

**Rural Urban Migration in Ayeyarwady Region:
A Case Study of Ah Mar Sub-township, Phyapon District**

ABSTRACT

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The paper stresses migration caused by ineffective rural economy within Ah Mar Sub-township that is located in coastal area of Ayeyarwady Region. Objectives of the paper are to examine causes of migration in the area, to find out consequences of migration and to explore the means that can reduce depopulation of the area. Migration especially permanent migration and chain migration were distinct. Rural economy, low health care, less education facilities are major push factors that influence the migration of the area. Rural economic activities, such as agriculture, making thatch and fishing are ineffective and give low income. These economic activities are seasonal works and they do not get regular income. On the other hand, major pull factors of urban area are higher and regular income, better environment and job opportunities. In order to get regular income, they move to urban areas and abroad because most young adults are jobless after harvesting season. As a consequence, labour shortage problem and high labour cost become distinct and these, in turn, affect agriculture, major economy of the area.

Key Words: push factors, rural economy, agriculture, making thatch, fishing, pull factors, impacts.

INTRODUCTION

By increasing the demand for labour in urban areas, rural urban migration occurs (Roberts, 2001). Rural urban migration is a distinct phenomenon in Myanmar, like other developing countries. Most young adults who live in rural area move to urban areas for the purpose of getting better income and higher living standard.

Ah Mar Sub-township is located in Ayeyarwady Region known as Myanmar Granary and major economic activity is agriculture. As the study area is located in coastal area, and salt water intrusion that causes crop loss is a major problem. Although agriculture is major economy, labour shortage is distinctly found and labour cost increases because of migration. Role of labour is important in agriculture because it is necessary to plant and harvest crops in time. Fishing and

making thatch are also other economic activities of the area. But, these are also seasonal works and it gives insufficient income to local people. Therefore, rural economy which gives low income is a main cause that affects movement of people from rural areas to urban areas.

There are five types of movements, on the assumption that they represent possible patterns: rural-urban migration; seasonal movement; unskilled labor in search of employment opportunities; the "brain drain" phenomenon, and the creation of refugees (Choucri, N, 1978). In the area, rural-urban migration; seasonal movement and unskilled labor in search of employment opportunities are mainly found.

Second cause of migration is related to education. To get higher educational opportunities, most local people let their children to go to urban area to get higher educational opportunities. Most migrants are teenagers and move to attend higher education class, such as high schools and universities. Movement related to health matter is third reason for migration. Some local residents move to urban area for the purpose of getting good health care. In the area, medical centers are far apart and number of medical staffs is low. Rural health assistant plays important role in health care of the area. But, migration related to economy of the area is distinct. Migration reduces the use of young adult labour in agriculture because the majority of migrants are male (Maharjan, A., et al, 2013). Therefore, the area encounters labour shortage problem and labour cost increases in agriculture.

Study Area

Ahmar Sub-township in Phyapon Township composed of 4 Wards and 9 Village Tracts. It has an area of 2.8 sq.km (691 acres) and total population was 126899 in which male was 63865 and female 63034 in 2014. Major economic activities are agriculture, fishing and making thatch. More than 70 % of the population engaged in agriculture and the rest in fishing and making thatch. Therefore, most people are poor.

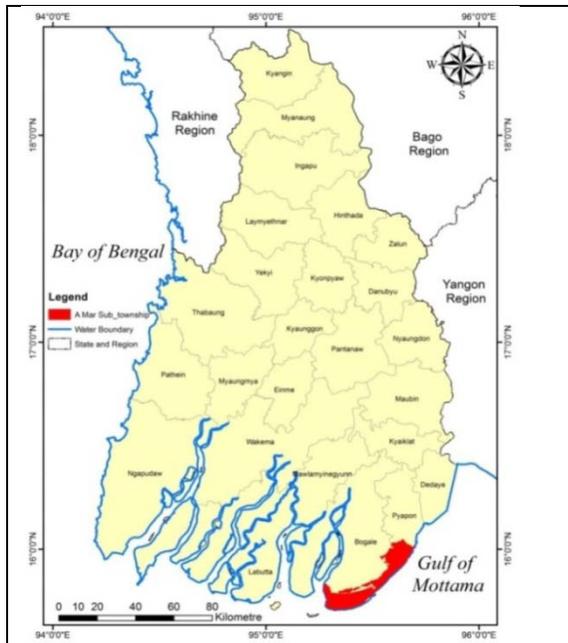


Figure 1: Location of Ahmar sub-Township in Ayeyarwady Region



Figure 2: Village Tracts of Ahmar sub-Township in Ayeyarwady Region

Data and Methods

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews to get thorough understanding on rural urban migration. Among 9 village tracts, 5 village tracts in which people engaged in agriculture, fishing and making thatch were selected to collect primary data to understand major driving force causing migration. Primary data such as family income, jobs, education, health, migration etc. were mainly collected and socio-economic and demographic questions that affect migration were also selected to illustrate causes, consequences and pattern of migration. Secondary data were also applied.

Descriptive method and quantitative- qualitative mixed method are mainly applied in this research.

Results and Findings

In the study area, rural economy including agriculture, fishing and making thatch, is a key factor that mainly affects migration. Other factors affecting migration include education, health issue, and etc.

Major economy of the area is agriculture and local people depend on agriculture. But, agriculture gives low income to the local people due to high loss caused by salt water intrusion. Income obtained from agriculture is insufficient for their cost of living, they have no variable alternatives to get income for their survival and they are in the vicious debt cycle.

Household migration can be divided into two categories: Split migration and family migration. Split migration occurs when the head of the household moves from a rural to an urban area. Family migration occurs when the entire family moves together at the same time to urban areas (McCatty, 2004). In the study area, one or more family members move to other places to get better income and split migration is found.

According to interviews, 48 percent of the families have one or more migrants. In the study area, jobs related migration is common. According to interviews, 60 % of the migrants are related to job opportunities and they move to other place to get higher income. Job related movement is distinct and young adults have moved to urban area of Phyapon Township, Hlaingtharyar Township in Yangon Region and abroad to get regular income and better life. These migrants work as labors in textile industries, construction work and trading activities and send back their salary to their parents.

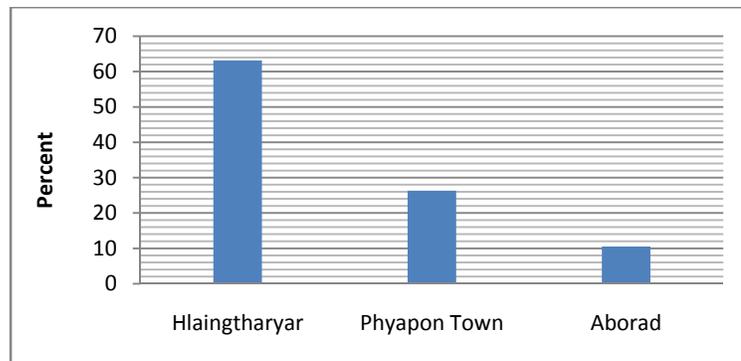


Figure 3: Work Places of Migrants

Source: Interviews (2015)

Figure 3 shows work places of migrants moved from Ahmar Sub-township. Directional bias is distinctly found. Although the Phyapon Town is nearer than Hlaingtharyar Township, most migrants move to Hlaingtharyar Township due to job opportunities.

In many countries, rural areas supply the manual labor needed in many industries. Rural laborers generally have little education and are relegated to low paying jobs (McCatty, 2004). Although education status of the person who moved to urban area to get regular and better

income ranged from monastic education to graduate level, most migrants are of high school level.

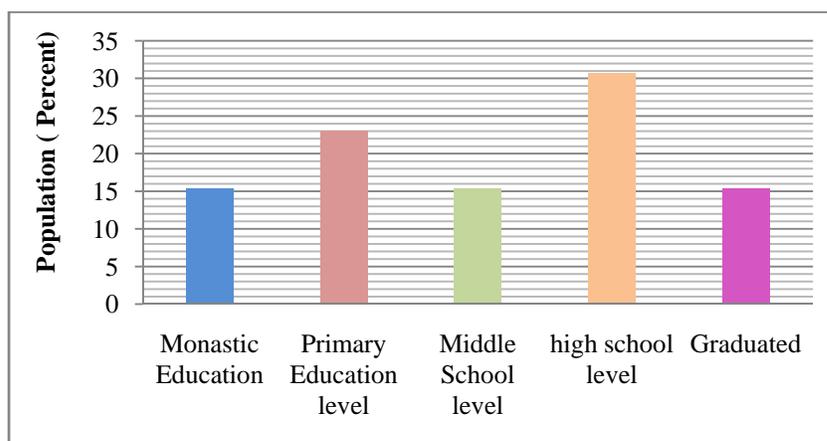


Figure 4: Education level of Migrants

Source: Interviews (2015)

Seventy percent of the family have desire to send their children to urban areas to get better income and better education. 90 % of the family wants to abandon farming but they do not have other alternative jobs for survival.

Push factors

Economic, educational and health factors are push factors that affect the migration of the area. Among them, ineffective rural economy is a major factor that forces the local people to make a move.

Rural Economy

There is a strong link between low economic growth and migration. In the area, three major economic activities: agriculture especially paddy cultivation, fishing and making thatch are found in the area.

Agriculture

Agriculture is always associated with natural risks. The poor farmers, especially in developing countries are most vulnerable to these risks. In the study area, the majority of the poor are engaged in agriculture. Risk in agriculture is mainly related to salt water intrusion.

Although paddy is a major crop in the area, paddy cultivated area decreased due to crop loss caused by salt water intrusion. As salt water intrudes into the paddy field when the ears of the paddy begin to appear and it causes grain loss in paddy cultivation. According to questionnaire's results, 88 percent of the farmers cultivate paddy and 62 percent of the paddy

cultivars said, they reduce their paddy cultivated area and left some paddy land as fallow land due to salt intrusion, crop loss and low benefit.

The potential yield of rice varieties in Myanmar is about 6 tons per ha (120 baskets per acre), but farmers in study area can only produce around 3.5 tons per ha (70 baskets per acre) (Than Htike Oo and Myo Myo, 2009). In the area, according to interviews, actual average productivity of paddy is about 1 tons per ha (20 basket per acre). It is mainly caused by salt water intrusion. Low agricultural productivity is one of the factors that causing migration.

Land preparation for paddy cultivation is done in March, April and May. Then, the land is ploughed in June and July. They collect the organic waste and bring them to their fields. Then they fire paddy stalks and organic waste for the purpose of increasing fertility. When the monsoon sets in, plowing is done by using cows and buffalo only. Farmers in the area do not use agricultural machinery because of less investment. In August, paddy seeds are broadcasted in the fields. They use only broadcasting method in paddy cultivation due to high labour cost caused by migration. Some farmers add fertilizers and pesticides into paddy field but most farmers cannot afford to buy fertilizers and pesticides due to high price and they do not use input in paddy cultivation. The ears of the paddy begin to appear in November. At that time, rainfall decreases in November and salt water intrudes into the paddy field. Then paddy plants become wilted and most paddy plants die. Therefore, yield is low and low yield gives insufficient income which causes migration.

Fishing

As the study area is located near the streams, fishing is also found in the area. The first contract is formally permitted by government and the second one is allowed by the first contract. The first contract must pay about 10,000,000 Kyats (8,000 \$) to the government to get permission on fishing in the whole area and second contract about 2,500,000 Kyats (2000 \$) to the first contract for getting a permission to catch fishes along the stream. The second contract has a permission to fish along a stream. Under the second contract, there are many small contracts that are allowed by second contract for fishing at an area. The individual fisherman has to take permission from these groups to fish in the stream allowed. According to interviews, fishes are caught the whole year but amount of fish-catch is higher in July in August. Although the amount of fish-catch is higher in the period, price falls due to higher supply and local people get low income. Therefore, the young adults of the fishermen's members move to other areas to

get regular income. Average income of a fisherman is about more than 3000 Kyats per day (>3\$).



Plate 1:Laid down the fishing net along the streams(20.6.15)



Plate 2: fishing along the streams (20.6.15)



Plate 3 : Selection fish on the boat
(20.6.15)



Plate 4 : Selection fish at depot
(20.6.15)

Making Thatch

As the study area is located near the coastal area, there are large areas of Nippa land. Most farmers depend on the Nippa land on their economy by making thatch. Leaves of thatch are cut twice per year: November and April. The leaves cut in November are known as summer leaves which are old and in April as the rainy season leaves which are young. The rainy season leaves are not as much expensive as thatch cut in November due to young leaves.

In the area, two types of making thatch are found. Some families buy a pack of raw material (Nippa leaves) of thatch roof and make them into thatch at home. These families make

thatches by using family members and they get average income of about 3000 Kyats(> 3\$) per day.

Some persons go to the thatch depot and work as daily wage earners. According to interview, a man or woman can earn about 1500 Kyats(about 1\$)per day by working at depot. Thatches are sent to Yangon by boats. Making thatch is also a seasonal work and local people do not have regular income.



Plate 5 : Nippa plant along the streams
(24.4.15)



Plate 6 : Nippa leaves (Tebinseik Village)
(24.4.15)



Plate 7 : Making thatch by family members
(24.4.15)



Plate 8: Transport to Yangon by boat(24.4.15)

In Ahmar Sub-Township, labour wage is about 3000 Kyats /day (>2\$ per day). But, people in the area do not have regular income. In agriculture, labour is needed only in planting and harvesting period. Most works in agriculture is done by family members. Making thatch is done twice per year; first time in December and January and second time in May and June. People do not get income from thatch making in remaining months.

Pull Factors

Major pull factor of the urban area is regular income and other pull factors are better living standard, higher job choice, greater recreational activities and better environment. Most migrants move to Hlaingtharyar Township in Yangon Region. Hlaingtharyar Township is located in North Yangon District and more than 600 factories are found in this industrial zone. It attracts migrant workers from rural areas. Hlaingtharyar is about 70 miles (112 kilometers) away from Phyapon District and it takes about 4 hours only. It is also a pull factor that attracts migrants from AhmarSub-township.

Impacts of Migration

The 'impact' of migration depends on the numbers involved, the duration of absence, the effect of both absence and possible return (Lipton, 1980). In the study area, most migrants do not usually return and impacts of migration are distinct in agriculture. According to interviews, permanent and chain migration is mainly found. Some young adults moved to urban areas of Phyapon and Yangon and they got married. Then, they settle in these areas. Therefore, permanent migration is found. Some moved to urban area look for jobs for the relatives and their younger. After that, young adults lived in the study area moved to the places where the relatives and the elders live and chain migration occurs.

In AmarSub-Township, according to interviews, most young adults moved to other urban areas and the number of adults is low. Therefore, labour shortage is resulted in and labour cost is high. Average labour cost is 90000Kyats or 100,000 Kyats (70 \$ or 80 \$) per month and it is also difficult to get labour. Labour charges have to be paid in advance before planting and harvesting time due to labour shortage. These problems affect agriculture because agricultural works such as planting, harvesting have to be done in time to prevent from untimely rain.

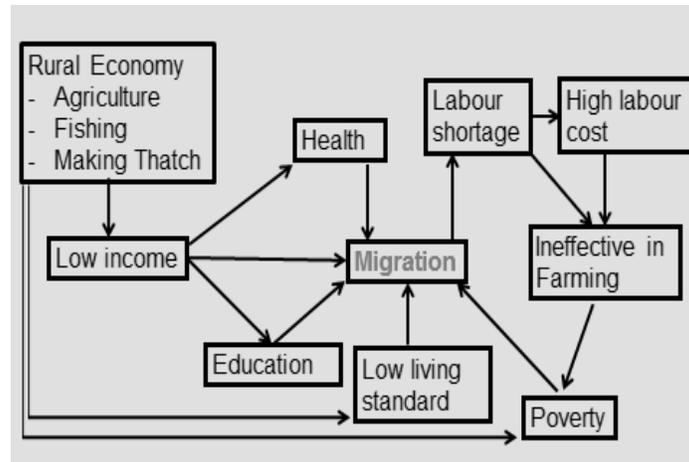


Figure: Causes and impacts of migration

Conclusion

Ah Mar Sub-township is located in coastal area of Myanmar. Migration is distinct in the area and economic, educational and health reasons play important role in migration. Although there are 3 major reasons, economic reason is most important and is a major push factor. Ineffective rural economic activities are agriculture, fishing and making thatch. These are seasonal work and local people engaged in agriculture encounter crop loss caused by salt water intrusion. Therefore, according to interviews, one or more family member of the most families moves to urban area to get regular income. Some migrants got married in the urban areas and permanent migration occurred. In the rural area, rural depopulation, labour shortage and high labour cost become distinct. Much labour force is needed in agriculture to harvest the crops in time because irregular and untimely rain causes crop loss which affects low yield and low return. It is necessary to build large embankment (Tar) to protect salt water intrusion for the purpose of getting higher income and reducing the number of migrants from the area. Moreover, it is necessary to open vocational schools for the school dropouts in the area to keep labour force, to establish small and medium scale enterprises in which job opportunities should be created for those who complete vocational trainings and to protect the area from rural depopulation.

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