Recruitment and Migration (% of migrants by source of assistance/support)**: 72% of all migrants surveyed received some type of assistance from another person. Among these (5,233 out of 7,295 respondents) 86% received assistance from friends/family/other acquaintances, 9% used a labour broker, and 5% used other sources.[21]

***Migrant levels of income (average income per month)**: MMK 108,180 or $85 (overall); MMK 121,775 or $96 (males); MMK 82,319 or $65 (females)[22]

***Forced Labour and Trafficking**: 26% (1,908 respondents) in situation of forced labour; 14% (1,007 respondents) in situation of trafficking for forced labour.[23]

REMITTANCES

Inflows: USD 3.468 billion (World Bank, 2015)[24]; USD 8 billion (MOLES, 2015)[25] (*Note: The discrepancy between these two figures arises due to differences in estimation methods, with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES) accounting for official as well as estimated unofficial flows.*

Outflows: USD 773 million (2014)[26]

Bilateral remittance inflows (2015): Thailand (USD 1.8 billion); Saudi Arabia (USD 954 million); United States (USD 189 million); Bangladesh (USD 143 million): Malaysia (USD 92 million)[27]

Remittance receiving households: 3.75%[28]

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid. *Note: The ILO study used purposive snowball sampling method to reach out to respondents in order to find workers who have experienced exploitations, which means that the findings are not representative of general internal migrants, and are biased towards those who were more likely to be in the exploitative situations.*
[24] World Bank Remittances Data, 2016.
[25] "Informal cash flows threaten kyat policy", Myanmar Times, 2 September, 2015. *Note: Figure reported as according to the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.*
[26] World Bank Remittances Data, 2016. *Note: Data for 2015 is unavailable according to publicly available datasets.*
[27] All data from World Bank Bilateral Remittances Matrix 2015.

Remittances as % of income in receiving households: 49.1%[29]

Remittance dependent households: 2.03%[30]

Main remittance receiving regions (% of households receiving remittances): Kayin (9.6%, highest); Mon (6.15%); Chin (4.99%); Yangon, Mandalay, Ayeyarwady, Shan, Kayah (<1%, lowest)[31]

LEGAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Internal Migrant Worker

There is no internationally recognized standard legal and/or operational definition of an internal migrant worker. Similarly, no legal definition of internal migrant worker has been formally adopted by the Government of Myanmar. Therefore it is important to understand data on internal migration in relation to how it is operationally defined by the data source.

The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census defined internal migration as inter-township movement of more than 6 months. The definition of internal migration used in the Census is designed to capture permanent or semi-permanent changes of residence. The criterion of six months used to establish the time spent in their usual residence results in those who move on a temporary basis of less than six months not being included in the definition of migration. Furthermore, internal migration is defined in the Census as movement between townships.

The ILO developed an operational definition of internal migrant worker in the context of Myanmar for the purpose of its migration study. It defines an internal labour migrant as "a person who migrates or who has migrated from one place to another inside the country with

[28] Myanmar Department of Rural Development (DRD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) & Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG), 2015. *Note: The source defines remittance receiving households as those who reported remittances as being at least 10% of their income, but not necessarily their main income source.*
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. *Note: The source defines remittance dependent households as those who reported remittances as their major source of income.*
[31] Ibid. *Note: The figures have been estimated by dividing the remittance receiving households in each region by the total remittance receiving households in Myanmar. All figures are based on sample data.*

a view to being employed", beyond his/her village or ward of origin for duration of more than 1 month.[32]

International Migrant Worker

A migrant worker (*de facto* international) is defined in the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) as "a person who migrates or who has migrated from one country to another with a view to being employed otherwise than on his own account and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant worker."[33]

Myanmar has not ratified the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990 defines the term migrant worker refers to "a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national."

The 1975 ILO Convention is not as comprehensive since it limits migrant workers to a person who has been regularly admitted. Furthermore, the 1975 Convention also has fewer signatories among member countries of the United Nations.

Forced Labour

At the international level, forced labour is defined in the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily."[34]

The Myanmar national legal framework on forced labour is largely consistent with the international standard. According to the 2012 amendment to the Ward or Village Tract Administration Law, forced labour is "…to exact or forcibly take another person's labour or

[32] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour". Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.17. Web. *Note: ILO defines internal migration as including movement of more than 1 month.*

[33] ILO Convention No. 143. 1975. See Article 11(1), http://courses.itcilo.org/A906119/documentation/ilo-conventions-and-others/ILO%20C143%20-%20Migrant%20 Workers%20-Supplementary%20Provisions.pdf. Convention No. 143 is a supplementary provision to the Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers.

[34] *Exceptions are provided for work required by compulsory military service, normal civic obligations, as a consequence of a conviction in a court of law (provided that the work or service in question is carried out under the supervision and control of a public authority and that the person carrying it out is not hired to or placed at the disposal of private individuals, companies or associations), in cases of emergency, and for minor communal services performed by the members of a community in the direct interest of the community.* For the full text of ILO Convention No. 29 (1930), see www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029 .

service, which was not offered by their own will, under threat of punishment or by affecting their interests…"[35]

Human Trafficking

At the international level, human trafficking is defined within the UN Trafficking Protocol, 2000. The standard is equally applicable to trafficking in persons in the context of labour migration.

According to both Myanmar national and international law, a case of trafficking may be established when three elements are present: these are referred to as the "act", the "means" and the "purpose (exploitation)".

These are defined in Myanmar's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law, as follows:

The act

"…the recruitment, transportation, transfer, sale, purchase, lending, hiring, harbouring or receipt of persons after committing any of the following acts for the purpose of exploitation…"[36]

The means

"*…threat, use of force or other form of coercion; abduction; fraud; deception; abuse of power or of position taking advantage of the vulnerability of a person; or giving or receiving of money or benefit to obtain the consent of the person having control over another person…"*[37]

The purpose (exploitation)

"*…receipt or agreement for receipt of money or benefit for the prostitution of one person by another, other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced service, slavery, servitude, debt bondage or the removal and sale of organs from the body."*[38]

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[35] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour". Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.15-16. Web. *Note: The original law was adopted on 24 February 2012 and the amendment on 28 March 2012 as provision 27.A, to be inserted in section 27 of the original law.*

[36] Ibid, p. 16. *Note: See the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (2005), Article 3(a). Note: The UN Trafficking Protocol "acts" are slightly narrower, including only "recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring and receipt of persons".*

[37] Ibid. *Note: See the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (2005), Article 3(a) 1–6. Note: The "means" are the same in meaning to those in the UN Trafficking Protocol. However, the UN Trafficking Protocol states that the "means" are not necessary to establish a case of trafficking for children, while the Myanmar law does not include this application of the law.*

[38] Ibid. *Note: See the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (2005), Article 3(a), Explanation (1). Note: The UN Trafficking Protocol forms of exploitation are explained using different terms: "prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices, removal of organs, other types of exploitation". At the international level, servitude and debt bondage are considered forms of forced labour, while the Myanmar Government includes them as distinct forms of exploitation.*

SECTION ONE: A MIGRATION PROFILE OF MYANMAR

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) identifies Myanmar as the largest migration source country in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), with up to 10% of the Myanmar population migration internationally.[39] The 2014 Census data shows that almost 20% of the population now comprises of internal migrants.[40] Another study that included migration as a thematic component and was conducted in 6 state/regions across Myanmar also revealed that 17-38% of all households have a family member migrating, and overall village population migration levels range from less than 2.5% in Shan State to over 15% in Mandalay Region.[41]

The main drivers of both internal and international migration in Myanmar are[42]:

1. Seasonal fluctuations of employment and income opportunities in rural areas;
2. Oversupply of labour in rural areas;
3. Increased levels of education among populations living in rural areas, and the unavailability of jobs that match their skills;
4. Crop failures and income related shocks;
5. Natural disasters and environmental changes;
6. Loss of livelihoods due to conflict;
7. Better job security and stability as well as better incomes in destination areas;
8. Greater professional opportunities in destination areas, especially outside Myanmar.

Broadly speaking, a variety of push and pull factors affect the patterns of movement in the context of Myanmar. These factors and the emerging patterns also have crucial implications for the country.

Some of the key implications are[43]:

1. A notable increase in rural to urban, non-seasonal internal migration;
2. Lack of adequate manpower in rural areas during the agricultural peak seasons, resulting in higher labour costs, and mechanization or discontinuation of farming;

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[39] International Organization for Migration (IOM). "Myanmar: Overview". 2015. Web.
[40] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population. "The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2." dop.gov.mm. May 2015, p. 123-124. Web.
[41] Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. "Livelihoods and Social Change in Rural Myanmar: QSEM Series, Round Five Report." LIFT: Yangon. 2016, pp. 30-31. Web.
[42] International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Department for International Development (DfID), 2016. Internal Document. *Note: All information gathered from Rapid Migration Assessment for Myanmar prepared by IOM Myanmar for the UK Department for International Development (DfID).*
[43] Ibid.

3. Greater incidence of family migration as opposed to individual migration in the case of internal migration, and vice-versa in the case of international migration;
4. The emergence of remittances as a main income source among households;
5. Increasing income gap between migrant-sending households and non-migrant households (especially in the case of international migration);
6. The emergence of migration as a viable livelihood choice, increasingly relied upon by rural households;
7. Skewed age distributions in migrant source areas within the country (more elderly and children) and in destination areas (presence of a more young, productive population);
8. Possibility of increased inter-ethnic issues and/or tensions related to escalated levels of migration, especially in Mon, Kayin and Rakhine;
9. A shift towards migrant sensitive urban planning in key urban centres within the country;
10. Greater opportunity to ensure the financial inclusion of migrants and their families through savings and credit products.

Although formal channels of migration, especially labour migration, are increasingly being made available to Myanmar migrants, majority of the migrant outflows from the country are still considered to be irregular, passing through unofficial channels that often unsafe for the migrants as well as their families. Smuggling and trafficking across international borders is a lucrative industry in the GMS. Similarly, the risk of exploitation also exists in internal migration, with a study by the ILO identifying that 26% of the surveyed internal labour migrants are in a situation of forced labour, and 14% are in a situation of trafficking for forced labour.[44]

Safe migration, therefore, is an important concern in the context of Myanmar. The impediments to safe migration for Myanmar migrants include[45]:

1. Insufficiently regulated migration brokerage;
2. Lack of safe recruitment mechanisms for low skilled migrants from rural areas;
3. Lack of information and knowledge sharing on safe migration practices;
4. Lack of written employment contracts; unsafe and unhealthy working conditions in destination areas;
5. Irregular documentation and protection in the case of destinations outside Myanmar;
6. Weak legal enforcement or official corruption.

[44] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. “Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour”. Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.6. Web. *Note: The ILO study is based on a sample size of 7,295 internal labour migrants.*

[45] International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Department for International Development (DfID), 2016. Internal Document. *Note: All information gathered from Rapid Migration Assessment for Myanmar prepared by IOM Myanmar for the UK Department for International Development (DfID).*

It is evident that the phenomenon of migration in Myanmar is complex, dynamic, and increasingly relevant in order to understand the opportunities and challenges that confront the long-term goal of inclusive development that benefits all citizens equally.

SECTION TWO: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

***Note on international migration data**: This working paper is based on data and information compiled from different sources, including independent research papers, where relevant. It should be noted that variation among different sources of data, as well as unavailability of data is a key limitation in the context of migration related research in Myanmar. The information presented in this section is gathered from studies and surveys that relied on different methodologies, and although comparative data has been provided where possible, the reader should also note that much of the data is unable to account for irregular cross-border migration from Myanmar.*

Myanmar Nationals Living Abroad

The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census counted 2, 021,910 former conventional household members living abroad.[46] Out of these, 1, 233,168 (61%) are male and 788,742 (39%) are female.[47] Furthermore, the Census also reports that 1, 684,414 (83.3%) are between the ages of 15 and 39, with a significantly large number (over 1 million) in this age group are male.[48]

It should be noted that Census data does not account for the movement of entire households/families, and although actual numbers are likely to be higher, no official estimate has been provided by the Myanmar government. However, the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MOIP) considers the Census numbers as underreported, and has provided an unofficial estimate of 4.25 million Myanmar nationals living abroad.[49]

Apart from government data, information on the number of Myanmar nationals living abroad is also available through the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The UNDESA data estimates that approximately 2, 881,797 or 5.08% of the total Myanmar population lived outside their country of origin in 2015.[50]

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[46] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population. "The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2." dop.gov.mm. May 2015, p. 129-131. Web.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Department for International Development (DfID), 2016. Internal Document. *Note: As presented by MOIP during the Census Data Users Consultation Workshop in February, 2016. Information gathered from Rapid Migration Assessment for Myanmar prepared by IOM Myanmar for the UK Department for International Development (DfID).*
[50] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Population Division. "International migrant stock 2015: By destination and origin." 2015. Web.

Main Destination Countries

The 2014 Census reported migration data according to country of residence outside of Myanmar. Out of the 2 million Myanmar people living abroad:

- 1,418,472 (70.2%) are in **Thailand**;
- 303,996 (15%) in **Malaysia**;
- 92,263 (4.6%) in **China**;
- 79,659 (4%) in **Singapore**;
- 37,577 (1.8%) in the **United States**;
- 17,975 (0.9%) in India;
- 14,592 (0.7%) in Korea;
- 7,597 (0.4%) in Japan, and
- the remaining 49,779 (2.5%) in Other.[51]

The UNDESA database on international migrant stock in 2015 reports migration data by country of destination and origin. Out of the 2.8 million Myanmar people living abroad:

- 1,978,348 (68.6%) are in **Thailand**;
- 252,292 (8.7%) in **Malaysia**;
- 202,720 (7%) in **Saudi Arabia**;
- 201,346 (6.9%) in **Bangladesh**;
- 103,291 (3.5%) in the **United States**;
- 50,587 (1.7%) in India, and
- 11,514 (0.4%) in Korea.[52]

Data for China, Japan, and Singapore is not presented on the UNDESA database.

Note: As highlighted previously, the above data relies on data from two different sources (2014 Myanmar Census and UNDESA) and important discrepancies must be noted. The Census identifies China, Singapore, and Japan as some of the major destination countries, but these countries were not presented in the UNDESA data. The UNDESA reports Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh as destination countries while these were not reported as major destinations in the Census findings.

Major Corridors

According to the Census (which counts 2 million international migrants from Myanmar), the major corridors of international migration from Myanmar are focused on three destination

[51] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population. "The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2." dop.gov.mm. May 2015, p. 129-131. Web.
[52] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Population Division. "International migrant stock 2015: By destination and origin." 2015. Web.

countries, namely Thailand, Malaysia, and China, which account for almost 90% of the international migrant stock from the country.[53]

The major source regions within Myanmar from where people are migrating to these three destinations are spread out across the country. Mon state is reported as the state/region of origin for 27.2% of the migrating population to Thailand, followed by Kayin (21.5%), Tanintharyi (13.2%), Shan (12.6%), and Bago (9%). Migration to Malaysia happens primarily from Yangon (15%), followed by Mon (11%), Mandalay (10%), Magway (10%), Bago (9%), Rakhine (9%), Sagaing (9%), and Chin (9%). Similarly, majority of the migrant population in China originates from Shan (46%), followed by Magway (12%).[54]
Overall, the Census reports that the major source regions of both the male and female migrating populations are Mon state and Kayin state.[55]

The Census data can also be used to highlight key differences in the migrant stock according to major destination and gender[56]:

Male (total males reported to be living abroad – 1, 233, 168)

- Thailand 66% of males reported to be living abroad
- Malaysia 20%
- China 4%

Female (total females reported to be living abroad - 788,742)

- Thailand 77% of females reported to be living abroad
- Malaysia 7%
- China 5%

The male-female ratio of international migrants from Myanmar is 69:31, except for Singapore where female migrants outnumber male migrants (51% of migrants in Singapore are female). Migrants to Malaysia and Korea are predominantly male (81% and 97% respectively), which reflects the gendered nature of employment opportunities available to Myanmar nationals in these countries.[57]

It is believed that majority of migration flows to Thailand, India, and China are through irregular or unofficial channels. This is of particular importance in the case of international migrant stock flowing from Myanmar into China, wherein the most reliable and up-to-date information on the number of Myanmar nationals residing in China is only available through the 2014 Census report. However, Census numbers are considered underreported, and

[53] Based on migration data available in the Union Census Report, 2014.
[54] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population. “The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2.” dop.gov.mm. May 2015, p. 132-133. Web.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

largely unrepresentative of unofficial flows between Myanmar and major destination countries.

Migration from Myanmar to Thailand

The Myanmar-Thailand migration corridor is perhaps one the most extensively researched subjects pertaining to cross-border migration in the GMS. This paper relies on a combination of official reports by the IOM, studies conducted by NGOs, and publications written by independent research institutes and individuals, to inform readers on key aspects of this complex phenomenon, with a special focus on labour migration.

A Brief Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that cross-border migration between Myanmar and Thailand is a phenomenon that has occurred for decades, beginning with irregular flows that were gradually regularised through official government interventions, mostly on part of the Thai government. In 2003, Thailand signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Myanmar on cooperation in the employment of migrant workers, which opened up space for long-term dialogue and policy making on the issue.[58]

Thailand is a destination for both regular skilled and low-skilled workers from Myanmar, as well as irregular low-skilled workers employed in labour intensive industries such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing, as well as trading and service.[59] Certain sectors of the Thai economy are highly dependent on Myanmar migrant labour, where 76 per cent of the total migrant workforce is from Myanmar.[60] Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand also send back millions of baht worth of remittances to their families in Myanmar. With the promise of political change and rapid economic development looming large over Myanmar, many of these migrants are now keen on returning back to Myanmar. The question of return migration however, is heavily circumstantial, with issues such as available savings, economic opportunities on return, competitive wages, political stability, and adequate infrastructure dominating the migration landscape for these workers.[61]

Demographics

[58] See full text of the MoU here http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/MOU_Between_Thailand_and_Myanmar_Cooperation_in_Employment_of_Workers_ENG.pdf
[59] Chantavanich, S. and Vungsiriphisal, P. "Myanmar Migrants to Thailand: Economic Analysis and Implications to Myanmar Development." *In* Economic Reforms in Myanmar: Pathways and Prospects, edited by Hank Lim and Yasuhiro Yamada. BRC Research Report No.10. Bangkok Research Center, IDE-JETRO: Bangkok, Thailand. 2012, pp. 213-217. Web.
[60] Huguet, J. W., & Chamratrithirong, A. "Thailand migration report 2011." IOM: Bangkok. 2011. Web.
[61] Ibid.

The IOM conducted a comprehensive assessment of Myanmar migrants in Thailand, based on a population size of over 100,000 and a sample size of 5,027 across seven target provinces in Thailand, namely Chiang Mai, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Ranong, Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, and Surat Thani. These provinces accounted for 56% of all registered Myanmar migrants in Thailand.[62]

Among the surveyed migrants, 51.6% were male and 48.2% were female (0.2% no answer. Around 98% of the migrants belonged to the age group of 18-60 years, with there being more females in the 15-24 year old age group than males.[63]

A majority (76.4%) of surveyed migrants had come to Thailand from the states and regions bordering Thailand, namely Mon state, Shan state, Tanintharyi region Kayin state, and Kayah state. Around 20.2% came from other regions, and 2.5% from other states that do not share a border with Thailand (0.9% no answer).[64]

State/Region within Myanmar	**% of surveyed migrants originating from state/region**
Kachin	0.7%
Sagaing	0.4%
Chin	0.2%
Mandalay	2.2%
Magway	0.9%
Bago	9.3%
Rakhine	1.6%
Ayeyarwady	2.3%
Yangon	5%
Shan	19%
Kayah	0.1%
Kayin	14.5%
Mon	26.7%

[62] International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Asian Research Center for Migration, Chulalongkorn University. "Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and their Impacts on Thailand." IOM: Bangkok, Thailand. 2013, p. 4. Web.
[63] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[64] Ibid.

Tanintharyi	16.2%

*based on data from IOM, 2013.[65]

In terms of ethnicity, the Bamar comprised the largest ethnic group among the surveyed migrants (43.5%), followed by Shan (18.3%), Mon (15.1%), Kayin (12.5%), and other groups (10.6%) which included the Kayar, Rakhine, Kachin, and Chin.[66]

One third or 35.7% of the migrants came from urban areas within Myanmar, while 64.3% came from rural areas. Although a majority of respondents (59.8%) reported having adequate living conditions in Myanmar prior to migration, those belonging to the Kayar, Kachin, Chin, and Muslim ethnic groups reported more difficult living conditions as compared to other groups in the sample.[67]

In terms of employment status prior to migration, 21% of the surveyed migrants were unemployed, 38.8% were wage labourers in sectors such as agriculture (10.9%), services (6.7%), educational and social work (3.5%), and other (6.2%). The remaining 40.2% were self-employed, including those with their own farms (32.4%) and merchants (7.8%).[68]

Finally, in terms of levels of educational among surveyed migrants, more female migrants reported lower levels of education (no education and primary education), as well as higher levels (university and vocational education. Male migrants were three times more likely to have received informal education from institutions such as monasteries.[69]

Reasons for Migrating to Thailand

Majority of migrants moved to Thailand for economic reasons, with around 74.9% of surveyed migrants citing factors such as higher income or better employment opportunities as their primary reasons for migration. Personal reasons such as following friends and family or desire for personal experience and exposure were cited by 13.4% of the migrants. Around 7% cited security/safety reasons, and 4.6% cited better living conditions and services in Thailand as their primary reason for migration.[70]

A disaggregation of data according to ethnic group revealed that economic reasons were the primary reason for migration among all ethnic groups, especially the Bamar. On the other hand, the Shan had the highest percentage (22.6%) of those citing security/safety issues, followed by Kayin (7.2%).[71]

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] IOM, 2013., p.9.
[68] Ibid.
[69] IOM, 2013., p.10.
[70] IOM, 2013., pp.11-13.
[71] Ibid.

Assistance/Support in Migration

Among the surveyed migrants, 43.3% came to Thailand through arrangements made by family and friends, 37.7% through brokers, and 18.5% on their own. Only 0.5% of the migrants came through the formal recruitment process stipulated in the MoU signed between Myanmar and Thailand on cooperation in the employment of migrant workers.[72]

Shan state had the highest number of migrants assisted by friends and family, while the highest number of migrants who migrated with the assistance of brokers came from Mon state. The use of brokers was higher among migrants from the five states and region bordering Thailand, than among migrants from non-border states and regions.[73]

Employment Sectors

The IOM assessment identifies the top three employment sectors among surveyed migrants in each target province in Thailand:[74]

In Bangkok (which accounts for 33% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are garment production and sales (23%), other manufacturing (20.6%), and domestic work (17%).
In Samut Sakhon (which accounts for 24% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are fishery related (29.3%), other manufacturing (15.5%), and fishery (15.2%).

In Chiang Mai (which accounts for 14% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are construction (52.2%), other services (11.1%), and food and beverage sales (10%).

In Tak (which accounts for 12% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are agriculture and animal husbandry (30.5%), construction (22.2%), and other services (10.3%).

In Ranong (which accounts for 7% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are fishery related (28.5%), construction (18.8%), and fishery (16.7%).

In Surat Thani (which accounts for 7% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are agriculture and animal husbandry (32.3%), agriculture and animal husbandry related (26.6%), and food and beverage sales (6.3%).

In Kanchanaburi (which accounts for 4% of the total sample), the major employment sectors are other labour work (43.9%), agriculture and animal husbandry (32.2%), and construction (6.7%).

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] IOM, 2013., p.5.

The major employment sectors by gender can be identified as:[75]

Male

- Construction
- Other manufacturing
- Agriculture and husbandry
- Garment production and sales
- Fishering related

Female

- Domestic work
- Garment production and sales
- Fishery related
- Construction
- Other manufacturing

Employment Conditions in Thailand

Female migrants reported lower levels of income than male migrants. Among the lowest income group, there were nearly twice as many females as males. Females were found to be earning a mean monthly income of 219 USD, while males were earning a mean monthly income of 235 USD. On average, monthly wage earners were more likely to be earning at least the minimum wage or more as compared to daily wage earners - whereas 38.2% of the daily wage earners earned less than the minimum wage, only 25.2% of monthly wage earners earned less than the minimum wage.[76]

Migrants with full or temporary documentation were found to be earning higher incomes on average, as compared to those without documentation. Around 65% of migrants who earned less than half the minimum wage were found to be without documentation. At the same time however, higher percentages migrants with coloured cards were also found to be receiving salaries between 150 - 300 THB and below 150 THB per day.[77]

In terms of working conditions, majority of the migrants reported their conditions as adequate (59.8%) or good (32.8%), while those reporting working conditions as very good (3%), bad (4.1%) or very bad (0.2%) comprised only a small minority of surveyed migrants.[78]

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[75] Ibid.
[76] IOM, 2013. pp. 16-18. *Note: The minimum wage in Thailand is THB 300 per day. Mean income data is based on the exchange rate of 1 USD = 35 THB.*
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p.19.

Return Migration

Around 79.9% of surveyed migrants expressed a willingness to return to Myanmar in the future, while 20.1% of migrants wished to stay in Thailand or had no intention of returning at the time of survey. The difference according to gender was negligible. Among those who expressed willingness to return, 82% indicated that recent economic and political changes in Myanmar have influenced their decisions.[79]

A migrant's length of stay in Thailand was found to be one of the strongest determinants of his/her willingness to return. Among migrants who had lived in Thailand for more than 30 years, only 44.1% expressed a willingness to return, indicating that the longer a migrant has stayed in in Thailand, the less willing they are to return. Similarly, the better documented a migrant is (including having access to options for permanent residency), the less willing they are to return.[80]

In terms of reasons for migrating to Thailand, those who cited economic reasons for migration comprised a higher proportion (81%) among those willing to return, while those cited safety and security reasons comprised a slightly lower proportion (74.9%). Similarly, those who cited personal reasons, and better living conditions in Thailand also comprised a lower proportion. It is worth noting that the willingness to return among respondents who claimed to have fled Myanmar due to security/safety concerns is much higher than the willingness to return expressed by displaced persons living in temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border.[81]

Despite the fact that a lower (though still significant) proportion of people who migrated to Thailand for personal reasons are willing to return, the most common primary reasons for wanting to return to Myanmar were found to be personal (77.9% of surveyed migrants). The most cited secondary reason was changes happening in Myanmar (43.3% of surveyed migrants).[82]

Upon return, majority of migrants (77.6%) wish to go back to their hometowns or villages.[83]

Majority of migrants expressed willingness to engage in four job types upon return: farming their own land (32.7%), opening a business (20.9%), selling food and beverages (19.3%), and engaging in trade and retail (14.3%).[84]

A significant concern among those willing to return was the unavailability of jobs in Myanmar that adequately match the skills they learned in Thailand.[85]

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[79] IOM, 2013. pp. 22-23.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., pp. 25-26.
[82] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[83] IOM, 2013., pp. 37-39.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

A policy review conducted in 2012 found evidence to support the concern migrants have regarding job availability on return. Migrants were found to be more willing to move back to Myanmar in the presence of an "enabling working environment" even if the wage received in Myanmar was lower than in Thailand. For example, in the case of less-skilled workers, the difference between wages offered by local subcontractors were reported to be much lower than those offered by international contractors such as the Italian-Thai Development Co. (ITD) which offered a daily wage of MMK 7000 or USD 10 to workers in the Dawei Deep Seaport Project, which forms a part of the SEZ and infrastructure project in Tanintharyi Region.[86]

SECTION THREE: INTERNAL MIGRATION

***Note on internal migration data**: This working paper is based on data and information compiled from different sources, including independent research papers, where relevant. It should be noted that variation among different sources of data, as well as unavailability of data is a key limitation in the context of migration related research in Myanmar. The information presented in this section is gathered from studies and surveys that relied on different methodologies, and although comparative data has been provided where possible, the reader should also note that much of the data is unable to account for irregular migration within Myanmar.*

Demographics

The 2014 Myanmar Housing and Population Census counted 9, 391,126 internal migrants (19.6% of the total population of Myanmar), out of which 4, 453,017 were male and 4, 938,109 were female.[87] Additionally, the population with state/region of usual residence was different from the state/region of birth totalled 4, 834,345 people or roughly 10% of the total population.[88] However, Census data does not include seasonal migration of less than 6 months, and intra-township migration, both of which are believed to be large numbers.[89] Due to the seasonality of agricultural employment in Myanmar, rural to rural, rural to urban, or intra and inter-regional seasonal migration in both source and destination areas is believed to be widespread.

[86] Chantavanich, S. Bangkok Research Center, JETRO Bangkok. "Myanmar Migrants to Thailand and Implications to Myanmar Development." *Policy Review Series on Myanmar Economy*, No.7. October, 2012, p.4. Web.

[87] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population. "The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2." dop.gov.mm. May 2015, p. 127-128. Web.

[88] Ibid., pp. 123-124.

[89] The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census defines internal migration as inter-township movement of more than 6 months.

In the context of internal migration, Census data is believed to be more reliable than other surveys despite its limitations.[90] However, a few thematic studies based on sample data have been carried out to map internal migration patterns in Myanmar, and yielded insightful results. A survey on internal labour migration was conducted by the Internal Labour Organization (ILO) in April, 2015. A total of 7,295 internal labour migrants were interviewed. The key demographic results from the survey are as follows:

- 94% of the respondents were found to be 18 years or older;
- 66% were male, and 34% were female;
- Around 72% identified themselves as ethnic Bamar, while 27% were of other recognized ethnicities in Myanmar;
- 90% of the respondents were Buddhist, 9% were Christian, and the remaining 1% were Muslim, Hindu or Animist;
- The average household size of respondents was five members, with an average of two members engaged in economic activities;
- 63% had completed education up until grade nine, 24% had started high school, however only 6% were found to have graduated.

Census data as well as information from smaller studies suggests that gender is a determinant of migration patterns. However, while the Census recorded more female internal migrants than male, the ILO survey counted more male migrants than female migrants in its sample.

This could be due to a combination of different factors, including that 1) the Census counts all movement whereas the ILO survey only reaches out to workers (i.e. accompanying family members, who are also migrants, are not the target of the study), 2) the ILO survey is not a representative survey and the gender ratio is biased, 3) the Census covers the entire nation but the ILO has smaller coverage, 4) the Census does not count the movement of less than 6 months but other studies do 5) the Census counts inter-township movement within Yangon (which also includes residential migration).

The Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring (QSEM) survey, conducted in 2015 across 6 states/regions of Myanmar, also concluded that women were less inclined to migrate than men.[91] In QSEM's survey regions, the vast majority of women who did migrate were found to prefer long term domestic migration to the urban areas of Yangon and Mandalay, with the notable exception of Chin and Shan states from where women were more likely to migrate internationally.[92]

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[90] The key limitations of Census data are the exclusion of seasonal migration of less than 6 months and intra-township movement, as well as the exclusion of over 1 million people classified as *non-enumerated* population.

[91] Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. "Livelihoods and Social Change in Rural Myanmar: QSEM Series, Round Five Report." LIFT: Yangon. 2016, pp. 30-35. Web.

[92] Ibid. *Note: Destinations for women from these two states varied based on pre-existing migration patterns and geographic locations. Women from Chin state moved to Malaysia, the United States and Singapore, whereas women in Shan state predominantly migrated to Thailand.*

Main Reasons for Movement

The Census recorded data on the main reasons for movement from the place of previous usual residence.[93] Around 41% of the migrant population (9 million) followed family, 34.3% moved for employment or in search of employment, 15.7% due to marriage, 2.2% for education, 0.7% due to conflict, and 5.9% for other reasons.

The QSEM survey results from 2015 suggested a landscape of economic hardship/shock which drives internal migration among the interviewed migrants, while the ILO survey also found the lack of employment opportunities in source areas and a stated need for money among respondents as primary reasons for internal labour migration. Another survey on internal migration in Ayeyarwady and Magway regions revealed that 20% of migrants from both regions also moved in response to economic shocks faced by their households.[94] Broadly speaking therefore, it can be observed that majority of people move to look for work and income, with a smaller percentage of people moving to respond to economic shocks.

Broadly speaking therefore, migration is identified as a livelihood strategy by majority of the households in Myanmar whose members choose migration. For example, for households with medium landholding, it could mean diversifying the livelihood options for family members to protect against extreme events such as crop failures, while for households with large landholding, it could mean opportunities for further skill development and better career prospects in urban areas like Yangon.[95]

Geographical Patterns

Census data shows that approximately 51% (4, 834,345) of the internal migrant population (9 million) moved across states/regions, and the remaining population moved within a given state/region. As highlighted in the previous sub-section reasons for movement, out of the 9 million, 34.3% had moved from their place of previous residence for the purpose of employment or searching for employment.

The ILO survey revealed that 62% of the surveyed labour migrants had migrated for work across states/regions, while 38% had migrated for work within a state/region.[96]

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[93] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population. "The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2." dop.gov.mm. May 2015, p. 127-128. Web.

[94] Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. "A Country on the Move: Domestic Migration in Two Regions of Myanmar." LIFT: Yangon. 2016, p.21. Web.

[95] HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the Southeast of Myanmar." February 2015, p. 11-13. Web.

[96] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour". Yangon: ILO. 2015, pp. 38-39. Web. *Note: The ILO data is based on a purposive sampling method that suffers from an inherent sampling bias. Therefore, this data must not be used for comparison with Census figures.*

The top-four destination areas of internal labour migrants surveyed by the ILO, according to state/region of origin, are as follows[97]:

State/Region of Origin	State/Region of destination			
	Most common destination	**Second most common destination**	**Third most common destination**	**Fourth most common destination**
Ayeyarwady	Yangon (49%)	Ayeyarwady (20%)	Mon (16%)	Tanintharyi (7%)
Bago	Bago (25%)	Yangon (21%)	Tanintharyi (18%)	Mon (14%)
Chin	Chin (80%)	Kachin (9%)	Sagaing (5%)	Magway (2%)
Kachin	Kachin (90%)	Shan (2%)	Yangon (1%)	Mandalay (1%)
Kayah	Kayah (55%)	Shan (24%)	Yangon (6%)	Bago (2%)
Kayin	Kayin (63%)	Yangon (16%)	Mon (12%)	Bago (4%)
Magway	Yangon (18%)	Chin (17%)	Shan (17%)	Magway (15%)
Mandalay	Mandalay (35%)	Shan (25%)	Sagaing (7%)	Kachin (7%)
Mon	Mon (55%)	Kayin (31%)	Tanintharyi (7%)	Yangon (6%)
Nay Pyi Taw	Shan (30%)	Tanintharyi (19%)	Kayah (16%)	Yangon (9%)
Rakhine	Rakhine (53%)	Yangon (34%)	Kachin (6%)	Tanintharyi (2%)
Sagaing	Sagaing (52%)	Kachin (18%)	Chin (5%)	Shan (5%)
Shan	Shan (58%)	Mandalay (18%)	Kayah (13%)	Kachin (5%)
Tanintharyi	Tanintharyi (79%)	Yangon (10%)	Ayeyarwady (3%)	Bago (2%)
Yangon	Yangon (50%)	Mon (8%)	Tanintharyi (8%)	Chin (6%)

[97] Ibid. *Note: The table has been adapted from data published by the ILO. For a more detailed breakdown of origin-destination patterns, see report. Of the total 7,295 respondents in the survey, 7,236 gave sufficient information to determine migration trends at the state/region level.*

A similar study conducted across the Dry Zone, Shan state, and Southeast (Mon state) of Myanmar found that majority of the migration happening in Mon was intra-state, with migration from outside the state is mostly year-round and temporary in nature. Migration to Mon from the Dry Zone is low, as compared to Bago and Ayeyarwady. Certain townships in Mon state, namely Mawlamyine, Mudon, and Kyaikmaraw do attract migration from other states/regions, but majority of migrants in these townships live in temporary settlements.[98] *(The aforementioned study however, does not rely on primary data collection. It must be noted that there are other townships in Mon State which attract many migrant workers from other states/regions which are not covered by the study.)*

The labour force in Shan state on the other hand preferred international migration to China, Thailand, and Malaysia. However, the state was found to attract migrants from the Dry Zone to work in mine, tea plantations, sugarcane farms, etc. Migrants from the Dry Zone also use Shan as a transit point for onward migration to China and Thailand. Intra-state migration in Shan is also high, including seasonal movement across villages or to peri-urban and urban centres such as Mongla township.[99]

In the Dry Zone (Magway and Mandalay regions), internal migration was found to be seasonal, temporary, and permanent. According the type of work available, the preferred destinations for internal labour migrants from the Dry Zone are[100]:

- Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Mandalay for work in industrial zones, tea shops, restaurants, construction, and petty trading;
- Shan state and Southeast to work in tea, sugarcane, rubber plantations, and mines;
- North Kachin for work in gold and jade mines;
- Central Dry Zone for work in crude oil extraction.

Seasonal migration was found to be in the Dry Zone in the case of intra-region migration, whereas inter-region migration was found to be more temporary in nature.[101]

Among the key findings of a study conducted on formal sector internal migration in Myanmar, was that nearly three quarters (71%) of all migrants to the formal sector are from four regions: Ayeyarwady, Yangon, Mandalay, and Bago. Additionally, over half of all formal sector workers in Yangon were migrants. Over one third (38.9%) of formal sector workers in the sample of 15,000 had migrated for work from one state/region to another.[102]

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[98] HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Myanmar. “Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the Southeast of Myanmar.” February 2015, pp.13-18. Web.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Griffiths, M.P. and U Kyaw Zaw Oo. Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG). “Formal sector internal migration in Myanmar.” 2014, p.3. Web.

A smaller study also found Yangon to be the most popular destination for migrants from Ayeyarwady and Magway for approximately 58% and 24% of the migrants respectively.[103]

The ILO survey also reveals some rural-urban migration patterns. Overall, 42.1% of the surveyed migrants had migrated a rural area to an urban area. Urban and rural migration across states/regions were found to be 52.5% 47.5% respectively. Migration across townships within a state/region was largely rural (64.7%).[104]

Major Occupational Sectors

The ILO conducted its survey on internal labour migration across 14 occupational sectors, and the percentage of surveyed migrants working in each sector are as follows[105]:

- Construction (28%)
- Manufacturing (25%)
- Agriculture (11%)
- Mining (10.5%)
- Domestic services (5.7%)
- Wholesale/retail trade (4.5%)
- Fishing (4%)
- Transportation (3.3%)
- Food/beverage services (2.5%)
- Forestry (2.2%)
- Building/land services (0.7%)
- Amenity services (0.6%)
- Hotels (0.4%)
- Sex services (0.08%)

Research conducted on the Dry Zone, Shan state, and Southeast (Mon state) of Myanmar identified occupational sectors preferred by migrants. For instance, in Mon state, migrants from the Delta region (particularly Ayeyarwady) were mostly engaged in fisheries and rubber plantations, while migrants from the Dry Zone were involved in construction work, brick factory, and to a lesser extent rubber plantations. Although work in brick factories is

[103] Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. "A Country on the Move: Domestic Migration in Two Regions of Myanmar." LIFT: Yangon. 2016, p.25. Web.
[104] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour". Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.41. Web.
[105] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour". Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.36. Web. *Note: The ILO study used a purposeful sampling method and this data must be not be taken as representative of the entire internal labour migrant population in the country.*

seasonal in nature, it was found that workers often decide to stay on and find work in other, more permanent sectors such as construction.[106]

In Shan state, migrant workers from the Dry Zone predominantly work in mines, tea plantations, and sugarcane farms. Intra-state migration across townships is also observed, with work in casinos and construction sites often being preferred due to higher wages. Migration to Yangon is also observed.[107]

Migrants from the Dry Zone (Magway and Mandalay regions) migrate for work in a variety of sectors, including construction, industrial zones, tea, sugarcane and rubber plantations, and mining. Work in urban centres/cities and mines tends to be temporary or permanent in nature. On the other hand, work in agriculture or crude oil extraction is seasonal.[108]

Surveys conducted in Magway and Ayeyarwady regions revealed that among migrants who moved to Yangon from these regions, garment factory-work is perceived as highly sought after due to higher wages and regular, long term employment as compared to casual labour.[109]

Migrant Levels of Income

Comprehensive survey information on migrant levels of income is available from the ILO and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation.

The ILO survey recorded an overall average migrant monthly income of MMK 108,180 ($85), with an average of MMK 121,775 ($96) for males and MMK 82,319 ($65) for females.[110] The survey also recorded average monthly incomes of migrants by occupational sector (except Sex services) and gender, and the data is as follows[111]:

Occupational Sector	**Average (mean) monthly income**		
	Male migrants	**Female migrants**	**All migrants**
Agriculture	MMK 89,777 ($71)	MMK 82,088 ($65)	MMK 86,793 ($68)

[106] HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Myanmar. “Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the Southeast of Myanmar.” February 2015, pp.13-18. Web.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. “A Country on the Move: Domestic Migration in Two Regions of Myanmar.” LIFT: Yangon. 2016, pp.25-29. Web.
[110] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. “Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour”. Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.4. Web.
[111] Ibid., p.45.

Forestry	MMK 144,632 ($114)	MMK 120,464 ($95)	MMK 140,321 ($110)
Fishing	MMK 89,450 ($70)	MMK 84,541 ($67)	MMK 87,986 ($69)
Mining	MMK 145,033 ($114)	MMK 99,888 ($79)	MMK 139,774 ($110)
Manufacturing	MMK 103,032 ($81)	MMK 83,209 ($65)	MMK 92,872 ($73)
Amenity services	MMK 123,400 ($97)	MMK 66,429 ($52)	MMK 114,915 ($90)
Construction	MMK 139,670 ($110)	MMK 95,518 ($75)	MMK 130,577 ($103)
Wholesale/retail trade	MMK 88,685 ($70)	MMK 68,344 ($54)	MMK 79,434 ($62)
Transport of goods	MMK 143,880 ($113)	MMK 71,000 ($56)	MMK 138,760 ($109)
Hotels	MMK 99,000 ($78)	MMK 156,111 ($123)	MMK 116,724 ($92)
Food/beverage services	MMK 71,797 ($56)	MMK 65,210 ($51)	MMK 71,798 ($56)
Buildings/land service	MMK 106,071 ($83)	MMK 68,708 ($54)	MMK 95,952 ($75)
Domestic services	MMK 100,022 ($79)	MMK 60,520 ($48)	MMK 71,361 ($56)

A study (based on secondary research data) conducted by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in the Dry Zone, Shan state, and the Southeast (Mon state) of Myanmar found information on wages by main occupational sectors in the geographic areas where the study was focused.

In Mon state, income information was collected from migrants working in the rubber plantation, agriculture, fisheries, construction, and brick factory sectors[112]:

Sector	Daily wages (MMK)	Monthly wages (MMK)
Rubber		
Tapping	--	50,000 - 60,000
Weeding/other	2,000	20,000
Agriculture	2,000	60,000

[112] HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Myanmar. “Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the Southeast of Myanmar.” February 2015, pp.14-19. Web. *Note: The study conducted by HELVETAS relies on secondary data, and as such the information relies on a small, targeted sample of respondents chosen for the study.*

Fisheries		
Labourer	--	70,000
Captain	--	80,000 - 85,000 (10% of the catch)
Construction		
Unskilled	4,000	120,000
Semi-skilled	6,000	180,000
Brick Factory	4,000	120,000

In Shan state for example, migrant workers from Dry Zone working in tea plantations in Nahmsam township reported earning 100,000-150,000 MMK for 3 months with free accommodation provided by the plantation owner. In some townships, daily wages are paid. For example, in Pin Laung township, daily wages range from 2,000 MMK in the low season to 3,000-3,500 MMK in the peak season.[113]

In the Dry Zone, income information was collected from migrants working in the agriculture, oil processing, construction, sales, and restaurant sectors[114]:

Sector	**Daily wages (MMK)**	**Monthly wages (MMK)**
Agriculture	2,000-3,000	60,000-90,000
Oil processing	4,000-4,500	120,000-135,000
Construction	4,500-6,000	135,000-180,000
Sales person	--	50,000-100,000
Restaurant	--	50,000-100,000

Assistance/Support in Recruitment and Migration

Multiple studies identify social networks as an important source of assistance and/or support to Myanmar migrants seeking to move internally as well as internationally. The existence of social networks is also crucial for migrants who wish to progress from internal to international migration.[115] The importance of social networks in facilitating migration opportunities has

[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., p.9.

also been observed through variations in migration patterns at village level. For instance, in one township surveyed in Mandalay region in 2014, migration rates between villages were as low as 1.2% in one village, to as high as 15.6% in another.[116]

In the survey conducted by ILO, 72% of all surveyed migrants reported to have received some type of assistance from another person. Among these (5,233 out of 7,295 respondents), 86% received assistance from friends/family/other acquaintances, 9% used a labour broker, and 5% used other sources.[117]

Only 5% of the surveyed migrants stated that the person who had assisted them (family member, broker, or other) had a recruitment license. Men were slightly more likely (5%) to receive assistance from a licensed recruiter than women (3%).[118]

Forced Labour and Trafficking

The ILO survey on internal labour migration identified that 26% of all respondents were in a situation of forced labour, while 14% were in a situation of trafficking for forced labour. There were no differences between the rates of forced labour and trafficking among males and females.

The survey also identified characteristics of respondents as well as situations, behaviours, and conditions associated with high rates of exploitation. These include being a child (especially female), having little or no education, household size, migration across state/region as compared to within, using a broker for job placement and travel, working as a domestic worker, in mining, in fishing, in wholesale/retail trade, and in food/beverage service. Additionally, migrating to Ayeyarwady, Kayin, and Sagaing states/regions placed a higher risk of exploitation on migrants due to the level of exploitation in particular industries in these areas.

SECTION FOUR: REMITTANCES

Note on remittance data*: This working paper is based on data and information compiled from different sources, including independent research papers, where relevant. It should be noted that variation among different sources of data, as well as unavailability of data is a key limitation in the context of migration related research in Myanmar. The information presented in this section is gathered from studies and surveys that relied on different methodologies,*

[116] Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. “Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring: Round Four Report.” LIFT: Yangon. December, 2014, pp.18-19. Web.
[117] International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO Liaison Officer for Myanmar. “Internal Labour Migration in Myanmar: Building an evidence-base on patterns in migration, human trafficking and forced labour”. Yangon: ILO. 2015, p.3, 42. Web.
[118] Ibid.

and although comparative data has been provided where possible, the reader should also note that much of the data is unable to account for irregular remittance flows in and out of Myanmar.

Inflows

International remittances to Myanmar are predominantly sent through unofficial channels, and it is difficult to estimate the total volume of remittances. The Myanmar Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES) was reported to have estimated the annual official and unofficial inflow of remittances at USD 8 billion in 2015.[119]

According to the World Bank, remittances worth a total of USD 3.468 billion flowed into Myanmar in 2015, increasing by over USD 300 million from 2014 when total inflows were recorded to be USD 3.103 billion, accounting for 4.8% of GDP share.[120] This is a significant increase from data published in 2010, when the total volume of remittances to Myanmar was worth USD 200 million.[121]

The IOM estimated in 2013 that USD 2.9 billion were sent back from Thailand to Myanmar, of which 83% were sent through unofficial channels, and 78.2% were sent back to states and regions bordering Thailand, including Mon, Kayin, Tanintharyi, Shan, and Kayah.[122]

A forthcoming study on impact of migration on the rural economy in Myanmar suggests that 65.7% households received cross-border remittances, with 35.8% of the household income coming from remittances.[123]

Outflows

The World Bank estimated remittance outflows with USD 773 million from Myanmar in 2014, although this number might be larger if unofficial flows are taken into account.[124]

Bilateral Remittance Inflows

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119 Aye Thidar Kyaw. “Informal cash flows threaten kyat policy.” Myanmar Times. 2 September, 2015. Web. *Note: Figure reported as according to the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.*
120 World Bank. “Migration and Remittances Data: Annual Remittances Data, Inflows (updated as of Apr. 2016).” 24 September, 2015. Web.
121 World Bank. “Migration and Remittances Fact Book.” 2011.
122 IOM, 2013.
123 Griffiths, M.P. Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG). “The Precarity We Left Behind: Migration in Rural Myanmar.” Forthcoming publication.
124 World Bank. “Migration and Remittances Data: Annual Remittances Data, Outflows (updated as of Apr. 2016).” 24 September, 2015. Web. *Note: Data for 2015 is unavailable according to publicly available datasets.*

According to the World Bank, the top five bilateral remittance inflows to Myanmar in 2015 came from Thailand (USD 1.8 billion), Saudi Arabia (USD 954 million), United States (USD 189 million), Bangladesh (USD 143 million), and Malaysia (USD 92 million).[125]

Note: It is important to keep in mind that remittance flows do not always correspond with migrant stock, and this is evident in the case of remittance flows from Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh to Myanmar. Although both countries have just over 200,000 Myanmar migrants, there is a significant difference in the amount of annual remittances sent. Furthermore, the official 2014 Myanmar Census does not enumerate Myanmar nationals living in Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh, giving rise to questions over whether this limitation has been overcome by the MOLES in its estimate of USD 8 billion worth of remittances. There is little clarity over the type of channels used by Myanmar migrants in Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh for sending money, as well as a comprehensive classification of recipients.

Remittance Receiving Households

According to a study conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) with the Myanmar Department of Rural Development (DRD), at the Union level 3.75% of all surveyed households were remittance receiving households (classified as those who reported remittances as being at least 10% of their income, but not necessarily their main income source). Among remittance receiving households, remittance accounted for 49.1 of total household income at the Union level.[126]

In terms of variation across states/regions, the study found that the lowest proportion of remittance receiving households were in Shan state (0.26%), and the highest proportion were in Kayin state (19.49%). Differences were observed in terms of the percentage of household income generated through remittances across the states/regions. For instance, remittances accounted for only 26.7% of household income in Shan state, but accounted for 87.3% of household income in Yangon even though only 0.78% of households in Yangon were receiving remittances.[127]

Remittance Dependent Households

The FAO/DRD study also found that at the Union level 2.03% of surveyed households were remittance dependent households (classified as those who reported remittances as their major source of income). The lowest level of remittance dependence was observed in Shan

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[125] World Bank. "Migration and Remittances Data: Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2015." 24 September, 2015. Web. *Note: The World Bank uses estimated migrant stock to compute remittance figures.*
[126] Myanmar Department of Rural Development (DRD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG). "Dimensions of Poverty, Vulnerability, and Social Protection in Rural Communities in Myanmar." SPPRG: Myanmar. 29 September, 2015, pp.101-102. Print.
[127] Ibid.

state (0%), and highest Kayin state (12.09%). In Yangon, remittance dependence was found to be 0.78%.[128]

Remittance Receiving Regions

The main remittance receiving states/regions according to the FAO/DRD study in terms of % of households receiving remittances are Kayin (9.6%), Mon (6.15%), and Chin (4.99%). On the other hand, in Yangon, Mandalay, Ayeyarwady, Shan, and Kayah, the proportion was almost negligible (<1%).[129]

SECTION FIVE: SAFE MIGRATION

There are numerous risks involved in international and internal migration for Myanmar nationals, including trafficking and forced labour, use of informal brokers, exploitation in destination areas, and lack of legal redressal mechanisms. Often, irregular migration mechanisms, particularly in the case of international migration, may be viewed more favourably by migrants due to greater flexibility and a lesser debt burden as compared to regular means (such as government schemes or licensed brokers).[130]

The dangers of smuggling and extortion of migrants have been observed in the case of maritime migration across borders in the Bay of Bengal, as well as land transportation from Myanmar to other countries such as Thailand, Bangladesh, and Malaysia.[131] The barriers to safe migration are often interconnected with the economic compulsions that influence migrants' decisions to move, suggesting a need for better economic opportunities at the local level within Myanmar, as well as better access to knowledge that can help migrants make informed choices.[132]

A survey on safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices among 625 potential migrant workers, conducted by the ILO and MDRI-CESD in Mandalay region, Tanintharyi region, and Shan state revealed that lack of local livelihood options and low wages are the primary reasons for migration among young people (18-24 years). Inadequate access to information

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128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and World Bank. "Livelihoods and Social Change in Rural Myanmar: QSEM Series, Round Five Report." LIFT: Yangon. 2016, p.33. Web.
131 Newland, K. Migration Policy Institute (MPI). "Irregular Maritime Migration in the Bay of Bengal: The Challenges of Protection, Management and Cooperation." July, 2015. Web.
132 HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Myanmar. "Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the Southeast of Myanmar." February 2015, p.3. Web.

on safe migration consequently creates further risks, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable potential migrants.[133]

The survey found that agriculture was the largest employment sector (45%) within Myanmar for potential migrant workers, followed by the informal sector (27%) which included jobs such as vending, sewing, and unpaid work as homemakers. The need for a gendered approach to safe migration outreach was identified based on the fact that male potential migrants predominantly worked in agriculture (54%), while women were more engaged in the informal sector (46%).[134]

Approximately 66% of surveyed potential migrants expected to migrate irregularly (highest in Shan state at 89%), with the help of friends/family (50%), or on their own (16%). Around 22% expected to use the services of a recruitment agency, or a broker (9%). The cost of migration via regular channels, and difficulties in obtaining official documents such as a passport were key factors influencing the decision to migrate irregularly in Shan state and Tanintharyi region. Furthermore, in terms of intended destination outside of Myanmar, 94% of migrants planning to work in China and 86% of migrants planning to work in Thailand anticipated migration through irregular channels.[135]

In order to cover the cost of migration, 50% of potential migrants (both internal and international) indicated they will be using their own savings, while 32% expected to take out a loan, and 15% anticipated that they will be paying through wage deductions (a practice that has the potential introduce the possibility of debt bondage upon arrival).[136]

Although a majority of migrants (70%) were aware that both a passport and visa are necessary to migrate regularly across borders, however only 27% were aware that a job offer is also needed, and 19% understood the requirement of a work permit.[137]

In the context of labour migration (both international and internal), 73% of potential migrants believed that friends and family were the most reliable source of information about migration, indicating the strong role played by social networks. Recruitment agencies and brokers were considered reliable by only 10% of the sample population. Notably, only 1% considered local labour authorities a dependable source of migration information.[138]

A low level of awareness was observed among potential migrants of the risks involved in migration, with 37% being aware of the risk of financial burden caused by high expenditure, 23% of the risk of deception, 23% of exploitation, and 16% of complex procedures.

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[133] International Labour Organization (ILO) and MDRI-CESD. "Safe Migration Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Myanmar." ILO: Bangkok. 2015, p.ix. Web.
[134] Ibid., p.x.
[135] Ibid., p.xi.
[136] Ibid., p.xi.
[137] Ibid., p.xiii.
[138] Ibid., p.xiii.

Concerning the crucial interlinkages between internal and international migration, the survey found that many internal migrants from the Dry Zone and Delta regions moving to Shan state and Tanintharyi region respectively, decide to migrate internationally to China and Thailand. However, these migrants become vulnerable to exploitation due to lack of social networks in the region to facilitate cross-border movement. They often resort to relying on the services of local brokers which increases the risk of exploitation and forced labour.[139]

Overall, it is evident that access to information on how to migrate safely, awareness of migrant workers' rights and entitlements, and knowledge of working conditions is very poor among potential migrants in Myanmar.[140]

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[139] Ibid., p.xiv.
[140] Ibid., p.xiv.

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