

The Role of Local Economy in Mon State: The Case of Mawlamyine Township

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Abstract

The role of local economy is very important in development of a region. Major economic activities of a region depend on location and climate conditions of the region. Economy of Myanmar is based on agriculture activities. But, economic activities are different in relation to the locations such as mountainous region, plain region and coastal region. Mon State, existed on a southern part of Myanmar, is a coastal region, Mawlamyine Cities is the capital of Mon State. The township is the developed and commercial township. Thus the role of local economy of Mawlamyine Township was studied in this paper. Nowadays, this area is occurring in economic and areal development. The main research questions of this paper are (1) what is the distribution pattern of economic activities in Mawlamyine Township? (2) why are there different economic zone and functions? (3) how do support the local economy? And (4) which factors control the local economy in Mawlamyine Township? were considered. In this study, three main control factors are found. In this paper Cluster analysis and SWOT analysis are used. Finally, analysis indicates that distribution of economic activities and their functions depend on location, population and other factors. Secondary and primary data were used in this paper to analyze the economic development of the studied area. Arc GIS10.4 and SPSS is used as research tool in this paper.

Key words: local, economic activities, region, agriculture, control factor

Introduction

Mon State is a coastal region in southern part of Myanmar. In the State, people grow paddy cultivation and gardening in plain area. They do rubber plantation and other perennial crops are grow in mountain region. They also do fishing works in river bank and coastal region. Mawlamyine Township is one of the ten townships in Mon State. It is situated central part of Mon State and it is located between north latitudes 16° 21' and 16° 37' and between east longitudes 97° 39' and 97° 44'. The total area of Mawlamyine Township is 230.04 square kilometer, 1.87 percent of Mon State area. Mawlamyine Township is capital of state and also commercial city in Mon State. It is comprised of 29 wards and 13 village tracts. It is elongated in shape. The shape of Mawlamyine Township is longer from north to south than from east to west. Yankin Ridge is divided at the central portion of the Mawlamyine Township. The relief of Mawlamyine Township is undulation features. Thanlwin, Gyaing and Ataran rivers are the three important drainage systems. There are numerous creeks flows in study area.

Climate is an important factor which influences socioeconomic activities and agriculture sector of the township. As Mawlamyine Township is situated at the mouth of the Gulf of Mottama, it is influenced by the maritime effect. The type of climate is tropical monsoon climate (Am) with high temperature all year around and heavy summer monsoon rain during June to September. The soils of Mawlamyine Township are Meadow and meadow alluvial soil, red brown forest soil and gley and gley swampy soil. Thus, the township is a very good place for paddy cultivation, gardening works and perennial crops plantation in study area.

Mawlamyine Township connects with other towns by water way, air way, rail way and motorway. Mawlamyine Township distributes and sells its regional products to other towns in Myanmar. Besides, Mon State is existed closely with Thailand in the east. The study area is imported its necessary goods from Thailand and other towns in Myanmar, is a

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developed township in education, economic and health sector. Hence, the role of local economy of the Mawlamyine Township is studied in this paper.

In this study, economic activities of Mawlamyine Township are divided into two cluster zones, namely cluster zone one and cluster zone two. Commercial works is included in cluster zone one. Paddy cultivation and garden works of the township are contained in cluster zone two. In this paper, (1) what is the distribution pattern of economic activities? (2) why are there different economic zones and functions? (3) how do support the local economy? And (4) which factor controls the economic development in study area? In this paper, physical factor, social factor and institution factor are studied as major control factors in study area. Population is one of the major human factors in the study area. According to population data, the total population of Mawlamyine Township was 272,669 in 2024.

Study area

Mawlamyine Township is located in the southern part of Myanmar. It is one of the ten townships of Mon State. The study area is situated between the North latitude $16^{\circ} 21'$ and $16^{\circ} 37'$, and between East longitudes $97^{\circ} 39'$ and $97^{\circ} 44'$. It has an area of 230.04 square kilometer. It is composed of 29 wards and 13 village tracts. Mawlamyine Township is bounded by Hpa-an and Paung Township on the north, Mudon Township on the south, Kyaikmaraw Township on the east, and Chaungzon Township and Thanlwin River on the west.

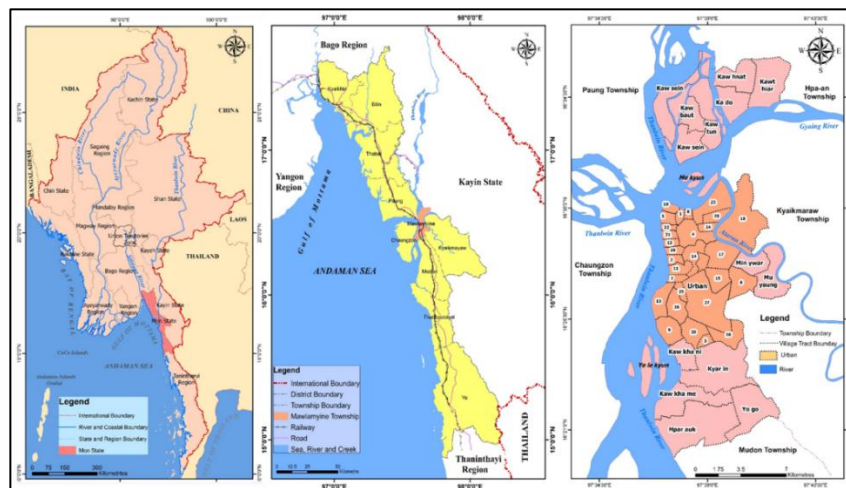


Fig. 1. Study area of Mawlamyine Township

Source: Field survey

Materials and Methods

Primary data and secondary data are used to present geographical study of the role of local economy in Mawlamyine Township within Mon State. To see the spatial pattern of the “Mawlamyine Township” economic activities, field observations were made. To know the spatial and functional changes, open talks and interviews with some residents, authority’s persons and private shop owners were made. Field observations support to get a clear overview of economic activities in study area. The Secondary data are also gathered from several departments. Some required information has also been acquired through the study of previous research thesis conducted in the geography department. The data processing cartographic presentations have been made by the Geographical Information System (GIS). In this paper, Cluster Analysis and SWOT Analysis were used. This paper can partially contribute to accomplishing a more successful local economic development in study area.

Research Questions

- (1) What is the distribution pattern of economic activities in Mawlawmyine Township?
- (2) Why are there different economic zones and functions?
- (3) How do they perform their roles of local economic activities?
- (4) Which factors control the local economy in Mawlawmyine Township?

Research background

Although many research papers have been published on Mawlawmyine City, they primarily focused on educational landscape, retail shops, road infrastructure, paddy cultivation and socio-economic conditions. However, research regarding the role of local economy in Mawlawmyine Township, has not been conducted so far. So this paper aims to analyze the geographical study of “the role of local economy” in Mawlawmyine Township from a geographical perspective.

Result

A local economy map is a visual representation that helps communities understand and develop their economic landscape by highlighting concentrations of businesses, identifying growth opportunities, and supporting local investment and entrepreneurship. Total population of Mawlawmyine Township was 272669 persons in 2024. Under 18 years is 39.25 percent and above 18 years is 60.75 percent in the study area. The central part of the township has densely populated area. In study of occupation structure of the township, central part of the township has maximum job creations and northern and southern part of it has minimum job creation. Therefore, the dependent population accounted for 39.25 percent of the total population, while the remaining 60.75 percent were considered as workable persons. The majority of workforce was engaged in random job 85.02 percent, it is ranked first and ranked seven was agriculture, with 0.28 percent of township population. Which a little population of work force was farmers were engaged in paddy cultivation (Fig. 2).

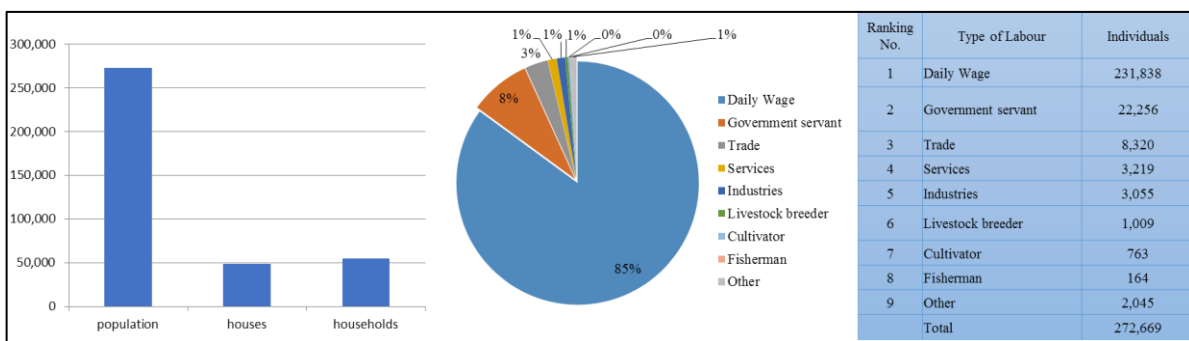


Fig. 2. Population and occupation structure of Mawlawmyine Township

(Source: Township General Administrative Office)

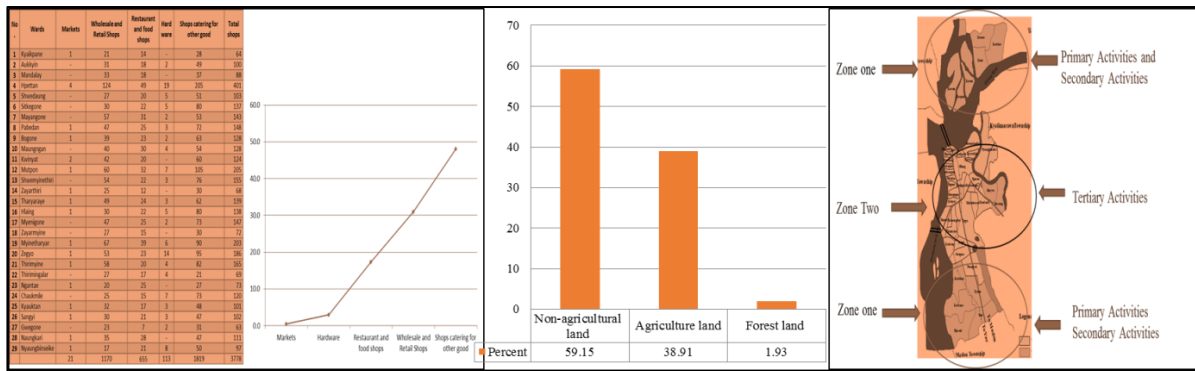


Fig. 3. Economic activities of Mawlamyine Township

Source: Field survey

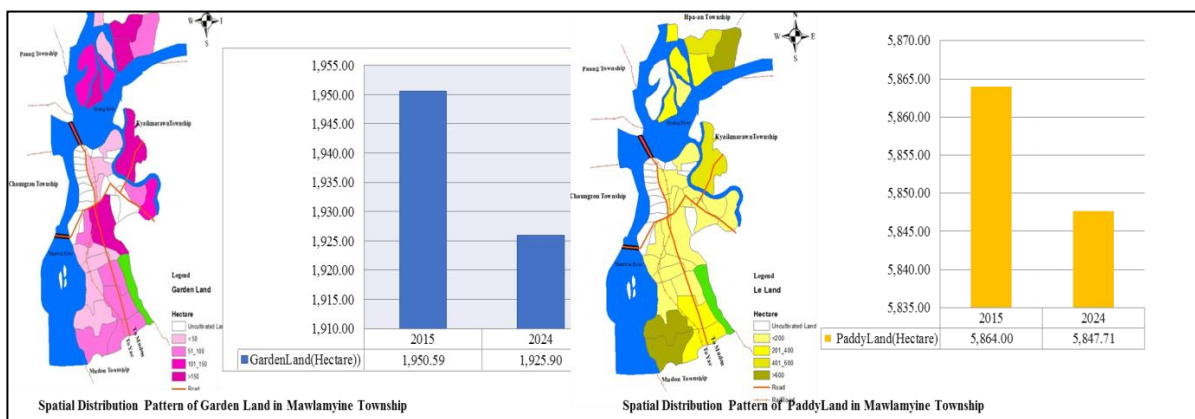


Fig. 4. Paddy land and garden land in Mawlamyine Township

Source: Township General Administrative Office

In Mawlamyine Township the land surface has been appropriate for various uses. The use of land Mawlamyine Township can be classified into three types. They are non-agricultural land and forest land and agriculture land in study area. The non-agricultural land within the study area included urban land, rural land, industrial land, religious and cemetery land, grazing land, road and railway land, dam and reservoir land, stream and inn land, under water bodies land. In 2023, the non-agricultural land within the study area was 59.15 percent of township area and forest Land was 1.93 percent of total township area. Agricultural land was 38.91 percent of total township area (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

The area of the Mawlamyine Township is 230.04 square kilometer. Urban area of the township is 0.07 percent and rural area of it is 99.93 percent. Besides, urban population is 83 percent of the township population and rural population is 17 percent of it. There are many various economic activities in the township. 83 percent commercial activities are in urban area and 13 percent commercial activities are in rural area. In urban area the number of markets is 62 percent of the township. The number of wholesale and retail shops is 75 percent. The number of restaurants and food shops is 96 percent. The number of hardware shops is 90 percent. The number of other goods shops is 86 percent. In the study of the economic activities of rural area, the market in rural area is 38 percent of the markets in the township. The number of wholesale and retail shops is 25 percent. The number of restaurants and food shops is 4 percent. The number of hardware shops is 10 percent. The number of other goods shops is 14 percent. In the study of the role of local economy in the township,

most of the tertiary sector is found in urban area. Most of the secondary and primary sector area found in rural area. Agriculture product, fishing product, other goods, foodstuff and beauty products and sold to other regions from the township.

In the study of trade pattern, 57 percent of agriculture products are distribution in the local consumers. 32 percent of these products are sold to other townships. 11 percent of these products are exported to Thailand and China. 51 percent of fishing products are distributed in the local consumers. 28 percent of these products are sold to other cities. 21 percent of products are exported to Thailand.

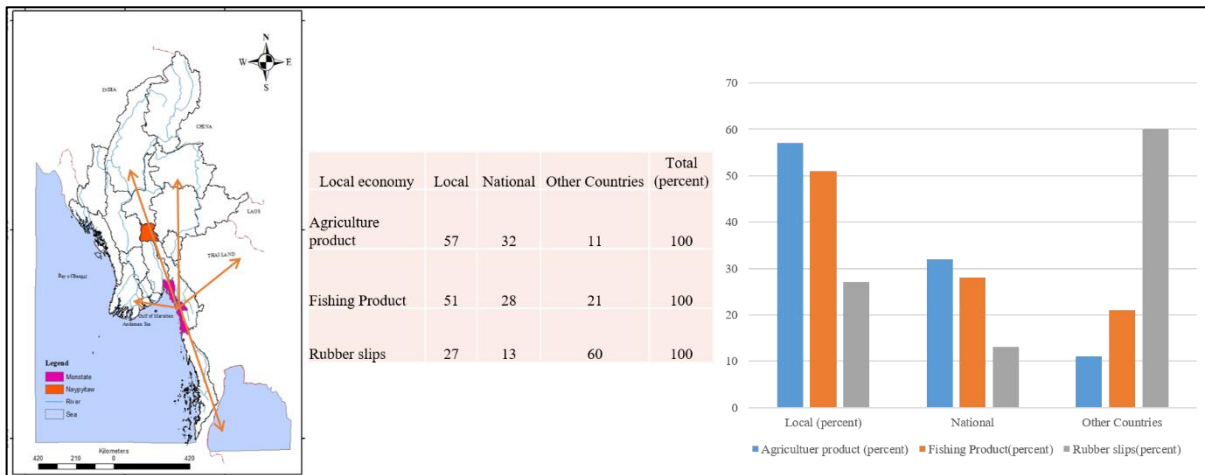


Fig. 5. Distributed of local products in Mawlamyine Township

Source: Field survey

Rubber plantation and rubber slips production work is an important economic activity in Mawlamyine Township. Rubber plants are grown in large scale because it has heavy rainfall and high temperature. Rubber plantation works are more successful and imported due to efforts of agriculture servants and distribution of pure and good seeds. Rubber slips are distributed and sold 27 percent in region, 13 percent to other towns and 60 percent to foreign countries. Thus, the role of local economy of Mawlamyine Township is important for regional economic development. It is found that incomes and living standard of the local people are rise. The city has good transportation to other towns. Trades are made by motorway, railway and waterway do other towns (Fig. 5).

Discussion

Cluster Analysis

Mawlamyine Township is taken into account by Dendrogram using Ward method, which depends on General Administrative Office data during the period between 2020 and 2024. Then, clusters are differentiated by the Dendrogram using Ward Method. Nine variables are used for the Cluster Analysis. Two clusters are found significantly in Mawlamyine Township. Cluster one includes relatively higher economic development than in cluster two. The area of the cluster one is 51 percent of the whole township area and the population is 72 percent of total population of Mawlamyine Township. The area of the cluster two is 49 percent of the whole township area and the population is 28 percent of total population of Mawlamyine Township. The study area is divided into two different cluster zones. Cluster one group was mainly existed in the center of the town and in the both sides of

the main roads. The wards included in cluster one were initially well developed area. Cluster two group was existed in north, south and east part of the township. It includes development land area, recreation places and other land use. Cluster two was slowly improved than cluster one. This case was related to paddy cultivation area. Cluster one has the highest population, and cluster two, with the lowest population (Fig. 5).

The population of the cluster one is 234,482 persons and it has 3778 (83 percent) economic activities. . The population of the cluster two is 38,187 persons and it has 752 (17 percent) economic activities. Cluster one is the commercial centre of the township and it has many tertiary sectors. Besides, development of the banking and hotel services are found near the centre of the study area. Cluster two is especially found primary sectors. Also cluster two is northern and southern part of the township. Major economic activities of the township are paddy plantations, garden works, fishing works and services.

There are 34 markets in Mawlamyine Township. In the study of the market function, people sell and buy vegetables, meats, fish, food staff and other daily-use goods in the township. There are many consumers in the township because it has high population, universities, military regiments and training schools. Vegetables, flowers, fruits, meats and fish are sold in the market of the township and neighbouring township. Many rice are consumed in the township and sold to other townships. The fishing product made in the Mon State are sold to other towns in the countries via Mawlamyine Township. Seasonal garden crops are sold in the region and other townships. Rice, vegetables, garden crops and rubber slips are supplied from cluster two to demand areas. Most market functions and urban functions are existed in cluster one. Cluster one is directly distributed the goods to local consumers living in cluster two. Ze Cho Market in Mawlamyine Township is mainly supplied the daily-use goods and the food stuff exported other township and other country.

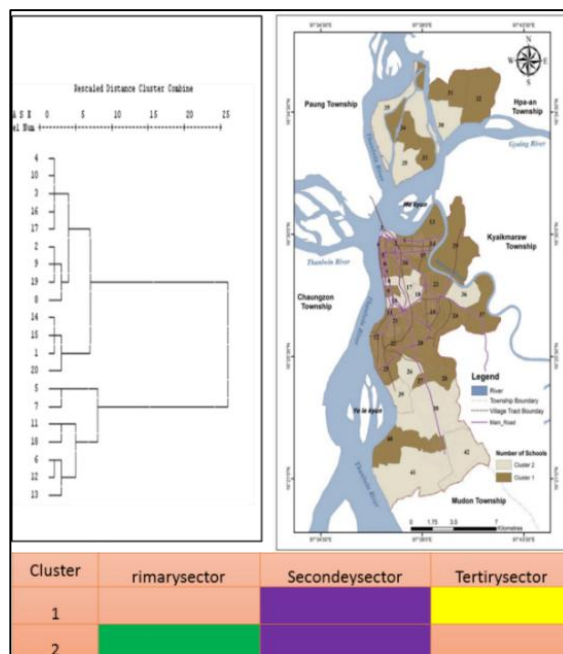


Fig. 6. Cluster analysis of Mawlamyine Township

Source: Field survey

Controlling Factors

In the study of the role of local economy in Mawlamyine Township, it is found that three major controlling factors, namely physical, social and institution factors.

Physical factors

Economic development of a region depends on its physical bases. Mawlamyine Township is in the east of Thanlwin River. It has tropical monsoon climate. The township is a very good place for agriculture works because it receives heavy rainfall and high temperature annually. The township soil supports largely paddy cultivation and garden works in it. Besides, the township is a good location for fishing works and agriculture works. The relief of Mawlamyine Township is undulation features. Thanlwin, Gyaing and Ataran rivers are the three important drainage systems. There are numerous creeks flows in study area. Yankin Hill is located along the central part of the city and it is low range of 64 meters (210 feet) above sea level. Therefore, the role of local economy is developing in study area. As physical factors is inflicting the local economy.

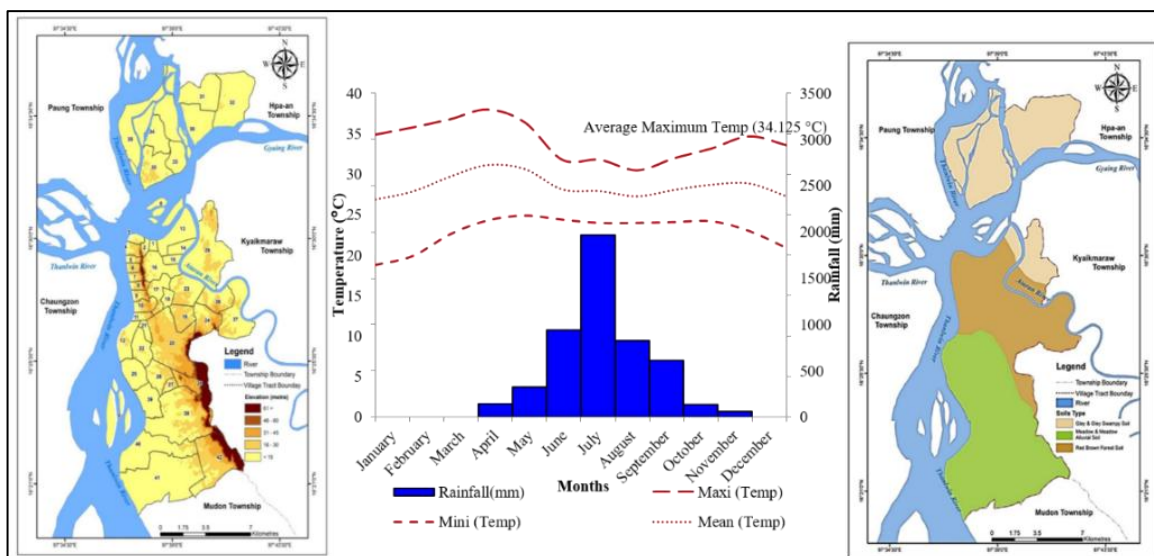


Fig. 7. Physical factors of Mawlamyine Township (Source: Field survey)

Social factors

Social factors are important for local economic development of a region. Population of the township is gradually increased year by year. Its population density is 1185.31 (Per sq.km). In 2024 Mawlamyine Township's, urban area has 234,482 persons and rural area has 38,187 persons respectively. Most of the population is working age population. In study area 60 percent of the population Mawlamyine Township resides in the urban wards mainly depending on urban functions (Figure 7 and Fihure8). In the study of occupation structure, the township has 1.12 percent businessmen, 8.16 percent government servants, 0.34 percent farmers, daily wages 85.02 percent and 0.75percent others. Thus social factors are important play of local economy in Mawlamyine Township.

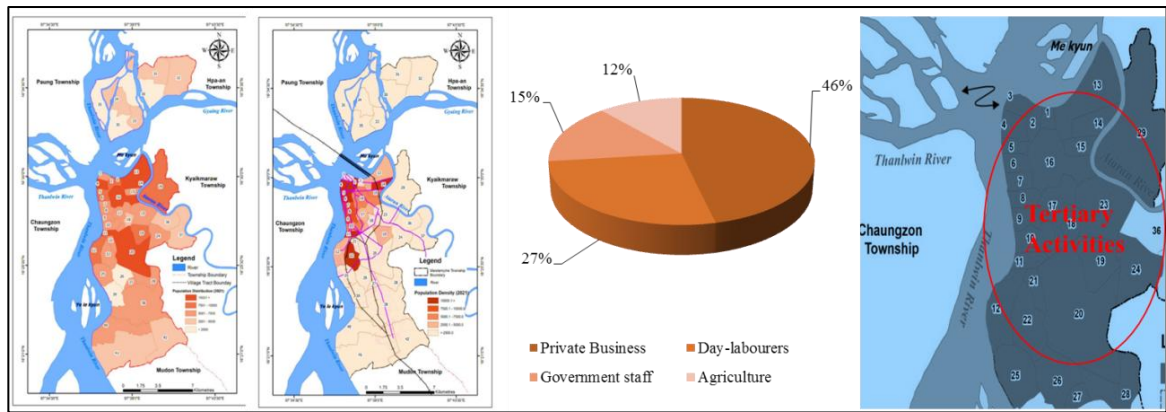


Fig. 8. Population of Mawlamyine Township (Source: Field survey)

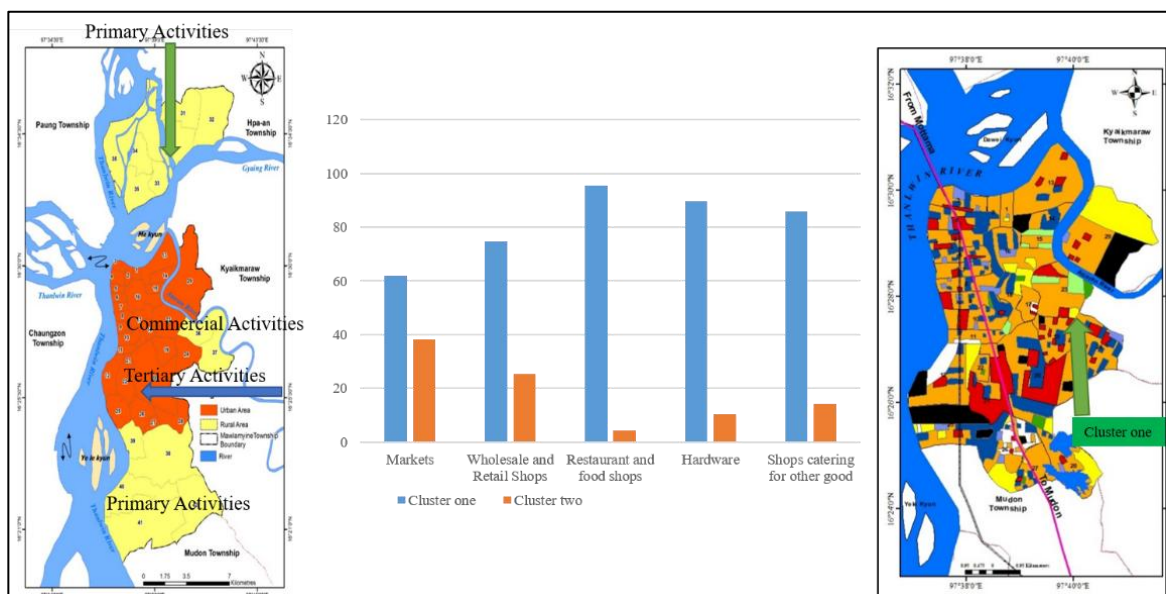


Fig. 8. Economic activities in study area (Source: Field survey)

Institution factors

Institution factors and government policy are important to develop local economy in Mawlamyine Township. Government makes giving agriculture loans and pure seeds to the formers and trainings to become skilled agriculture servants and farm labour. Agriculture products are sold to other towns from Mawlamyine Township. There are many high way bus lines to connect through the country. It is found that the government takes responsibility for good transportations and safe journeys to other towns of the country. Imported goods to Mawlamyine Township are carried by rail way, waterway and motorway. Thus institution factors are vital role in the development of economic activities in study area.

SWOT Analysis

In this study, S mean strength of local economic development in study area. W is weakness of economic activities in respective township. O for opportunity of resident within the township and T is threat of local economic development of study area. To present good points and weak points, SWOT analysis is applied in the role of local economy in Mawlamyine Township within Mon State.

Table (2) SWOT analysis result of economic activities in study area

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Good physical environment -southern part of Myanmar -coastal area -river mouth	Labour shortages	Job Opportunities <i>Providing the employment</i>	Decrease agriculture sector
Various economic activities -primary sector -secondary sector -tertiary sector	<i>Not availability of skill labors</i>	<i>Good location</i>	Migrant
<i>High population density</i>	<i>Limited area</i>	Various economic activities	Flooded
<i>Good relation between the sector and services</i> <i>Creating employment</i> <i>Sufficient water supply</i>	<i>Increase raw material prices</i>	<i>Close to market</i>	<i>Electricity shortage</i>

Source: Field survey

Strengths

Mon State is existed on a good physical environment place in Myanmar and it has a coastal area. Thus, fishing works are being done in the State. Paddy cultivation and garden works are also being done due to the state has a very good climatic condition. Mawlamyine Township supports the regional economic development of the state. The township has a good transportation with other townships by water way, motor way and air way. The township has various economic activities. It has new economic works and job opportunities due to the economic sectors and services connect each other. The township has a good water supply system because it is existed on left side of Thanlwin River.

Weaknesses

There are labour shortages in Mawlamyine Township because of many township dwellers go to Thailand for their works. Besides, a few skilled workers are in the township. The area of the township cannot be extended due to the township is existed on the mouth of river. The township dwellers face difficulties in doing their economic activities due to the higher prices of raw materials in the township.

Opportunities

Mawlamyine Township has many various economic activities. So it has many job opportunities. There are many jobs for regional works in most of economic activities because most of the young city dwellers go to Thailand for their works in the township. Most of economic sectors are done easily and smoothly.

Threats

In study of the role of economic activities of the township, agriculture sector is slightly reduced in production. Sometimes, labour shortages emerge because migrant workers are in the township. Some places are flooded in rainy season due to the township has heavy rainfall. Electricity supply shortages are frequently caused for most of the economic activities in the township (Table 2).

Conclusion

Mawlamyine Township is one of the ten townships in the Mon State, with a total population of 272,669 persons in 2024. In Mawlamyine Township, urban population was 86 percent and rural population was 14 percent of the township total population. It is situated between north latitude $16^{\circ} 21'$ and $16^{\circ} 37'$ and between east longitude $97^{\circ} 39'$ and $97^{\circ} 44'$. It is surrounded by Hpa-an Township and Paung Township on the east and Chaungzon and Thanlwin River on the west. The area of Mawlamyine Township is 226.52 square kilometer. Mawlamyine Township comprises of twenty-nine wards and thirteen village Tracts. Its economic activity is developed in study area.

There are strengths (good points) and weaknesses of the role of local economic activities by eight criteria. The good points observed are favorable for economic development, whereas the weak points may lead to unequal economic activities. Therefore, main economic activities affect local development differently among the economic sectors in Mawlamyine Township.

In the studying of the role of local economy in Mawlamyine Township, (1) what is distribution pattern of economic activities? was studied firstly. The city has elongated shape by long north south direction. Commercial works and many services are existed in western and central part of the township. Paddy fields and gardens are situated in northern, eastern and southern part of the study area. It is found that primary sector, secondary sector and tertiary sector are developed in sector-wise in the township. In study of the (2) how do support the local economy? The township has a good market for rice, garden products and rubber slips. Rice and various seasonal fruits are consumed by local people and sold to other township in the country. Local farmers' incomes are increased yearly. Local people produce agriculture products largely because higher temperature and rainfall in the township. Besides, rubber slips are change to finished goods and exported to foreign market by businessmen. Fishing products are also sold to other townships in the country. In addition, Thailand made products is distributed to the other towns via Mawlamyine Township by business men. In the study, (3) why are their different economic zones and functions? was studied by cluster analysis with nine variables. Two cluster zones are found. Cluster one is the commercial area, center of the township. Cluster two is found in the northern and southern part of the township. Cluster zone one is more developed than cluster zone two. Most of the tertiary sectors is also found cluster zone one. In the study (4) which factors control the local economic? was studied with physical factor, social factor and institution factor. Mawlamyine Township is a sea- port and existed in western part of Thanlwin River. A mountain ranges in central part of the township. The climate of the township is very good for agriculture works. The government supports largely of economic development gives agriculture loans, pure seeds and fresh seeds to farmers in the township. The township is population and 47 percent of the townships do commercial works. Therefore, economic sector is gradually increased in study area.

Physical factors play a good role in shaping social factors as well. Due to favorable climate and rivers, agriculture, rubber plantation, gardening and fishery work. These are

indeed the main income and work of the local people, who in return could generate sufficient profits and revenues to support their township.

Institutional factors are based on government policy and road infrastructure. Thanlyin Bridge connects this area to the rest of the country. There are transportation routes for various modes of vehicles as well, and these criteria play a relevant role in terms of communication and movement.

To sum it up, the key influencing factors of the role of local economy in Mawlamyine are based on physical, social and institutional factors. In terms of physical factors, the area is situated in close proximity to rivers, further resulting in fertile soil and favorable location. The Climate is also in favour of agriculture. It is also the capital city of the Mon state. The area is relatively wider and has a lengthy North-South distance. Therefore, physical, social and institutional factors play a crucial role in the economic activities of study area.

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