

## Determinants for Labor Migration in Maubin Township

Ei Phyo Oo<sup>1\*</sup>, Yu Yu Tun<sup>1</sup>, Nang Ei Mon The<sup>1</sup>, and Than Da Min<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This study was carried out to examine agricultural labor migration in Maubin Township, Ayeyarwaddy delta region in December 2015. Sample size was 60 migrant farm households from two sample villages by using the purposive sampling procedure through household survey and field observation. Descriptive analysis revealed that International non-seasonal migration (9%) to abroad and internal seasonal migration (91%) to urban areas were found. Currently, both types of migrants worked in the non-agricultural sectors of the migrated destination. The push factors of rural out-migration were mostly associated with low agricultural productivity and declining job opportunities in agriculture as well as low employment opportunities in original residential areas. The pull factors were out-migrating to other places which had better economic or employment opportunities, high income and better living standard. The secondary income of migrant farm households was remittance income (30% of total household income) which was mainly used for their basic needs (30%) and agriculture (24%). The study area faced the labor shortage problem in their farming especially during agricultural peak season because of migration.

**Key words:** migrant farm households, remittance, labor migration, Maubin Township.

### Introduction

Migration is the movement of people from one location to another and widely associated with change of permanent place of residence. Rural out-migration and agricultural crop production are key livelihood strategies in many rural areas of agro-based developing countries nonetheless the relationship between migration, agriculture and rural development has become an interesting argument in the study of economic development. In developing countries, the major source of income, food and employment opportunities are still provided from the agriculture sector (World Bank, 2008). In the last decade, an increasing number of migrants from Myanmar have been crossing the borders with Thailand, China and India. The numbers of those migrating from one place to another within Myanmar itself, either seasonally or longer term also seem to be growing (Save the Children UK, 2001).

Small studies of migration in Myanmar, as a part of Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring

(QSEM) revealed that migration is a common coping strategy, with 26-30% of all households having a family member migrating, and overall village population migration levels ranging from less than 2% in Shan State to over 10% in Mandalay Region. International, non-seasonal migration was the highest in States bordering neighboring countries, whilst in the central and delta areas, the migration was predominantly internal and seasonal (LIFT/World Bank, 2014).

Myanmar's total population is 51.41 million and 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas (Census, 2014). Since agriculture is the major income source and employment in the rural areas, farm labor is a major source of employment opportunity for the rural labor force. However, farming activities are gradually unattractive for them because of unstable crop production, inadequate credit, and adverse climate condition etc. Under such conditions, most of the households commonly practice income diversification strategies, including labor migration. Therefore, the rural out-migration

<sup>1</sup> Department of Agricultural Economic , Yezin Agricultural University Yezin, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

<sup>2</sup> Department of Agronomy, Yezin Agricultural University, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

within and between the countries is one of the most important issues and it receives a particular consideration for alternative economic development. Within these evolving content, understanding the socioeconomic factors, pull and push factors and impact of labor migration in the selected rural area is critical in order to assist balanced and inclusive development of Myanmar.

The specific objectives of the study are –

To examine socioeconomic characteristics of migrant farm households,

To find out the significant push and pull factors of migration in the study area,

To examine the impact of labor migration on agricultural labor management in crop production.

## Research Methodology

### Data collection and analysis

Maubin Township was selected as the study areas. The survey was conducted during the period of December, 2015. Primary data collection was conducted in two villages of Maubin Township, Khanaunggyi and Yelaekalay villages. The primary survey data were taken from the selected respondents by purposive random sampling method through personal interview. Secondary data were gathered from various sources from official records of Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI), Department of Agriculture (DoA) and other related publications such as several books, research literatures, articles, journals, academic thesis.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, were analyzed to show the socio-economic and demographic characteristics, migrant's profile, income composition, contribution of remittances in crop production sector, pull and push factors, and changes of crop production activities before and after migration.

## Results and discussion

### Demographic characters of migrant farm households

The household heads were found as male (95%) and female (5%) of total sample farmers. Thus, male headed households were traditionally domi-

**Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of the sample migrant farm household heads and household members in the study area**

Item	Migrant farm HHs (N = 60)	Migrant farm HHMs (N = 270)	Total
Female	3 (5%)	177 (66%)	180 (55%)
Male	57 (95%)	93 (34%)	150 (45%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>	<b>270 (100%)</b>	<b>330 (100%)</b>
<b>Age (Year)</b>			
Mean Value	55	30	
<b>Educational level</b>			
Illiterate	0 (0%)	5 (2%)	5 (2%)
Monastery	7 (12%)	9 (3%)	16 (5%)
Primary	19 (32%)	79 (29%)	98 (30%)
Middle	20 (33%)	90 (33%)	110 (33%)
High school	11 (18%)	39 (14%)	50 (15%)
Graduated level	3 (5%)	48 (18%)	51 (15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>	<b>270 (100%)</b>	<b>330 (100%)</b>

nant in the study area. The average age of all sample migrant farm household heads was around 55 years. In the study area, the education levels of migrants' household heads were found the highest percentage in middle (33%) and primary (32%), while high school (18%), monastery (12%), and University level (5%) were comparatively lower percent of education level (Table 1).

The total number of household members was 490 in 60 migrant households. The population of female (66%) was higher than male (34%) in the sample migrant farm household members. In the study area, the education levels of migrant household members were observed at higher percentage in primary (33%) and middle level (32%) (Table 1). The average family size was 5 ranging from 2 to 10.

### Land holding sizes

Being major agricultural family, the average farm size for the total migrant farm households was 9 acres and ranging from 0.5 to 45 acres. In the study area, the major crops grown were summer paddy, monsoon paddy and pulses. Major occupation and income sources were agriculture and secondary incomes were earned by jobless, livestock raising, agricultural labor, shopkeeper, government employee, motorcycle/car, and factory worker.

**Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of migrants in the sample migrant farm households**

Item	Male	Female	Total
<b>Gender (No.)</b>	41 (45%)	51 (55%)	92 (100%)
<b>Educational level</b>			
Primary	10 (24%)	15 (29%)	25 (27%)
Middle	10 (24%)	8 (16%)	18 (20%)
High school	10 (24%)	11 (22%)	21 (23%)
Graduate level	11 (27%)	17 (33%)	28 (30%)
<b>Age (Year) Mean</b>	-	-	25
<b>Age range (years)</b>	-	-	14 - 60

### Profile of migrants in Maubin Township

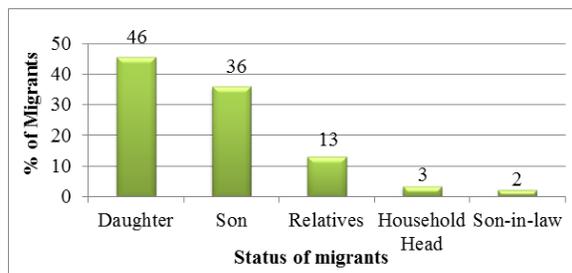
#### Demographic information

The total number of migrants was 92 out of 490 population in the 60 sample migrant farm households. Among them, 45% were male and 55% were female. The average age of migrants was 25 years old and ranging from 14 to 60 years. In this case, most of these migrants were young female (55%). The highest education was university level attained by 30% of the migrants and the lowest level of primary was only 27% (Table 2).

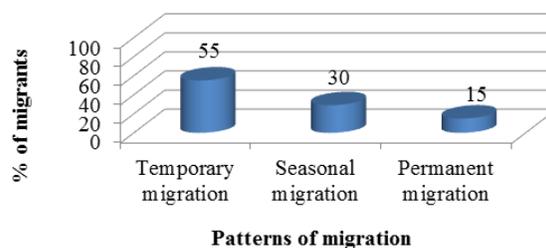
Regarding the status of migrants in their households, most of the migrants (46%) were daughter and son (36%). The relatives, household heads and son-in-law were 13%, 3% and 2% of the migrants respectively. According to the gender issue, most of the migrants were female in the study area (Figure 1).

#### Types of migration and migration conditions

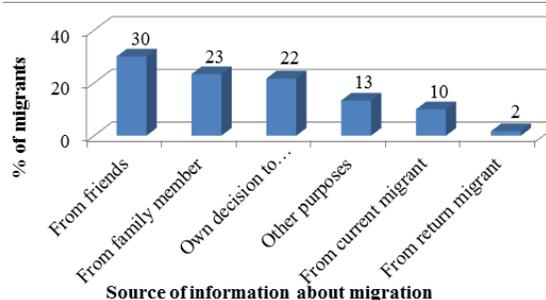
In the study area, two types of migrations were examined - rural to urban (internal migration) and



**Figure 1. Status of migrants in the sample migrant farm households**



**Figure 2. Patterns of migration in the sample migrant farm households**



**Figure 3. Source of information about migration for sample migrant farm households**

abroad (cross-border migration). It was found that 91% of the sample migrants did rural to urban migration and 9% was cross-border migration. The destination places for internal migration were Yangon, Maubin, Mandalay, and Shan State. As international migration, most of migrants went to Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

According to the return time interval and their migration period, there were 3 patterns of migrations were found in this study. They are permanent migration, temporary migration, and seasonal migration. In this study, temporary migration (55%), seasonal migration (30%) and permanent migration (15%) were found (Figure 2).

#### Source of information about the migration

Among 92 migrants, 30% of the migrants got the information on migration from friends. About 23% of internal migrants got information through their family members working in a new destination place. Among them 22% of migrants worked in other places by their own decisions. The rest of migrant (25%) decided to migrate and looked for a job by contacts with returned migrants and currently migrated people abroad and some other reasons

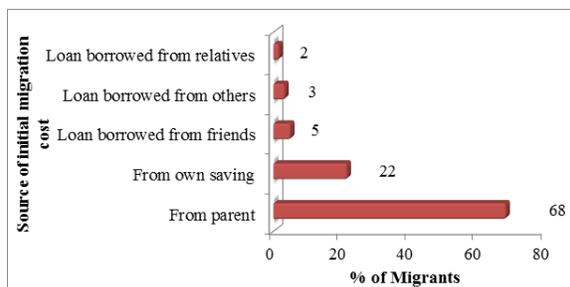


Figure 4. Source of initial migration cost of migrants in the study area

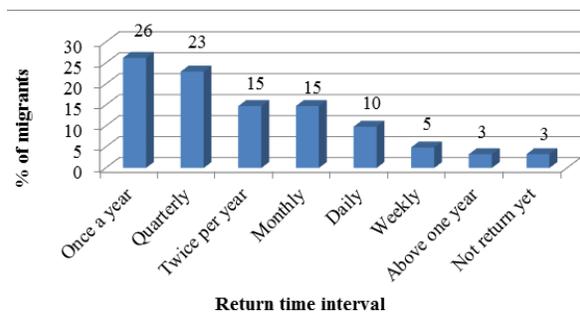


Figure 5. Frequency of returning home by migrants in the study area

(Figure 3).

### Source of initial migration cost

In case of initial migration cost, 68% of migrant workers anticipated to cover the costs of migrating with their parents' money and 22% used their own saving. Some migrants reported that initial migration cost was covered by borrowing money from friends (5%), others (3%) and relatives (2%) in this study area (Figure 4).

### Time interval of returning home

In total 92 migrants, return time interval of migrants was commonly found as 38% of seasonal basis (3or 6 months interval) because these migrants returned to their home depending on labor needs of the family farm during the major agriculture season. Another 30% reported returned home daily, weekly and monthly intervals. Some migrants (26%) were involved in annual return and most of them were worked in agriculture while they were in village. About 3% of migrants were permanent migration and have not returned home till the time of field survey. Other 3% of migrants responded that the

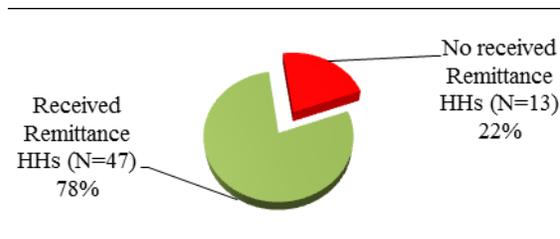


Figure 6. Remittance received by the sample migrant farm households in the study area

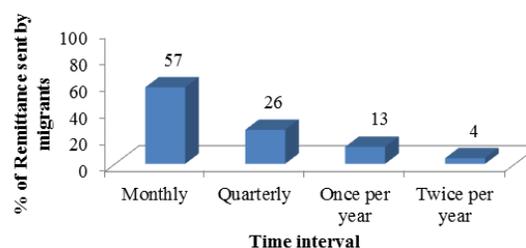


Figure 7. Time interval of sending remittance

turn time interval was irregular (longer than one year) (Figure 5).

### Remittance received by the sample migrant farm households

Among 92 sample migrants, about 78 % have received remittances from their migrant family members while 22% have not received remittances from migrant family members (Figure 6). The remittance received by migrant farm households was varied with different time interval. Among them,

Table 3. Types of occupations of migrants in the sample migrant farm households

Type of occupation	Before migration %	During migration %
Farmer	53.26	-
Student	38.04	18.48
Jobless	5.43	-
Shopkeeper	2.17	6.52
Services	1.09	20.66
Factory worker	-	23.91
Government Staff	-	19.57
Company	-	3.26
Motorcycle/ car driver	-	2.17
Carpentry/ masonry	-	2.17
Tailoring	-	2.17
Livestock & fisheries	-	1.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

57% of migrants sent money to their families monthly. Various remittance receiving intervals were once per 3 months (26%), once a year (13%) and 6 months interval (4%) respectively (Figure 7).

### Type of occupations of migrants before and during migration

In case of occupation of migrants before migration, the highest percentage of the migrants (53%) had worked in farm activities as a family labor. Another 38% of migrants were students before migration. Before migration few of them were jobless (5%), shopkeeper (2%) and working in restaurants or shopping center (1%) respectively. During migration, 24% of migrants worked as industrial workers at the migrated places. Furthermore, after migration migrants worked in services providers (such as restaurants, shopping center) (21%), government employees (20%) and attending school again (18%) respectively. It can be seen that most of the migrants worked as a family labor in their farming

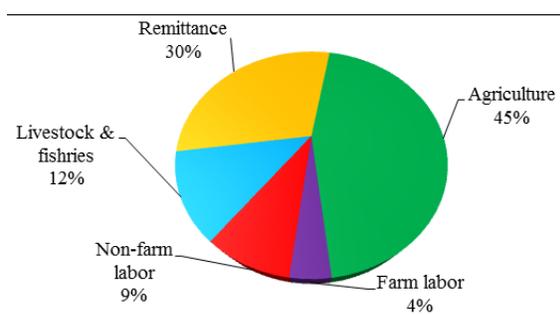


Figure 8. Income compositions of the sample mi-

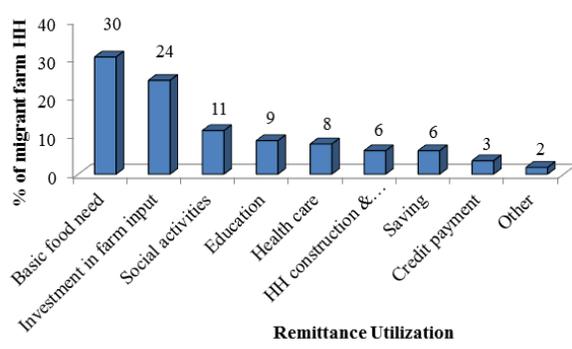


Figure 9. Remittance utilized by the sample migrant farm households

before migration. After migration, their job was changed to non-agricultural sectors and worked as industrial workers (Table 3).

### Income composition of the sample migrant farm households

According to the observed income composition, annual income from crop production was the largest amount and it took 45% of total incomes. Annual income from remittance was the second largest amount (30%) of total income. Other sources of income were 12% from livestock raising, 9% from non-farm activities and 4% from farm activities. Therefore, the second main income of migrant farm households was remittance income and they relied on that kind of income for their survival and capital investment of agriculture (Figure 8).

### Remittance utilized by the sample migrant farm households

The utilization of remittance receiving households was analyzed separately in order to identify the allocation of remittance money in all households' expenditures and agricultural production activities. About one third of the migrant farm households (30%) utilized remittance money for basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) and 24% of migrants farm households invested remittance in agricultural and livestock inputs. Another 11% of migrant farm households spent for social affairs, 9% for education, 8% for health care, 6% for household construction and maintenance, 6% for saving and 3% for debt repayments, and a few percent of migrant farm households (2%) allocated remittance in other purposes (Figure 9).

### Pull and push factors of migration in the study area

In the study area, the majority of households depend mainly on crop income. The push factors for migration were low agricultural productivity (25%) probably due to irregular rainfall and weed problem and consequently they earned low wages (11%) from agriculture. In this region, the natural environment is severely degraded. Some migrants reported that they were in poor economic conditions (16%), poor living standard (12%), unemployment (10%) and inadequate farm land holding (6%) in their vil-

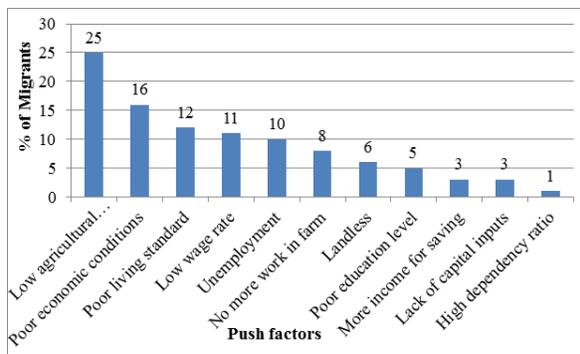


Figure 10. Push factors for out-migration of the sample migrant farm households

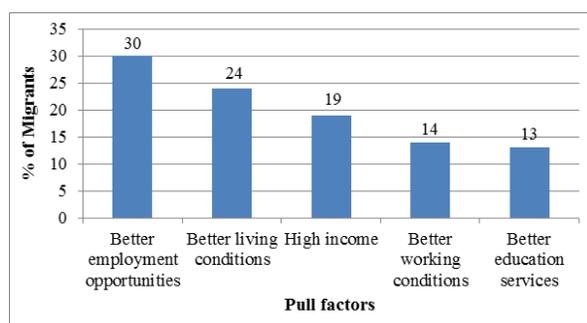


Figure 11. Pull factors for out-migration of the sample

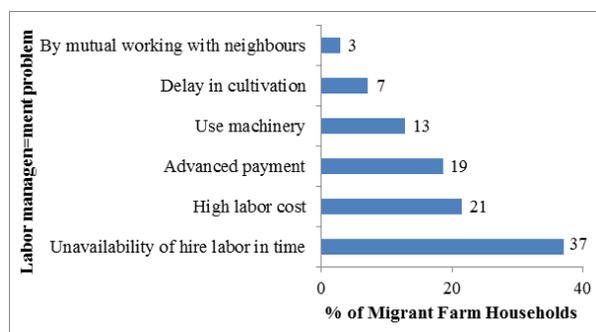


Figure 12. Labor management problems of the sample migrant farm households

lage. Therefore, they were unemployed and looked for job opportunities near urban area. Some villagers had migrated to other further places and neighboring countries to work as casual labors. Some migrants (4%) had family social problem. Some rural households took loan from money lenders to invest agricultural production (Figure 10).

Unfortunately, crop productivity was low and they could not repay for the debt. Therefore, some migrants reported that they decided to migrate for repayment of the debt. The main pull factors for the

Table 4. Monthly income of migrants in the study area

Migration	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Monthly income before migration (MMK)	4,130	0	150,000
Monthly income current migration(MMK)	213,478	0	2,000,000

migrants (73%) were high salary income (19%), better job opportunities (30%) and better living conditions (24%) in the new destination places. By doing short-term work or in factory work by migration during their off season, rural household got better income. Some migrants (13%) reported that they migrated for education purpose (Figure 11).

**Impact of migration on households' income**

After migration, average monthly income was (213,478 MMK) and ranging from (0-2,000,000 MMK). In this case, zero means that students did not have income. Before migration, average monthly income was (4,130 MMK) and ranging from (0-150,000 MMK). Some migrants did not have income before out-migration. Therefore, income from migrated areas was higher than the native areas (Table 4).

**Impact of migration on agricultural labor problem and crop production**

Generally, farming in Myanmar is small scale and labor intensive. Labor migration creates labor shortages in the crop production which, in turn, high wages and decrease crop yields, particularly during the peak season are happened (Amina Maharjan &Theingi Myint, 2015). These will affect labor shortage in their crop production and face the problem in accessing hired labor. Furthermore, migrant farm households need more agricultural laborer in farm activities to compensate their loss of family labor. Among 92 sample migrants, 87% households faced the problem in accessing hired labor while only 13% households didn't have this problem. Labor management problem were unavailability of hire labor in time (37%), high labor wage (21%), advanced cash payment in hiring labor (19%), alternative use of machinery (13%), delay farming activities (7%) and using the help of neighbors as family labor (3%). Therefore, these labor shortage prob-

lems affect on difficulties of crop cultivation and poor crop yield (Figure 12).

### Conclusion and policy implication

Migration is an important livelihood strategy to increase income and employment security especially in rural areas where the employment opportunities are limited. Understanding the migration characteristics and patterns are very useful information for planning and management of rural development and economics to a developing country like Myanmar. According to the study area, it can be seen that there is a relatively large percentage of internal migration to urban areas than international migration. In this study temporary migration (55%), seasonal migration (30%) and permanent migration (15%) were commonly found. The earning capacity was much higher in international migration compared to internal migration. Internal migration was mostly a survival and investment strategy for their living condition rather than wealth accumulation. Based on the findings, the age of migrants varied from 14 to 60 years old including students and workers. Summarizing the push factors of rural out-migration, the determinants of migration were mostly associated with declining opportunities in agriculture due to low agricultural productivity, low employment opportunities of non-farm sectors in original local areas. The pull factors for out-migration to other places were better economic and employment opportunities, high income and better living standard.

Examining the impact of migration, the original resident areas faced the labor shortage problem in their farming especially during peak season. More elder people, female and children had to participate in the farm activities to compensate the loss of family labor already migrated to another places. High labor cost, labor unavailability in time, unskillful female and child labor were unavoided important causes of low productivity due to labor migration problem. It was needed to use more hired male labor with high wage from other outside places.

Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are made to help in improving agricultural development. For labor shortage problem, the policies should be targeted to-

wards coping strategies of labor saving technologies which include use of proper machinery, pesticides and weedicide, etc. Furthermore, government should establish small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in the rural areas that will provide jobs opportunities for the youths in economic activities. In addition, educational and vocational institutions should be established to facilitate skill building of rural youths that will make them employable in the SMEs.

### References

- LIFT/World Bank. 2014. Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring (QSEM) Summary of Round Four Report.
- MAharjan, A. & Theingi Myint. 2015. Internal Labor Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and Southeast of Myanmar, HELVET-AS Swiss Intercooperation Myanmar.
- Ministry of Immigration and Population. 2014. Myanmar Population and Housing Census. Census report volume II.
- Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MOLES). 2012. Country brief: Unemployment Insurance of Myanmar. Available at: [www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ResourceDownload.action?ResourceId=34371](http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ResourceDownload.action?ResourceId=34371) [12 Sep. 2014]
- Township General Administrative Office. 2014. Maubin Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region, Myanmar.
- World Bank. 2008. World development report 2008: Agriculture for development: World Bank.