

A COUNTRY ON THE MOVE:

Domestic Migration
in Two Regions of
Myanmar

2016

A Qualitative Social and
Economic Monitoring
(QSEM) thematic study

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
	INTRODUCTION	13
	Research Questions	15
	Methodology	16
	Limitations	18
	Terminology	19
	A SNAPSHOT OF MIGRATION IN MAGWAY & AYEYARWADY	20
	Who Migrates? Age, Education, Gender	22
	Where Do People Migrate and What Do They Do?	25
	MIGRATION TYPES	31
	Risk Management	33
	Upwardly Mobile	36
	Shock Response	39
	WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?	43
	Drivers for Migration	45
	Earning Differentials	46
	Job Availability in Sending Areas	46
	Gaps in Working Conditions and Lifestyle	48
	Constraints to Migrating	49
	Financial Cost	49
	Safety	50
	Social Costs	52
	Enabling Factors	54
	Social Networks	54
	Transportation	59
	Communication Technology	59
	Modeling the Migration Decision	61
	Significant Factors Driving Migration in Magway & Ayeyarwady	61
	Evaluating the Migration Decision for Livelihoods Groups	62
	Significant Factors Driving Migration Across Livelihood Groups	64
	Summary: Why do People Migrate?	66
	THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN SENDING VILLAGES	69
	Economic Effects on Sending Households	70
	Social Effects on Sending Households	72
	Economic Effects on Sending Communities	76
	Social Effects on Sending Communities	78
	FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	83
	Findings	83
	Recommendations	86
	REFERENCES	94
	ANNEXES	96

FIGURES & TABLES	Figure 1. Households with Family Members Currently Living Away from Home by Region	20
	Figure 2. Percentage of Households with a Current or Returned Migrant by Year of Departure	21
	Figure 3. Reasons for Migrating	22
	Figure 4. Composition of Migrants According to Age and Gender	23
	Figure 5. Composition of Migrant and Non-Migrant Groups by Age, Gender and Schooling Completed	24
	Figure 6. Popular Jobs for Ayeyarwady and Magway in Destination Sites	26
	Figure 7. Main Migration Destinations from Magway and Ayeyarwady	27
	Figure 8. Employment in Destination Sites by Sector and Gender	28
	Figure 9. Migration Types	33
	Figure 10. Conceptual Framework for Migration Decisions	44
	Figure 11. Reasons for Decision to Migrate by Region as Reported by Sending Household	45
	Figure 12. Perceptions of Sending Area Households of the Reasons for Migration	47
	Figure 13. Perceptions of Primary Constraints to Migrating as Reported by Sending Households	50
	Figure 14. Cost of Financing Migration as Reported by Sending Households (MMK)	51
	Figure 15. Sources of Financing for Migration as Reported by Sending Households	53
	Figure 16. Primary Source of Job Information as Reported by Sending Households	55
	Figure 17. Type of Information Received Pre-Departure	57
	Figure 18. Primary Mode of Contact with Current Migrant as Reported by Sending Households	60
	Figure 19. Distribution of Households by Livelihoods Type	65
	Figure 20. Method of Remittances as Reported by Sending Households	71
	Figure 21. Primary and Secondary Use of Remittances	73
	Figure 22. Perceptions of Changes in Household Responsibilities as Reported by Sending Households	74
	Figure 23. Frequency of Contact Between Migrant and Sending Household	75
	Figure 24. Perceptions of Changing Responsibilities to Generate Income as Reported by Sending Households	76
	Figure 25. Perceptions of the Effects of Migration on the Ability to Find Casual Labor in Sending Areas	77
	Figure 26. Perceptions on the Effects of Migration on Work Opportunities in Sending Areas	78
	Figure 27. Perceptions of Engagement in Village Activities by Sending Households	79
	Table 1. Differentiated Interventions for Improving Migration Outcomes	88

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last four years Myanmar's economy has seen a slight shift away from agriculture toward industry and services. This may mark the beginning of a structural transformation away from a rural, agricultural economy toward a more urban, industrial and service-based economy. Urbanization and job creation in urban areas have the potential to have a significant impact on labor and mobility patterns, especially for the landless and land-poor workers that account for a large part of the rural workforce.

Domestic migration has been a critical component of the way many other countries in the region, including South Korea, China, and Vietnam, have managed to reduce poverty and support resilient livelihoods. However, pursuing these opportunities often entails significant risk for poor migrant households, who often have little capacity to absorb the shocks of failed migration attempts. Developing access to a knowledge base that enables them to manage risk more easily and make more informed choices around migration is critical to supporting their livelihoods. Migration flows can also have long-term social and economic consequences in rural areas as members of the labor force, particularly young people, move into cities and towns. This entails major public policy choices around areas such as spatial development, urbanization, service delivery, and poverty reduction. The government will need information on anticipated migrant flows in order to make the right policy choices and to plan for and provide services to people arriving from rural areas into urban settings.

Within this evolving context, understanding the motivations, patterns, and dynamics of existing migration practices is critical in order to assist balanced and inclusive development in Myanmar by supporting safe and informed migration. The primary objective of this study is to collect detailed evidence and provide an objective assessment of how, and to what extent, migration within and from particular regions of Myanmar affects the livelihoods of rural

Urbanization and job creation in urban areas have the potential to have a significant impact on labor and mobility patterns, especially for the landless and land-poor workers who account for a large part of the rural workforce.

households and the social and economic environment of villages. It seeks to understand how migration decisions take place, the key obstacles and risks faced by migrants, and the individual and household strategies that evolve to manage them. It also seeks to capture broader changes over time in sending communities, and how the departure and return of migrants affects social and economic dynamics at home and within the village. The analytical framework

is organized around four key questions: who migrates, why people choose to migrate, what their migration strategies are, and what the effects of migration are on the families and communities left behind.

The study focuses on the Ayeyarwady Region and the Magway Region of Myanmar, which are home to large numbers of Myanmar's rural poor and are also close to two of the major centers of growth and job creation in the country, Yangon and Mandalay respectively. In these areas, the study applies a mixed-methods approach to the four key questions outlined

Migration has increased significantly in recent years, especially since the beginning of Myanmar's economic transition.

above. Quantitative research was chiefly used to identify migrant profiles and migration patterns. Qualitative research focused in more depth on: 1) migration strategies; 2) the role of social networks; 3) the impacts of migration on the social fabric of sending areas; and 4) the impacts of migration on those left behind at the household level. The approach used for the quantitative analysis was based on a Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) household questionnaire, and included an expanded migration module that allowed a representative picture of overall migration patterns in Magway and Ayeyarwady. To ensure representative estimates for relevant indicators in both regions, 800 households per region were targeted, a total of 1,600 households. In addition to the descriptive statistics from the survey results, which illustrate general patterns of migration in Ayeyarwady and Magway, results from regression analysis also provide some insight into the key factors associated with decisions to migrate for different categories of the population in sending areas, defined in this study in terms of livelihood options.

Qualitative research was conducted in eight sending villages and four urban receiving areas. In each village, focus group discussions were held with village authorities, households of different socioeconomic groups, and male and female individuals who fit the profile of migrants but who had not yet migrated. Key informant interviews were also carried out with households that, at the time of the research, had a member migrating or returned migrants, and were identified as vulnerable.

Findings from the research, which was conducted in 2014–15, identify high levels of migration, with about one in four households in Ayeyarwady, and one in five in Magway, affected. Migration has increased significantly in recent years, especially since the beginning of Myanmar's economic transition in 2011. Migrants are generally young, predominantly male, and better educated than their peers. They tend to migrate in order to find jobs in urban areas, especially Yangon and Mandalay, where they mostly find work on the informal labor market: jobs in construction, restaurants and tea shops. A minority enjoy more formal employment in garment factories. Migrants gain access to these jobs primarily through social networks in their villages, rather than paid brokers.



Men are significantly more likely to migrate than women across both regions, with double the number of men migrating in Magway than women, and 60 percent of migrants from Ayeyarwady being men.

Migration patterns across both regions have some important similarities. In both regions, landless households are more likely to have family members migrating than the rest of the population. This reflects a lack of year-round income-generating opportunities for these households locally. It also indicates a dependence of small- and medium- landholding households on labor provided by family members. Men are significantly more likely to migrate than women across both regions, with double the number of men migrating in Magway than women, and 60 percent of migrants from Ayeyarwady being men. Women comprise at least one-third of all migrants in both regions.

There are also significant differences between the two regions. Migration in Ayeyarwady follows a more uniform geographic pattern: with 58 percent of migrants moving to Yangon, it is, by far, the primary location of choice. Migrants from Ayeyarwady are also generally younger when they leave their households and are more likely to have only primary- or lower-secondary-level education compared with migrants from Magway. People are less likely to migrate from Ayeyarwady unless they have confirmed guarantees of employment prior to making the decision. These guarantees usually occur through either a family member working in the city or relatives; these networks are seen as more reliable sources of information.

After identifying patterns of where people from Ayeyarwady and Magway migrate to and what they do there, the study addresses the question of why they choose to migrate. To do so it has identified a variety of factors that act as drivers for migration—differentials in earnings, job availability, and differences in working conditions and lifestyles. The study has also identified factors that act as constraints, namely safety and financial and social costs. Moderating the decision for each prospective migrant are enabling factors that can help to overcome the constraints; these include the relative accessibility of transportation to urban jobs, telecommunication technology, and most importantly social networks. Social networks serve many purposes: identifying job opportunities while in the village of origin; securing accommodation in destination sites; and lowering the psychological burden of moving into an unknown environment. The utility of social networks in these terms is particularly important in the context of rural Myanmar, where many households operate within subsistence constraints.

In addressing the question of why people choose to migrate, the study also examines the relative significance of these factors using a model that tests, via multivariate regression analysis and a set of control variables reflecting available assets (land, labor, education, and capital), the likelihood of households having a migrant. The model confirms that migrant households seeking to manage risk choose to migrate in order to create a diverse and potentially more reliable income stream. Regression analysis also demonstrates that the decision to migrate is inversely correlated with the availability of alternative income sources—households without access

to such income streams are more likely to migrate—confirming the idea that for many households migration is a coping mechanism to respond to the lack of regular income streams. In Ayeyarwady, households with greater diversity of income sources are less likely to migrate, indicating that they do not need to use migration as a risk-management tool. In Magway, small landholding households migrate at a lower rate than the landless, probably because of the fact that they have two income streams: their own agriculture or business, and the potential to supply casual labor.

Overall, findings from the study confirm that while patterns and motivations of migration in Myanmar are consistent with other internationally comparable cases, there are several notable points that are relevant for migration and development interactions. Firstly, although qualitative research finds that earning differentials between sending and destination locations are not substantial, the certainty and regularity of urban jobs is a significant incentive to migrate, especially for migrants seeking to manage risk. Secondly, social networks play a pre-eminent role in influencing decisions about migration, especially for risk management. The strength of social networks also varies significantly between villages and explains the substantial differences in migration levels from village to village. Thirdly, households exercise a high degree of caution in exploring migration opportunities. This is particularly true for small landholding households seeking to manage risk. Finally, the financial costs associated with migration for most groups are low, enabling people deciding to migrate predominantly to finance a move themselves or with financial support from their families.

The relative importance of these factors varies widely within and across the regions, along with people's motivations and strategies for migrating. We construct three illustrative migration types to analyze this variation: risk management, shock response, and upwardly mobile.

Risk Management: As noted, many households in the study sample face subsistence constraints: they find it difficult to secure basic daily needs and cope with shock. This is compounded by the risk and volatility inherent to rural agricultural livelihoods in Myanmar. Members of such households migrate to manage this risk by allocating household labor to urban jobs with a more predictable income. A large proportion, if not a majority, of migrants from Ayeyarwady and Magway fit this category. Indeed, qualitative evidence suggests that migration rates were increasingly high even though rural and urban wages did not differ significantly, indicating that people from such households are migrating primarily to manage risk. These people have little capacity to cope with a failed migration attempt. As a result of this, they migrate almost exclusively through existing social networks, through which they are able to secure jobs in advance. This helps to avoid risk, however they tend to remain in low-wage jobs and avoid making investments or taking risks that might make them better off in the long run.

Shock Response: Other households in our sample fit the subsistence constraint profile outlined above, but have already experienced significant adverse shock, which prevents them from being able to overcome these

constraints. Shocks include those at the household—such as health or injury issues, or crop damage—and at the community level, including weather shocks and, in our study, the residual effects of Cyclone Nargis in Ayeyarwady. These households are being “pushed” out of origin areas, citing an inability to meet subsistence needs because of the effects of shock.

Upwardly Mobile: On the other end of the spectrum of livelihood groups, the study identifies households that, through ownership of land or other assets, are defined as non-poor and seek to use migration for upward mobility. These households see migration as a chance to participate in Myanmar’s market economy and the emerging, mostly urban, opportunities that it is creating. Since they are seeking to use migration as a means of upward social and economic mobility, this study has categorized migration from these households as upwardly mobile. Upwardly mobile households are responding to opportunities by accessing a better formal education, which qualifies them to compete for skilled employment, and by international migration, which comes with higher upfront costs but higher financial returns in the form of better wages, to China, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea. Both

perceived as having implications on the local labor market; villages with higher migration rates report greater challenges in finding casual labor.

Using these migration types, the study identifies critical factors along the stages of migration that affect migration outcomes. These have been identified as: access to information about jobs and human capital endowments like education and vocational skills during the pre-migration stage; access to services and vocational, on-the-job training during the migration period; and integration or reintegration as migration types divide between those people who return to their homes and those who set up permanent new ones. These critical phases serve as the basis for recommended points of intervention for LIFT and other actors.

With many, if not most, migrants in Ayeyarwady and Magway migrating to manage the risks related to subsistence constraints, interventions to support risk management are identified as the most critical. Improving migrants’ risk-management strategies depends on enabling them to confront risk in a better planned, systematic, and integrated way. Supporting prospective migrants by ensuring that failed migration attempts won’t result in a fall below subsistence level should offer the right incentives for risk management migrants to make investments in education and training in order to become upwardly mobile migrants. Enabling prospective migrants to safely exploit emerging urban opportunities has important implications for migration-development interactions regarding both poverty reduction and broader economic growth.



Despite the reasonably high rates of migration, there are yet to be significant observable economic impacts on sending households.

formal education and the upfront costs of international migration constitute investments for upwardly mobile households. The ability to afford such investments is directly correlated with the assets owned by households.

Despite the reasonably high rates of migration, there are yet to be significant observable economic impacts on sending households. This reflects the nature of the most prominent form of migration, with movement toward cities to take up predominantly low-skilled employment. Earning differentials are not significant and, as a result, any remittances are used primarily to supplement food expenses; only a minority of households are able to allocate funds toward productive assets. In terms of social impacts, migration appears to be affecting roles within sending households as those left behind are required to take on more responsibilities: for one-third of households with migrants, responsibilities at the household level increase for those left behind. At the household level, family members of migrants use remittances to smooth income and reduce debt.

Similarly, it is still too early to definitively identify collective impacts on sending villages, but some initial findings warrant further observation. Firstly, migration is perceived as having a more positive impact on village dynamics in Magway than it does in Ayeyarwady. This reflects the differing nature of migration; in Magway there is a prevalence of both shock response migration and international migration associated with upward mobility, resulting in, respectively, perceptions of migration as something that facilitates the resolution of financial difficulties and, international remittances being invested into communities. Secondly, although difficult to measure, migration is

INTRODUCTION



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FACTORY WORKER

INTRODUCTION

Since the initiation of wide-ranging political and economic reforms in 2011, Myanmar has entered a period of intensive transition. Recent economic growth, driven by a construction-related boom, an increase in manufacturing output, and the resulting expansion in services, is creating significant employment opportunities in urban areas.¹ These opportunities have the potential to introduce significant changes in labor and mobility patterns, especially for the landless and land-poor workers who compose a large part of the rural agricultural workforce. Increased productivity resulting from the movement of labor from rural to urban sectors can help catalyze economic transformation and contribute to economic growth. Domestic migration can also play a powerful role in efforts to reduce poverty: it has been a critical component of poverty reduction in many other countries in the wider region, including South Korea, China, and Vietnam, as well as globally, with significant increases in consumption for migrant households. In order to reduce poverty effectively, Myanmar will need not only to improve agricultural productivity but also to support diversified livelihoods and rural-urban migration.

However, migration opportunities carry risks. These risks include the immediate effects of failed migration attempts, as well as the long-term social and economic consequences in rural areas as members of the labor force, especially young people, leave their villages. In this rapidly evolving context, improving the capacity of prospective migrants to confront risk is critical to improving both short- and long-term outcomes. This report focuses on understanding the reasons why people migrate, and examines how they do so, in order to develop operational insights into how to enable prospective migrants to make better, more informed choices.

The study seeks to understand in greater depth the patterns, dynamics and motivations for domestic migration in and from Ayeyarwady and Magway. It also investigates how rural communities perceive migration as affecting local labor markets and social relations within villages. The Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring of Livelihoods in Myanmar (QSEM), an associated research program supported by LIFT, has consistently identified high labor costs and peak-season labor shortages across agro-ecological zones. Farmers perceive this to be caused by, among other factors, an increase in out-migration. Inversely, income opportunities for landless laborers outside the peak season are scarce, which helps drive the need to migrate. Existing data from previous QSEM research also suggest that there are distinct regional

Domestic migration can play a powerful role in efforts to reduce poverty: it has been a critical component of poverty reduction in many other countries in the wider region, including South Korea, China, and Vietnam, as well as globally, with significant increases in consumption for migrant households.²

differences in the demographic patterns made by migrants and where they move. These are influenced by local socioeconomic conditions, geographic proximity to migration destinations, local job markets and other factors.

With these issues in mind, the study draws on the empirical evidence to develop operational insights for LIFT strategy and programming on:

- The role and importance of migration in household livelihoods among both landless and small landholding households;
- How to best support landless and small landholding households with few other means to escape poverty; and
- The links between migration and social and economic dynamics in sending villages.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary objective of the research is to collect detailed evidence in order to provide an objective assessment of how, and to what extent, migration within and from particular regions of Myanmar affects the livelihoods of rural households and the social and economic environment of villages. It seeks to understand how migration decisions take place, the key obstacles and risks faced by migrants, and the individual and household strategies that evolve to manage them. It also seeks to capture the changes in the social and economic dynamics of the communities and households affected by the departure and return of migrants over time.

The analytical framework is organized around four general questions:

- **Who migrates?** Which individual and community characteristics help to explain the variation in levels and types of migration? Key factors to explore include: age, gender, education, and the socioeconomic profile of families and the communities of origin.
- **Why do people choose to migrate?** What motivates migration, and how do motivations vary according to socioeconomic groups? Which combinations of push-and-pull factors prompt household migration decisions? Are migration and non-farm employment a means to escape from poverty or are they coping mechanisms for when there are no other alternatives? How are key decisions about migration made within the household?
- **What are migration strategies?** What type of work do migrants do? What strategies—selecting a destination, securing work there, managing

¹ World Bank. 2015. "Myanmar: Empowering People for Inclusive Growth; Myanmar Country Partnership Framework for the Period 2015-2017." <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Publications/eap/myanmar-2015-2017-country-partnership-framework.pdf>

² See, for example, Beegle et al. "Migration and economic mobility in Tanzania." It was found that the average consumption change for domestic Tanzanian migrants was more than four times greater than for people within the same villages who did not migrate. Similarly, over 13 years, the poverty rate decreased by 23 percentage points for those who moved, versus 4 percentage points.

the related risks and financial costs—do individuals and families use to migrate? What is the role of informal networks in finding and facilitating work, and what determines access to these networks? What are the links between the areas sending and receiving migrants?

- **How is migration experienced by migrants and by those left behind?**
How does migration impact on household and village livelihoods in the communities of origin? What are the social and economic effects of an outflow of (mostly young) workers and an inflow of remittances? How do these effects vary by migration type?

METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of the study is to build an empirical basis from which to establish: a better understanding of the profile of migrants; their motivations and migration strategies; and the impacts on those left behind. The study uses a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative research was chiefly used to identify profiles for, and patterns of, migrants and migration. Qualitative research focused in more depth on better understanding: 1) migration strategies; 2) the role of social networks; 3) the impacts of migration on the social fabric of the sending areas; and 4) the impacts of migration on those left behind at the household level. The research instruments are outlined in the Annex.

The regions of study were selected according to longitudinal research undertaken through QSEM, which identified the perception held by local villagers; that levels of domestic migration have been increasing in both Ayeyarwady and Magway since 2013. These areas are also important for understanding migration and rural poverty as they are home to large numbers of Myanmar's rural poor (Ayeyarwady has Myanmar's most)³ and because they are near to the primary centers of growth, Yangon and Mandalay. Other areas of Myanmar, in particular border regions such as Chin State and parts of Shan State, are characterized by international migration and have received more analytical attention.⁴ This research aimed at exploring the phenomenon of domestic migration and in particular the effects of rural-urban migration on rural communities. Given the differences between these regions, we expect to observe seasonal and permanent patterns of migration in addition to different levels of migration. Exploring these variations is necessary to understand the decisions individuals and households make relating to migration, as well as the different impacts varying levels and types of migration have on the sending communities.

The approach used for the quantitative analysis employed a similar Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) questionnaire to that of the Myanmar Poverty and Living Conditions Survey (MPLCS), including an expanded migration module that allowed a representative picture of overall migration patterns in the regions covered (Magway and Ayeyarwady). The quantitative

³ 2014 World Bank staff analysis of: United Nations Development Programme. "Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment" (IHCLA-II).

⁴ See, for example, International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2014. "Migration, Livelihoods, and the Impacts on Myanmar: Analysis of Assessment Findings." Draft presentation, 14 February 2014.

instrument was composed of a household survey and a village information survey administered to the village authorities for general background information on the village. To ensure representative estimates for relevant indicators, 800 households per region were targeted, a total of 1,600 households. In each region 40 villages were selected, and 20 households in each village. The selection of both villages and households was randomized. Village selection in each region was stratified across districts. In each of Magway's five districts eight villages were randomly selected. In Ayeyarwady, which has six districts, six villages were randomly selected in each of the two districts with the lowest populations, and seven villages were selected in the four districts with the largest populations. The resulting sample of 800 households per region is representative at the region level for both Magway and Ayeyarwady.⁵

In addition to the descriptive statistics from the survey results, which illustrate general patterns of migration in Ayeyarwady and Magway, results from regression analysis also provide some insight into the key factors associated with a decision to migrate for different categories of the population in sending areas defined in this study in terms of livelihood options.⁶

The qualitative research employed a purposive sampling strategy to examine potential differences in migration patterns, strategies, and outcomes. Within each region, two townships were selected for analysis as sending areas, in order to aim at capturing geographic variation within the region. Within each township, two villages (each from a different village tract) were purposively selected to take into account variations across: 1) access to transportation; and 2) agricultural potential (measured by irrigation in Magway and by freshwater or brackish water in Ayeyarwady). The analysis therefore covered four villages where LIFT operated in each region. In each village, focus group discussions were held with village authorities, households from different socioeconomic groups, and people who fit the profile of potential migrants (identified from QSEM—young, single, and from poorer households). Key informant interviews were also carried out with households identified as vulnerable that, at the time of the research, had either one member migrating or returned from migration.

Qualitative research was also undertaken in a small number of urban centers to understand the perspectives of current migrants. Research in urban centers progressed from the initial village-level phase, when contact information was gathered to facilitate interviews with migrants in urban centers. Common destinations identified in the first phase included Yangon and Mandalay. In villages sampled in Magway, the city of Magway was also a popular destination

⁵ Results have been weighted to reflect the impact of sampling design on the probability of a household being selected using 2014 census-based population data. A simple random sample size of 363 households per administrative area was estimated based on the following parameters: Confidence interval: 95 percent; Level of significance: .05; Expected proportion in the population having a migrant member: 30 percent; Population size: ~1,000,000 (households). The 363 household sample size was then adjusted upwards to 400, given the lack of data and assumptions involved in determining input parameters to the sample size estimation. A design effect of 2.0 was chosen in accordance with standard practice for large household surveys in Myanmar (including LIFT QSEM surveys and IHLCA I and II) to take into account clustering at the village level. Based on a design effect of 2.0, the total sample size need for each administrative region using villages

⁶ Annex 4 provides a detailed description of the approach and summary of the findings.

for seasonal migration. The city of Bogale was selected as a fourth research site for the second phase in order to understand the long-term impacts of Cyclone Nargis on migration patterns. In these areas, current migrants identified in the first phase were contacted for key informant interviews. Current migrants were also asked to identify co-workers from the same area of origin in order to expand the pool interviewed.

In total field work was conducted in 12 locations in the course of the qualitative research, between January and April 2015. The first phase, which focused on rural areas producing migrants, was conducted over January and February 2015, and included 120 key informant interviews and 40 focus group discussions; it counted a total of 345 respondents. In the second phase 103 key informant interviews were undertaken during March 2015.

LIMITATIONS Although these two regions have large populations and are critical for growth and poverty reduction in Myanmar, the study is not national in scope, and therefore does not make nationally representative claims about migration; the findings are representative at a regional level. It does not capture migration patterns from the country's upland regions, for example, where variations in weather, crops, cultivation practices, infrastructure and transportation access, among other factors, may combine to influence migration in markedly different ways. Many areas of Myanmar's borders, also not covered in the geographic scope of this study, are inhabited by diverse ethnic-minority groups who in many cases have longstanding cultural and linguistic ties that predate modern administrative borders; this, too, influences different migration practices and dynamics from those studied in this report.

The research does not examine the net flow of migration but focuses on out-migration. Both the quantitative survey and qualitative work did not capture information on the effects of migration into the regions researched. With the exception of a defined number of migrant interviews in destination locations, the research does not examine the migrants' experience at their destinations. The focus of the research is on the impact of migration on the communities from which the migrants originate. Information about actual migrants in the quantitative survey is captured primarily through interviews with household members rather than directly from the migrants themselves. Household members may not always have accurate information about the type of employment migrants are engaged in, the networks from which it was obtained, or even their location. Social and economic impacts on villages as a whole are difficult to quantify given the relatively recent phenomenon of increased domestic migration. The primary tool used for this draws on a module on the perceptions of people in the sending villages. Relying on perceptions differs from documenting actual experiences and has its own limitations.

TERMINOLOGY **Domestic migration** refers to voluntary migration within Myanmar.

Migrants are defined as any individuals who were part of a household during the last five years but currently live abroad or elsewhere in Myanmar. A returned migrant is defined as an individual who has lived or worked outside a village tract for at least one month during the past five years.

Casual labor is ad hoc, usually temporary or part-time labor. Employees are hired for—and usually paid by—an hour, day, or week.

Small landholding farmers are defined as those who own five acres or less.⁷

Landless means lacking access to, and ownership of, cultivable land.

Seasonal migration occurs when employment opportunities are present in nearby villages or nearby urban areas during the off-peak harvest and planting seasons of the home villages. Migrants practice both agricultural and non-agricultural casual labor based on the seasonal calendar as part of this migration pattern.

Permanent migration refers to rural-urban migration that is intended to be permanent, rather than when a return to the village of origin is planned after a fixed period.

⁷ Qualitative analysis undertaken through this study and through previous World Bank research, including QSEM research, shows that landholdings of this size, even in environments that permit double cropping, are often insufficient or barely sufficient to meet household consumption needs. The profit small cultivators receive from the sale of their crop generally falls short of what is required for household consumption. Many households that farm five acres or fewer are trapped in a cycle of debt; loans are never fully repaid and new loans are sought to make payments on existing debts. Interest rates continue to compound or may increase during the period in which the debtor is in arrears. See World Bank qualitative field research undertaken in the Dry Zone and the Delta as part of preparation for the MPLCS, July 2014.

A SNAPSHOT OF MIGRATION IN MAGWAY & AYEYARWADY

Understanding migration begins with identifying who migrates. This section outlines the basic profiles of migrants within Ayeyarwady and Magway, including what types of households tend to send migrants; who within those households; and where the migrate.

Migration levels are high in both Ayeyarwady and Magway, with domestic migration being more pervasive than international migration.⁸ One in five households in Ayeyarwady, and one in four in Magway, report having at least one household member currently migrating. Only 9 percent of Ayeyarwady migrants and 22 percent of Magway migrants cross international borders.

Figure 1. Households with Family Members Currently Living Away from Home by Region⁹

Domestic migration is common across Ayeyarwady and Magway.

■ Ayeyarwady ■ Magway

Ayeyarwady



Magway

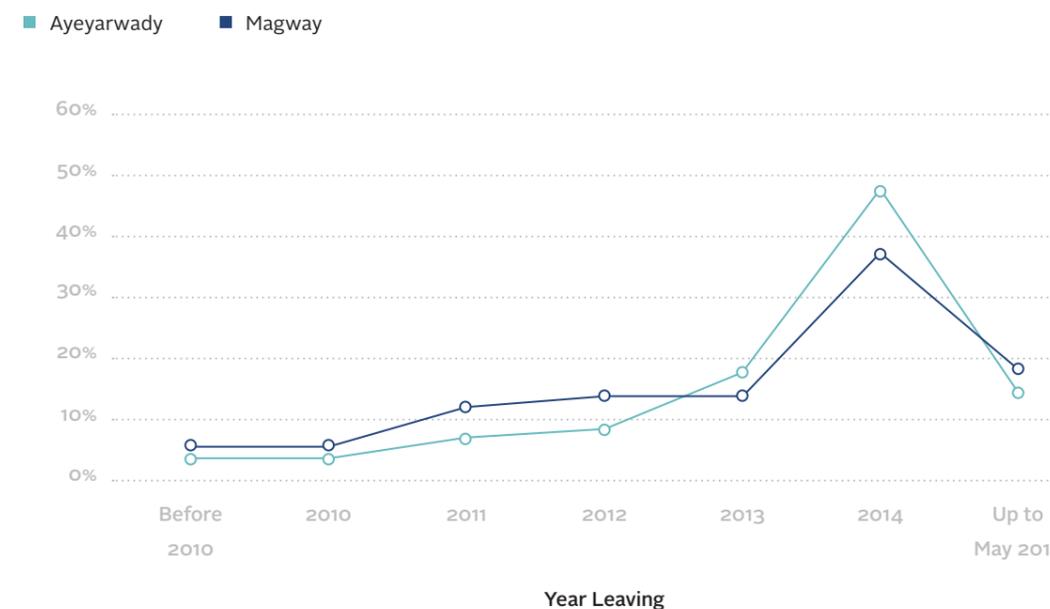


⁸ Data presented refers to out-migration in Ayeyarwady and Magway. The research did not examine levels of people moving into these communities and as such does not present figures on net migration.

⁹ The number of observations for each sub-group of the sample are not listed in the tables of the main text for clarity. They are available on request.

Figure 2. Percentage of Households with a Current or Returned Migrant by Year of Departure¹⁰

The number of migrants increased significantly after 2013.



Migration from villages in Ayeyarwady and Magway has increased rapidly in recent years. Examining the year of departure of both current and returned migrants in both regions, there is a marginal annual increase of people leaving villages for each year after 2010, with a significant increase in 2014: about one-third of migrants from both regions left their villages that year.

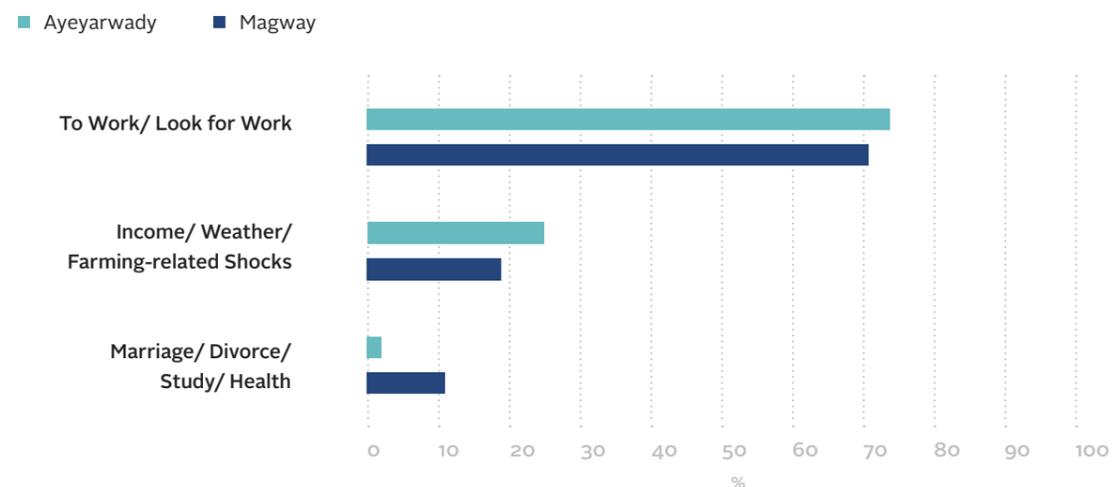
Migrants overwhelmingly migrate for economic reasons rather than for family purposes or education. Only 2 percent of households in Ayeyarwady reported that their members moved for family reasons (for example to join a family member or due to marriage or divorce) or to seek education. The proportion is only slightly larger for Magway, where 11 percent of households cite family issues or education as the reason for migration. The vast majority of migrants in both regions (74 percent in Ayeyarwady and 71 percent in Magway) migrated either for a job or to look for work, with an additional 20 percent in both regions moving in response to economic shocks faced by their households.

One in five households in Ayeyarwady, and one in four in Magway, report having at least one household member currently migrating.

¹⁰ Year of Departure from Households reporting current family member migrating or returned migrant.

Figure 3. Reasons for Migrating

In Ayeyarwady and Magway, migrants overwhelmingly move for work.



**WHO MIGRATES?
AGE, EDUCATION, GENDER**

Men migrate at a higher rate than women, but the migration rate of women is significant. The proportion of migrants who are male is 66 percent in Magway and 60 percent in Ayeyarwady.

In both regions, current and returned migrants were mostly in their mid-teens to twenties when they left their home villages for the first time. About 80 percent of migrants in each region are aged between 11 and 30, with the vast majority of these in their late teens or early twenties. Only 13 cases of migrants under the age of 15 were recorded.

Female migrants tend to be slightly younger than male migrants when they first leave their home village in Ayeyarwady, and slightly older in Magway (Figure 4).

Since most migrants make an initial departure at a relatively young age, many are single when they do so. In Ayeyarwady, 75 percent of migrants were single, compared to 71 percent in Magway. Qualitative research highlighted that married migrants were usually male household heads leaving their families behind, typically for seasonal work. This was especially true for migrants from a village in Pakokku Township, Magway, who tended to work in the Hpakant jade mines. In rare cases, the study observed the migration of entire households, mostly in areas affected by the 2008 Cyclone Nargis, such as the Bogale Township.

Migrants also tend to be better educated than non-migrants. As most migrants were between the ages of 11 and 50, the analysis compared the education of migrants against non-migrants in this age bracket. In Magway 60 percent of migrants have higher than primary-level education, compared with only 40 percent of the region's non-migrants. This was similar but less pronounced in Ayeyarwady, where the figures are 56 percent and 49 percent for migrants and non-migrants, respectively.

Figure 4. Composition of Migrants According to Age and Gender

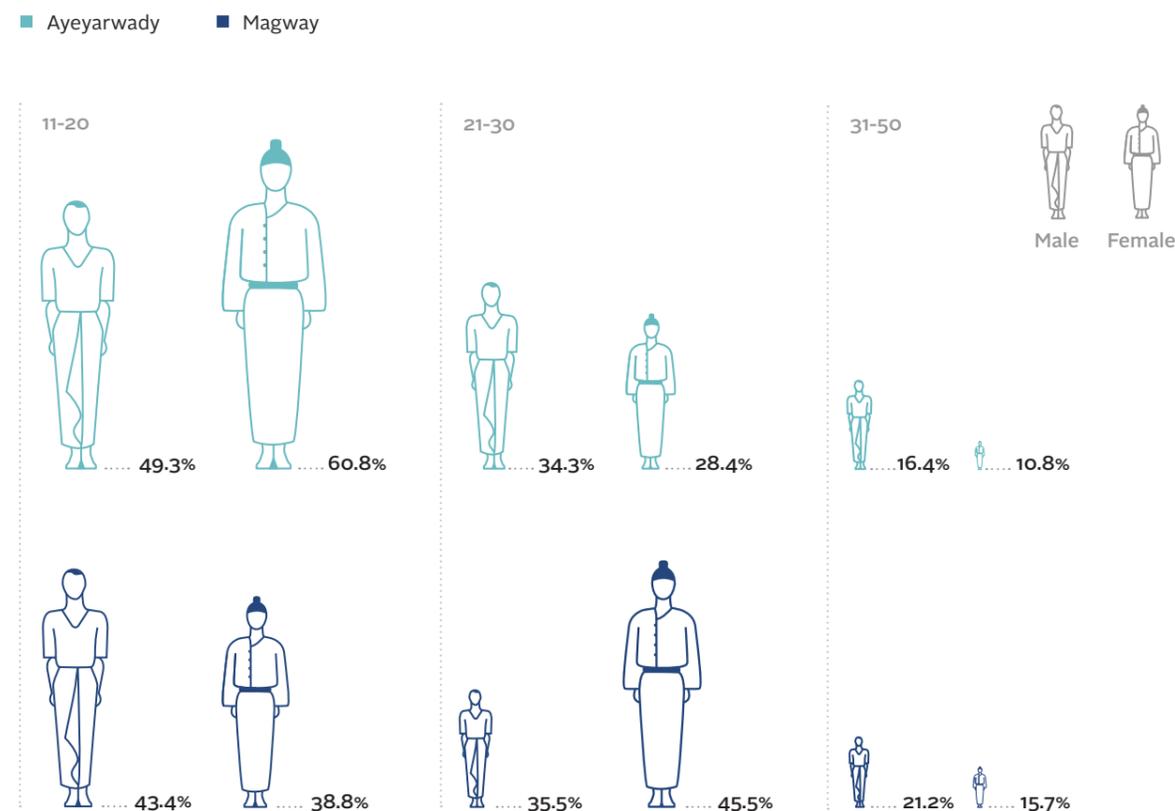


Figure 5 shows how in Ayeyarwady and Magway migrants in general tend to be younger, better educated, and are more likely to be male.

In Ayeyarwady casual laborers—especially casual farm laborers in areas such as agriculture, fishing and livestock raising—are more likely to migrate than others. However, in Magway, owners of farms, fisheries, and/or livestock make up a greater proportion of migrants. This reflects regional differences: in Ayeyarwady landlessness rates are significantly higher, as are the corresponding rates of casual labor.¹¹

There are significant regional differences in the welfare profile of migrant households. In Ayeyarwady, landless households are more likely to have a migrating member than landholding and non-poor households. More than 25 percent of poor landless households in the region report at least one member migrating, compared with less than 18 percent for households that own farmland or are categorized as better off households. In contrast, there are no significant differences in household migration rates across livelihood

¹¹ LIFT.2012. Baseline Survey Results. LIFT: Yangon. <http://lift-fund.org/lift-in-action/content/lift-baseline-survey-results-2012>

Figure 5. Composition of Migrant and Non-Migrant Groups by Age, Gender and Schooling Completed

Migrants are generally young and better educated than non-migrant counterparts



There are distinct regional differences in the profile of migrant households. In Ayeyarwady, landless households are much more likely to have migrants, but there is little difference across livelihood groups in Magway.

categories in Magway, although households with family members who are educated to either an upper, secondary or tertiary level are more likely to have a migrant, at 30 percent, compared with households with only lower-secondary or primary education, at 22 percent.

Another distinguishing feature of migration from Ayeyarwady is its duration: 69 percent of survey responses from migrant-sending households described the employment type as permanent compared to 44.9 percent in Magway.

WHERE DO PEOPLE MIGRATE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

There is observable variation between the two regions regarding migration destinations and, to a lesser extent, the types of occupations that migrants pursue in those destinations. As Figure 7 illustrates, Yangon is the most popular destination for both men and women, featuring particularly prominently for migrants from Ayeyarwady, with 58 percent of migrants heading to Yangon compared with 24 percent from Magway. Aside from Yangon, migration destinations are diverse. Mandalay is the next most popular destination, a distant-second attraction, with 10 percent of migrants from Magway and 4 percent from Ayeyarwady. In addition, approximately one in five migrants move within the same region, with many of these moving within their townships.

Yangon is especially popular for female migrants from Ayeyarwady, with three-quarters of women choosing to move there. Ayeyarwady migrants in Yangon are overwhelmingly engaged in casual labor and employment in the manufacturing sector. Qualitative research highlighted that casual laborers in urban areas tend to work in restaurants, construction, and in other non-agricultural, low-skilled casual labor. Additionally, migrants in Yangon also work as factory employees in the garment sector, with 55 percent of female migrants employed in manufacturing. Based on the qualitative research, garment-factory work is perceived as highly sought after; it is better paid and provides regular, longer terms of employment compared with casual labor.¹² A quarter of men work on construction projects, usually as casual laborers. Only 9 percent of Ayeyarwady migrants relocate internationally, with the vast majority being men. Malaysia, Korea, and Thailand are the major destinations for international migrants from Ayeyarwady.

Overall, migration destinations are more varied for migrants from Magway, where people were far more likely to move to a different region in Myanmar

¹² More specific information on the conditions of employment in garment factories was limited by the accessibility of workers, suggesting that despite a preference for this work by prospective and current migrants, the work day is long and rigorous: over 120 current migrants were identified as working in garment factories in Yangon, but researchers were only able to speak to two of them, as factory owners did not permit laborers to be interviewed during working hours.

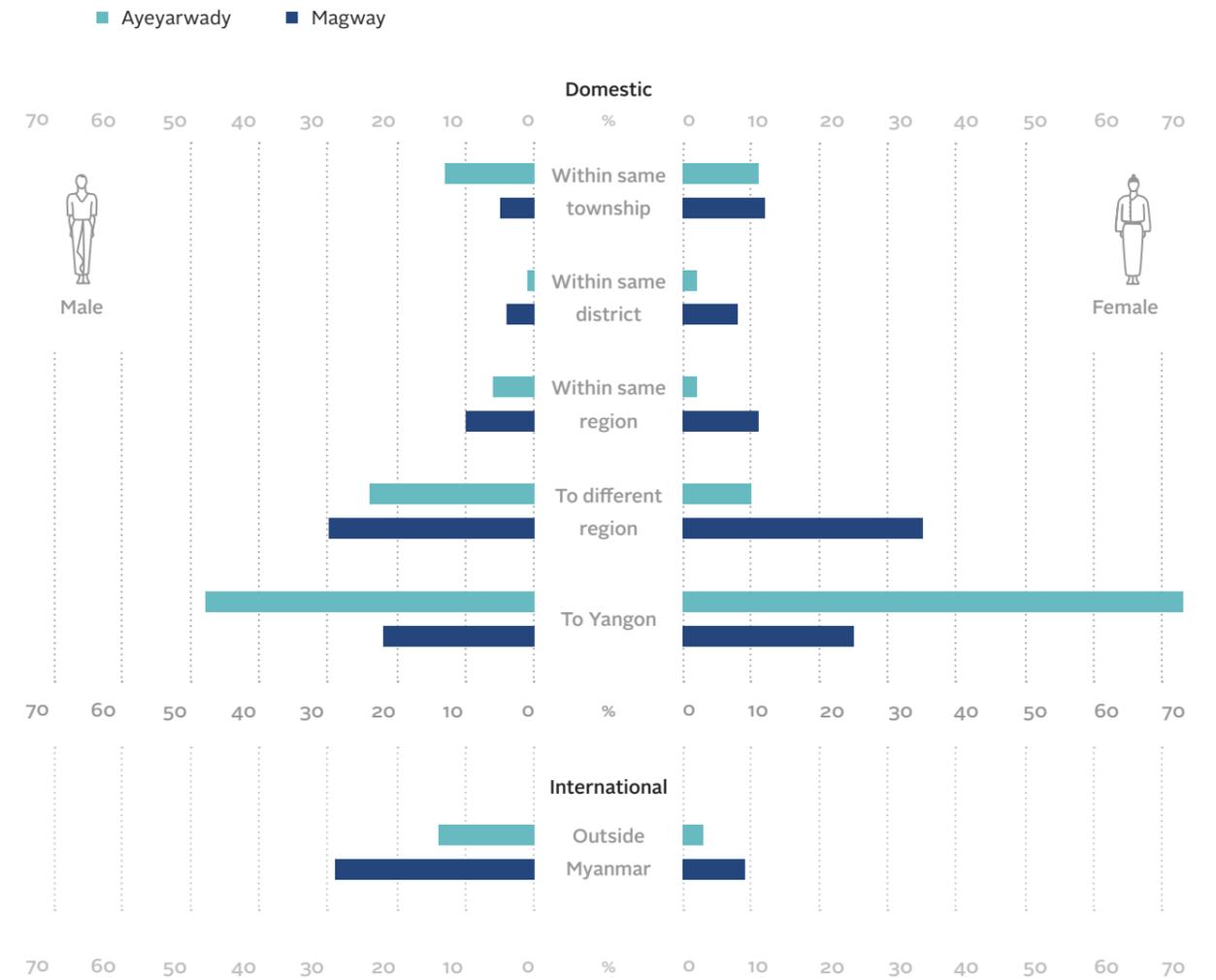
Figure 6. Popular Jobs for Ayeyarwady and Magway in Destination Sites

Ayeyarwady migrants are concentrated in the informal sector in Yangon, while destinations and job types are more diverse for migrants from Magway.



Figure 7. Main Migration Destinations from Magway and Ayeyarwady

Yangon is the primary destination for migrants from Ayeyarwady, but destinations from Magway are more diverse.

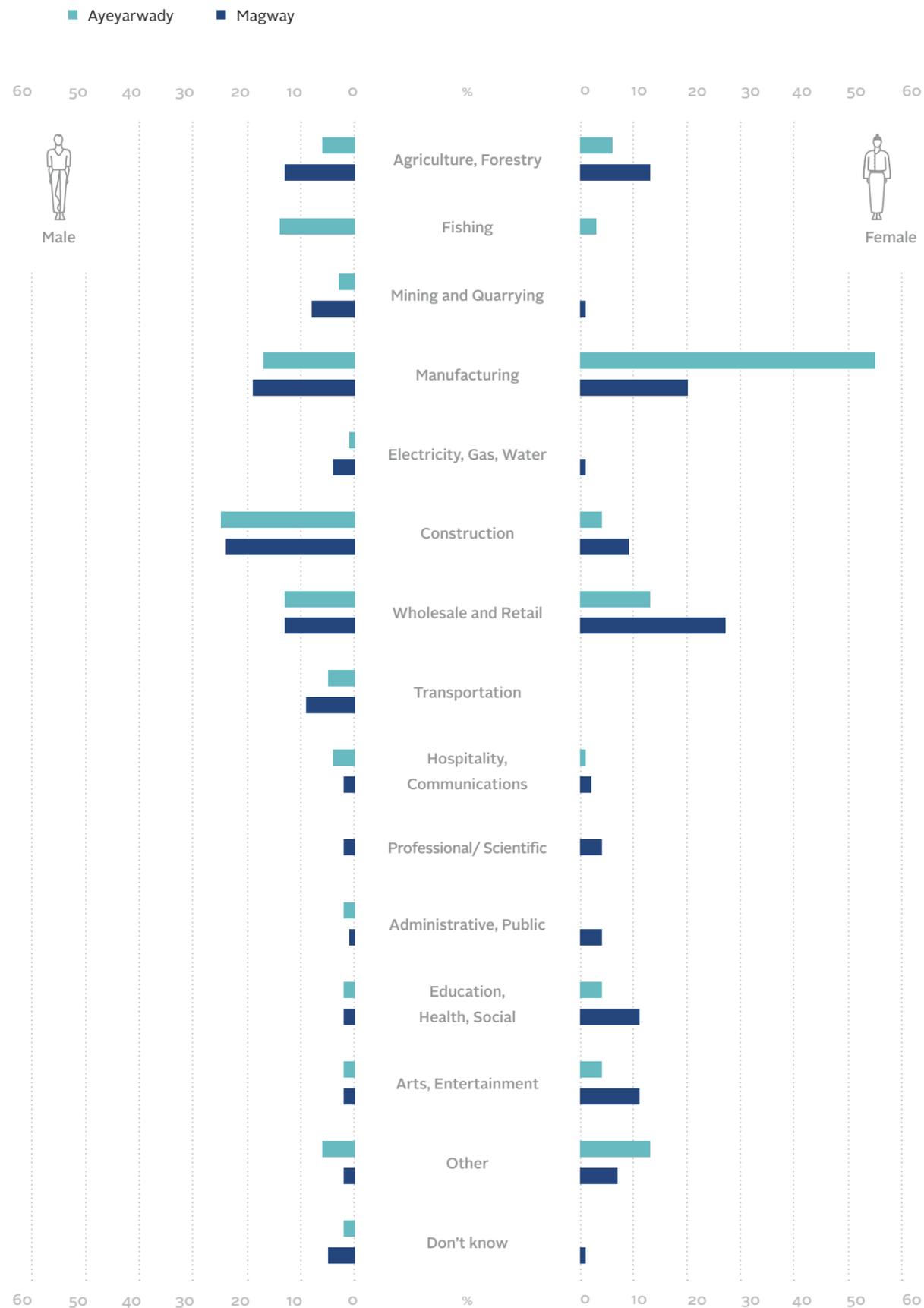


other than their home region or Yangon. Destinations include Sagaing (8 percent), Nay Pyi Taw (7 percent), Magway townships (4 percent), and Kachin State (3 percent). Migration from Magway also exhibits a distinct prevalence of international migration, particularly for men: almost one-third of men migrating from Magway do so internationally, mostly to Thailand, Malaysia, and China. The numbers are significantly lower for women, with 9 percent of Magway's female migrants moving overseas.



Yangon is the most popular destination for male and female migrants, especially from Ayeyarwady. 58 percent of migrants from Ayeyarwady move to Yangon compared to 24 percent from Magway.

Figure 8. Employment in Destination Sites by Sector and Gender



Given the numerous destinations for migrants from Magway, there is also more diversity in terms of the types of employment in which they are engaged. Survey data confirm that there is a stronger preference toward seasonal migration in Magway in comparison with Ayeyarwady. Qualitative research identified migration patterns ranging from permanent or long-term, rural-urban labor, to seasonal work in seed-processing mills in Magway, or to jade mines in Kachin.

Overall, there is significant discrepancy between the perceived duration of the migration episodes of family members and their perceived job status in destination sites. This is particularly the case in Ayeyarwady, where 69 percent of respondents define their migrating family members as moving permanently, although 89 percent identify the job status of those migrants as casual laborers. This distinction is less observable in Magway, where 45 percent are defined as moving permanently, with 70 percent employed as casual laborers. This reflects both the higher rate of seasonal migration in Magway, clearly temporary in nature, and the greater number of international migrants who, similarly, are more likely to migrate for fixed periods of time and have greater job security.



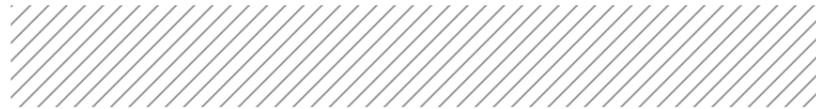
Migrants from Magway are more likely to move abroad than migrants from Ayeyarwady.

MIGRATION TYPES



GARMENT MAKER

MIGRATION TYPES



There are very different groups of migrants, with different motivations, constraints, and strategies. This section identifies three indicative types of migration. In the subsequent section these types serve as the framework for an examination of the different experiences of migration.

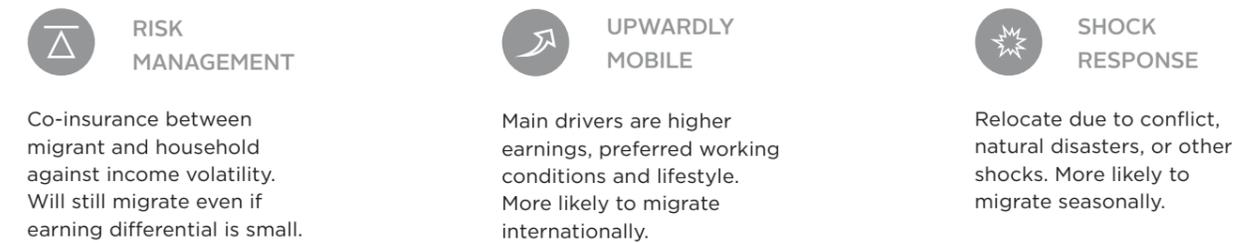
The study identifies a wide range of motivations for migration according to livelihoods and social groups. Just a handful of cases illustrate the many, sometimes competing, reasons people have for migrating and how this varies across different livelihood groups:

- Poorer casual labor and small landholding households who want to solve their immediate needs or reduce their debt level through seasonal or permanent non-farm employment opportunities outside the village.
- Households that want to diversify their source of income from rural agriculture as a means of managing risk. Migration of this type can be further disaggregated:
 - Households send children, often the eldest, to urban areas to generate a regular stream of income throughout the year.
 - Households also send adult members to urban areas to work during off-peak agricultural seasons in order to reduce their debt level during these periods.
- Casual laborers who want to pursue an alternative livelihood that is less physically demanding than the jobs in the farms working under the sun and in the mud.
- Young people seeking better education opportunities and better career prospects.

There is no single reason why people migrate in Magway and Ayeyarwady. For example, few people report migrating only for higher wages; rather they cited a combination of factors involving risk management, social preferences, and expected opportunities to develop skills.

The dominant motivating factors tend to cluster in three primary groups, developed in this section as three migration types: risk management, upwardly mobile, and shock response. Each type of migration represents the most influential drivers and constraints that motivate migrants' decision-making processes and migration patterns. As illustrative archetypes, it is unlikely that these factors are as clear-cut and mutually exclusive "in the real world"; motivations to undertake a life event of such significance seldom are. Overlaps between types are to be expected. However, by identifying primary motivations, these types can help to illuminate why people in Ayeyarwady and Magway migrate, and how different factors inform their strategies.

Figure 9. Migration Types



RISK MANAGEMENT

For many households in Ayeyarwady and Magway, migration is practiced primarily as a way of managing risk. These households seek to diversify their source of income through non-farm activities, by allocating household labor between agricultural work in the area of origin and non-farm work in the area of destination. The development literature has extensively documented how households in developing countries regularly develop practices to cope with risk. Examples of these "non-market mechanisms" include transferring funds within villages or families, depleting assets, increasing labor supply, gaining additional household members, and migrating.

Migration to manage risk is especially important for households facing subsistence constraints. Households existing close to the subsistence line tend to adopt a decision-making framework designed primarily to manage risk because the consequences of an adverse shock—a harvest failure or a household death or illness, for example—can have devastating consequences.¹³ Within this context, data from this research suggest that risk management motivates and conditions migration decisions for many, if not most, prospective and current migrants in the regions captured in this study. This can be observed, for example, by the large fraction of Myanmar's population that is clustered around the poverty line; the majority of households in the general population live within one shock from falling into poverty.¹⁴

Members of this group face volatility and uncertainty in their primary sources of income. This includes most casual-labor households, as well as small landholding farmers. Access to land is not the only determining factor in this type of migration; however, as demonstrated earlier, the capacity to absorb adverse shocks increases as household land ownership reaches five acres. Since risk-management-related migration is fundamentally a household strategy, migration decisions under this category tend to be made as a household, rather than by individuals.

As discussed in greater detail in the section entitled "Why Do People Migrate?" qualitative data on wages in source and destination locations

¹³ See, for example, Halliday, Timothy. 2010. "Intra-Household Labor Supply, Migration, and Subsistence Constraints in a Risky Environment: Evidence from Rural El Salvador." IZA DP No. 4903. Or, Scott, James. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*. New Haven, CT: YUP.

¹⁴ World Bank. 2014d. "Myanmar Systematic Country Diagnostic." World Bank, Myanmar.

suggest little difference in casual labor wages between areas of origin and destination. The presence of rural-urban migration despite a lack of significant wage differentials adds support to the idea that income stability is the primary motivation for this group; urban areas offer greater year-round employment opportunities compared with limited and irregular casual labor in agricultural areas. This explains the higher proportion of landless households engaging in migration as a risk-management strategy and their propensity for migration to Yangon, where jobs are thought to be most available. Over 25 percent of landless households in Ayeyarwady have a migrating family member, compared with an average of 20 percent overall for both regions; of these households almost 60 percent of migrants move to Yangon. The difference is less noticeable in Magway, with 26 percent of landless households reporting migration, compared with an average of 24 percent. Migrants from landless households in Magway are also more likely to go to Yangon compared with migrants from other categories of land ownership.

The availability of labor within the household is a key variable associated with the decision to migrate for people seeking to manage risk. The decision to commit resources to migration is closely linked to the availability of sufficient household labor to compensate for the lost labor of the migrating individual, and to cover existing income streams until the migrant can begin to remit funds home. In both Ayeyarwady and Magway, migration rates increase as the ratio of working-age household members—particularly men—to the total household size increases.

Migration under this type tends to focus on major cities like Yangon and Mandalay, where jobs are perceived to be most available. Migrants in this category tend to work year round in urban areas in casual-labor activities, such as construction, restaurants, and tea shops, remitting money via fellow migrants from the same or surrounding villages, or in person when they return to their village for holidays. However, some casual laborers in these job categories also reported migrating only in off-peak agricultural seasons, and returning to their home villages to take advantage of high wages during peak planting and harvest seasons, such as in Box 1 below.

Migration to manage risk depends strongly on the use of social networks to seek information on jobs and destination areas before leaving the village. While social networks are important for all migrants, prospective migrants and their households in this type are, by definition, more risk averse, and therefore seek to secure guarantees on jobs and accommodation during the pre-departure stage.



BOX 1. RISK MANAGER: GOING WITH THE SEASONS

Like other landless households in this village in Magway Township, Magway, this three-generation household had long sought employment during the off-peak agricultural season to supplement their primary income, which was barely sufficient for their basic consumption needs. The household relied on two of the middle-aged members to generate income: an unmarried woman in her thirties and her younger brother, who was in his twenties. Their parents



Why they migrate

Facing subsistence constraints, many households migrate to manage risk by allocating household labor into non-farm jobs where income is more predictable. A large proportion, if not a majority, of migrants from the Ayeyarwady and Magway regions fit this category.

How they migrate

Members of such households migrate almost exclusively through existing social networks, which helps to mitigate some migration risks, such as a long or failed job search in destination areas.

What do they do

Exclusive reliance on social networks tends to keep such migrants in low-wage, unskilled jobs, like construction.



were too old to work and the woman's teenage daughter was still in school. Their primary income was derived from casual labor on farms in their town; however, the planting and harvest cycles that provided this income last less than five months of the year. The household reported that they struggled to cobble together secondary, often irregular sources of income. As a result the family often had to rely on high-interest loans. Lacking land, the household was unable to access low-interest agricultural loans provided through the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB), and instead was forced to borrow from private money lenders in the village at more than 20 percent interest.

Such a situation may be typical of many rural household economies in Magway; however, in this village it all changed about three to four years ago, when someone from the village who had migrated to the city of Magway several years before, began to operate a seed-processing mill there. In hiring labor for the factory, this owner turned to his home village. Within the village, where a recruitment network immediately established itself, a local contact was key to facilitating migration; guaranteeing job placement in the factory, as well as securing city accommodation. These arrangements were critical, especially for the first wave of migrants from the village, as the risk of moving without having secured a job or a place to stay was simply too high otherwise. For example, a member of the household that is the focus of this case study explained in an interview that they would not have trusted anyone making the offer to work in the township if it hadn't been someone they knew.

The form of migration that arose in this village as a result of the seed-processing mill—with the vast majority migrating to the city of Magway to work in that mill—is highly seasonal: migrants leave the village in June and July and return in January. This period corresponds with the harvest season for sesame and pulses, as well as labor demand in the factories in the city of

Magway that subsequently process these inputs further along the value chain. In this way, many casual laborers in this village effectively fill labor gaps along the value chain; picking the sesame seeds during peak harvest, then following their product to processing plants in the city, where they work for four to five months. This cycle is repeated annually.

The mother of the migrant household in this case study reported that migration to the city of Magway for work in the seed-processing mill has been critical to addressing the challenges associated with the irregularity of agricultural primary income. “We can buy food now,” added the elderly couple in the household. “And we don’t have to take out loans for that anymore.”

While seasonal work in the factory provides an opportunity for households in this village to regularize their income, the jobs at the mills are low skilled. Interestingly, many households cited this positively—there is no requirement for formal education, for example, which few have—however, this also means that there is virtually no opportunity for career advancement or skills development.

The success of this household’s experience with migration in terms of both diversifying and regularizing their income sources is not unique to this village in Magway Township. Today, approximately one-third of all households currently have a member migrating, and migration rates have been increasing over the past three years, almost all to the city of Magway to work in the seed-processing mill. Village leaders report that the majority of these migrants come from poorer households in the village, although not the poorest, which is consistent with the risk management migration type.

UPWARDLY MOBILE

Upwardly mobile migration refers to migration that is aimed at taking advantage of higher wages in urban areas or overseas, as well as attaining social preferences. Compared with migration in response to shock or as a form of risk management, upwardly mobile migrant households see migration not as a coping mechanism for poverty-inducing risks but rather as a chance to participate in Myanmar’s market economy and the emerging, mostly urban, opportunities that it is creating. This distinguishing feature of upwardly mobile migration is critical to both micro-theories on migration and poverty reduction, as well as macro-theories on the role of rural-urban migration in the structural transformation of Myanmar’s economic transition, which is based on the theory that migration sees the movement of labor from sectors of lower-to-higher productivity.

Migrants in this category are more likely to come from households with access to capital or assets—namely, land. They borrow against their assets to raise the capital to cover initial investments. These investments, such as an education or the upfront costs of travel, allow them access to higher-paying jobs in urban areas or overseas.

Investments in education enable migrants to take higher-paying, stable jobs in urban areas. For example a girl with a lower-secondary-school education may



Why they migrate

Through ownership of land or other assets, these households possess the capacity to use migration as a means to step up and out of poverty by participating in Myanmar’s market economy and its emerging, mostly urban, opportunities.

How they migrate

Better education qualifies these migrants to compete for more formal employment in urban areas. With greater assets, relatively, these households are able to finance international migration to take advantage of higher wages abroad.

What do they do

Such migrants are more likely to engage in more formal, low-skilled jobs, like garment factory work, that provide regular wages and fixed-term employment terms.



find casual work in a garment factory; a woman with a college education could enjoy regular clerical work. The ability to afford such investments is directly correlated with the assets households have access to: 40 percent of migrants from medium landholding households (5–12 acres) have at least a lower-secondary education, nearly double the figure for migrants from households with small landholdings, or none at all. About 35 percent of non-poor households (over 12 acres and/or in the top 10 percent of the consumption distribution by region) have a migrant with a college degree, compared with 16 percent for medium landholding households, and just 4 percent and 8 percent for small landholding and landless households, respectively.

The means to cover travel costs correlates with the propensity of international migration under this type. International migration entails not only more expensive transport, but also official or unofficial immigration arrangements. Again, the ability to afford these investments in rural Myanmar is correlated with access to land or productive assets. While there is a lack of a strong correlation between migration destination and livelihood group, small landholding farmers in Magway are more than twice as likely to migrate internationally as people from landless households. Over one in ten small landholding farmers report having a family member migrating internationally, to countries such as Thailand, China, and Malaysia.

The capacity to protect themselves from shocks also creates the conditions in which upwardly mobile migrants can cite skills development and life experiences as key motivations for migrating, in addition to better paying jobs. This contrasts with risk management migration, for example, where representative migrants, unable to afford investments, are principally interested in the year-round availability of work.



BOX 2. UPWARDLY MOBILE: BIG PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The young man—just turned 19—could afford to dream big. Coming from a medium landholding family, his household was insulated from subsistence constraints. His family was not wealthy, but they were better off than most in this village in the Pakokku Township, Magway. The household was able to hire casual labor to cultivate their farmland, and so he was not required to contribute much of his own. He had been able to continue his education all the way to high school, which was out of reach for most of his peers.

He felt an attraction to life in the city and a corresponding dissatisfaction with village life. He lamented the lack of electricity and internet access in the village. He couldn't update himself with news, because newspapers and magazines were not available. Most importantly, he did not want to be a farmer. He knew what he wanted to be: a tour guide for foreign visitors.

One year ago, he made the decision to drop out of high school, and pursue work in Mandalay in order to pursue his ambition. His sister, who was already living there, put him in touch with her childhood friend who now owned a small restaurant in the city. The restaurant owner told him that he needed a bartender and preferred to employ people from the Pakokku Township. A high-school diploma was not a requirement, but some high-school-level education was preferable. Having passed the 10th grade, the young man was well qualified.

While he was still not a tour guide, bartending work paid well, and the young man received free lodging and accommodation. What really appealed to him, however, was the opportunity to engage with a private English-language tutor who was provided without cost to the restaurant's employees, as they catered mostly to overseas tourists. He was very happy with the arrangement, since he could not afford the cost or time-commitment required to learn English. With a good income, exposure to foreigners, and an opportunity to develop his English-speaking skills, working at the restaurant was the perfect stepping stone to fulfill his goal.

He has been working as a full-time bartender for almost eight months now, earning K60,000 a month. Since he doesn't have to pay for meals and lodgings, he can save most of his income. He sends money back home to his parents; while they don't rely on it for their survival, it enables them to save and invest.

The young migrant said he enjoyed working in Mandalay and had no plan to move back to his village. While he still wants to become a tour guide in the short-to-medium term, he is beginning to think about even further into the future; namely, wondering if he can save enough to return to school and complete his degree in order to get a better job at a private company in Mandalay or Yangon. For this young man the future is quite exciting.



SHOCK RESPONSE



Why they migrate

For poor and especially landless households that have experienced adverse shock disrupting their primary livelihood, such as illness or crop damage, migration is a coping mechanism to meet subsistence needs.

How they migrate

The effects of adverse shock diminish the ability of these migrants to proactively plan for migration, which means that they are more likely to seek immediate opportunities in nearby rural areas.

What do they do

Such households are likely to work as casual, on-farm laborers in surrounding villages.



SHOCK RESPONSE

Migration as a response to shock is used principally to address immediate subsistence needs following an adverse shock to the household or community, such as a loss of household labor through injury or illness, crop damage, or a weather event. This type of migrant will be the poorest, with little or no savings and no alternative form of livelihood; migration becomes the only viable alternative when the primary livelihood activity is no longer tenable. Compared with risk management migration, households producing shock response migrants are unable to effectively plan migration strategies.

Shocks encountered in the study included both individual and collective shocks. Individual shocks commonly reported included the loss of family labor due to illness or death, or crop destruction, often resulting in household food insecurity. Migration may then be seen as a direct reaction to food insecurity and the urgent need for non-farm income.

Collective shocks are generally perceived to be weather related, and result in poor crop yields. While these shocks are collectively felt, different households have varying response capacities. In the case of severe shocks, however, such as the 2008 Cyclone Nargis, entire communities continue to migrate from affected areas, citing unsustainable crop yields. Migration as a response to exogenous collective shock is observed primarily in Ayeyarwady in our sample, especially migrant households moving to the city of Bogale.

As described previously, the capacity to absorb shocks, and the specific coping strategies households adopt in response to them, is correlated with household assets, including household labor and land ownership. Migration, in this sense, can also be considered as a coping strategy for households without the capacity to otherwise absorb shock. As a corollary, landless households are more likely to respond to shock through migration than households with agricultural land. This can be observed by comparing the correlation of

migration with food insecurity episodes—that is, whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate food is limited or uncertain. For example, 42 percent of households experiencing food insecurity reported migration as a response in Ayeyarwady. Moreover, the incidence of food insecurity is most prevalent in landless households, and households suffering food insecurity episodes are more likely to migrate if they are landless. Other livelihood groups, in particular small and medium landholders migrate less during food insecurity episodes indicating that they are more able to manage shocks.

Migration in response to shock occurs primarily within the same region. This type of migration is characterized by a lack of significant planning due to the unpredictable nature of the adverse event and the urgent needs that result. For this reason, and for the fact that these tend to be the poorest migrants, migration as a response to shock happens primarily at a localized level. Results from the household survey confirm this pattern: in both regions, the most popular destination for households facing a food insecurity episode is within the region.

This type of migration includes seasonal movements within a given region in response to food insecurity, as discussed above; however, in cases of large-scale collective shocks that fundamentally disrupt local livelihood patterns, such as Cyclone Nargis in Ayeyarwady, migration in response to shock can also be permanent.



BOX 3. RESPONDING TO SHOCK

It was never her plan to move out of the village. The 29-year-old woman said that even after working for the last six years, she still missed home in her village in the Labutta Township, Ayeyarwady. Her family did not own any agricultural land, and she was her household's main breadwinner even before she left. During that time she sold food, mostly mohinga (a traditional Burmese fish soup), in the village. She lived with her parents, who supplemented her income by fishing from a nearby stream. When they managed to catch enough fish to sell, they could earn K5,000 to K10,000 but most days they could not catch any. In total their income was barely enough to support the household, but they managed to get by.

When Cyclone Nargis hit in 2008, however, their various income-earning activities were disrupted, and were no longer sufficient to meet the subsistence constraints of the household. She and the rest of the household hoped that in the post-Nargis landscape they would be able to continue their previous livelihoods, but life in the village never really recovered its equilibrium. With the village economy decimated, selling food and fish no longer became a viable option. They soon found themselves in debt and could not make the repayments. She decided that her family's best chance of survival was if she found a job in Yangon to provide the necessary income. Her family was against the idea, saying that it was not safe for a young woman to go to the city by herself, but she insisted that it was the only choice available.

She was not the only one from this village to need to move after the cyclone hit. In fact, many others were already making their way out of the village, mostly into Yangon. Like herself, most of her fellow villagers had a middle-school-level education and were looking for unskilled labor. The jobs they typically found in Yangon were in the construction sector for men and in garment factories for women.

Once the decision to migrate had been agreed, she contacted a friend who already worked at a tea shop in the city. With her experience working as a food seller in the village, her friend was able to get her a job as a cook. Her friend was also willing to share her accommodation and split the fee, allaying fears from her family that she would be living alone.

Without savings, she was forced to borrow some money from a local money lender for travel and other initial costs before she received her first pay. She took out a loan of K20,000 at a monthly interest rate of 20 percent, intending to pay it back after a month. She said she would not have taken that risk if she had not already secured a job and lodging.

The investment paid off; after one month she received her salary of K50,000 and paid off the loan. Over the past six years she has been working in the food industry in Yangon; she has managed to improve her skills as a cook and has found better and better jobs. She has worked in four different restaurants; each time negotiating a salary increase. She is now working at a restaurant in North Okkalapa in Yangon, earning a monthly wage of K100,000. She sends K150,000 back home every three months or so, either by giving the cash to a fellow villager visiting home or taking it herself.

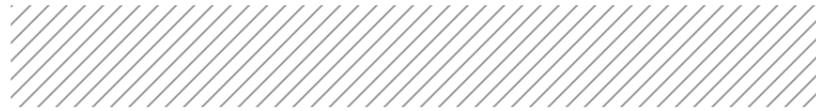
She does not intend to bring her children to Yangon, not only because she could not afford it, considering the high cost of living in the city, but also because she still harbors hopes of returning to the village permanently someday. She is now trying to save money and raise enough capital to open a food stall back in the village. Until then, she will have to call Yangon home.

WHY DO PEOPLE
MIGRATE?

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GARMENT MAKER



WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?



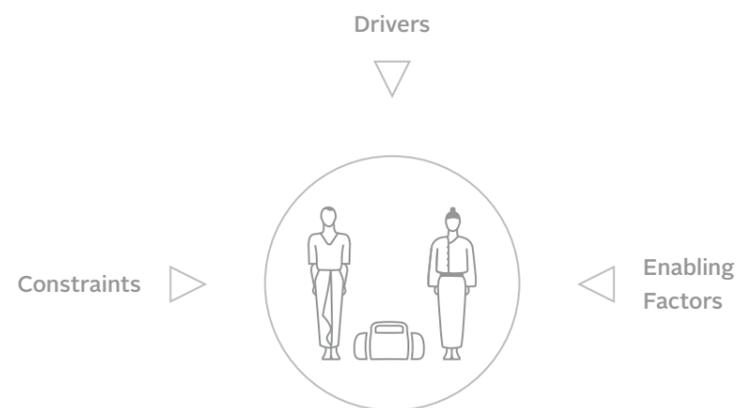
This section turns to the question of “why people migrate” rather than “why migration happens”.

People decide to migrate when the motivating factors overcome the constraints. This is driven by an interaction of drivers, constraints, and enabling factors:

- Drivers**
 Migration is motivated by a series of drivers, such as job availability, insufficient or unreliable labor opportunities in rural areas, and the expected earning differential in other sectors. It is also, in some cases, because people prefer urban amenities and society, and less physically demanding labor.
- Constraints**
 At the same time, potential migrants are faced with a series of constraints, including financial and social costs, as well as lack of job information and security.
- Enabling Factors**
 Improved access to a range of enabling factors including transportation, communication technology and information can potentially influence the decisions of people to migrate. As discussed below, the key enabling factor identified by research is the scope and strength of social networks, which provide information about jobs, housing, and security in hoped-for destinations.

Figure 10. Conceptual Framework for Migration Decisions

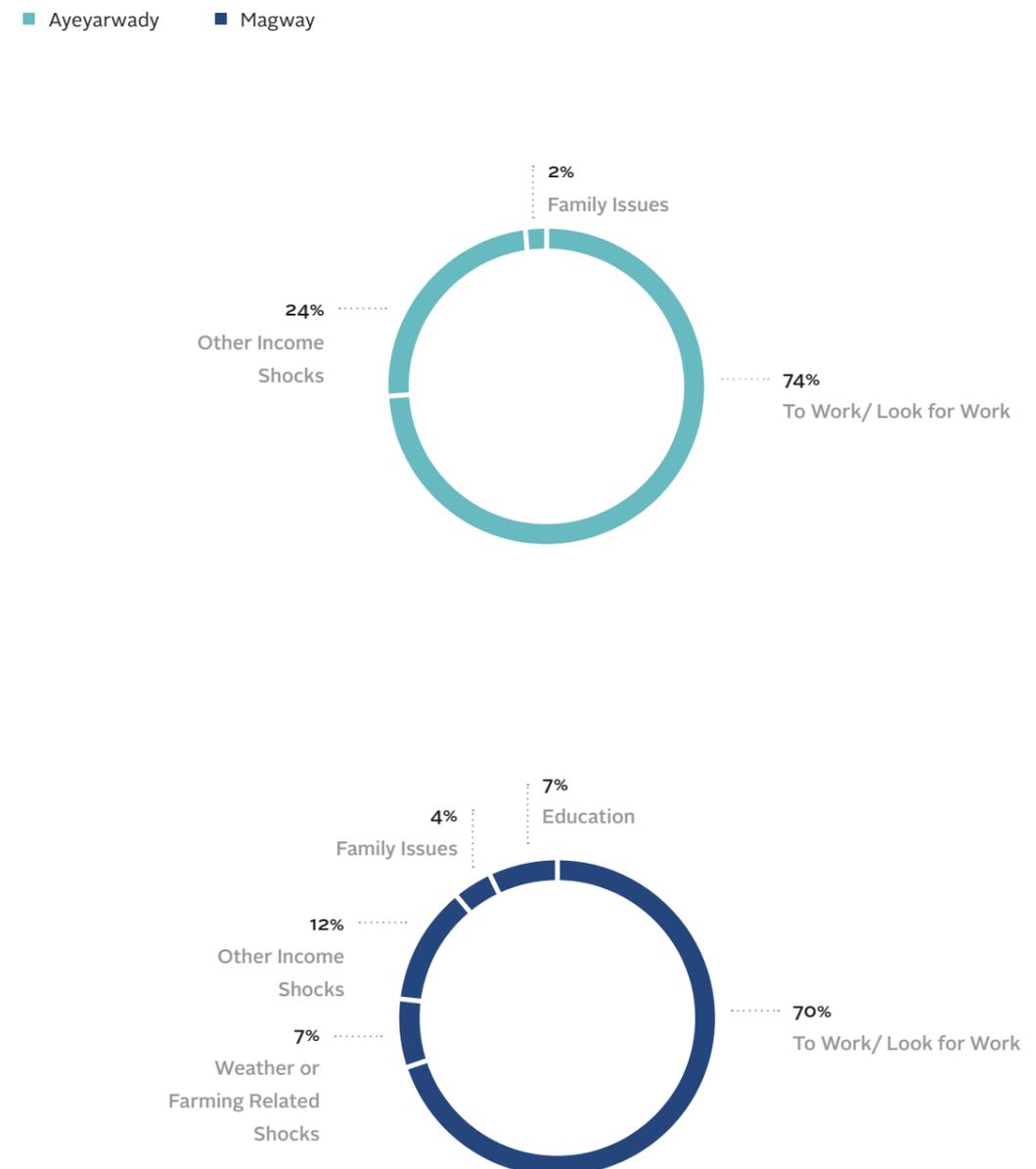
Migration decisions are influenced by the interaction of drivers, constraints, and enabling factors.



DRIVERS FOR MIGRATION

Drivers for migration are the factors that create the pressure for migration. There are three major drivers for migration in Magway and Ayeyarwady: earning differentials, job availability, and gaps in living and working conditions. As noted in the previous section, overwhelmingly, motivating factors are related to employment opportunities.

Figure 11. Reasons for Decision to Migrate by Region as Reported by Sending Household



Earning Differentials

The prevailing notion in migration literature is that the difference in expected earnings is one of the major drivers for labor movement. The higher the earning differentials between areas, the higher the pressure becomes for individuals to migrate. Lant Pritchett, for instance, cites “gaps in unskilled wages” as one of the five irresistible forces that create historically unprecedented pressure for labor mobility across national boundaries.¹⁵

At this time, there are no reliable large-scale systematic data on destination wages in Myanmar. However, qualitative data on wages in source and destination locations, which was collected in the off-season when field work was being conducted, suggests little difference in casual-labor wages between areas of migration origin and destination. Assuming that information on wages in the destination areas is available—and combined with our findings that people migrate primarily for work—this suggests that migration may be motivated by objectives other than earning higher wages, especially for risk management types. For these households, which are operating within subsistence constraints, this could include attempting to diversify their assets in order to manage the risk of failing to meet subsistence requirements—in this case, allocating household labor across rural, farm employment and urban, non-farm employment.

Job Availability in Sending Areas

In rural sending areas, casual laborers reported difficulty in securing sufficient labor in off-peak seasons, creating insufficient incomes for poor households despite higher wages in peak-harvest and planting seasons due to labor shortages. As the 2012 LIFT baseline survey documented, the average days of work a farm laborer could expect were: 49 days for men and 42 for women in the monsoon season, and respectively, 12 days and 16 days in the off-season.¹⁶ Similarly, the fourth round of QSEM reported: “The lack of consistent work resulted in casual laborers looking at other alternatives to sustain their



In rural sending areas, casual laborers reported difficulty in securing sufficient labor in off-peak seasons, creating insufficient incomes for poor households despite higher wages in peak-harvest and planting seasons.

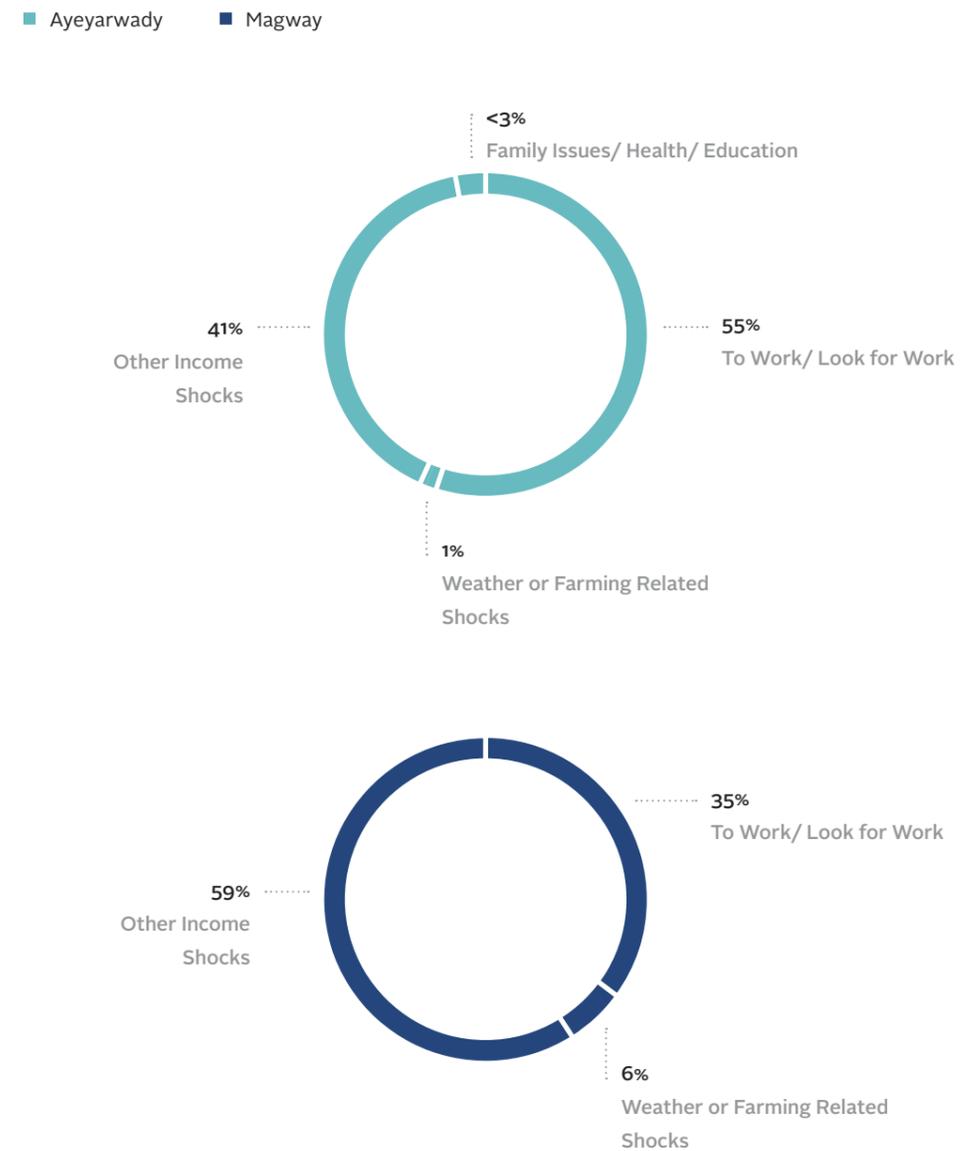
livelihoods.”¹⁷ As one male casual laborer from a village in Labutta Township reported: “Jobs are scarce for casual laborers. Land owners hire laborers from other villages, and also hire those who borrow money from them during the lean season in exchange for cheaper labor during peak season.”

¹⁵ Pritchett, Lant. 2006. Let Their People Come: Breaking the Gridlock on Global Labor Mobility. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.

¹⁶Note that this varies significantly between regions and even within regions.

¹⁷ World Bank. “Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring Round 4.” World Bank, Myanmar.

Figure 12. Perceptions of Sending Area Households of the Reasons for Migration



This driver is expected to be most influential for those seeking to manage risk and respond to shock through migration: limited job availability during the off-season potentially puts households with limited assets at risk, and it is these households that lack the ability to cope with shock by non-migration means. Households with access to land, non-agricultural labor or financial resources are in a better position to weather income-stream variations; households without such assets attempt to diversify income streams via migration.

For upwardly mobile types, who are more likely to have education levels above lower secondary, the availability of desirable jobs can also influence the decision to migrate. This most commonly occurs when source villages are unable to provide employment options commensurate with skills attained.

Survey results demonstrate the differences between regions in the relationships between migration and employment in sending areas. In Ayeyarwady, perceptions amongst the sample population reveal that more than half of respondents think that migrants leave in search of jobs. That people in sending areas in Ayeyarwady more closely link migration and employment—people are leaving because jobs are scarce—suggests that the impact of migration on local labor markets would be greater than in Magway, where migration is seen more as a response to shock.

Gaps in Working Conditions and Lifestyle

Migration is also motivated by lifestyle preferences. Young people, especially, often express a desire to escape on-farm labor, which is perceived as physically demanding. Urban work is seen as easier: “Work is not always available in the village and my daughters did not want to do farming in the sun,” reported the father of a current migrant in a village in Magway Township.

Beyond economic considerations, there is an attraction, especially among young people, to urban amenities and culture. As described by a 21-year-old casual laborer from a village in Pakokku Township now in Mandalay: “I envied those who migrated to Mandalay. I knew that I would not have to work in the sun and would not be as tired as in my village if I work there. And the wage earned by herding cattle was about the same amount as washing dishes at food shops.” According to focus group discussions with village elders in Magway and Ayeyarwady the spread of perceptions relating to urban lifestyles in rural areas appears to be driven in part by an increase in the availability of mobile phones and TVs.



BOX 4. MIGRATING FOR NEW EXPERIENCES

In several interviews, with young people especially, motivations for migrating were expressed in terms of social preferences and the desire for new experiences outside the bounds of traditional village life. Such preferences were illustrated well by the case of an 18-year-old woman who had recently returned from her first migration experience to her home in this village in Magway Township. She had initially left the village at 15, not in search of better wages but because she was unsatisfied with village life and sought to experience the kind of urban life described to her by current and returned migrants. Typifying upwardly mobile migration, her motivation was primarily to seek a different, better life, rather than as a household strategy to manage income streams.

That is not to say that she did not rely on the counsel and support of her family and her broader social network when she decided to migrate: with the help of her neighbors, she was put in touch with the owner of a restaurant in the city of Magway about a position working for him cleaning vegetables. Once the initial terms of the employment arrangement, including wages and accommodation, were discussed she relied on her relatives and friends in Magway to investigate these arrangements and confirm that they were suitable. Only after this vetting was completed did she accept the job and make the move.

After two years she returned to her village when she became dissatisfied with her restaurant job, even though she had been promoted to waiting on customers. She did not consider her initial migration experience a failure, but it did not live up to her expectations. However, having experienced urban life she was now sure that she did not want to live in the village. She plans to migrate again in the near future and is making inquiries with friends in Yangon. She explained that she will apply what she learned in the first attempt to the future in the hope that she will eventually be able to permanently live in Yangon.

CONSTRAINTS TO MIGRATING

While the drivers for migration create pressure for individuals to find work outside their native regions, the ability to migrate is also constrained by a variety of factors. The most prominent constraints include: financial and social costs; the capacity of the household to compensate for lost labor; gender norms; and safety concerns. There is very little regional variation in the relative importance of the various constraints. Language ability and official documentation were not identified as constraints, in part because the areas under study are largely ethnically homogenous.



The most prominent constraints to migration include: financial and social costs; the capacity of the household to compensate for lost labor; gender norms; and safety concerns.

Financial Cost

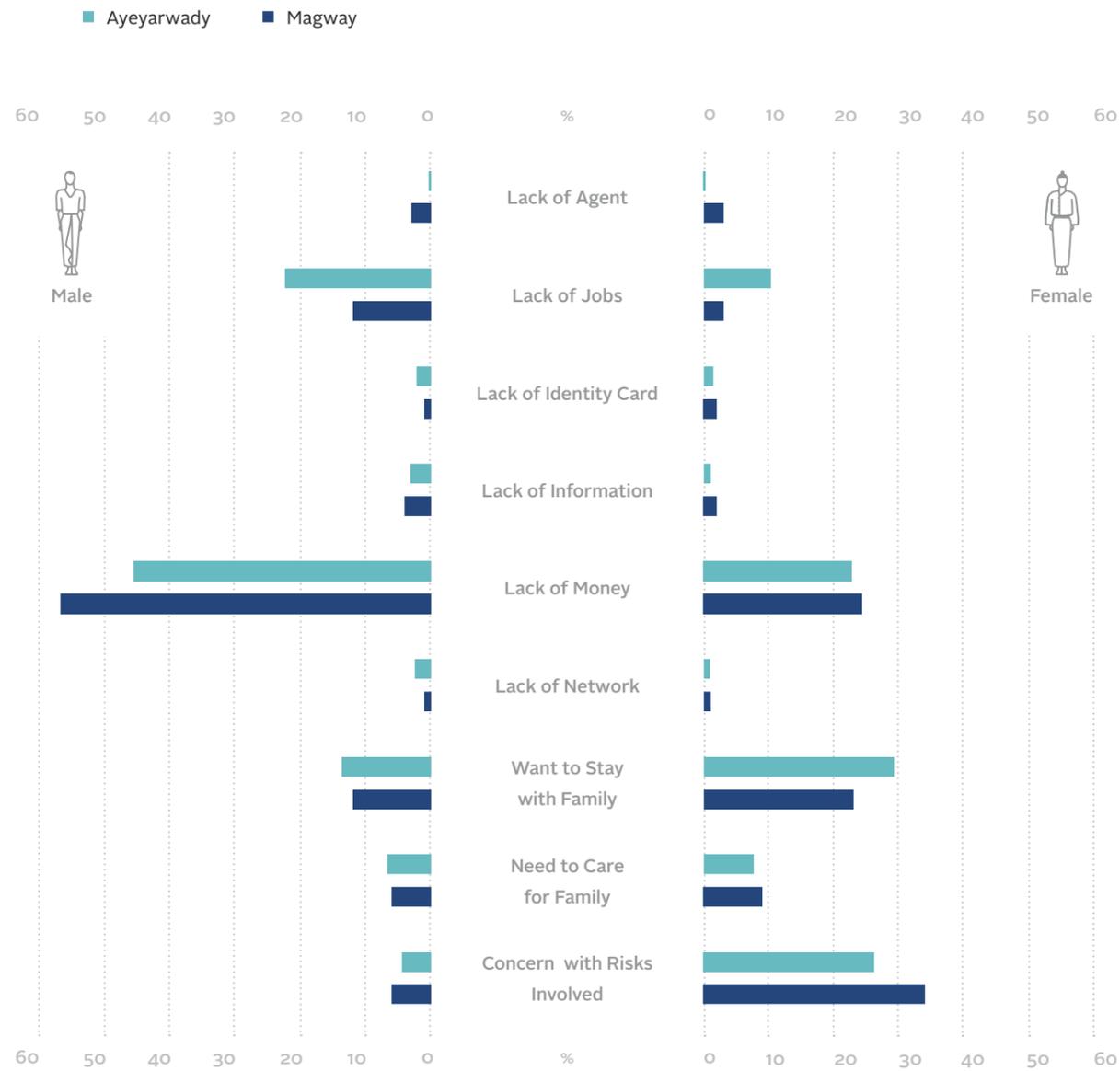
Respondents perceived financial costs to be the primary constraint on migration for men. Most of the financial costs of migration are borne at the outset; they include transportation from the village to the destination, initial accommodation, and the initial job search requirements.

The study finds that these upfront costs associated with migrating are quite low. Over half of households with migrants estimated the total costs related to sending a family member away to be less than K40,000. This increases to over two-thirds of surveyed households when only domestic migration is considered. In general the costs associated with migration are similar for both Magway and Ayeyarwady, with the exception of a greater proportion of households spending over K100,000 in Magway. This reflects the significantly higher number of international migrants from Magway.

With such low costs, a majority of migrants in both regions either financed their migration episodes themselves through savings (43% in Ayeyarwady and 33% in Magway) or by calling on family or relatives (28% and 19%). The study finds that financial constraints are also largely mitigated by the strategy of identifying, if not securing, a job and accommodation prior to migrating. As is discussed in the following section, a reliance on social networks to identify job opportunities prior to departure reduces the potential financial costs required on arrival.

Figure 13. Perceptions of Primary Constraints to Migrating as Reported by Sending Households

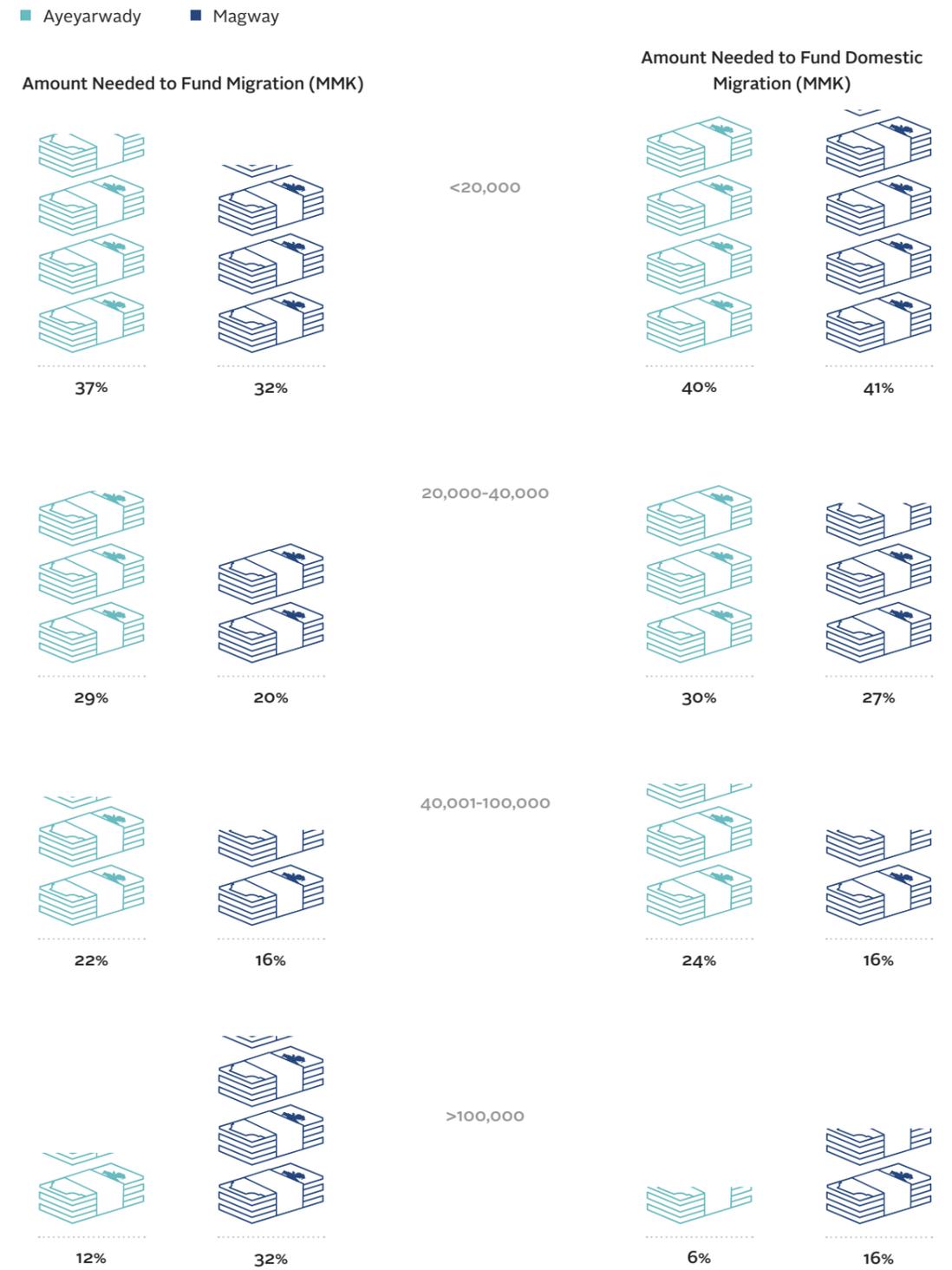
Most men perceive that money is the primary constraint. For women, perceived constraints are oriented more towards family responsibilities and safety concerns.



Safety

Safety and social norms are the primary constraints on migration for women. Consistent with the responses from the survey outlined in Figure 13, non-migrant respondents in sending villages frequently asserted that the migration of young women and girls was at best, inappropriate and at worst, dangerous. Sometimes generalizations about migration patterns were made that were at odds with the data, such as the assertion in a village in Kyaunggon Township in Ayeyarwady that, "Parents do not send their single daughters to work in the cities because they worry about their safety." These collective normative biases, in turn, served as constraints on young women who had

Figure 14. Cost of Financing Migration as Reported by Sending Households (MMK)



The study finds that upfront costs associated with migrating are quite low. Over half of households with migrants estimated the total costs related to sending a family member away to be less than K40,000.

desires to migrate. As one young woman from a village in Labutta Township, Ayeyarwady, reported: “I want to migrate but my parents do not allow me to do so.”

An explanation offered in the same village outlined the issue: “Parents do not allow daughters under the age of 18 to migrate because of their concerns for the safety of their young girls. The parents believe that younger girls are not old enough to take care of themselves and to protect themselves from harassment.” The concern was summarized as follows by one respondent in Magway: “Women are less likely to be allowed to migrate compared with men. Parents usually feel worried about their daughters being cheated or sexually harassed.



Safety and social norms are the primary constraints on migration for women.

More generally, respondents exhibited a significant lack of trust when engaging beyond the village social system. In the qualitative research, several respondents raised concerns about human trafficking and abuse. Survey responses also identified concerns about risks involved in migration. About 40 percent of respondents in both regions perceive a risk of being cheated by an agent, and over one-third of respondents in both regions expressed concerns about human trafficking. This is despite the fact that people were not able to identify particular cases and current migrants rarely reported problems with these issues. In Ayeyarwady, 3 percent of migrants reported being forced to work without pay or trafficked and there were no cases of exploitation by agents. In Magway, 1 percent reported exploitation by agents but there were no reported cases of being forced to work without pay.

To overcome this lack of trust, potential migrants—especially young women—collect a remarkably detailed level of information about job and housing arrangements. As is discussed below, migrants rely on social networks to mitigate the risks associated with migration. Many migrants emphasized the importance of “trust” in various parts of their migration experience. This is more common for young, single women whose parents do not allow them to migrate. For those women who migrated, some reported that their parents took them to the city to ensure their safety and to familiarize themselves with their living conditions.

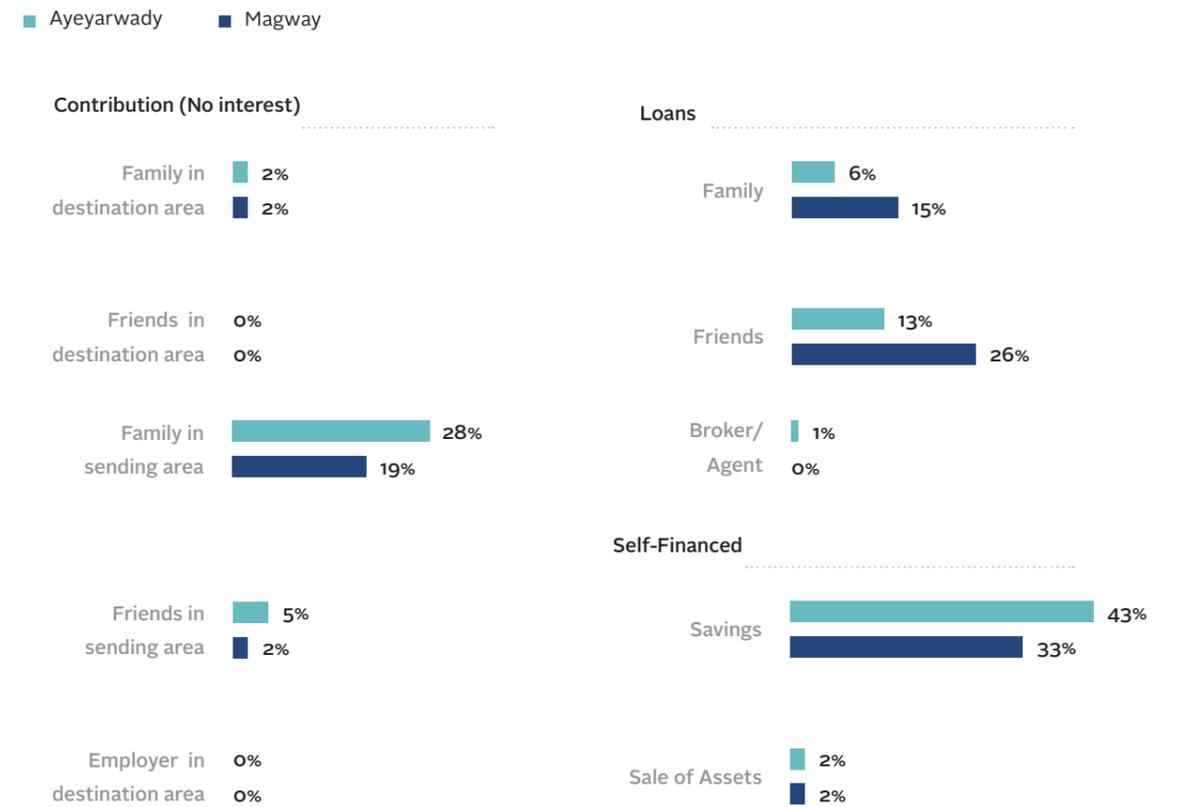
Social Costs

Costs are not only calculated in financial terms: migration entails, in many cases, psychological strain as migrants leave behind family and friends.



About 40 percent of respondents in both regions perceive a risk of being cheated by an agent, and over one-third of respondents in both regions expressed concerns about human trafficking.

Figure 15. Sources of Financing for Migration as Reported by Sending Households



Domestic migration attempts captured within this study did not generally involve the challenges related to language or ethnicity that often characterize international migration; however, migration frequently represented the first time a person left their home and, as a result, social and cultural disorientation can be a major challenge. As noted in Figure 13, a desire to remain close to family remains a considerable constraint to migration, about 17 percent of women and over 12 percent of men identified familial ties as a barrier to migration.

Families are also the locus of a series of social obligations that are differentially applied across age and gender, and impose different constraints on these groups. These connections can influence migration in numerous ways; for example, families with aging parents or young children who would be left behind if their son or daughter migrate.

Family labor also plays an important role in household economies and, by extension, is a key factor in migration decisions. Small and medium landholding households rely on, and allocate family labor to, agricultural production. In this sense, the endowment of human labor that a household has plays an important role and, where insufficient, is a critical constraint. As one respondent explained: “I don’t want to migrate because we don’t have extra labor in the family to work on our family farm.”

ENABLING FACTORS Enabling factors act to lower the constraints described in the previous section. A number of variables that facilitate migration were identified, including social networks, access to transportation, and communication technology. These factors lower both the financial and social costs of migrating. The most important factor the study identified is access to information about jobs and, to a lesser extent, accommodation, through social networks. The central importance of social networks in accessing this information reflects the informal nature of the majority of the migration patterns examined. These networks enable potential migrants to seek potential earning differentials or the availability of jobs in destination areas. Access to social networks varies, however, across individuals and villages—some are able to find jobs through their social network, while others are able only to learn that jobs exist. Similarly, some villages have stronger connections to job markets than others. This section explores the different uses of social networks, including how they change over the course of the migration experience. This section also examines how transportation and communication technology enable migration.

which to rely when learning about general job availability, rates and regularity of pay, and work activities that a given job may entail. Employers and migrants across both regions described a scenario in which employers rely on the social networks of migrants currently under their employ to recruit as typical.

Reliance on social networks to address information asymmetries plays an especially important role in Myanmar because of the strong risk aversion of potential migrants that results from subsistence constraints. When considering and practicing migration, households in the study exercise extreme caution to avoid the poverty-inducing consequences of unsuccessful migration outcomes, namely unsuccessful or even prolonged job searches. Against this background the presence of relatives or someone they trust at their destination also helps to manage the significant risk that migration can entail for many households. These contacts serve to identify, and even secure, jobs. They also provide initial accommodation, often for the first several months or longer, until migrants find their own housing.

Given the important role played by social networks it is unsurprising that the vast majority of migrants in the study moved to places in which they had family or friends; those people were facilitating their job search. Of 75



Social networks play a critical role in both finding a job and managing risk: a female respondent from Magway summarized: 'You need to know someone in the place you're moving; only then can you get a job easily and succeed'.

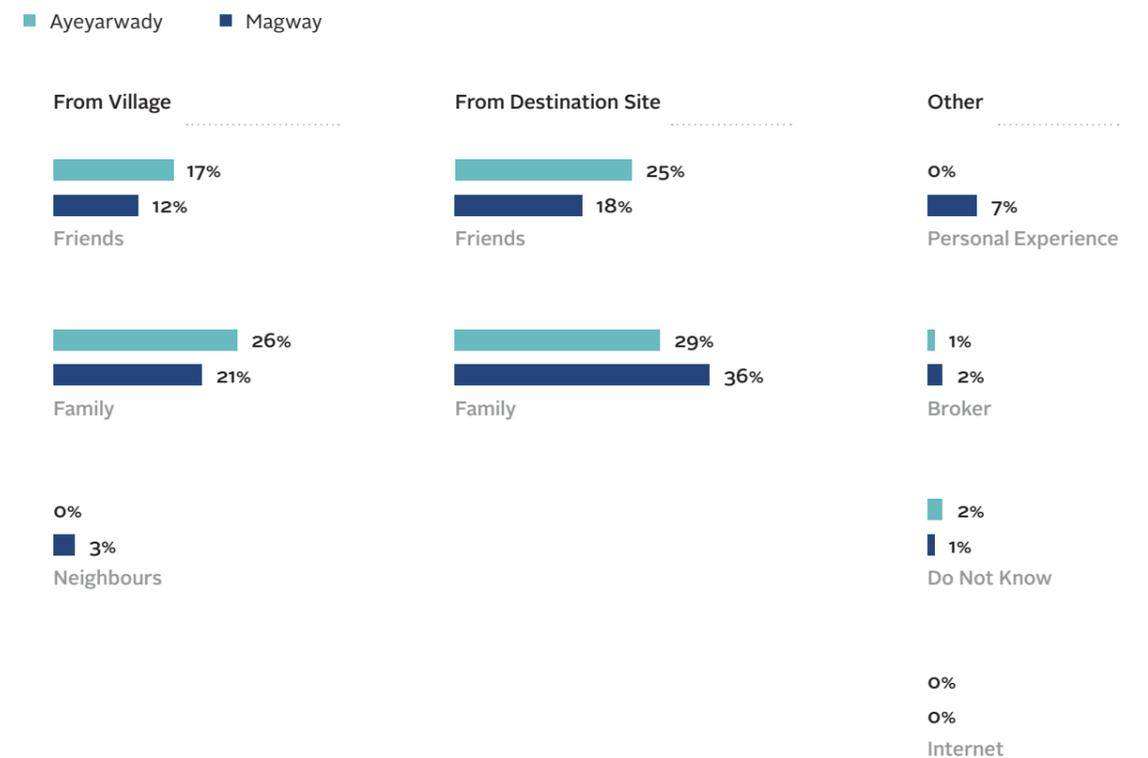
Social Networks

More than any other factor, access to social networks that can help identify and secure jobs facilitates the migration process. Social networks are a critical means for overcoming information asymmetries and managing risk. A significant body of global evidence has demonstrated that contacts in specific destination areas have a positive impact on migration and a migrant is "more likely to be employed and to hold a higher-paying, nonagricultural job" when their social network is larger; in other words, networks not only facilitate jobs, they facilitate better-paying jobs.¹⁸

In Myanmar, social networks play a critical role in both finding a job and managing risk: a female respondent from Magway summarized the dynamic: "There should be someone you know in the receiving community; only then you can get a job easily and you're more likely to succeed in your migration attempt." The importance of social networks for managing risk along the migration experience is tied to the highly informal nature of migration outlined above, as most migrants are moving from rural to urban areas to provide non-agricultural casual labor. These jobs generally come without contracts and formal recruitment processes. In labor-market terms, these markets are characterized by significant information asymmetries; both employers and potential employees have limited sources of information on

¹⁸ See, for example, Munshi, Kaivan. 2003. "Networks in the Modern Economy: Mexican Migrants in the U.S. Labor Market." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 549–99.

Figure 16. Primary Source of Job Information as Reported by Sending Households
Existing social networks are the primary source of job information.



current migrants interviewed in Yangon, Mandalay, and the city of Magway, 67 migrants reported that they had existing friends or family in that location. Of these, 52 cited these networks as the primary reason for selecting their destination when they first chose to migrate. Survey responses, relating to the question on the primary source of information leading to a job in the most recent migration attempt, confirm the central role played by social networks in identifying job information: family and friends are the only significant information resource that migrants in Magway and Ayeyarwady rely on.

Interestingly, while virtually all migrants had job information that they accessed through social networks before they left their village, there is a significant difference between those who simply knew of jobs and those who had secured a job. The vast majority, over 80 percent in both regions, migrate only once they have obtained information about a job situation. This suggests that general job information is fairly accessible and inclusive in sending villages; that is, most potential migrants are able to access information about jobs in destinations like Yangon.



For 58 percent of migrants in Ayeyarwady and 33 percent in Magway, jobs were guaranteed prior to departure. This was usually through either a family member working in the city or relatives, seen as the most reliable source of information for prospective migrants.

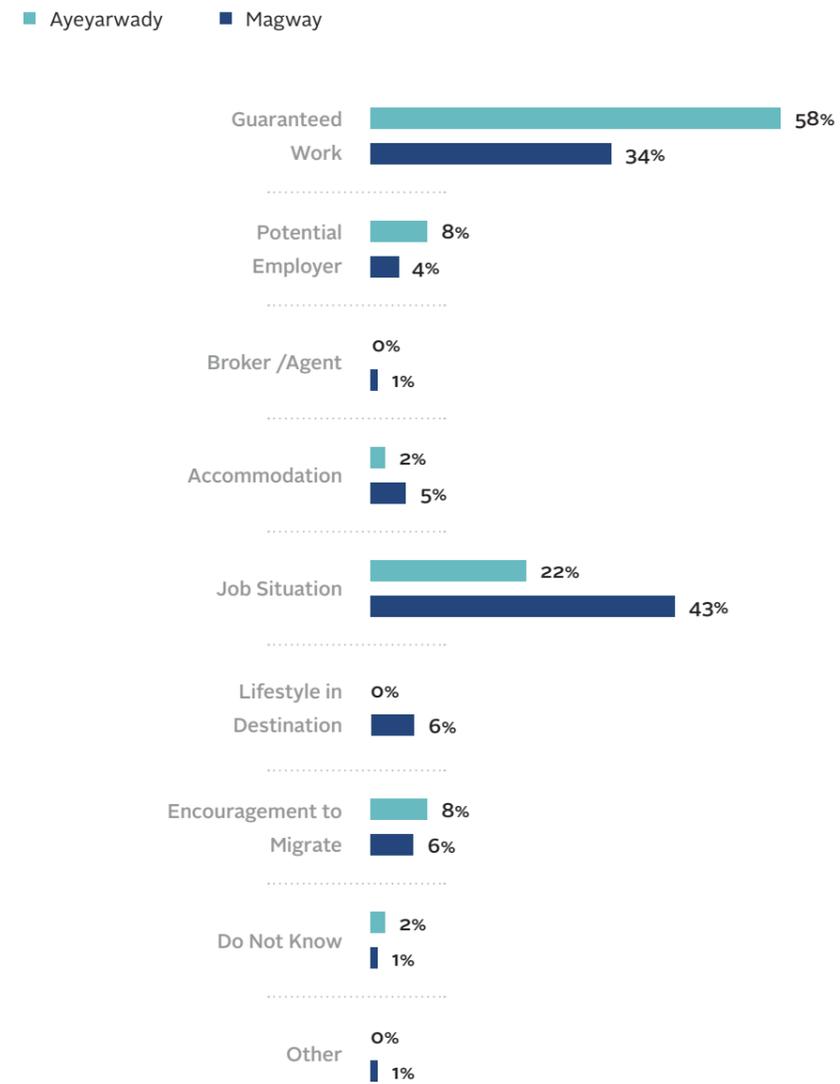
However, this information also indicates a critical difference between identifying job opportunities and securing employment before departure. The distinction between potential job opportunities and guaranteed work is related to the narrow margin of risk associated with a prolonged job search held by many migrants in the sample, as demonstrated in Box 5. For 58 percent of migrants in Ayeyarwady and one-third in Magway, actual work was agreed upon prior to departure. This was usually through either a family member working in the city or relatives, seen as the most reliable source of information for prospective migrants. In contrast, information about possible job opportunities was obtained from fellow villagers. In Magway more migrants were willing to leave only with information about a job prospect (43%) than in Ayeyarwady (22%).

Social networks are, in particular, a key variable factor for migrants under the risk management type. Since the main reason for migration under this type is to provide co-insurance between the migrant and their household, this group is even more averse than others to the risk of not finding a job. As a 29-year-old female migrant from a village in Labutta Township, Ayeyarwady, now working at a restaurant in Yangon described: "If I hadn't had a friend who secured a job for me and was willing to let me live with her, my family wouldn't have let me go to Yangon, even if we didn't really have any other option."

In contrast, people migrating in response to shock had limited access to social networks—and by extension, job information—in destination sites, in part because their planning period was often short and lacking key resources: several key informant interviews described making decisions under heavy

Figure 17. Type of Information Received Pre-Departure

An overwhelming majority of migrants sought information about jobs in destination areas before leaving their village. Many—over one-half in Ayeyarwady—sought a guarantee for employment before leaving.



duress; without the time or means to consult widely or exploit a broader social network. While use of brokers was rare in this category, those who did use it generally tended to be migrants from landless households.

The other livelihood group that reported relying on brokers (again, rarely) was the non-poor households (that is, those from the top wealth quintile but without large land holdings). These households are characterized by the upwardly mobile migration type, which tend to exhibit strong social networks and sufficient planning opportunity. This seeming paradox in fact illustrates the nature of migration motivated by upward social and economic mobility; migrants of this type seek to move beyond their existing social networks. This, combined with the capacity to take on more risk than other migration types, explains why upwardly mobile migrants are less likely to rely on their existing social networks for job information.



BOX 5. JOB INFORMATION IN SENDING VILLAGES: POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES VS. GUARANTEED WORK

Interviews with current and former migrants highlight a critical difference between identifying information about job opportunities and securing employment before departure. The distinction between potential job opportunities and guaranteed work is related to the narrow margin of risk associated with a prolonged job search held by many migrants in the sample, especially for those households with subsistence constraints. For example, in this village in Kyaunggon Township in Ayeyarwady, the poorest of the eight sending villages sampled, a 27-year-old household head explained in a key informant interview how he struggles to make ends meet for his wife and two young children. As a casual laborer he earns K700 a day in the off-peak seasons and K1,500 a day in the peak seasons. His wife also works as a casual farm laborer. To supplement their income, which is often insufficient to meet their consumption needs, he catches crabs and fish in a nearby stream during off-peak seasons. He also borrows from a local farm owner against his future labor, receiving advanced pay for future work in the next planting or harvest season, usually at a much lower rate than he would get paid if he did not have to take it in advance.

With such difficulties he would like to migrate. However, he does have any contacts in destination areas who are able to guarantee him a job if he left his village. Without such a guarantee, he fears for how his family would survive during the job search process: “I would like to go but if I go to Yangon, but while looking for a job it would be very difficult [financially] for my family left in the village. It is also difficult to find an affordable lodging in Yangon.”

Even though he has a relative in Yangon who has suggested promising leads, he has not helped him secure a job. For this prospective migrant the consequences of failure are too onerous. Faced with these calculations, he remains in this village, struggling but surviving.

The imperative of having good social networks is more pronounced for women, and this phenomenon cuts across different groups. Across regions and migration types, researchers observed virtually no households that allowed their female members to move out of the village without a secure job, a definite place to live, and a relative or trusted friend to look after them. This is evident in the case of the female migrant from the village in Labutta Township (featured in Box 3) who, even under pressing circumstances, found it challenging to have her family's consent to go to Yangon.

The composition and use of social networks also change over time. Immediately after migrants arrive, they tend to live with relatives or family members already working in the city. Often these people are the same people who informed them about the job, but this is not always the case. However, networks grow and evolve, and are used to further identify better jobs and accommodation. One woman in Yangon explained how she initially found work cleaning dishes for a tea shop but discovered through other migrants



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living in her Yangon neighborhood that she could earn more if she found a job helping to prepare food in a restaurant. By navigating the growing network of migrants she met she was able to identify vacancies and increasingly better-paying jobs at a series of different restaurants over the course of her seven-year stay in Yangon.

In addition to a variation in the strength of social networks across individuals within a village, there is also significant variation across villages. Since current and previous migrants are the primary source of information, and since migration occurs primarily through social networks, as demonstrated above, areas of previous migration are significantly more likely to have more migrants. For both regions, the chance of a household having a migrant increases with the number of current migrants in the village. For villages with between one and five individuals currently migrating, the chance of having a migrant is 15 percent in Ayeyarwady and 17 percent in Magway. For villages with over five current migrants, the chance of a household having a migrant increases to 35 percent and 39 percent, respectively. As is noted in the following section, the presence of other migrants in a village, particularly in Magway, significantly increases the likelihood of migration.

Transportation

Theoretically, differential access to urban destination areas can be expected to play a large role in constraining or facilitating migration. In villages with limited or very costly transport to the nearest provincial market, which often also functions also as the most proximate transportation hub for movement onward to major migration destinations, the barriers to migration were expected to be higher. However, given the low costs of transportation generally, the study found a lack of significant correlation between the costs of transportation—measured by distance to township center from the village—and migration rates. Rather, the major variable associated with current migration rates in any given village was found to be the number of previous migrants from that village, further confirming the importance of social networks for facilitating migration.

Communication Technology

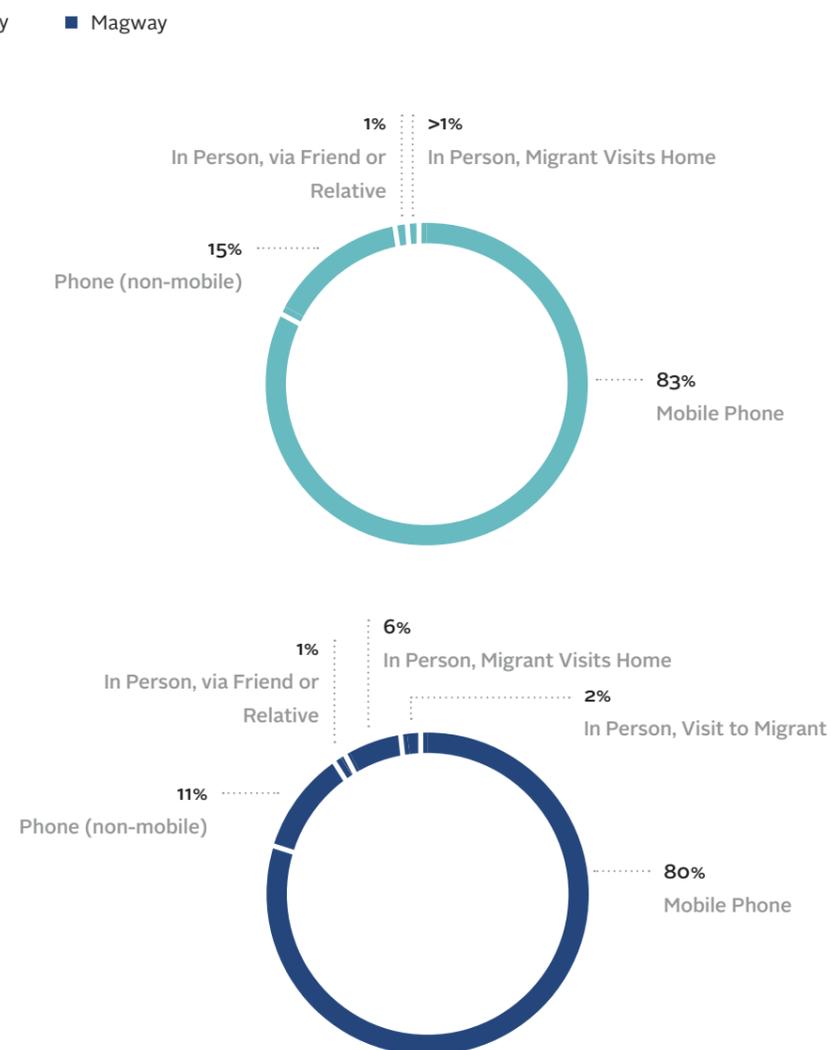
Access to mobile phones has eased information constraints by allowing people in villages to investigate job opportunities, housing, and safety conditions without having to leave their homes. They also temper constraints that are linked to social costs and safety by allowing households to monitor the well-being of their migrating members.

The study was conducted at a time of unprecedented expansion of mobile-phone services across the country, from about 10 percent in 2012 to 50 percent by mid-2015,¹⁹ with prices of SIM cards falling from US\$250 in 2012 to US\$1.5 by early 2015.²⁰

Correspondingly, migrants and migrant-sending families cited greater access to mobile-phone technology as increasing the frequency of communication between them during migration episodes. For example, a mother of two young children in a village in Labutta Township, Ayeyarwady, explained that weekly communication by mobile phone enabled her to discuss household

decisions with her husband, currently in Yangon where he has worked in construction for the past three years. She explained that now he is able to save more money because he does not need to visit as often. As he intends to eventually return to the village, she hopes that this will enable him to do so sooner. In a focus group discussion with village elders in a village in Pakokku Township, parents discussed the effect of mobile phones on lowering the social costs of migration, including reducing the psychological burdens associated with leaving behind loved ones; one father explained that now, with the ability to stay in closer contact, he would feel closer to his daughter if she moved to Mandalay or Yangon, as well as more comfortable that she was safe.

Figure 18. Primary Mode of Contact with Current Migrant as Reported by Sending Households



¹⁹ World Bank. 2014. "Telecommunications Sector Reform Project." Project Appraisal Document, World Bank. 2015b. "Myanmar Country Partnership Framework." World Bank, Myanmar.

²⁰ World Bank. 2015b.

MODELING THE MIGRATION DECISION

Based on the qualitative and quantitative data, the previous sections present an overview of the set of factors that collectively impact on the decision to migrate. The following sub-section examines the relative significance of these factors using a model that tests, via multivariate regression analysis and a set of control variables reflecting available assets (land, labor, education, and capital), the likelihood of households having a migrant. The objective of this approach is to identify which factors are significantly correlated with migration from a statistical standpoint²¹ and to represent key factors shaping migration decisions.²² The model incorporates the analytical framework outlined above—drivers, enabling factors and constraints—by including all of the identified factors for each of the three migration types, identifying their potential impact and specifying variables used in the analysis. These are listed in Annex 4, along with a detailed description of the model, methods used and results. The discussion here presents a summary of the findings.

Significant Factors Driving Migration in Magway & Ayeyarwady

Magway

In Magway, the availability of labor and social networks are the significant factors, in contrast to household assets (land, education, wealth) which are not significantly correlated with increased migration:

- **Availability of labor is the key enabling factor.** The number of working-age adults has the largest effect on migration decisions, suggesting that migration is a means to add an additional type of income stream when labor is not fully employed in local activities (own agriculture, small business, employee labor). The lack of significance of the diversity of livelihood strategies indicates that migration is an important diversification strategy when labor resources are available.

²¹ It is important to note that the results do not assert a causal relationship but instead determine whether particular factors demonstrate statistically significant correlation with the migration decision.

²² As a corollary, the model also identifies those factors which are simply variables correlated with the key factors but which do not independently influence decisions to migrate. For example, there are many factors correlated with land ownership (education, food security, shock, consumption level) but not all may impact on the migration decision from a statistically significant standpoint.

- **Migration response to shocks varies based on the type of event.** Households facing food insecurity episodes are less likely to migrate, potentially due to the larger rate of land ownership in Magway where some form of agricultural activities are always viable (see Figure 19 for rates of land ownership). In contrast, households in debt are more likely to migrate, suggesting that small landholdings are not sufficient to address debt-service needs and that migration is a potential mitigating factor.
- **Social networks lead to greater migration.** The number of migrants in the village is a key enabling factor, reflecting the social networks that reduce information gaps.
- **Assets are not key drivers.** Migration rates are similar across different wealth, education and land-ownership categories.

Ayeyarwady

In Ayeyarwady, household assets and the potential to generate alternative income streams play a complementary role alongside labor availability and access to information:

- **Low levels of education and land assets lead to greater migration.** Households with less access to land and fewer years of education are more likely to migrate. However, higher levels of wealth/income are not associated with greater migration rates.
- **Even accounting for low levels of household assets, food security events are significant.** Migration rates are increased for those experiencing a food insecurity episode, likely due to the fact that the percentage of landless households is much higher in Ayeyarwady. Landless households lack access to resources that could work as buffers against shock, creating more impetus for migration to address food scarcity.
- **Households with access to a greater diversity of income streams are less likely to migrate.** Households who are able to earn income from different sources—own agriculture or small business, along with casual labor for others—are less likely to migrate.
- **Availability of labor and access to information are key factors.** Similar to Magway, having household members of working age available beyond the labor employed in the source village, along with information from other migrant experiences in the village, increases migration rates.

Evaluating the Migration Decision for Livelihoods Groups

The results above demonstrate that household asset factors (land, education, wealth) are not always key drivers of migration decisions. For Ayeyarwady, those with land and education are less likely to migrate but this is not the case for Magway. For both regions, measures of household welfare (in this case, consumption) are not significant. This is not surprising given the variation of migration rates by different asset-based sub-groups: households with different

levels and types of assets employ migration strategies for different reasons. This entails poor households responding to negative shocks and a lack of sustainable livelihood (shock response); casual laborers looking to diversify away from agriculture in the off-season (risk management); or college- or high-school educated young adults seeking out lifestyle changes or career opportunities in urban areas (upwardly mobile).

Households with different levels and types of assets have different motivations to migrate, and they employ different migration strategies. Poor households respond to negative shock and a lack of sustainable livelihood options (shock response); casual laborers look to diversify away from agriculture to manage income volatility in the agricultural off-season (risk management); and college or high-school educated young adults seek lifestyle changes of career opportunities in urban areas (upwardly mobile).

In this context, in order to identify key factors motivating migration decisions it is necessary to assess whether groups of households with similar asset characteristics and, thus, similar livelihood options demonstrate differences across these factors. To do so, households are placed into four groups based on the degree to which they hold assets that allow them to diversify livelihood strategies, starting from a base of landless households engaging in casual labor only. Given the relatively flat consumption distribution found in rural areas in Myanmar, the primary differences from an economic welfare standpoint center around the management of income-flow risk via a diversity of income streams, rather than an overall measure of wealth, except at the very top of the distribution.²³ As noted above, the qualitative research demonstrates that although actual unemployment is rare, the variability of work in the off-season introduces significant income-stream risk for those without access to multiple livelihood strategies. Livelihood strategies depend primarily on three factors:

- **Land ownership:** Households with access to land are able to mix labor for their own farm with casual labor for others; as land ownership increases, households are less likely to depend on employment as agricultural labor to supplement other income streams.
- **Education:** Households with members who have high-school or tertiary degrees have access to employment where wages are higher than standard wage levels for agricultural or unskilled non-agricultural labor.
- **High consumption:** Households in the top 10 percent of the consumption distribution show much larger variation in relation to the flat, bottom 90 percent and are presumably able to manage a variability of income streams due to existing wealth.

²³ 80 percent of the distribution reports less than K70,000 per person per month.

Households are thus placed into four livelihood categories:

- Landless
- Small landholding: <5 acres
- Medium landholding: 5–12 acres
- Non-poor: households with >12 acres, a household member with a tertiary degree and/or households in the top 10 percent of the consumption distribution by region

Figure 19 illustrates the distribution of households across the four livelihood types. It is worth noting that the number of landless is significantly smaller in Magway than in Ayeyarwady due to a larger group of households owning very small plots of land. While the size of the landholding is probably not enough to sustain a household independently through subsistence agriculture, the income stream derived still provides a measure of risk mitigation that is not available to those without land.

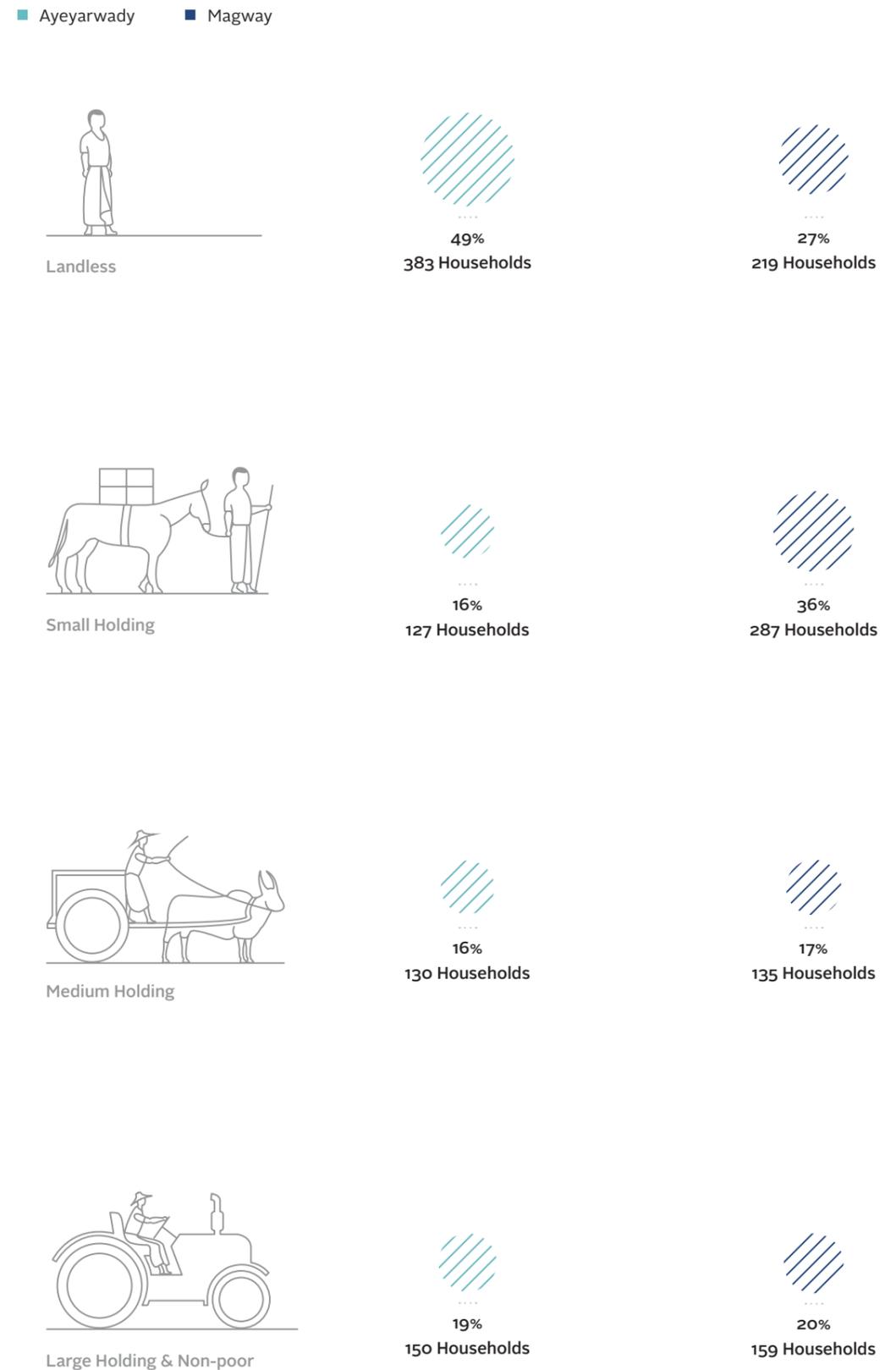
Significant Factors Driving Migration Across Livelihood Groups

The different levels of assets held by different livelihood groups is a stronger driver in Ayeyarwady than in Magway. Migration decreases across livelihood groups as household assets increase: the land, education and wealth assets owned by small landholding, medium landholding and non-poor livelihood groups in contrast to the landless, lead to less frequent migration. In Magway, only households with small landholdings are less likely to migrate than landless households. Those with larger land ownership or the non-poor (with access to education or wealth) migrate at similar rates. Although small landholders are probably not able to provide enough income solely from their own agricultural activities, the ability to diversify income streams using casual labor in addition to agriculture probably reduces overall risk, making migration less attractive.

In Ayeyarwady, available labor, especially male labor, is more important for small and medium landholders. These households are more likely to require extra household members or males, indicating households do need labor at home and only release members for migration when they already have sufficient working-age members to work on their own land or engage in other household activities. For landless households and non-poor households, members are more likely to migrate regardless of their number of working-age members or males in the household.

In Ayeyarwady, households suffering food insecurity episodes are more likely to migrate if they are landless. Other livelihood groups, in particular small and medium landholders migrate less during food insecurity episodes, indicating that they are more able to manage such shocks. Landless households are more likely to respond to shock with migration than other groups.

Figure 19. Distribution of Households by Livelihoods Type



SUMMARY:
WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

This section has sought to answer the question of why people from villages in Magway and Ayeyarwady choose to migrate. To do so it has identified a variety of factors that act as drivers for migration—differentials in earnings, job availability, and differences in working conditions and lifestyles— as well as factors that act as constraints—safety, financial and social costs. Moderating the decision for each prospective migrant are enabling factors that can help to overcome the constraints; these include the relative accessibility of transportation to urban jobs, telecommunication technology, and most importantly social networks. Social networks serve many purposes: identifying job opportunities while in the village of origin; securing accommodation in destination sites; and lowering the psychological burden of moving into an unknown environment.

The utility of social networks in these terms is particularly important in the context of rural Myanmar, where many households operate within subsistence constraints. For these households the primary purpose of migration is to manage risk through diversifying their household income into productive sectors other than agriculture. Not only does this help mitigate the consequences of agricultural shock, but especially for landless or small landholding households, migration can help fill seasonal gaps in income. The foregoing section has identified migration undertaken by these households as risk management migration.

The section has also sought to examine the relative significance of the factors identified above using a model that tests, via multivariate regression analysis and a set of control variables reflecting available assets (land, labor, education, and capital), the likelihood of households having a migrant. The model confirms that migrant households seeking to manage risk choose to migrate in order to create a diverse and potentially more reliable income stream, assuming availability of labor and an information network. Risk management migration decisions are influenced by three factors: 1) the availability of labor in the household for migration; 2) the capacity of the household to diversify income streams; and 3) the relative availability of jobs in the sending areas and information concerning jobs in the destination areas.

due to the fact that they have two income streams: their own agriculture or business and the potential to supply casual labor locally.

In addition to those who migrate to manage risks, there are households that employ migration as a response to shock and the immediate loss of a primary income source. Shock response migration tends to occur in poor, landless households: regression analysis shows that households suffering food insecurity episodes are more likely to migrate if they are landless.

On the other end of the spectrum of livelihood groups, the study identifies households that, through ownership of land or other assets, are defined as non-poor. These households see migration as a chance to participate in Myanmar's market economy and the emerging, mostly urban, opportunities that it is creating. Since they are seeking to use migration as a means of upward social and economic mobility, this study has categorized migration from these households as upwardly mobile. Upwardly mobile households are responding to opportunities by accessing a better formal education, which qualifies them to compete for skilled employment, and international migration—which comes with higher upfront costs but higher financial returns in the form of better wages—to China, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea. Both formal education and the upfront costs of international migration constitute investments for upwardly mobile households. The ability to afford such investments is directly correlated with the assets households have access to.



The decision to migrate is inversely correlated with the availability of alternative income sources—households without access to such income streams are more likely to migrate—confirming the idea that for many households migration is a coping mechanism to respond to the lack of regular income streams.

Regression analysis also demonstrates the decision to migrate is inversely correlated with the availability of alternative income sources—households without access to such income streams are more likely to migrate—confirming the idea that for many households migration is a coping mechanism to respond to the lack of regular income streams. In Ayeyarwady, households with a greater diversity of income sources are less likely to migrate, indicating that they do not need to use migration as a risk-management tool. In Magway, small landholding households migrate at a lower rate than the landless, probably

THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILIES AND
COMMUNITIES IN SENDING VILLAGES



UMBRELLA FACTORY

THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN SENDING VILLAGES

Migration has important effects on poverty reduction. A key instrument through which migration transfers benefits to sending households and, indirectly, communities is through remittances. This section examines key ways in which migration is changing the social and economic lives of households and communities in sending areas, including through remittances and the return of migrants.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON SENDING HOUSEHOLDS

Remittances from domestic migration can provide a more stable and reliable income source, an important resource in the context of rural Myanmar. In upwardly mobile cases, migration can also contribute to poverty reduction by providing higher incomes than work in the agriculture sector, and offer opportunities to climb the income ladder.²⁴ These effects are well documented across the world: a 71-country study concluded that remittances “reduce the level, depth, and severity of poverty” of receivers and their communities.²⁵ In Tanzania, researchers tracked migrants and non-migrants between 1991 and 2004 and found that the poverty rate decreased by 23 percentage points for those who moved versus 4 percentage points.²⁶ Gains from migration were even greater for domestic migrants in Ethiopia: there, rural-rural migrants’ consumption growth between 1994 and 2009 was an estimated 100 percent greater than that of non-migrants after controlling for age, education, and family fixed effects. The difference between migrants and non-migrants for those who moved to urban areas was almost 200 percent.²⁷

The majority of migrants in Ayeyarwady and Magway, 69 percent and 55 percent respectively, remit; mostly only once or twice per year. The amount that migrants remit depends on the type of migration, which is related, as demonstrated above, to the type of migrant. The median amount of remittances over a 12-month period is K250,000; however, the mean is closer to twice that amount, K415,800. This is driven by a small number of cases of international migrants remitting very significant sums (over K1.5 million).

Many migrants avoid regular banking services when sending money back to their families. Instead, they rely on relatives and friends to carry cash back; to a lesser extent they carry it back themselves. The method of sending remittances is closely correlated with the type of migration and destination: international migrants overwhelmingly use the formal banking system; the closer the migration destination is to the source village the more likely it is

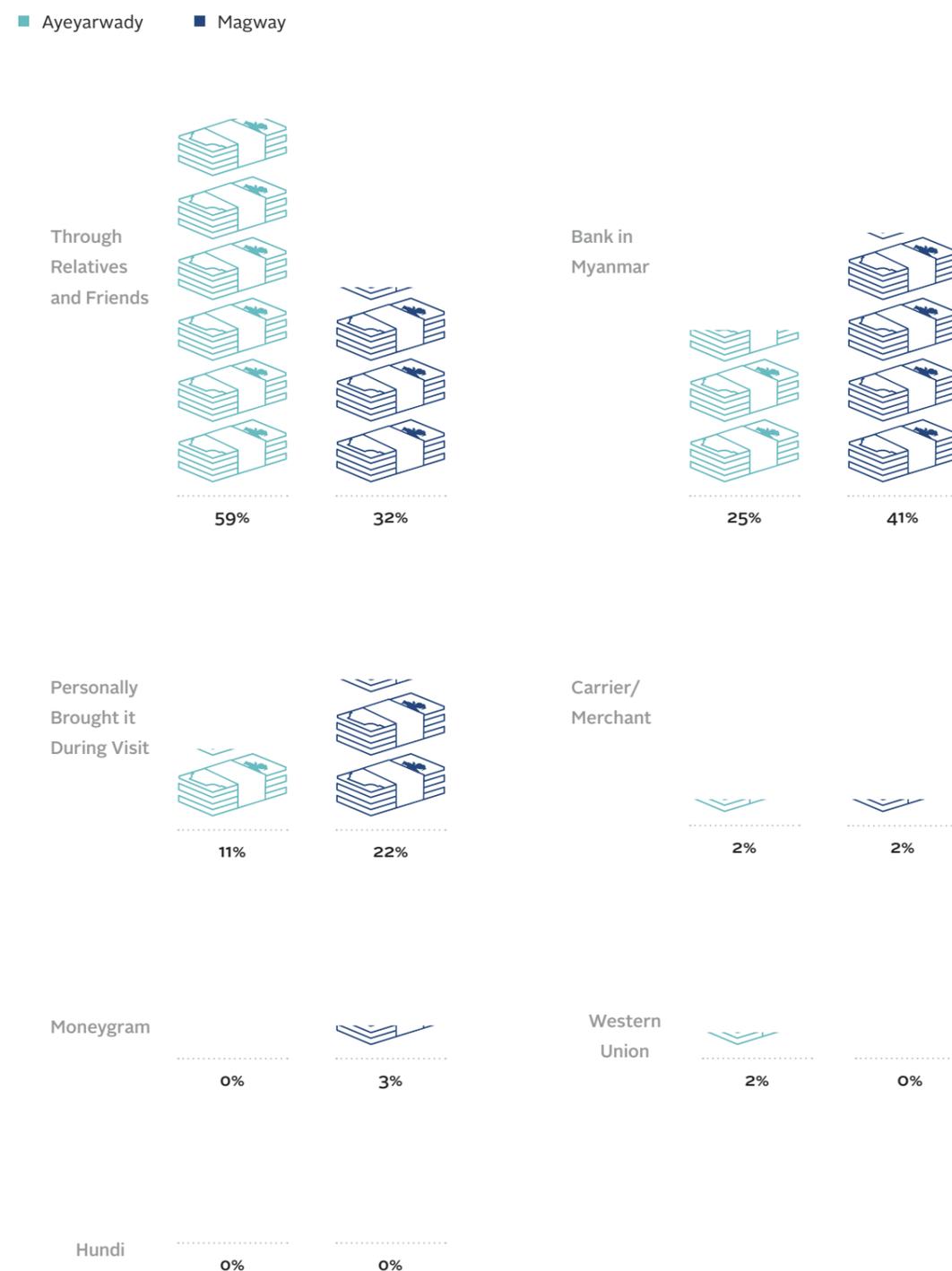
²⁴ IMF and World Bank. 2013. Global Monitoring Report 2013. IMF and World Bank.

²⁵ Adams, R.H., Jr., A. Cuecuecha, J. Page. 2008. “The Impact of Remittances on Poverty and Inequality in Ghana.” Policy Research Working Paper Series No. 4732, World Bank, Washington, DC.

²⁶ Beegle, K., J. de Weerd, and S. Dercon. 2011. “Migration and Economic Mobility in Tanzania: Evidence from a Tracking Survey.” Review of Economics and Statistics, 93(3), 1010–33.

²⁷ De Brauw, A., V. Mueller, and T. Woldehanna. 2013. “Does Domestic Migration Improve Overall Well-being in Ethiopia?” IFRPI Ethiopia Strategy Support Program Working Paper No. 55, Washington, DC.

Figure 20. Method of Remittances as Reported by Sending Households



69 percent and 55 percent of migrants in Ayeyarwady and Magway, respectively, remit earnings to their families back home. Most do so once or twice per year, sending the money through friends or colleagues.

for the remittance method to be informal, with seasonal migrants within the region most likely to remit personally. Survey results suggest an expansion of the use of banks to remit funds by international migrants, especially in Magway, where 41 percent remitted funds by bank. This compares, for example, with findings from a survey of migrants from Myanmar in Thailand in 2013 that cited 17.6 percent of migrants sending remittances through banks. This growth in the use of banks is consistent with developments in the banking sector in recent years to increase accessibility in rural areas.

Remittances also serve to smooth income: rural households engaged in agriculture in Myanmar face uncertain incomes related to volatility in rice and other agricultural markets, not to mention weather-related shocks. More stable income from remittances allows migrant households to smooth their variable income, enabling them to better align income with spending needs and, critically, obviating borrowing during off-peak seasons when casual labor is scarce. This is especially important for casual-labor households who lack the collateral required to borrow from formal credit sources, and thus turn to private money lenders, often at high interest rates. Using remittances to smooth income is especially characteristic of risk management migration, where migration is used as a strategy to diversify income. "It's a lot better now because [with remittances] we can repay our debts and buy food," explained the parents of two current migrants in a village in Magway Township, Magway, who characterize the risk management type.

While remittances are primarily used for basic consumption needs they may also play an important poverty-reduction role. Survey results on secondary uses of remittances suggest that, once basic subsistence needs are addressed, migrant households in these regions begin to invest in health, education, home improvements, or income-generating activities like agricultural inputs.

SOCIAL EFFECTS ON SENDING HOUSEHOLDS

Survey results indicate that when a member of the household migrates those left behind take on more responsibilities. These include daily spending decisions, as well as decisions about education for children and health expenditures. Where household labor is lost through migration, remaining family members must also compensate, sometimes by hiring external labor.

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Survey results demonstrate that in Ayeyarwady there is a perception that female migrants create more responsibilities for family members left behind than male migrants; however, there is no significant difference between male and female migrants in terms of their perceptions on the work for those left behind.

Changes in division of these responsibilities depends on the frequency and effectiveness of the communication between the migrant and the family left

Figure 21. Primary and Secondary Use of Remittances

Primary remittances are mainly used for basic needs, especially food expenses. Once basic needs are met remittances are primarily used for education, savings, and home expenses.

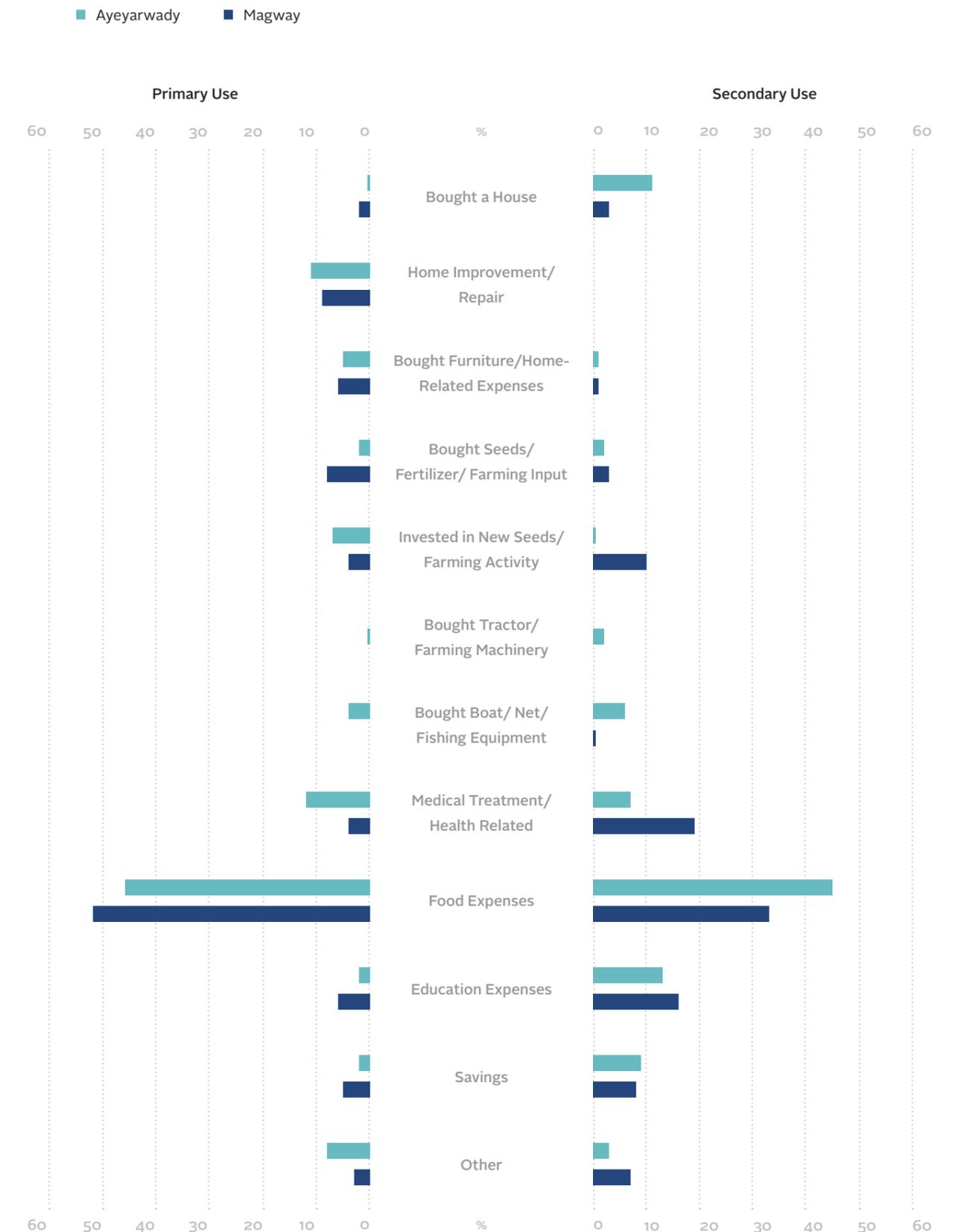
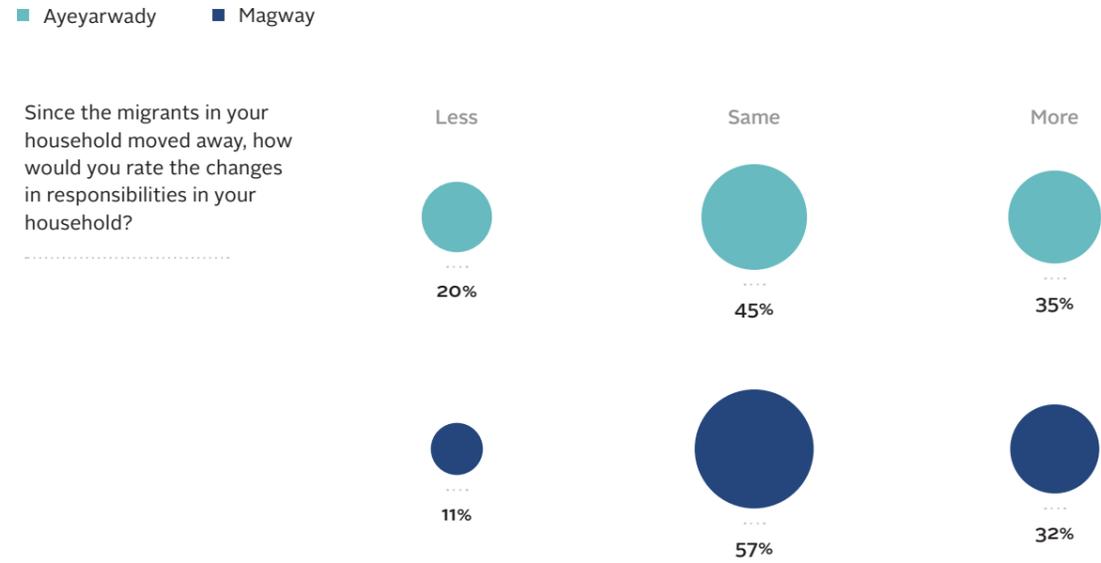


Figure 22. Perceptions of Changes in Household Responsibilities as Reported by Sending Households



behind. Increased access to mobile phones has improved communications. The vast majority of migrants communicate at least monthly, with approximately 29 percent in Ayeyarwady and 40 percent in Magway communicating either weekly or daily. However, the qualitative research indicated that in villages with low connectivity, decision making transferred to women household members who were left behind. In one village in Ayeyarwady, for example, there were several women interviewed who made decisions independently regarding sending other household members, including children, outside the village for work.

While changes in household decision making tend toward greater responsibilities in both regions, a slight inverse was observed in relation to responsibilities for income generation. Whereas between 15 and 20 percent of households claimed their responsibilities had increased as a result of a migration episode, the difference was much smaller when asked about the responsibility for generating income; for example, in Ayeyarwady 5 percent more households claimed a decrease in responsibility for income generation, indicating the benefits of receiving remittances

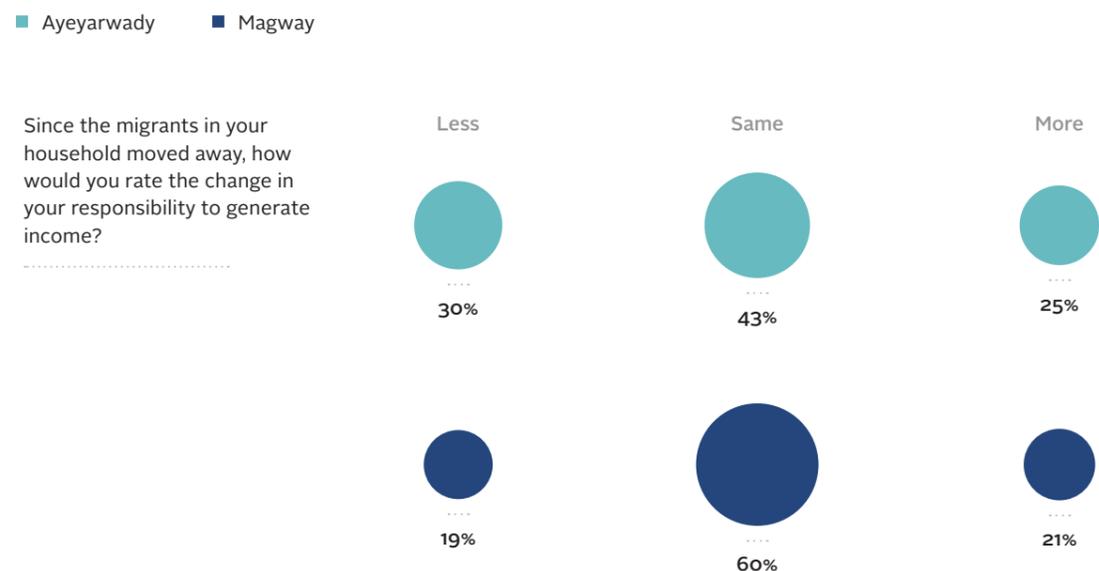
In Ayeyarwady there is a perception that female migrants create more responsibilities for family members left behind than male migrants.

Figure 23. Frequency of Contact Between Migrant and Sending Household

Most migrants are in touch with the family they left behind at least once a month.



Figure 24. Perceptions of Changing Responsibilities to Generate Income as Reported by Sending Households



ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON SENDING COMMUNITIES

While the economic impacts on sending households appear to help reduce poverty by, amongst other features, smoothing consumption, the collective effects on those left behind are less clear. Much of the focus of migration studies to date has surrounded the question of the relative impact of migration on macroeconomic growth, which is beyond the scope of this study. As a result, migration theory offers little on the collective economic impacts of migration in local sending areas besides speculating that the withdrawal of labor can be expected to raise wages and employment levels amongst those left behind, and that remittances should help raise living standards.²⁸

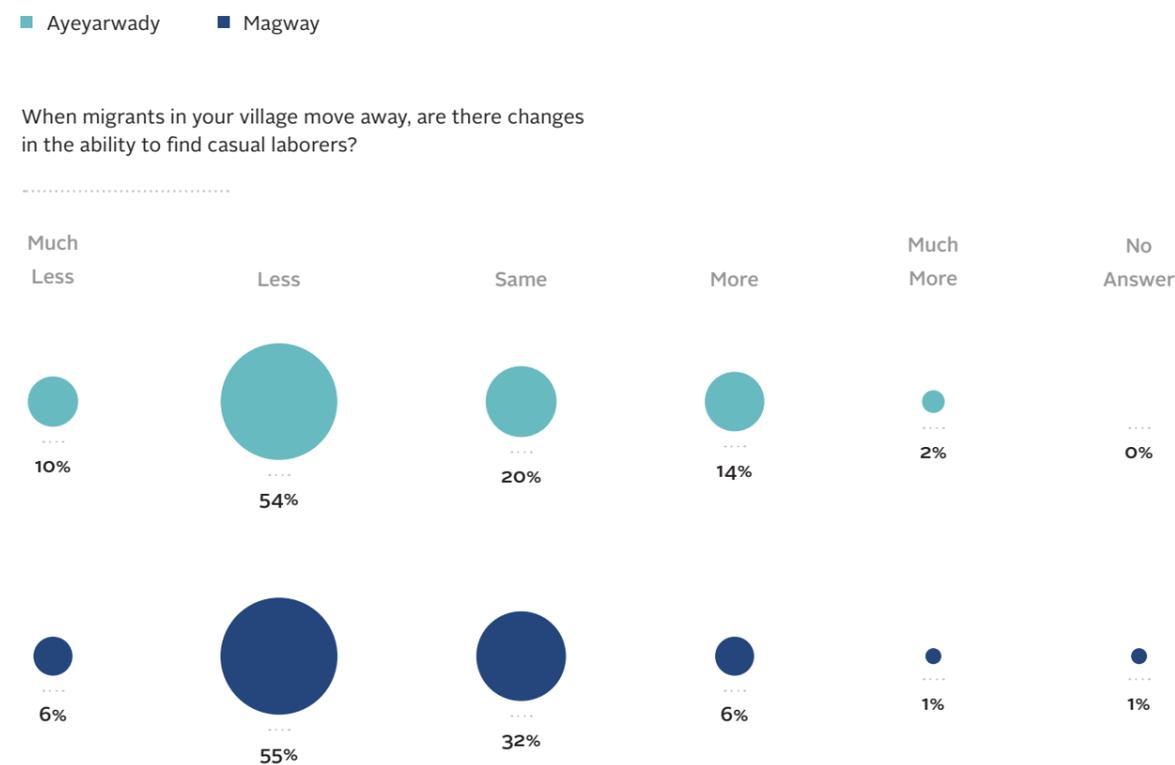


There is a common perception, especially amongst land owners, that migration is causing a shortage of labor during farming season. Farmers in both regions reported difficulty identifying and hiring sufficient labor during peak times. Over 50 percent of respondents in both regions perceived that it was more difficult to access labor as a result of migration.

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²⁸ Lucas, Robert. 2014. "Internal Migration in Developing Economies: An Overview." Draft document, 20 April 2014.

Figure 25. Perceptions of the Effects of Migration on the Ability to Find Casual Labor in Sending Areas



especially in Magway. Qualitative research identified negative implications for crop production. These included poor yields and even, in some cases, wastage when crops could not be harvested in time.

A focus group of farmers in Magway explained that: "Because of labor shortage, different steps of farming work cannot be done in time. The result is that yields are poor. This is a difficult situation for the farmers. Migrant workers may be doing well but remaining members of the community are having a hard time."



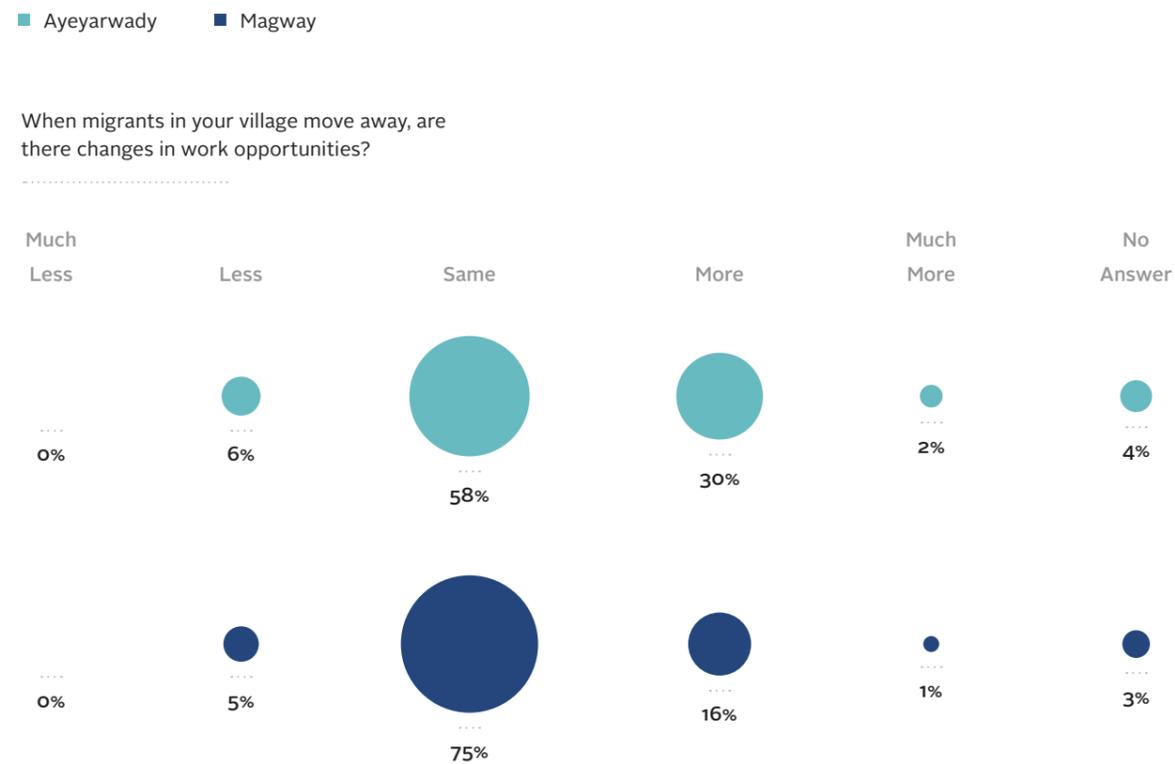
While migration is perceived by farmers to create labor shortages, casual laborers see increasing work opportunities in sending areas, especially in Ayeyarwady.

This narrative is complemented by the shortage of casual labor opportunities in off-peak seasons, which for staple crops like rice extend over a significant portion of the year. Since, in many cases, the part-time casual labor is reportedly insufficient to meet the subsistence needs of casual laborers they combine agricultural work with other incomes sources, including those found through migration.

Perceptions that work opportunities in sending areas are changing as a result of migration varied between the regions, as illustrated in Figure 26. In Magway, migration is perceived to have had little effect on work opportunities, whereas nearly twice the proportion of respondents in Ayeyarwady think that migration has created more work opportunities in their village. This reflects in part the differences in relative access to land in these regions. With larger landless populations, it may be inferred that more migrants from Ayeyarwady are migrating from casual-labor backgrounds, therefore freeing up those opportunities for others. In contrast, households in Magway tend to engage in casual labor to supplement income from small landholdings, thus explaining why migration has had less of an impact on local labor markets.

In relation to this, several respondents mentioned that migration, and the resulting labor shortages perceived, provided casual laborers with more collective negotiating power to discuss wages and terms of payment for labor.

Figure 26. Perceptions on the Effects of Migration on Work Opportunities in Sending Areas



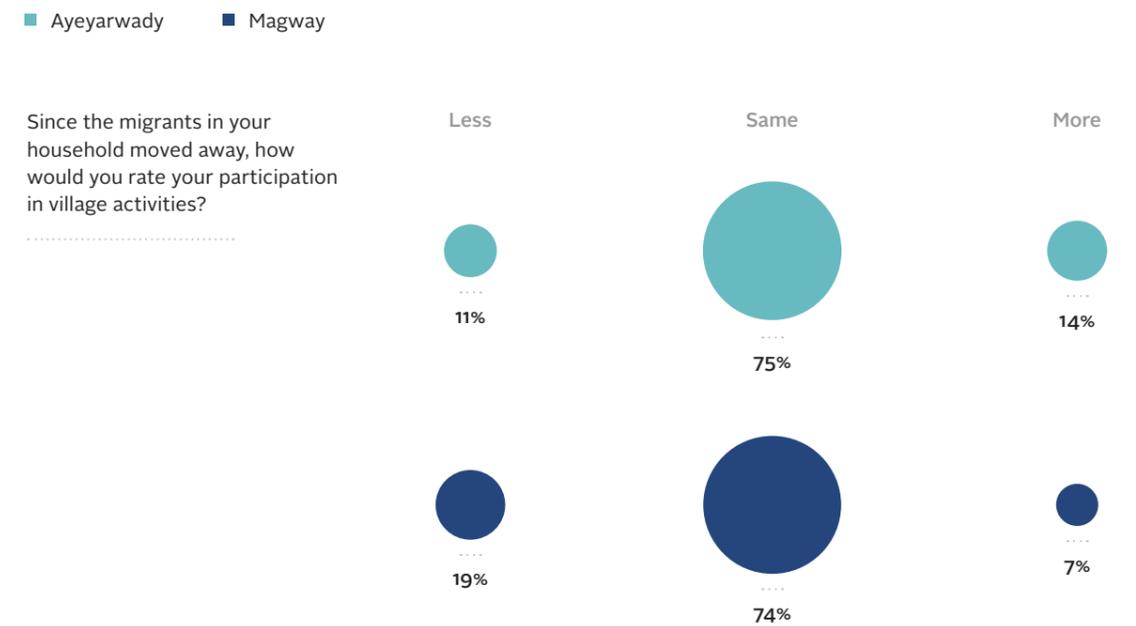
A focus group of casual laborers in Magway was clear on the subject: “There are not many farmers who can afford to hire labor. They don’t have enough money to hire labor for a long time. A laborer can’t work for a farmer if he isn’t paid. He has to make his own living.”

SOCIAL EFFECTS ON SENDING COMMUNITIES

The relatively recent nature of rural-urban migration in Magway and Ayeyarwady means that it is premature to definitively identify collective social impacts on sending villages; however, some initial findings warrant further observation.

In general, findings from perception surveys across several issues ranging from the contributions of migrants to community and religious activities to the role of returned migrants in the community, indicate a more positive impact on village social dynamics in Magway than in Ayeyarwady. This is, at least in part, a consequence of the regional differences in the patterns of migration; in Magway there is a prevalence of both shock response migration

Figure 27. Perceptions of Engagement in Village Activities by Sending Households



and international migration associated with upward mobility, resulting in, respectively: perceptions of migration facilitating the resolution of difficulties; and international remittances being invested into communities.

There is little evidence at this stage to suggest that migration is resulting in a change in how migrant households relate to other households in the village. Here, survey results show that some three-quarters of the respondents for households with a current migrant do not feel that the absence of one of their members has changed the way they participate in village activities. There is, however, some significant regional variation: almost one-fifth of households in Magway report less participation, while respondents in Ayeyarwady were twice as likely to claim that they have been more involved in village activities.

Qualitative research showed that most village authorities welcomed and even encouraged migration because of the possibility of a better and regular income. However, they also acknowledged that migration causes labor shortages during farming season and consequently increases wages. They also lamented the erosion of community organization and the social fabric of the village. On these topics, village elders and respected persons cited a lack of young people for youth associations, which amongst other activities, provide volunteer labor for community-development activities. Interestingly, some villagers cited the same phenomenon as a cause of increased social cohesion, though this view was less common: “As there are fewer people in the village, people become more united in organizing social events and funeral cases because one needs the other’s help.” (Focus group discussion with village authorities in Ayeyarwady.)

There is also a perception that returning migrants bring new skills and knowledge, as well as tastes, perceptions, and attitudes. Migrants in the sample reported returning more confident, worldly, and better able to engage with others in a social and professional sense. Meanwhile, villagers who have not migrated tend to see migration as having a positive impact in individual migrants when they return. In several focus groups discussions, villagers argue that when migrants return to the villages they are more polite, knowledgeable, and have better social and communication skills. One returned male migrant in Magway explained: “Migrants seem more knowledgeable because of their work experiences, more sociable; talk to people nicely.”

Migrants also remit funds for religious and social activities in their communities, further serving to raise their esteem in the eyes of non-migrants. A non-migrant from Magway stated during a focus group discussion with village authorities in Magway that: “Migration is good for the community because migrants can contribute money to social events and community festivals.”

Yet, returned migrants reported ambiguous experiences as they reengage with their communities. On one hand, they can be respected as more worldly and experienced, and some return wealthier. Many devote a portion of their remittances to social and religious ends, and this can improve their community standing. On the other hand, there are isolated instances in the qualitative research of migrants absorbing bad habits related to drugs and alcohol, and there is a concern that they may introduce them to the village. Moreover, there is at least one reported instance of an older migrant being discriminated against in his bid for village office because others in the community assumed he would migrate again, abandoning his office to do so. This may be an important development to monitor, since—in a community in which individuals rely on social institutions to respond to shock and hardship—the emergence of stratified socioeconomic groups may potentially recalibrate expectations between individuals in those groups, although it is too early to draw conclusions.

There is limited evidence from the research that tensions are emerging between migrant and non-migrant households or that remittances are impacting on inter-household social relations, as it has in other national

contexts or in areas of international migration, where remittances tend to be larger. This is related to the relatively recent nature of migration in many areas, as well as the relatively small volume of remittances, especially when compared with international migration. However, potential horizontal inequalities in sending areas as a result of remittances will be an important phenomenon to monitor in the coming years.



UMBRELLA FACTORY

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has attempted to provide insight into why people in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady and Magway regions make the decisions around migration that they do. To do so, the preceding sections have developed illustrative types of migration and subsequently used that typology to understand different experiences of migration, both for those leaving and left behind. Critical points that shape the trajectory of migration episodes within those experiences were identified. Based on these observations this section develops recommendations on how external actors, including LIFT and the Government of Myanmar, at the national and sub-national level, can intervene at these critical points to support both more choices and more informed decisions around migration.

FINDINGS Overall, the report identifies a high level of migration from both Magway and Ayeyarwady. In Magway almost one in four households had at least one family member migrating at the time of research. The figure was slightly lower, but still high, in Ayeyarwady, where it was one in five. Moreover, this study confirms that, in Ayeyarwady and Magway, migration rates are increasing, especially in recent years, as Myanmar undertakes a wide-ranging economic and political transition.

Migration patterns across both regions have some important similarities. In both regions, landless households are more likely to have family members migrating than the rest of the population. This reflects a lack of year-round income generating opportunities locally. It also indicates a dependence of small- and medium-landholding households on labor provided by family members. Men are significantly more likely to migrate than women across both regions, with double the number of men migrating in Magway than women, and 60 percent of migrants from Ayeyarwady being men. Women comprise at least one-third of all migrants in both regions.

There are also significant differences between the two regions. Migration in Ayeyarwady follows a more uniform geographic pattern: with 58 percent of migrants moving to Yangon, it is, by far, the primary location of choice. Although Yangon is also the most popular destination from Magway, with just under a quarter of all migrants moving there, the range of destinations to which people migrate from Magway are much more varied: there was no other single location that attracted more than 10 percent of migrants. Related to this point, international migration is significantly higher in Magway, with 22 percent of all migrants moving overseas. The vast majority of international migrants are men and this is a particularly popular option among small landholders, with 40 percent of international migrants from Magway coming from small landholding households. There are regional differences also in the profile of migrants: migrants from Ayeyarwady are generally younger when they leave their households and are more likely to have only primary- or lower-secondary-level education compared with migrants from Magway. Finally, there are regional differences in the way people migrate: people are less likely to migrate from Ayeyarwady unless they have guarantees of employment



In both regions, landless households are more likely to have family members migrating than the rest of the population. This reflects a lack of year-round income generating opportunities locally.

prior to departure. These guarantees usually occur through either a family member working in the city or relatives, as these networks are seen as more reliable sources of information for prospective migrants.

Within and across regions, the study identifies significant variation in motivations and strategies for migration for different households according to their livelihood options, based on the land, education and wealth assets they hold. Combining qualitative field research and multivariate regression analysis, this study constructs three illustrative migration types—risk management, shock response, and upwardly mobile—that provide insight into the question of why rural households in Ayeyarwady and Magway choose to migrate.

Risk Management

Many households in the study, especially small landholding households and casual laborers, are characterized by their limited options for secondary income sources; they risk being unable to meet their basic consumption needs throughout the year, especially during the off-peak seasons. These households choose to migrate to manage this risk by allocating household labor to urban jobs, predominantly in Yangon. The risk mitigating factor—and thus primary driver—is the regularity and certainty of stable income. This is supported by qualitative data that indicates large-scale migration between rural and urban areas despite any significant wage differentials. By moving almost exclusively through existing networks, migrants in this type try to lower the costs of migration by seeking to avoid risks instead of proactively managing them. As a result many migrants under this type also avoid making investments in formal education or skills training that might open better employment opportunities and thus tend to remain in low-wage jobs.

Shock Response

Other households in the sample have encountered exogenous shocks which impact on their primary livelihood, and thus create income shortage problems and food insecurity. Shocks encountered include those at the household level, such as health problems or injury, or crop damage, as well as community-level shock, including weather-related shock and, in our study, the residual effects of Cyclone Nargis. Households that are migrating in response to shock are primarily landless, since they lack the assets that could help support alternative income sources and buffer against shock. They tend to migrate within their region. In the case of migrants from Ayeyarwady this includes Yangon.

Upwardly Mobile

Finally, the study documents migrant households whose assets in terms of land ownership and/or wealth create a buffer from income uncertainty. These households seek to make investments in formal education and skills training that enable them to migrate in order to exploit opportunities for higher-

paying, formal urban employment. This category also includes international migration, especially from Magway, since this type of migration entails higher upfront costs and other risks but comes with higher wages and returns.

The research analyzed a range of factors that have been identified in migration literature as influencing why people migrate. Through this analysis four key factors relating to migration decisions across rural Ayeyarwady and Magway emerged.

Firstly, although qualitative research finds that earning differentials between locations are not substantial, the certainty and regularity of urban jobs is a significant incentive drawing people to migrate, especially for migrants seeking to manage risk.

Secondly, social networks play a pre-eminent role in influencing migration decisions, again, especially regarding risk management. Across both regions, people overwhelmingly make decisions on whether or not to migrate based on information they receive from family or friends either in their village or already in destination sites. There are significant variations both within and between villages on the strength of these social networks. Within villages, potential migrants rely on extended networks to receive generic information about living conditions in destination sites. However, more specific information, including actual job guarantees, is transacted among tighter social networks made up of family or close friends.



The strength of social networks varies significantly between villages and explains the substantial differences in migration levels from village to village.

The strength of social networks also varies significantly between villages and explains the substantial differences in migration levels from village to village. As migration levels continue to increase, so too do the breadth of social networks. The variations in migration levels between villages, however, highlight significant information asymmetries; some villages are better placed than others to benefit from opportunities arising from migration.

Thirdly, households exercise a high degree of caution in exploring migration opportunities. This is particularly true for small landholding households seeking to manage risk. Villagers also expressed safety concerns, in particular in relation to female migration. The very low levels of use of agents or brokers in facilitating migration shows a reluctance to place confidence in people beyond close social networks and, in part, explains the extensive reliance on those networks. Risk aversion is more pronounced in Ayeyarwady where well over half of migrants moved only subsequent to receiving guarantees of employment in the destination area.

Finally, the financial costs associated with migration are low for most groups and the cost of migrating domestically does not represent a barrier, although men were likely to cite it as a concern. The overwhelming majority of migrants

fund their journeys through their own savings or assistance and loans from friends or family. The research found that the low costs enabled migration decisions to be made reasonably quickly upon receipt of reliable information about job opportunities.

Despite the reasonably high rates of migration, there are yet to be significant observable economic impacts on sending households. This reflects the nature of the most prominent form of migration, with movement toward cities to take up predominantly low-skilled employment. Earning differentials are not significant and, as a result, any remittances are used primarily to supplement food expenses; only a minority of households are able to allocate funds toward productive assets. In terms of social impacts, migration appears to be affecting roles within sending households as those left behind are required to take on more responsibilities: for one-third of the households with migrants, responsibilities at the household level increase for those left behind. However, with the recent expansion of telecommunications services in Myanmar, some of these changes are already mitigated by an improved frequency in communication.



Migration is perceived as having a more positive impact on village dynamics in Magway than it does in Ayeyarwady.

Similarly, it is still early to definitively identify collective impacts on sending villages, but some initial findings warrant further observation. Migration is perceived as having a more positive impact on village dynamics in Magway than it does in Ayeyarwady. This reflects the differing nature of migration; in Magway there is a prevalence of both shock response migration and international migration associated with upward mobility, resulting in, respectively, perceptions of migration as something that facilitates the resolution of financial difficulties, and international remittances being invested into communities. While difficult to measure, migration is also perceived as having implications on the local labor market; villages with higher migration rates report greater challenges in finding casual labor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report has shown that increasing domestic migration flows to urban areas may mark the beginning of a structural transformation away from a rural, agricultural economy toward a more urban, industrial and service-based economy. Myanmar's economy, in the last four years, has seen a slight shift away from agriculture toward industry and services. Urbanization and job creation in urban areas have the potential to significantly impact on labor and mobility patterns, especially for the landless and land-poor workers that account for a large part of the rural workforce. At this critical point, Myanmar can benefit from other countries' experiences, including those in East Asia. Domestic migration has been a critical component of the way many other countries in the region, including South Korea, China, and Vietnam, have managed to reduce poverty and support resilient livelihoods. However,

pursuing these opportunities often entails significant risk for poor migrant households, who often have little capacity to absorb the shocks of failed migration attempts. Supporting prospective migrants through rural and urban development to enable them to better confront risk and make better, more informed choices around migration is thus critical to supporting their livelihoods.

Public approaches to addressing the challenges causing, and caused by, migration entail major public policy choices around areas including spatial development, urbanization, service delivery and poverty reduction. The government needs information on anticipated migrant flows in order to plan for, and provide services to, rural-urban migrants. This report has provided insights into patterns, profiles and motivations for domestic migration in Ayeyarwady and Magway, but it has also highlighted the need for more comprehensive information gathering and planning efforts by government agencies at the local, State/Region, and Union level. The feasibility for targeted interventions explained in this section is one area that requires more study.

The report also highlights the importance of approaching migration comprehensively, in both rural and urban areas. Government, and development actors operating in Myanmar, should plan national strategies and comprehensively mainstream them. Across rural and urban sectors there are a range of specific interventions that can help support better migration outcomes. In order of priority, areas for intervention can be summarized as follows:

- Links between migrants in receiving areas and their families and communities in sending areas should be strengthened, to ensure that migration provides a positive contribution to the development of rural communities;
- In rural sending areas interventions should seek to provide prospective migrants with informed choices around migration;
- During the arrival and integration period in urban receiving areas, interventions should seek to anticipate the challenges associated with rapidly expanding informal populations on the periphery of urban areas like Yangon, including access to quality basic services.

Interventions will also vary according to the type of migration—risk management, upwardly mobile, or shock response—in terms of their needs and how they are likely to respond to external interventions. The typology aligns with LIFT's strategy for supporting small landholding and landless households: "stepping up, stepping out, and hanging in."²⁹ Upwardly mobile and, to an extent, risk management migration can be seen as an attempt to "step out" of agriculture to take advantage of opportunities further afield. Recommendations for supporting "stepping out" in LIFT's strategy include several components for domestic migrants in this category, including

²⁹ LIFT Strategy. 2014.

improved access to banking services to facilitate remittances, as well as financial training on saving and productively investing remittances. In contrast, the shock response approach to migration represents a strategy for “hanging in;” that is, using migration as a means to improve food security and manage risk.

The range of interventions suggested by the evidence covered in this report is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Differentiated Interventions for Improving Migration Outcomes³⁰

	Risk Management	Upwardly Mobile	Shock Response
Pre-Departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informational resources on urban services Micro and weather-linked insurance services Vocational training in rural areas Targeted employment generation schemes (cash for work or local infrastructure) sequenced to fill labor gaps at crucial times in market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informational resources on urban services Secondary education in rural areas Access to affordable credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informational resources on services in urban and rural areas, where available Vocational training in rural areas Effective social protection mechanisms that reduce susceptibility to shock Access to affordable credit
Arrival and Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support mechanisms in destination areas—both Yangon and international—predominantly for female migrants, given common concerns about safety issues Vocational training in receiving areas Legal avenues for accessing services and integration in host communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational training in destination areas Social protection or insurance mechanisms, especially for international migrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate access to basic services in destination areas
Links with Source Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal remittance program and access to finance in source areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal remittance program and access to finance in source areas 	

³⁰ Critical intervention areas are identified in the table to demonstrate at what point and for which group a given intervention will be most effective. It does not imply that such an intervention wouldn't positively impact on other migration types; as noted, these types overlap and are not clearly distinguished in practice, but are applied here for illustrative effect.

LINKS WITH SENDING AREAS

In order to strengthen links between migrants and sending areas, the most critical area of intervention for government and LIFT, and other development partners, is supporting the regulation and ease of remittances. Strengthening remittance mechanisms to make them more efficient and more formal can effectively address several important constraints that migrant families face. Firstly, easy and affordable access to remittances may increase their regularity, and enable families left behind to better incorporate them into their consumption planning, thereby providing more support for their income smoothing aspect and also encouraging better medium-term household planning. This is important because many respondents in the study send money back through a personal carrier; these visits are infrequent and irregular, and make economic planning difficult.

In relation to this, strengthening the instruments used by private financial institutions (microfinance institutions, private banks) to send or receive remittances, especially in rural areas, is an important element for the development of formal financial institutions in Myanmar, especially in light of the very large amount of remittances that are sent through informal channels. Utilizing formal banking services for remittances can also help to improve the bankability of migrant sending families and provide opportunities to access affordable finance. Given the importance of strengthening efforts for financial inclusion as a pre-requisite for broad-based growth, the links between formalizing remittances and improving access to finance should be examined further. In doing so the risks of over-indebtedness in Myanmar should be taken into account; any access to finance initiatives must include a consideration of comprehensive household debt portfolios.



In order to strengthen links between migrants and sending areas, the most critical area of intervention for government and LIFT, and other development partners, is supporting the regulation and ease of remittances.

In addressing this challenge LIFT, and other development partners, can pilot collaborations that bring together banks, mobile-payment providers and others working in microfinance to experiment with platforms that can encourage migrants to adopt formal remittance mechanisms. In addition, various local banks are currently experimenting with local banking agents to cover “the last mile” in rural sending areas; here, development partners and government actors can support these existing initiatives to foster a more development-oriented use of remittances for the households left behind.

Given the rapidly increasing access to mobile phones and telecommunications networks in rural areas, mobile banking should also be further explored as a convenient and reliable means of remitting money. With significantly lower overhead costs compared with brick-and-mortar banks, expanding mobile-banking services to rural, under-served areas can help target poorer

households and improve access to financial services for this population. LIFT, and other development partners, can play a role in ensuring inclusive access, especially in remote areas, for the efforts of private sector actors like commercial banks and telecommunications companies. Mobile-banking efforts in Myanmar, including a regulatory system, are at an early stage, so government action is required. An appropriate regulatory regime is necessary to allow inclusive access, as well as the transfer of sufficient sums of money; based on the findings of this research, the median remittance volume for one household over 12 months is K250,000.

This study identified that most domestic remittances are used to smooth income and meet basic consumption needs; yet, there is also evidence that once these needs are met, remittances are used to invest in productive activities. A better understanding of how remittances are used over time is an important insight into the interaction of migration and poverty reduction, and should be studied further. This study captured patterns of international migration primarily from Magway. Further research is needed to compare the methods and uses of remittances between domestic and international forms of migration, and how policy and operational agendas seeking to strengthen the efficient transmission and productive use of remittances can be mutual supportive. Given the prevalence of international migration from small landholding households in Magway—one in ten reported a migrant overseas—such research could focus on this area in order to understand the specific needs and patterns of migration for these households.

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION IN SENDING AREAS

In rural sending areas, the aim of migration support should be to provide prospective migrants with informed choices. In order to maximize the choices available to prospective migrants, interventions should include targeted support for rural livelihoods. In terms of rural finance, this study has identified two areas of particular need in this context: risk insurance and access to affordable credit. For many migrants, this research shows that migration is practiced principally to manage risk. In other countries, targeted support to create affordable and accessible, formal market risk insurance measures has helped rural villagers to limit their risk exposure. Possible interventions in this area could include micro- and weather-linked insurance services. LIFT should investigate further the feasibility of such an intervention in the context of rural villages in Ayeyarwady and Magway.

Findings also support the need for employment-generation schemes targeted at specific periods of the agricultural calendar. Migration was also defined by many migrant households without alternative income sources—risk management and shock response—as an alternative to the irregular and insufficient employment opportunities provided by agriculture. To address these gaps, LIFT, and other development partners, should consider targeted employment-generation schemes, such as cash for work or local infrastructure, that are sequenced to fill labor gaps at crucial times in the market. Such employment-generation schemes could also include relevant vocational training. For households managing risk or responding to shock—and likely to be unable to afford investments in high-school education—vocational training in rural areas can develop the skill sets demanded by

urban employers in sectors that could provide long-term, sustainable work, such as in garment factories. As this study has shown, a critical point in many individual migrants' trajectory is the opportunity and ability to develop employable skills; the difference between sustained, stable, and higher incomes and irregular casual labor.

Critically, interventions to support informed choices should seek to improve planning strategies in rural sending areas. Interventions in these areas will be especially important for households under the risk management migration type. For LIFT, and other development partners, the primary means to do so is to provide informational resources in sending villages; however, interventions here need to be designed to take into account that prospective migrants in rural villages in Ayeyarwady and Magway tend to act on job information only from friends and relatives—information that they feel they can trust—due to the pervasive risk aversion documented in the foregoing analysis. Due to the informality of information flows, it is likely that external interventions to create formal marketplaces for job or accommodation information will be ignored and unused.



LIFT, and other development partners, should consider targeted employment-generation schemes, such as cash for work or local infrastructure, that are sequenced to fill labor gaps at crucial times in the market.

In a context of pervasive risk aversion—and until interventions (such as those outlined above) to improve the capacity to manage risk take effect—this report recommends that LIFT, and other development partners, should focus on orienting informational resources toward practical information about what to expect in urban areas. Unrealistic expectations and a lack of practical knowledge were common problems cited by returned migrants. When asked why they had come back to their village many returned migrants interviewed in the study identified a range of issues: they were disoriented when they first arrived; the work they expected was not in evidence; they experienced social marginalization; their work was too physically demanding.

Discussions with friends and family, including those currently in destination areas, could be based around easily accessible information on practical challenges, and used to prepare prospective migrants. Practical information could include how to access services like health and education, as well as what sources of support and recourse are available. Information about destination areas might be especially important for international migrants given the real and perceived risks involved, and the concerns regarding human trafficking in Myanmar and Southeast Asia. Equally female migrants may be keen to discuss common concerns about safety issues. IOM and ILO are currently supporting a similar project, Local Resource Centers, in areas with large rates of international migration. A similar intervention could be developed on this model to provide advice on important pre-departure considerations, such as proper documentation—which can only be processed in the area of origin—and contact information for support services at a given destination (based on patterns in this report, the popular destinations for particular villages can be identified). Given that approximately 80 percent of migrants use mobile

phones, dissemination of this information through ICT could be a cost-efficient means of reaching potential migrants on a large scale.

Pre-departure information can be especially important for migrants who have limited opportunity to plan carefully prior to leaving; namely, migration in response to shock.

While there is limited evidence from interviews with current migrants to suggest that a lack of documentation or access to services is a challenge for migrants, this principally reflects the informal nature of much of their employment.³¹ As LIFT, and other development partners seek to support migrants in moving into better paying, more regular employment—that is, supporting a transition to upwardly mobile migration that is closer to LIFT’s strategy of migrating as a means to “step out” for opportunities—regional experiences with rapid urbanization highlight the need for attention to the lack of documentation as a binding constraint to access to services. This was echoed by one village leader when explaining his concerns for migrants from his village.

areas, local government officials interviewed as part of the study appear to have very little data on who these people are, where they live, what their needs are, or how to help them. Officials across ministries and regions all cited migration as an important phenomenon that impacts in a major way on their work—whether it be urban planning, health, or education—but revealed that they had no existing data on migrant numbers or how to support these people.

As an initial step in supporting ways to extend basic services to migrants, LIFT, and other development partners, should consider interventions that can improve government understanding of migration trajectories in economic transition. This could include lessons learned from regional experiences at national and sub-national levels, given the similar transitional experiences of countries like Vietnam and South Korea. Workshops and peer-to-peer learning exchanges could be an important way for LIFT, and other development partners, to raise the profile of medium-to-long term challenges for policy makers, and to facilitate brainstorming on policy responses that go beyond the scope of this study.

ARRIVAL AND INTEGRATION IN RECEIVING AREAS

Interviews with current migrants illustrated a general absence of service access in urban areas. While respondents in the study did not explicitly cite a lack of services as a key challenge during their migration experience, the lack of engagement with public services that this informality reflects, in areas such as education and healthcare, is likely to produce significant vulnerability for migrant populations as Myanmar’s urbanization takes off. Experiences in countries nearby, where rapid urbanization has occurred without appropriate spatial planning and service delivery, have resulted in slum areas with lagging human development outcomes (Indonesia’s kampungs, for example). In countries with similar early patterns of domestic migration, like Vietnam, the urban poor are more likely than local residents to be vulnerable; for example, they compose 72.9 percent of the urban poor in Ho Chi Minh City.³² Exacerbating the problem in Vietnamese cities is the systemic exclusion of migrants from social services that provide for poor households with residents’ status. To offset these challenges, Vietnamese migrants tend to then opt for cheap, cramped housing with shared sanitation.³³

The accessibility and quality of basic public services remains an ongoing challenge in general terms in Myanmar, but, based on interviews with local government officials at the township level in receiving areas, at present there is an especially acute gap in urban planning regarding migrant populations. Despite this research highlighting significant numbers of migrants in receiving



As an initial step in supporting ways to extend basic services to migrants, LIFT, and other development partners, should consider interventions that can improve government understanding of migration trajectories in economic transition.

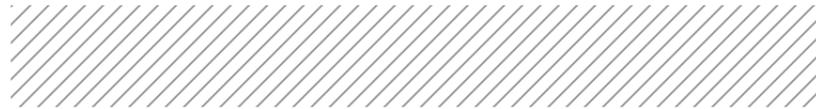
The study also identifies a large number of cases where migrants struggled to move into long-term employment; mostly, because they lacked the requisite skills. To address this LIFT, and other development partners, should examine the feasibility of developing vocational training centers in receiving areas to promote skills development, which can help access these jobs. With most migrants leaving home unskilled and ignorant of the skills required in the labor market, the ability to gain them over the migration experience is a key factor in determining their success. Current and returned migrants identified the opportunity to develop employable skills like cooking as key determinants of migration outcomes. Migrants who are able to secure jobs that offer on-the-job training for even basic skills, like cooking or brick laying, are more likely to be able to find work over a longer period of time. In contrast, those migrants unable to develop such skills are trapped in cycles of temporary casual labor, its irregularity creating a back-and-forth migration to wherever work can be found. The jobs available to these people offer low pay, are physically demanding, and present extremely limited opportunities to save and invest. As a result migrants in this group were unable to make the transition to more formal, stable, and better-paying jobs and, in many cases, were forced to negotiate a series of temporary jobs that offered no sense of security and often resulted in cyclical migration.

³¹ Garment-factory work would not be considered here part of the informal sector since families of workers described regular contractual arrangements. However, as noted, while garment factory employees composed a large proportion of the migrant sample in Yangon in other receiving areas, because researchers had limited access to conduct interviews with these workers their voices are not reflected in this report.

³² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2010. Urban Poverty Assessment in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. United Nations Development Programme: Hanoi.

³³ UNDP. 2010.

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ANNEXES

This annex outlines the key research questions which informed the development of the qualitative and quantitative research tools. The full research tools, including the household survey, are available upon request.

ANNEX 1 Key research questions

	Key Research Questions	Primary Research Approach
1	<p>Who migrates?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who migrates? Where to? And for what work? • What are the key characteristics of migrants? What are their main skills? • What are the key characteristics of source areas? • What is the duration of migration and what seasonal patterns can be observed? 	<p>Quantitative</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Quantitative</p>
2	<p>Why do people choose to migrate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is migration more driven by push or pull factors? • What push factors are most prominent in making people consider migration? • What pull factors are most prominent in influencing people to migrate? • Who makes decisions to migrate and how are those decisions made? 	<p>Both</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Both</p>
3	<p>What are migration strategies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do people obtain information about migration opportunities? • How do people plan their move prior to departure? • What degree of investment is required prior to migration and how do people obtain those resources? • What factors can be learned from successful or less successful migration experiences? • How do people manage risk in the migration process and how do migrants and their families respond to risks? • What are the most influential networks for identifying migration opportunities? • How are remittances made? • How are ties maintained between migrants and sending areas? • How are social networks used to mitigate risks or deal with issues in the migration process? 	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p> <p>Both</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p>

	Key Research Questions	Primary Research Approach
4	<p>What are the impacts of migration on the social fabric of source areas (at the community level)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does migration affect livelihoods in source areas? • How is migration changing the types of work done by those left behind, including changes in gender roles? • How does migration affect social institutions in source villages, including youth associations, community development, and health care? 	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Both</p> <p>Qualitative</p>
5	<p>What are the impacts of migration on those left behind at the household level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the impacts of remittances for source families? How are decisions made about how remittances are used? • How has migration changed roles of household members in source villages, including gender roles? • What are the effects of returning migrants on social structures within households? 	<p>Both</p> <p>Qualitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p>

ANNEX 2 Qualitative sample

Region	Sample Township	Sample Village Tract	Sample Village
Magway	Magway	Kayin (Kan Yin)	Kayin (Kan Yin)
	Magway	In Taing Gyi	Ka Daung Gyi
	Pakokku	Myin Win	Myin Win
	Pakokku	Ku	Yae Kyi
Ayeyarwady	Mawlamyinegyun	Pyar Mut Shaw Chaung	Kyon La Tar Wa
	Mawlamyinegyun	Kyet Shar	Kyun Chaung
	Labutta	Ah Mat	Ah Mat
	Labutta	Kyu Taw	Chaung Kwe Gyi

ANNEX 3 Quantitative survey sampling design

Stage	Unit	Number of Units	Method of Selection
Primary Sampling Unit	Village	40	Random from the region
Secondary Sampling Unit	Household	20	Random from the list of households in the village
Total Households per Region		800	
Total Villages in the Overall Sample		80	
Total Households in the Overall Sample		1,600	

Village Distribution Across Districts

Region	District	Number of Villages	Total Number of Households
Magway	Gangaw	8	160
	Magway	8	160
	Minbu	8	160
	Pakokku	8	160
	Thayet	8	160
Ayeyarwady	Hinthada	7	140
	Labutta	6	120
	Maubin	7	140
	Myaungmya	6	120
	Pathein	7	140
	Pyapon	7	140

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE
MIGRATION DECISION

Drivers

Wages in source locations: Wage differentials between source and destination areas can be a potential driver, with the potential for income beyond what could be accrued via local labor alternatives. At this time, there is no reliable data on destination wages in Myanmar. However, wages in source locations in the off-season (the period when the quantitative survey was fielded) can serve as a good proxy for wage differentials: when wages are sufficiently low households are more likely to seek out opportunities elsewhere. In addition, education levels above lower secondary can impact on opportunities for higher wages.

Job availability in source locations: Households frequently supplement high-season agricultural labor (either via their own land or as employees or contractors) with off-season casual labor. While job availability data is not available, wages in source villages represent a good proxy as wages should decrease when job availability declines, making migration a more attractive proposition. In addition, education levels above lower secondary can impact on job opportunities—fewer are available to those with less schooling.

Variability of income streams: As noted above, job availability and wages levels vary significantly during the off-season, potentially putting households with limited assets at risk. Households with access to land, non-agricultural labor or financial resources are in a better position to weather income-stream variations. Those without such assets can attempt to diversify income streams via migration.

Shocks: Households experiencing negative shocks, food security problems or that have high levels of debt are potentially at greater risk due to income-stream variability or overall income levels, exacerbating the driving factors listed above (wages, job availability and variability of income streams).

Lifestyle factors: For individuals seeking lifestyle changes and livelihood choices that may not exist in rural areas, opportunities in other, particularly urban, locations may drive migration decisions. Education levels and household wealth are the primary means of seeking an alternative lifestyle; one not directly related to household welfare considerations.

Enabling Factors

Social networks: As noted above, the key concern cited by households with respect to destination areas is the ability to find a job and accommodation. The greater the number of migrants in a given village, the more likely it is that such information will be both available and accurate with respect to the likelihood of securing jobs and the cost of living in the destination area.

Low cost of transport and communication: The data above demonstrates that the costs associated with migration are low, including the transition to the new location and communication with family members, and allow for

frequent contact via mobile phone and return visits to source villages. The extent to which these costs are a consideration can be captured by household welfare measures, in this case per capita monthly consumption.

Labor availability: Households with a higher ratio of working-age adults to dependents (children and the elderly) are more likely to consider a migration strategy because they have a greater chance of diversifying income streams and existing labor resources are available to care for dependents. In addition, since households perceive females as having an enhanced set of constraints—with respect to safety, security and family responsibility—compared with males, the number of males of working age in a household could potentially impact on the migration decision more than the number of available females.

Constraints

Financial costs: As noted above under enabling factors, costs associated with migration are low and not likely to be an impediment. The extent to which these costs are a consideration can be captured by household welfare measures, in this case per capita monthly consumption, along with debt levels as a percentage of per capita monthly consumption.

Safety and security: As noted above, while still a potential issue for males, safety and security considerations are a much greater concern for females. The ratio of male working-age household members to female working-age household members captures these potential factors.

SUMMARY

The following table lists the factors, their potential impact and the specific variables used in the analysis (with names used in relevant specifications in bold).

Factor	Impact	Variable
Wage Differential	Low or unpredictable wages in off-season creates incentive to seek higher wages in destination (seasonally or permanently)	Wage: Village wage in the off-season as percentage of household per capita monthly consumption
Job Availability	Off-season casual labor to supplement high-season work (on own land or as an employee or contractor) can be difficult to find	Wage: Village wage in the off-season as percentage of household per capita monthly consumption
Variability of Income Streams	The fewer income streams available, the more a household is at risk with respect to sufficiency. Migration is a strategy to diversify the set of household livelihood strategies. Assets (land, education, capital) are a key driver of risk	Land: Land ownership (acres) Education: Average years of education of working-age adults; ratio of working-age adults with upper-secondary degrees to total household members Consumption: Log per capita monthly consumption Diversity of Livelihoods Strategies: Number of income sources by type of work, including farming own land or livestock, employee for farming or livestock, own business or employee for non-farm sector
Shocks	Exacerbate problems of income variability, job availability and wages	Food: Food insecurity episode in the last 12 months Debt: has debt Shock: Negative shock in the last 12 months
Lifestyle	Those with higher education or financial assets may seek lifestyle and/or career opportunities, which are available to those with higher incomes in urban areas	Education: Average years of education of working-age adults; ratio of working-age adults with upper-secondary degrees to total household members Consumption: Log per capita monthly consumption
Social Network	Greater previous migration levels increases the overall level of information on costs and job availability in the destination areas for the village, reducing risk of migration strategy	Migrants Village: Number of households with current migrants in the village
Communication and Transport	Cost of transport and communication a higher burden on households with low income or consumption levels	Consumption: Log per capita monthly consumption
Labor Availability	The greater availability of working-age adults increases the attractiveness of migration as a strategy with respect to factors cited above	Dep Ratio: Ratio of working-age (15–65) to non-working-age adults in the household
Safety and Security, Social Costs	Female household members less likely to migrate for non-economic reasons	Male Ratio: Males of working-age, ratio to number of household members
Financial Cost	Cost of migration a higher burden on households with low income or consumption levels	Consumption: Log per capita monthly consumption

THE MODEL The migration decision model is evaluated based on the following specification for both Magway and Ayeyarwady³⁴:

$$(1) M = a + b_1 (\text{Consumption}) + b_2 (\text{Wage}) + b_3 (\text{Land}) + b_4 (\text{Education}) + b_5 (\text{Food}) + b_6 (\text{Debt}) + b_7 (\text{Shock}) + b_8 (\text{Dep Ratio}) + b_9 (\text{Male Ratio}) + b_{10} (\text{Migrants_Village}) + b_{11} (\text{Strategies}) + vx_1 + e$$

RESULTS

Factors Impacting Migration Decisions in Magway

Variable	P-value	Direction of Effect
Land owned (acres)	0.792	
Diversity of livelihood strategies	0.253	
Debt	0.009	+
Food security event last 12 months	0.037	-
Negative economic shock last 12 months	0.376	
Households with migrants in the village	0.000	+
Working-age to household-size ratio	0.000	+
Males to household-size ratio	0.000	+
Log per capita monthly consumption	0.231	
Average years of education	0.894	
Ratio of village wage off-peak to per capita consumption	0.785	

Results significant at the 10 percent level are indicated in bold. No direction of effect is given for variables which are not significant at the 10 percent level.

³⁴ Where “M” is 1 if the household has a migrant and “0” if it does not; “a” is the intercept; “bn” are the coefficients for the respective independent variables listed; “vx” are fixed effects at the village level; and “e” is the error term. A logit model is employed to conduct the estimation. Standard errors are clustered at the village level.

Variable	P-value	Direction of Effect
Land owned (acres)	0.020	-
Diversity of livelihood strategies	0.000	-
Debt	0.135	
Food security event last 12 months	0.001	+
Negative economic shock last 12 months	0.649	
Households with migrants in the village	0.043	+
Working-age to household-size ratio	0.001	+
Males to household-size ratio	0.016	+
Log per capita monthly consumption	0.367	
Average years of education	0.035	
Ratio of village wage off-peak to per capita consumption	0.285	-

Results significant at the 10 percent level are indicated in bold. No direction of effect is given for variables which are not significant at the 10 percent level.

EVALUATING THE MIGRATION DECISION FOR LIVELIHOOD GROUPS

Households are placed into four Livelihood Types based on the land, education and wealth assets they hold:

- Landless
- Small landholding: <5 acres
- Medium landholding: 5–12 acres
- Non-poor: households with >12 acres, a household member with a tertiary degree and/or households in the top 10 percent of the consumption distribution by region.

Distribution of Households by Livelihood Type

Variable	Magway % of HH	# of HH	Ayeyarwady % of HH	# of HH
Landless	27.4%	219	48.5%	383
Smallholding	35.9%	287	16.1%	127
Medium holding	16.9%	135	16.5%	130
Large holding and Non-poor	19.9%	159	19.0%	150

RESULTS Firstly, we remove the asset based variables from the specification in (1) above (years of education, per capita monthly consumption, and land owned) and include binary variables for each of the categories for livelihood types. We then estimate the same specification in (1) above using binary variables for the four livelihood types by including interaction terms for each independent variable in (1).³⁵

Impact of Livelihood Type on Migration Decision in Magway

Magway	P-value	Direction of effect	Ayeyarwady	P-value	Direction of effect
< 5 acres	0.038	-	< 5 acre	0.025	-
5–12 acres	0.62		5–12 acres	0.023	-
Non-poor	0.145		Non-poor	0.029	-

Results significant at the 10 percent level are indicated in bold. No direction of effect is given for variables which are not significant at the 10 percent level. Direction of effect is relative to the landless category.

³⁵ Binary variables and interaction terms with each of the independent variables are introduced into the specification. Only significant findings are reported here.

Impact of Livelihood Type on Migration Decision in Ayeyarwady

Ayeyarwady		P-value	Direction of effect
Food security event	< 5 acres	0.086	-
	5-12 acres	0.032	-
	Non-poor	0.616	-
Working-age to household-size ratio	< 5 acres	0.769	
	5-12 acres	0.005	-
	Non-poor	0.801	
Males to household-size ratio	< 5 acres	0.102	-
	5-12 acres	0.217	-
	Non-poor	0.98	

Results significant at the 10 percent level are indicated in bold. No direction of effect is given for variables which are not significant at the 10 percent level. Direction of effect is relative to the landless category.





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