

Taikichiro Mori Memorial Research Grants Report

Project Name

The Obstacles of Myanmar Migrant Workers Before and After
Migration to China

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The Obstacles of Myanmar Migrant Workers Before and After Migration to China

I. Background

2009 UNDP report expressed that ‘the movement has a great potential for human development.’ It also mentioned that all persons who migrate are motivated by the perspectives to improve their access to jobs, education, civil and political rights, security and health’ and the most migrants ‘end up enjoying better conditions’ compared to their place of origin because people try to find the ways of their development in everywhere. For that reason, migration is at the heart of early sociological concerns and the word of migration is very popular and interesting among the world wide environment In present, global economic crisis continues to threaten the economic well – being of millions: climate changes pose the potential for large scale displacement within countries and across international border.

According to the geographical situation, Myanmar has a long border area with their neighboring countries and among them, China is sharing a longest border of about 2,185 km and both have the same religious faith, cultures and manners. For this reason, most Myanmar workers have migrated to China but there has no records about how many Myanmar migrant workers in China soil from past to present time. China and Myanmar have not only the same religious and cultures, but also the similar tradition and manners too. Among the world China which has large area and populations, is developed and developing in economic.

China is steady and continuous economic enlargement, employment opening opportunity and higher wages than the developing origin country Myanmar. Recent years have seen a number of encouraging developments in this regard in Myanmar even though significant progress has been made both in keeping migrants safe and in providing support for victims of migration. Because of those perspectives and people’s challenging and impressed perspectives to China, most of the Myanmar different Ethnic peoples are economic migrants

those who go through from border illegally to China by seeking a better life, or sojourners hoping to send remittance home. Myanmar migrants are employed in agricultural, manufacturing, construction and domestic service sectors in China.

From past decade to till now, Myanmar migrants face major different needs and physical risk, poor wages, high working hours, lack of education, lack of rights, less health and insecure safety systems especially in rural border areas of China. With increasing numbers of people on the move, not only migrants' rights and security is lack but also surviving in China is not easy and smooth before they expected. Especially, most of the Myanmar migrants are ethnically diverse groups and are unable to communicate in a common language among themselves or with China nationals. Myanmar migrants are leaving from the origin country because of the personal development, upgrading the standard of living and family survival problems and at China they face lower pay, longer hours or worse conditions than they considered about the suitable and relevant jobs. Moreover, there had a few researchers who observed about the Myanmar Migration to China and so I am interested to observe in this topic Myanmar workers' migration to China.

Migration

Migrants have different points of view for migration. But all persons who migrate are motivated by these perspectives to improve their access to jobs, education, civil and political rights, security and health and most migrants end up enjoying better conditions compared to their place of origin than the destination country (2009 UNDP report). Nigel Harris (1980) mentioned that the dynamic of international labour migration as a whole, showing how dispossessed peasants from poor countries are forced through poverty and lack of alternative to seek work in rich countries. After the Second World War, Switzerland and Germany tried to implement and perfect a *gastarbeiter* model of rotating labour. Employers retained good workers, migrants organized themselves to advance their human rights and long-term

settlement took place, particularly in Germany. The end of labour recruitment in Europe was closely matched by the beginning of extensive recruitment of Arab and Asian workers in the Gulf States.

Migration flows usually start with a few pioneers who cover the way and then assist the arrival of others, until finally establishing communities. Social networks, therefore, are an important mechanism that facilitates self-sustaining migration flows. According to the record, there are 954 millions of persons to migrate worldwide and more than three-quarters of world migration takes place domestically (77.5%) and only 22.5% takes place internationally, reaching 214 million persons. This only represents 3% of the world population. Half of international migrants only migrate regionally, while 40% do so within neighboring nations. For both countries of origin and destination, it is important to show up the contribution of migrants, both regular and irregular. Particularly, migrant participation in key growth sectors such as agriculture, construction and services, contributes significantly to the welfare of the population.

Why migration

Nowadays, most parts of the world face economic crisis because some developed countries faced war, some developed and undeveloped countries faced natural disasters' effects and some neighboring countries faced weather changes. This Global economic crisis continues to threaten the economic well – being of millions: climate changes poses the potential for large scale displacement within countries and across international border; and criminalization of migrants, militarization for borders and attacks against immigrants threaten the human and physical security of migrants. Migration processes are often deeply related to geography and history context but eventually they establish migrant communities and begin to operate the social networks and multiple connections between countries of origin and destination. Migrate was taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of "personal

convenience" and without intervention of an external compelling factor; it therefore applied to persons, and family members, moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their family.

Myanmar migrants' migration to China

According to the 2011 World Bank report, the Net migration in Myanmar was last reported at -500000.00 in 2010. Net migration is the net total of migrants during the period, that is, the total number of immigrants less the annual number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens. That data are five-year estimates. To receive estimates of net migration, the United Nations Population Division takes into account the past migration history of a country or area, the migration policy of a country, and the influx of refugees in recent periods. The data to calculate these official estimates come from a variety of sources, including border statistics, administrative records, surveys, and censuses. When no official estimates can be made because of insufficient data, net migration is derived through the balance equation, which is the difference between overall population growth and the natural increase during the 1990-2000 periods and Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in the Southeast Asia. Years of stagnation, mismanagement and isolation has left the economy in a very bad condition but actually Myanmar is rich in natural resources and has strong agricultural base (rice covers about 60% of the country's total cultivated land area). It also has enormous timber, natural gas, and fishery reserves and is a leading source of gems (rubies) and jade. However, the main reason of the economic problem and rare work opportunities, they decided to migrate to not only China but also to other neighbouring countries too.

Human rights and human security

Nowadays, human rights and human security are essential and important needs for every people because of economic crisis, war, and climate changes threaten. In the context of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and

Members of their Families, we urge governments to Ratify and implement this important instrument. As due to their irregular status, migrant workers are at great hazard of working in insecure environments, holding dangerous jobs, working extra hours, being exploited, and receiving wages below the minimum. No one is perfect and always face a problem but need to survive with fair – education, language, illegal living status, social right and security. Health is also a key determinant for the empowerment of human beings, and the protection of them at all stages of the migration life cycle.

Human security not only protects, but also empowers people and societies as a means of security. People contribute by identifying and implementing solutions to insecurity. Human security is people-centered and focus shifts to protecting individuals. The important dimensions are to entail the well-being of individuals and respond to ordinary people's needs in dealing with sources of threats.

Human development is the opening out of people's freedom to live their lives as they choose. It includes opportunities for human growth which is including access to decent work at home and abroad, health care, education, security and full of development. From my point of view, migrant workers should have access to social security benefits, health care and legal remedies and mechanisms for enforcing rights because legal or illegal migrants make contributions society and the economy but get little in return – for example, they are not eligible for social benefits or pensions or so on. When migrants do not fully benefit from social security and rights, end of service and/ or pension contributions, they may work informally, reducing their earnings and increasing their vulnerability.

II. Problems

For the reason that the political, social and economic problems Myanmar migrants went away from their homes illegally without recognizing what kind of job they will really find in their destination country. On the other hand, they were difficult to survive in China,

for the reason of limited education and language; Myanmar migrants faced a lot of problem too. After a few months, they didn't get money what they expected because of the deduction of others fees and China wanted to substitute low wages migrants instead of their place or other unsecured problems and their family whom they missed, they returned back from China to Myanmar again illegally again. In my paper, I would like to observe why Myanmar migrants were going away from the origin country, why did they come back from China. There has no exact record of the amount of migration in both countries, and from human perspective point of view, no partnership cooperation between these two countries for migrants' development, migrants' right and social security and human physical needs.

III. Fieldwork Objectives and questions

These main research objectives are

- To determine the reasons of why Myanmar migrants went to work in China and
- To establish why they came back to Myanmar after working in different places of China
- To define the consequences things of migration that happened to Myanmar migrant workers in both governments.

The research questions are

- 1) What were Myanmar Migrants' obstacles before migration to China?
- 2) Why did Myanmar migrants come back to Myanmar from China?
- 3) What kind of others consequences will happen to migrant workers and both governments?
- 4) How both Myanmar and China governments can supports to reduce these migrants' obstacles/ problems?

IV. Expected Results

Myanmar migrants uttered a lot of problem in Myanmar and when they migrated to China with high expectations. When they arrived at China, they received high working hours with

low payment with human rights and human security what they didn't expect. Later China didn't want them, they returned back to the origin country and they started from the beginning level in work. Both countries had such a kind of problem and I would like to find more information about their problems in the origin and the destination countries. They faced such a kind of problems in both countries most of the migrants circulate but there are increasing numbers of people on the move, not only migrants' rights and security is lack but also surviving in China is not easy and smooth before they expected. For doing this fieldwork and understanding the problems of Myanmar migrant workers before and after migration at China and would be vitally important in the use for the process of analyzing why they never end up as cyclical migrants who go home and out until they are too old to work abroad. I want to expect the wonderful material resources to solve migrant's needs and problems that require extensive commitment by both sending and receiving governments so there should be as similar as possible across countries to reduce the rate of migration gap between the richer country and poor country. These findings support and help to make the rules and regulation of the Myanmar migrants' right and security. Moreover, I feel confidence that my finding data and acknowledge would be useful and effective for not only my master's study but also in human rights and security aspects of all migrants.

V. Fieldwork Activity Plan

Time : 24 August to 23 September 2011 (28days)

August : In depth interviews and discussions with 5 groups of migrant workers (each and group contains around 3-5 workers) from various types of job.

September : In depth interviews with at least 5 employers from various types;
 : In depth interviews with 2 people from the national level (Project Coordinators and Director of Social Service of International Organization for Migration (IOM) who are assisting migrant workers;

September : In vigor interviews and discussions with at least 6 returnee migrants who were recently force to come back;

: In vigor interviews with local government officials (line ministries including Ministry of Labor, Home Ministry and Ministry of Immigration and so on)

: Gathering updated-government policies related with migrant workers.

Fieldwork location

My fieldwork interview will be conducted in various different types of jobs such farms, factories, garment industries and provinces near China and Myanmar.

Vacation and observing the different places (villages) of Lashio district and Muse district of Shan State at Myanmar (See Annex1). In these areas, I went and interviewed with Myanmar migrants who came back from China and are now living in their own native with their family. Why I chose these areas is the majority of Myanmar migrant workers went to across China because of the closet places from China border area . The next reason is most of them are ethnic people and in that villages are not still developed area from different perspective such as economy, social, education and so on. Last reason is in those area are very difficult to communicate about their ethnic language and difficult to go there without guide because of unsmooth transportation.

Target informants: Interview and discussion

(1) *Myanmar migrants*: All of Myanmar migrants (interviewees) in my study are illegal status in China. Deeply understanding various conditions of migrants from their own voices, and their basic needs and problems will be my most important approach of this research.

(2) *Central and local government officials*: Access to policies in aspect of encouraging and protection workers are necessary and need, so far I expect to interviews with those officials for gaining the long term strategic plan for human development in this sector.

(3) *NGOs*: A few NGOs have been assisting migrant in taking their problems through legal

ways and can be got and sharing of their views, feelings and incidents.

VI. The Actual Fieldwork

Actual Activities

Observation, descriptive, quantitative and qualitative studies were employed for this assessment with the following methodologies.

(I) In interviews with selected main informants from government and non government agencies at both national and local levels. Nine key informants were interviewed: three at the national level (Assistant Director from Immigration Ministry, Home Ministry and Director from Ministry of Foreign Affairs): Two at the national level (Project Coordinators and Director of Social Service of International Organization for Migration (IOM), and four at the provincial level of different ministries. The list below is an example of matters collected during the in - depth interviews:

- Feelings toward migrants,
- Perceptions about the problems of migrant workers in China and Myanmar sides,
- Their background history and their living status in China
- Their evaluation and willingness things about the Migration to China

Institutions Visited

(1) *Interview and Discussion with Project Coordinator and Director of International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Myanmar.*

It currently runs mobile and migrants' problem in every country borders. It also supports and helps on a range of other issues, including community development, child protection, education, health, micro-enterprise, human rights and human security.

(2) *Interviewed with Assistant Director of Home Ministry, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar*

During my fieldwork, I had a chance to meet an Immigration officer who is dealing with migrants' current problems.

(3) Interviewed with Assistant Director of Immigration Ministry, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

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(4) Interviewed with Director from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Myanmar has been handling migrants' matters and also counterpart of Thailand Labour Ministry. They had mutual frame work between Myanmar and Thailand but no framework or law between Myanmar and China.

(5.) The number of migrants who participated in focus group discussion sessions in each site:

Field site	Time	Place	Methods	respondents
1	September,2011	Lashio district, Shan state	In-depth interview	8
2	September, 2011	Naung Cho sub-district,Lashio District Shan state	In-depth interview	9
3	September, 2011	Man Su sub-district, Mai Eai sub-district, Lashio District, Shan state	In-depth interview	8
4	September,2011	Muse district, Shan state	In-depth interview	12

The following issues were conversed:

- Background history of the Myanmar migrants and education status
- Working and living conditions of migrants in Myanmar,
- The reasons of migration

- Discussing how to migrate to China
- Working and living conditions of migrants in China
- Salary or income and financial condition in China
- Participants' length of stay in China and their future plans,
- Staying status in China
- Other getting beneficial things such as (supporting education, social, health system)
- Participants' experience with different kinds of problems, their coping mechanisms and behaviours,
- Their perspective of opinion which is concerning with migration upon China

VII. Information Gathered

The main point group interviewing with migrants were conducted in the four study locations. One focus group discussion session was conducted in each studied place especially all are unregistered and illegal migrants. Employers, who are working with migrants was arranged to facilitate coordination at each site. The authorized persons engaged Myanmar migrants from different villages according to the criteria planned by the researcher, i.e. including illegal and unregistered migrants, gender, those who had experienced and returned back from China and now staying in Shan state. The meetings took place in each sub district. The interviews were made easy by migrants, and a Shan native who is currently working in Home Ministry helped to translate for my interview.

VIII. Fieldwork Findings

Problem Findings, three categories: from the Myanmar migrants' problems from Myanmar side, the problems from China side and Myanmar migrants' needs in origin country and destination country

(1) Myanmar migrants' problem in Myanmar

There is an important relationship between political, social, education, health and

economic in every country. Because of the political conflicting, economy falling down, low level of education system and social relationship which drive down people's incomes and the general poverty of the country which affected Myanmar's people general poor quality, especially in the country areas, are only just managing to increase the downward pressure on people's in-comes to the point where the household economy falls down and survival is threatened. The situations also consist of such as forced labour, land confiscation, arbitrary taxation, and compulsory, non-viable cropping in the case of farmers because of the natural disasters which concern the poorer families in a community. These things base and family incomes are driven down into crisis point. Among these families, some of the young people want to challenge and observe to work in different developing places which have impressed living standard and high technology than undeveloped country. At this point, leaving home appears to be the best or only option. Generally, Myanmar people with its extensive poverty, rising price increases and declining real incomes, an already uncertain situation is made seriously by the coercive measures encouraged to migrate to rich country which has more job opportunity and higher salary than the origin. In this way, migration process occurs.

(2) Myanmar migrants' problem in China

After interview, I have known that migrants migrated to China without much enrollment assistance because they were aware that the migrants was responsible to pay the registration fees who did border passes, which permit for only a short stay in specific areas. Furthermore in China side, they did not give Myanmar migrants to official stay but they stayed in China with the permission of their own but illegal registration that has disadvantages of long-term problems. Female should be registered than male in migration process because they need security in destination country especially for preventing crime events. Lacking registration process that Myanmar migrants' do not get a system of health support and welfare support; it cannot assist greatly in reducing corruption and cannot provide a more secure environment

for a greater number of people. Other problems are lower salary and higher wages than their citizens and they didn't get feeding fees and didn't get the chance of health security from that country too. The worst thing is they don't get a chance to attend for their further educational course for human development in China.

Though they got low cost with high wage hours, they didn't get other benefits of their rights. They lived in poor, unsecured places and nothing facilities for their securities. Another point is migrants were not being provided social benefits and they could not create or integrate in social or political movements to advance their rights because they have a different culture, religion, language or color. For this main reason they are rare of chances, highly restrictive work or visa conditions. Some employers feared that if migrants have legally status they have entitled to ask for their rights or more salary. After working and returning back to the origin country, they did get some extra money which they expected before coming to China. During working in China, they didn't get their personal development and other progresses and later China didn't want them, they came back bare hands.

(3) Myanmar migrants' needs in both countries

When they were back from China, they started their lives from the beginning but they have opportunity to live with their family. When they face low cost with a big family in Myanmar again, these physical needs and family encouragement they high return migration programs which have better conditions and chances for them and their family. In the way, most of Myanmar migrants' lives are end of the migration cycle.

IX. Conclusion

My paper is descriptive and qualitative research. Because of the political, social and economic problems Myanmar migrants go away from their homes for the reasons of low demanding of money, low and poor standard of living, family survival and challenging mind, Myanmar migrants go away from their homes illegally without recognizing what kind of job

they will really find in their destination country. On the other hand, they were difficult to survive in China, for the reason of limited education and language, illegal migration, culture and tradition differences, staying in insecure environment at poor accommodation, with no insurance, high working hours, low wages, and no social security rights. After a few months they didn't get money what they expected because of the deduction of others fees and China wanted to substitute low wages migrants instead of their place or other unsecure problems and their family whom they missed, they returned back from China to Myanmar again. After living a few months in Myanmar, their experience has shown and encouraged them to return the circular migration programs which have better conditions for maintaining family links and family supporting. In this way, Myanmar migrants' lives are end of the migration cycle. But circularity is often forced by restrictive migration policies, which can lead to more irregular migration, which in turn restricts the mobility of the migrants, including their ability to return home. Wherever Myanmar migrants are survival for their lives, all people must need human right and security in their society because the human empowerment and protection at all stages of the migration life cycle are needed. To solve the migration physical needs problems, the origin and the destination country should try to find joint solutions that benefit the economy and society in balanced ways in both countries. By cooperation with bilateral partnerships that tend to be the most common form of cooperation between countries of origin and destination in creating regular and protected migration.

After interview with migrant I have known about migrants' views, problems and ideas will be supporting, encouraging and improving their standard of living in both origin and destination countries. For another reason, there is no NGO (non-government organization) between the China & Myanmar borders which is essential and needed for Myanmar migrants' in need of it. And moreover, both countries can work with partnership cooperation to build and make the rules and regulation for Migrants. Establishing human

rights and regulation for security, each country needs to be applied without distinction and without discrimination against irregular migrants. Although the human perspective is important, as are the economic and political ones, to understand how imbalances in international labor markets can negatively impact human development; while the realities of origin and destination countries should be taken into account. Due to their irregular status, migrant workers are at great risk of working in insecure environments, holding dangerous jobs, working extra hours, being exploited, and receiving wages below the minimum.

In conclusion, migration and development can focus on economic development, but it can also focus on capacity building and migration partnerships. Exchanging knowledge between origin and destination countries could increase mutual understanding about the different aspects of the problem and also help countries improve their legal system, border control, migration services, administrative procedures and how to address the problems of internal displaced persons (IDP's). Nowadays, GFMD addresses key issues and strategies to reduce the costs of migration to migrants and maximize the human development of migrant men and women in the context of cross-border labor mobility. So for humanizing and developing the Migrants' right and security, we need to invite both the origin and the destination countries, non-governmental organization and all migrants who should take part in this social activity.

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Annex 1

Research Location Site Map at the Shan State of Myanmar

