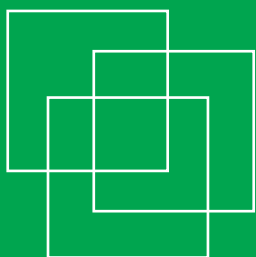


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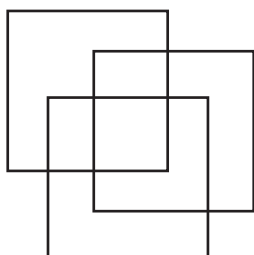


Safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices in Myanmar

Tripartite Action to Protect the Rights of Migrant Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Subregion
(GMS TRIANGLE project)

ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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Foreword

The political, economic and social reforms initiated since the general elections held in late 2010 have begun a process of change in Myanmar, placing it on-track to becoming a more modern and democratic nation. Following decades of isolation, this transition to democracy has resulted in the easing of economic sanctions, growing diplomatic rapprochement with the international community and increased optimism for adherence to human rights standards and norms in the country's administration.

Recognizing the significant progress achieved, in 2012 the International Labour Conference lifted the restrictions limiting Myanmar from full participation in International Labour Organization (ILO) meetings and from receiving technical cooperation on issues other than the elimination of forced labour. Following this decision, the ILO Governing Body endorsed an 18-month programme framework of immediate activities in Myanmar, with development of a full Decent Work Country Programme contingent upon further progress made in eradicating forced labour and strengthening freedom of association and social dialogue. As part of the inception phase for the Country Programme, consultations held with the Government and social partners identified labour migration as one of five priority areas requiring preparatory research and policy development.

Driven by widespread poverty and lack of sufficient employment opportunities within the domestic labour market, labour migration has been a vital coping strategy for a large segment of Myanmar's labour force for decades. However, opportunities for research and dialogue on the issue to formulate comprehensive protection policies had been very limited until the recent reforms began. To assist with filling this knowledge gap, the ILO's Tripartite Action to Protect the Rights of Migrants Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS TRIANGLE project) supported the Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) to carry out an assessment of safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices.

The findings of the study reveal both the challenges and importance of developing effective labour migration policies in Myanmar. Although the expectations inspired by the reform process are high, everyday life in many local areas remains a struggle to meet basic needs. This encourages migrant workers to endure substantial legal, financial and even physical risks in pursuit of opportunities to work abroad, with few protections in place to provide assistance when they face abuse or other difficulties.

Operational in Myanmar since 2013, the interventions of the GMS TRIANGLE project on strengthening policy and legislation, building capacity of stakeholders and providing support services are exceptionally relevant to many of the most critical needs identified by the research. In addition, the two cross-cutting issues recognized within the ILO's programme framework for Myanmar – gender mainstreaming and capacity development – are fundamental to the project strategy.

The ILO is committed to continued technical cooperation with tripartite constituents, under this project and others, to promote effective labour migration governance and a rights-based approach to labour migration in Myanmar and in destination countries.

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Executive summary

Introduction

Workers seeking temporary employment abroad constitute the vast majority of international migrants departing from Myanmar. Estimates by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES) have suggested that as much as 10 per cent of the labour force is employed overseas (2012). These migrant workers play a critically important role in shaping the country's economic and social development, however, decades of isolation from the international community and gaps in the policy framework governing labour migration have meant that their situation at places of origin is still inadequately understood.

To obtain further empirical information, the ILO's GMS TRIANGLE project partnered with MDRI-CESD to conduct a survey of safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices among 625 potential migrant workers in Mandalay Region, Tanintharyi Region and Shan State. These sites were chosen based on consultation with stakeholders and provided a diverse cross-section of the conditions under which labour migration occurs. The pioneering study will be used to shape the design and evaluate the impact of policy measures, capacity building trainings and support services to protect the rights of migrant workers throughout the migration process.

Profile of potential migrants

For the purposes of the study, potential migrant workers were defined as persons between 15 to 45 years of age who intend to work abroad within the next two years. The majority of the potential migrants surveyed were men (66 per cent), however, the result should not be interpreted as representative. The gender breakdown of migrant workers in Myanmar is unknown due to the paucity of reliable disaggregated data on labour migration but the available evidence suggests that the gender balance is not so uneven.

The age of potential migrants was typically between 18 and 24 (55 per cent), implying that demographic pressures created by a large youth population are part of the calculus determining migration. Lack of sufficient job opportunities and low wages encourage many young people to go abroad in order to better support their families.

Young migrants (below the age of 18) represented 3 per cent (n=19) of the total sample but may be under-represented due to laws restricting their employment in many destination countries and exclusion of those under 15 years old from the sample. Although migration of young people is not intrinsically problematic, having no choice but to migrate irregularly before finishing schooling due to lack of local livelihood options (and inadequate access to information on safe migration) does create undue risks.

Approximately two-thirds of potential migrants described themselves as ethnically Bamar or Dawei (n=414), with the remainder coming from a variety of minority groups (n=211) that closely reflected their respective local populations. Although there is no reason to assume these findings are typical for Myanmar as a whole, they do suggest that the ethnic makeup of migrants from Myanmar is extremely diverse.

Although nearly all migrants in Dawei and Mandalay could speak Burmese as a first or second language, a sizeable portion in Shan State were not fluent (18 per cent). This suggests that, particularly in ethnic minority areas, using local languages for dissemination of safe migration information is an important consideration for reaching some of the poorest and most vulnerable potential migrants.

Nearly half of potential migrants had not completed a secondary education (48 per cent) although this was thought to be generally representative of educational attainment in their places of origin. On the other hand, 22 per cent of potential migrants had finished university and were still planning to migrate (in many cases for low or semi-skilled jobs) in order to earn a higher income, raising concerns about the scale of "brain drain" and "brain waste" occurring.

Most potential migrants were already working in some type of remunerative activity (70 per cent) but unemployment was a particular problem in Shan State (35 per cent) and Tanintharyi Region (39 per cent). Vulnerable employment was also widespread, with 53 per cent of potential migrants employed as own-account and family workers. It can be inferred that in addition to higher earnings, lack of employment opportunities and stable earnings are important motivations for many workers who choose to migrate.

Agriculture was the largest sector of employment within Myanmar for potential migrants (45 per cent), but a large number (27 per cent) also worked in a variety of informal sector jobs such as vending, sewing and unpaid work as homemakers. It was notable that men migrants predominantly worked in agriculture (54 per cent) and women in informal sector jobs (46 per cent), dictating a gender sensitive approach to outreach.

Intentions and expectations of potential migrants

The prime motivation for migrants as a whole was the promise of higher wages (50 per cent) but unemployment and underemployment were also important considerations in Shan State and Tanintharyi Region (43 and 31 per cent). Migrants from Mandalay Region appear to have less trouble obtaining employment at home and are pulled overseas by wage differentials, while there are job shortages regardless of remuneration in Shan State and Tanintharyi Region.

Potential migrants typically planned to depart within the next three months (42 per cent). However, there were major differences based upon destination country as migrating to the Middle East (67 per cent), Singapore (57 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (44 per cent) was more often expected to take 1-2 years. This long duration has important policy implications as any unnecessary delays in deployment for regular channels may provide a greater incentive for irregular migration in some corridors. It also suggests ample awareness of the destinations that necessitate regular migration and those that offer more flexibility – such as Thailand.

The most frequent intended destination country for migrants of both genders was Thailand (39 per cent) because of the low costs involved, close proximity for those living in border areas and ease of migrating. Singapore was the second most popular choice for women at 15 per cent (reflecting the country's high demand for domestic workers), followed by China (11 per cent); while for men, Malaysia (26 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (18 per cent) were the next most common destinations. The dissimilarities exist partly because women from Myanmar are excluded entirely from the Employment Permit System in the Republic of Korea (due to concerns from MOLES about the physical demands of the sectors of work available, arranging accommodation and ensuring the safety of women migrants) and from domestic work in Malaysia (due to nationality restrictions imposed by the Malaysian Government).

In each region, potential migrants had disparate intentions for where they planned to work. In Mandalay Region, most migrants expected to go to Malaysia (39 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (31 per cent), with chain migration and word of the exceptionally high wages for low-skilled work in the Republic of Korea said to be key motivations. The two main destination countries for migrants from Shan State were Thailand (43 per cent) and China (32 per cent), for which the nearness, simplicity and economy of crossing borders and finding work were said to be key reasons. For Tanintharyi Region, the majority of migrants planned to migrate to Thailand (71 per cent) due to close proximity and low cost.

Some interesting patterns emerged in analyzing the intended destination country of potential migrants by ethnicity and religion. Shan migrants, who share a similar culture and language with the Thais, were much more likely to decide to migrate to Thailand (66 per cent). The proportion was even higher among Kayin migrants, with 81 per cent intending to migrate to Thailand; both historically and presently a site of refuge from conflict and home to a large population of ethnic Kayin. Akhar migrants, who continue to maintain strong cross-border ties and even family relations with communities in south western China, were more commonly interested in migrating to that country (52 per cent). Among Muslim migrants (n=16), nearly all were planning to migrate to Islamic countries (88 per cent).



The most common sectors that migrants intended to work in were services (29 per cent) and manufacturing (22 per cent), probably because they are considered to be less dirty, dangerous and demeaning (3D) jobs. The preference for service work was even greater among women migrants at 41 per cent. While manufacturing is certainly a possible sector of employment for migrants in many destination countries, it is doubtful that such a large portion will find work in services, which suggests that many potential migrants do not have an actual job offer prior to departure and are ill-informed about the type of work they are likely to be doing upon arrival. Although neither gender appeared to be very aware of the employment opportunities available abroad, the share among women did seem to be larger.

Approximately two-thirds of potential migrants expected to migrate irregularly with the help of friends and family or independently (50 and 16 per cent respectively), and were more than twice as likely to do so as use the services of a recruitment agency (22 per cent) or broker (9 per cent). The rate of irregular migration occurring may be even higher as many brokers simply provide smuggling services without concern for legal documentation. Projected use of broker services was surprisingly low, although the term was found to have strongly negative associations which may have contributed to under-reporting.

There were some distinct differences revealed in migration channels used by region. In Mandalay Region, 63 per cent planned to use a recruitment agency or broker because of the greater distance to border areas and because many potential migrants there intended to migrate to administratively and logistically more complicated destinations such as the Republic of Korea and Malaysia. In Shan State, migrants were overwhelmingly planning to use irregular channels to migrate (89 per cent), either with assistance from friends or family or on their own. Key informants explained that migrants in Shan State prefer to use irregular channels because the process of getting a passport and visa is difficult, the cost of migrating via regular channels is high and the duration required quite long. Similarly in Tanintharyi Region, the vast majority migrate irregularly (85 per cent), which was mainly because of the high expense of migrating through regular channels. As regular migration often requires departure via Yangon, it is logistically more difficult for migrants in rural and border areas.

The expected channels for migration were highly correlated with intended destination country. The vast majority of migrants planning to work in China (94 per cent) and Thailand (86 per cent) anticipated migrating irregularly. Other countries were predominately destinations for prospective regular migrants via licensed recruitment agencies or government to government channels, such as the Republic of Korea (67 per cent), the Middle East (67 per cent) and Japan (57 per cent). Plans to migrate to Malaysia more commonly involved unlicensed brokers (31 per cent).

Likely due to policy restrictions, workplace rules, safety concerns and the high expense involved, many migrants were not planning to bring their children with them overseas. Approximately 9 per cent of migrants expected their children to join them, with the vast majority heading to Thailand, Malaysia or China and migrating irregularly.

The destinations expected to be the most expensive by migrants included Japan, the Middle East, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, which require more travel, have a higher cost of living and are more likely to necessitate the involvement of recruitment actors and obtaining legal documentation. Thailand and China were perceived to be substantially cheaper, with most migrants expecting to pay less than 300,000 Myanmar Kyat (MMK) (US\$310) to migrate, and some as little as 900 Thai Baht (THB) (US\$28). The recruitment actors (or lack thereof) involved in the migration process were found to be an important determinant of expenditure.

Half of potential migrant workers thought they would be able to cover the cost of migrating with their own savings, while 32 per cent expected to take out a loan and 15 per cent anticipated paying through wage deductions. By region, a much higher proportion of potential migrants expected to take out loans in Mandalay (55 per cent) than in Shan (7 per cent) or Tanintharyi (26 per cent). This is largely explained by the greater number of workers in Mandalay Region who migrate regularly through recruitment agents or brokers to more expensive destination countries but there are other factors involved as well, including less access to loans from financial institutions in some areas.

A larger number of migrants in Tanintharyi Region expected to finance migration through wage deductions (24 per cent), a risky practice that introduces the possibility of debt bondage upon arrival. Its prevalence is likely because of

the substantial number of unlicensed brokers operating in the Region who recruit for agricultural, fishing or seafood processing work in Thailand. In many cases, these brokers may actually be a part of a migrant's social network, as 56 per cent of those who planned to make wage deduction arrangements said that they were migrating with the help of "friends and family".

A higher number of men than women planned to obtain loans (38 vs. 20 per cent) to finance their migration, suggesting that women likely have less need of loans to finance migration because of the lower cost of migrating irregularly but also may have reduced access to financial services. Rural women in particular, who represent a sizeable portion of potential migrants, are considered to be among Myanmar's most marginalized socio-economic groups.

Migrants traveling for work abroad with the assistance of a broker (66 per cent) or a recruitment agency (43 per cent) were much more likely to anticipate needing a loan than those migrating with the help of friends and family (26 per cent) or alone (16 per cent). Many recruitment agencies or brokers assist migrants to obtain informal loans but the interest rates charged in such cases may be exorbitant and the repayment terms unfavourable in comparison to those available from financial institutions.

The majority of potential migrants anticipated working abroad for a period of less than four years (54 per cent). A strong correlation was found between the anticipated amount paid to migrate and the planned duration of employment for migrants, suggesting that opportunity cost heavily affects migrants' thinking on duration of stay.

The wage expectations of potential migrants varied quite broadly, with a quarter of migrants anticipating earnings above MMK500,000 (US\$520) and an almost equal number expecting wages between MMK200,000-299,000 per month (US\$210-310). Women migrants were less likely than men (13 vs. 31 per cent) to anticipate wages above MMK500,000 (US\$520) and a greater proportion were unsure of what amount of remuneration they could expect to receive. Even after controlling for destination country, similar dynamics of fewer women anticipating high salaries or being unaware of what to expect in wages were still apparent. For example, a disturbingly high number of women migrants planning to leave for work in China had no idea what they would be paid (46 per cent) – much higher than for men migrants going to the same country (9 per cent).

Migrants intending to work in the Republic of Korea were the most likely to expect high wages, with 92 per cent anticipating a monthly income of over MMK500,000 (US\$520). Japan, the Middle East and Singapore were also considered high wage destination countries. For Thailand and Malaysia, the majority (58 per cent) anticipated monthly salaries of between MMK100,000-299,000 (US\$105-310) and between MMK200,000-399,000 (US\$210-415), respectively. The highly publicized minimum wage laws enacted in both countries is an important factor to consider behind the confidence of these predictions.

There were clear assumptions of bigger economic rewards for those who had completed more education, as nearly half of migrants who had completed a university degree (48 per cent) and 28 per cent of high school graduates expected to earn over MMK500,000 (US\$520). Whether these suppositions about higher income were actually fulfilled warrants further study as there is little evidence available on whether migrants seeking low and semi-skilled jobs receive recognition for credentials obtained in Myanmar.

The expected savings rate for migrants was less than a quarter of their earnings for 57 per cent of migrants but only a small portion stated that they did know how much they would save (15 per cent). Remittance amounts planned were noticeably higher, with the greater portion of migrants (55 per cent) expecting to send home at least half of their income. The intended purpose of these remittances was varied, including living expenses, house construction, education of children, purchase of livestock and donation. Group discussions with return migrants confirmed that they had retained 50-80 per cent of income.

Men migrants expected to send considerably greater amounts of remittances home than women, with 64 per cent of men planning to remit at least half of their income compared to 36 per cent of women. A number of differences, including greater access to high income destination countries, better paying jobs and traditional gender roles are



possible explanatory factors. It also appears likely that access and awareness of how to use remittance services may be lower for women migrants due to higher levels of informal sector employment. It is unclear how this substantially higher expected rate of remittances for men migrants matches with the reality as there have been a range of findings on gendered remittance patterns at the global level, and limited data on the situation in Myanmar specifically.

The two most commonly anticipated means for remitting money from overseas were through banks (38 per cent) and the hundi system (35 per cent) (see definition in section 3.14), with a smaller number of migrants using their friends to physically carry money back when they visit home (20 per cent). Although there is little comparable data available on the amount of remittances sent through informal money transfers in Asia, this would appear to be a high rate of utilization in relation to more formalized service providers. Particularly in Shan State, the proportion of migrants expecting to send remittances through friends and family was quite substantial (43 per cent). The results appear to show that use of informal channels remains dominant in many corridors.

Awareness of safe migration practices among potential migrants

The majority of migrants (70 per cent) were aware that both a passport and visa are necessary to migrate regularly but only 27 per cent realized that a job offer is also needed and only 19 per cent understood that a work permit is generally required. As many migrants are known to cross borders with short-term border passes and only later obtain jobs and permission to work, this finding may reflect what they see as the practical requirements. Men migrants were somewhat more aware than women of the legal requirements, which probably results from greater utilization of recruitment agencies to migrate regularly.

Although a maximum amount of four times their basic salary earned has been set for recruitment fees charged to migrant workers, very few potential migrants were aware that a limit has been fixed (9 per cent). If this policy is to be implemented effectively, it appears that a major increase in promulgation is needed to ensure that migrants are aware of their rights during recruitment.

A widely held belief among potential migrants was that friends and family were the most reliable source of information about migrating for work (73 per cent), with recruitment agencies and brokers the only other source considered reliable by a substantial number (10 per cent). In addition, only 1 per cent of migrants considered local labour authorities to be a dependable source of migration information. It was also notable that all potential migrants under 18 years of age (n=19) felt that the only information source they could rely upon was friends and family.

Brokers and recruitment agents were considered less reliable sources of information for those interested in migrating to Thailand (5 per cent) and China (5 per cent). A probable explanation is that higher levels of irregular migration make brokers and agents less relevant sources of information but it must also be considered that the recruitment actors specializing in certain locations have earned a bad reputation for deception and abuse.

Almost half of potential migrant workers believed that reputation was the most important criteria for choosing a recruitment agency or broker (48 per cent). Without a more systematic and impartial means for comparing the services of the available recruitment actors, the only real way in which recruitment agencies could be assessed is through word of mouth from other migrants or through asking the parties themselves. While these approaches certainly have value, a more authoritative source of information appears to be an important gap to be filled in allowing migrants to make better decisions.

The largest group of potential migrants would contact their friends or family members if they had a dispute with a recruitment agency (48 per cent). A considerably smaller number of migrants stated that they would go to the police (19 per cent), the village head (14 per cent) or labour authorities (10 per cent) if they had a grievance, which suggests that there is a lack of knowledge about jurisdiction and/or trust in local authorities for assistance with recruitment complaints. Outside of friends and family, women were most comfortable in approaching the police with such problems (24 per cent).

A pattern of greater reliance on more formal assistance was prominent for migrants expecting to go to countries with higher levels of regular migration. One-third of migrants planning to go to the Republic of Korea said they would approach labour authorities with their grievances and 30 per cent of migrants heading to Singapore said they would seek the help of police. Conversely, migrants heading to Thailand (56 per cent) and China (54 per cent) were much more reliant on their social networks for support.

The problem that migrants were most aware might occur during migration was the financial burden caused by high expenditure (37 per cent). Knowledge of other possible difficulties included deception (23 per cent), exploitation (23 per cent) and complex procedures (16 per cent). In addition, a substantial group of migrants were not aware of any of the risks involved (20 per cent). The results show perilously low awareness among potential migrants of some of the most serious risks involved with migration.

Comparing gender differences in awareness, men were more frequently aware of the problems caused by the high costs involved (41 vs. 29 per cent), and women the potential for exploitation (31 vs. 20 per cent). Whether exploitation is actually more of a risk for women migrants is difficult to determine with any certainty, and awareness of the possibility should be increased for both men and women. There were also some troubling variances in awareness between ethnic groups, with Akhar migrants more likely to be unaware of any of the potential challenges involved with migrating (34 per cent).

An important dynamic linking internal and international migration was uncovered in Shan State and Tanintharyi Region which adversely affects migrant awareness. Because of high rates of international migration in these border areas, labour shortages have been created that are filled by internal migrants from Myanmar's Dry Zone and Delta areas. Many of these workers later decide to migrate to China or Thailand for higher wages but become vulnerable to exploitation because they lack social networks in the area to facilitate their journeys. Instead, they must rely upon the services of unfamiliar brokers which can lead to placement in poor working conditions and even situations of forced labour.

Awareness of working conditions and labour protections among potential migrants

Although the majority of potential migrants knew that wages should be included in their employment contract (55 per cent), fewer were aware that working hours (40 per cent) and benefits (26 per cent) also ought to be defined and even less understood that job duties (17 per cent), the employment period (14 per cent) and rules for termination (4 per cent) are generally a part of such agreements. Nearly another quarter of migrants stated that they did not know any of the articles needed in a contract, which likely reflects the fact that most potential migrants in Myanmar have probably never signed an employment contract before.

Potential migrants in Shan State had the largest knowledge gaps related to employment contracts, with less than half even aware that their wages should be established in writing (39 per cent) and over a third unacquainted with any of the usual terms. It was a common belief in Shan State that irregular migrants cannot expect to receive written employment contracts, making their contents irrelevant from the perspective of most.

The problems that migrants were most commonly aware of in destination countries were related to health and safety (32 per cent), extortion or arrest by authorities (27 per cent), wages (21 per cent) and working and rests hours (18 per cent). An additional quarter of potential migrants were unable to name any difficulties that they might encounter while working overseas. While it should be noted that this describes intention rather than actuality, there was an alarming correlation between being unaware of any of the potential problems and plans to use a recruitment agency (44 per cent) or broker (38 per cent) to migrate. Although there is little that can be done to regulate the information provided to migrants by unlicensed brokers (other than to provide a more accurate understanding), standards should be enforced for registered recruitment agencies.



Prominent differences in awareness of the possible difficulties were apparent between women and men migrants, with the former being more conscious of most. Particularly in terms of wages (33 vs. 15 per cent) and safety and health at work (44 vs. 26 per cent), women were better informed, and were much less likely to be completely unaware of the potential problems (9 vs. 33 per cent). It's unclear why such notable variances exist by gender, although traditional protectionist cultural beliefs may be a factor. Migrant awareness of abuse was also inconsistent between ethnic groups, suggesting that it may mostly be the result of word of mouth and that more systematic information is needed.

The two main channels that migrants would use to seek assistance in destination countries if their rights were violated were friends and family (53 per cent) or a Myanmar diplomatic mission (31 per cent). The divide is most closely correlated with plans for regular/irregular migration, with the former preferring to access assistance at embassies and the latter seeking informal help from friends and family. However, discussions with return migrants revealed that in practice most simply had to solve their own problems.

Women migrants were more reliant upon informal assistance from friends and family (62 vs. 48 per cent) while male migrants had greater willingness to go to the embassy for support (37 vs. 20 per cent). Despite the differences, both men and women return migrants frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the support offered by embassies within focus groups. Ethnic minorities were also much less likely to approach the embassy for help than Bamar migrants (15 vs. 50 per cent), which shows that building trust in government services is likely to take longer for some minority groups due to their long histories of conflict.

Most migrants saw value in joining a trade union or migrant association in destination countries (69 per cent). Many also appeared to be fairly well-informed about the relative benefits of organizing in their future countries of employment. Migrants heading to destinations where trade unions are more active, such as Japan (93 per cent), the Republic of Korea (89 per cent) and Malaysia (81 per cent), were very likely to see the value of joining such organizations – while those expecting to work in China did not (28 per cent).

The greater portion of potential migrants were amenable to paying a part of their earnings in order to obtain health insurance (78 per cent). A very linear correlation was found between longer duration of stay overseas and willingness to pay for insurance, suggesting that measures to expand coverage should not only include awareness raising but also reduction of enrolment waiting periods, greater inclusion in universal schemes and other free or affordable options to effectively target short-term migrants.

Conclusion

Myanmar has yet to establish a policy framework fit to the task of managing its immense labour migration flows. As a result, migration remains largely a laissez-faire and inequitable phenomenon, divided between regular migrants who typically head to more developed economies within Asia and the Middle East via formal recruitment and irregular migrants who travel clandestinely to work in neighbouring low and middle income countries.

While this division is based to some degree upon the knowledge and skills of migrant workers, it is more clearly driven by personal connections and the ability to pay large sums of money for safer and more lucrative employment opportunities abroad – a recruitment system that tends to marginalize rural people, women and ethnic minorities in particular. Although irregular migrants continue to far outnumber those who migrate through formal channels, the recruitment and labour protection afforded to them is very limited, contributing to a high risk of abuse throughout the migration cycle. Even for regular migrants, who generally have somewhat better working conditions and receive more freedoms, rights and protections, the substantial debts typically required to finance migration can make them unable to leave exploitative employment situations.

On a personal level, labour migration is an undertaking filled with hopes and dreams of obtaining a better life for migrant workers and their family members. Unfortunately, these aspirations are frequently not matched

with a clear understanding of the potential risks involved or adequate knowledge about how to minimize them. Awareness of critical information on how to migrate safely, the rights to which they are entitled and the working conditions they can expect is dangerously low among potential migrants in Myanmar, with most heavily reliant on information provided by friends and family. Women potential migrants and those from ethnic minority groups (two demographics that frequently meet in relegation among Myanmar migrants) are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to information. This scarcity of unbiased and authoritative knowledge means that many migrants receive intentionally misleading or erroneous information from unprincipled or incompetent recruitment agents and brokers. Potential migrants who are ill-informed or deceived become much easier targets for abuse, including forced labour and other unacceptable forms of work.

Recent political reforms within Myanmar have provided the opportunity to begin development of a more deliberate, transparent and rights-based approach to labour migration management, in line with international standards and good practices. In taking up this challenge, an improved understanding of the situation of migrant workers through collection and analysis of empirical data will be critical to ensuring that the policies and practices developed are evidence-based and inclusive. The baseline assessment completed provides a preliminary reading on many of the essential conditions required for safer migration from Myanmar, helping to define the key areas of work for the Government, social partners and the ILO in protecting the rights of migrants. Greater protection for these workers, whose enduring social and financial remittances continue to fuel the country's development during this critical transition period, is both an economic and human rights imperative.

Aligned with the framework of the GMS TRIANGLE project, challenges and recommendations for addressing them were identified and divided into three broad objectives: (1) strengthening the policy and legal framework; (2) capacity development of stakeholders; and (3) increasing access to support services for migrant workers (see section 6.2 for a detailed listing).



Abbreviations

ARCM	Asian Research Centre for Migration
CBO	community-based organization
CSO	civil society organization
GMS TRIANGLE	Tripartite Action to Protect the Rights of Migrants Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Subregion
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LEO	Labour Exchange Office
MAP Foundation	Foundation for the Health and Knowledge of Ethnic Labour
MDRI-CESD	Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Centre for Economic and Social Development
MMK	Myanmar Kyat
MOEAF	Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation
MOLES	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MRC	migrant worker resource centre
MYR	Malaysian Ringgit
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
THB	Thai Baht
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-INSTRAW	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USDOS	United States Department of State
3D	Dirty, dangerous and demeaning

1.1 Introduction

Workers seeking temporary employment abroad constitute the vast majority of international migrants departing from Myanmar. Estimates by MOLES have suggested that as much as 10 per cent of the labour force is employed overseas (2012), with over 3 million currently working in Thailand and Malaysia alone. These migrant workers play a critically important role in shaping the country's economic and social development, however, decades of isolation from the international community and gaps in the policy framework governing labour migration have meant that their situation at places of origin is still inadequately understood.

What is clear is that migrant workers from Myanmar remain extremely vulnerable to exploitation, particularly for the greater portion who migrate irregularly. Because of the often expensive, complex and time consuming procedures required for formal recruitment through licensed agencies, most migrants continue to seek out the assistance of brokers or go abroad independently. The social networks that facilitate these movements were established long before any management systems had been developed to regulate labour migration and frequently provide a much more efficient means to an end. However, the involvement of unscrupulous actors and the lack of accurate and impartial information can also place migrants at high risk of becoming victims of abuse. Even for the minority of migrant workers who make use of a licensed agency to find work abroad through legal channels, the regulatory procedures applied have so far proven ineffective at ensuring fair recruitment practices.

As employees at destination, migrants from Myanmar are typically ill-informed about their labour rights and unable to assert them when they face violations. This contributes to a situation where migrants often endure exploitative working conditions and terms of employment, ranging from non-compliance with social security registration to forced labour. Irrespective of the type of violation, migrant access to assistance is generally very limited, leaving most without sufficient means to seek redress for their grievances.

In spite of the prevalence of abuse against migrant workers from Myanmar known to be occurring, little field research has been conducted on the subject within the country itself to improve the understanding of the causal factors at source. A thorough assessment of the knowledge and experiences of migrant workers in Myanmar prior to departure has yet to be completed, nor an analysis of the recruitment process that involves all of the key stakeholders – including recruitment agents and brokers. Given the sizeable contribution that these migrant workers make to national development in both countries of origin and destination, a stronger evidence base is needed in order to provide them with more effective protection.

To obtain further empirical information, the ILO's GMS TRIANGLE project partnered with MDRI-CESD to conduct a survey of safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices among potential migrant workers at three target sites within Myanmar. Carried out in close collaboration with MOLES and other tripartite constituents, the pioneering study will be used to shape the design and evaluate the impact of policy measures, capacity building trainings and support services to protect the rights of workers throughout the migration process.

1.2 Research objectives

The primary objectives of the study were: (1) to collect information about the population of potential migrant workers in Myanmar in order to formulate evidence-based recruitment and labour protection policies and interventions; and (2) to obtain a zero-measurement of safe migration awareness and behaviour for use in assessing the impact of the GMS TRIANGLE project.

1.3 Research methodology

Prior to commencing field work, a thorough desk review was conducted of the existing body of literature on labour migration from Myanmar. Primary data was then collected at research sites using a mixed methodology approach to triangulate the results:

- Researcher administered survey was used to gather quantitative data about potential migrant workers (see Appendix 1).
- Focus group discussions were held with potential and returned migrants and licensed recruitment agents to obtain qualitative data (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4).
- Key informant interviews were carried out with representatives from government, trade unions, civil society organizations (CSOs) and labour brokers to collect further qualitative information.

1.3.1 Research sites

Primary data for the study was collected at the three field research sites from late January to mid-February 2014. Based upon consultation meetings held with tripartite constituents to identify large and underserved populations of potential migrant workers, the locations selected for the study were Mandalay Region, Tanintharyi Region and Shan State. Each site presented a very unique set of conditions and stakeholders for labour migration:

Mandalay Region: Most of the data was collected from the townships of Myin Gyan District, an area in the Dry Zone located about two hours from Mandalay City. The District sends a large number of migrant workers abroad, while Mandalay City itself draws internal migrants to work in its trading shops and burgeoning manufacturing sector. Most of the potential migrants in the area are of Bamar ethnicity and Burmese is the predominant language spoken.

Tanintharyi Region: In the four townships of Dawei District where research was carried out, the majority of potential migrants were from rural areas rather than the city centre. Interviews were conducted with recruitment agencies in Kawthaung in the southern part of Tanintharyi Region, as no licensed agencies were found in Dawei. Although generally considered an ethnic sub-group of the Bamar, Dawei people speak their own eponymous dialect of Burmese and constituted the bulk of potential migrants at the site.

Shan State: Data was gathered in the villages of Kyaing Tone Township in Eastern Shan State, which presented a smaller and more rural area than the research sites in Mandalay or Tanintharyi Regions (about two hours away from the city centre). Shan State is an ethnically diverse area and the languages spoken by its populace include Shan, Lahu, Akhar and many others.

Extensive pre-testing of the data collection tools was carried out in all three research sites to ensure that the questions, translations and data collection strategies were contextually appropriate. One significant alteration was made to the data collection plan after encountering difficulty in finding potential migrants in Mandalay City. Based upon information provided by local contacts, it was learned that the amount of workers migrating internationally from the metropolitan area is relatively small due to the large number of decent employment opportunities available locally. As a result, it was decided to move most of the survey data collection for the Mandalay Region to Myin Gyan District - an area with a greater concentration of potential migrant workers.

1.3.2 Research sample

A total of 625 surveys were collected from potential migrants. Selection criteria for determining the eligibility of respondents were age between 15 and 45 and having a clear intention to work abroad within the next two years.

A mixture of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was employed in selecting potential migrants for the survey. Within the survey areas, the villages that were likely to have the most potential migrants were chosen based on information supplied by authorities and other local contacts. The assistance of village chiefs was particularly

useful for reassuring respondents that the enumerators for the study could be trusted, however, no authorities were allowed to be present during interviews to avoid biasing responses. After being interviewed, each respondent was asked to help the enumerator to identify other potential migrants in his or her village.

In order to compare differences based upon the gender of respondents, the intent was to collect an equally apportioned sample of women and men migrants from each location. However, the gender balance among respondents became uneven during data collection due to challenges with identifying sufficient numbers of female potential migrant workers in Mandalay Region. A second visit to the Region was carried out to obtain additional data from 50 women migrants for greater parity but the overall sample remains skewed towards men (see section 1.6 for further analysis).

Table 1.1 Survey sample by region and gender

Gender	Mandalay	Shan	Tanintharyi	Total
Female	53	73	87	213
Male	199	118	95	412
Total	252	191	182	625

To collect qualitative data in the three research sites, 15 key informant interviews were conducted (with representatives from MOLES, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, village chiefs, religious leaders and labour brokers) and nine focus group discussions were held (with potential migrants, return migrants and recruitment agents). Key informants and focus group discussants were chosen based on advice from local contacts or were selected from among the survey respondents as broadly representative of the sampling frame.

Focus groups with licensed recruitment agencies were held in Shan State (Tachileik) and Tanintharyi Region (Kawthaung) but no licensed agencies could be identified in Mandalay Region. Instead, several Yangon-based recruitment agencies employ unlicensed brokers to represent their firms in Mandalay Region. These individuals were interviewed during the field research, however, whether they provide recruitment services as “sub-agents” of licensed firms or should be considered unlicensed brokers is an area of legal ambiguity within the regulatory framework.

1.3.3 Data quality control and analysis

To collect data for the study, 12 enumerators were hired in each research site who were fluent in the local language(s). Each group of enumerators were provided with three days of training on the study objectives, tools, methods and ethical guidelines prior to beginning interviews. The data collection process was closely supervised by the research team from MDRI-CESD to ensure data quality.

Quantitative data from clean surveys was entered into the STATA software programme for cross tabulation and statistical analysis. Qualitative data was analysed using observer impression and was triangulated with the quantitative data set to validate and provide a more in-depth understanding of the results.

1.4 Research questions

The main areas of inquiry for the study were:

1. What is the demographic profile of potential migrants?
2. What are the intentions and motivations of potential migrants?
3. What channels for recruitment and migration are available to potential migrants?
4. What is the level of knowledge and awareness among potential migrants of safe migration, rights at work and labour market opportunities?

5. What are the costs involved in labour migration?
6. What are the differences between sub-groups of potential migrants based upon location, gender, ethnicity, destination country and other characteristics?
7. What are the opinions among stakeholders about the policy framework for labour migration and its implementation?

1.5 Research terms and concepts

The meaning of the key terms and concepts used in the analysis are provided below. Definitions included without a citation were developed for the purposes of this study only.

Migrant worker

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 (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990).

Potential migrant worker

A person between 15 to 45 years old who intends to work abroad within the next two years.

Return migrant worker

A person who has returned to their country of origin after working for at least one year in a country of which he or she is not a national.

Regular migrant worker

A migrant worker or members of his/her family authorized to enter, to stay and to engage in a remunerated activity in the State of employment pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990).

Irregular migrant worker

A migrant worker who leaves, enters, stays or works without the necessary authorization or documents required under the laws of that State.

Private employment agency (also referred to as a recruitment agency)

Any natural or legal person, independent of the public authorities, which provides one or more of the following labour market services:

- (a) services for matching offers of and applications for employment, without the private employment agency becoming a party to the employment relationships [that] may arise therefrom;
- (b) services consisting of employing workers with a view to making them available to a third party, who may be a natural or legal person (referred to as a 'user enterprise'), which assigns their tasks and supervises the execution of these tasks; or
- (c) other services relating to job seeking, determined by the competent authority after consulting the most representative employers and workers organizations, such as the provision of information, that do not set out to match specific offers of and applications for employment (Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181).

Labour broker

Any natural or legal person not licensed by the State to provide one or more of the previously mentioned labour market services. This includes both individual brokers and social networks that offer services with or without remuneration.



Vulnerable employment

“Vulnerable employment is a measure of persons who are employed under relatively precarious circumstances as indicated by their status in employment. Because contributing family workers and own-account workers are less likely to have formal work arrangements, access to benefits or social protection programmes and are more “at risk” to economic cycles, these are the statuses categorized as ‘vulnerable.’” (ILO, 2009, p. 27)

1.6 Limitations of the research

There is a lack of reliable population data, both for Myanmar as a whole and on labour migration more specifically, that could serve as a sampling frame and guide interpretation of the research results. Prior to the nation-wide census that took place between March and April 2014 (for which the results have yet to be released), the last population survey was completed in 1983. At that time, the country’s ongoing internecine conflicts prevented surveyors from reaching many areas. Challenges caused by armed conflict, distrust of government authorities, marginalization of ethnic minorities, logistical hurdles and capacity limitations are also thought to have affected the 2014 census, particularly in parts of Kachin, Shan, Rakhine and Kayin States (UNOCHA, 2013).

As a result of the statistical gaps, there was no base population data available in any of the survey regions or at national level. Acknowledging the lack of a functional sampling frame for the study, the researchers relied on “snowball sampling”, which is a non-probability method and has certain potential biases which should be acknowledged. The sample was not randomly selected and was highly dependent on the inclusiveness of the respondents’ social networks to obtain a broad cross-section. As such, the statistical representativeness of the research results cannot be determined.

In addition, due to the lack of a formally established recruitment industry in some of the research sites, as well as the clandestine nature of unlicensed recruitment, challenges were faced in locating a sufficient number of recruitment agencies and labour brokers for interviews. In some cases, respondents were reluctant to identify themselves as “brokers” because of the common association of the term with exploitative or illegal practices. However, with the exception of the previously mentioned absence of recruitment agencies in Mandalay Region, discussions were held with at least some licensed and unlicensed recruitment actors in all research sites.

As stated in the research sample section, identifying a sufficient number of female potential migrants in the Mandalay Region proved difficult during the initial field work (only 2 per cent of respondents were women). The research team collected survey data from nearly 45 villages across three townships but the gender of potential migrants interviewed was overwhelmingly male. One significant causal factor for this imbalance is that MOLES currently does not allow women to migrate from Myanmar to the Republic of Korea under the Employment Permit System, and the Malaysian Government restricts employment of women from Myanmar as domestic workers, which are both popular destination countries for migrant workers in Mandalay Region. However, it should also be stated that women migrants are a veiled population in many local areas, requiring great effort to find and interview.

Acknowledging the importance of rectifying the sampling error to support a more thorough gender analysis of the data, supplementary field work was undertaken to collect survey data from an additional 50 female potential migrants in the Mandalay Region. Because of the previous challenges experienced in locating female potential migrant workers, the MDRI-CESD researchers requested assistance from the ILO and the Local Resource Centre (an NGO active in the Region) to facilitate the research. While the additional data obtained helped to even out the gender of the survey respondents, the sample remains heavily skewed towards men migrants (66 per cent), potentially limiting the reliability of gender analysis for some variables. It should also be noted that the addendum to the original sample was obtained from potential migrant workers in Mandalay City rather than the more rural Myin Gyan research site, that many of the interviews had to be conducted without supervision due to privacy concerns and that a small reimbursement for transportation costs was provided to respondents that was not given in other locations. To ensure data quality and consistency, the addendum findings were checked for comparability before inclusion in the overall sample.

Important internal migration dynamics were identified during the study which did not fit entirely within its scope but do warrant further research. A recent study by the Ministry of Immigration and Population and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) suggests that 14 per cent of Myanmar's population relocate internally during their lifetime (Nyi, Nyi, 2013, p. v). The Dry Zone within Myanmar, which includes the Mandalay Region, is a major site of origin for these internal migrants. According to local informants, migrant workers from the Dry Zone often complete a two-stage migration process, first migrating to border areas in Shan State or Tanintharyi Region and later migrating internationally to Thailand and China.¹ It is thought that international migration of the local populace from these border areas creates labour shortages that are filled by internal migrants from areas with high rates of landlessness and poverty, and that these internal migrants often subsequently migrate internationally in pursuit of higher incomes. Local authorities in Dawei believe that these "two-stage migrants" may be more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking because they do not have social networks in the area to facilitate their onward migration to Thailand and must rely upon the services of unfamiliar brokers. Many end up employed under poor conditions on fishing vessels or within the agricultural sector, in some cases in forced labour.

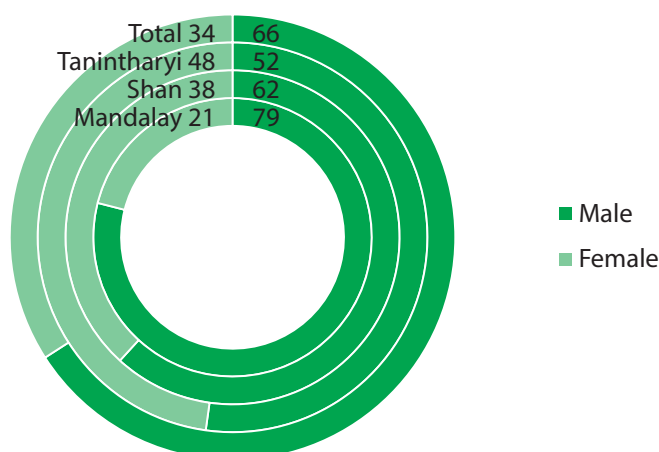
1. Similar migration dynamics were found by a study conducted in Mon State, with large numbers of migrants from Myanmar's Dry Zone and Delta areas migrating first to Mon State, and then internationally to Thailand and Malaysia (Linn, 2011).

This chapter examines the demographic profile of potential migrant workers in Myanmar to better understand who they are and how they can be reached with information and support services.

2.1 Gender

Figure 2.1 shows that two-thirds of the potential migrants surveyed were men (66 per cent). As stated within the introduction, locating women migrants in Mandalay Region proved especially challenging during field research and should not be interpreted as representative of the country as a whole. The actual gender breakdown of migrant workers in Myanmar is unknown due to the paucity of reliable disaggregated data on labour migration, however, the available evidence suggests that the gender balance is not so uneven. In Thailand, 40 per cent of Myanmar migrants entering through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process and 43 per cent completing Nationality Verification were women, as of September 2014 (Department of Employment). The difficulties faced in identifying an equal number of women for interviews serves to further highlight their marginalization under the current policy framework, as male migrants have been provided with more opportunities for regular migration.

Figure 2.1 Gender balance of potential migrants by region (n=625) (%)



2.2 Age

As displayed in Table 2.1, most potential migrants were between the ages of 18 and 24 (55 per cent), followed by the 25-30 age group (26 per cent). This suggests that demographic pressures created by a large youth population are part of the calculus determining migration. According to a number of key informants, many young people decide to migrate due to the lack of adequate employment opportunities and low wages available to them in Myanmar, feeling that they must go abroad to better provide for their families.

Table 2.1 Age of potential migrants by region (n=625)

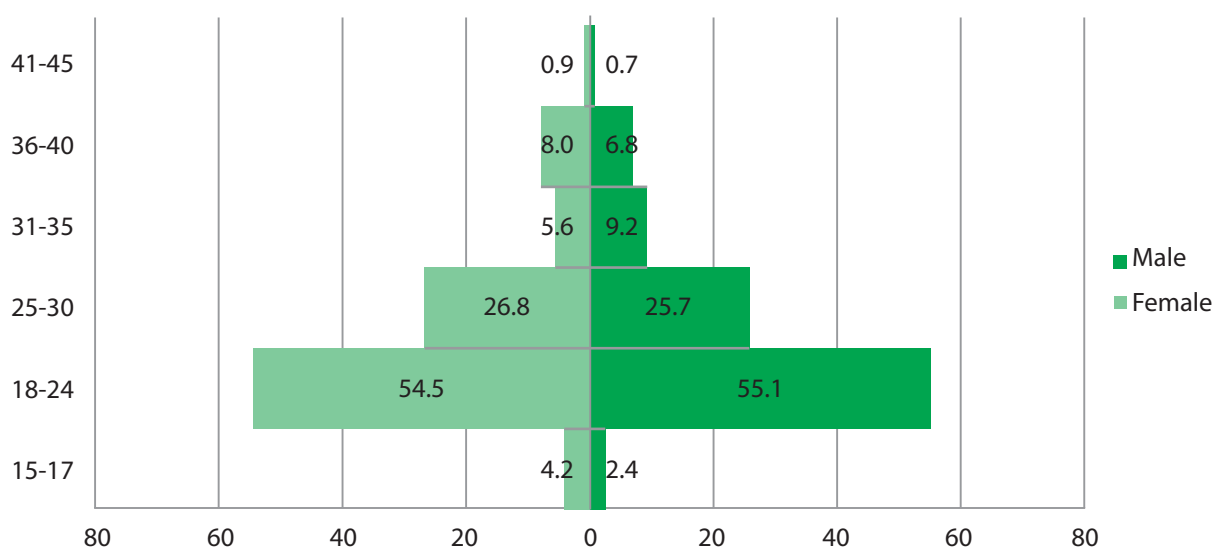
Age	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
15-17	3	1	2	1	14	8	19	3
18-24	125	50	111	58	107	59	343	55
25-30	72	29	54	28	37	20	163	26
31-35	31	12	13	7	6	3	50	8
36-40	18	7	11	6	16	9	45	7
41-45	3	1	0	-	2	1	5	1
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Young migrants (those under the age of 18) constituted 3 per cent (n=19) of the total sample but may be under-represented due to laws restricting their employment in many destination countries and the sampling criteria, which excluded those under 15 years of age from the study.² An estimate made for Thailand that included statistical data on all migrant children resident in the country regardless of legal status suggested that the figure could be as high as 11 per cent of the aggregate migrant population (Jampaklay, 2011, p. 96).

Fleshing out the profile of young migrants in Myanmar, most were unemployed in Myanmar (74 per cent), had not completed a high school education (69 per cent),³ were planning to work in Thailand (79 per cent) and were going to migrate with the help of friends and family (95 per cent). Although migration of young people is not intrinsically a problem, having no choice but to migrate irregularly before finishing schooling due to lack of local livelihood options and inadequate access to information on safe migration creates undue risks.

There were no particularly significant trends in terms of the type of work that young migrants planned to pursue but several economic sectors in Thailand have been noted as facing problems with child labour (including agriculture, fishing and seafood processing, domestic work and the urban informal sector). It should be noted that under Thai labour laws, migrants between the ages of 15-17 are considered “young workers” rather than children, and can obtain a work permit for legal employment.

No major differences in the ages of migrants were apparent by gender, as depicted in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Age pyramid of potential migrants (n=625) (%)

² See section 3.7 for information about dependent children.

³ High school in Myanmar finishes at standard 10, which is normally completed at age 15-16.

2.3 Ethnicity and language

Table 2.2 reveals that two-thirds of potential migrants described themselves as ethnically Bamar or Dawei (n=414), with the remainder coming from a variety of minority groups. The ethnicity of migrants in each region for the most part reflected their respective local populations. In Mandalay Region, nearly all migrants were ethnically Bamar, at 98 per cent of the total sample. In Shan State, 93 per cent of respondents came from three local ethnic groups: The Shan, Akhar and Lahu. The ethnicity of migrants in Tanintharyi Region was slightly more diverse, with 15 per cent Bamar and 11 per cent Kayin in addition to the majority Dawei (74 per cent). As mentioned previously, Dawei City is a known transit area for itinerant migrant workers from other areas of Myanmar.

Table 2.2 Ethnicity of potential migrants by region (n=625)

Ethnicity	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Shan	3	1	64	34	0	-	67	11
Dawei	0	-	0	-	135	74	135	22
Bamar	247	98	5	3	27	15	279	45
Lahu	0	-	51	27	0	-	51	8
Akhar	0	-	61	32	0	-	61	10
Kayin	0	-	1	1	20	11	21	3
Other	2	1	9	5	0	-	11	2
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

The vast majority of migrants speak the language of their ethnic group as their native tongue except for the small number of internal migrants who have settled in another area for a long period of time. A notable finding with implications for provision of informational materials in appropriate languages was that, although nearly all potential migrants in Tanintharyi and Mandalay Regions could speak Burmese as a first or second language, 18 per cent of potential migrant workers in Shan State stated that they were not fluent.

2.4 Religion

As with other types of statistical data on the population of Myanmar, up-to-date figures on religious affiliation are currently unavailable, preventing a direct comparison with the population as a whole. The last official census conducted in 1983 calculated Muslims and Christians as each representing approximately 4 per cent of the country's total population, but these figures are thought to underestimate the non-Buddhist proportion of the population (USDOS, 2013).

Table 2.3 shows that over three-quarters of potential migrants were from the Buddhist majority (77 per cent), with 20 per cent identifying as Christian and 3 per cent as Muslim. It is likely that the larger than expected number of Christians simply represents the religious beliefs of many Akhar and Lahu migrants in Shan State rather than a demographic feature of migrant workers in Myanmar as a whole.

Table 2.3 Religion of potential migrants by region (n=625)

Religion	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Buddhist	246	98	81	42	152	84	479	77
Christian	3	1	104	55	17	9	124	20
Muslim	3	1	1	1	12	7	16	3
Hindu	0	-	0	-	1	1	1	0
Animist	0	-	5	3	0	-	5	1
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

2.5 Marital status

Among potential migrants, 73 per cent were single and 25 per cent were married, with the remainder widowed or divorced. Being young and unmarried likely contributes to the willingness of migrants to pursue the opportunities and undertake the risks involved with working abroad.

2.6 Education

As revealed in Table 2.4, approximately half of potential migrants had not completed a secondary education (48 per cent). According to focus group discussions, this is fairly representative of the educational level in their villages as a whole. On the other hand, more than one out of five migrants had finished university and were still considering migrating, in many cases for low or semi-skilled jobs. Discussants from a group in Dawei, where migration of university graduates was the highest (27 per cent), stated that young people who have finished a higher education are also migrating in to order to obtain greater incomes.

Table 2.4 Educational attainment of potential migrants by region (n=625)

Education	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	1	0	19	10	1	1	21	3
Monastic	10	4	3	2	3	2	16	3
Primary	33	13	23	12	19	10	75	12
Middle	77	31	49	26	64	35	190	30
High	88	35	53	28	46	25	187	30
University	43	17	44	23	49	27	136	22
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

2.7 Employment

Among potential migrants, 70 per cent were employed in some type of remunerative activity (Table 2.5). There were substantial differences in unemployment by region, with potential migrants in Shan (35 per cent) and Tanintharyi (39 per cent) more likely to be out of work than those in Mandalay (21 per cent). Conversely, it was more common for potential migrants to be self-employed in Mandalay Region (63 per cent) than in Shan State (52 per cent) or Tanintharyi Region (39 per cent). These results reflect the largely agrarian economies from which many potential migrants in Myanmar still originate.

It should be noted that own-account and family workers, who represented 53 per cent of the sample (or 83 per cent if the unemployed are added), are considered forms of vulnerable employment by the ILO. They are less likely to have formal work arrangements or access to social protection, and are more susceptible to economic shocks

during periods of downturn. A minority in each region actually work full-time in formal employment (20 per cent in Tanintharyi Region, 15 per cent in Mandalay Region and only 12 per cent in Shan State), with the implication that pursuit of greater income stability may be an important impetus for many workers who choose to migrate.

Currently, only a very small portion of Myanmar's population are covered under social protection schemes, implemented mainly in the form of health insurance for workers in the formal private sector under the Social Security Act (1954) and a pension plan for civil servants under the Civil Service Law (2013). A new Social Security Law was enacted in 2012 to increase the benefits provided – including unemployment insurance – but what impact it will have on ensuring a basic income for the vulnerable workers referenced above is not yet clear.

Table 2.5 Employment of potential migrants by region (n=625)

Employment	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self-employed	158	63	99	52	71	39	328	53
Have employer	38	15	23	12	36	20	97	16
Self-employed/ have employer	4	2	2	1	5	3	11	2
Unemployed	52	21	67	35	70	39	189	30
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

The results were inconclusive about whether lack of local employment opportunities is a more significant motivating factor for women than men migrants. More women migrants had a formal employer than men (23 vs. 12 per cent) and were less likely to be self-employed (43 vs. 58 per cent) but were also slightly more commonly unemployed (34 vs. 28 per cent).

2.8 Sector of work

Agriculture was the most common sector of employment for potential migrants, with 45 per cent stating they worked in farming (Table 2.6). Although traditional migration patterns within the region have begun to change in recent years, it is still not uncommon for people from agricultural communities to migrate in search of better employment opportunities and higher wages in more industrialized areas, either internally or across borders. Migrants working in “other” forms of employment was the second most common occupation at 27 per cent (including a variety of informal sector occupations such as small-scale vending, sewing and unpaid household work), followed by day labourers at 13 per cent of total employment.⁴

Analysing employment by region, notably higher proportions of potential migrants were employed in agriculture in Mandalay (50 per cent), the hospitality industry in Shan (15 per cent) and day labour in Tanintharyi (18 per cent). These variances are likely representative of the differences in local labour markets rather than unique to potential migrants. However, as a labour force survey has not been carried out in Myanmar since 1990, the availability of comparable data is currently very limited.⁵

⁴ Most unemployed potential migrants also answered this question as having “other” employment.

⁵ ILO and MOLES signed an agreement in November 2013 to jointly conduct a comprehensive labour force survey.

Table 2.6 Sector of work for potential migrants by region (n=625)

Sector	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	127	50	84	44	70	38	281	45
Fisheries	1	0	0	-	2	1	3	0
Trader	12	5	10	5	7	4	29	5
Day labour	26	10	25	13	33	18	84	13
Hospitality	11	4	28	15	18	10	57	9
Other	75	30	44	23	50	27	169	27
No answer	0	-	0	-	2	1	2	0
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

As depicted in Table 2.7, the most outstanding difference in sector of employment between men and women migrants was that women were commonly working in “other” forms of employment (46 per cent worked in various informal sector jobs, as homemakers or were unemployed), whereas the majority of men were employed in agriculture (54 per cent). A number of confounding factors are likely to have influenced these results, including the more urban sample of women potential migrants in Mandalay Region, but they also appear to show the continuing importance of gender in determining the type of domestic employment opportunities available (or unavailable).

Table 2.7 Sector of work for potential migrants by gender (n=625)

Sector	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	59	28	222	54	281	45
Fisheries	1	1	2	1	3	1
Trader	12	6	17	4	29	5
Day labour	18	9	66	16	84	13
Hospitality	25	12	32	8	57	9
Other	98	46	71	17	169	27
No answer	0	-	2	1	2	0
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

Chapter 03

Intentions and expectations of potential migrants

Chapter 3 of the report provides an analysis of the plans and anticipations of potential migrants for their employment abroad, focusing on differences by regions, genders, destination countries and other germane characteristics.

3.1 Motivation for migration

As shown in Table 3.1, the most frequent motivation for potential migrants in all areas was the promise of a higher income (50 per cent). Comparing regions, unemployment and underemployment were more significant factors in migration decision-making in Shan and Tanintharyi (43 and 31 per cent) than in Mandalay (12 per cent). The implication is that migrants from Mandalay Region have less trouble finding work but are drawn overseas by wage differentials, whereas there are not enough employment opportunities in the labour market to meet the needs of migrants from Shan State and Tanintharyi Region.

Comparing motivations between potential migrants of different ethnicities, Bamar migrants were most often driven by pursuit of a higher income (60 per cent) and ethnic minority groups by unemployment or underemployment (41 per cent) but the differences appear to be mainly dependent upon location rather than ethnic group (i.e. Bamar in Tanintharyi Region and Shan State also struggled to find sufficient work). No particularly salient variances were found in the primary motivation of women and men potential migrants but were implied in the results of other variables (see section 2.3).

Motivations revealed by focus group discussions in the three study areas closely corresponded to the survey results. Major factors conferred included the desire for more income to attain a higher standard of living, wages that are insufficient to meet basic family needs, difficulty in finding employment and the need to pay back debts.

Table 3.1 Primary motivation for migration by region (n=625)

Motivation	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cannot find work	15	6	58	30	27	15	100	16
Underemployment	15	6	24	13	30	16	69	11
Higher income	165	65	71	37	74	41	310	50
Friends/family abroad	5	2	5	3	6	3	16	3
Want to leave home	4	2	15	8	13	7	32	5
To pay for debts	5	2	6	3	16	9	27	4
Familial poverty	31	12	2	1	7	4	40	6
Self-improvement	4	2	10	5	0	-	14	2
Other	7	3	0	-	8	4	15	2
No answer	1	0	0	-	1	1	2	0
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

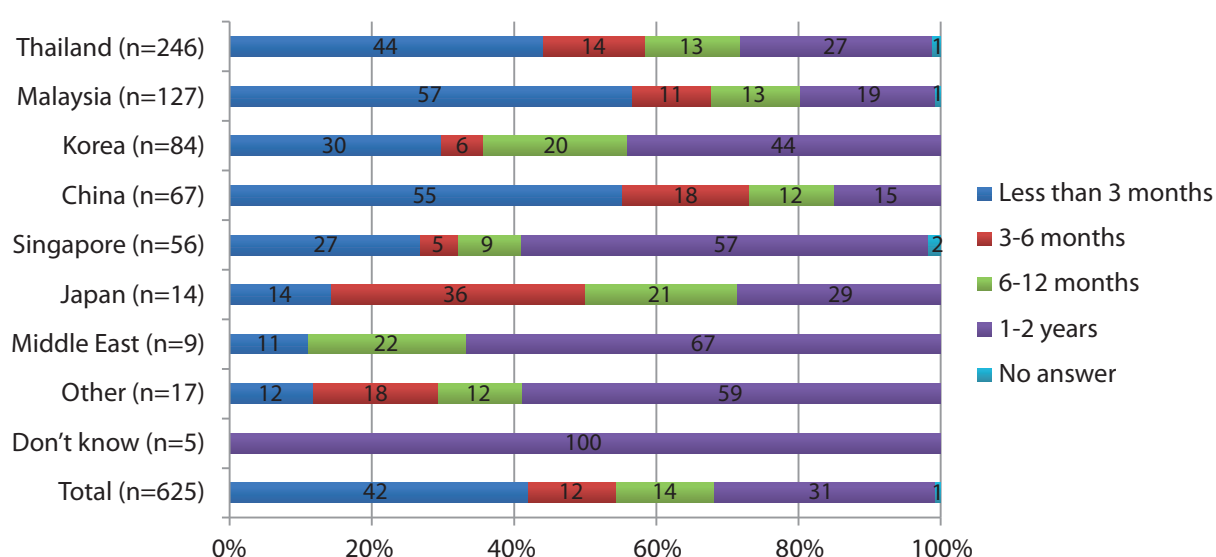
3.2 Anticipated date of migration

Figure 3.1 reveals that potential migrants were most often planning to migrate within the next three months (42 per cent). However, a major bifurcation in the data is observable between those who expect to migrate within three months and those who anticipate departure in 1-2 years. This difference in duration appears to largely reflect the

intended destination country, with those migrating regularly to the Middle East, Singapore and the Republic of Korea expecting a longer wait and those journeying to Thailand, Malaysia and China irregularly anticipating fewer delays.

These estimates are not inaccurate as the many steps involved in the recruitment process under some labour migration regimes can be protracted, including acquiring language proficiency, completing skills testing, passing multiple medical examinations, obtaining travel documents and receiving required approvals by authorities and others. The finding has important implications for policy-makers as any unnecessary delays in recruitment required for regular channels provides a greater incentive for irregular migration in many corridors within Asia. It also suggests significant awareness among migrants of the destinations that necessitate regular migration and those that offer more flexibility. From Myanmar to Thailand, for example, where a myriad of options for both regular and irregular migration exist, the long duration of the regular process has encouraged illegal entry and employment of migrant workers (followed by registration during amnesty windows) as the preferred approach.

Figure 3.1 Anticipated date of migration by destination country (n=625) (%)



More women than men expected to wait 1-2 years before migrating for work (38 vs. 27 per cent). While the differences in intended departure date were not sizable in the aggregate, there were acute variances by region. In Mandalay, 60 per cent of women expected to wait 1-2 years before migrating compared to just 18 per cent of men. One contributing factor may be the greater scarcity of options available for women to migrate regularly (more of a necessity given that irregular migration is more difficult from the Region).

3.3 Expected country of destination

The most common intended destination country among potential migrants was Thailand (39 per cent), as displayed in Table 3.2. According to focus group participants in Tanintharyi Region, key factors in choosing this destination were the availability of better employment opportunities and the higher salary in comparison to their home areas. In Shan State, close proximity and ease of migrating were said to be the most important reasons for selecting Thailand. A number of other considerations also probably influenced the decision, including a long and porous shared border, chain migration, relatively liberal immigration policies, cultural and linguistic similarities and the extensive availability of low-skilled employment.

Although Thailand was the top destination for both genders, women and men migrants had very different preferences and opportunities for work in other countries. As stated in Section 1.6, the dissimilarities exist partly because women from Myanmar are excluded entirely from the Employment Permit System in the Republic of Korea (due to concerns from MOLES about the physical demands of the sectors of work available, arranging accommodation and ensuring the safety of women migrants) and from domestic work in Malaysia (due to restrictions imposed by the Malaysian

Government). As alternatives, migration of Myanmar women to Singapore as domestic workers is a phenomenon known to be increasing in recent years,⁶ as is migration to some areas of China such as Yunnan Province. For men migrants, the wide availability of manufacturing, agricultural and construction work in Malaysia continues to draw large numbers of migrants, as do the high wages paid for low-skilled work in the Korean manufacturing sector.

Table 3.2 Expected country of destination by gender (n=625)

Destination	Women		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Thailand	116	54	130	32	246	39
Malaysia	18	8	109	26	127	20
Korea	8	4	76	18	84	13
China	24	11	43	10	67	11
Singapore	32	15	24	6	56	9
Japan	4	2	10	2	14	2
Middle East	2	1	7	2	9	1
Other	7	3	10	2	17	3
Don't know	2	1	3	1	5	1
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

Analysis of intended destination country by region revealed broad variation among potential migrants (Table 3.3). In Mandalay, the two clear preferences were to migrate for work in Malaysia (39 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (31 per cent). Reasons for this provided in focus group discussions emphasized the importance of chain migration, with information and social networks established by earlier migrants having a strong influence on their decision-making process. In one group discussion it was simply stated that because the majority of migrant workers in their village headed to Malaysia, they had decided to work there as well. Other focus group discussants acknowledged that they would have preferred to migrate to the Republic of Korea – because they had been told the wages were higher there than in other countries – but had decided on Malaysia as a second option as they could not afford the high costs involved (see section 3.8).

In Shan State, the two main destination countries were Thailand (43 per cent) and China (32 per cent). Both the destinations and channels for migration were different than for migrants in Mandalay Region, as the vast majority of workers in Shan State migrate irregularly. The affordability and simplicity of crossing borders and finding work in both countries are clearly important factors. For migration to Thailand, it can cost migrants in Shan State as little as THB900 (US\$28) to cross the border informally. A much smaller number of workers in Shan State were found to be migrating to Singapore and Malaysia, mostly via assistance provided by social networks.

In Tanintharyi Region, the overwhelming majority of migrants planned to migrate to Thailand (71 per cent). As in Shan State, close proximity and low-cost were said to be key factors in decision making, as well as the aforementioned advantages over working domestically.

6 However, as of September 2014 a five-month ban has also been placed on deployment of domestic workers to Singapore until an MOU has been signed.

Table 3.3 Expected country of destination by region (n=625)

Destination	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Thailand	34	13	83	43	129	71	246	39
Malaysia	99	39	11	6	17	9	127	20
Korea	77	31	0	-	7	4	84	13
China	6	2	61	32	0	-	67	11
Singapore	23	9	17	9	16	9	56	9
Japan	10	4	2	1	2	1	14	2
Middle East	1	0	3	2	5	3	9	1
Not sure	1	0	2	1	1	1	4	1
Other	1	0	12	6	4	2	17	3
Don't know	1	0	2	1	2	1	5	1
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Some interesting patterns also emerged in analyzing the intended destination country of potential migrants by ethnicity and religion. Shan migrants, who share a similar culture and language with the Thai, were much more likely to decide to migrate to Thailand (66 per cent). The proportion was even higher among Kayin migrants, with 81 per cent intending to migrate to Thailand; a site of refuge from conflict for three decades and home to a large population of ethnic Kayin. Akhar migrants, who continue to maintain strong cross-border ties and even family relations with ethnic communities in south western China, were more commonly interested in migrating to that country (52 per cent).⁷ Among Muslim migrants (n=16), nearly all were planning to migrate to Islamic countries for work (88 per cent).

3.4 Intended sector of work

As depicted in Table 3.4, the most common sectors that migrants intended to work in were services (29 per cent) and manufacturing (22 per cent). This is likely because they are considered to be less dirty, dangerous and demeaning (3D) jobs than work in agriculture, construction and fishing, and also may offer more formalized/regular payment of wages, working hours, employment relationships and social protection benefits.

While manufacturing is certainly a possible sector of employment in many destination countries, it is doubtful that such a large proportion of migrants will find work in services. In Thailand, for example, employment in agriculture, construction, fishing and seafood processing and domestic work are more common for migrants. Similarly in Malaysia, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and domestic work are all larger employment sectors for migrants than services. This suggests that migrants often do not base their plans on the availability of jobs within destination country labour markets and it can be inferred that many do not have an actual job offer yet and are uninformed about the type of work they are likely to be doing upon arrival.

There were major variances between men and women potential migrants in terms of job expectations, with the largest portion of women expecting to work in services (41 per cent) and men split mainly between manufacturing (28 per cent) and services (24 per cent). While neither gender appeared to be very aware of the labour market opportunities available abroad, a particularly large portion of women seemed to be uninformed of the realities. This finding is reinforced by the 18 per cent of women who stated that they did not know what sector they would work in at all.

⁷ Fleeing from civil conflict in Myanmar, large Akhar communities also exist in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces of northern Thailand, with similarly strong communal linkages.

Table 3.4 Intended sector of work by gender (n=625)

Sector	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Domestic work	18	8	5	1	23	4
Fishing	2	1	6	1	8	1
Maritime	12	6	15	4	27	4
Seafood	0	-	4	1	4	1
Manufacturing	20	9	115	28	135	22
Construction	3	1	64	16	67	11
Agriculture	17	8	39	9	56	9
Service	87	41	97	24	184	29
Other	15	7	16	4	31	5
Don't know	39	18	51	12	90	14
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

Exploring the data by region shows major differences in the expected type of employment in each location (Table 3.5). Migrants in Mandalay were most often anticipating manufacturing jobs (49 per cent), whereas migrants in Shan were planning to work in services (45 per cent) and migrants in Tanintharyi were most commonly unsure of what type of employment they would obtain (29 per cent). A number of factors are likely to have influenced these results: (1) Migrants in Mandalay Region were often seeking work in the Republic of Korea and Malaysia where manufacturing is a key sector of migrant work; (2) The majority of Shan people were seeking employment in services (54 per cent) for which their ability to communicate with customers would be an advantage in Thailand; and (3) For internal migrants in Tanintharyi Region heading abroad, they may have fewer social networks to provide them with labour market information.

Migrants who had completed more education were most frequently interested in working in the service sector (38 per cent of university graduates and 32 per cent of high school graduates), whereas those who had finished less schooling most commonly intended to obtain manufacturing jobs (25 per cent of middle school graduates and 29 per cent of primary school graduates). This would seem to be consistent with the higher skill demands normally required in the service industry in comparison to factory work.

Service work was also the only sector where current employment was a decent predictor of intended future employment, with 37 per cent of service workers expecting to continue in their field. All other workers anticipated finding employment in different sectors than their current jobs while overseas. As most migrants from Myanmar are employed in low-skilled work in destination countries, prior experience is seldom a requirement.

Table 3.5 Intended sector of work by region (n=625)

Sector	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Domestic work	2	1	11	6	10	6	23	4
Fishing	2	1	1	1	5	3	8	1
Seafood	2	1	1	1	25	14	28	5
Maritime	1	0	0	-	2	1	3	1
Manufacturing	113	45	14	7	8	4	135	22
Construction	29	12	22	12	16	9	67	11
Agriculture	21	8	26	14	9	5	56	9
Service	50	20	86	45	48	26	184	29
Other	10	4	15	8	6	3	31	5
Don't know	22	9	15	8	53	29	90	14
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

3.5 Expected channel of migration

As displayed in Table 3.6, the majority of potential migrants intended to migrate irregularly, with nearly two-thirds going abroad with the help of friends and family or independently (50 and 16 per cent, respectively).⁸ Migrants were more than twice as likely to migrate irregularly through these channels as use the services of a recruitment agency (22 per cent) or broker (9 per cent). The balance of irregular and regular migration occurring is likely even more skewed towards the former, as many brokers simply facilitate the smuggling of migrants across borders without concern for legal documentation. In addition, it was notable that the portion of migrants expecting to make use of broker services was surprisingly small but it is likely that the strongly negative associations of the term in Myanmar contributed to some degree of under-reporting.

The explanation provided by both focus groups and key informants is that this heavy reliance on friends and family is largely just a matter of greater trust. As there is a dearth of useful information or assistance available from official sources, many base their judgements upon word of mouth from friends and family. It should not be interpreted as a preference, however, since a large number of potential migrants expressed the desire for more trustworthy information to be provided by Labour Exchange Offices (LEOs) or other resource centres.

Table 3.6 Expected migration channel by region (n=625)

Migration channel	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agency	111	44	15	8	12	7	138	22
Broker	48	19	2	1	8	4	58	9
Independently	19	8	69	36	14	8	102	16
Friends or family	68	27	102	53	140	77	310	50
Other	1	0	0	-	3	2	4	1
Don't know	5	2	3	2	5	3	13	2
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Note: The "agency" response includes those who migrated government to government via MOLES in addition to private employment agencies.

⁸ It should be noted that the legal status of migrants cannot be determined definitively by the migration channel used, so such assignments are based upon common assumptions.



There were distinct differences revealed in migration channels used by region. In Mandalay, 63 per cent planned to use a recruitment agency (44 per cent) or broker (19 per cent). The use of these recruitment service providers in Mandalay Region is relatively high for a number of reasons, including greater distance from border areas and because many potential migrants intend to migrate to administratively and logistically more complicated destinations such as the Republic of Korea and Malaysia. Key informants and focus groups in Mandalay Region explained that migrants often believe they will not be cheated, get a better job, receive higher wages and be able to remit more money home if they use regular channels. The major downsides noted to using such channels, particularly for recruitment via MOLES to work in the Republic of Korea, was the long wait (typically at least six months and as long as two years in some cases) and high expense required.

Migration channels were also heavily gendered in Mandalay Region, with female migrants much more likely to journey irregularly (independently or with help from friends and family) than male migrants (55 per cent vs. 29 per cent) and male migrants much more likely to use a recruitment agency or broker (69 vs. 42 per cent). This result likely reflects the fewer options and lack of information available to women for migration through regular channels.

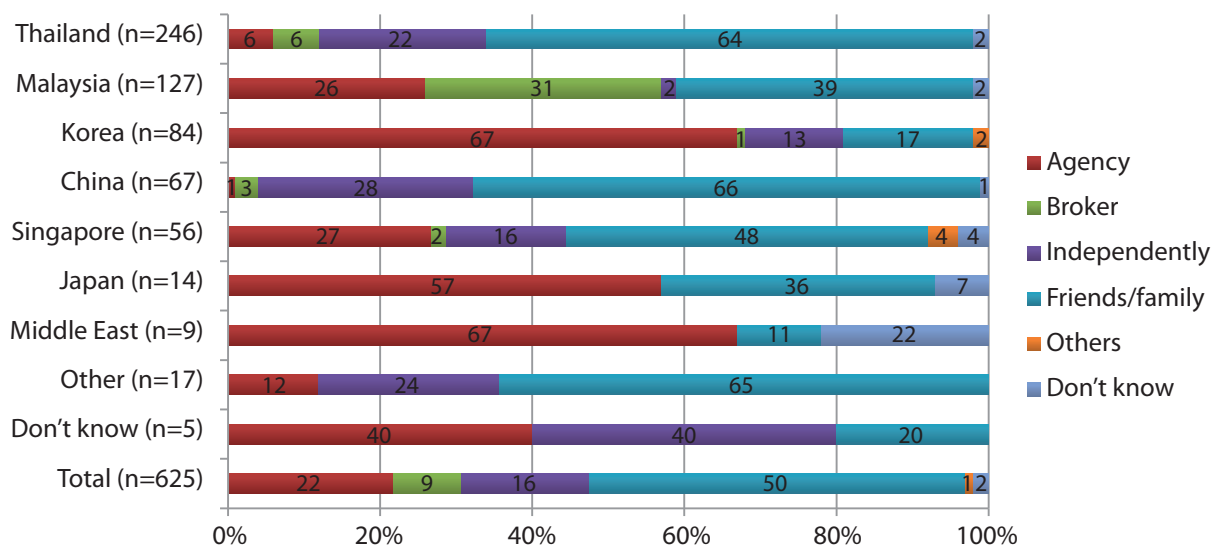
In Shan State, migrants were overwhelmingly planning to use irregular channels to migrate (89 per cent), either with assistance from friends or family (53 per cent) or on their own (36 per cent). According to key informants interviewed in the State, most migrants prefer to use irregular channels because the process of getting a passport and visa is difficult, the cost of migrating regularly is high and the duration required quite long in comparison. Several focus group discussants added that another reason was their wish to avoid having to visit (or pay fees to) government offices. As regular migration often requires departure via Yangon, it is logistically more difficult for migrants in rural and border areas. It was also noteworthy that more migrants traveled abroad without even the assistance of social networks in Shan State, which may reflect relevant language abilities, greater ease of migrating and well-established receiving communities in Thailand and China.

Similar to the situation in Shan State, the vast majority of migrants in Tanintharyi Region intended to migrate irregularly (85 per cent). Focus group participants explained that this is primarily because the high expense of migrating through regular channels excludes many. Among these prospective irregular migrants, a much larger proportion relied on assistance from friends or family (77 per cent) as opposed to traveling independently (8 per cent). Although a number of border crossings to Thailand are accessible from Tanintharyi Region (including Kawthaung, Maw Daung, Htee Kee and other areas), lack of ability to communicate fluently in Thai and the ruggedness of some of the crossing points likely discourages many from traveling alone. This was confirmed by group discussions which noted that migrating irregularly from Tanintharyi is often a quite physically demanding process.

A trend identified in focus groups held in Tanintharyi Region was that more migrants are beginning to use regular channels, facilitated by a new passport issuing office in Htee Khee and more recruitment agencies operating in Kawthaung. In spite of these additional options though, the cost of migrating regularly was still said to be prohibitive for many in the Region. Key informants stated that costs to go to Thailand via the MOU process were approximately US\$340,⁹ which many migrant workers have to pay off through monthly wage deductions (taking up to two years in some cases). However, there appears to be a lack of standardization for such costs as the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation (MOEAF) has generated a detailed cost breakdown of MMK150,000 (US\$155) paid upfront by workers in Myanmar and THB10,000 (US\$315) which is generally advanced by the Thai employer and recouped through wage deductions over the course of ten months.

9 This amount includes both the US\$315 typically charged by recruitment agencies in costs and fees and a US\$25 registration fee paid to MOLES.

Figure 3.2 Expected migration channel by destination country (n=625) (%)

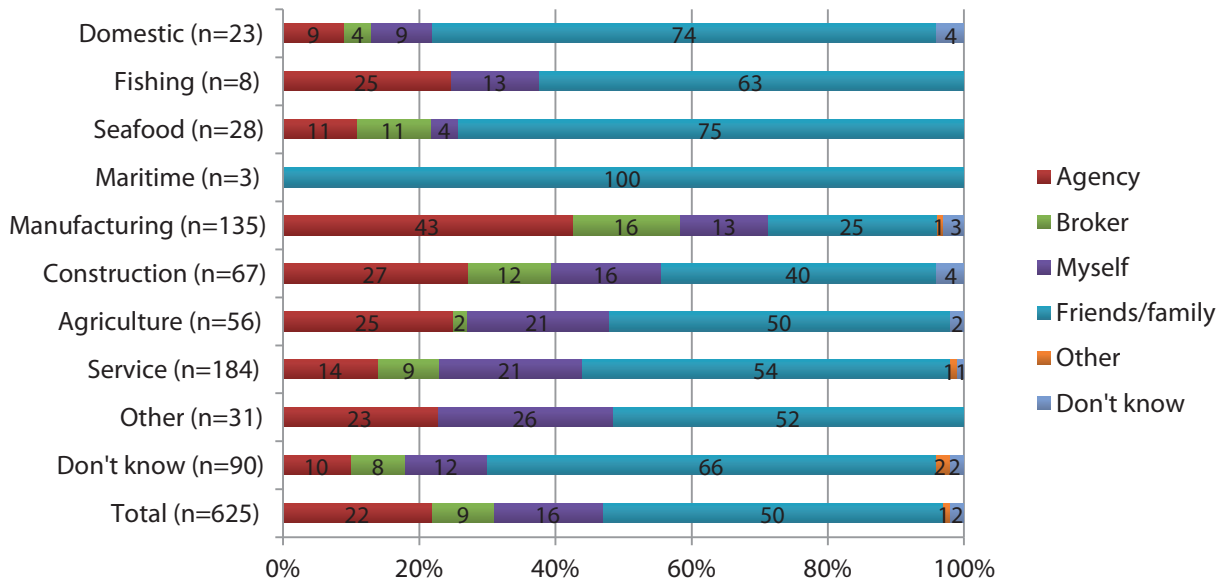


Unsurprisingly, the expected channels for migration were highly correlated with intended destination country, as shown in Figure 3.2. The vast majority of migrants planning to work in China (94 per cent) and Thailand (86 per cent) anticipated migrating irregularly (either alone or with the help of friends or family).¹⁰ Several countries were predominately destinations for prospective regular migrants via licensed recruitment agencies or government to government channels, such as the Republic of Korea (67 per cent), the Middle East (67 per cent) and Japan (57 per cent). Plans to migrate to Malaysia more commonly involved unlicensed brokers (31 percent).

Irregular migration is one of the few areas of labour migration policy where there is a general consensus between the governments involved: nearly all sending and receiving countries seek to reduce or eliminate it from occurring. Although the data above is based on a degree of conjecture and does not account for regularization of legal status after arrival, it does provide a useful measurement of the outcomes of migration management policies by corridor. The data also demonstrates that irregular migration is unlikely to be completely eliminated regardless of policy because of the basic reason that migrant workers are human beings and cannot be controlled entirely by states during the migration process.

In most cases, use of regular migration channels requires that a specific job has been secured prior to migrating (with outsourcing agencies providing the major exception). Analysing the patterns by intended sector of employment suggests that manufacturing firms generally recruit more regular migrants regardless of destination country (Figure 3.3), while primary sector industries tend to be more associated with irregular migration. This may be the result of the more formalized and public nature of factory operations, which would make an irregular workforce more apparent to authorities. It should also be noted that the globalized nature of supply chains may contribute to higher standards of transparency and accountability for the employment practices of some manufacturing firms.

¹⁰ Presently, there are no regular channels available for low-skilled migration from Myanmar to China and the MOU process for legal migration to Thailand continues to be underutilized. A trial group of 19 domestic workers were the first group officially employed in Hong Kong (China) in early 2014 but further deployment has been suspended until MOLES completes an assessment of their welfare.

Figure 3.3 Expected migration channel by intended sector of work (n=625) (%)

3.6 Accompanying parties during migration

Migrating with friends or family members is a basic protection strategy that many migrants use to reduce their vulnerability. Judging by the finding that only one migrant was unsure of whom they would travel with, it is clear that most consider it to be an important decision.

When asked to list their expected companions during migration, the largest proportion of migrants said that they will travel with a friend (49 per cent), followed by those who planned to go alone (46 per cent).¹¹ Roughly equal numbers of men and women migrants expected to travel alone, but men were more likely to migrate with a friend (59 vs. 33 per cent) and women with a family member (31 per cent vs. 12 per cent) which may be influenced by protectionist cultural tendencies.

3.7 Plans for children

Approximately 9 per cent of the respondents (n=54) expected to bring their children overseas with them. This rate closely matches the registration figures from the One-Stop Service Centres in Thailand, where roughly 7 per cent of Myanmar migrants registered their children (Department of Employment, 2014b). As displayed in Table 3.7, the majority of this group planned to have their children study full-time (52 per cent) but a sizeable portion anticipated that they would also work at least some of the time (41 per cent). Although the number of children expected to work in countries of destination appears alarmingly high, it is important to note that not all jobs done by children should be classified as “child labour”. Work that does not adversely affect the health and personal development of children, or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive; helping to prepare them to be productive members of society during adult life and contributing to their family’s welfare. On the contrary, work that deprives young people of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development, should be targeted for elimination (ILO, 2014). Clearly though, the risk of being employed in hazardous work and the worst forms of child labour is considerably higher for migrant children.

11 Multiple response variable

Table 3.7 Plans for children by region (n=54)

Plans for children	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full-time primary school	0	-	8	25	5	26	13	24
Full-time beyond primary	3	100	7	22	5	26	15	28
Work	0	-	1	3	1	5	2	4
Work and study	0	-	16	50	4	21	20	37
Don't know	0	-	0	-	4	21	4	7
Total	3	100	32	100	19	100	54	100

There were large variations in migrants' plans for their children by region (although the number of responses is too low to draw solid conclusions). In Mandalay, all expected their children to study full-time to beyond primary level but very few were bringing their children with them (n=3) which is probably linked to greater use of regular migration channels. For migrants in Shan State (where accompanying children were most common), 47 per cent planned for their children to study full-time at least through primary school but the majority anticipated that their children would also work at least part of the time (53 per cent). It should be noted that there is less access to education in Shan State in comparison to Mandalay Region – particularly for non-Burmese speakers – which may have a knock-on effect for educational plans after migration. In Tanintharyi Region, about half of migrants expected that their children would study full-time at minimum through primary school (52 per cent), with the remainder planning for them to work at least some of the time (26 per cent) or unsure (21 per cent).

Two important factors in determining plans for children appear to be migrant intentions for destination country and migration channel. The vast majority of migrants who expected to bring their children with them were heading to Thailand (n=28), Malaysia (n=10) or China (n=8), and were planning to migrate irregularly with the help of friends and family or without any assistance (n=44). Policy restrictions, workplace rules, safety concerns and high expense likely prevent migrants from bringing their children with them in many cases.

3.8 Anticipated migration cost

The amount that migrants expected to pay to obtain work abroad differed broadly by region (Table 3.8), and was heavily dependent upon the prevailing destination countries and migration channels in each area. Mandalay Region was the most expensive place of origin for migrants, with two-thirds expecting to pay over MMK1,000,000 (US\$1,040) to migrate (most commonly via a recruitment agency or broker to Malaysia and the Republic of Korea). According to focus group discussions held in the Region, the total cost involved to migrate to the Republic of Korea is typically MMK1,500,000 (US\$1,560) and must be paid upfront to MOLES, while the expense to journey to Malaysia for work was said to be between MMK900,000-950,000 (US\$940-990).

Table 3.8 Anticipated migration cost by region (n=625)

Migration cost (MMK)	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 100 000	2	1	56	29	23	13	81	13
100 000-199 000	3	1	26	14	30	16	59	9
200 000-299 000	11	4	10	5	47	26	68	11
300 000-399 000	7	3	4	2	27	15	38	6
400 000-499 000	15	6	8	4	5	3	28	4
500 000-999 000	33	13	11	6	8	4	52	8
> 1 000 000	166	66	34	18	24	13	224	36
Don't know	15	6	42	22	18	10	75	12
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Shan State was a considerably cheaper place of origin for most migrants. Because the majority are headed to Thailand or China via irregular channels, 43 per cent of migrants in Shan State expected to pay less than MMK200,000 (US\$210). A finding with important implications for dissemination of information to potential migrants in Shan State was that 22 per cent did not know how much migration would cost, a considerably higher proportion than in Mandalay (6 per cent) or Tanintharyi Regions (10 per cent). Lack of knowledge about the proper expenses involved for migrating could increase their vulnerability to being charged excessive fees or being deceived into bonded labour. Most of the migrants who were unaware of the cost of migrating were of Shan or Lahu ethnicity and were expecting to work in Thailand or China via irregular channels.

The cost of migration was more varied in Tanintharyi Region, where most migrants were planning to work in Thailand via assistance from friends or family. Despite the similarities with Shan State in terms of migration channels (typically irregular) and destination countries (predominantly Thailand), the expenses involved were notably higher in the Region. The additional cost is likely because a greater proportion of migrants from Tanintharyi Region were planning to work in Bangkok, requiring more travel, higher fees and a greater possibility of extortion at police checkpoints.

As displayed in Table 3.9, comparing the cost to migrate by destination country reveals two fairly distinct price bands. The majority of migrants expected to pay less than MMK300,000 (US\$310) to migrate to Thailand (63 per cent) and China (56 per cent). Particularly for migration to China, migrants were also often unaware of how much it would cost (30 per cent). On the other end of the cost spectrum, the destinations expected to be the most expensive by migrants included Japan, the Middle East, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, which require more travel, have a higher cost of living, often require legal documentation and are more likely to necessitate the involvement of recruitment actors. A similar duality exists for migration costs when analysed by migration channel, suggesting that the recruitment actors (or lack thereof) involved are an important determinant of expenditure.

Table 3.9 Anticipated migration cost by destination (n=625) (%)

Migration cost (MMK)	Thailand (n=246)	Malaysia (n=127)	Korea (n=84)	China (n=67)	Singapore (n=56)	Japan (n=14)	Mid East (n=9)	Other (n=17)	Don't know (n=5)	Total (n=625)
< 100 000	21	1	-	39	4	-	-	6	-	13
100 000-199 000	19	2	-	13	-	-	-	6	-	9
200 000-299 000	23	2	1	4	4	-	-	-	60	11
300 000-399 000	10	6	1	4	2	-	11	-	-	6
400 000-499 000	4	8	1	6	4	-	-	-	-	4
500 000-999 000	5	20	5	1	11	7	-	12	-	8
> 1 000 000	4	57	88	1	68	93	89	53	-	36
Don't know	13	6	4	30	9	-	-	24	40	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 3.10 shows that men were definitively expecting to pay more to migrate for work than women, with 45 per cent paying over MMK1,000,000 (US\$1,040) compared to just 17 per cent of women. Controlling for migration channel and destination however, the differences in cost were fairly insignificant. As more men migrants make use of recruitment agents or brokers to migrate regularly to higher-end destination countries, the cost involved is commensurately higher. This indicates that although men expect to pay more to migrate, it is primarily because they have greater opportunity for high-wage employment and legal migration than women.

Table 3.10 Anticipated migration cost by gender (n=625)

Migration cost (MMK)	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 100 000	31	15	50	12	81	13
100 000-199 000	22	10	37	9	59	9
200 000-299 000	40	19	28	7	68	11
300 000-399 000	22	10	16	4	38	6
400 000-499 000	13	6	15	4	28	5
500 000-999 000	12	6	40	10	52	8
> 1 000 000	37	17	187	45	224	36
Don't know	36	17	39	10	75	12
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

3.9 Expected source of financing for migration

As presented in Table 3.11, half of migrant workers anticipated being able to cover the costs of migrating with their own savings, followed by those who planned to take out a loan (32 per cent) and a smaller share who planned to pay through wage deductions (15 per cent). By region, a much higher proportion of potential migrants expected to take out loans in Mandalay (55 per cent) than in Shan (7 per cent) or Tanintharyi (26 per cent). This is largely explained by the greater number of workers in Mandalay Region who migrate regularly through recruitment agents or brokers to expensive destination countries and the associated higher costs. There are other factors involved as well though, including lack of access to loans from financial institutions. It was put forward in a focus group that some poorer migrants who do not have collateral to obtain loans end up pawning or selling their possessions in order to finance their migration.

It was also notable that a larger proportion of migrants in Tanintharyi Region expected to finance migrating through wage deductions (24 per cent), a risky practice that introduces the possibility of debt bondage upon arrival. Anecdotally, it has been well-established that a substantial number of brokers operate in the Region, often recruiting for agricultural, fishing or seafood processing work in Thailand. In many cases, these brokers may in fact be a part of a migrant's social network, as 56 per cent of those who had made wage deduction arrangements said that they were migrating with the help of friends and family (i.e. they did not consider them to be professional brokers).

Table 3.11 Expected source of financing by region (n=625)

Financing source	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Loan	138	55	13	7	47	26	198	32
Savings	88	35	138	72	87	48	313	50
Wage deductions	20	8	27	14	44	24	91	15
Don't know	6	2	13	7	4	2	23	4
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

In choosing an option to finance migration, the logical assumption would be that the likelihood of needing a loan increases as the cost of migrating rises. Figure 3.4 suggests that the relationship is not quite so linear but there is a close correlation. A transition occurs at the MMK500,000 (US\$520) cost point, above which more migrant workers financed their journeys by obtaining loans than paid out of personal savings. Ensuring the availability of low-interest loans to protect migrants from usurious charges from money lenders appears to be a particular need beyond that threshold.

Figure 3.4 Expected source of financing by migration cost (n=625) (%)

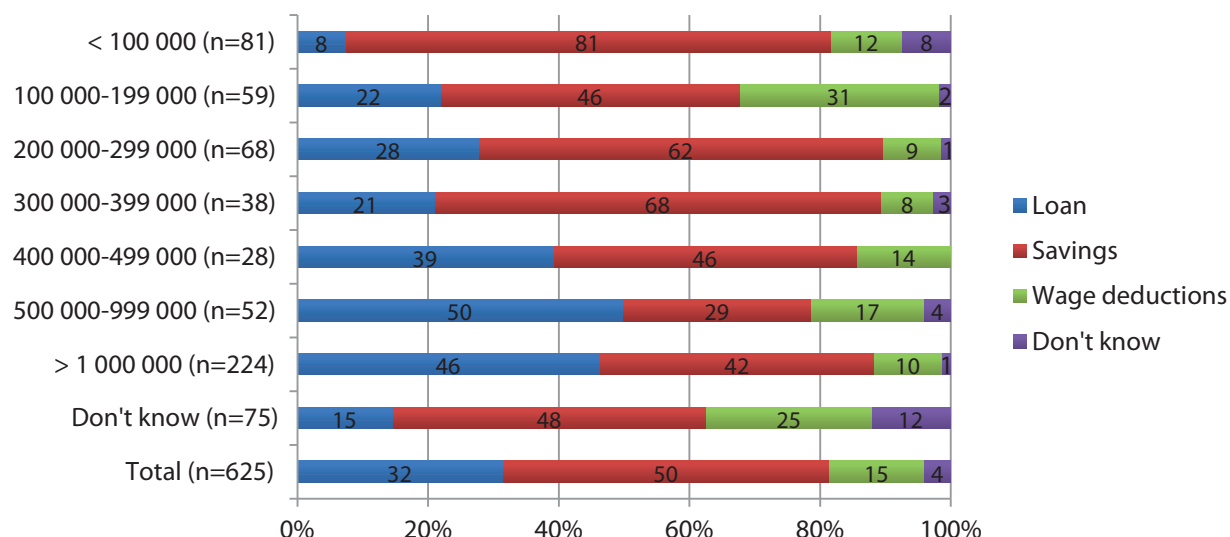


Table 3.12 reveals that the main difference in source of funding between men and women migrants was that more men planned to obtain loans (38 vs. 20 per cent) and women more frequently relied upon personal savings (59 vs. 45 per cent). The findings suggest that women likely have less need of loans to finance migration because of lower costs but also may have less access to them. Rural women in particular, who represent a sizeable portion of potential migrants, are considered to be among Myanmar's most marginalized socio-economic groups (IFAD, 2014).

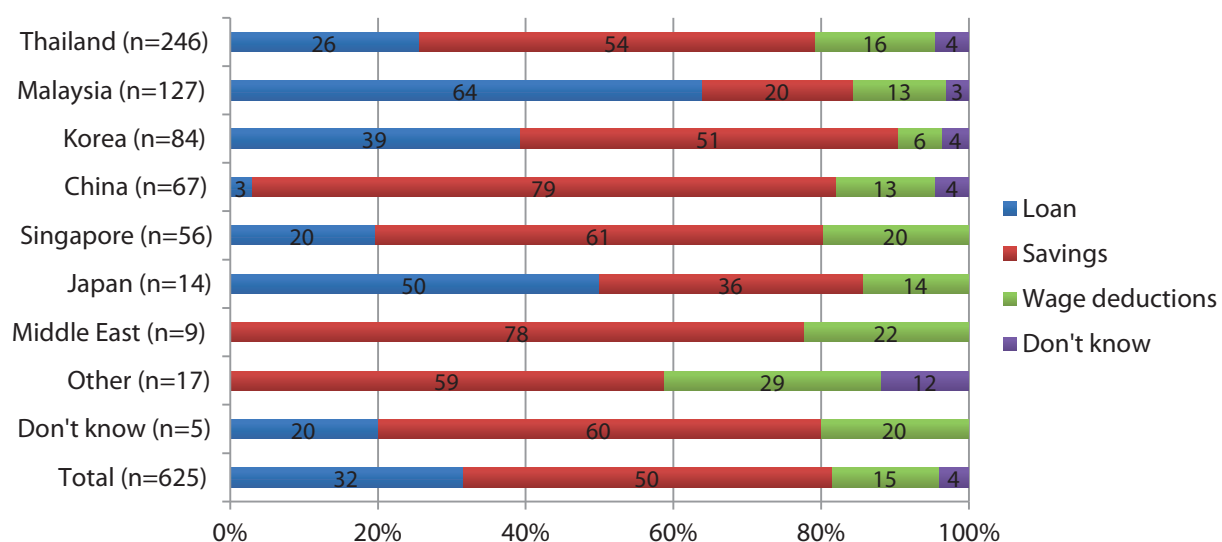
Table 3.12 Expected source of financing by gender (n=625)

Financing source	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Loan	43	20	155	38	198	32
Savings	126	59	187	45	313	50
Wage deductions	37	17	54	13	91	15
Don't know	7	3	16	4	23	4
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

Examining sources of funding for migration by destination country reinforces the theory that the differences cannot simply be explained by the cost of migrating (Figure 3.5). The range of options available to obtain the money to pay for migration also depends upon where potential migrants wish to work and the parties involved in facilitating their migration.

For example, migration to Malaysia, although not as expensive as to destinations such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore or the Middle East, was by far the most likely to be funded through loans (64 per cent). A likely contributing factor is the higher probability that unlicensed brokers were involved in facilitating migration to Malaysia (31 per cent) than for other destination countries.

Migrants traveling for work abroad with the assistance of a broker (66 per cent) or a recruitment agency (43 per cent) were much more likely to anticipate needing a loan than those migrating with the help of friends and family (26 per cent) or alone (16 per cent). In many cases, migrants obtain the money to cover the fees and expenses of migrating through a broker or recruitment agency by means of loans from community money lenders. The interest rates charged may be exorbitant and the repayment terms unfavourable as there are no formal loans from financial institutions available to keep rates more competitive. There is also the danger of losing their homes or land put forward as collateral if they fail to service the debt acquired.

Figure 3.5 Expected source of financing by destination country (n=625) (%)

3.10 Planned duration of employment abroad

The majority of potential migrants anticipated working abroad for a period of less than four years (54 per cent), as shown in Table 3.11. Very few migrants intended to stay employed in another country indefinitely (2 per cent) but nearly a quarter were unsure of how long they would stay (23 per cent).

Investigating distinctions by region shows that migrants in Mandalay were the most likely to plan on working abroad for over four years (33 per cent), and were the least likely to state that they were unsure of when they would return (17 per cent). This likely results from higher levels of migration to destination countries with clear limits on the duration of employment allowed and stricter enforcement against violators, as well as the greater expense required to migrate. Under the Employment Permit System in the Republic of Korea, for example, migrants are allowed to work for a maximum period of four years and ten months, after which they must leave the country for three to six months before re-entry is permitted.

The notable pattern in Shan State was that a large share of migrants intended to work abroad for only two years or less (40 per cent), but many also had no set time frame in mind (39 per cent). As migrants in Shan State can cross the borders into Thailand and China cheaply and easily, it is commonly undertaken with less planning and may be for a shorter period of time (including a greater prevalence of circular migration based on seasonal/short-term employment).

Migrants in Tanintharyi Region were the most likely to migrate for a medium-term period of 2-4 years (36 per cent). Although irregular migration predominates in the Region, it may be a somewhat more deliberate and longer term enterprise due to the challenges and higher expenses involved in comparison to Shan State.

Table 3.13 Planned duration of employment abroad by region (n=625)

Duration	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 2 years	30	12	77	40	35	19	142	23
2-4 years	97	39	30	16	65	36	192	31
4-6 years	76	30	6	3	28	15	110	18
> 6 years	8	3	4	2	12	7	24	4
No plan to return	4	2	1	1	7	4	12	2
Don't know	37	15	73	38	35	19	145	23
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

There was a strong correlation found between the anticipated amount paid to migrate and the planned duration of employment in another country. For those who expected to pay less than MMK100,000 (US\$105), 42 per cent planned to work abroad for under two years and 38 per cent had no time frame in mind. In contrast, 77 per cent of migrants who paid above MMK1,000,000 (US\$1,040) anticipated working overseas for more than two years and only 11 per cent did not have an intended date of return. The results indicate that opportunity cost has a strong effect on migrants' thinking about how long they will work in destination countries.

3.11 Expected wages in destination country

Table 3.14 demonstrates that the wages anticipated by potential migrants varied quite broadly. A quarter of migrants thought their monthly earnings would be above MMK500,000 (US\$520), which is a realistic expectation for some destination countries. A recent ILO survey in the Republic of Korea found that the average wages earned by migrant workers were US\$1,414 per month (Kang & Lee, 2014, p. 48). This amount should be considered quite exceptional for low-skilled migrant workers within Asia though, and the results show an almost equal number who expected to earn between MMK200,000-299,000 per month (US\$210-310) in locations such as Thailand, Malaysia and China.

Wage expectations were found to be significantly different between men and women migrants. Although women were only slightly more expectant of earning less than MMK200,000 per month (US\$210) than men (19 vs. 10 per cent), they were also less likely (13 vs. 31 per cent) to expect wages above MMK500,000 (US\$520). In addition, women were somewhat more commonly unaware of what amount of remuneration they could expect to receive

(16 vs. 7 per cent). Controlling for destination country, similar dynamics of fewer women anticipating high salaries or being unsure of what to expect in wages were still apparent. For example, a disturbingly high number of women migrants planning to head for work in China had no idea what they would be paid (46 per cent) – much higher than for men going to the same country (9 per cent). Although no multi-country studies are available on the subject of wage inequality between men and women migrants in Asia, a recent survey of Myanmar migrants in Thailand found that women consistently reported earning lower wages than men (IOM & ARCM, 2013).

Table 3.14 Expected wages by gender (n=625)

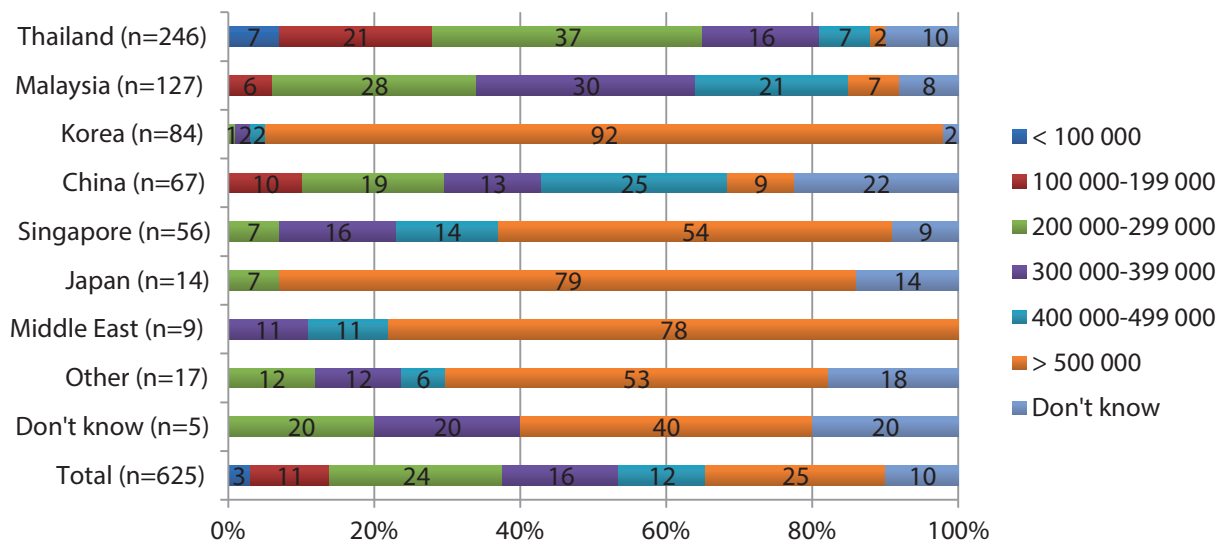
Expected wages (MMK)	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 100 000	8	4	8	2	16	3
100 000-199 000	33	15	34	8	67	11
200 000-299 000	53	25	96	23	149	24
300 000-399 000	31	15	70	17	101	16
400 000-499 000	26	12	47	11	73	12
> 500 000	28	13	128	31	156	25
Don't know	34	16	29	7	63	10
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

As depicted in Figure 3.6, migrants intending to work in the Republic of Korea were the most likely to expect relatively high salaries, with 92 per cent anticipating monthly salaries of over MMK500,000 (US\$520). According to focus groups in all areas, the Republic of Korea is well-known among potential migrants as the location offering the highest remuneration. This is based upon more than word of mouth from return migrants, as apparently labour authorities inform potential migrants of the minimum wage before departure.

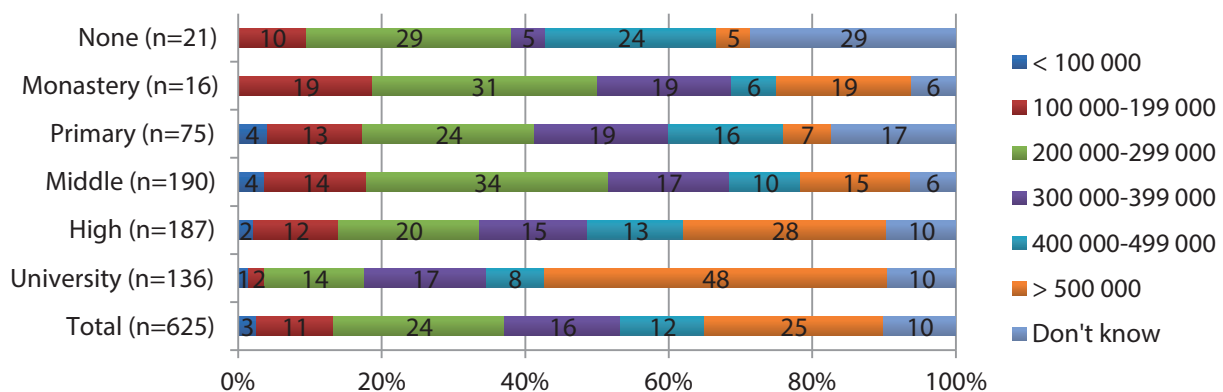
The results show that Japan, the Middle East and Singapore were also considered high wage destinations, with the majority of migrants heading to those countries expecting MMK500,000 (US\$520) or more in monthly salary. Potential migrants were much less clear about how much they would earn in China, with a broad range of amounts stated and nearly a quarter unwilling to even offer an estimate (22 per cent).

Expectations for wages in Malaysia and Thailand appeared to be better established, with the majority of migrants (58 percent) anticipating monthly salaries of MMK100,000-299,000 (US\$105-310) for work in Thailand and 200,000-399,000 (US\$210-415) for Malaysia. Most focus group discussants thought that they would receive wages on the high end of those scales.

The highly publicized minimum wage laws recently enacted in both countries is an important factor to consider behind the confidence of these wage predictions, as group discussions in Tanintharyi Region and Shan State revealed that nearly all migrants had heard of the minimum established for Thailand (THB300 (US\$9) per day). It was not as clear whether most potential migrants were aware of the minimum monthly wage amounts established in Malaysia (900 ringgit (MYR) (US\$280) in the peninsula and MYR800 (US\$250) in Sabah and Sarawak) but given the scale of chain migration occurring it seems quite probable. It should be noted, however, that the previously mentioned survey of Myanmar migrants in Thailand found that about one-third were not actually being paid the legal minimum wage (IOM & ARCM, 2013).

Figure 3.6 Expected wages by destination country (n=625) (%)

Although the correlation between greater educational attainment and expected income is not as strong as has been documented in many labour markets, Figure 3.7 illustrates that there were clear assumptions of bigger economic rewards for those who had completed more education. Nearly half of migrants who had completed a university degree (48 per cent) and 28 per cent of high school graduates expected to earn over MMK500,000 (US\$520), while only seven per cent with a primary education had similar hopes. Whether these suppositions about future income were actually fulfilled for migrants is an issue that warrants further study. Research conducted in Lao PDR found that many families questioned the usefulness of further schooling for their children on the grounds that education does not lead to better jobs after migration to Thailand (TWG, 2008), and there is currently little evidence available on whether labour markets provide recognition of credentials obtained in Myanmar for migrants seeking low and semi-skilled jobs.

Figure 3.7 Expected wages by education completed (n=625) (%)

A common belief expressed in focus groups was that regular migrants earn more than irregular migrants. While the findings from this study are ex ante projections and not useful for testing this theory, studies conducted in Thailand have found that migrants with legal documentation do tend to receive somewhat higher wages than those without (MAP Foundation, 2012; IOM & ARCM, 2013). However, the increase in wages for these migrants is often more than offset by the high fees required for recruitment and legal documentation (Harkins et al., 2013). Thailand may be something of an outlier in this regard though, and the benefits of regular migration are not simply pecuniary.

3.12 Anticipated savings rate

As presented in Table 3.15, the majority of migrants expected to save less than a quarter of their earnings while working overseas (57 per cent). Only a small portion stated that they did know how much they would save (15 per cent), suggesting that most migrants have some plans in mind for their earnings and spend carefully while working abroad. This was borne out by focus group discussions with return migrants, with most stating that between savings and remittances, they had retained about 50-80 per cent of their income.

Table 3.15 Anticipated savings rate by region (n=625)

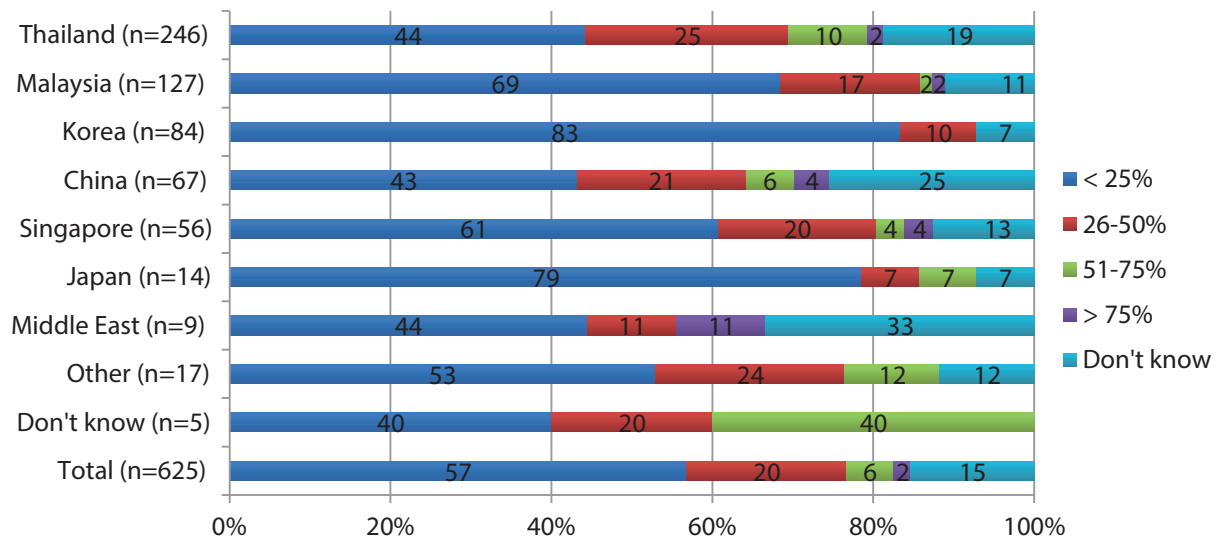
Savings rate	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 25%	195	77	70	37	90	50	355	57
26-50%	32	13	50	26	42	23	124	20
51-75%	2	1	26	14	9	5	37	6
> 75%	0	-	10	5	3	2	13	2
Don't know	23	9	35	18	38	21	96	15
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Reviewing the data by region, migrants in Mandalay were more likely to have a savings rate in mind (91 per cent) and it was much more commonly below a quarter of their income (77 per cent). An important factor in the lower savings amounts within the Region may be that migrants there anticipate sending much higher levels of remittances (discussed further in section 5.4) but also that they overwhelmingly planned to take out loans to cover the cost of migrating and would need to service the acquired debt.

Migrants in Shan State were more likely to plan on holding on to a higher share of their wages, with 19 per cent setting a goal of saving at least half. Again, it appears that remittances are an important element determining the savings rate, as migrants from Shan State frequently planned to send smaller remittance amounts. This higher rate of savings may reflect that there are fewer cheap and reliable channels available to send money for irregular migrants in Thailand and China, so migrants there are more likely to send money infrequently with their friends or carry their savings back with them upon returning home. Other studies of migrants from Shan State in in Thailand suggest that another reason they tend to save more rather than send remittances is that they frequently bring their families abroad with them (Aung & Aung, 2009).

The most distinctive feature of savings plans for migrants in Tanintharyi Region was that a significant number had not developed one (21 per cent), which may indicate low levels of financial literacy among potential migrants in the area.

Surprisingly, savings rates appeared to be more closely correlated with destination country than the more obvious relationships with expected income and duration of work abroad (Figure 3.8). Characteristics such as the cost of living, remittance services available, and expenses paid to migrate vary considerably by destination and may have a strong influence on how much migrants plan to save. For example, migrants heading to Thailand and China (where the migration expenses and cost of living are low and dependable remittance services less available) were expecting to save larger proportions of their earnings, with about one-third planning to save more than a quarter of their income (37 and 31 per cent respectively). Conversely, most migrants going to the Republic of Korea, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore expected to save less than a quarter of their earning, likely because of the higher expenses involved and more reliable remittance services.

Figure 3.8 Anticipated savings rate by destination country (n=625) (%)

Differences in anticipated savings rates between women and men migrants were fairly minor. Overall, the pattern appeared to be that women expected to save somewhat higher amounts, which may result from greater levels of irregular migration to countries like Thailand and China where sending regular remittances is less feasible, as well as more frequent employment of women migrants in the informal sector where payment is often less regular.

3.13 Anticipated remittance rate

The amount that migrants expected to send in remittances was markedly higher than for savings, as revealed in Table 3.16. The greater portion of migrants anticipated transferring at least half of their income home in remittances (55 per cent). Discussion of the purpose of these remittances in focus groups revealed a wide variety of uses, including living expenses, house construction, education of children, purchase of livestock and donation. Experience in the Asia and the Pacific region has shown that remittances can play a significant role in reducing poverty and improving human development, with total remittances worldwide reaching unprecedented levels that far exceed official development aid and foreign direct investment (United Nations Country Team in Myanmar, 2011).

Planned remittance rates were much larger in Mandalay Region, with 70 per cent of migrants expecting to send at least half of their wages back home. This appears to mainly result from long-term regular migration to destination countries such as the Republic of Korea, Japan and Malaysia, making the sending of remittances easier and more essential.

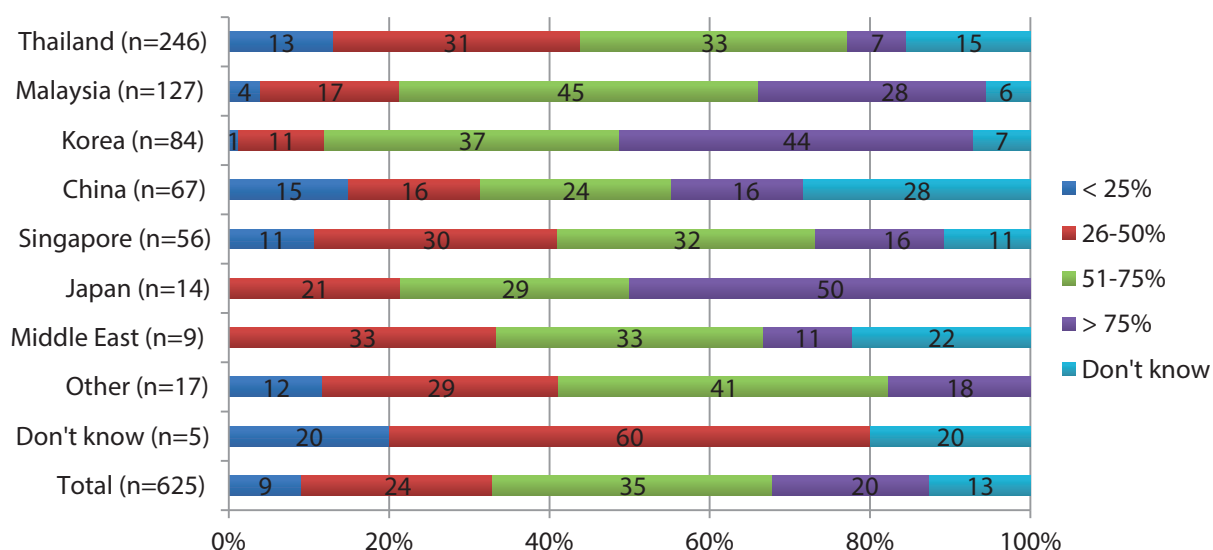
It was notable in Shan State that a larger number of migrants were either planning to send less than a quarter of their income in remittances (20 per cent) or did not know how much they would send (18 per cent). As discussed previously, less access to reliable and inexpensive remittance services is likely a contributing factor for these results, as well as lack of knowledge about how to use the services.

In Tanintharyi Region, remittance rates tended to fall in the mid-range, with 72 per cent of migrants remitting 26-75 per cent of their earnings.

Table 3.16 Anticipated remittance rate by region (n=625)

Remittance rate	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 25%	8	3	38	20	11	6	57	9
26-50%	48	19	38	20	63	35	149	24
51-75%	91	36	60	32	67	37	218	35
> 75%	85	34	21	11	16	9	122	20
Don't know	20	8	34	18	25	14	79	13
Total	252	100	191	100	191	100	625	100

Figure 3.9 reveals that destination country heavily affects planned remittances, with higher incomes, longer term migration and more access to reliable remittance service systems encouraging larger rates. For those migrants heading to work in the Republic of Korea (81 per cent), Japan (79 per cent) and Malaysia (73 per cent), the vast majority expected to send more than half of their earnings back home in remittances. In Thailand and China, only 40 per cent planned to send similar amounts. A notable outlier was among migrants heading to Singapore, who often had lower expectations for sending remittances.

Figure 3.9 Anticipated remittance rate by destination country (n=625) (%)

Men migrants expected to send considerably greater amounts of remittances home than women. Table 3.17 shows that 64 per cent of men planned to remit at least half of their income, whereas only 36 per cent of women had similar intentions. A number of factors may have influenced the higher results for men within Myanmar, including greater access to high income destination countries, better paying jobs and traditional gender roles which cast them as the primary breadwinners. It also appears likely that access and awareness of how to use remittance services may be lower for women migrants due to higher levels of informal sector employment.

It is unclear how this substantially higher expected rate of remittances for men migrants matches with the reality as there have been a range of findings on gendered remittance patterns at the global level, and limited data on the situation in Myanmar specifically. A study of the issue carried out by the World Bank using survey data from 18 countries determined that men tend to remit greater amounts than women in most countries (Orozco, Lowell & Schneider, 2006), while an IOM survey found that women send approximately the same amount of remittances as men migrants but proportionally higher based on their income (IOM & UN-INSTRAW, 2007). A more contextually relevant survey conducted among approximately 1,000 Myanmar migrant workers employed in Thailand found

equal median remittance amounts between men and women, with women remitting a slightly greater share of the lower wages they received (40 vs. 36 percent) (Turnell, Vicary & Bradford, 2007, p. 16).

Table 3.17 Anticipated remittance rate by gender (n=625)

Remittance rate	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 25%	31	15	26	6	57	9
26-50%	72	34	77	19	149	24
51-75%	60	28	158	38	218	34
> 75%	16	8	106	26	122	20
Don't know	34	16	45	11	79	13
Total	213	100	412	100	625	100

A gap in access and awareness for use of remittance services was also apparent among several ethnic minority groups. Around half of Kayin (57 per cent), Lahu (53 per cent) and Akhar (41 per cent) migrants were either unsure about what amount they would send or planned on remitting less than a quarter of their wages. It is probable that many of these migrants have less experience in dealing with financial institutions and may have less confidence in doing so to send remittances.

3.14 Expected channel for sending remittances

Table 3.18 reveals that the two most commonly anticipated means for remitting money from overseas were through banks (38 per cent) and the *hundi* system¹² (35 per cent). A smaller number of migrants anticipated recruiting their friends or family to physically carry money back when they visit home (20 per cent).

Although there is little comparable data available on the amount of remittances sent through informal money transfers in Asia, these results appear to show a high rate of expected utilization in relation to more formalized service providers. Because of a history of periods of high inflation, low interest rates offered on deposits and at least three episodes of demonetisation since independence, there is thought to be a lingering public distrust of the banking system in Myanmar (The Economist, 2013). A recent survey found that just 16 per cent of households use formal financial services (Duflos et al., 2013, p. 8), suggesting that in practice, the rate of remittances sent through banks may be even lower.

Table 3.18 Expected remittance channel by region (n=625)

Remittance channel	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bank	82	33	68	36	86	47	236	38
Friends or family	12	5	82	43	34	19	128	20
Hundi system	145	58	18	9	55	30	18	35
Other	3	1	22	12	1	1	26	4
Don't know	10	4	1	1	6	3	17	1
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

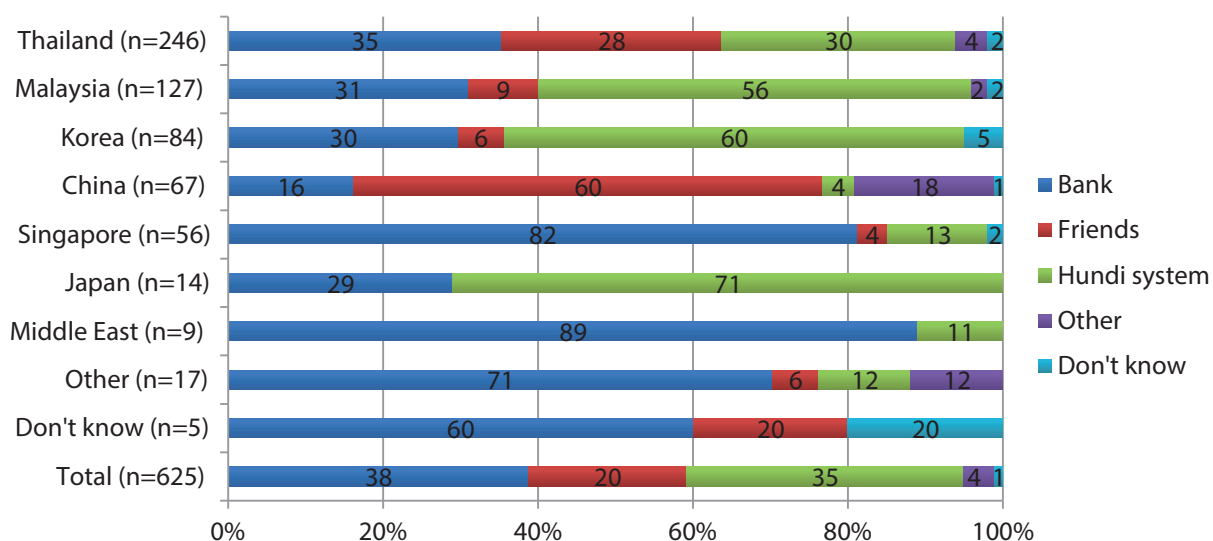
12 The *hundi* system is an informal channel for sending remittances (and sometimes goods) operated by unlicensed financial brokers. While based almost entirely on bonds of trust between the parties involved, these types of money transfer systems are very popular in countries such as Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and China because they are relatively cheap, fast and do not require the sender to provide identification (OECD, 2006).

There were major differences between regions in how migrants expected to remit their earnings back home. The majority of potential migrants from Mandalay (58 per cent) intended to use the hundi system to send money, whereas the largest group of migrants in Shan anticipated sending remittances through friends or family (43 per cent) and those in Tanintharyi stated they would use banks (47 per cent).¹³

Other studies of remittance patterns in Myanmar have identified similar tendencies among migrants from Shan State, who often rely on friends to physically carry their transfers back to their families (Turnell et al., 2007). Globally, it has been found that short-term migrants and those who frequently return to their country of origin are often more inclined to use this method, as are those from least developed countries (where formal financial services are often less available) and in cases where the country of origin and destination share a border. Reduced cost is often the key motivation for using this approach (Kang & Lee, 2014). However, coupled with this affordability is the obvious risk involved with carrying large sums of money informally across international borders.

As displayed in Figure 3.10, there were broad differences in expected remittance channels by destination country. Most migrants going to Japan (71 per cent), the Republic of Korea (60 per cent) and Malaysia (56 per cent) anticipated using the hundi system to send their earnings back to Myanmar. On the other hand, migrants planning to work in the Middle East (89 per cent) and Singapore (82 per cent) heavily favoured the use of banks to remit money. For those workers intending to migrate to China, 60 per cent expected to have friends carry their funds back home. The results appear to show that despite international efforts to raise awareness and reduce the cost of formal remittance services for migrants, use of informal channels remains dominant in many corridors.

Figure 3.10 Expected remittance channel by destination country (n=625) (%)



13 In reviewing the data, it was found that the preference for sending remittances through banks in Tanintharyi may have resulted from a misunderstanding among enumerators. Many respondents were referring to a form of the *hundi* system where money is deposited in a bank account in Myanmar after the transfer has been completed. Therefore, the findings in Tanintharyi region are likely somewhat inaccurate on the use of banks vs. *hundi* to send remittances.

This chapter analyses the knowledge among potential migrants about how to migrate safely, the possible problems they may encounter and where they can seek assistance for recruitment-related grievances, providing comparisons by region, gender, destination country and other variables with significant correlation.

4.1 Knowledge of the requirements to migrate legally for work

As a test of awareness, potential migrants were asked what documentation is typically required to migrate regularly for work.¹⁴ Table 4.1 shows that the majority of migrants were aware that both a passport and visa are necessary (70 per cent) but that much smaller fractions knew that a job offer (27 per cent) and a work permit (19 per cent) are also generally required. As many migrants are known to cross borders with short-term border passes and only later obtain jobs and permission to work, this finding may reflect what they see as the requirements in practice.

Reviewing the differences by region, migrants in Mandalay were the most aware in the aggregate. In particular, they were more familiar with the need for a job offer (38 per cent), which is likely because more migrants in the Region planned to work in countries where they would not be granted a visa until an employment contract is signed.

Notably fewer migrants in Shan State understood that a visa is a requirement to migrate (57 per cent) but a larger number knew that they needed a work permit (32 per cent). This may be an indication of how authorities enforce the law in Thailand, where the validity of work permits is often checked.

There was lower awareness of all of the requirements in Tanintharyi Region, with the exception of the need to obtain a visa (78 per cent). Many migrants in the Region are known to cross the border into Thailand with seven-day passes and may not be aware that this is not actually sufficient to migrate legally because they plan to later regularize their status through registration (or simply work irregularly).

Table 4.1 Knowledge of the requirements to migrate legally for work by region (n=625)

Requirements	Mandalay (n=252)		Shan (n=191)		Tanintharyi(n=182)		Total (n=625)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job offer	95	38	59	31	14	8	168	27
Passport	211	84	148	77	79	43	438	70
Visa	187	74	108	57	142	78	437	70
Work permit	39	15	61	32	20	11	120	19
Don't know	2	1	6	3	11	6	19	3
Total	534	212	382	200	266	146	1182	189

Note: Multiple response variable.

There were no dramatic differences in awareness between genders, although men migrants were somewhat more aware than women of the need to have a passport (75 vs. 61 per cent) and to obtain a job offer (31 vs. 18 per cent). This is probably explained by the higher number of men migrating regularly through recruitment agencies, which results in their being better informed about legal requirements than women.

¹⁴ These requirements were defined in an essentialist manner as a job offer, passport, visa and work permit.

4.2 Knowledge of the legal limit for recruitment fees

Myanmar's Law for Overseas Employment (1999) establishes a committee to prescribe the service fee amounts that can be charged to migrant workers. In accordance with Article 8(e) of the Law, it has been stipulated that recruitment agencies charging workers more than four times their basic monthly salary earned will have their licenses revoked (Government of Myanmar, Undated). Although instituting a ceiling on fees is considered a good practice for regulating recruitment agencies in countries where such charges are allowed, Table 4.2 shows that very few workers were aware that a limit has been fixed (9 per cent). If this policy is to be implemented effectively, it appears that a major increase in promulgation is needed to ensure that migrants are aware of their rights during recruitment.

Appraising differences in knowledge about the legal limit by region, potential migrants in Mandalay were the most aware (14 per cent) and those in Tanintharyi were least aware (2 per cent). However, given the much higher quantity of migrants using recruitment agencies to migrate in Mandalay Region (44 per cent), this figure cannot be considered a positive finding on migrant awareness of their rights.

Table 4.2 Knowledge of legal limit on recruitment fees by region (n=625)

Knowledge of limit	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Know the limit	35	14	16	8	4	2	55	9
Don't know limit	217	86	175	92	178	98	570	91
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Men migrants were only slightly more aware of the fee restrictions than women (11 vs. 4 per cent), which does not faithfully reflect the fact that a larger proportion of men were actually being charged such fees by recruitment agencies (27 vs. 14 per cent).

Box 1

International standards for regulation of private employment agencies

Although private employment agencies were generally looked upon unfavourably and banned in many countries during much of the twentieth century due to their potential for abuse and exploitation of workers, the changes in labour markets that occurred over the past several decades led to a reassessment of the potential for private employment agencies to make a positive contribution. A new perspective on the function and regulation of employment agencies was established in international law under the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181).

Convention No. 181 was developed to improve the efficiency of labour markets by providing guidance on how private organizations could contribute towards greater matching of the supply and demand of labour and by establishing programmes for partnership with public organizations to assist unemployed workers in re-entering the labour market. The Convention also provides for the regulation of private employment agencies to ensure fair practices and help prevent human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Ratification of the Convention, however, has been limited so far to 28 countries globally; as of 2014, Japan and Fiji are the only ILO Member States in the Asia and the Pacific region to ratify Convention No. 181.

A major obstacle to the signing of the Convention for many of the countries in Asia is the clause that indicates that employers rather than workers should bear the costs of recruitment. Some governments (including Myanmar) have opted to establish ceilings for the amount that recruitment agencies can collect in service fees, with the rates usually calculated as a proportion of a worker's monthly wages

rather than a fixed amount. Nevertheless, the costs involved can still be extremely high for workers due to charging of excessive fees, costly bureaucratic procedures and/or official corruption.

Source: Adapted from *Regulating recruitment of migrant workers: An assessment of complaint mechanisms in Thailand* (Bangkok, ILO).

4.3 Most reliable source of information on migration

Table 4.3 reveals that migrants were overwhelmingly dependent upon friends and family to obtain information about migrating for work (73 per cent). The only other source of information considered reliable by a significant number of migrants was recruitment agencies and brokers (10 per cent); although even among those who planned to actually make use of their services, only 34 per cent considered them the most trustworthy. It was also notable that only one per cent of migrants considered either authorities or NGOs to be dependable sources of migration information. A commonality in all focus group discussions held was the lack of safe migration information and support services available, particularly acute for rural migrants.

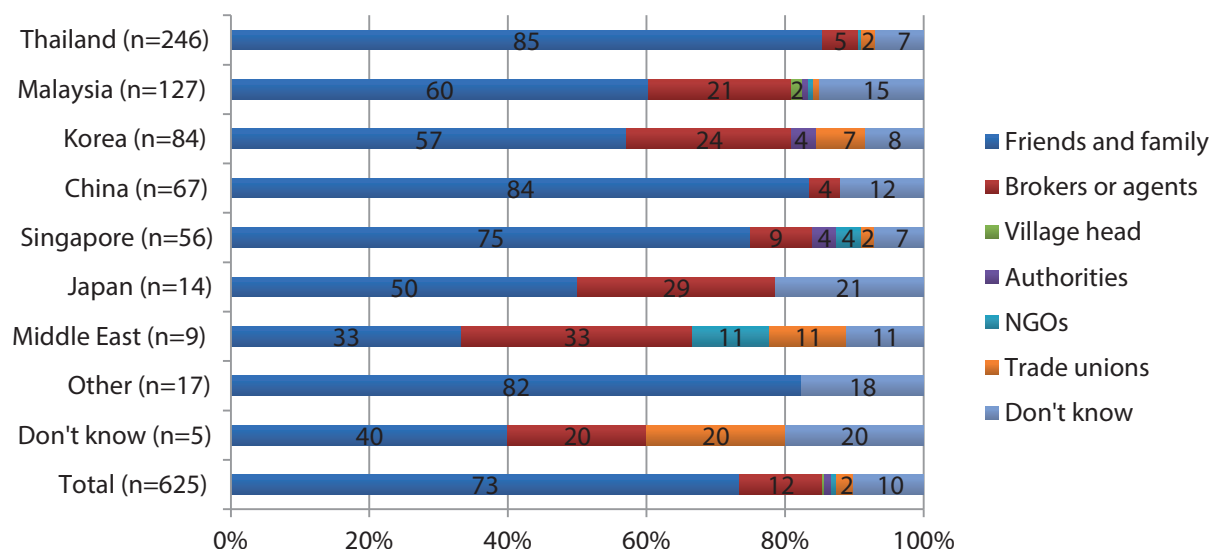
Analysing the results by region, the most salient data point was that migrants in Mandalay consider brokers and recruitment agencies substantially more reliable sources of information (26 per cent) than migrants in Shan (2 per cent) or Tanintharyi (3 per cent). This is likely because of greater familiarity and more feedback from other migrants about recruitment agencies and brokers within Mandalay Region. The results reveal that substantive efforts will be required in order to build trust in the information available from both public and private sector sources in Shan State and Tanintharyi Region.

Table 4.3 Most reliable source of information on migration by region (n=625)

Source of information	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Friends and family	139	55	161	84	158	87	458	73
Brokers or agents	65	26	4	2	6	3	75	12
Village head	2	1	0	-	0	-	2	0
Authorities	6	2	0	-	0	-	6	1
NGOs	3	1	1	1	1	1	5	1
Trade unions	8	3	6	3	1	1	15	2
Don't know	29	12	19	10	16	9	64	10
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

Examining the data by gender sub-groups did not reveal any major differences in trust of information sources. It was notable, however, that all potential migrant under 18 years of age (n=19) felt that the only information source they could rely upon was friends and family, indicating a need for greater outreach to young people considering employment abroad.

Figure 4.1 shows that recruitment agencies and brokers were considered less reliable sources of information for migrating to Thailand (5 per cent) and China (5 per cent), and more reliable for information about the Middle East (33 per cent), Japan (29 per cent), the Republic of Korea (24 per cent) and Malaysia (21 per cent). The simplest explanation for this result is that high levels of irregular migration in border areas via other channels makes agents and brokers less relevant as there is reduced demand for their services. However, it must also be considered that the recruitment actors specializing in certain locations may have earned a particularly bad reputation for deception and abuse.

Figure 4.1 Most reliable source of information by destination country (n=625) (%)

4.4 Criteria for choosing a recruitment agency or broker

As shown in Table 4.4, nearly half of potential migrant workers felt that reputation was the most important criteria for choosing a recruitment agency or broker to assist them with migrating (48 per cent).¹⁵ Approximately equal numbers of migrants felt that cost, reliability¹⁶ and duration required for deployment were the key factors in decision-making (13-14 per cent each). Furthermore, 9 per cent of migrants were unsure of what criterion is most important in choosing an agency or broker. Without a more systematic and impartial means for comparing the services of the available recruitment actors, the only real way in which these criteria could be assessed are through word of mouth or by asking the parties directly. Though neither approach is without value, a more authoritative source of information appears to be an important gap to be filled in allowing migrants to make better decisions.

The outstanding discrepancy by region was that migrants in Shan were much less likely to rely upon reputation (22 per cent) than those in Mandalay and Tanintharyi (60 per cent). They were also more apt to state that they did not know how they would decide (17 per cent) or to offer an unexplained standard of “reliability” (22 per cent). As the vast majority of migrants do not plan to use recruitment agencies or brokers in Shan State (91 per cent), these results probably just reflect lack of familiarity with how to make such a decision. More awareness raising for migrants on what is important to consider before selecting a recruiter seems to be a particular need in Shan State.

Table 4.4 Most important criteria for choosing a recruitment agency or broker by region (n=625)

Selection criteria	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Speed of deployment	27	11	38	20	15	8	80	13
Cost	30	12	38	20	17	9	85	14
Reputation	150	60	41	22	110	60	301	48
Reliability	31	12	41	22	11	6	83	13
Other	9	4	1	1	13	7	23	4
Don't know	5	2	32	17	16	9	53	9
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

15 It should be noted that registration and licensing by authorities, which the ILO considers fundamental to effectively regulating private employment agencies, was omitted from the coded list of criteria.

16 Reliability was not a coded response but was put forward as an “other” criteria by a large number of migrants. It was unclear how these respondents planned to assess the reliability of agencies or brokers before making their decisions.

4.5 Sources of assistance for recruitment-related grievances

Table 4.5 reveals that the largest group of potential migrants would contact their friends or family members if they had a dispute with a recruitment agency while still in Myanmar (48 per cent). Although the most common response, it was not clear what type of assistance migrants expected to obtain from friends or family in such an instance other than strength of numbers. A considerably smaller numbers of migrants stated that they would go to the police (19 per cent), the village head (14 per cent) or labour authorities (10 per cent) if they had a grievance. The results appear to indicate that there is a lack of knowledge about jurisdiction, and/or trust in local authorities, for assistance with recruitment-related complaints.

Reliance upon friends and family for help with problems faced during recruitment was stronger in Shan State (61 per cent) than in Tanintharyi (49 per cent) and Mandalay Regions (37 per cent), which appears to mainly reflect a greater reluctance to seek assistance outside of social networks among ethnic minorities. The police were the most likely formal institution for migrants to approach with grievances about recruitment in all locations (19 per cent in Mandalay/Tanintharyi Regions and 17 per cent in Shan State).

Table 4.5 Sources of assistance for recruitment-related grievances by region (n=625)

Source of assistance	Mandalay (n=252)		Shan (n=191)		Tanintharyi(n=182)		Total (n=625)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Village head	33	13	24	13	29	16	86	14
Labour authorities	47	19	11	6	2	1	60	10
Police	49	19	33	17	34	19	116	19
NGO/CBO	8	3	0	-	8	4	16	3
Trade union	26	10	3	1	7	4	36	6
Political party	1	0	1	2	7	4	9	1
Friends and family	94	37	117	61	89	49	300	48
Other	12	5	5	3	5	3	22	4
Don't know	4	2	8	4	22	12	34	5
Total	274	108	202	107	203	112	679	110

Note: Multiple response variable.

Women and men migrants were about equally likely to depend on friends and family for assistance with recruitment problems, with women marginally more inclined to go to police than men (24 vs. 16 per cent) and slightly less probable to go to labour authorities (3 vs. 13 per cent).

A pattern of greater reliance on public/private sector assistance as opposed to friends and family was notable for migrants heading to countries with higher levels of regular migration. For example, one-third of migrants planning to go to the Republic of Korea said they would approach labour authorities with their grievances (MOLES is the designated sending agency under the MOU with the Republic of Korea) and 30 per cent of migrants heading to Singapore said they would seek the help of police. Conversely, migrants heading to Thailand (56 per cent) and China (54 per cent) were much more dependent on their individual social networks to obtain support.

4.6 Awareness of problems faced during the migration process

As displayed in Table 4.6, the problem that migrants were most aware they might face during migration was the financial burden of high expenses (37 per cent). An approximately equal share of migrants knew of the possibility of being deceived or exploited during migration (23 per cent), followed by a substantial group of migrants who were not aware of any of the risks involved (20 per cent) and a slightly smaller number who knew that the procedures might be lengthy or complicated (16 per cent). Overall, the results show perilously low awareness among potential migrants of some of the most serious risks involved with migration.

Migrants in Mandalay Region were generally the most aware of the potential pitfalls, with over one-third mindful of the possibility of being deceived while migrating (34 per cent) and only a few unaware of any of the risks involved (6 per cent). Because of the higher rates of regular migration from the Region, migrants in Mandalay also tended to be more familiar with the long duration and complexity of the procedures involved (25 per cent).

The most common problem that migrants in Shan State were familiar with was the high expense by a wide margin (49 per cent). Much smaller numbers were knowledgeable about the possibility of facing deception (16 per cent) or exploitation (17 per cent), and a sizeable group were unaware of any of the potential problems that might occur (28 per cent). Lack of legal status in destination countries due to irregular migration may increase the vulnerability of many migrants from Shan State, indicating that awareness raising on the possible risks involved should be expanded.

Potential migrants in Tanintharyi Region were much less aware that the costs of migration might cause problems for them (14 per cent), a somewhat surprising result given that migrating from the Region was typically more expensive than in Shan State and less than half of migrants there could cover the costs out-of-pocket. On the other hand, migrants were decidedly more aware of the potential for exploitation (37 per cent), perhaps suggesting that the risks in Tanintharyi Region are considered greater after arrival. It was also notable that a large number of migrants in the Region were completely unaware of any the risks involved (31 per cent).

Table 4.6 Awareness of problems faced during migration by region (n=625)

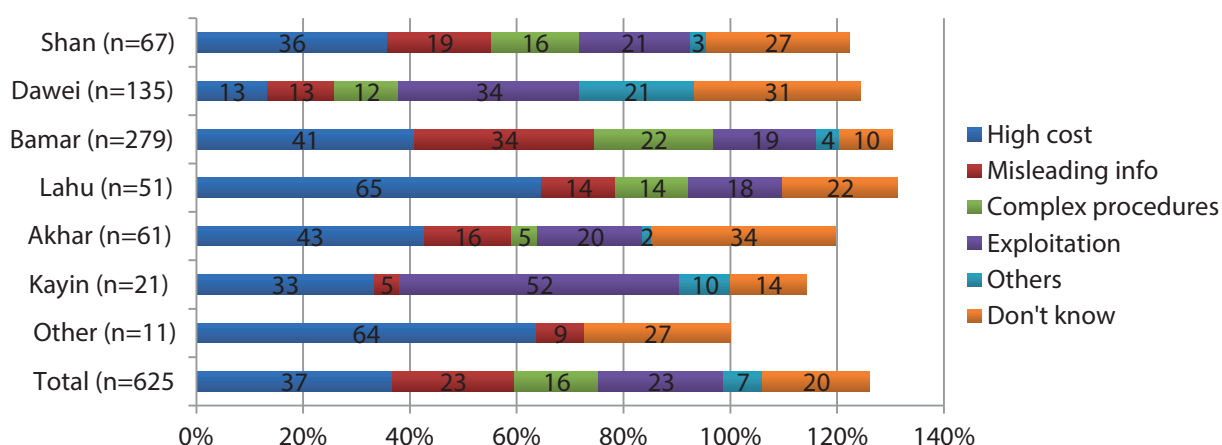
Awareness of problem	Mandalay (n=252)		Shan (n=191)		Tanintharyi (n=182)		Total (n=625)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High cost	109	43	94	49	26	14	229	37
Misleading info	86	34	31	16	26	14	143	23
Complex procedures	62	25	21	11	16	9	99	16
Exploitation	45	18	33	17	68	37	146	23
Other risks	10	4	2	2	33	18	46	7
Don't know	16	6	53	28	56	31	125	20
Total	328	130	234	123	225	123	788	126

Note: Multiple response variable

Comparing gender differences in awareness, men were more frequently aware of the problems caused by the high costs involved (41 vs. 29 per cent) and women of exploitation (31 vs. 20 per cent). While greater awareness of the problem is a positive, whether exploitation is actually more of a risk for women migrants is difficult to determine with any certainty, and awareness of the possibility should be increased for both men and women.

As shown in Figure 4.2, significantly greater or lesser awareness of some problems was also apparent by ethnic groups, possibly reflecting word of mouth (or lack thereof) within their communities:

- Lahu migrants were the most familiar with the high costs of migration causing difficulties (65 per cent).
- Kayin migrants were more readily aware of the possibility of facing exploitation (54 per cent) but none knew that the complex procedures involved might pose a problem.
- Akhar migrants were the most likely to be unaware of any of the potential challenges involved with migrating (34 per cent).
- Bamar migrants were the most aware overall and the least likely to be completely unfamiliar with any of the prospective problems that might occur during migration (10 per cent).

Figure 4.2 Awareness of problems faced during migration by ethnicity (n=625) (%)

Note: Multiple response variable.

Migrants planning to head to the Middle East (67 per cent), Singapore (48 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (48 per cent) were the most aware of the financial risks involved with migrating, a list which includes some of the most expensive destination countries. Those migrants expecting to go to Thailand (33 per cent) and Malaysia (25 per cent) were the most aware of the possibility of exploitation, perhaps revealing the high profile of some of the cases of abuse documented in those countries.¹⁷ The potential for misleading information was the most well-known among migrants wishing to go to Japan (36 per cent), Malaysia (32 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (27 per cent), which may be because they are considered highly desirable destinations by many migrants – increasing the opportunity for deception by unscrupulous parties.

Box 2

Deceived into icy affliction

Seven male migrant workers from Mergui, Yangon, Bago and Mandalay used an employment agency in Yangon to secure jobs in Malaysia. Three of them paid US\$800 before departure for these services and the other four made an upfront payment of US\$350 and then took out a loan from a broker in Malaysia to cover the rest of the cost.

Prior to departure, they had been told that they would be working in a small ice cube factory. Instead, they were put to work moving 50 kilogram blocks of ice without any protective clothing. As they had been informed by the employment agency that they could switch jobs after three months if they wanted to, they made a request to change their employment. In response, one member of the group was beaten and all were arrested by immigration authorities. While in detention, they lost all of their possessions including their National Registration Cards.

The families of the migrant workers went to the employment agency for help and were told that they would have to pay US\$300 to obtain their release (one family did pay US\$150). After six weeks, the workers were taken from the detention centre in handcuffs and were put on a plane. They were not given their passports back until they arrived in Yangon.

When the workers complained to the employment agency about their ordeal, their grievances were met with contempt from the staff. Since returning home, they have not been able to recover their possessions and are financially worse off than before they left.

Source: A case file from the ILO Forced Labour Complaint Mechanism.

¹⁷ In 2014, both Thailand and Malaysia were downgraded to the lowest rating within the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report for not complying with minimum anti-trafficking standards (USDOS).

Chapter 05

Awareness of working conditions and labour protections among potential migrants

Chapter 5 assesses the cognizance among potential migrants of prospective problems, labour protections and where to access assistance in destination countries, analysed by region, gender, destination country and other relevant variables.

5.1 Awareness of articles that should be included in an employment contract

Table 5.1 shows that the majority of potential migrants were aware that wages should be included in their employment contract (55 per cent). However, fewer migrants knew that working hours (40 per cent) and benefits (26 per cent) should also be included, and even less understood that job duties (17 per cent), the employment period (14 per cent) and rules for termination (4 per cent) are generally a part of such agreements. In addition, 22 per cent of migrants didn't know any of the articles that are needed in a contract. It should be considered that most potential migrant workers within Myanmar have probably never signed an employment contract within the domestic labour market given the dominance of agricultural and informal sector work, contributing to their lack of knowledge on the relevant terms and conditions to be included.

Table 5.1 Awareness of articles that should be included in an employment contract by region (n=625)

Awareness of article	Mandalay (n=252)		Shan (n=191)		Tanintharyi (n=182)		Total (n=625)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment period	58	23	25	13	3	2	86	14
Job duties	68	27	18	9	18	10	104	17
Working/rest hours	116	46	77	40	58	32	251	40
Wages/overtime pay	174	69	74	39	97	53	345	55
Benefits	105	42	27	14	32	18	164	26
Termination rules	9	4	9	5	9	5	27	4
Don't know	17	7	65	34	55	30	137	22
Total	547	218	295	154	272	150	1114	178

Note: Multiple response variable.

Breaking down the results by region, migrants in Mandalay were considerably more aware of nearly all of the articles that should be incorporated in a contract, and only a few were unfamiliar with any of the matters to be defined (7 per cent). However, focus groups held in the Region expressed that the existence of a written contract was insufficient to provide them with protection. Many discussants stated that they had been given an employment contract before leaving Myanmar but were simply instructed to sign without being offered a chance to negotiate any of the terms included. Moreover, nearly all migrants in group discussions who had signed contracts felt that the working conditions were not as promised, including deficiencies in occupational safety and health standards and even being provided with an entirely different job than was agreed upon.

Migrants in Shan State had the largest knowledge gaps related to employment contracts, with less than half even aware that their wages should be set forth in this type of document (39 per cent) and over a third unacquainted with any of the terms to be included (34 per cent). Participants in group discussions in Shan State voiced the belief that irregular migrants are not usually provided with employment contracts and that only regular migrants can really expect to have a written agreement, which makes their contents an irrelevant issue from the perspective of many in the State.

Respondents in Tanintharyi Region fell somewhere in between on awareness of the essential articles in an employment contract but had particularly limited knowledge that an employment period (2 per cent) and working hours (32 per cent) should be specified. More outreach to migrants on the importance and essential articles of an employment contract appears to be called for in all locations.

5.2 Awareness of problems faced in destination countries

As displayed in Table 5.2, the problems that migrants were most commonly aware of in destination countries were related to safety and health (32 per cent), extortion or arrest by authorities (27 per cent), payment of wages (21 per cent) and long working hours (18 per cent). An additional quarter of potential migrants were unable to name any of the difficulties that they might encounter while working overseas. The findings show little awareness of the realities among potential migrants as group discussions with return migrants frequently revealed unfair wages, lack of overtime pay, dangerous job duties, confiscation of passports or work permits, inability to leave the company premises or otherwise unequal treatment with nationals.

While it should be noted that this finding describes intention rather than actuality, there was an alarming correlation between being completely unaware of any of the potential problems and plans to use a recruitment agency (44 per cent) or broker (38 per cent) to migrate. In contrast, migrants headed overseas independently (14 per cent) or with the assistance of friends and family (18 per cent) were much less likely to be unaware of the risks involved. Although there is little that can be done to regulate the information provided to migrants by unlicensed brokers other than to provide a more accurate understanding through other sources, standards should be enforced for registered recruitment agencies. In group discussions held with return migrants, most expressed that the pre-departure training they received was not very useful, and that it would have been better to spend the time learning some of the local language or skills related to their work as protection strategies.

The most distinct discrepancy in awareness was in Mandalay Region, where a much larger proportion of migrants were unacquainted with any of the problems that they were likely to face in destination countries (44 per cent). The lack of knowledge identified in Mandalay is particularly troubling given the extensive recruitment services provided by licensed recruitment agencies and labour authorities in the Region, who are responsible for providing such information to their clients. It should be noted that all of the potential migrants interviewed were at different stages in actualizing their migration though, and many had probably not received extensive services as of yet.

Table 5.2 Awareness of problems faced in destination countries by region (n=625)

Awareness of problem	Mandalay (n=252)		Shan (n=191)		Tanintharyi(n=182)		Total (n=625)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Wages	22	9	57	30	54	30	133	21
Working hours	51	20	43	23	18	10	112	18
Safety and health	63	25	61	32	76	42	200	32
Extortion or arrest	29	21	57	30	82	45	168	27
Job unavailable	21	6	14	7	15	8	50	8
Other	0	-	20	11	14	8	50	8
Don't know	112	44	20	11	24	13	156	25
Total	298	125	272	144	283	156	869	139

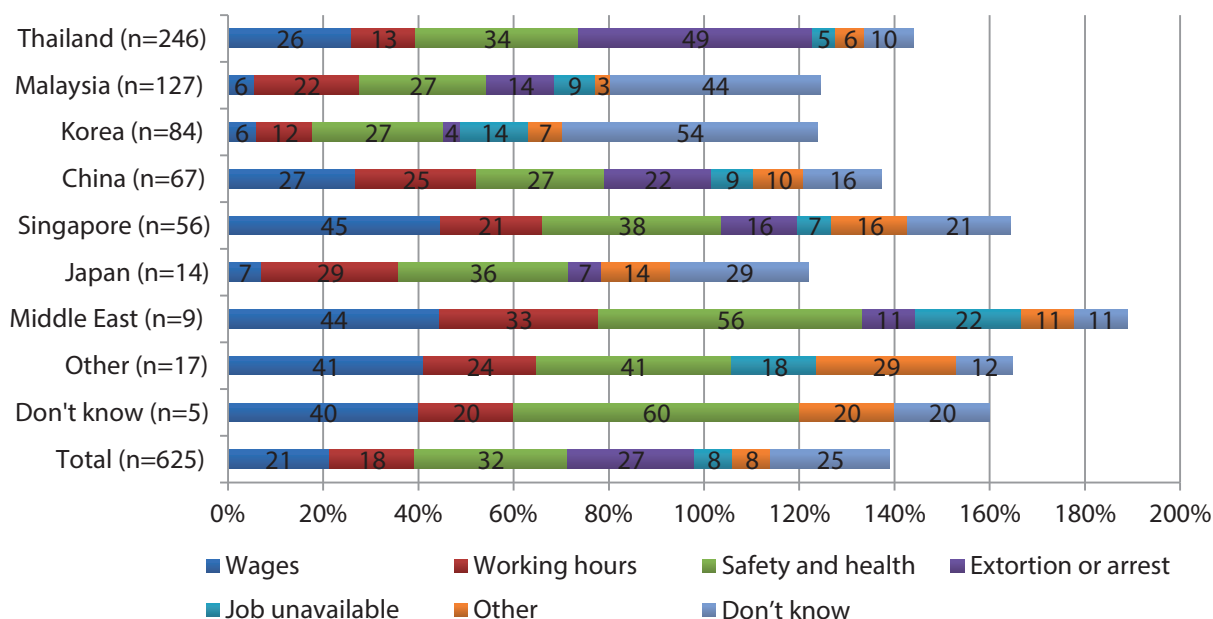
Note: Multiple response variable.

There were prominent variations in awareness of the possible difficulties between women and men migrants, with the former being more conscious of most. Particularly in terms of problems with wages (33 vs. 15 per cent) and health and safety (44 vs. 26 per cent), women were better informed. They also much less likely to be entirely unaware of

the potential problems than men (9 vs. 33 per cent). It is not entirely clear why these substantial differences exist, although traditional cultural beliefs that women must be protected are a probable contributing factor.

Reviewing awareness of risk by destination country shows that migrants planning to go to the Middle East, “other” countries, Singapore and Thailand were the most conscious about the potential difficulties of working abroad (Figure 5.1). Migrants heading to the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Japan were the least mindful of the challenges that their employment might entail. Most of the stories about abuses shared in focus group discussions were related to work in Thailand and Malaysia but this may partially be the result of higher levels of migration.

Figure 5.1 Awareness of problems faced in destination countries by destination (n=625) (%)



Note: Multiple response variable.

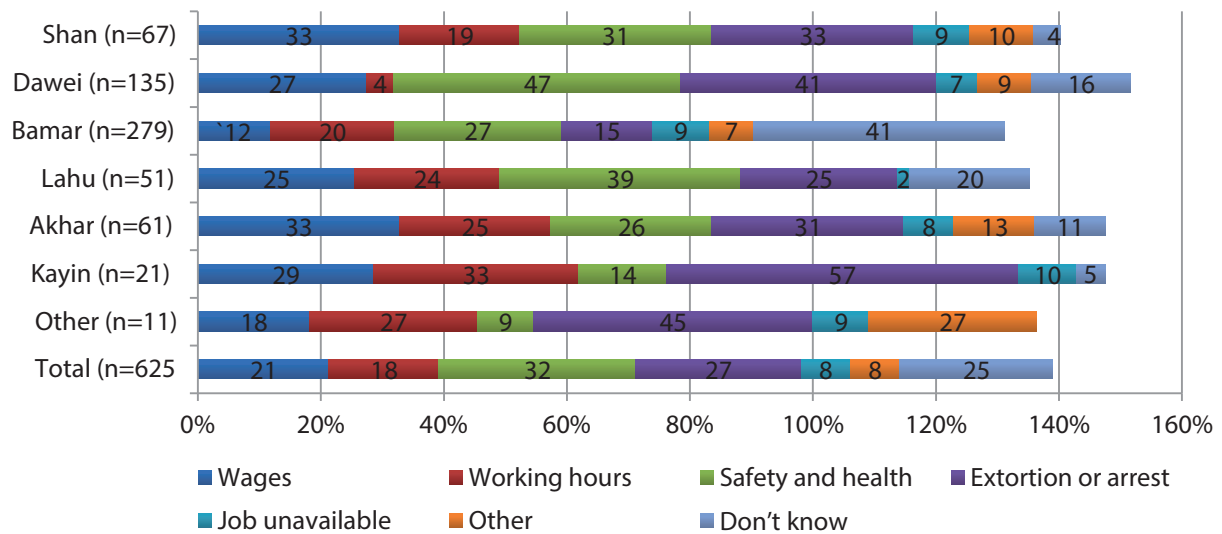
Major differences in awareness of the potential abuses were also apparent between ethnic groups, as illustrated in Figure 5.2. Interestingly, while Bamar migrants were the most cognizant of the possible risks during migration, they were the least aware that they might face trouble during their employment in destination countries, with 41 per cent unable to name any such problems. Although perhaps attributable to the confidence instilled by greater use of recruitment agencies and brokers to migrate legally, regular status is not a panacea in preventing the possibility of abuse and migrants should be informed of the possible hazards involved.

Knowledge among different ethnic groups of the potential problems in destination countries is noticeably siloed:

- Kayin migrants were considerably more aware of that they might face extortion or arrest by authorities (57 per cent) or long working hours (33 per cent).
- Shan and Akhar migrants were more familiar with wage related problems (33 per cent).
- Dawei migrants were more conscious of safety and health concerns (47 per cent) but had very limited awareness of abuses related to working hours (4 per cent).

The implication of this inconsistency is that much of migrant awareness of abuses in destination countries may currently be the result of word of mouth within narrowly defined socio-ethnic groups, indicating that more systematic dissemination of information is needed.

Figure 5.2 Awareness of problems faced in destination countries by ethnicity (n=625) (%)



Note: Multiple response variable.

5.3 Sources of assistance for labour rights violations

Table 5.3 reveals that there were only two major channels that migrants would use to seek assistance in destination countries if their rights were violated. The majority would rely upon friends and family (53 per cent) and a smaller group would approach a Myanmar diplomatic mission (31 per cent). The divide seems to be most closely correlated with plans for regular/irregular migration, with the former preferring to access assistance at embassies and the latter seeking informal help from friends and family. It was also notable that few migrants would be willing to approach labour authorities (10 per cent) or their own recruitment agencies (5 per cent) with their problems, both of whom have clear mandates to provide such assistance. In the end, most return migrants in focus groups stated that they did not receive any assistance and had to solve their problems on their own.

Awareness among migrants that they can obtain support from NGOs and trade unions was low in all regions, however, focus group discussions suggested that return migrants are often more familiar with the support services they provide in many locations. Dissemination of more country-specific information about the assistance available from NGOs, trade unions and other CSOs during pre-departure appears to be necessary.

Analysing the results by region, a much larger share of migrants in Mandalay (52 per cent) expected to seek support from Myanmar embassies if they face labour rights violations, likely the result of higher levels of regular migration enabling greater comfort with approaching diplomatic officers from the Myanmar Government for help. In both Shan State and Tanintharyi Region, migrants were substantially more likely to depend upon the aid of friends and family for such difficulties (68 and 67 per cent respectively).

Table 5.3 Sources of assistance for labour rights violations by region (n=625)

Source of assistance	Mandalay (n=252)		Shan (n=191)		Tanintharyi (n=182)		Total (n=625)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Labour authorities	30	12	18	9	14	8	62	10
Embassy	131	52	24	13	40	22	195	31
Recruitment agency	27	11	5	3	0	-	32	5
Police	14	6	18	9	26	14	58	9
Migrant association	9	4	2	1	8	4	19	3
Trade union	30	12	12	6	17	9	59	9
NGO	7	3	0	-	6	3	13	2
Friends and family	78	31	130	68	122	67	330	53
Other	9	4	3	2	7	4	19	3
Don't know	2	1	8	4	7	4	17	3
Total	337	136	220	115	247	135	804	129

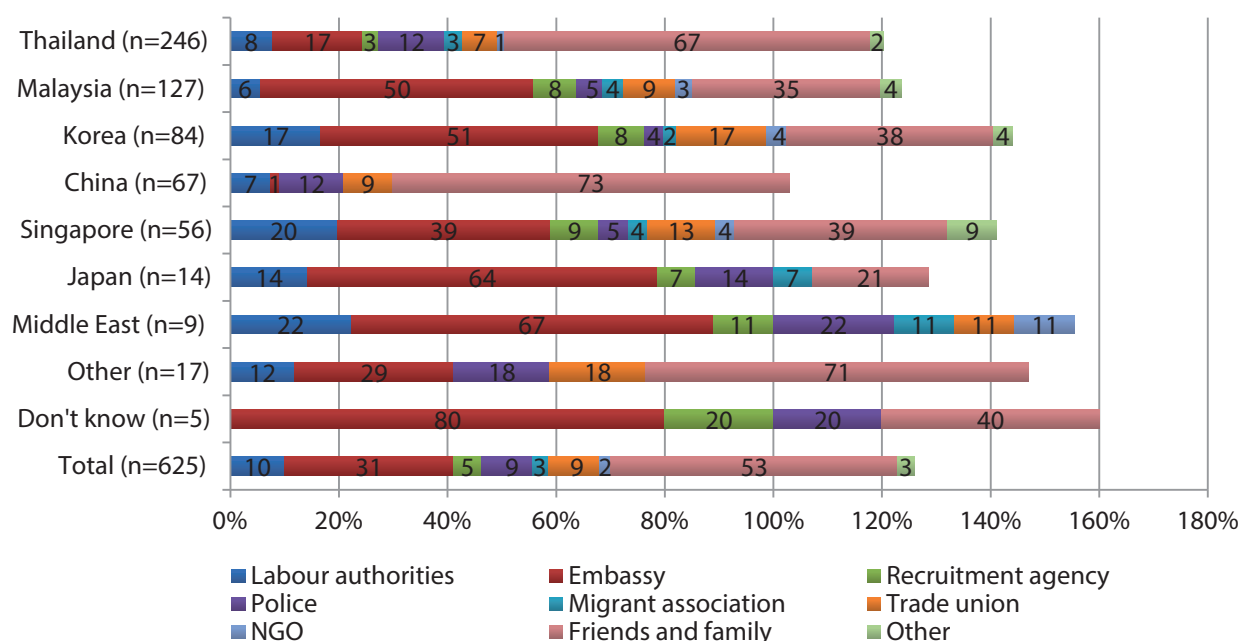
Note: Multiple response variable.

Women migrants were more reliant upon informal assistance from friends and family (62 vs. 48 per cent), whereas male migrants had greater trust in going to the embassy for support (37 vs. 20 per cent). This distinction was corroborated in focus group discussions suggesting that women were more reluctant to seek formal assistance outside of their social networks. However, it should be stated that both men and women migrants frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the support offered by embassies within focus groups.

Ethnic minorities were also much less likely to approach the embassy for help than Bamar migrants regardless of legal status (15 vs. 50 per cent). Although a nationwide peace and reform process was initiated after the elections held in 2010, it seems clear that building trust in government services is likely to take longer among minority groups, many of whom have long histories of conflict with the prior military-controlled regimes.

Figure 5.3 shows that the sources for obtaining aid were markedly different between destination countries. Most migrants headed to China (73 per cent), "other countries" (71 per cent) and Thailand (67 per cent) expected that they would seek the help of friends and family if faced with abuses at work. In contrast, the greater portion of migrants planning to go to the Middle East (67 per cent), Japan (64 per cent), the Republic of Korea (51 per cent) and Malaysia (50 per cent) thought they would go the embassy for assistance with complaints. As stated previously, differences in legal status appears to be the key factor influencing such decisions for migrants, but other considerations also appear to matter. For example, only the Myanmar Embassies in Kuwait, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea currently have labour attachés on staff, suggesting that the quality of assistance available is likely to be more limited in some destination countries.

Examining the levels of trust in major destination country institutions, willingness to approach government authorities with grievances (labour officers or police) was strongest for migrants going to Singapore (25 per cent) and weakest for those migrating to Malaysia (11 per cent). CSOs (trade unions, migrant associations and NGOs) were most frequently seen as potential sources of support with abuses for migrants planning to head to the Republic of Korea (23 per cent) and least often for those journeying to China (9 per cent). Although based on perception rather than direct experience, the successes of labour authorities in Singapore and trade unions in the Republic of Korea in building trust with Myanmar migrants appears to merit further study to document good practices.

Figure 5.3 Sources of assistance for labour rights violations by destination country (n=625) (%)

Note: Multiple response variable.

Box 3

Provision of support services at migrant worker resource centres

A key strategy for improving service provision to migrant workers under the GMS TRIANGLE project has been through the establishment of migrant worker resource centres (MRCs). In 21 locations in six countries, the project has partnered with governments, trade unions and civil society organizations to provide support to women and men migrants, potential migrants and their family members. MRCs serve as a focal point for migrants and potential migrants to obtain accurate information and counselling on safe migration and rights at work, countering misleading information provided by some unscrupulous brokers, agencies and employers. Information is also disseminated through broadcasts on local radio and television, job fairs, and seminars on safe migration in schools, vocational training centres and in the community.

Migrants can also receive legal assistance with settling grievances at MRCs. In countries of origin, most complaints received relate to non-deployment, non-fulfilment of contract terms, and family members who have lost contact with migrants overseas. In countries of destination, the MRCs usually provide support in the recovery of unpaid wages and in accessing compensation for accidents suffered at work. Support at both ends of the migration process is a key feature of the MRC model. Several cases received by service providers in Cambodia or Viet Nam have been resolved through consultation with their counterparts in Thailand and Malaysia.

In addition, MRC staff work with local authorities to prevent and resolve problems. Cambodian district and commune officials have been provided with training on safe migration so that they can become resource persons in their communities and make referrals to the MRC for more in-depth services. In Thailand, migrant community leaders are being trained as paralegals to deliver information and assistance to their peers. For migrants in Malaysia, MRCs assist with organizing as part of existing trade unions so that they can benefit from collective bargaining agreements.

Source: Adapted from *Migrant worker resource centres and the provision of support services* (Bangkok, ILO).

5.4 Value of organizing in destination countries

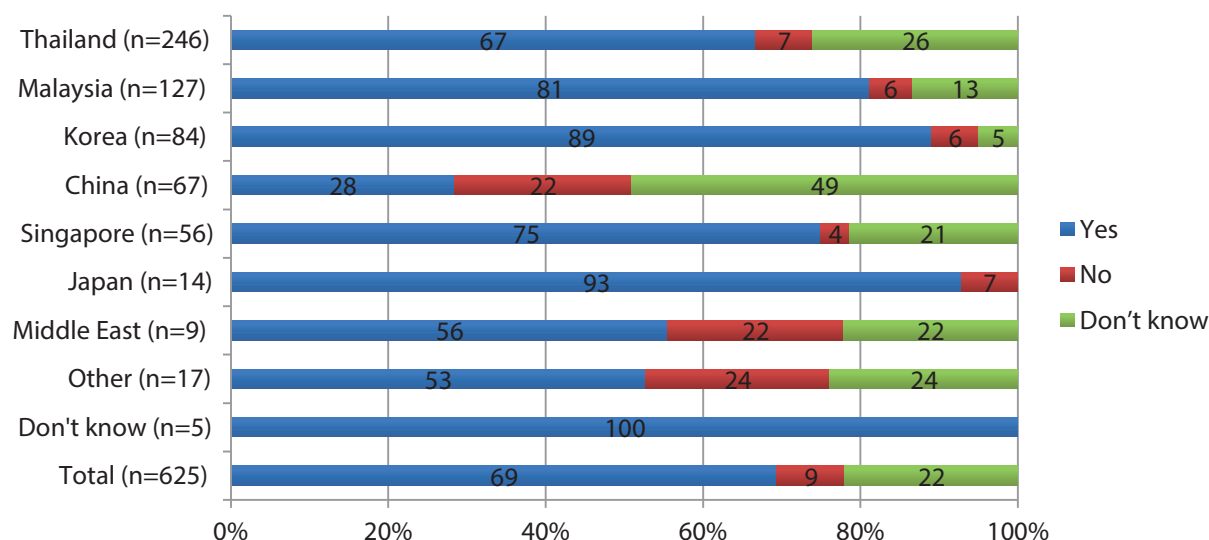
As displayed in Table 5.4, most migrants saw value in joining a trade union or migrant association in destination countries (69 per cent). Migrants in Mandalay Region were the most likely to agree that organizing was worthwhile (87 per cent), with migrants in Shan State the least disposed to agree (43 per cent). However, this appears to mainly reflect the much smaller number of migrants in the State who had ever heard of a workers' organization prior to the survey (17 per cent). Eliminating those who felt that they could not offer an informed opinion for this reason, the differences by region are not very prominent. Focus group discussions held in all three regions confirmed that most migrants are interested in joining workers' organizations.

Table 5.4 Value of organizing by region (n=625)

Value organizing	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	220	87	85	45	129	71	434	69
No	13	5	31	16	10	6	54	9
Don't know	19	8	75	39	43	24	137	22
Total	252	100	191	100	182	100	625	100

There were no major differences in interest by future sector of employment, with the majority of migrants expecting to work in all fields viewing membership in a workers' organization as meaningful. Among the main employment sectors, migrants anticipating work in manufacturing (83 per cent) were the most apt to see the importance of organizing, while prospective agricultural workers were the least inclined (55 per cent) – reasonable as no significant tradition of organizing for farm workers exists in the Asia and the Pacific region. There was also a general consensus among men and women migrants, as the majority of both agreed that membership in a union or association is worthwhile (72 and 65 per cent respectively).

Many potential migrants appeared to be fairly well-informed about the relative benefits of organizing in their future destination countries (Figure 5.4). For some expected destinations, such as Japan (93 per cent), the Republic of Korea (89 per cent) and Malaysia (81 per cent), migrants were very likely to see the value in joining a trade union or association. On the contrary, they were much less liable to place similar value on organizing in China (28 per cent). According to one group discussion, migrants planning to work in the Republic of Korea are taught about the virtues of joining trade unions through pre-departure training delivered by MOLES. But it was also commonly stated by return migrants that the reason they did not join a trade union or association was because they did not know of their existence.

Figure 5.4 Value of organizing by destination country (n=625) (%)

5.5 Willingness to pay for health insurance

As shown in Table 5.5, most potential migrants were amenable to paying a portion of their earnings in order to obtain health insurance (78 per cent), with interest in purchasing coverage lowest in Shan State (62 per cent) and highest in Mandalay Region (89 per cent). This was affirmed by the majority of participants in focus group discussions, who had expectations of obtaining some type of social protection benefits in destination countries and typically thought that health and life insurance were the most important.

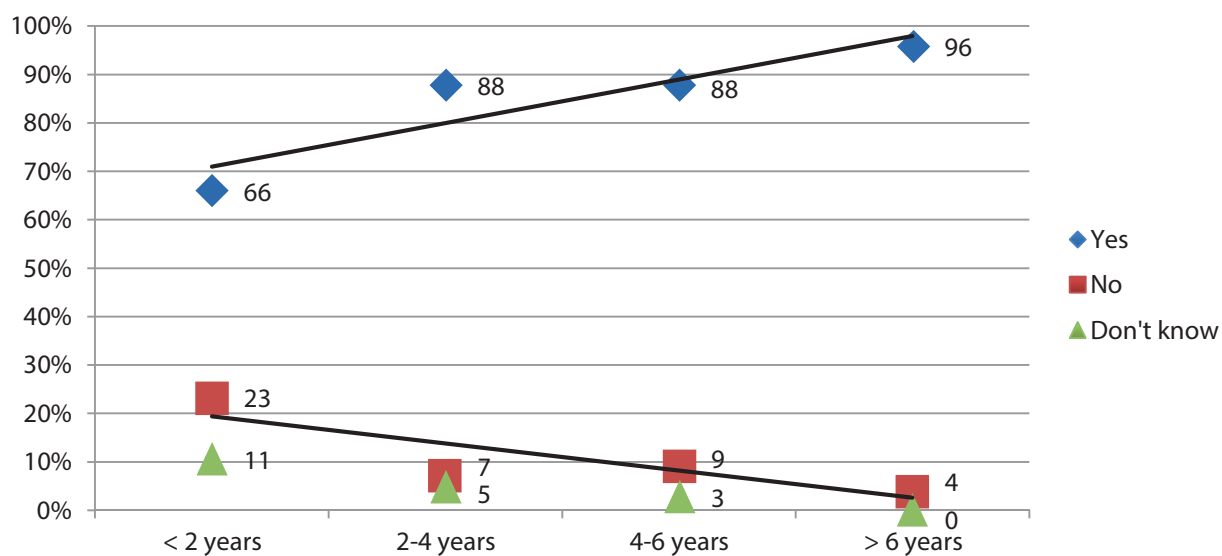
Table 5.5 Willingness to pay for health insurance by region (n=622)

Willing to pay	Mandalay		Shan		Tanintharyi		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	222	89	118	62	145	80	485	78
No	20	8	53	28	22	12	95	15
Don't know	7	3	20	11	15	8	42	7
Total	249	100	191	100	182	100	622	100

Note: Three responses in Mandalay were missing for this variable.

Although unmeasured factors such as current health status were also likely important determinants of migrant interest in buying coverage, a very linear correlation exists between longer expected duration of stay overseas and willingness to pay (Figure 5.5). As migrants in Shan State tended to plan on migrating for shorter periods of time, it followed that fewer there felt inclined to pay for health insurance. Additional measures to expand coverage should include awareness raising for both migrants and their employers, but also reduction of waiting periods to enrol, greater inclusion of migrants in universal health schemes and other free or affordable options to effectively target short-term migrants.

Figure 5.5 Willingness to pay for health insurance by planned duration of employment abroad (n=465) (%)



Note: Only 465 potential migrants had a clear idea of how long they intended to stay abroad.

The final chapter of the report summarises the situation of potential migrant workers in Myanmar and recommends key areas of work for ensuring safer migration that results in decent work.

6.1 Conclusion

To date, Myanmar has yet to establish a policy framework fit to the task of managing its immense labour migration flows. As a result, migration remains largely a laissez-faire and inequitable phenomenon, divided between regular migrants who typically head to more developed economies within Asia and the Middle East via formal recruitment and irregular migrants who travel clandestinely to work in neighbouring low and middle income countries.

While this division is based to some degree upon the knowledge and skills of migrant workers, it is more clearly driven by personal connections and the ability to pay large sums of money for safer and more lucrative employment opportunities abroad – a recruitment system that tends to marginalize rural people, women and ethnic minorities in particular. Although irregular migrants continue to far outnumber those who migrate through formal channels, the recruitment and labour protection afforded to them is very limited, contributing to a high-risk of abuse throughout the migration cycle. Even for regular migrants, who generally have somewhat better working conditions and receive more freedoms, rights and protections, the substantial debts typically required to finance migration can make them unable to leave exploitative employment situations while overseas.

On a personal level, labour migration is an undertaking filled with hopes and dreams of obtaining a better life for migrant workers and their family members. Unfortunately, these aspirations are frequently not matched with a clear understanding of the potential risks involved or adequate knowledge about how to minimize them. Awareness of critical information on how to migrate safely, the rights to which they are entitled and the working conditions they can expect is dangerously low among potential migrants in Myanmar, with most heavily reliant on information provided by friends and family. Women potential migrants and those from ethnic minority groups (two demographics that frequently meet in relegation among Myanmar migrants) are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to information. This scarcity of unbiased and authoritative knowledge means that many migrants receive intentionally misleading or erroneous information from unprincipled or incompetent recruitment agents and brokers. Potential migrants who are ill-informed or deceived become much easier targets for abuse, including forced labour and other unacceptable forms of work.

Recent political reforms within Myanmar have provided the opportunity to begin development of a more deliberate, transparent and rights-based approach to labour migration management, in-line with international standards and good practices. In taking up this challenge, an improved understanding of the situation of migrant workers through collection and analysis of empirical data will be critical to ensuring that the policies and practices developed are evidence-based and inclusive. The baseline assessment completed provides a preliminary reading on many of the essential conditions required for safer migration from Myanmar, helping to define the key areas of work for the Government, social partners and the ILO in protecting the rights of migrants. Greater protection for these workers, whose enduring social and financial remittances continue to fuel the country's development during this critical transition period, is both an economic and human rights imperative.

6.2 Key areas of work

Aligned with the framework of the GMS TRIANGLE project, challenges and recommendations for addressing them were identified and divided into three broad objectives: (1) strengthening the policy and legal framework; (2) capacity building of stakeholders; and (3) increasing access to support services for migrant workers.

6.2.1 Strengthening policy and legislation

1. The Government of Myanmar should consider ratifying and implementing the relevant international conventions and frameworks (the Private Employment Agencies Convention, No. 181, the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, No. 143, the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families) in order to bring the protections provided to migrant workers into line with international standards.
2. The high and unstandardized costs of migrating through regular channels is a policy area that requires greater government attention. The most expensive destination countries that Myanmar migrants often work in, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and several Middle Eastern countries, legitimately require costly travel and living expenses but are also artificially elevated by excessive recruitment fees, rent-seeking by authorities and unfair interest rates due to inadequate regulation of the actors involved. Stricter monitoring of recruitment agency services, addressing official corruption and reducing the role of unlicensed brokers in the recruitment process are therefore critical measures for lowering the overall cost of migration. In addition, with the aim that employers should eventually bear the cost of recruitment in accordance with international labour standards, a new limit on service fees of two months' salary should be adopted.
3. For migration costs above MMK500,000 (US\$520), most migrants needed to obtain a loan to finance their journeys. Because they often have less access to loans from financial institutions (particularly in Shan State), poorer migrants often resort to pawning or selling their possessions, take out high-interest loans from money lenders or are shut out from many productive destinations. Providing greater access to loans at affordable rates through government institutions will help to ensure equal opportunity and protection against usury.
4. The Government should actively seek out equal opportunities for women to migrate for work. With fewer possibilities for legal migration available (and several recent temporary bans on deployment of domestic workers), a greater proportion of women must migrate irregularly, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Bilateral agreements and other policy instruments on labour migration developed should be gender-sensitive to ensure that decent work opportunities are available for both men and women migrants.
5. Complaint mechanisms for recruitment-related grievances have not been sufficiently developed to provide migrants with an effective means to seek redress when their rights are violated. Clearer policies and procedures need to be put into place so that migrants know which institution has jurisdiction and that they can be assured of receiving impartial assistance when they face abuses.
6. Thailand was identified as the most common intended destination country among potential migrants, however, numerous research studies have also revealed the breadth and severity of labour rights abuses occurring against Myanmar migrants workers employed there. Improving bilateral cooperation with Thai authorities on the management of labour migration between the two countries should be further prioritized, including a review of the MOU on employment cooperation to increase utilization and rights protection.
7. Labour migration to China is already substantial and appears to be increasing, however, little information is available to migrants about working and living conditions there due to the irregularity of the migration flows. The resulting lack of awareness is a particular problem among women migrants, who frequently do not know the costs involved to migrate or what they will be paid upon arrival. To address these gaps, the knowledge base on labour migration to China needs to be expanded in order to develop better informed policies and support services.
8. As migrants who intend to migrate for shorter periods of time were found to be more reluctant to pay a portion of their wages for health insurance, measures to expand coverage should be negotiated with



receiving countries that will reduce enrolment waiting periods, provide greater inclusion of migrants in universal health schemes and offer more affordable short-term coverage.

9. “Brain drain” of educated workers through labour migration, in some cases also a form of “brain waste” because of employment in low-skilled jobs in spite of their knowledge and abilities, is an issue that warrants further study and policy development. Loss of the best educated within the labour force may detract from the social, political and economic development of Myanmar, and a better understanding of the situation is needed.
10. Within the domestic labour market, support for youth employment opportunities should be increased (particularly in Tanintharyi Region) to ensure that labour migration is a voluntary choice rather than motivated by economic necessity. Likewise, increased access to social protection for informal sector workers would enable them to be more resilient when faced with economic shocks rather than being forced to migrate without sufficient preparation because of short-term periods of inadequate income.
11. Migrants who are documented as more skilled and/or fluent in the local language of destination countries are likely to receive better working conditions. Research should be carried out on the recognition of credentials obtained in Myanmar for low and semi-skilled migrants, and subsidized or free language and vocational training courses made available for potential migrants from poorer households.

6.2.2 Capacity building of stakeholders

1. As many potential migrants in Myanmar are employed in agricultural work and reside in remote rural areas, broad dissemination of safe migration messaging will require communication strategies that engage with local leaders and organizations, reinforce existing migrant support networks with accurate and up-to-date information and make creative use of popular and social media (where appropriate). Some ideas for dynamic and participatory outreach activities could include talk radio shows, community festivals and the website Thithtoolwin.com (recommended by focus groups). Approaches that rely exclusively on providing information through government institutions located in urban centres are unlikely to succeed.
2. Outreach activities will need to be gender-sensitive if they are to be effective in providing equal access to information for both women and men migrants. As female potential migrants were most commonly found to be working within the informal sector, safe migration messaging will need to be responsive to their distinct needs and availability. To achieve this, training of informal change agents, and engaging gender-specialized partners, should complement outreach through official leadership. Where women’s groups already exist, they should be supported to take up the issue of safe migration within their communities, and in areas where they do not exist, support should be provided for their formation.
3. LEOs need to take on a more active role in promoting safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices. Currently, many potential migrants have little faith in labour authorities as reliable sources of information on migration, with the result that the majority depend on information and assistance from friends and family and typically migrate irregularly. Trainings should be provided to LEOs to improve their capacity to disseminate useful information and deliver support services to potential migrant workers.
4. To assist migrants with choosing a licensed and reputable recruitment agency, capacity building should be provided for MOEAF to catalyze the development of an impartial and authoritative source of information on their services, and the results widely and regularly disseminated.
5. Many potential migrants expected to have to wait 1-2 years before departure, particularly for those migrating regularly to the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore and the Middle East. While a certain amount of preparation and protocol is certainly prudent and necessary, long delays required for migration through regular channels may serve to encourage irregular movement. Further bilateral cooperation with destination countries and training of the relevant authorities to streamline procedures should be undertaken to speed up the emigration process.

6. The pre-departure orientation seminar provided to migrant workers needs to be upgraded as many return migrants questioned the value of the information conveyed. A standard curriculum that includes more relevant, practical, accurate and country-specific information should be developed, including information about support services available from NGOs, trade unions and other CSOs.
7. Return migrants frequently stated that the support services available at Myanmar diplomatic missions were unsatisfactory. Capacity building trainings should be provided to consular officers and labour attachés to ensure that all migrants regardless of legal status have access to effective assistance for labour rights violations in major destination countries. The number of staff assigned to each duty station should be determined by the scale of labour migration to the country, with sufficient budget allocated.
8. Gender analysis of labour migration policies must be based upon systematic collection of disaggregated data on migrant workers in Myanmar. Inadequate official data to make such assessments was identified as an important capacity gap that requires additional training of the competent authorities.

6.2.3 Support services for migrant workers

1. As most potential migrants currently do not have enough information to make well-informed decisions about migrating, additional sites for obtaining accurate and balanced information should be established to supplement and strengthen the existing sources. Potential migrants should be provided with individualized and responsive counselling services at MRCs that provide them with a clear understanding of the realities of working abroad.
2. To facilitate safer migration practices, awareness raising activities should be carried out on the benefits and requirements for regular migration, particularly focusing on documentation needed to work legally as opposed to just admission and stay. These efforts should seek to clearly communicate the message that the advantages of regular migration are not simply pecuniary, and should be especially targeted for women migrants and those in border areas who have less knowledge of the requirements presently.
3. There is low awareness among potential migrants of the possibility of being deceived or exploited during the migration process, as the most commonly stated worry was affording the cost. Counselling and outreach needs to be expanded on the potential risks involved, including information that broadens awareness about exploitation among men migrants, targets ethnic minority communities who were found to be less cognizant of the hazards and provides practical advice about how to seek assistance within Myanmar.
4. As a proxy for general awareness of their rights during recruitment, very few migrants knew of the maximum amount that can be charged for recruitment fees that has been set by the Regulations for Sending Workers Overseas. Potential migrants should be informed of the ceiling that has been established, but also the other rights to which they are entitled, before engaging the services of a recruitment agency.
5. Many migrants believe that only regular workers can expect to receive a written employment contract and awareness of why they are important and the essential articles that should be included is exceedingly scarce. Migrant workers should be informed of the value, requirements and standard contents for such agreements.
6. Legal assistance and referral services should be provided for potential migrants to enable greater access to justice for abuses they encounter during the recruitment process. At the moment, the majority of migrants seek assistance from friends and family members for their grievances, suggesting that tangible remedies are a rarity. Cooperation of MRCs, trade unions and NGOs with the relevant authorities should be expanded in order to facilitate the identification and resolution of a higher number of migrant complaints.
7. An abridged version of the full MRC model or “Migrant Worker Resource Corners” should be set up in all LEOs across Myanmar to provide information and assistance on labour migration.



8. Safe migration information should be available to those under 18 years of age as potential migrants under this threshold were found to be completely reliant upon friends and family for advice. As it is clear that a substantial number of young people are migrating, they should be provided with information about how to do so as safely as possible.
9. The majority of potential migrants in all areas expected to send remittances through informal channels such as the hundi system or friends and family. Financial literacy trainings should be provided to migrants to build confidence in the use of banking services, ensure that they are informed about how to send remittances safely and affordably and are able to set and achieve financial goals.
10. As a considerable number of potential migrants are not fluent in Burmese, informational materials disseminated in ethnic minority areas should also be translated into local languages where necessary.
11. Research should be carried out on the phenomenon of two-stage migration within Myanmar: from the Dry Zone and Delta areas to border areas in Shan State or Tanintharyi Region and then internationally to Thailand or China (as well as other possible origin and staging sites). It is believed that these migrants may be more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking because they lack sufficient social networks in border areas to facilitate their onward migration and must rely upon the services of unknown brokers. More information is needed to design interventions targeting these potentially at-risk groups.

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Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire for potential migrants

1. Age?	_____
2. Gender?	(a) male; (b) female
3. Ethnicity?	(a) Shan; (b) Dawei; (c) Bamar; (d) Other _____
4. Religion?	(a) Buddhist; (b) Christian; (c) Muslim; (d) Hindu; (e) Animist; (f) other _____
5. What is your marital status?	(a) single; (b) married; (c) widowed; (d) divorced
6. Do you have children?	(a) yes; (b) no
7. What is your native language?	(a) Burmese; (b) Shan; (c) Dawei; (d) Lahu; (e) Akhar; (f) other _____
8. What is your second language (if any)?	(a) Burmese; (b) Shan; (c) Dawei; (d) Lahu; (e) Akhar; (f) English; (g) other _____
9. What level of education have you completed?	(a) none; (b) monastery school; (c) primary school; (d) middle school; (e) high school; (f) university
10. What is your employment situation?	(a) self-employed; (b) have an employer; (c) mix of self-employment and working for employer; (d) unemployed
11. What is your primary livelihood?	(a) agriculture; (b) fisheries; (c) trader; (d) day laborer; (e) hospitality; (f) other _____
12. When are you planning to migrate?	(a) within the next 3 months; (b) in 3-6 months; (c) in 6-12 months; (d) in 1-2 years
13. What is your intended destination country?	(a) Thailand; (b) Malaysia; (c) Republic of Korea; (d) China (e) Singapore; (f) Japan; (g) Middle East; (h) other _____; (i) don't know
14. What type of work do you plan to do upon arrival?	(a) domestic work; (b) fishing; (c) maritime/seafarer; (d) seafood processing (e) manufacturing; (f) construction; (g) agriculture; (h) service; (i) other _____; (j) don't know
15. Who are you planning to migrate with? (choose all that apply)	(a) by myself; (b) with spouse; (c) with child; (d) with parent; (e) with sibling; (f) with friend
16. How are you planning to migrate?	(a) through a registered recruitment agency; (b) through an unregistered labour broker; (c) independently; (d) through help from friends or family; (e) other _____; (f) don't know
17. What is your primary motivation for migrating?	(a) cannot find work; (b) underemployed; (c) higher income; (d) join friends or family abroad; (e) want to leave home; (f) pay back debts; (g) other _____
18. How long are you planning to migrate for?	(a) less than 2 years; (b) 2-4 years; (c) 4-6 years; (d) more than 6 years; (e) no plan to return; (f) don't know
19. Who are you planning to ask for information about migration and work abroad? (choose all that apply)	(a) friends or family; (b) broker or recruitment agency; (c) village head; (d) local authorities; (e) NGO; (f) trade union; (g) don't know
20. Who is the most reliable source of information about migrating and working abroad?	(a) friends/family; (b) broker/agency; (c) village head; (d) local authorities; (e) NGO; (f) trade union; (g) don't know
21. How much do you expect to pay to migrate?	(a) less than MMK100,000; (b) MMK100,000-199,000; (c) MMK200,000-299,000; (d) MMK300,000-399,000; (e) MMK400,000-499,000; (f) MMK500,000-999,000; (g) MMK1,000,000 or more; (h) nothing; (i) don't know

22. How are you planning to pay for the costs involved with migrating?	(a) take out a loan; (b) pay with savings; (c) wage deductions; (d) don't know
23. What is the maximum service fee that a recruitment agency can charge according to Government regulations?	(a) knows the limit; (b) does not know the limit The legal limit is four times the basic monthly salary of the worker (Regulations for Sending Workers Overseas)
24. What is the most important criteria for choosing a recruitment agency or broker to help you with migrating?	(a) speed of deployment; (b) cost; (c) reputation; (d) other _____; (e) don't know
25. What kinds of problems do Myanmar migrants face during migration? (choose all that apply)	(a) high costs; (b) misleading information; (c) lengthy and complex procedures; (d) exploitation; (e) don't know
26. Who could you contact if you have a problem during recruitment? (choose all that apply)	(a) village head; (b) labour authorities (c) police; (d) NGO or CBO; (e) trade union; (f) political party; (g) friends or family; (h) other _____; (i) don't know
27. What items should be included in your employment contract? (choose all that apply)	(a) employment period; (b) job duties; (c) working hours and rest time; (d) wages and overtime pay; (e) benefits; (f) rules about termination; (g) don't know
28. How much do you expect your monthly wages will be?	(a) less than MMK100,000; (b) MMK100,000-199,000; (c) MMK200,000-299,000; (d) MMK300,000-399,000; (e) MMK400,000-499,000; (f) MMK500,000 or more; (g) don't know
29. What proportion of your wages are you planning to save during your employment?	(a) less than 25 per cent; (b) 26-50 per cent; (c) 51-75 per cent; (d) more than 75 per cent (e) don't know
30. What proportion of your wages are you planning to send home during your employment?	(a) less than 25 per cent; (b) 26-50 per cent; (c) 51-75 per cent; (d) more than 75 per cent; (e) don't know
31. What are the requirements to migrate legally for work? (choose all that apply)	(a) job offer; (b) passport; (c) visa; (d) work permit; (e) don't know
32. How will you send money back home during your employment abroad?	(a) bank; (b) friends or family; (c) hundi (d) other; (e) don't know
33. What kinds of problems do Myanmar migrants encounter in destination countries? (choose all that apply)	a) wage problems; (b) long working hours (c) safety and health problems; (d) extortion or arrest by authorities; (e) promised work not available; (f) other _____; (g) don't know
34. Who would you contact if your labour rights are violated while in the destination country? (choose all that apply)	(a) labour authorities; (b) embassy or consulate; (c) recruitment agency representative; (d) police; (e) migrant association; (f) trade union; (g) NGO; (h) friends or family; (i) other _____
35. Did you know that there are groups who work on protecting the rights of migrant workers? If so, what do these types of groups do?	(a) knows they exist and what they do; (b) knows they exist but not what they do; (c) does not know they exist These groups organize to protect the rights of workers within a trade. They may be involved in collective bargaining, working to resolve problems, skills training, advocating for better working conditions, or other collective actions.

36. Do you think that joining a workers' rights group or migrant association while you are abroad has value?	(a) yes; (b) no; (c) don't know
37. Are you willing to pay for skills training before you migrate?	(a) yes; (b) no; (c) don't know
38. Are you willing to pay a portion of your earnings for health insurance?	(a) yes; (b) no; (c) don't know
39. If you plan to migrate with your children, what are your plans for them?	(a) educate them full-time through primary school; (b) educate them full-time beyond primary school; (c) have them work; (d) combination of work and school; (e) don't know
40. If you plan to send your children to school, where will they study?	(a) destination country public school; (b) migrant learning centre; (c) don't know



Appendix 2:

Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews with potential migrants

1. In your community, who typically goes to work abroad? Why? How do they choose their destination country and sector of work? Have migration trends changed in recent years?
2. Do most people in your community migrate through regular or irregular channels? Why? What aspects of the migration process are you most worried about? What precautions will you take to guarantee your safety?
3. How did you/will you decide on which recruitment/migration channel to use? Do you have enough information about the channels available? If you are using a recruitment company, what were the most important criteria in deciding which to use? (cost/reputation/speed of deployment/etc.)
4. Are you familiar with the laws and procedures regarding labour migration in Myanmar and your destination country? If yes, how did you learn about them? If not, what do you want to know? Where and how do you think this information should be made available?
5. How much do people usually pay to migrate? What are the expenses involved? How do people come up with this money? How much do migrants tend to earn while working abroad? What do migrants usually do with their earnings?
6. Do most people have a positive or negative migration experience overall?
7. What should the government do to make migration legal and safe? Are you familiar with the kinds of support that the Government and NGOs provide to migrant workers? What do you think should be done to strengthen these support services?
8. If you face problems with your employment or working conditions while in the destination country, what will you do? Who will you turn to for support? (recruitment agency, embassy, local authority, NGO, worker protection organization, etc.)
9. What type of social protection do you expect to have in your destination country? (social security, workers' compensation, health insurance, access to education, etc.) Which benefits do you think are the most important for you?

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews with recruitment agencies and brokers

1. What are the main channels available in your community for migrants to go abroad for work? What proportion of migrants do you think use recruitment agencies to migrate? What are the key reasons that they make the choice to use recruitment agencies or not? (i.e. cost, complexity, duration and accessibility of legal recruitment channels)
2. Is your agency licensed or unlicensed? Why do you operate in that way? What are the positive and negative aspects of your status?
3. What are the requirements for registering as a recruitment agency? Do recruitment agencies generally register or operate illegally? What parties typically carry out recruitment at village level?
4. How much do recruitment agencies charge for their services? What loan arrangements are made for migrants who cannot pay the fees upfront? Are standardized employment contracts normally provided to migrants before departure?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
The costs of legal migration must be brought down
The procedures for migrating through legal channels must be simplified and expedited
The rights of regular migrants are better protected than the rights of irregular migrants
6. What are the most common violations committed by recruitment agencies against migrants? Are sanctions enforced against recruitment agencies that do not follow the regulations? What are your recommendations for improving compliance by recruitment agencies?
7. What channels exist for migrants (including pre-departure and return migrants) to register a complaint against recruiters or their employer in destination countries? Are there official means provided for settling these grievances out of court through conciliation or arbitration? What are the typical outcomes for these complaints? Are follow-up actions taken? How could complaint channels be strengthened?
8. What kinds of support services are provided to migrants by the Government / recruitment agencies / CSOs to facilitate safe migration? What needs to be done to strengthen access and effectiveness for the support provided? What additional support services should be provided to migrant workers?
9. Do you think that local authorities have a solid understanding of migration policies and how to apply them? What should be done to raise awareness among authorities about the relevant policies and build their capacity to implement them?
10. Do you think that people in your community generally understand migration policies and procedures? What could be done to raise awareness about how to migrate safely and legally?



Appendix 4:

Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews with return migrants

1. Why did you decide to migrate? Where did you go and how long did you stay? Overall, was your migration experience positive or negative? Would you recommend migrating for work to your family and friends? Why or why not?
2. Do most people in your community migrate through regular or irregular channels? Why? Is there a big difference between the way that regular and irregular migrants are treated in destination countries?
3. What aspects of the migration process did you find most challenging? Have migration trends changed in recent years?
4. In what ways do you think migrants are treated unfairly both in Myanmar and destination countries?
5. Do you feel that women and men migrants are treated equally?
6. What could the government do to increase migration through legal channels? What could the government do to make migration safer?
7. What do you wish you had known before you left your country? Did you receive pre-departure training? Was it useful? What would you do differently if you were to migrate again? What precautions would you take to guarantee your safety?
8. How did you decide on which recruitment/migration channel to use? (cost, complexity, duration and accessibility of legal recruitment channels, etc.) What criteria did you use to choose your recruitment agency? (cost, reputation, speed of deployment, etc.) What additional information would have been useful in making the choice of recruiters and where would you have preferred to obtain it?
9. Approximately how much did you pay to migrate in total? How much did you pay to the recruitment agency? Did you have to take out a loan to cover the cost and from whom? Did you have deductions taken out of your wages each month? How much? What other costs did you have to pay?
10. How much did you earn while working abroad? What did you do with your earnings? Were you able to save any money? How much did you send in remittances?
11. Did you sign a labour contract? If so, did you sign it before departure or in your country of destination? What terms were specified in the contract? Were the working conditions in line with your expectations?
12. While working, did you keep your passport/identification documents or did your employer hold them? Did you have the freedom to leave the premises outside of working hours?
13. What kind of assistance was available to migrants in your country of destination? Did you ever make use of support services provided by migrant associations / trade unions / NGOs / Government? Were they able to resolve your problems? What do you think should be done to strengthen these support services?
14. Did you join a trade union or migrant association? Why or why not?
15. What type of social protection did you receive in your destination country? (social security, workers' compensation, health insurance, access to education, etc.) If yes, were they useful? Did you have any difficulties accessing them? What additional benefits did you need?
16. While you were working abroad, were your rights violated? If yes, did you complain? Who did you complain to? If you didn't complain, why not?
17. Why did you decide to return home? What are your future plans? What type of assistance do you think return migrants should be provided with?

Safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices in Myanmar

Migrant workers make a critical contribution to Myanmar's economic and social development, however, decades of isolation from the international community and gaps in the policy framework governing labour migration have meant that their situation at places of origin is still inadequately understood. To obtain further information about safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices, the ILO's GMS TRIANGLE project partnered with the Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Centre for Economic and Social Development to conduct a survey of 625 potential migrant workers at three target sites within Myanmar. The pioneering study will be used to shape the design and evaluate the impact of policy measures, capacity building trainings and support services to protect the rights of migrant workers throughout the migration process.

The **Tripartite Action to Protect the Rights of Migrants Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS TRIANGLE project)** aims to strengthen the formulation and implementation of recruitment and labour protection policies and practices, to ensure safer migration resulting in decent work. The project is operational in six countries: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. In each country, tripartite constituents are engaged in each of the GMS TRIANGLE project objectives - strengthening policy and legislation, building capacity of stakeholders and providing services to migrant workers. These goals are interdependent, with policy advocacy and capacity building activities driven by the voices, needs and experiences of workers, employers and service providers.

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