

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE VILLAGE

In this chapter, the study will present the description of the community and the overall socio-economic condition of the village: income and living status of the families and types of social services available in the community. Through quantitative survey and in-depth interview, the research will explore migration situation in the village by showing the commencement of migration period, the routes of migration and cost for migration process. Remittances from the migrants: how it is transferred, how it is used and how it impacts the children, families and community will also be explained. The findings on the impacts of migration on children, families and the community will also be revealed.

3.1 Descriptions of the Community

The field research took place in Ta Won Phan Ya village, a village in Hlaing Bwe Township which is located in Kayin state, lower part of Myanmar. The village is about 24 kilometres east of Hpa-an town, capital city of Kayin state and 314 kilometres southeast of Yangon, former capital city of Myanmar.

There are three reasons for selecting this village:-

- (1) high migration rate (about 30 per cent out of total population)
- (2) non-political sensitivity area
- (3) security (it is safe to travel in the area due to less conflict between ethnic armed groups).

The researched village is a quiet place with a large number of household compared to other three villages in that village track. There are 230 households as documented by the Village Peace and Development Council¹⁵ (VPDC) in December 2006. The village is divided into five wards and there are more or less 45 households

¹⁵ Name of the Village Local Authority

in each ward. Total population in the village is about 1,662 in which 834 are males and 828 are female. Total number of children under the age of 18 is 604 in which 312 are male and 292 are female (see map in page 62).

The area is hot and humid because of mountain ranges. Annual rainfall is from June to October and the highest volume of rain is in July and August. The average rainfalls is over 160 inches and the temperature is about 20 to 40 degree centigrade. It rains more in this area than in Hpa-an area as it is close to mountains.

Main economy of the village is based on rice farming and subsistence agriculture. Normally, in Myanmar there are three paddy plantation and harvesting seasons in a year: raining season, winter and summer. In this area, farmers work during two seasons: rainy and summer season. In the rainy season which is the plantation period, the farmers start to work at the end of May or June and harvest the crops in October. During the summer season, January is a paddy plantation period with April and May as the harvesting month. In the summers, farmers have to grow rice by irrigation water. Thus, farmers are especially busy during the months of plantation and harvest. In addition to the paddy plantation, groundnut and beans are cultivated in the winter season. Apart from farming and migration, no other career alternative is found for local people. Yet some families may have their own business such as running small shops or stores at home. Gradually, traditional farming which generates low income becomes less attractive to younger generation whereas migration rate is on the rise.

Farmers who owned many lands usually hire labours to work on their farm on daily wages. For those who do not own any land, they work as daily wages workers in other's farm. As for the families that possess the farmlands but have lack of persons to manage it due to migration, they allowed the poor families who own no land to work on their farm without lending charges. However, those who work on other's farms without lending fees usually give the rice to the farmland owner after harvesting as a token of rent and also as gratitude.

The family size in this community varies from five to ten members. There are two family types; extended family and nuclear family. Extended family includes grandparents, parents, children and other family members who are still unmarried whereas nuclear family type includes only parents and their children. The majority (n=67) of the family found are extended family and the remaining (n=33) are nuclear family.

The whole population in this community is pure Kayin (Karen) ethnic. Out of Kayin ethnic, there are three main groups namely Eastern Pwo Kayin, Western Pwo Kayin and Sagaw Kayin. All of which has their own dialect and linguistic traits. Over ten sub-groups who speak different Kayin dialects derive from one of those main groups. Kayin people are spreading in different parts of Myanmar and the language is spoken variant of area of residence. The community members in the research area are pure Eastern Pwo Kayin ethnic group. The majority in the community both adults and children speak only Kayin language and only the minority with secondary education or above can speak Myanmar language. Their religion is mainly Buddhism and only a few still believe in the old Kayin tradition called *Nat*¹⁶. The community is religious and uphold well their culture.

3.2 Infrastructure and Welfare Services in the Community

3.2.1 Infrastructure

The village can be reached by bus or car or motorbike from Hpa-an town. There is one main arterial road that passes through the centre of the village. That main road which connects Hlaing Bwe – Hpa-an road and *Myaing Gyi Ngu special region*¹⁷ was constructed by Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) after the ceased fire with the military government in 1994. The DKBA, without seeking any financial support from the government, built the road under the supervision of a monk in Myaing Gyi Ngu in view that their special region could be linked with other towns.

¹⁶ Guardian spirit that old Kayin people believe in

¹⁷ A place where military government provided to DKBA after ceased fire

Prior to that, local people used only the unpaved seasonal road to travel and the transportation is not convenient. Today, people can commute to the adjacent towns within a few hours. Undeniable, the study place is closed to the armed DKBA's stronghold. However, conflicts and confrontations are much less likely due to good cooperation between DKBA and the military.

Roadway serves as the main route to and from this village. There are both public and private buses running from *Myaing Gyi Ngy special region* or *Shwe Gon*¹⁸ to Hpa-an through the village. Buses are operated daily from 06.00 – 17.00 hrs. People can stop the bus along the way in order to travel or to transport materials. Although the transportation is sound, there is no electricity provided by the government in the village.

During the old days before the year 2000, there were limited communication channels in rural areas of Myanmar. Since no postal service is available in rural areas, communication between people can only be done by the letters being sent with the people who travel. The government controlled the communication system and telephones can only reach big cities with limited numbers. The cost for installing a telephone at home was extremely high.

There has been an improvement of the communication process with the advances made in technology. More telephone lines are installed in the cities and in some parts of rural areas. One government telecommunication line was found in this village as an extension of where the main line is based in the village close to the town. Much to the surprise of the researcher, it was found not less than ten Thai cordless telephone line being used in that village. The main board for this Thai phone is based in two places in Hlaing Bwe Township and one place in Hpa-an Township. The cost for installing Thai phone is about 1 million Kyats (about 800 USD) which is relatively cheaper than that of the government.

¹⁸ Name of a town in Hlaing Bwe Township

3.2.2 Welfare Services in the Community

Educational facilities are present in the village assuring the children's access to a basic education. For children to get access to education there is one government primary school in the village which allows the children to learn from Kindergarten - Grade 1 to Grade 5 (see picture in page 65). There was only one teacher and one head mistress in the previous years and that was not sufficient for the total number of students who were attending the school. This school year, (2007 – 2008), two new teachers were assigned by the education department, that came to a total of four teachers. There is also one school assistant who is native. Although he is the assistant, he also has to take part in teaching the younger children's class as he speaks the local language. There are 187 students enrolled this year of which 88 (eighty eight) are boys and 99 (ninety nine) are girls. Although the numbers of students whose parents are migrants have not been recorded as such, the headmistress estimated that one third of the total number of students are children of migrants. In order to maintain the teachers in the village, the community provides houses for the assigned teachers and gives free of tax quota. Community also provides rice as basic food for the teachers. In return, teachers allow their students to study at their homes every evening for free.

The village established a new Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centre in July 2007 while this research was taking place. The aim of the centre is to ensure that the young children (age from three to five) develop holistically and will be ready for primary school. School goes from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. everyday during weekdays from Monday to Friday and the fees is 3,000 Kyat (about 2.5 USD) per month per child. 19 children are enrolled this year and among them 15 (fifteen) are children of one or both migrant parents. There are three ECCD teachers responsible for the children at the centre. They are recruited and paid by the community (see picture in page 65).

There is no secondary school available in the village. Therefore, in order to continue their education after the primary level education, children have to go to a

village nearby named “Naung Ka Myaing”, where they can receive education from Grade 6 to Grade 9. The school located about 4 km from the village. It takes fifteen minutes drive by motorbike and half an hour by bicycle from the village. High schools are available only in the main towns. Thus, once the children complete their secondary school, they will have to continue their high school in Hpa-an, the capital of Kayin state which is about 24 km from the village.

In terms of accessibility to health services, there is one clinic in the village to which only one midwife is assigned (see picture in page 65). That particular midwife is a government service employee and is responsible for one village track which contains four villages including Ta Won Phan Ya village. Her service as a midwife is already at 21 years. She has to visit all four villages under her jurisdiction and take care of the pregnant mothers as well as sick people. In rural areas of Myanmar, the government used to assign only one midwife for four to ten villages. Other sources for seeking health assistance are from traditional healers. Since the midwife is a native of that village, the majority goes to her because of their faith in her and because they know her. The community members also use locally available herbs because it is cheap and can be obtained easily. In case of health problems such as Malaria in serious stage and the operations that the midwife is unable to handle, they go to Hpa-an or Hlaing Bwe hospitals located about 24 km from the village. Both hospitals are about the same distance from the village and can be reached by road.

3.3 Migration and its Impacts

3.3.1 Migration Trend

Since the 1980s, people from this area started to do small trade by bringing local materials to sell in Thailand’s border town. On their return, they brought Thailand made materials such as bicycles, slippers and clothes. The route used was by walking along the unpaved road through the jungles. People started to follow the trend from 1985 onwards. There were lots of human trafficking cases in the 1990s and it declined gradually because of improvements in the roads, making travel much easier

and convenient. This led to mass migrations which started to increase significantly in 2004 due to effective communication systems that were established through the use of the Thai cordless phones. This enabled the migrants to break through the “broker” or locally called “carry” barrier making it impossible for the brokers to cheat on the migrants and traffick them into prostitution and slavery. With the breakdown of this barrier, migrants could now be in direct contact with the employers and network with other migrants resulting in a safety net, whereby they could now call on each other for assistance. This encouraged more people to migrate as by that time the villagers felt that working in Thailand can earn more money than farming in the village.

Since there is a strong network between migrants and the village, the migration process has become progressively smoother. Before 2005, there were many cases of human trafficking during the migration process. According to the VPDC secretary, there has been almost no trafficking case from 2006 onwards. Migrants who have already been working in Thailand for more than three years arrange the trips and jobs for the new comers – mostly their relatives – in cooperation with the brokers. With the help of migrant worker in consultation with the trustworthy brokers, there are fewer victims and less difficulty for those who find job in Thailand.

3.3.2 Migration Routes

According to the interview, people from Ta Won Phan Ya village migrated to Thailand either legally or illegally. Initially, migrants travel legally by air holding Myanmar passport or through the bridge of Myawaddy – Mae Sot official border check point. However, due to the complicated process of applying for a passport and visa and the air travel to Bangkok, a majority choose the option to cross the border. The other legal option takes one full day travel time to reach Thailand from the village. They travel from the village to Hpa-an by car and continue on to Kawkareik. From Kawkareik, they further proceed to Myawaddy. Once they reach Myawaddy, they can obtain the official pass to Mae-Sot (Thailand) by providing a copy of their National Registration Card (NRC) at the gate. That official pass is valid for one day only. Although migrants travel legally through this channel, they extend their stay

once they are in Thailand and thereby become "overstayers", finally ending up as illegal migrants. Migrants mostly use this Myawaddy – Mae Sot channel either legally or illegally as it is the easiest and most convenient (see map of Migration Routes in page 63).

Migrants who do not possess a NRC card travel along the road by car and when they reach Myawaddy, they illegally cross the Moei River by boat to get to Mae Sot. Another route is by car from the village to a place called *Myaing Gyi Ngu* and thence to *Mae Tha Waw*. This is located at the Thai-Myanmar border. This road can be used only in summer when there is no rain. If they want to travel during the rainy season, they have to walk in order to reach *Mae Tha Waw*. From there, migrants crossed the border by boat across the Moei River to Thailand. This channel is rarely used as it is hard to travel and it is used only when the bridge connecting Myawaddy – Mae Sot is closed. Migrant workers to Malaysia use the same route to arrive in Thailand and from there, they further proceed to Malaysia by boat. However, migrants who work in Malaysia are only a small number compared to those in Thailand (n=10, 14% of surveyed migrant household).

The migration process takes place with the help of the brokers. As per the information received from the in-depth interview with family members and key informants, migrants have to pay broker's fees about 500,000 to 600,000 Kyats (about 400 USD to 500 USD) per trip per person. Some mentioned that they have to pay the broker fees about 10,000 to 15,000 Baht (about 300 USD - 500USD) before leaving. Since Thai baht is not available in Myanmar, Migrants have to pay the amount equivalent to the Baht amount. Some have to pay half in Myanmar and the rest after arriving in Thailand. For some migrants who have direct contact with the employer, the employer paid for them in advance and deduct it later from their wages. As there is a strong network between migrants, family and the brokers, migrants do not need to worry about getting jobs. They can get jobs immediately once they arrive in Thailand.

3.4 Survey Findings

3.4.1 Households Income

The survey was done with 100 households in order to measure the economic status in the community and to segregate the number of migrant and non-migrant households. As per results from the survey of 100 households, there are about 71 per cent households that have at least one migrant member living and working elsewhere and the remaining 29 households are non-migrant households. The family size in this village is between five to ten members. However, due to migration of the family members including parents of the children, there are only a few members left at home. In some families, there are altogether eight members in the family but only three or four members left. The other members have migrated and work abroad.

Table 1: Income of Non-migrants Households

No. of Households (total 29 HH)	Land owned 5-10 acres & above	Land owned 1-4 acres	Shop / Merchant / others	Daily wages	Estimated Yearly income (Kyats)	by US Dollar
7	✓				700,000-1,000,000	560-800
2	✓		✓		700,000-1,000,000	560-800
1		✓	✓		800,000	640
4			✓		800,000-1,000,000	640-800
7		✓		✓	300,000-500,000	240-240
8				✓	100,000-300,000	80-240

Among Non-migrant households, there are six categories. The first category is households who own land 5 to 10 acres and above and their income is between 700,000 to 1,000,000 Kyats (560-800 USD). The second category is households who own land 5-10 acres and also have income from small shops or other business. Their income was not much different from the first group. The third category is the

households who own land 1-4 acres and have small business. They received about 800,000 Kyat (640 USD) per year. Merchants or shop owners are in the fourth category and they received income about 800,000 to 1,000,000 Kyats per year (640-800 USD). The fifth category is the families who own land 1 to 4 acres and have income from other sources. Their income is from 300,000 to 500,000 Kyats (240 – 400 USD). The last category is the households who have to depend on the daily wages and they earned about 100,000 – 300,000 kyats per year (80-240 USD). Current exchange rate for 1 US Dollar is equivalent to 1,250 Kyats (unofficial exchange rate). Yearly income from those who owned lands varies depending on the condition of the weather. As farmers have to depend on raining season, if there is draught or long monsoon season, paddy fields are destroyed and the production of rice is decreased. In this case, their income is not stable.

Table 2: Income of Migrant Households

Migrant Households (total 71 HH)	Land owned 5-10 acres & above	Land owned 1-4 acres	Remittance	Daily wages	Estimated Yearly income (Kyats)	by US Dollar
5	✓		✓		1,000,000 - 1,200,000	800-960
36		✓	✓		700,000-1,000,000	560-800
30			✓	✓	500,000-900,000	400-720

Among the migrant households, there were 5 households who own farmland 5 acres and above. Since they also received income from the remittance, their income is between 1,000,000 – 1,200,000 Kyats (800-960 USD). Those who own land acres 1-4, their income is less than the first group between 700,000-1,000,000 Kyats (560-800 USD). The last group is those who own no land and solely depend on the migrant remittance. Their income is not much different from the second group who own land 1-4 acres. Since the return from the farm is less due to small acres of land, they do not

pay much attention to the farming. So, the income of households whether or not they own land does not make a big different.

Table 3: Family Size of Migrant Households

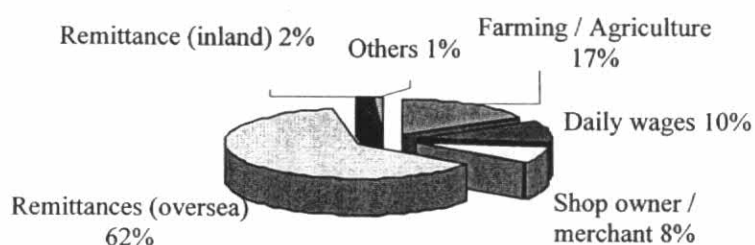
Migrant HH (Total 71 HH)	Family Size	Number of Migrants	Number of year	no of child	In school
Migrants (Parents and other members)	6-10	2-5	> 1	2-4	1-3
	1-5	1-3	>1	1-3	1-2

Among the 71 migrant households, not only parents who leave their children with the grandparents but also relatives who live in the same households. Family size is maximum 10 members and at least 2 members migrated. The remittances are not only from the parents of the children but also from the relatives who migrated.

3.4.2 Main Income

Originally, the main economy of this community was rice farming and agriculture, local people earned their income by working on farms. However, due to limited job opportunities and lesser interest in farming, the local people migrate to other countries for earnings. According to the information from the survey, local people depend mainly on remittances from the migrant workers. The following pie chart shows the percentage of the main income of local people in the village.

Graph 1: Main Income by Percentage

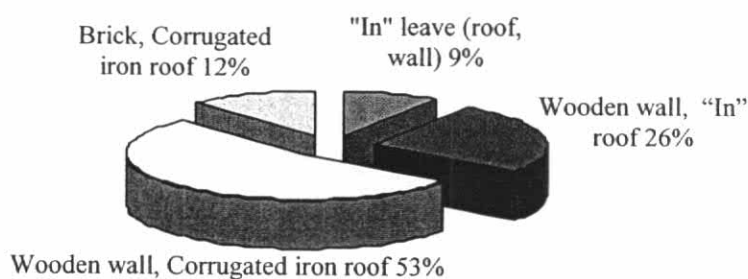


More than half of the surveyed 100 households rely mainly on remittances from overseas. Although they have their own land for farming, their main income is from migrants' remittances and not from farming. As many young adults and middle age people migrate to other countries, those who can work at farming are decreasing and in some households, there is no one left to manage the farming work. The cost to hire people to work on the farm as daily wages workers is about 2,500 Kyats (about 2 USD) per person per day. There is no profit for the family from the farms/farming. So, the village members no longer rely on farming work. In this regards, instead of hiring workers, the farm owner whose family members are working abroad abandon their farming work and let others who do not have their own farm work on behalf of them without renting fees. The lenders return rice to the land owner, as gratitude.

3.4.3 Household Types

Household types in this village are categorized into four main types: houses walls and roofing with "In" leaves¹⁹, wooden houses roofing with "In" leaves, wooden houses roofing with corrugated iron sheets and houses with brick walls and corrugated iron roofing sheets. It shows the ranking of their economic status; from brick and corrugated roofing house to roofing and walls with "In" leaves. Household roofing and walls with "In" leaves are regarded as the low income families and household with brick walling and corrugated roofing sheets are regarded as the high income families in the village. The other two types of household are average middle income families and the majority are migrant households (see pictures in page 64).

Graph 2: Household Type



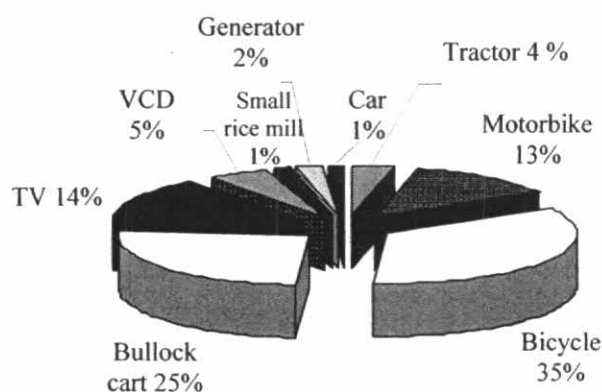
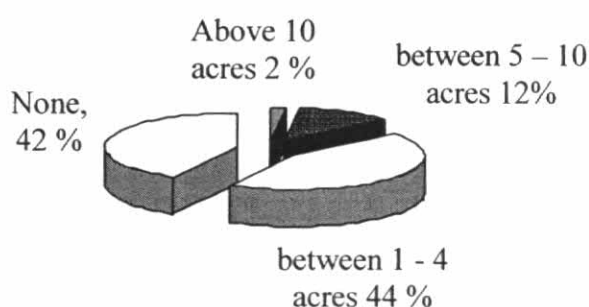
¹⁹ Local roofing materials (leaves and bamboo)

Since the percentage of household walls and roofing with “In” leaves is low, it appears that the economic status of the village is in a better position. There are more migrant household with the wooden house roofing with corrugated iron sheet household types (n=44 and n=9) and wooden house roofing with “In” leaves (n=16 and n=10). Those who can live in wooden house with corrugated iron sheet roofing are meant to be average families and they are doing well in the village. There are more non-migrant household than migrant in the category of brick wall and corrugated iron sheet (n=5 and n=7) since these households have their own business as traders/ merchants and shops owners.

3.4.4 Wealth Ranking

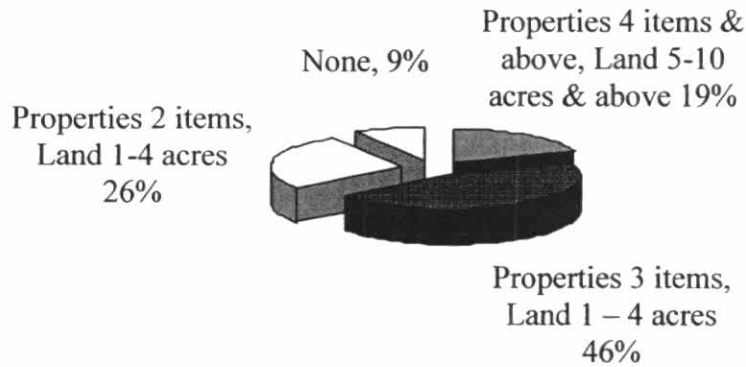
The following pie charts show the percentage of land and property owned by the surveyed households in the village. To measure the wealth ranking by land, it was divided into four categories: those who owned more than 10 acres of land, those from 10 to 5 acres, those from 4 to 1 acres and those who do not own land. Those who owned more land were said to be families with good economic conditions in the village and the poorest in the village are labourers on daily wages who do not own anything. The average families are those who owned from between 10 to 5 and 4 to 1 acres of land.

In terms of property owned, the study looked at the possession of material that could be seen physically such as possession of tractors, motorbikes, bullock carts, bicycles, TVs, VCD players and so on. The majority of the households possess the required item for transport such as bicycles. Those who work on farms owned bullock carts as it is the most basic form of transportation used by the farmers. Some possess more than one item. About 15 % of the surveyed families owned up to four items and these are meant to be the rich families.

Graph 3: Property owned**Graph 4: Land Owned**

To rank the families in the village in terms of their possession of land and property, it can be divided roughly into four levels. The first level is the families who possess four to six items such as cars, tractors, motorbikes, TVs, VCD players, bicycles, land of 5 to 10 acres or above 10 acres. The percentage at this level is about 19 per cent in which 10 are migrant households and 9 are non-migrant households. They are living in the houses with brick wall and corrugated iron sheet roofing as well as living in the house of wooden wall and iron roofing sheet. The second level is at about 46 per cent who possess at most three items such as bicycles, bullock cart, TV and others. This level owned between 1 to 4 acres of land and their houses are wooden with corrugated iron sheet roofing. 39 percent of this group is meant to be migrant households whereas the remaining 5 per cent is non-migrant households. Families in the third level are those who still possess land of 1 to 4 acres while some do not possess any land but have incomes from other sources such as migrant remittances and/or small home shops. This household percentage is at 26 per cent and they live in the wooden house with “In” leaves roofing household types. The last level is at about 9 per cent who possess no land and live in the household of roofing and walls with “In” leaves and are the households depending on daily wages.

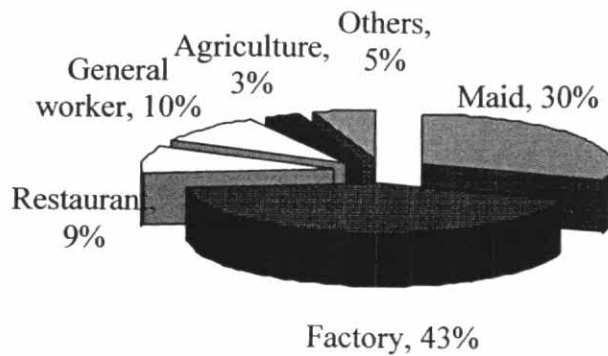
Graph 5: Wealth Ranking



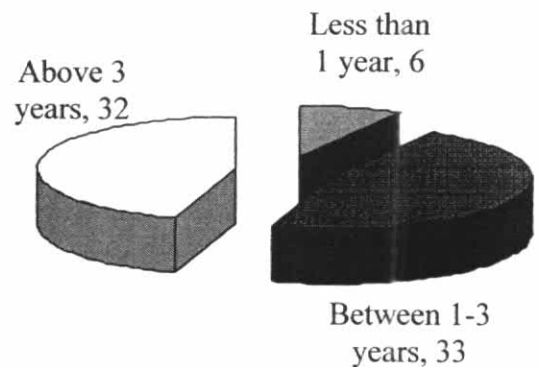
3.5 Migrants’ Job and Duration of Stay

According to the results of the survey, 30.7 per cent (206n out of 671n) out of the surveyed population (in 100 households) was found as the migrant population. Members from this community migrate and work in Thailand as well as Malaysia. The following graphs indicate the percentage of jobs occupied by the migrants and the duration of their stay.

Graph 6: Types of Job



Graph 7: Duration of Stay (by household)

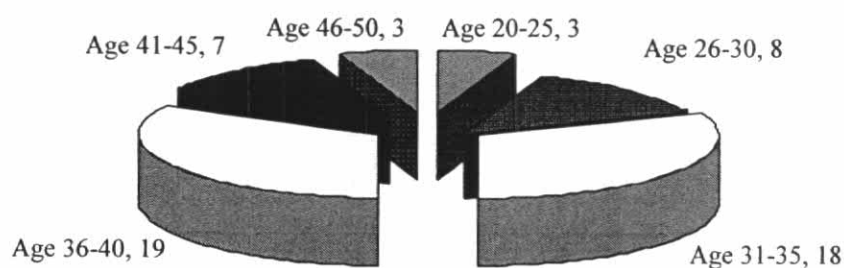


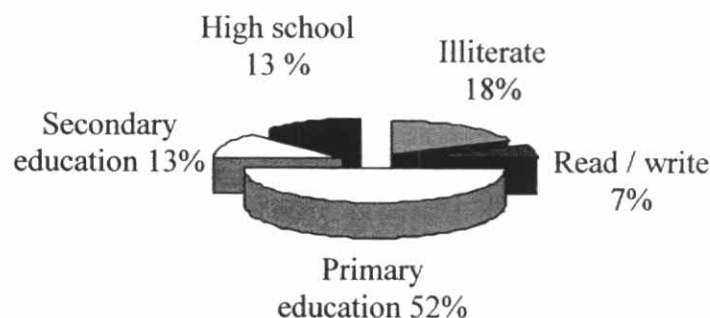
3.6 Profile of Migrant Parents

Among the 71 migrant households in the survey group, there are 39 families which one or both parents migrated and left their children with caregivers. It is more than one third of the total surveyed households. Among the 39 households having at least one migrant parent, 37 is living in extended families which include children, their grandparents, parents and their aunts and uncles who are still unmarried. Only two families are found living in a nuclear family that includes only parents and their children.

The total number of migrant parents in the survey group is 58 numbers. Age ranges of the parents are from 23 to 50. Among the 58 parents, the highest numbers has been found in parents of ages between 30 to 40 whereas the lowest numbers are found in the ages under 25 and above 45. The education level of the migrant parents is categorized into five levels. It was found that slightly more than half of the migrant parents received only primary level education and about one fifth are illiterate. Less than 10 per cent can merely read and write and the rest are those who reached secondary and high school education levels. The following pie charts show the percentage of educational levels and age range of migrant parents.

Graph 8: Age Range of Migrant Parents



Graph 9: Education level of Migrant Parents

3.7 Remittances

3.7.1 Channel of Remittances

As per the survey findings, the majority of migrant workers originating in this village are living and working in the Bangkok area. Channels of remittance are mainly through the brokers. According to the two returned migrants, they explained that the brokers receive money in Thai Baht which is then transferred from Bangkok to Mae-sot by bank transfer. From the Mae-sot bank, money is withdrawn in Baht and exchanged into Myanmar currency (Kyats). From there, brokers bring it to the village and hand over the cash to the families. Sometimes the family has to collect the remittance from the village nearby or from the town. Migrant workers have to pay the brokers 10 per cent on the money sent for service charges. The received family does not need to pay for the transfer fees as it is paid by migrants from the sending side.

Since the Bangkok area where migrants from the research community work, is far from the border, the migrants rarely use the channel to send the money through relatives or friends who go back to Myanmar to visit. Thus, for remittance purposes, migrant workers rely only on brokers. In some cases, where they have less contact with the outsiders because of their work nature, they save their earnings and bring it back only when they return to the village. As communication becomes more convenient than ever before, migrants use the broker's channel because the remittance can be received in a few days and the brokers are trustworthy.

3.7.2 Wages Earned and Frequency of Sending

The majority of the interviewed caregivers were not able to answer the amount of the migrants' earnings. Only two returned female migrants and two caregivers could answer this question. Migrant workers' wages varied from 3,500 to 7,000 Baht depending on their sectors of work. Housemaids usually receive about 3,500 to 4,000 Baht a month and some factory workers receive 4,500 Baht a month. One returned migrant mentioned that her husband earn 220 baht a day which makes a total of about 6,000 baht a month.

The frequency of remittance sending is not regular. Most of the interviewees answered that they received remittances once in every three or four months. The amount sent varies from 100,000 to 400,000 Kyats (about 80USD to 320USD) according to the income and desire of the migrant workers. The frequency and amount sent varies among groups depending on the factors such as length of stay in the destination country, sector of work, wages earned, their way of living at the working place and the migrants' desire to remit money. It also depends on the gender and the migrant's motivation to send remittance. According to some caregivers, the remittance is regular and increases once the wife follows the husband. It can be understood that mothers are more likely to remit money than fathers. Some respondents mentioned that they called the migrants – those who can be contacted-when they are in need of money.

3.7.3 The Use of Remittances

The research found out that remittance received by the families is an important factor that affects the well-being of those left behind and their access to social services. Remittances provide a financial boost to the families that enable them to reach a standard of living adequate for the development of their children. Remittances by the parents ensure food security, help repay debts, renovate houses and cover the costs of schooling and illness of relatives left behind.

As per the answer of the interviewees, the main person who manages the remittances from parents is the children's caregivers. However, when asked about how much they spend on what items, they were not able to answer. They could not estimate the amount as they did not have the habit of recording the expenditure. They could merely mention whether or not the remittance money is enough for the family and whether they received remittance in time before they run out of money. When asked about the way they solve the problem when they did not receive money on time, those who solely depend on remittance replied that they seek help from the neighbours by borrowing money. The money was returned once the family received the remittance from the migrants. Some migrant households have their secondary income from the farm and some from the daily worker wages.

The main expenditure on the remittance is for the day to day expenses, especially on food. Children's education and family health are set as the second priority. Migration has significant and positive effects on the schooling of the 'left-behind' children in addition to the daily living of the family. This is obvious when children get into the secondary and high school level. The majority sees that only remittance from migrant parents could allow children to seek higher education. Although school fees at the primary level are not a problem, children's school expenditure at the secondary level is considerably increased. As the secondary school is located in another place, the children now need expenditures for school fees as well as other supportive items such as school uniforms, bicycle for transportation and other contributions collected in school. There was one high school student among the surveyed children. He continues his tertiary education in nearby town. He stays in the special hostel where he is closely tutored and guided. Fees for such kind of education service is at least 10 Lahks (about 800USD) per student per year. Income from farming and daily wages could not cover those expenses, according to the respondents. Only remittance money could fulfil the need. There are also other children from migrant households, who were not included in the survey group, attending the high school in towns. A mother whose husband migrated to Thailand for two years and was left with three children expressed as follows.

“My husband was working as a helper at primary school when our children were young. As they progressed to the higher grades, the school fees became higher and my husband’s income could no longer support our children’s school fees. We owned no farm land to work for an income. So, my husband decided to migrate and work in Thailand. Now, with his remittance, we can send our eldest son to high school. We have already spent 700,000 Kyats (about 560 USD) for his school fees this year.” (Daw Lone, Interview, 14th July 2007)

Since the ceased fire between DKBA and the government, political situation nowadays, is stable and there is no more conflict between armed groups and the army. There is no “portering” and no forced labour either from the military or the armed groups these days. Instead of providing labour, however, the village has to pay tax every month. The amount to be paid varies from three thousand (2.5 USD) to ten thousand Kyats (8 USD). Sometimes, the army and police request gasoline for their cars and motorbikes, bamboo and “In” leaves for building tents.

In the case of DKBA, every year, there is a festival for harvesting crops held by the DKBA in their special region. This is a big festival and the DKBA collects rice in bags - more than 15 bags (about 750 kg) per village - in order to host the festival. The village leader sets a quota for each household to contribute to the amount demanded by the DKBA. There is also one branch of the DKBA group residing near this village. The village has to pay the group 20,000 (17 USD) to 30,000 (25 USD) Kyats every month. All the taxes are collected and paid through the village leader. The village leader estimated that there will be an average of five thousand Kyats (4 USD) per month per household to pay in regular tax excluding taxes collected for special events.

Another payment has to be made to “incentives” to the police as well as to the DKBA for installing Thai phones in the village because installing Thai phones in

Myanmar is not official. The cash amount that has to be paid to the DKBA is about 30,000 Kyats (about 25USD) per phone bi-annually, but the payments to the police vary. There is also cash collected by the township level government department as a contribution used for sports, health and education. Remittances sent from the migrants ease the tax load imposed by the DKBA and other government departments.

Moreover, remittances pay other expenditure such as donation for religious festivals and events in the community. The interviewees also mentioned that the remittance money helps the family to do meritorious deeds, such as donating to the monks, monastery and contributing the religious and social affairs in the community. Particularly, money is spent for the son's novitiation. Novitiation is a Buddhist tradition of letting sons become novices and is held once every three years. Families who can host this festivals, gain merit and credit and recognition in the community. The family has to spend at least one million Kyats (about eight hundred US dollars) in order to host the festival. The festival last for three days and relatives and people from nearby villages come and celebrate with the host family.

As per the researchers' observations, many migrant households are in a good condition and some households are newly constructed. Some interviewees also stated that, in addition to the daily expenses, the remittance has been used to renovate the houses. It can be confirmed that remittances from migrants were also used for the family's future. (See examples of the use of remittances in the table below)

Table 4: The Use of Parents' Remittance

No.	Respondents	Relationship to the child	Day to day	Children's education	Family health	for religious	Tax
1	Daw Win	Headmistress / Aunt		X	X		
2	Daw Khine	Grandmother	X	X		X	
3	Daw Shwe	Grandmother	X	X			
4	Daw Chit	Grandmother	X	X			
5	Daw Mu	Grandmother	X	X			
6	Daw Cho	Grandmother	X	X			X
7	Daw Mon	Grandmother	X	X	X	X	X
8	Daw Than	Grandmother	X	X	X		X
9	Ma Naung	Mother	X	X			
10	Daw Lone	Mother	X	X			
11	U Lin	Father	X				
12	Nan Thein	Neighbour		X			
13	Nan Tin	Aunt	X	X	X		
14	Nan Hla	Mother/ returned migrant	X		X		
15	Nan Yi	Mother/ returned migrant	X		X		
16	Monk						

3.7.4 Impacts of the Remittances on the Families and the Children

Remittance from the parents, as mentioned above, attains an impact on family's socio-economic status and their children's education. On the other hand, remittance itself leads to a negative effect on the children due to misuse of money. Since the parents have a lower education level, they expect their children to have a better education and they do their best to support this goal with sufficient money for their children to study for a higher education without any worries. In this regard, if the money remitted can not be managed well, then the adolescents who study in high school are at risk.

One of the interviewees, who is a social worker explained a case of a high school boy of migrant parents. The parents' remittance lets him study in a good private tuition school with no worries for money and his grandparents provide him

whatever he wants. Being a high school student and an adolescent, he got a motorbike to travel from his hostel to school and around the town. Although he is a high school student, most of the time he spends his time outside with friends, he enjoyed spending the money and did not study very well. Since he can use the money for his desire, he is at risk of becoming addicted to alcohol and drug as drugs can easily be obtained in Kayin State. Therefore, caregivers should bear in mind not to let the children abuse money sent from their parents and to avoid unnecessary risks that can lead to a negative result like spoiling the child with money.

By looking at this scenario, it can be assumed that there is a negative impact on the children's psychosocial well beings. This may be because they feel insecure in the absence of their parents' care, love and support. They may not differentiate what is right or wrong and they might not understand that money cannot buy many important things in life. In fact, the love and care from the parents cannot be replaced with other things including money. Money is just for supporting the children's well being while their parents are away. Grandparents should understand this and give the necessary support to the children in an appropriate direction. The grandparents' misguided affection and lack of ability to guide the children to use money can lead to a negative effect that could spoil them. Thus, the important thing is to manage and use the money in a correct way in order to be effective and impact the children in a positive way.

At the family level, it is obvious that remittances improve the family's socio-economic status and children's access to education. However, a family's investment for the future was rarely seen. Only two surveyed households were seen to have a small rice mill and a car for the family business. Remittances sent are mostly not being used in a productive way and only add to the family's consumerism. In this regards, the return from migration will not be sustained. As a result, a members' migration can not be reduced, it will increase in numbers with old migrants re-migrating followed by the newer migrants.

Another factor is the over-dependency of the family on the remittances. It was found that the dependency on migrant remittances is not only by the elder people and children but also other members who still farm, yet they do not see farming as a worthy job when compared to their efforts. As a consequence, rice production is merely enough of the family itself and cannot be sold for the family's extra income. This can finally impact on the community.

3.8 Impacts of Migration

3.8.1 Children

According to the survey, 39 families out of 71 migrant households have at least one parent migrated. The research found that migration of parents has contributed to both positive and negative impacts on children by means of remittances. As mentioned in 3.7.3, the positive impact on individual is that since children had to manage things by themselves without parents' guidance, they may become more mature than other children and will be able to face any problem as they grow up. Moreover, since they have to try to stand on their own and have to make decision by themselves in some cases, they may gain problem solving skill which could be regarded as a positive impact of being left behind.

As for the negative impact, children who were left at home with the caregivers may become unattached from their parents. They may feel distance from their parents. The distance could worsen the parent-child relationship. Later on, staying together as a family may not be considered to be important for them as long as they are provided with material need. They will not value the relationship between parents and children.

Being an extended Kayin family, all of the members traditionally work together in harmony either in the farm or in other works. They are united and No one is left out. Children are also counted. Now, due to migration, a custom of family members working together on farming is reduced and expect only on the remittance.

As for the children, they rarely involve or participate in the traditional farming and become more individualistic.

Since the majority of children do not have other goals than migration, they do not have intention to stay in the village or in the country and work for the development of the community. Like their parents, they will regard money as a priority concern in which only migration can fulfil this.

3.8.2 Family

Family members migrate in order to overcome the poverty problem within the family. The families back home gain material supports and improve socio-economic condition (mentioned in 3.7.3). However, since parents and children have to stay separately, the family lose the unity. The family members could not feel the enjoyment of being together. As parents' migration started to be trendy nowadays, family unity could gradually diminish from this generation onwards.

Traditionally, a family has all the members living together. Now due to members' migration, the family's structure has changed. Only two generations, the children and the elderly grandparents were seen in a family. Moreover, since their ages are very different, there could be generation gap between the old people and the children particularly when they become adolescents. Different view and opinion of the two generations will create burden and difficulty for the Grandparents.

In some families, only one parent migrates and leaves their spouse at home. Some of the couples are both migrated together but stay in different places. Away from the community norm and the prolonged separation can create misunderstanding and dishonest between the two couple which lead to a divorce.

In the early days, a family in the community prefers to have more members at home. The more members they have, the more workforce to work on farming so that the family could produce more rice. Nowadays, the family started to think in reverse

as the more member migrate, the more income from outside sources will be received. The effect of migration could be seen in the structural change of the family.

3.8.3 Community

Migration, in the first place, benefits the community. Tax from the government, armed group and cash for the activities in the community can be collected without difficulties. Members pay for the collected money without any complaint. In addition, migration that causes less people to work in the farmland turned the families who owned the paddy fields to allow landless family to work on their land without expecting any return. The scenario could be regarded as positive effect of migration since migrant families are doing the charity work by sharing what they have, to other community members.

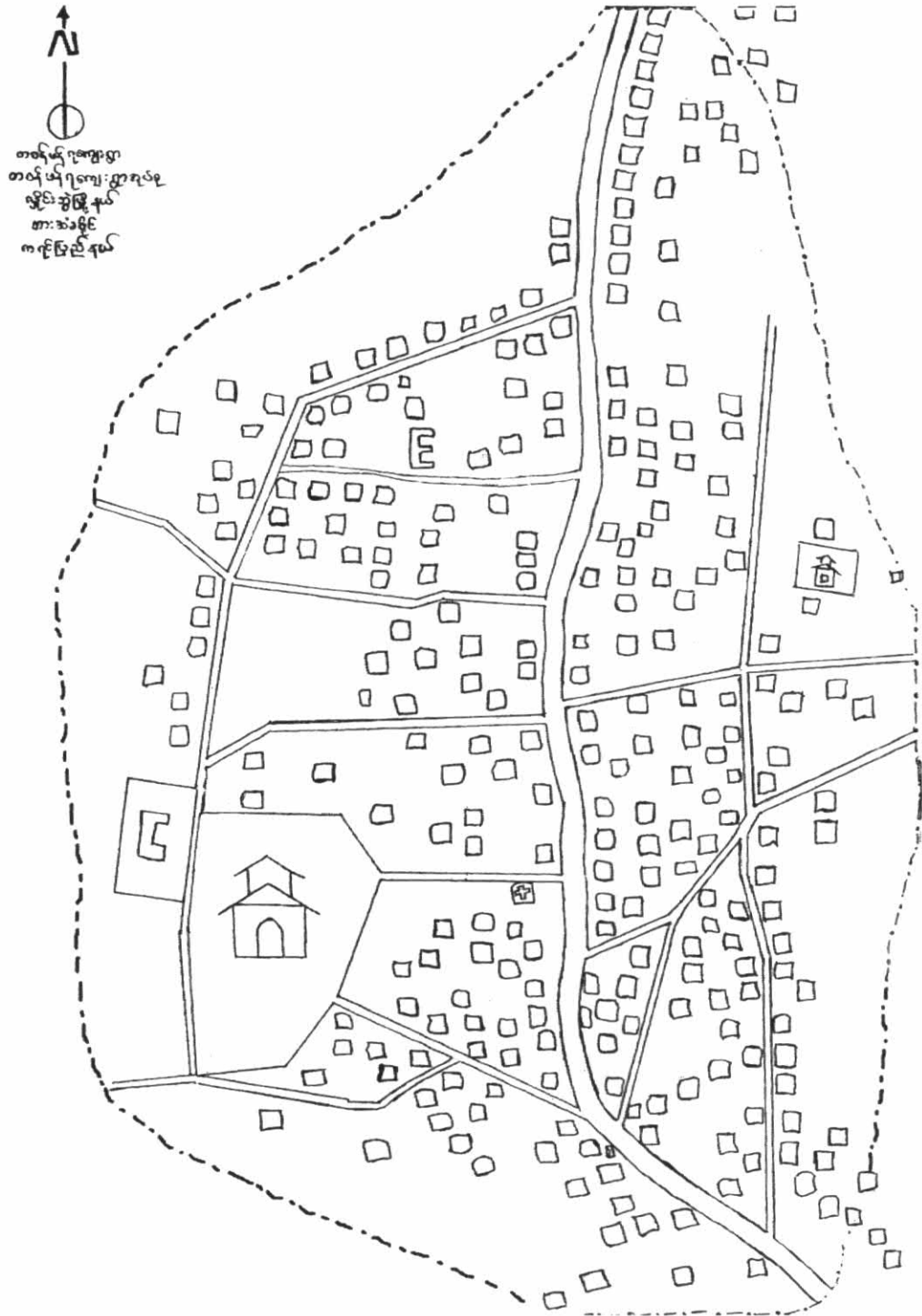
As for a negative impact, migration also affects the community in the sense that children has become less interest in education and thought of migrating like their parents and other community members. The result could affect the community. It is appeared that labour migration is flowing from one member migration to parental migration. It can continue to the migration of one generation to another. Although family migration has not been occurred in the community where the research took place, mass migration of the family members such as siblings and relatives was found. Children will not desire to study anymore as they will finally migrate. As a consequence, the community will lack of educated persons.

Members' migration is still progressing due to the limited job opportunity and lack of interest in farming by new generations. Due to out- migration of the members, there was labour shortage for farming work in the community. There are only elderly persons and children who could not work in the farm land but depended solely on the remittance. Since the majority of the productive workforce leaves the village, stagnation of the rural economy appears to be a negative impact on the community resulted from migration. Rice production will eventually be declined in the near future.

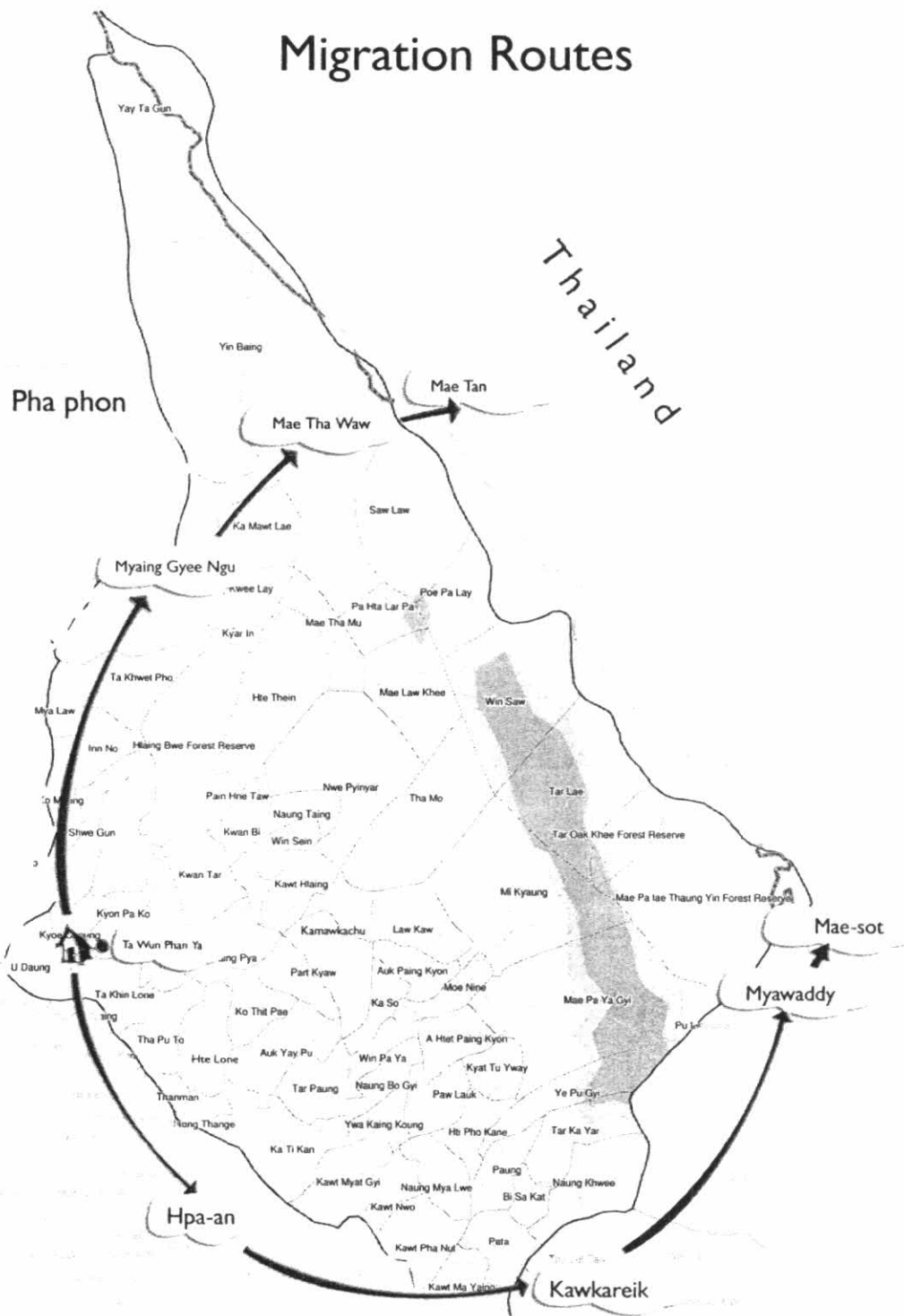
The community has bondage of united and tried to maintain the members inside the community. Nowadays, the community, instead of preventing the members to go out, it encourages the members to go abroad and earn money even it is risky in some cases because the return from migration also benefits the community. With the help of remittances, there is no more force labour because it replaces by the “money”. In addition, since members’ migration is increasing, the structure of the village has changed from farming community to labour supply community.

In general, the study shows a good socio-economic condition in this community. It can be assumed that it is mainly because of migration since the results from migration as seventy one percent is the migrant households. As the flow of remittances from migrants is smooth due to the convenient transportation and communication, it benefits the families as well as the community. Since remittances provide profits, the important thing to keep in mind is to use the money effectively in order to reduce or avoid the negative impact. In the next chapter, the study will reveal the impacts of parents’ migration on the children and the coping strategies of the children and families.

Map of the Research Village



Migration Routes

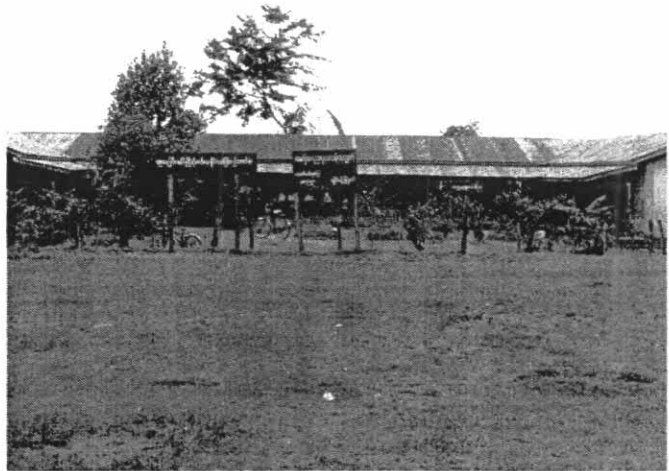


Types of Houses in the village



Welfare Services in the Community

Primary School



Newly Opened ECCD Centre



Village Clinic

