

Reasons and Prospects for Return Migration and Reintegration in Myanmar from  
ASEAN Countries



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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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เหตุผลและโอกาสในการย้ายถิ่นกลับจากประเทศอาเซียนและบูรณาการเข้าสู่ประเทศพม่า

วิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้ศึกษาเกี่ยวกับผู้ย้ายถิ่นทางด้านเศรษฐกิจ ชาวพม่าทั้งที่เป็นแรงงานฝีมือและไร้ฝีมือซึ่งเดินทางกลับประเทศพม่า จากประเทศมาเลเซีย สิงคโปร์ และไทย โดยได้รับทุนทางทรัพยากรมนุษย์หลายประเภท และโอกาสที่คนเหล่านั้นบูรณาการตัวเองเข้าสู่การปฏิรูปเศรษฐกิจในปัจจุบันของประเทศพม่า จุดประสงค์ของการศึกษาในครั้งนี้ เพื่อหาเหตุผลที่ทำให้แรงงานย้ายถิ่นกลับสู่ประเทศเดิม โดยอาศัยคำอธิบายจากทฤษฎี “push and pull factors” จากประเทศอาเซียน 3 ประเทศในระยะเวลา 5 ปี และเพื่อวิเคราะห์ทุนทางทรัพยากรมนุษย์และการกลับเข้าสู่ระบบเศรษฐกิจของประเทศของผู้กลับสู่ถิ่นฐานเดิม การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นกรณีศึกษาแบบเชิงคุณภาพ พร้อมด้วยการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกและแบบสนอว์บอล ใช้การสัมภาษณ์ตัวอย่างทั้งหมด 15 ราย ซึ่งเดินทางกลับจากประเทศมาเลเซีย สิงคโปร์ และไทย ประเทศละ 5 คน ครอบคลุมทั้งแรงงานที่มีฝีมือและไร้ฝีมือที่อาศัยอยู่ในย่างกุ้ง

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า เหตุผลสำคัญในการกลับบ้านได้แก่การเริ่มทำธุรกิจใหม่ โอกาสการทำงานใหม่ๆ และเหตุผลทางด้านครอบครัว ทั้งแรงงานที่เดินทางกลับโดยสมัครใจและถูกบังคับ การวิจัยครั้งนี้รวมแรงงานที่กลับถิ่นฐานทั้งที่มีฝีมือและไร้ฝีมือ เหตุผลของการเดินทางกลับถิ่นฐานเดิม ตามทฤษฎีโครงสร้างหน้าที่ของการย้ายถิ่น เป็นไปตามทฤษฎีการเดินทางกลับ 3 แบบ ได้แก่ การเดินทางกลับเพื่อเริ่มธุรกิจใหม่ เพื่อคืนสู่ครอบครัวเดิม และเพื่อเกษียณการทำงาน รวมไปถึงโอกาสการทำงานใหม่ๆ งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ใช้ทฤษฎีทุนทางทรัพยากรมนุษย์ที่แรงงานได้รับจากประเทศที่ไปทำงานวิเคราะห์ว่าแรงงานได้เรียนรู้เรื่องใดมากที่สุด ในแง่ ภาษา ทักษะการทำงาน ประสบการณ์การทำงาน การศึกษา และการส่งเงินกลับ กระบวนการบูรณาการสู่สังคมเดิมของแรงงานที่มีฝีมือกับแรงงานไร้ฝือนั้นต่างกัน ขึ้นอยู่กับพื้นฐานทุนทางทรัพยากรมนุษย์ที่ได้รับ ผู้วิจัยพบว่า แรงงานที่มีฝีมือได้รับการจ้างงานในบริษัทข้ามชาติ หรือองค์กรภาคเอกชน พร้อมด้วยการศึกษา ประสบการณ์และการทำงาน ซึ่งพวกเขาเรียนรู้จากประเทศอื่น แต่แรงงานที่ไร้ฝีมือใช้วิธีส่งเงินกลับประเทศเป็นเงินออมเพื่อเริ่มธุรกิจใหม่ หรือขยายธุรกิจครอบครัวที่มีอยู่แล้ว กระบวนการบูรณาการสู่สังคมเดิมนั้นต่างกันระหว่างแรงงานย้ายถิ่นที่มีฝีมือและไร้ฝีมือ กลุ่มแรกสามารถบูรณาการสู่สังคมเดิมได้ดีกว่ากลุ่มหลัง แรงงานผู้กลับสู่ถิ่นฐานเดิมใช้ระยะเวลาราว 6 เดือนในการปรับตัว ทั้งฝ่ายนายจ้างและลูกจ้าง มีแรงงานบางรายที่เดินทางกลับถิ่นฐานเพื่อศึกษาต่อ ดูแลบุตรของตนเอง และเกษียณอายุการทำงาน

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ลายมือชื่อนิติ

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ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก

# # 5581112824 : MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

KEYWORDS: RETURN MIGRATION / HUMAN CAPITAL / ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION

HNIN PHYU PHYU MYINT: REASONS AND PROSPECTS FOR RETURN MIGRATION AND REINTEGRATION IN MYANMAR FROM ASEAN COUNTRIES. ADVISOR: PROF. SUPANG CHANTAVANICH, Ph.D., 100 pp.

This thesis looks at skilled and unskilled economic migrant workers from Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand who have returned to Myanmar after receiving different kinds of human capital and how they integrate into Myanmar current economic reforms. The objectives of the research are to identify the factors of return to the country of origin by using the migration theory of push and pull factors from three major ASEAN receiving countries during 5 years and to analyze human capital and economic reintegration of returnees.

The research is a qualitative case-study using in-depth interviews and snow ball sampling methodology and altogether 15 cases interviewed who returned from 3 ASEAN countries, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand comprising 5 cases per country, covering skilled and unskilled returned migrant workers within Yangon region.

The study showed that the reasons of return home are mainly starting business, looking for new job opportunities and family reason both for voluntary and involuntary return. Both skilled and unskilled returnees' reasons are examined by the theory of the structural approach of return migration. Most reasons are covered under the theory of return for starting business, return for family reunion, return for retirement and return for job opportunities. The research used the theory of human capital on what they learned from their country of destinations which include learned languages, working skills, working experiences, formal education and remittance. The reintegration process is different for skilled and unskilled returnees based on the human capital they received. While most of the skilled returnees are employees in international companies or NGOs with formal education, work experiences and working skills learned from other countries; the unskilled returnees used their remittances to start up the new business or to expand the existing family business. The process of reintegration process is also different between skilled and unskilled migrant workers. Skilled migrants can reintegrate better and faster compared to unskilled returned migrant workers. Normally the returned migrant workers took a significant time-frame of 6 months period for adaptation in reintegration of both self-employed and employee groups. Some returned for further studies, taking care of their own baby and retirement.

Field of Study: International Development  
Studies

Student's Signature .....

Advisor's Signature .....

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In globalization world of today, people are moving around the world from place to place to fulfill their dreams. By following their dreams, they are willing more and more to move to big cities in order to look for their job opportunities or to continue further studies or to stay in better lives. Everyday people decide to move out from their home towns or countries for different reasons and move to new places to work, study, reunite with their families or to live better. About 10% of population from different parts of Myanmar is currently working in overseas because of the poverty and limited job opportunities in country(Hall, 2012, p. 2).

The terminology of the pattern of migration includes two concepts as emigration and immigration that explain the movements of people from one country to another within region or all over the world (IOM, 2011). The emigration is explained the movement of people who left their state to settle in another while immigration explained the movement of people from home country with the purpose of settlement in another country. As the globalization of the world economy has accelerated in recent years, more and more people have been moving across borders and looking for better opportunity to upgrade their way of living. People decide to emigrate from the original country or recite country in order to immigrate into another country. Based on the definition of UNHCR, global migration patterns have become increasingly complex in modern times; among those there are refugees, and on the other hand there are millions of economic migrants also. If people are unable to enter a particular state legally, they often employ the services

of human smugglers and embark on dangerous sea or land voyages, which are very much harmful to them and many do not survive. Under the modern international law, although refugees and migrants are the same in defecting their countries, since the reason and nature are fundamentally different, are treated by host countries and humanitarian organizations very differently.

Different types of migrations were defined by IOM and many scholars because of the various reason of migrating especially under the two main reasons of economic and political. According to the definition of IOM, the term of migrant was covered of all cases when individual concerns for reason to migrate freely for “personal convenience” and without any external intervention (IOM, 2011). In any case, it is included when somebody and their family members are moving to another country or region for better social conditions and improves the prospect for themselves of their family. In Myanmar the gap between the upper class and lower class become significantly higher and inefficient, working environments are the key reasons of migrating to other neighboring countries.

The United Nations defines migrant as an individual who has lived in another country for more than one year regardless of the reasons, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate (IOM, 2011). It is covered the migrant workers status as they are looking for the better job opportunities outside of country.

Myanmar is located in the connection point between China and India which are between world’s most dynamic economies and taking back of its role as a regional trading hub. Besides, the transition of Myanmar is standing out for unique triple transition in once- from the very strict military government system to the

democratic governance, from state owned sector approach to private owned sector approach, and the civil conflict between Myanmar military and ethnic armed groups into peace negotiation process (Bank, 2013). These transitions make the Myanmar to engage again with the world community and to return the place of most wealthy country in Asia by creating the opportunities and shared success for the people. Myanmar became the interesting earmark market for foreign investors from around the world to stand out from the long-isolated country.

The future of Myanmar economic is dramatically changed and people outside of country especially the millions of migrant workers who are working in the neighboring countries, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand is keep on their eyes upon economic reform to grasp the opportunities by returning home after working several years in the foreign countries with better income. The industrial and commercial center of the country is Yangon which is also the largest city in Myanmar<sup>1</sup>. The infrastructure of Yangon is still under development compared to other big cities in Southeast Asia like Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore but it is famous for the highest number of colonial buildings in the region. In future, it is expected that Yangon will become the place of trade zone for foreign investment with the better infrastructure. When migrant workers return to home, they chose to remain in the place of big city, Yangon where there is many job opportunities and better living standard.

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<sup>1</sup> Yangon (also known as Rangoon in international community) is the capital city of Myanmar from 1948 to 2006 before the new officially announced the new city of Nay Pyi Taw.

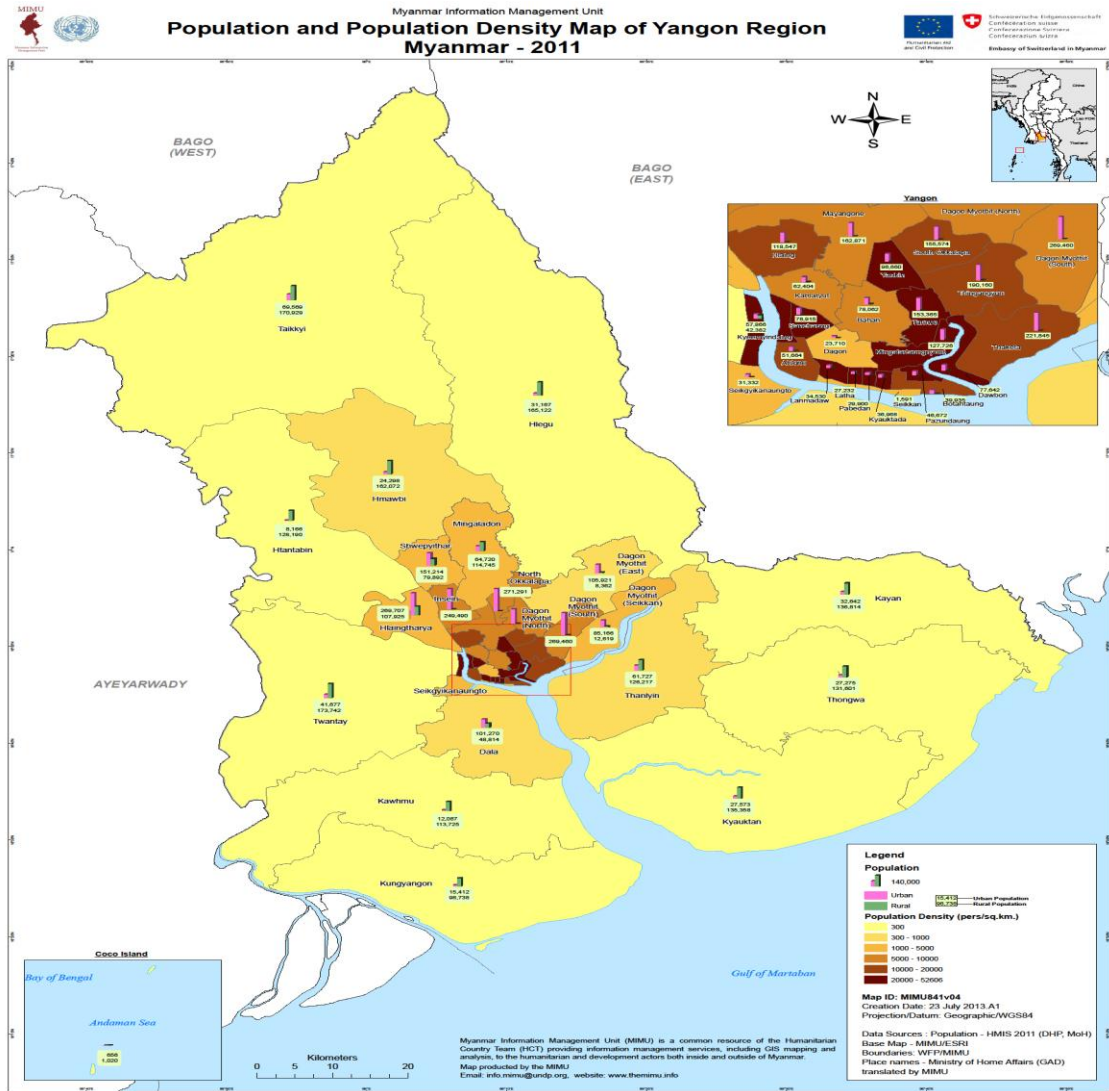


Figure 1: Map of Yangon Region

Source: MIMU

### 1.1 Statement of Research Problem

The diversity of people from different states and regions are migrating to the border country of Thailand, and neighboring countries like Malaysia and Singapore.

Most of them are from Yangon, Bago, Karen, Mon, Shan and Tanintharyi states and regions where there is less job opportunities for people with no skilled and skilled labors. The limited job opportunities with uninterested paid in long working hours are the main reason of migrating to other countries.

Before 2012 of political change, people are interested in going to the neighboring countries for study and work. In previous time, Yangon is the only place for giving passports and every morning, long queue of people are standing in front of immigration office which situated in downtown. Most of the people who are trying to receive passport are for working in Malaysia, Singapore, Dubai and Korea. Now things are getting reverse, migrant workers are thinking to return to the country of origin as many investors are coming in and people are expecting job opportunities with same income as in neighboring countries.

In Myanmar context it can be expected that the recent economic reform will succeed within the next years and both skilled and less skilled migrant workers in all over the world are likely returning home. We still need to know and find out who return, when, and why; and why some returnees appear as actors of change, in specific social and institutional circumstances at home, whereas others do not.<sup>i</sup>

Myanmar is on the path of global economic system by reforming their political status of democracy platform in association of concluding its isolation and finds more ways to integrate with world economic system. Western countries are releasing sanctions by recognizing the dramatic transition in Myanmar and trying to find the way to cooperate through diplomatic relations. The U.S president, Mr. Barak Obama visited Myanmar on November 2012 and that proved U.S is rebuilding strong

diplomat relationship with Myanmar again (Head, 2012). Myanmar is geographically situated in the main trade zone and located as the one country plays the curial role in the need of world capitalism market too. For example, Myanmar is junction in between India, China and ASEAN. Being a gateway to these three super powers, the western countries obviously would like to dominate the country and in the same manner it can be assumed that how many the other surrounding countries also would like to be dominant. Many of the economists expected that the visit of U.S. president is not only to build close relationship with Myanmar but also intended to balance the power of China. Together with the Myanmar's economic openness of "Myanmar way to democratic liberalism" everybody have equal opportunity from it and how it would bring up the status of people lives (social plus economy) in Myanmar is very interesting. In order to address the economic sector in Myanmar, the first one that we have to look deeply into is economic capital.

In order to address the economic sector in Myanmar, the first one that we need to look in depth is capital. We can separate the capital into three groups- human capital, physical capital and social capital. Human capital is intelligence, knowledge, skills held, and way of living, etc. the physical capital is land, water resources, natural resources like oil, gas, and mining, and other basic needs. And "social capital is the social cohesion, the trust, the social status of minorities, non-citizenship, conflicts between race, religion and neighborhood and its effects" (Than, 2007)..

In the meantime it is needed to focus on Myanmar National Economic Policy, which mainly focus on the four main areas;

Sustainable development of agriculture towards industrialization and all round development;

Equitable and proportionate development among Regions and States;

Inclusive development of entire people;

Quality of statistics and statistical system(ERIA, 2012).

Under this National Economic Policy, Myanmar will create many job opportunities by minimizing the number of high unemployment rate in country.

The outline of these reforms is in the Framework for Economic and Social Reform by setting up the policy before 2016 and guiding principles for longer-term development plans. The framework identifies 10 priorities: (i) fiscal and tax reform, (ii) monetary and finance sector reform, (iii) trade and investment liberalization, (iv) private sector development, (v) improvements in health and education, (vi) food security and agricultural growth, (vii) governance and transparency, (viii) mobile telephony and internet, (ix) infrastructure investment, and (x) efficient and effective government (ADB, 2013).

Despite economic reforms in country, the development in all sectors in Myanmar is still weak including the economic structure of Myanmar. Not only the institutional development, Myanmar is the country which is in need of many local technicians and experts in different sectors in private sectors by small and medium enterprises (SME) to build up the economy of country under the title of Economic policy. These policy and framework are designed for people centered development and long-term National Comprehensive Development Plan. With the very limited timeframe, Myanmar is trying to speeding up to meet the target for four pillars of



reforms- political, economic, public administration and private sector development which is all around development in another word.

In the rebuilding process of Myanmar economic, the role of returnees is significantly important as they came back as an actor of change as technicians and experts in relative fields. Together with the changes of these political and economic reforms, many people outside of country are watching the updated news of political and economic changes and planning to go back home once there is a dawn of new era. It is a major pull factor for migrations from Myanmar.

Most of the migrants decided to stay and work in Thailand because of the political condition in Myanmar. As a consequence of political situation, less-skilled workers were also affected by the authoritarian regime in the form of corruption, land occupation, forced labor<sup>2</sup> which normally include the type of porter, forced recruitment into government army as well as anti-government forces, forced relocation and armed conflicts. And the political stability is the main consideration for both of economic migrants and refugees when they are thinking to return to their origin place in their long term plan. This research figure out the social gap to find out the lives of returnees with successful and failure case studies. It will give the recommendations to the potential returnees to consider either go back home or continue their survival in foreign countries.

“Labour demands for economic, social and political development in Myanmar are obvious, migrant workers’ decision to return will depend on two

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<sup>2</sup> Forced/ compulsory labor - All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself/herself voluntarily (*Art. 2(1), ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour, 1930*).

major conditions: political stability and democratic freedom on one hand and economic opportunities on the other hand” (Chantavanich, 2012).

## 1.2 Research Questions

What are the push and pull factors for economic migrant workers to go back home?

How are returnee’s human capital and economic reintegration in Myanmar?

## 1.3 Research Objectives

This study has two main objectives, which are trying to cover in entire research. The researcher used the different methodological approaches to examine these objectives.

- 1) To identify factors of return to the country of origin
- 2) To analyze human capital and economic reintegration of returnees

## 1.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is divided into five different segments. The first segment categorized the conceptual framework for return migration to Myanmar. The second section had the target population of Myanmar returnees are expected to return to Myanmar within 5 years from Malaysia, Singapore

and Thailand. The third and fourth segments explained the push and pull factors from each of the country of destination and country of origin. Then the last section explained the reintegration process of returnees and human capital what they received from the country of destination and how it helped them for smoother reintegration in the country of origin.

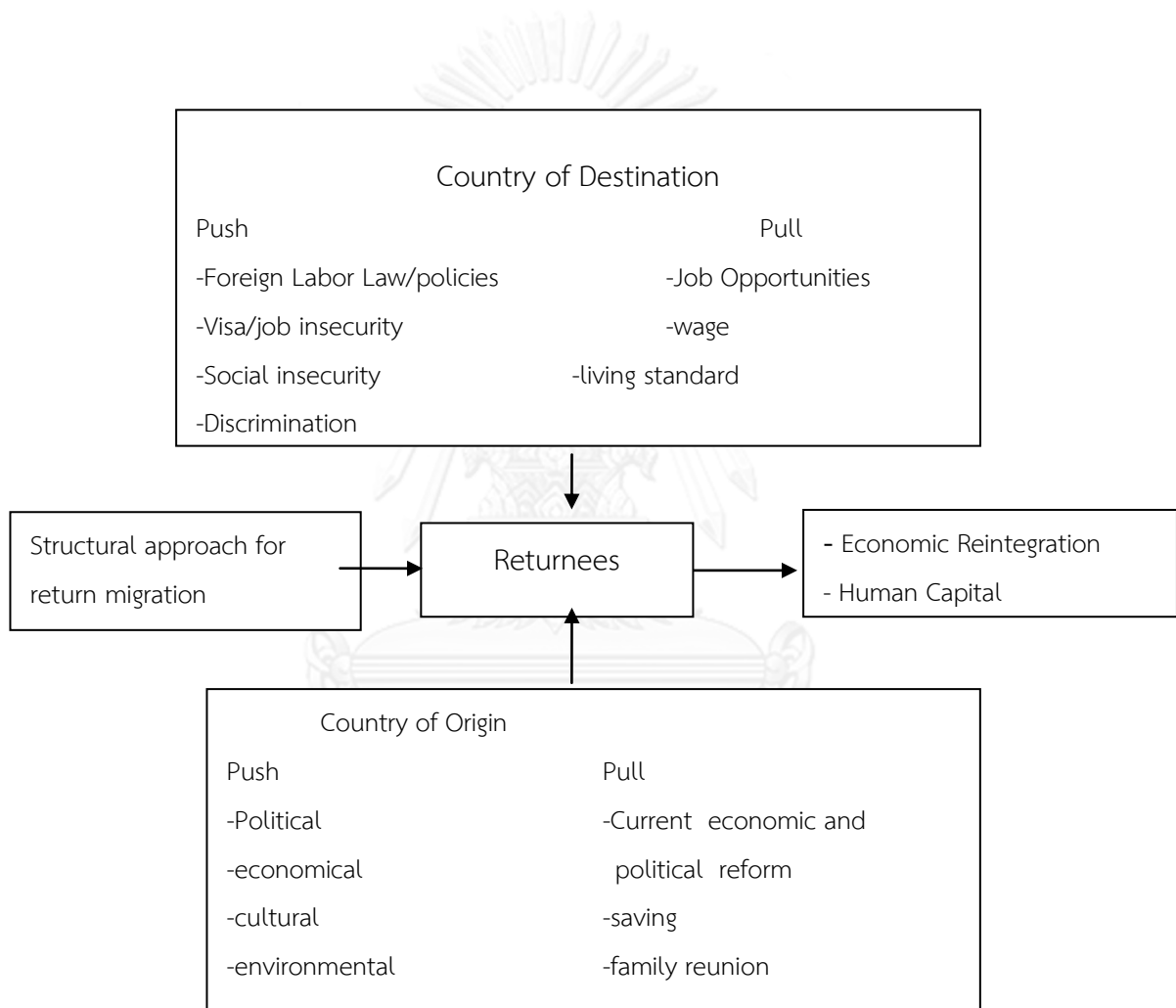


Figure 2 : A Framework for the return migration

The researcher examined the migrants who left country because of the country's economic situation and return home last 5 years that covered skilled and unskilled migrant workers. In the migrating world today, while someone is considering to leave country from their own country in order to learn new experience and to find better job opportunities, there is no doubt of someone came back home with savings, higher degrees and new experiences in order to settle business or to stay with their family. The study of current economic and political changes is the necessary for return migrations when they make their decision process. In reality Myanmar is originally rich with natural resources but only it stands behind in developing compared to neighboring countries because of the mismanagement of regime. As a significant development in economic reform recently is the welcoming of foreign direct investment. In this time being, the government is established 30 SEZs including central body and states/regions throughout the Myanmar. In order to attract the FDI, there are some of the business opportunities by Myanmar government which included i) five year tax holiday, ii) 50 percent income tax relief on items exported overseas and on revisited profits from overseas exports for five years, iii) No custom duties on approved products for five years exceptions and iv) Land leases to grant for 30 years (MIC, 2012). Furthermore, there are also business opportunities in trading by encouraging the small and medium enterprises which is included as reduction of export tax from 10% to 0%, previously restricted export and import items were allowed, less cargo inspection stations at border checkpoints, liberalization in documentation process for trade procedure, every citizens who hold the foreign exchange account is allowed to import car, online licensing system has been introduced and 152 items of export and 166 items of import are now free to

trade without applying license (Sett, 2013). These business opportunities are anticipated to develop logically with market dynamics by encouraging the government to develop a policy framework to raise the economic integration into regional markets. It will increase trade within region by creating investment linkages (ADB, 2012). These economic opportunities can encourage the returnees into smoother reintegration.

#### **1.4.1 International migration**

International Migration is a global phenomenon that is developing in complexity, impact and scope (UN, 2013). International organization of migration define the international migration is the “Movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or the country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country”(IOM, 2011). There are many reason of people to consider in moving around and among them economic is the main reason for migration and lack of job and economic opportunities in country is the push factors for people to migrant other countries. The international migration can be categorized into two major types regarding by skill, “Unskilled worker” (blue collar) which includes cleaner, domestic helper, agricultural worker, service worker, care taker and the another one is “ Skilled worker (white collar)” who are manager, engineer, doctor, artist, teacher, etc (IOM, 2011).

### 1.4.2 Return Migration

After working in foreign countries for some years, some migrant workers return home with the capital and experiences, skills and languages which they attained in the country of destination. They normally use their human capital for investment and production in order to have better life style and condition than before leaving country. IOM defined return migration as the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country (IOM, 2011). This return may or may not be voluntary. Return migration includes voluntary repatriation.

The structural approach for return migrations is relating to the reference to the individual experience of the migrants, but also with reference to social and institutional factors in countries of origin (Cassarino, 2004a). The article on Italian returnees from the United States provides the examples the complex relationship between the returnee's expectations and the social and economic context and can be classified into different types of returnee based on their expectations and aspirations.

- “Return to failure” which is referred to the people who could not integrated in social and economic sectors of host countries and finally decided to come back home.

- “Return of conservatism” which includes the migrants who have plan to come back home and set up business after receiving of what they needs and what they need to learn.
- “Return of retirement” which means migrants who planned to go back their home country to spend the rest of their lives.
- “Return of innovation” who has already fulfilled of their goals in other countries and decided to go back in their origin countries for “carriers of change” and looking for better experiences, opportunities and new skilled.
- “Return of family reunion” which includes the people who leave their parents or children at home and work outsidess for many years by collecting some money.
- “Return to set up family” which includes the people to get married and to have their own family after leaving countries for many years to work in order to collect money.
- “Return of political reason” which includes the people who leave countries for several reasons such as freedom of movements and came back the country of origin after the transform of political sector(Cassarino, 2004b).

The researcher studied this structural approach by categorizing the returnee’s case. It gave clear understanding to successful or failure returnees in reintegration process with economic reform.

### 1.4.3 Push and Pull factors

The definition of migration is the relocation pattern of people who are moving around together with ideas, innovations and behaviors from one place to another. The basic theory of international migration is push and pull factors that is the reasons to people migrate. Push and Pull factors are the drivers for people to move to a new location or to force them to leave old residences. The basic motivation for push factors from the country of origin can be political, economic, cultural, and environmental reasons. In this conceptual framework, it is explained the each of push and pull factors from the country of destinations and the country of origin. The pull factors from the country of destinations included job opportunities, wages and living standard which are the negative signs in the country of origin in another words, motivation for people to leave their countries due to the limited job opportunities, low wages and under living standard.

Normally in migration study, the push factors are from the country of origin which makes them leaving country and then moving to the country of destination/host country for different reasons. In the return migration flows, it is different. The push factor from the country of destination is the conditions that can make them to leave. The return can be voluntary and involuntary. In this research, the factors of return from the country of destination included foreign labor law/policy, visa/job insecurity, social insecurity, enough savings and discrimination. The pull factors exactly conversed of push factors; they are factors that drive people to a particular location. The pull factors in Myanmar of this research included current economic and political reform, saving, family reunion and network.



#### 1.4.4 Human Capital

Human capital is set of skills which an employee acquires on the job, through training and experience which increase that employee's value in the marketplace. According to the definition of "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)", human capital can be divided into two types. The first is to utilize "human as labor force" related to economic added-value that is generated by labor force as other production factors such as financial capital, land, machinery, and labor hours. The second one is that human capital can be viewed as the target of investment through education and training (OECD, 2009). In this research, the human capital is defined as languages, working skills, experiences and formal education gained by returnees from the country of destinations both of blue and white colors workers' type.

#### 1.4.5 Economic Reintegration

Reintegration is people who re-include or re-incorporate into a group or a process. And economic reintegration is the reinsertion of a migrant into the economic system of his/her country of origin. The basic concept of return migration is to reintegrate into the whole community of the country of origin in social and economic platforms. In developmental terms, economic reintegration also aims at using the knowhow which was acquired in the foreign country to promote the economic and social development of the country of origin. It is no doubt every of the migrant workers wants to come back home with better status. It may take years for returnees

to receive a fully reintegration in economic. Some may use the human capital of their expertise what they learnt from the country of destination such as foreign languages, work skills, work experiences and formal education to improve their status in reintegration process.

### **1.5 Research Methodology**

The research methodology for this study is the qualitative research including field research and documentary research. The case study on the micro level focusing on individual migrant returnees from three major ASEAN receiving countries, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to come back home and their perceptions of the working conditions in their place of origin. The research found out the cases of the returnees focusing on their internal and external influences of push factor to go back home and will be documented their feelings. The factors of the polices of the country of destination for migrant workers as a one part and how the country of origin in current economic and political reforms and the economic policy are attracting in considering of coming back home. For Macro level, documentary research conducted in order to line up with the framework for this study of economic migrants flow from Myanmar last 5 years ago because of major economic factor or unemployment and to examine the returnee's flow of economic migrant workers from major receiving countries.

### 1.5.1 Data Collection

It included the literature, report and the scholar study of Myanmar economic sector and job opportunities in last 5 years ago and which is the push factor for people to work outside of country for their living. Government published data related to social and economic aspects which is the existing organizational resources including the collected data for efficient and effective usable.

In-dept interview (15 returnees)

Field research was conducted in Yangon of Myanmar by using the in-depth interviews method. Face-to-face interviews conducted with returnees who were working outside of country within last 5 years to find out their social and economic situation recently by comparing to their status before working in foreign countries. How human capital increased within their stay in foreign countries especially languages they learnt, work skills, working experience and formal education they received and how it is helpful for them to set up their own business or looking for job opportunities. Moreover, the researcher included 15 people from three different countries and 5 people will be selected per county. The participants were selected by the researcher herself by using the snowball sampling methods in social networking when population listing is unavailable. It relies on previously identify members of a group to identify others members, as newly identified members name others. Especially it is used with outlaws or unpopular people. Interview questions

provided a degree of flexibility to explore unexpected issues coming up during interviews, while maintaining consistency. The interview was conducted as major study on the returnees of economic migrants focusing on skilled and unskilled workers from Yangon, Myanmar which people usually remain in big city for suitable job opportunities when they came back from foreign countries.

#### Key-Informant Interview

This research tool was used to give deeper understanding on the social and economic situations of three different types of returnees which include unskilled economic returnees and skilled economic returnees. The researcher aimed to find out the diverse point of view for this qualitative research from Ministry of Labor and the UMFCCL from Government point of view, IOM which are the main organizations working for economic migrants, Mr. Khin Maung Nyo (Economist), Chief Editor of the Smart ICT & Business Journal and private business owners who were appointed of migrant returnees in their business in to obtain sufficient data to respond to all objectives.

The researcher interviewed the migrants who left country because of the country's economic situation and return home last 5 years that covered skilled and unskilled migrant workers. In the migrating world today ,while someone is considering to leave their own country in order to learn new experience and to find better job opportunities, there is no doubt of someone came back home with remittance,

higher degrees and new experiences in order to settle business or to stay with their family.

Following table shows the interviewee lists.

**Table 1: List of Interviews**

|           | Malaysia | Singapore | Thailand | Total |
|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Skilled   | 2        | 3         | 2        | 7     |
| Unskilled | 3        | 2         | 3        | 8     |
|           | 5        | 5         | 5        | 15    |

### 1.5.2 Research Scope and Limitations

This research area of this study was in Yangon, the place to conduct for all interviews. Yangon was one of the entry points to conduct in-depth interview with skilled and unskilled returnees. To avoid the barriers of bias of this study to select the cases, the researchers selected the interviewees randomly by using the snow ball method. The cases were asked to interview to another case with the network between them. In this mean time, the researcher chose carefully by variety of interviews and answers, the gender, age and how many years they are already returned to Myanmar will consider in choosing the case studies. By using the researchers' social networking was the key entry point to find out the returnees from three respective countries. The researcher also used her networks in finding the case to receive the diverse cases in tourist attraction zones in Yangon which is Bogyoke

markets as many of foreigners gave a visit every day. Among them Thai visitors are up to 50 percentage and most of the employed sale staff appointed in Bagyoke market who can speak Thai language were the unskilled returnees from Thailand. Most of the Japanese restaurants, European restaurants, language institutes, sea men and fashion shops owners are also the returnees from different countries and set up their own business with the remittances and skill they earned from other counties. The researcher found out the 15 cases not only from the city area but also the outskirts of Yangon where is Kungyangon and Hlegu by covering the case studies of unskilled returnees with few cases covering to skilled returnees and like to reintegrate. Besides, the researcher was faced with difficulties in making appointment with the Ministry of Labour as it was the time of hot issue the conflict between Myanmar migrant workers and Bingali migrant workers in Malaysia.

### **1.5.3 Significance of the research**

The findings of the study will continue to the understanding of the current situation of returnees' reintegration in social and economic sectors. Myanmar's policy makers, politicians, business and civil society also understand to highlight the roles and values of a migrant who is staying outside of country and President, himself is inviting people who are outside of country to come back to Myanmar by requesting to involve in Myanmar's national development process. Recommendations made in this study will be useful in improving the understanding of current country's

development. Together with country political and economic reform, most of the migrants are thinking to come back home and the findings from this study will give them proper understanding in considering to come back home.

#### **1.5.4 Ethical Issues**

The standard ethical considerations of conducting research with human subjects will inform consent. In addition, since this research deals with personal experience, the voluntary participation and confidentiality will be emphasized. The researcher might not have enough time to interview in-depth as it is working hours for economic returnees and it will be difficult to hold more than one hour per each. The researcher has to discuss with employees to interview their employers. The researcher visit private sectors like markets, language institutions and so on and as these private sectors are profit oriented and the researcher face difficulties in time management to interview them. And in conducting in-depth interviews, It is needed to secure voluntary informed consent explaining to participants it will be used for academic purposes only.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

This chapter will give a review of different existing data on this topic, which is relevant for the entire research. It is divided into four sectors, including the short overview on the economic background of Myanmar, recently development of the Myanmar economic reforms, Myanmar economic migrant workers under the differential between skilled and unskilled returnees.

#### 2.1 Economic Background of Myanmar

Myanmar is well-known as the golden land for its rich preserves of natural resources. Myanmar stood out as one of the richest country among the region after World War II in the time of colonialization. Before 2011 of the election of civilian government, Myanmar was ruled by military dictatorship for decades and stood out as isolation country from international community. In military regime, Myanmar is the poorest country in the region. One quarter of the total population are estimated living in poverty (Banyaneer, 2013). Many changes in political and economic can be seen in civilian government in 2011. As a significant steps of political reform is releasing the hundreds of political prisoners including Daw Aung San Su Kyi who is the idol of democracy in the world, peace negotiation going on with armed ethnic groups, new laws that provide the freedom of expression and assembly, political participation and labor rights (AustAid, 2013). Myanmar government took this opportunity to reintegrate in international community by receiving the technical



advice from International Monetary Fund (IMF) to standard the floating exchange rates in April 2012 (AustAid, 2013). Before that the official exchange rate was counted as 6.5 MMK while the market price is around 800 MMK. Before the economic reform, Myanmar exists as exporting raw materials in regions, the major export materials are gas, timber, vegetables, rice and precious stones. The major trading countries are China, Japan, India and Thailand (Sett, 2013). For imports materials included the construction material, fertilizers, petroleum, textile material and food stuffs.

The unstable political situation within country causes conflicts and lower the economic conditions, lower living standards and lower standard of human security are the main root causes for leaving country with different reasons such as looking for better jobs, looking for safety place, looking for education and so on.

## **2.2 Myanmar Economic Reform**

Nowadays, Myanmar is on the path of global economic system by reforming their political status of democracy platform by concluding its isolation and finds more and more entries to integrate into world economic system. Western countries are releasing sanctions by recognizing the dramatic changes in Myanmar and trying to find the ways and means of cooperation through diplomatic relations. During the political transition, the main trading partner for Myanmar is China and according to the data of Ministry of Commerce Myanmar, the total investment of China through bilateral trade agreement is about 3.6 billion USD in the financial year 2012-2012 before political reform (MNA, 2013).

Myanmar is geographically situated in the main trade zone and located as the one country plays the curial role in the need of world capitalism market too. In the reform agenda of Myanmar government is to create the appropriate that will catch up with recent international practice after long period of isolation. The outline of these reforms is in the Framework for Economic and Social Reform by setting up the policy before 2016 and guiding principles for longer-term development plans. It is believed that Myanmar people will benefit in several areas over the next 2-3 years due to the reforms process. Myanmar political reforms, policy changes and economic openness are also including as pull factors while migrant workers are considering in making decision to come back home. Based on the study of the *Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry* (UMFCCI), the particular improvement areas in economic reforms stage are followings as;

- Reviewed and enacted new FDI Law on 2nd Nov, 2012
- Issued notification no. 39/2011 relating to the right to use land According to notification no. 39/2011, investors can lease the land not only from the State but also from private
- The Special Economic Zone Law was also enacted in January 2011 and is now proceeding for amendment.
- The Dawei Special Economic Zone Law was also enacted in January 2011
- Revised the exchange regime into a managed floating rate on 2nd April 2012.(Kudo, 2012)

Myanmar Investment Commission reorganized with 11 members who are not only from Government Sector but also from private sector, academic field and researcher field. These changes are driven the Myanmar economic situation into better place within regional and global.

Regarding the migration policy, the Myanmar Government has no clear policy to ensure that migration of its workers overseas contributes to the development of the Myanmar economy and society in the future. Myanmar is going to lead ASEAN since 2014 and perform as a chair in ASEAN Economic Community 2015 which is integrating industries across the region by enhancing the resources within region including the flows of human resources and encouraging private sector involvement for the building of the AEC. Myanmar itself is on transition of reform and the new development integrity form of AEC will give many challenges to the chair of Myanmar. Myanmar Framework for Economic and Social Reform locates the country's development priorities until 2016 and targets for peace, prosperity and democracy (Prakash, 2013).

ASEAN is getting closer under the title of AEC-2015, the migration flows will also change in somehow as there will be free flow of skilled labors within region. For now on, the government has no particular plan for return and integration of migrant workers into the Myanmar economy at a specific time in the future so as to contribute positively to development and enhance the chance of a better life for the workers concerned but still ethnic issues surrounding migration remain particularly challenging.

### 2.3 Myanmar Economic Migrant Workers

The large numbers of Myanmar economic migrant workers go into the unskilled labour industry which their local people do not interest to work. In 1999, Myanmar government established the law relating to Overseas Employment in order to protect the foreign employments to be legal and systematic (ILO, 2012). The Overseas Employment Division was placed under the Department of Labour in 1990 for the recruitment and placements of Myanmar migrant workers in abroad. This division cooperated with 192 Myanmar Embassies from respective countries in order to facilitate the protection and promotion of the rights of the migrant workers in terms of recruitment, preparation for employment for overseas and protection of the migrant workers when they are working abroad (Myanmar, 2013).

Myanmar migrants have the channel of irregular migration which is illegally and informally in order to work outside of country. To be precise, as irregular migrants from Myanmar entered to neighboring countries like Thailand and Malaysia without a proper travel document. As a result, unnecessary cases like human trafficking, slavery and exploitations occurred. Myanmar government recently started watching the issues of unskilled economic workers by giving them trainings in order to get skills in accordance with the need of labor market, finding the right employments for labor through government to government system and assisting by giving legal protection. The law relating to overseas employment, 1999 which is

drafting in order to harmony with current situation is identified. The following graph is showing the numbers of Myanmar migrant workers going to several countries.

The major destination countries (host countries) for Myanmar migration workers are following as according to the statistic provided by Ministry of labor, Union of Myanmar.

Thailand (1,285,051)  
 Malaysia (881,112)  
 Singapore (11,310)(Hall, 2012)

Thailand is standing out as a top place in the list of host country as Thailand is geographically border to the Myanmar in many areas with four major checkpoints in Tarchileik-Mae Sai, Myawady-Mae Sot, Htee Khee-Suaron and Myawaddy –Mae Sot<sup>3</sup>. Because of the cheap administration and travelling fees to Thailand, most of the unskilled migrant workers are willing to choose to Thailand than the rest.

#### 2.4 Skilled and Unskilled Returnees

International organization of migration explained that the international migration is the “Movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://elevenmyanmar.com/tourism/3182-four-thai-myanmar-border-crossings-to-be-opened-on-august-28>

country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country”.

There are many reason of people to consider in moving around and among them economic is the one of the main reason for migration and lack of job and economic opportunities in country is the push factors for people to migrant other countries. The international migration can categorized into two major type regarding by skill which is “Unskilled worker” (blue collar) which includes cleaner, domestic helper, agricultural worker, service worker, care taker and the another one is “ Skilled worker (white collar)” who are manager, engineer, doctor, artist, teacher, etc. In 2012, the Myanmar government invited foreign investors in order to promote the key economic sectors which are agriculture, oil and gas, mining, electric power and manufacturing as a significant development in the transition of country’s economic reform. After working in foreign countries for some years, some migrant workers return home with the capital and experiences, skills and languages which they received in the country of destination and they normally use their human capital for investment and production in order to have better life style and condition than leaving country. IOM stated the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country.

### 2.4.1 Human Capital and Economic Reintegration

Reintegration is people who re-include or re-incorporate into a group or a process. And economic reintegration is the reinsertion of a migrant into the economic system of his/her country of origin. The basic concept of return migration is to reintegrate into the whole community of the country of origin in social and economic platforms. In developmental terms, economic reintegration also aims at using the knowhow which was acquired in the foreign country to promote the economic and social development of the country of origin. In the reintegration process, human capital plays a vital role as it decides the reintegration process into successful or failure. Human capital is a set of skills which an employee acquires on the job, through training and experience which increase that employee's value in the marketplace. According to the definition of "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)", human capital can be divided into two types. The first is to utilize "human as labor force" related to economic added-value that is generated by labor force as other production factors such as financial capital, land, machinery, and labor hours. The second one is that human capital can be viewed as the target of investment through education and training.

Every one of the migrant workers want to come back home with better status. It may take years for returnees to receive a fully reintegration in economic. Some may use the human capital of their expertise what they learnt from the country of destination such as foreign languages, work skills, work experiences and formal education to improve their status in reintegration process.

#### 2.4.2 The case study of Philippine's return migration

Like the country of Myanmar, Philippines is a country with 7,000 islands people which is great diverse ethno-linguistic groups. According the statistics of December 2004, an estimate 8.1 million Filipinos and 10 percent of country population both skilled and unskilled workers were working or residing in world's more developed regions. The culture of migration was started among Filipino in last 30 years. Millions of Filipinos are eager to work abroad, despite the risks and vulnerabilities they are likely to face. According to the nationwide survey of 1,200 adult respondents in 2002 found one in five Filipinos are mentioned that they would like to migrant to other country for better job opportunities. The development of a culture of migration in the Philippines has been greatly aided by migration's institutionalization. The government encourages migration by facilitating in operating recruitment agencies and stands out for the rights of its migrant workers. The remittances sent by migrant workers to home have become a pillar of the country's economy.<sup>ii</sup> In Philippine, the livelihood of migrations is generally highest portion among young adult.

For much of the 20th century, "international migration" for Filipinos meant going to the United States and its Pacific territories and work there. The first batch of Filipino workers arrived in the US territory of Hawaii on December 20, 1906 to work on sugarcane and pineapple plantations.



More workers, mostly single men, followed; others left Hawaii to work in agriculture in California, Washington, and Oregon, or the salmon canneries of Alaska. On the mainland, low-wage service work in the cities — waiters, busboys, or domestic work provided alternative jobs between agricultural seasons or when other jobs are not available. Some 4,000 Filipinos were employed in the merchant marine, but this employment possibility ceased with the 1937 passage of a law requiring the crew of US flag vessels to be at least 90 percent American citizens.

Because the Philippines was a US colony, the movement of Filipinos to the United States was considered internal migration and Filipino migrants were "nationals" (but not citizens). It was not until the passage of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Law (also known as the Philippines Independence Act of 1934), which provided for the granting of Philippine independence in 10 years' time, that the Philippines became subject to immigration quotas. The 1934 law limited the Philippines to 50 visas per year, and migration dropped off dramatically. But even so, there was an exception clause: in case of a labor shortage, the governor of Hawaii was authorized to hire Filipino workers. As nationals, Filipinos were entitled to American passports and could enter and leave the country freely. World War II intervened and further migration to the United States stalled. Between 1946 and the mid 1960s, about 10,000 to 12,000 Filipinos came to Hawaii as workers, military personnel, and war brides. It was not until the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, when nationality-based restrictions were struck down, that Filipino immigration grew and diversified. Other countries of settlement also dismantled their pro-European immigration policies in the 1960s and 1970s, paving the way for Filipinos to enter

Canada, Australia, and New Zealand under family or skills-based provisions. The Philippines eventually became one of the top 10 sending countries in these traditional immigration countries. Filipinos also settled in countries that are not traditional countries of immigration, such as Germany and Japan, through marriage or work-related migration. This permanent migration, however, was overshadowed by the larger and thornier temporary labor migration that started in the 1970s (M.B., 2006)

While the Philippine government cannot stop people from leaving, the country needed to explore how migration can be an instrument for development. In this regard, the Philippines can learn much from international discussions and reflections on migration and development taking place in other countries.

The Philippines is rich in migration policy as it is major sending countries in region to all over the world. But regarding the phenomenon of returning migrants, it is still new for them. The systematic mechanism of collecting on return migrants is still in very weak. The lack of data on re-migration under the characteristics of returnees and the circumstances under which they return is on the lack of official data and very limited knowledge about this phenomenon. Under the act of Filipinos of 1995, the governments is trying to support the return migrants as a part of its policy priorities("Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act," 1995).

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration gives assistance to the overseas worker members and their families of social services for the welfare. The reintegration of returning workers is offered by the program of several services which is designed to make the reintegration process part of its policy priorities smoother for returnees as a part of its task (P.Go, 2012).. The two main components were offered by reintegration programme based on the needs of psychosocial and economic. The economic components is targeted for livelihoods projects or community based income-generating projects, skills training and credit lending.

## CHAPTER III

### Returnees and Factors of Return

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the first research question of the factors of migrant workers returning home. Migrant workers return from the country of destination with some incentive reasons gained from the country of origin. The very first part of this chapter provides the information of the profile of returnees who came back from the three ASEAN countries of Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand by focusing on their own stories of the reason of return. After that the researcher fixed these fifteen interviewed cases into the structural approach for return migration which the researcher discussed in the chapter I of “Return Migration”. Then the researcher continues the chapter by defining the driven factors of return home interviews based on the objectives of thesis of identifying the factors of returning to the country of origin which will include the migration theory of push and pull factors from the destination of countries and the origin country. These factors will mainly highlight the different stories of returnees based on their conditions of the countries of destinations which is another word in theoretically called push factors and the main attractions of the country of origin, Myanmar which mean the pull factors.

## 3.2 Contexts of Returnees

This chapter will provide research findings based on the reasons of returnees. The researcher interviewed fifteen people involved. All of them returned from ASEAN developed neighboring countries, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Among them, seven participants are skilled labors and eight are unskilled labors. Out of eight of the unskilled labors, seven returned after starting business by working there for some years and the last one came back to continue her education. Among the returned skilled labors two came back from Singapore to raise their children at home country while one returned for retirement from Malaysia and the rest 4 return for better job opportunities.

### 3.2.1 Profile of returnees

#### Malaysia

The first profile is about the returnee who is 23 years old, came back from Malaysia after working there for 5 years as a unskilled labor with the position of chef assistant. He decided to leave his school at his grade 9 as he wanted to work for family income. After working in Malaysia for some years, he made his mind not to extend his work permit. He said he wanted to have his own business with saved money (M#1, 3 June 2013).

Second story is about the 47 years old man who worked in food industry and ended his contract after finishing his contract of 5 years working in the same industry

with same position. In Myanmar he lived in Kungyangon Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region and stopped going to school at his grade-10. Before he went to Malaysia, he opened motorbike workshop as a family business. After returning back from Malaysia, with his saving money of working for 5 years, he is now running a business of one small glossary store and at the same time owns some farm lands at his home town (M#2, 5 June 2013).

The third one is about 38 years old unskilled ( male ) returnee who is AGTI diploma ( Engineering Diploma ) holder in Myanmar. He came back home after working at a furniture factory of Malaysia for 2 years. Before that, he worked as a volunteer at some of the NGO in Myanmar. As Myanmar has few job opportunities at that time, he had no alternate choice but leaving home country to work In Malaysia. He came back home for the job opportunities appeared in Myanmar during transition period of economic reform. Now he is working as a communication officer at one of the NGO in Yangon (M#3, 10 June 2013).

The fourth story is about a 63 years old Karen ethnic group person who worked in Malaysia as personal officer at one of the Embassy in Malaysia. Before he received this job, he worked in several positions in Malaysia as an unskilled labor. In Myanmar he is BA degree holder majoring in history. He worked as a government servant at finance division in the department of Meteorology and Hydrology before he left Myanmar. He had worked for a long time and finally decided to return to Myanmar for retirement after working in Malaysia for 28 years (M#4, 18 June 2013).

The fifth story is about a 32 years old Karen female skilled returnee. She was a student before she left Myanmar. She received the degree in Computer Studies in Malaysia. She worked as a pre-school teacher In Malaysia. She decided to return

home as her family moved back to Myanmar. She is now working as a freelance photographer and planning to open the photo studio in a very near future (M#5, 18 June 2013).

Singapore

The sixth story is about a 25 years old unskilled returnee who decided to go back home after working as a general staff at one of the company of Singapore for 3 years. In Myanmar he was a student and was graduated BSc degree with Geography subject before leaving country. He made his decision to leave country as he had no job opportunities after finishing his school. He faced problem in dealing with his boss at work in Singapore and it made him to go back home. Luckily, he had saved money to be able to start a new business in home country. He opened a tea-shop in Bogyoke Aungmye market in Yangon (S#1, 10 June 2013).

The seventh story is about a 30 years old female skilled returnee. She got Bachelor of Engineering degree in (IT) in Myanmar and continued her study doing a master degree specializing in computer engineering subject in Singapore. After that she worked at one of a Japanese IT company as marketing network engineer before she left to Singapore. She worked as a technical officer in Singapore. Because of her family plan, she decided to come back home to deliver a baby. She is hoping that Myanmar economic reform would bring her the better job opportunity. (S#2, 19 June 2013).

The next story is about a 29 years old male skilled returnee who had worked as an senior researcher in Yangon University after finishing his study of MSc (Environmental Engineering). Later he worked as a foreign expert in PMG group of companies in Singapore. Although he is staying in Singapore with the permanent

residence status, he decided to return home when he received a decent job as a business development manager in one of the international company in Yangon. And he believes that there will be more foreign investments in Myanmar and there will be high demand of skilled labor in future in Myanmar. Added to that he wants to live together with his family and this is one of the pull factor for his decision to come back. (S#3, 19 June 2013).

The next story is about a 33 years old male unskilled returnee who worked in Singapore for 6 years at the sea port industry. He is AGTI diploma holder in Myanmar and worked as a mechanical engineer in Shwe Thanlyin Company before he left Myanmar. He returned home because he didn't receive working permit extension. Luckily, when he returned back he has some saving amount in hand and now he owns two taxis for his daily income (S#4, 21 June 2013).

Next story is about a 30 years old female skilled returnee who holds Spass visa status in Singapore is BA degree holder with English specialization in Myanmar. Before leaving to Singapore she worked as an Accountant in a Marketing Pharmacy Company in Myanmar. When she arrived at Singapore she worked there in a finance related position for about two and half years. She came back home to deliver a baby (S#5, 21 June 2013).

Thailand

The next story is about a 31 years old Karen male unskilled returnee who came back from Thailand after working 5 years in several job placements in Bangkok. He is a AGTI diploma holder specialized in electrical power in Myanmar. Before going to Bangkok he worked in one of the construction company in Yangon as a technician. When he was able to collect some savings in Thailand, he returned Myanmar and he



decided to start a new business with his friend. He observes that Myanmar is going forward, stepping into development and mobile phones market is growing popular. So he opened a phone shop with some share from his friend in suburb of Yangon (T#1, 22 June 2013).

The next story is about a 30 years old female unskilled returnee who left school in her grade 9 in Myanmar. After that with her parents she did farming in her village. Later she went to Thailand and worked for 6 years in different job places. She decided to come back home as she had enough savings to open a small business. Besides her parents are in their old age to look after. When she arrived back home she opened small grocery store near her house in Yangon (T#2, 10 June 2013).

The next story is about a 31 years old Karen skilled returnee who received Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) but worked as chef assistance and waiter in one of the restaurant in Bangkok for one year and three months. He came back home to start business with his co-workers. He started opening a computer accessories shop in Yangon with the business connections he had have from Thailand (T#3, 24 June 2013).

The next story is about a 20 years old female unskilled returnee who worked in Bangkok for about 5 years in different job placements of food processing. She was a high school student before and her parents brought her to Bangkok along with them when she was grade 9 during their visit back home. She came back home to continue her high school education when her parents returned home for resettlement in their home town, Helgu in Yangon Region. She is trying to sit her high school exam as an outsider student (T#4, 25 June 2013).

The last story is about a 25 years old male returnee who hold the degree of B A (English) in Myanmar and post diploma in computer application. In Bangkok he worked as a networking engineer at one of the international company for two and half years. Previously, he worked as a freelance networking engineer. He is appointed as a Marketing Supervisor when his company opened country office in Myanmar (T#5, 28 June 2013).

Most of them are the aged group between 20 to 45 despite one returnee, 63 years old who came back for retirement. The self-employee and employees are different between skilled and unskilled returnees. When the skilled returnees received jobs in international companies or ngos, the unskilled returnees started new business or extend the existing family business.

### **3.2.2 Reasons of Return**

Different people have different reasons of returning home. Besides, according to Myanmar culture, people are usually form strong lifelong attachments to their families. According this study of 15 returnees from three different countries in ASEAN, most of the unskilled returnees returned home to start a new business with the saving they earned, while four of them returned home for job opportunities and the rest for family reasons. The cases of the return migrations can be fixed into the structural approach that the researcher discussed in the chapter I of “Return Migration”.

(a) Return for starting business

The cases are in line with the return for starting business in another words, conservatism who returned home for business after working in host country and came back home with human capital to set up the new business. Most of unskilled returnees came back home under the title of it. One of the skilled migrant workers, who is 32 years old young lady, came back from Malaysia, explained her return experiences as follows.

“I decided to return home when my parents were turning to the old age for retirement and besides, as Myanmar is in the reform process, I wanted to start my own business at home. I worked as young learner teacher in Malaysia and I picked up language skills, teaching skills and management skills. I believe my experiences, degree and skills what I received from foreign country would contribute better success in my own business. I am still studying the Myanmar context to be able to open a private kindergarten school or photo studio together with my husband. (M#5, 18 June 2013)”

One of the involuntary returnees who came back from Singapore said like this,

“I came back home because I have no chance to work there as I couldn’t extend my visa. But luckily, I can bring my saved money with me. So when I came back home, I bought 2 taxis. This is the good entry step for returnees like us who are still new to the country’s reform context. I will start my own business using the

human capital what I received from Singapore within 2 years. (S#4, 21 June 2013)”

The 28 years old returnee who came back from Thailand said that

“I decided to return home when I saved money to start the new business. At first, I had no confidence of starting the new business but my friend who is working the same industry with me is interested to start business by holding a share half by half. We opened the phone shop last year. (T#1, 22 June 2013)”

For returnees who consist in type of return to start a business have also strong family network or friends besides great interest of Myanmar current reform context. According to this study, the returnees started the new business or extended existing family business based on their previous knowledge and experience plus the network that they have gained from the country of destinations.

(b) Return for retirement

One case is under the approach of return for retirement. After working long decades in another country, some of the returnees thought that the country of origin is the best place to spend the rest of life. The 63 years old Karen man returned home for the reason of retirement.

“I worked in Malaysia for 28 years. I think it is enough of staying such a long period in an another country. My three children already grown up and received degrees. Besides, my wife is not good in health to take care of herself. So I

decided to return home. I planned to work for humanitarian works in a Church by helping the people who are in needs. For business, I grow orchid farms to sell (M#4, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013).

The reason of retirement was found mostly among skilled labor than unskilled labor. Enough saving or family background is needed for this type of return. Mixed type can be seen in this return for retirement while some of them just want to work as volunteer for their community.

(c) Return with new idea and for new Job opportunity

Return with innovation is significant among the other types of returns. It includes the type of returnees who came back for the carriers of change at home land.

The 38 years old male unskilled returnee who came back from Malaysia said that

“I enjoy working in humanitarian field for development of my country than working at outside. Previously, I worked in some NGOs as intern or volunteer before I leave my country. These experiences help me to look for my current job (M#3, 10 June 2013).”

The 29 years old skilled returnee who came back from Singapore said that

“I am the card holder of Permanent residence (PR) in Singapore and my work is quite better compared to recent some of oversea jobs. But I want to be involved in the country reform process and I believe it is the good chance for

me of returning home in period of early stage of economic reform process. Now I am working as a Business Development Manager in one of the international company in Yangon. I will invest in oiling or gas sector after 1 or 2 years. (S#3, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013).”

One skilled returnee of 23 years old came back from Thailand said that

“Previously, I worked as freelance networking engineer. I am appointed as Marketing Supervisor when my company opened country office in Myanmar (T#5, 28 June 2013).”

The returnees who came back for job opportunities are the people who have some educational backgrounds or working experiences. This type of return reasons are also found among skilled labours and medium skilled labors. Moreover, the significant job opportunities also higher in Myanmar than before.

#### (d) Return for family reunification

As most of the cases shown us that reason of returning for family reunification is that Myanmar people always consider that Myanmar is the best place to raise up their children. Two of the skilled returned migrant workers from Singapore are found that they came back home for their family reasons.

“I don’t want to stay alone in foreign country when I got pregnant. My husband went to work every day and I had to spend all the time by staying alone in our apartment. I want to stay with my family or friends around. I want to socialize with my colleagues. So I decided to return home. I have no idea to go back to

Singapore after delivering as I need my family's assistance to raise my kid up and besides, I have no experience in caring baby. (S#2, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013)”

“I think it is the best for me and my baby to stay surrounding with family members around. Taking care of baby is difficult task for me in life. I want to grow up my baby in Myanmar culture to maintain Myanmar tradition. (S#5, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013)”

Sometimes it is seen that under the title of reason for family reunion there are some other reasons else. One of them is a 30 years old female unskilled returnee worked in Thailand for 6 years. Before that she did farming in her village in Myanmar. She decided to come back home as she had enough savings to open a small business and on the other hand she needs to take care her parents who are in their old age. She opened small glossary store in her neighborhood, Yangon (T#2, 10 June 2013).

The 20 years old female unskilled returnee worked in Bangkok came back home to continue her education when her parents returned home for resettlement in their home town, Helgu in Yangon Region. She is trying to finish her high school as an outsider student (T#4, 25 June 2013).

The studies of cases show that they came back to take care of their children or parents at home. Although they are saying they come back for ever and permanently, it is believed that if country's living standard does not become better these people may live temporarily and they might plan to go back again to any other developed countries when their children are grown up.

### 3.3 Factors of Returning

According to this study, the push factors from the country of destinations will include the foreign labor law/ policy, visa issue which is in line with the title of involuntary returnees and will also be linked with job insecurity reason. Some of the people came back because of the social security reasons, discrimination between foreign labors and local workers and also the human capital issues as most of the unskilled labor jobs etc. In the decision process of going back home, the conditions of returning from the country of destination could be included push and pull factors from the country of destination like the conditions of returning in Myanmar. The basic concept of return migration is to reintegrate into the whole community of the country of origin in social and economic platforms. In developmental terms, economic reintegration also aims at using the knowhow which was acquired in the foreign country to promote the economic and social development of the country of origin. It may take years for returnees to receive a fully reintegration in economic. The pull factors from the country of origin is included because of the family reunion, followed by the reason of economic changes via political reforms and the important point is most of the unskilled labors decided to go back home when they meet with the amount of remittance to start their own business. The voice of returnees is not only representing for their own lives but also represent of the migrant communities who are thinking to return home, in other words, potential returnees.



### 3.3.1 Two influencing factors for migration flow

When people decide to leave the country of origin, the basic reasons included more job opportunities, more income and higher living standard. These three factors always stand out as pull factors from the country of destination for economic migrant workers.

In return migration, the push factors from the country of destination according to my study is following as:

#### (a) Foreign Labour Law/Policy

The foreign labour law/policy for receiving countries is playing in vital role. The increase number of demanding foreign workers would affect the local workers fall into unemployment. Most of the business men are interested to hire foreign labour which is much cheaper compared to local workers. That's why, governments use the different policy between local workers and foreign workers to give protection to their citizens while they couldn't deny the needs of foreign workers. Therefore national policies on employment of foreign worker are suited to the need of country.

Malaysia

Malaysia is the second primary destination for Myanmar migrant workers after Thailand. The country's economy is growing faster based on the work of migrant workers and refugees coming from neighboring countries. Myanmar migrant workers

are working in the industry where Malaysians wouldn't want to, for example construction sites, rubber plantations and open-air wholesale markets.

The employers of Malaysia are more likely to use migrant workers who devoted to their job and willing to work for overtime while local employees are ready to refuse for additional work.

In Malaysia, the contract between employers and employees is 3 to 5 years and normally bosses are the one who are illegible to keep the passports of migrant workers.

When the returnees were asked if they had faced any discrimination regarding Malaysia foreign labour policy, a 47 years old returnee who worked in food industry of Malaysia for 5 years told researcher that

“I started working in Malaysia in 2005 and I had to work the same job for everyday within 5 years during my stay there. I was under contract and every day of my working life, there was no change at all and I could not change job either as all employees had to fulfill their contractual agreements. The early termination from employers with satisfactory compensation to employees is acceptable in the foreign labour law of Malaysia. But the violation cases are still going on such as earlier termination without giving any compensation. We hope that mechanisms are needed to put in place to ensure that employers pay workers adequate salary and also pay compensation for any early termination of employment agreement.” (M#3, 10 June 2013)

Regarding the weakness of protection of labour law, the 23 years old young man who came back from Malaysia criticized and blame the third party ( Service Company ) in administration process of applying for work permit.

“Previously I tried to acquire work permit through the channel of Service Company but my service fee was stolen as I was not provided with documents. It was always happening between us. The migrant workers have to rely on Service Company as the application process was not familiar to them” (M#1, 3 June 2013)

There are some of the service companies in Malaysia and Thailand who are working for the migrant workers. They have to deal with Myanmar Embassy in Malaysia and Thailand and to work for some of the official documentation procedures. Most of the migrant workers who are working in Malaysia and Thailand are unskilled migrant workers with limited education. Normally they are not familiar with the office procedures and they could not take day off in weekdays as they are afraid that their bosses are going to cut off the leave day wage from the salary. This is the reason of appearing service companies who are working for migrant workers to do work permit and passport extension etc in Malaysia and Thailand.

The Malaysia law of labor protection exists injustice for Myanmar migrant workers. Sometimes workers didn't receive regular salaries.

The worker added,

“I received salary by combining three months and my cheated boss waited for my contract end till my work permit expired. So I couldn't complaint him

and report to authorities to take action for my unpaid last three month salaries.” (M#1, 3 June 2013)

On the other hand Myanmar Embassy in Malaysia is also weak in following up on such unfair migrant workers’ cases.

### **Singapore**

There are three types of visa status in Singapore which is employment pass; Spass and work permit which is different from salary and skilled. Most of the interviewees researcher met are holding the Skill pass (Spass) and work permit. According to my interview it is found that most of the Myanmar community in Singapore hold Spass and work permit visa. People who applied for Spass visa must have degree with three years working experience. According to Singapore Labour law, each company also has a quota of 20% for foreign migrant workers.

The migrant worker who holds the Spass visa holder told researcher that “It is very difficult to apply Spass through online and the Ministry of Manpower, Singapore looked at very detail on our past working experience, our educational level and how our previous working experience related to our degree and diplomas. Getting a job in company is more difficult and competitive as all of the companies in Singapore has to accept only 20% of foreign workers. Among the foreign workers, Myanmar migrant workers are really hard to get a job as there is also people coming from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippine who are better in English than Myanmar. Sometimes the company owners negotiate with Myanmar to pay less than 2,000 S\$ which is the under the standard pay of Spass.” (S#5, 21 June 2013)

She added about her community in Singapore like this

“some of my friends want to go back Myanmar and set up IT business there but IT business in Myanmar is still developing and they feel that idea is impossible”

### **Thailand**

Based on the MOUs, the rights of the migrant workers include to protect the rights including the entitlement to legal protection, non-discriminatory treatment by respecting the gender, race and religion which is under the protection of laws and regulations in the receiving country (Khai). However there are still problems among Myanmar migrant workers due to complex office procedure, language barrier and regularization process etc. These conditions cause the migrant workers fall into victims of being abused by agents/ broker services.

The 31 years old Karen female skilled returnee said that

“Although Thailand’s labour policy exists the protections for migrant workers, it does not work practically. There are always injustice cases happening in my surrounding of Myanmar migrant workers (T#3, 24 June 2013)”

According to this study on problems faced by returnees in these countries, it is found that although migration policy for foreign labour exists, there is always weakness to be justified between the labour policy for locals and foreign labour policy.

(b) **Visa/ Job Security**

People suffer shortage of jobs in Myanmar and they usually decide to go outside of country for job hunting. Nevertheless they often face that things are not happening as expected. Some people who go to Malaysia couldn't change jobs there. Since their passports are kept in hand of factory/shop/job owner's hand and if they transfer to another place to work, they simply lose their passports and their status of living in country automatically turn into illegal status.

For those who go to Singapore have different problem. The job competition in Singapore is very high among foreign workers in Singapore. One interviewee answers as following;

“I worked in Singapore about 3 years with the Spass visa status. The job competition in Singapore is very high as they have foreign labour policy and the company has to accept only 20% of foreign labour. Among these 20% of foreign labour, there are also migrant workers coming from Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Bangladesh. Sometimes the unnecessary discrimination and human right violation is taking place in workplace. It is not easy to get a job if you are not expert in particular field. If you couldn't find the decent job, it would be impossible to grantee your visa status. So, getting a job is very important to me.”

(S#5, 21 June 2013)

Like in Singapore, the Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand are also facing with visa problem. The Memorandum of Agreement between Myanmar and Thailand signed in 2003. It was mentioned that Myanmar migrant workers were allowed to

work in Thailand for four years with temporary passport and asked to go back home for three years before they come and work again in Thailand. Most of them working in Thailand are staying for decades and now they are facing with the problem of going back home or their passports were automatically expired. Then their status became illegal and expecting of facing more exploitation in work. The Ministries of Labour between Myanmar and Thailand were discussing these issues and reached to the agreement to re-enter Thailand after staying one month in Myanmar. The returnee who worked in Thailand for about 5 years changed several job placements.

“I worked in many places during my working days in Thailand. I did approach to the broker in order to receive the passport like the other do. My knowledge of electrical engineering did support me to get medium skilled work with better salary. As a general labour worker, we had to change many jobs until we are settled in the good one” (T#1, 22 June 2013).

### (c) **Social Security**

As Malaysia is the Muslim country, it is the attractive place for Myanmar Muslims to work there. The Myanmar Muslims or Rohingyas are working or being refugees in Malaysia. UNHCR mentioned that among the 116,568 Myanmar refugees, the Rohingyas are 32,977 and Myanmar Muslims 11,311.<sup>4</sup> The rest are Myanmar ethnicities like Chin, Burmese, Kachins and so on. Many of the refugees are significantly increasing with illegal migrants flow by means of taking the perilous trip to Malaysia and Thailand in rickety boats.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.unhcr.org/my/About\\_Us-@-Figures\\_At\\_A\\_Glance.aspx](http://www.unhcr.org/my/About_Us-@-Figures_At_A_Glance.aspx)

In news, there was a clash between Myanmar Buddhists and Muslim Rohingas from May 30 to June 4 in Kuala Lumpur<sup>5</sup>. The investigation by Malaysian authorities is still going on and the recent report said six Myanmar Buddhists dead and many injured. It makes the Malaysian Government to sweep out the illegal immigrants and the migrant workers who had expired their visa. But it is known that there are still remain illegal migrations there. Regarding with act of the Malaysia immigration's enforcement to crackdown illegal migrants, one the returnee memorized that

“We have to be careful if the Malaysian authorities announced their arrangements to crackdown illegal migrations through TV channels and newspapers. During the operation period, we are always scare of going around in Kuala Lumpur although we are in the legal status. We have to bring our passports along with us everywhere we are going. Malaysian police check us meticulously in every check point where many Myanmar migrants are living. Some of them are overstay migrant workers with expired visa and they were arrested by police and detained. The respective embassy has to come and pick up their citizen. The police arrested the one they suspect and detained sometimes although he or she is legal migrant worker. Then the police called to their boss and asked to take responsibility for them or asked money at least 100 ringgit per person. The illegal migrant workers have to hide in the place where they think it is safe place for them and sometimes they have to hide even in the forest. The authorities are also arresting the migrant workers if they are not staying in the address that they mentioned in the work permit or they are working in different place that they

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/7659-myanmar-workers-flock-to-malaysia-for-work.html>



mentioned. We have to take extra care on everything in operation period. I feel unsafe even I am sleeping and eating.” (M#1, 3 June 2013)

**Photograph 1: Myanmar Migrant workers from Malaysia came back home with the help of KBZ airline in Yangon International Airport**



Source: Popular Myanmar News Journal, issue dated November 21, 2013

This photograph is about the local airline, KBZ is helping to returnees from Malaysia who is faced insecurity to return home due to the religion conflict between Buddhism and Muslim.

In Thailand, there are still several problems going on in the broker industry because the broker channel was widely used by migrant workers to send remittance to home, to send their children back to home and to call for the new comers from their families and relatives. Sometimes there was human security violation happening in broker industry especially in the event of human trafficking.

The migrant workers who worked in seafood factory for 2 years said that

“When I was working in the region of Samut Sakhon at seafood factory, I was asked money by gangsters while I was walking in my neighborhood at night. I had not received any effective protection by police. Besides some of the police even asked money for no reason.” There were a lot of cases in exploitations made by police from even legal migrant workers. (T#2, 24 June 2013)

(d) Discrimination

The discrimination in the workplace always exist and sometimes the employer treat the employees unequally based on the difference between them for example gender, religion, skin, color, race, nationality. According to the ILO, the discrimination upon particular characteristics of migrant workers such as color, gender, race and nationality is illegal to discrimination in employment<sup>6</sup>. Every person has the right to choose and pursue the professional according to their capacity and enthusiasm. But the discrimination in workplace happens between the employers and employees based on the inequality especially for the migrant workers. The migrant workers were asked to work more compared to the local workers with less pay. The discrimination can be seen as various forms which includes; low wages, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect and an absence of protection in the workplace.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination/workplace-discrimination/lang-en/index.htm>

The returnee who came back from Malaysia said “The discrimination is always happening in my working environment. When I first started working in my industry, I was asked for the place where their Malay people didn’t want to work. We, all Myanmar people were working in the place where they didn’t want to work for. We had no chance to complaint in choosing the working place since our boss kept our passports and we have no chance to change the job in Malaysia”.(M#2, 5 June 2013)

Similarly, the returnees who worked in Thailand for 5 years said that

“There are many Myanmar migrant workers working in Thailand and most of them are coming from the villages of border area especially from Karen, Mon States and Tanithayi Region. We cannot get a job easily in Thailand if we couldn’t speak in Thai language. Besides, Thailand and Myanmar had bad history image where Thais people suffered and for this reason some of the Thais people hate and look down on Myanmar. When I worked in one of the restaurant as a waiter, I had not have a chance to collect even tip money from customer. I felt so bad during my working days in Thailand.” (T#2, 24 June 2013)

The returnee who came back from Singapore added that

“I was very young when I left to Singapore for work. My Chinese supervisor looked down to Myanmar citizen and I had bad working environment there.” (S#1, 10 June 2013) Relating with the working situation in Singapore, one of the the returnees who hold the Spass visa status recalled her experience that “ The boss in Singapore know that Myanmar people are very hardworking and their need of job is very high. So according to the Ministry of Manpower, Spass salary range is between 2,000 to 2,200 SG\$ and they normally negotiate with us with

the pay lesser than the actual pay. According to my experience, my pervious boss negotiated with me with 1,800SG\$ per month although I was appointed with Spass type. In order to avoid the tracing process from Ministry of Manpower, they transferred me 2,000SG\$ for every month and I have to transfer back to them 200 SG\$ in next day. They knew that Myanmar migrant workers are in high demand of work in need. They never do this to their local workers. This is the discrimination that I suffered throughout my working experience in Singapore.”  
(S#2, 19 June 2013)

The discrimination seems among unskill labours as all skill labours didn't mention such kind of discrimination in workshop.

### 3.4 Reasons for returning

The push factors from the country of origin include the limited job opportunities, low wages as Myanmar has no standardized norms for minimum wages with lower living standard.

As Myanmar is now in the reform process, the pull factors from the country of origin can include current economic and political reform, family reunion, network and saving that helps them for smoother reintegration into community.

(a) Current Economic and Political Reform

Myanmar's major reform is started since 2012 and 2013 which include the prompt enhancement of economic and social well-being of the people of Myanmar. ( In details it is mentioned above. )

It is found that the National Economic and Social Advisory Council have been organized within scholars, academicians, technicians and business persons from various fields in early 2012 in Myanmar (JICA, 2012). This council includes a patron; a chairman, a secretary and 14 members to make suggestions on the president about economic, educational, healthcare and agricultural matters<sup>7</sup>. Now this is the time to bring the policies into operation. Then the committee started drafting the Framework for Economic and Social reform (FESR) under the National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCDP). FESR which was developed together with Parliament members, line ministries and state/region governments, scholars and experts in the middle of 2013 by participating of all stakeholders. The policies developed by FESR are focused on the agro-based industrial development, resource sharing among regions and states, encouraging the local and foreign investment, implementing the people-centred development, and poverty reduction (Sett, 2013). The priority actions under FESR includes;

a, land reform,

b, improvement of access to credit,

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<sup>7</sup> <http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/192-myanmar-forms-national-economic-and-social-advisory-council>

c, and creating job opportunities.

In this regards, Myanmar Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi criticizes the reform implemented during the two years of the presidency of U Thein Sien by pointing that the reform is lacking structure, and the people are not able to see results. She studied the situation of great population of ordinary people staying in the villages or rural area and found out that no change is happened in their lives since 2010 by highlighting the need of job opportunities.

*“They need decent job opportunities that they can stand on their own with the decent income for their livings ((Eleven, 2013; Sanchez, 2013)”*

She said that six elements as jobs, water, roads, electricity, education and health are badly in need for civilians. She highlighted that 70 percent of youth in country are facing with the problem of unemployment which can lead to some social issues and this is the main reason of her putting the need in the top list to create job placements in national reform process. The young generation is the national resources are jobless and she sees this problem very important issue. That’s why creating job opportunities in country become her first priority in reform process. As this regard, her party together with transforming government is pushing to develop the minimum wage law (Sanchez, 2013). The old Myanmar minimum wage law only focuses on the formation of commission, the responsibilities and the rights but doesn’t include the rate of minimum wages. The ministry of labour drafted the new minimum wages law with the committee by studying the relevance pay for different particular fields of the workers. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi believes Direct Foreign Investments can bring lots of job placements and working opportunities for local people (Sanchez, 2013).

The reform idol of Myanmar, the President Thein Sein also agreed on that point and considers that job creating is the one of the important way to reduce the poverty rate. He said

*“The first priority for us is to fight poverty. In this regards, we need to create more job opportunities and income-generating opportunities to alleviate the chronic disease of poverty. And it is not only about poverty, it is also include the peaceful lives even they won’t not resort to violence like in Meiktila. (The conflict between local Buddhists and Muslims.) (Times, 2013).*

The Myanmar citizens outside of country as well as inside are waiting for that moment to upgrade the living standard of citizens through decent job placement with better social status. Myanmar people are hoping to lift all economic sanctions and foreign investment would bring to create more job opportunities for all people. And the researcher believes that this is the best contribution from international community that can fulfill the expectations of Myanmar people.

At the moment, Myanmar is still in need to develop the infrastructure with transparent administration system and the major improvement in health and education to host the FDI. Myanmar is trying to develop the hardware and software in order to host the FDI, for example as development of hardware in infrastructure, include energy, telecommunications and transport and also bring up the capacities of human resources and policies development as software. Only the concrete laws in different economic development fields in both parties are the key instrument to encourage the industrialization and in the meantime to protect the local private institutions. In the meantime, the developing infrastructure projects and natural resources business were taken over by Asian countries. FDI project might be bad for

the host country but it is also produce substantial positive effects. The good quality of law and justice action will bring the FDI projects to generate more good things than harm.

One of the well-known economic specialists in country, Mr. Khin Maung Nyo explained about the FDI and he discussed on the issue of economic development and job security for returnees.

“Foreign investors are still studying upon 2015 Myanmar election and investing through social development to study the infrastructure of Myanmar. Myanmar is expecting American investment but for the time being still only small investments are coming into country. At the moment Chinese investments are decreasing because of the anti-Chinese mindset in country. We still need to decrease the rate of unemployment among the locals in country than creating the job opportunities for returnees. I am concerned that fixed minimum wages can create more job insecurity in future ( U Khing Maung Nyo, 21.6.2013)”.

He highlighted the importance of unemployment issue in Myanmar. He has different view on minimum wages law, many of the business owners use less human resources by meeting the fixed labor rate and labor exploitation can be seen. Interestingly, the different view can be seen from one of the returnees from Singapore. He said,

The government is trying to establish the minimum wages law, 2012 in order to provide social security benefits with decent salary especially to unskilled and semi-skilled workers. He added



“Hopefully, this law will encourage economic migrant workers in considering go back to Myanmar.” (S#3, 19 June 2013)

In this regards, the president Thein Sein addressed on the economic reform that

*“Economic reform will be alive only the democratic transition is going on smoothly but we need three things- capital, technological capacity and human resources development(Times, 2013)”*

The international media and community should also support to Myanmar leading to the smooth transition together with local people he added<sup>8</sup>. Myanmar is still very new to the subject of democracy and recently facing with the problem of the lack of professional human resources in particular field. Many professionals from different particular fields were outside of country for different reasons.

One of the returnee of the skilled migrant worker from Singapore said that

“I believe this is the real time of change for all Myanmar people and the government will take the opportunity to build the good history by making the right decision. Besides, as the world is keep watching them and they cannot take backward. I think it is the best time for me to come back and work here. I want to be real asset in building the national reconstruction. But my friends from Singapore are still watching with doubts on the changes in Myanmar. They normally go back to Myanmar for every year for short visits and they have not confidence yet to believe in government not going back .” (S#1, 10 June 2013)

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b0fe31c8-9d07-11e2-88e9-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2lw6ntH85>

(b) Family Reunion

Myanmar workers who are looking for works outside of countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are unlikely to drop within the last few years ago. A 29 years old man who was working as a foreign expert in one of the big company of Singapore, PMG Asia Pacific Pte Ltd came back to Myanmar to settle a family in Myanmar.

“ The reason of coming back to Myanmar is not only to settle a family but also I feel that it is a good time to invest here. Although the pay is quite different between Singapore and Myanmar, it is still acceptable for me. Comparing the pay standard of Myanmar, I can say I received a very good salary.”( S#3, 19 June 2013)

It is not easy to make the decision to come back home because of the family reason while you are getting the high amount of salary. The lady who is working for IT networking company in Singapore and recently having baby decided to come back home because

“I would like to raise up my child in Myanmar which is the rich place with social and cultural norms. Here in Singapore I have observed children who learn English and Chinese at school grown up with poor knowledge of mother tongue. I want my children to know their mother tongue very well and become a real Myanmar citizen. So my husband and I decided to come back Yangon. This is our first baby and I would like to stay close to my family to get some help in rising up of my baby. We hope the working conditions in Myanmar will continue to improve”  
(S#2, 19 June 2013)

Myanmar is the rich of cultural norms with the world reorganization as the Golden Land which is great influences of Asian values and Buddhism. After working in several years in other countries, many migrants decided to return to Myanmar for their retirement and it is included as one main big reason under the family reunion title. In order to make the return goes smoothly, the 63 years old Karen migrant worker who had worked in one of the western Embassy in Malaysia decided to return home when his financial and family plan meet with expectations what he targeted.

“I want my children to be educated and this is main reason of quitting from government job (staff in finance division of the department of Meteorology and Hydrology, Yangon) When I was 35, moved to Thailand first to work. Then I followed with my friend from Thailand to Malaysia and I was under possibility of trafficking as I had no legal status. I faced many difficulties under the exploitative employers when I started working in Malaysia in illegal status. Finally I received a job in Embassy under the title of general worker. Working in Embassy brought me more opportunities than working in private business place. During my working days in Embassy, I felt safe as I received social protections for myself and my family for example visa status, etc. But I always imagining going back home when I get retire. This is the only reason of not selling out my house in Yangon. Now this is the time to stay closed to my community by giving more time to family and religious work in my community.” (M#4, 18 June 2013)

(c) Saving

Myanmar is the country with very limited job opportunities even with low pay. Even the degree holders around the nation are facing with the problem of need of continuous job hunting. Because of the limited job opportunities, the gambling

industry is getting bigger. Some people said they earn their living by selling two digit or three digit illegal lottery and football gambling as a kind of livelihood. The decent job opportunities are needed for these young people. The government's mismanagement in economic and civil war brings Myanmar into the poor country status comparing to other Asian countries. Working in Thailand and Malaysia with low-paying jobs is attractive to them rather than staying at home.

The returnee, who holds the AGTI (EP) diploma coming back from Thailand, shared his experience of working in Yangon before he left to work.

“I wanted to work when I finished my degree but there were few job opportunities in my hometown. Then I moved to Yangon where my relatives live. I got a job in one of the electronic wiring company which took me as for 3 months' probation and I got paid under 100 USD which is 85000 MMK in local currency with long working hours -9 hours a day and six days per week. Sometimes I have to work for extra hours so called overtime. It does not cover all my expenses such as lunch, transportation and other expenses. I am lucky that I can stay in my relative's home for free and I don't need to spend extra for rental fee. I decided to work in Thailand after working in Yangon for 2 years. My job in Thailand was not interesting. I worked in one of the small restaurant in Bangkok. My boss gave me a place to stay and food as well. I can earn double in Thailand than in Yangon. I could send back 100,000 MMK every month for my family in Myanmar.” (T#1, 22 June 2013)

This is not a strange story for most of the young people living in Myanmar. They have few job opportunities and furthermore the workforce is easily exploitable. Most

of the employers use the workers unfairly for their advantage, for example, small amount of wages, long working hours and unpleasant working environment.

While migrant workers are considering returning home, they consider the point” how much they can earn at home and what kind of business can they really need to do. They are not so much interested in political situation of mother land. The returnee who worked in Malaysia for more than 5 years with contract decided to come back home once he collected the exact amount of what he planned to start the new business at home.

“I don’t want to work in other country but I have no choice but leaving the country to work at abroad. Working in Myanmar wouldn’t give enough money for living. During my contract working days in Malaysia, I always wanted to go back home with some money that I can do small business in my home town.” (M#1, 3 June 2013)

Most of the unskilled migrant workers are dreaming to have small business when they return home with the money they earned from foreign countries because there is very limited job opportunity in mother land.

#### (d) Network

The family network between migrant worker in abroad and his/her family at home can be also seen as one of the important reasons among the rest of three reasons of coming back because it is proved as specific importance in migration decisions. In return migration, the background of family and individual social network play the vital role in reintegration process. Interpersonal networks across borders involve information, assistance and obligation which impact on return of both

individuals and groups. The participation of individuals in social networks may be a source of social capital (Fleischer). The network is not only important for people returning home but also on the decision of choosing the destination country. People normally chose the place of destination where their family members, relatives or friends lived. By doing so, they need to receive information, contacts and resources. The researcher found out that saving the regular remittances effectively at home is also a good way of preparation for their return.

Regarding the importance of network, the returnee from Malaysia explained that

“I always send my remittances to home and my mother use it effectively. During my 5 years of working in Malaysia, she could manage to buy a house. Besides my friends who are working in Myanmar also invited me to start new business here.”

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter will give the full understanding of the research questions and objectives of thesis of identifying the factors of returning to the country of origin which will include the migration theory of push factors from the destination of countries and the pull factors from the origin country as the driven factors which made the returnees' to decide to go back home. From this study, the researcher found that family reunion and remittance are very important for Myanmar returnees. Myanmar people are very much attach to the family compared to the developing neighboring countries and they always have the sense of “Home” which makes them

to remind that they belong to Myanmar and they have to go back home in one day. With this account the returnees who received permanent residence in Singapore also made their minds to go back home. According to the case studies, they are likely to send their remittance to home to contribute better living standard at home for the rest of family life in Myanmar. This is the new findings which is not included in the conceptual framework.

Some of the economic migrants have doubts on Myanmar government's current reforms and so they don't want to return. Peoples' trust is very important for voluntary return. Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare need to publish regular news letters in which government's reforms are stated correctly and updated news to be disseminated among migrant workers at abroad. Through as much channels as possible Myanmar government always must organize migrant workers to return to mother land. On the other hand Myanmar Government has to be aware that human resource, human capital is most important factor for country's development. In order to help them, Myanmar authorities need to strengthen contacts with economic migrant workers at these three countries.

At the same time they need to liaise with counterparts of respective countries and must increase caring measures to be able to get proper protection for migrant workers' safeties. Comparing with their own national workers, Malaysian and Singapore governments' labor laws allow lower pay scales to Myanmar workers. Myanmar government need not hesitate to contact with respective counterparts and should try to discuss to be able to remove these unreasonable acts of pressing Myanmar migrant workers.

Currently Myanmar migrant workers who live in Malaysia are not safe due to recently happened Northern Rakhing State conflicts. All the time Rohingjas are trying to harm Myanmar workers in Malaysia. Malaysian business owners take and keep passports from Myanmar workers and so they have no right but to stay in the compounds that is given by factory owner and work. They have to stay where they are given and work as slaves. There are no overtime payments, no compensation but to work like as paying back for debt. Myanmar authorities cannot liaise with Malaysian government and take action on these affairs. At the same time Myanmar government should build effective contacts with various NGOs working in these three countries for the sake of welfare of Myanmar migrant workers. Previously Myanmar Military Government always consider these NGOs as opposition parties and ignore the welfare of Myanmar workers in these countries and this attitude gives the chances and favors to unfair owners of various types of business. Thus these owners could legalize unlawful acts against Myanmar workers. Researcher think that Myanmar authorities should conduct frequent monitoring visits to these countries and sites where migrant workers are existing and explore needs of it's citizens.



## CHAPTER IV

### Returnees' Human Capital and Reintegration

Connecting to the conceptual framework this chapter will provide an analysis of the collected data from the interviews. The researcher is providing the detailed information of return profile and then putting into the different typology of returnees. Then explained the human capital of returnees as some of the returnees may use the human capital of their expertise what they learnt from the country of destination such as foreign languages, working skills, working experiences and also formal education to improve their status in reintegration process. Human capital is set of knowledge and skills which an employee acquires on the job, through training and experience which increase employee's value in the market place. According to the definition of "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)", human capital can be divided into two types. The first is to utilize "human as labor force" related to economic added-value that is generated by labor force as other production factors such as financial capital, land, machinery, and labor hours. The second one is that human capital can be viewed as the target of investment through education and training.

#### 4.1 Government policy on returnees

Regarding the migration policy, the Myanmar Government has no clear policy to ensure that migration of its workers overseas contributes to the development of

the Myanmar economy and society in the future. But the government do not have particular plan for returnees and integration of migrant workers into the Myanmar economy at a specific time in the future so as to contribute positively to development and enhance the chance of a better life for the workers concerned but still ethnic issues surrounding migration remain particularly challenging.

“The recent conflict between Myanmar migrant workers and rohingya migrant workers in Malaysia drew the attention of government and private sectors to be more focus on migration issue. Ministry of labour which is the focal ministry for migration labour is welcoming returnees from Malaysia by providing the services of looking for some job opportunity (News, 2013).

Myanmar’s ministry of labour provided services and job opportunities for returnees as a short term solution due to the Malaysia’s conflict. Career Development Consultants Co.Ltd. said that “Some Myanmar people want to come back and work here if they can receive a salary that’s acceptable to them”(Eleven, September, 2013). It means that there are still challenges in policy making for returnees’ future such as employment policy, identification of salaries and insurance. Although the migrant workers would like to come back to the country there is no certain type of policy for their future

The particular policy is needed for returnees in order to have smoother reintegration.

Besides there are no any other policy changes to take care the safety of migrant workers because this conflict continues case by case. Malaysia's government refused that this conflict is committed by the Malaysia's citizen.

#### 4.2 Business Companies' Perceptive insights into welfare of Returnees

In a private sector in Myanmar, the researcher interviewed with the owner of a home decoration company, Toe Wah, owner of company which find jobs for the returnees from Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand with attractive salaries.

Chinese owner shared his personal feeling of working in Singapore for 4 years and based on his personal experience of discrimination at work, it forced him to come back home to start a new business.

“The recent conflict between Myanmar and Rohingya migrant workers in Malaysia made him start to think of finding jobs to returnees with attractive salaries<sup>iii</sup>. He added that he would be grantee to support 50 places of jobs in his work which is more or less salaries with Malaysia and Thailand. The news was boomed in facebook and some social networking websites of offering jobs for returnees became very good opportunities for unskilled migrant workers who want to return home.” (Interviewed, U Toe Wah, 26.6.2013)

At the same time the private sector including the hotels and the tourism agencies also increased in Myanmar. Regarding the tourism industry, the Union Minister for tourism said that,

“The industry of Tourism in Myanmar has showed a progressive sign since 2001. 1.06 million of tourist visited to different parts of Myanmar in year 2013. And it is 30 percent higher when we compare the figures to last year. Because of the longer oversea trips, tourist arrivals are up in May. Based on this market needs, the flight schedules and the numbers of chartered flight arrivals are increased. The arrival from neighbouring countries is increasingly up significantly (Eleven, 2013).”

The executive manager of one of the export and import company, “ Crown “  
said

“Myanmar is in need of skill labours and the demanding is very high compared to last 3 years ago. Before that many of the graduates has few variety of job opportunities and finally ended with going to neighboring countries of ASEAN to look for the better job opportunities. The companies are more competitive than before because of the foreign investments. They offered better salary with some incentives to the skilled labors. “

This is reflecting the local companies’ view on the foreign investments.

#### **4.3 Returnees’ Human Capital**

The human capital received relating with migration buildup from returnees who bring back skills from the country of destination (OECD, 2009). Human Capital is the good investment in individuals and returnees’ may receive formal education, firm

specific on the job- training and other knowledge/vocational qualifications/ language which empower them to increase the productivity and profits or increased earnings and wages.

In migration term of human capital, there can be two ways to express the flow of capital as migrant workers are the brain drain from the country of origin. When migrant workers made decisions to work outside the country, the human capital that they received from the country of origin brought together with them. But in return when they decided to return, it turned into benefits for the return migrants who have already collected new skills, language and knowledge from abroad. The returnees invested in education, trainings or work where they could pick up knowledge and skills and education they need to work back in the country of origin. Furthermore this phenomenon helps the returnees to improve their social status by earning more in jobs.

According to the nature of human beings, the motivation is needed in order to improve himself/herself in another words, to increase the human capital (Fleischer). This study has shown that the human capital is much more improved rapidly by adding their existing human capital with the exposures, new challenges and new technological that they are facing in the host country. As a result, migration and employment in a host country lifted up the higher potential returns to human capital in terms of learning, acquiring skills on the jobs, and in the level of human capital formed. The emigration of skilled and unskilled individuals is the great benefit for the country of origin by receiving better knowledge, education and language skills than they could pick up at home.

The majority of unskilled returnees from Malaysia received only Malay language skills. They need to use it in work as other job trainings was unnecessary to pick up as they needed to do the job repeatedly in the factory throughout their working years. But one of the unskilled returnees received cooking skills that he could applied it back in Myanmar.

In this regards skilled returnees received English language skills more fluently than the previous time of before they came to Malaysia with some working experiences and degrees.

Working in Singapore is different from the Malaysia and Thailand. Singapore is the country of high in technology, all of the returnees received as least on- job trainings or the trainings that is in need in working environment. Unlikely from other countries, the returnees from Singapore received jobs in good positions when they returned Myanmar.

Thailand is likely to Malaysia as most of the unskilled returnees picked up Thai language especially in speaking than writing. Compared to Malaysia, the skilled returnees picked up less English skills and less trainings and education degree according to this study.

| No | Coding Name | Human Capital              |                |            |                                   |            | Reintegration |             |                             |                |  |
|----|-------------|----------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--|
|    |             | Language acquired          | Working skills | Experience | Formal Education                  | Remittance | Earning       | Use knowhow | Promote Economic in Myanmar | Year of return |  |
| 1  | M#1         | Malay-Yes<br>English-No    | Cooking        | Yes        | No                                | Yes        | Yes           | No          | Self-employed               | 1              |  |
| 2  | M#2         | Malay-Yes<br>English-No    | Communication  | Yes        | No                                | Yes        | Yes           | No          | Self-employed               | 3              |  |
| 3  | M#3         | Malay-Yes<br>English-No    | Engineering    | Yes        | No                                | Yes        | Yes           | No          | Work in NGO                 | 2              |  |
| 4  | M#4         | Malay-Yes<br>English-Yes   | Engineering    | No         | No                                | Yes        | No            | No          | Retired                     | 1              |  |
| 5  | M#5         | Malay-Yes<br>English-Yes   | Teaching       | Yes        | Yes<br>B.Sc<br>(Computer Studies) | Yes        | Yes           | Yes         | Self-employed               | 1              |  |
| 6  | S#1         | Chinese-Yes<br>English-Yes | Communication  | Yes        | No                                | Yes        | Yes           | No          | Self-employed               | 3              |  |

|    |     |                                   |                                       |     |   |         |     |     |                           |   |
|----|-----|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|---|---------|-----|-----|---------------------------|---|
| 7  | S#2 | Chinese-<br>No<br>English-<br>Yes | Techni-<br>cal                        | Yes | Yes<br>M.Sc.<br>(Comp<br>uter<br>Studie<br>s  | Ye<br>s | No  | No  | Raise<br>the own<br>child | 1 |
| 8  | S#3 | Chinese-<br>No<br>English-<br>Yes | Busine-<br>ss<br>Manag<br>ement       | Yes | Yes<br>M.Sc.<br>(Comp<br>uter<br>Studie<br>s) | Ye<br>s | Yes | Yes | Self-<br>employ<br>ed     | 1 |
| 9  | S#4 | Chinese-<br>No<br>English-<br>Yes | Comm<br>unicati<br>on                 | Yes | No  | Ye<br>s | Yes | No  | Self-<br>employ<br>ed     | 1 |
| 10 | S#5 | Chinese-<br>No<br>English-<br>Yes | Accou<br>nting                        | Yes | Yes<br>Diplo<br>ma in<br>accou<br>nting       | Ye<br>s | No  | No  | Raise<br>the own<br>child | 1 |
| 11 | T#1 | Thai-Yes<br>English-<br>Yes       | Comm<br>unicati<br>on                 | Yes | No  | Ye<br>s | Yes | No  | Self-<br>employ<br>ed     | 2 |
| 12 | T#2 | Thai- No<br>English-<br>Yes       | Netwo<br>rking<br>and<br>hardw<br>are | Yes | No  | Ye<br>s | Yes | No  | Employ<br>ee              | 1 |
| 13 | T#3 | Thai- Yes<br>English-             | Comm<br>unicati                       | Yes | No  | Ye<br>s | Yes | No  | Self-<br>employ           | 2 |



|    |     |                             |             |     |     |         |     |     |   |   |
|----|-----|-----------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|---|---|
|    |     | No                          | on          |     |     |         |     |     | ed  |   |
| 14 | T#4 | Thai- Yes<br>English-<br>No | Cookin<br>g | Yes | Yes | Ye<br>s | No  | No  | Continu<br>e her<br>high<br>school<br>educati<br>on | 2 |
| 15 | T#5 | Thai- No<br>English-<br>Yes | Sewin<br>g  | Yes | Yes | Ye<br>s | Yes | Yes | Self-<br>employ<br>ed                               | 1 |

**Table 2 : Analysis of Returnees under Human Capital and Reintegration**

The sign of M#, S# and T# refers to the returnees who came back from Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Among the 15 cases of interviews, they took a year to 3 years in reintegration process. The cases of S32, S#5 and T2 are about coming back with the reason of family to raise up their children and for now on the human capital what they received in another countries are not untitled under the reintegration process like earn of living by using knowhow method of to promote the country's economy. Among the 15 cases, T#4 came back to Myanmar with the reason to continue her education. She left country with their family in her grade -9 and now she is continuing her education by sitting exam as an outside student.

#### 4.3.1 Earn a Living

The researcher found out that 9 out of 15 could earn for their own living with the language skills, working experiences, working skills and Education. Among them, all the unskilled returnees came back to set up family business or to start their own

business while the skilled returnees came back to work for other companies to earn their livings.

#### **4.3.2 Use know-how**

In the economic reintegration also aims at using the knowhow which was acquired in the foreign country to promote the economic and social development of the country of origin (IOM, 2011). Interestingly among the fifteen cases, only three cases of skilled returnees used gained know-how in their economic reintegration at home.

#### **4.3.3 Promote Economy in Myanmar**

Every migrant worker wants to come back home with better status. It may take years for returnees to receive a fully reintegration in rebuilding of their economic situation. In somehow most of the skilled and unskilled mentioned as they were still in their reintegration process by setting up their own business. Surprisingly, two out of fifteen cases said they came back to promote economic sector in Myanmar who are working as NGO officer and Business Development Manager.

#### 4.4 Reintegration Process

Migrant workers decide to return home to his or her country of origin or ordinary residence normally after spending at least one year in another country. And it may be voluntary return or involuntary return. Return migration includes voluntary repatriation which is to send or bring someone, or sometimes money or other property, back to their own country. Reintegration follows after return migration.

Timeframe plays as one of the most important role in reintegration process. The returnees need specific time frame to reintegrate fully with the country context. They need specific time to study as some other people are looking for jobs or business which it is fixed with their human capitals. It is also based on the planning ahead of returnees as some returnees reintegrate without in need of timeframe.

The Business Development Manager who returned from Singapore said that

“When I decided to return home, I started looking for the jobs through online and I returned home once I received the job offer from current one” (S#3, 19 June 2013)

Reintegration is people who re-include or re-incorporate into a group or a process. And economic reintegration is the reinsertion of a migrant into the economic system of his/her country of origin. The basic concept of return migration is to reintegrate into the whole community of the country of origin in social and economic platforms. In developmental terms, economic reintegration also aims at using the knowhow which was acquired in the foreign country to promote the economic and social development of the country of origin. Every of the migrant workers wants to

come back home with better status. It may take years for returnees to receive a fully reintegration in economic. Reintegration can be classified into three categories; economic, social and cultural (IOM, 2011)

(a) Economic Reintegration

In the context of return migration, the process by which a migrant is reinserted into the economic system of his or her country of origin, and able to earn his or her own living. In developmental terms, economic reintegration also aims at using the know-how which was acquired in the foreign country to promote the economic and social development of the country of origin.(IOM, 2011)

When somebody returned home after spending some working years in foreign country always faced with the problem of economically reintegration. Most of the problems that they are facing is they have no proper understanding on the economic situation like locality and sometimes their choice of investment does not work. Myanmar is expecting that the SEZs are going to provide decent jobs not only for the locality but also for the returnees. Finally returnees who came back with some skills will receive the similar jobs of what they have done in other developing countries.

“I worked as a fuel agent in shipping industry while I was in Singapore. My job nature was to do refilling the fuel into ships stopped in the Singapore sea port. After my 6 years of working in Singapore, I collected some money and I got married. My visa was not accepted to do extension in Singapore of the Ministry of Manpower. So I had no choice than going back home. I couldn't find the appropriate jobs for me that suits to my working experience. In the mean time, I want to spend more time with my family and I decided to buy two taxis with the money I received from Singapore. I believed after finishing

the SEZs, I can look for the job matching with my experience. I am so much looking forward to receive the decent job in Myanmar especially in Thilwa and Dawei deep-sea port. (S#4, 26 June 2013)”

The 25 year old unskilled migrant worker from Singapore who came back Myanmar since 2010 said that

“I helped to my aunt’s fashion shop in Bogyoke market in Yangon as soon as I get back Myanmar. After spending about one year I opened small tea shop in Bogyoke Market only at the end of 2012. There is no job opportunity for me with my educational background which is B.Sc (Geography) and it took me about one year to start my own business. But I never regret of coming back home as I did have a good chance to continue my higher education. Together with the economic reform, many of the foreigners are visiting to our country and I am planning to open gem stone shop together with my friend in next 2 years with the remittance that I gained from Singapore” (S#1, 10 June 2013)

There are also other kinds of reintegration which is social and cultural reintegrations than the economic reintegration.

#### (b) Social Reintegration

In the context of return migration, we can see the reinsertion of a migrant worker into the social structures of his or her country of origin. This includes on the one hand the development of a personal network (friends, relatives, neighbours) and on

the other hand the development of civil society structures (associations, self-help groups and other organizations) (IOM, 2011).

“Many people who are working in Singapore are still looking for the better improvements in Myanmar by considering the salaries, job security and social welfare system as a major consideration factors to return home.” (S#3, 19 June 2013)

The reintegration process can be different from skilled to unskilled returnees, “ a 29 years old man who worked as a foreign expert in PMG Company, Singapore received a position of Business Development Manger received a job in one of the shipping company in Yangon as soon as he came back from Singapore. He said

“My educational background and the international working experiences helped me to find the good job in Myanmar. I applied this job while I was in Singapore and I had skyped interviews. Although the pay is not comparable to what I received in Singapore, it is acceptable. The reintegration process is smooth for me as my parent family is still staying in Yangon. But Myanmar is still need to improve the living style such as banking system, faster internet access, and better transportation system like the neighboring countries.” (S#3, 19 June 2013)

The researcher heard the similar stories from the unskilled returnees who came back from Malaysia and Thailand. Most of the unskilled returnees didn't improve their human capital through working in foreign countries. Most of the unskilled migrant workers working in factories and industries, doing on the same job for many years and didn't pick up valuable skills for their lives. The remittances are only the human capital what they received from the host countries.

According to my study, it shown that 15 people had to take about 6 months to study the situation of country's reforms and only after this they are adapted in process. While skilled returnees chose to work more in public sector, the unskilled returnees are likely work more in private sector by starting their own business. In reintegration process, it is easier and faster for the skilled returnees who received degrees, working experiences, skilled and languages that they picked up from host countries that became the gold credit for their future jobs.

#### (c) Cultural Reintegration

It may includes re-adoption on the part of the returning migrant of the values, way of living, language, moral principles, ideology, and traditions of the country of origin's society when returnees are fixed in with the country context (IOM, 2011)

The researcher met with the 20 years old young lady who returns from Thailand explained her reintegration experience. She was able to attend her high school in Bangkok. Before she came to Bangkok, she lived with her grandmother in Hlegu Township, Yangon region. Her parents worked in Thailand since she was born.

“My parents picked me up during their holiday back to home when I was 15. I stayed with my parents in Bangkok and studied in Thai school. I started working in restaurant when I was 17. After that my parents and I decided to go back home when I was 20. My family collected some saved money to run their own business after working in Thailand for 15 years. I continued my study when I returned home by sitting the exam as an outside student for grade 10. And I started facing

with the problem and feeling uncomfortable as people gave me strange look in private tuition school. I was ranking as alien in my school as I was older than the students and my dressing style was different from them. I felt quite unhappy the way of people looks when I was walking around in my neighborhood. Finally I recognized myself that I needed to fix in with the country context. It took me some months to readjust the culture of our country.” (T#4, 25 June 2013)

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Myanmar’s political reforms, policy changes and economic openness are also including as pull factors while migrant workers are considering in making decision to come back home. Based on the study of the *Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry* (UMFCCI), the particular improvement areas in economic reforms are already found especially in economic policy. These changes are driven factors for the Myanmar economic situation into better place not only regionally but globally also.

The findings of the study continue to understand the current situation of returnees’ reintegration in social and economic sectors. Myanmar’s policy makers, politicians, business and civil society also understand to highlight the roles and values of a migrant worker who is staying outside of country. President of the Nation himself is inviting people who are staying outside of country to come back to Myanmar by requesting to involve in Myanmar’s national development process. Together with country political and economic reform of Myanmar, many migrants are



thinking to come back home. The finding of this research would highly analyze the current situation of human capital of migration and the incentive of returned migration to Myanmar.

The findings proved that human capital is very important and it is necessary to make the reintegration process smoother. As the researcher mentioned in Chapter IV, the situation of reintegration process is different between skilled and unskilled migrant workers. Skilled migrants can reintegrate better and faster compared to unskilled returned migrant workers. The returned migrant workers took exact timeframe which is normally 6 months period for adaptation in reintegration of both self-employed or get proper employment in Myanmar.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This chapter will summarize the research finding of the chapter III which includes the profiles of return reason under the theory of push and pull factors from the destination of countries and the pull factors from the origin country as the driven factors which made the returnees' to decide to go back home. According to the case studies, they are likely to send their remittance to home to contribute better living standard of the conditions of the rest of family in Myanmar. This is the new findings which is not included in the conceptual framework. Here researcher would like to repeat that Myanmar people are very much attach to the family compared to the developing neighboring countries and they always have the sense of "Home" which makes them to remind that they are belong to Myanmar and they have to go back home in one day. There is answered that the returnees who received permanent residence in Singapore also made their minds to go back home.

These findings answer the second research questions of which factors contribute to the return migration and how human capital gained by returnees help in reintegration process. The human capital which is Education, experience, language, skilled and remittance is very important for returnees and it is necessary to make the reintegration process smoother. As the researcher mentioned in Chapter IV, the situation of reintegration process is different between skilled and unskilled migrant workers. Skilled migrants can reintegrate better and faster compared to unskilled returned migrant workers. The returned migrant workers took exact timeframe which

is normally 6 months period for adaptation in reintegration of both self-employed or get proper employment in Myanmar.

Regarding the better status of returnees, interestingly all returnees both skilled and unskilled from all three different countries said that they get better living standards when they returned home from the different country of destinations. While some of the returnees set up the new business or upgrading the existing family business, the others received good positions in private sectors.

## 5.2 Discussion

Some of the economic migrants have doubts on Myanmar government's current reforms and so they don't want to return. Peoples' trust is very important for voluntary return. Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MOFA and Ministry of Labour, MOL has to publish regular news letters in which government's reforms aims and procedures are stated correctly and distributed among workers. Through as much channels as possible Myanmar government always must organize migrant workers to return to mother land. On the other hand Myanmar Government has to be aware that human resource, human capital is really important for country's development. In order to help them, Myanmar authorities need to strengthen regular contacts with economic workers at these three countries.

At the same time they need to liaise with counterparts of respective countries and must increase caring measures to protect for migrant workers' safeties. As researcher mentioned that comparing with their own national workers, Malaysian and Singapore government labor laws allow lower pay scales to Myanmar workers.

Myanmar government need not hesitate to discuss this matter to remove these unreasonable acts.

Some of Myanmar migrant workers worked in these countries long time ago and now they even lose contacts with their families at their native places in Myanmar. Although they want to go back to Myanmar they have nowhere and no whom to contacts and having difficulties to return to country of origin. Myanmar government should cooperate more closely with Red Cross of stakeholder countries and take part in Restoring Family Links, RFL works. For those who are working in Thailand come from bordering area and it is very much possible of finding land mine dangers and injuries when they come back from Thai side to Myanmar side. Thus while they are working in Thai and before going back, mine risk education should be given to migrant workers. At the same time Myanmar government needs to start demining works as soon as possible.

It is observed that most of Myanmar migrant workers in these countries simply don't know the laws and orders, rules and regulations of host countries fall into the act of perpetrators and are punished and arrested by police. Myanmar government needs to arrange to organize pre service and in service training for Myanmar migrant workers.

Aiming to reduce number of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia while enhancing the welfare of migrant workers, research both in literature and filed interviews are conducted and found suitable alternative ways. According to limited chances of interviewing migrant workers and returnees by researcher, the findings aren't so representative but enough vision and

recommendations could be made by intensive learning and feel that a suitable conclusion is able to be made.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Government and business sectors should be strengthened for the returnees by setting the economic and social policy in order to have smooth reintegrating in country context. Researcher had highlighted that current conditions of Myanmar migrant workers' unsafe lives in Malaysia and also mentioned the need of Myanmar Government's intensive actions. Also Researcher emphasizes the need of Myanmar Government's action of negotiation for liquidation with Malaysian business owners' acts of taking passports from Myanmar workers. Researcher point out that there are no overtime payments, no compensation but to work like as pay back for debt and at the same time suggest to Myanmar Government's requirement to liaise with Malaysian government and take action on these affairs. At the same time Researcher warns that Myanmar government should build effective contacts with various NGOs working in these three countries for the welfare of Myanmar migrant workers.

At the same time the need of creating job opportunities by Myanmar government in country and need to upgrading salaries of skilled and unskilled labours is highlighted. In this case researcher sincerely believe that Myanmar migrant workers will prefer working at home if they could earn even two third of amounts that they can get at abroad. Myanmar Ministry of Labour always should focus the possibilities of comparing with minimum salary scales of these countries and should identify and upgrade labour salaries in minimum standards. Myanmar government

can actively cooperate with national business people of private sector in country and can take actions by using their force field in economic.

Although the number of migrant workers in these countries is too many, there should be a fine and systematic profiling at the hand of Myanmar Ministry of Labour. These documents should be handed over to relevant authorities of host countries. Correct, exact and always updated labor documentations can help both responsible personals of Myanmar and host countries's authorities handle the migrant workers's problems easier than before.

There should be more scholars studying the issues of returnees to Myanmar since this is the new topic for our country and the Ministry of immigration should have the statistics of migrant workers and returnees.

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## APPENDIX

### List of Interview to Returnees coming back from Malaysia

| No. | Coding Name | Gender | Age | Skilled or Unskilled | Occupation             | Place of interview | Date of Interview |
|-----|-------------|--------|-----|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1   | M#1         | Male   | 23  | Unskilled            | N/A                    | Yangon             | 3.6.2013          |
| 2   | M#2         | Male   | 47  | Unskilled            | Small business owner   | Kungyangon         | 5.6.2013          |
| 3   | M#3         | Male   | 38  | Unskilled            | NGO officer            | Yangon             | 10.6.2013         |
| 4   | M#4         | Male   | 63  | Skilled              | N/A                    | Yangon             | 18.6.2013         |
| 5   | M#5         | Female | 32  | Skilled              | Freelance Photographer | Yangon             | 18.6.2013         |

### List of Interview to Returnees coming back from Singapore

| No. | Coding Name | Gender | Age | Skilled or Unskilled | Occupation  | Place of interview | Date of Interview |
|-----|-------------|--------|-----|----------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1   | S#1         | Male   | 25  | Unskilled            | Tea Shop Owner in Bogyoke Market                          | Yangon             | 10.6.2013         |
| 2   | S#2         | Female | 30  | Skilled              | Dependant   | Yangon             | 19.6.2013         |
| 3   | S#3         | Male   | 29  | Skilled              | Business Development Manager, One of the shipping Company | Yangon             | 19.6.2013         |

|   |     |        |    |           |            |        |           |
|---|-----|--------|----|-----------|------------|--------|-----------|
| 4 | S#4 | Male   | 33 | Unskilled | Taxi Owner | Yangon | 21.6.2013 |
| 5 | S#5 | Female | 30 | Skilled   | Dependant  | Yangon | 21.6.2013 |

## List of Interview to Returnees coming back from Thailand

| No. | Coding Name | Gender | Age | Skilled or Unskilled | Occupation            | Place of interview | Date of Interview |
|-----|-------------|--------|-----|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1   | T#1         | Male   | 31  | Unskilled            | Phone shop owner      | Yangon             | 22.6.2013         |
| 2   | T#2         | Female | 30  | Skilled              | N/A                   | Yangon             | 24.6.2013         |
| 3   | T#3         | Male   | 31  | Unskilled            | Family Business       | Yangon             | 24.6.2013         |
| 4   | T#4         | Female | 20  | Unskilled            | N/A                   | Hlegu              | 25.6.2013         |
| 5   | T#5         | Male   | 28  | Skilled              | Marketing Supervisors | Yangon             | 28.6.2013         |

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY List of Key Informants Interview

| No. | Coding Name      | Occupation   | Institution                  | Place of interview | Date of Interview |
|-----|------------------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1   | Ms. Khin Nway Oo | Director     | Migration Workers Division   | Yangon             | 20.6.2013         |
| 2   | U Khin Maung Nyo | Chief Editor | Smart ICT & Business journal | Yangon             | 21.6.2013         |
| 3   | U Toe Wah        | Owner        | Toe Wah                      | Yangon             | 26.6.2013         |

|  |  |  |                               |  |  |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
|  |  |  | Aluminum &<br>Home Decoration |  |  |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------|--|--|



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## VITA

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