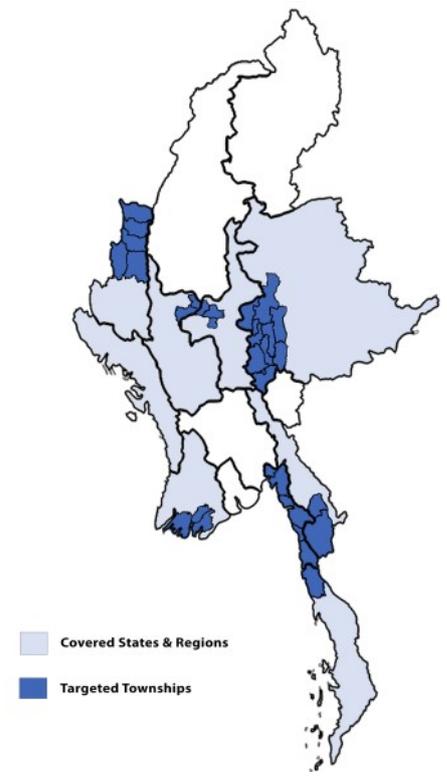




Young women attend a peacebuilding workshop in Mon State © IOM 2015/Valeria Turrisi

AREAS OF WORK



OVERVIEW

Migration has increasingly become a widespread livelihood strategy for people in Myanmar. Today, 25% of Myanmar’s population is a migrant whether they migrate internally and internationally. The underlying drivers for movement are complex and interrelated – including unstable and physically demanding rural livelihoods, lack of stable and viable employment opportunities, chronic poverty and indebtedness, emergence of industrial zones and new industries, unpredictable weather patterns, conflicts in some parts of the country and a desire to support the education of siblings or to pursue personal ambitions.

While the social, economic and environmental drivers of migration in Myanmar vary widely, Myanmar migrants share at least one goal: to improve their lives. In search for better lives for themselves and their families, labour migration is the most commonly used form of mobility. IOM Myanmar’s Labour Mobility and Human Development programme’s overall objective is to help labour migrants and their families experience the economic and social benefits of migration and address the unintended or negative consequences of migration. Reflecting the reality that migration for many people is a necessity rather than a choice, we also support diversifying livelihood choices in communities of origin, to make migration beneficial for those who leave *and* those who stay behind.

The Labour Mobility and Human Development Programme works closely with government and non-government partners at local, national and international levels to foster synergies between labour migration and development, and to support safe, informed and gainful labour migration for migrants, their families, communities, and for Myanmar as a whole.



Group work at a safe migration training in Mawlamyine, Mon State © IOM 2014

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Tailors at work in Thaton, Mon State © IOM 2016

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

IOM Myanmar's Labour Mobility and Human Development (LMHD) Programme supports the Government of the Union of Myanmar to coordinate, develop and implement policies which capitalise on mobility and create more effective development and poverty reduction interventions. These include the effort to mainstream migration into Myanmar's national development policies and the National Plan of Action for the management of international labour migration – an inter-ministerial effort led by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population. The Programme also facilitates whole-of-society discussions on labour migration and development at the state/region level, and supports initiatives that increase the developmental role of migration in line with the diverse local realities.

RESEARCH

IOM Myanmar's LMHD-related research activities aim to generate common, evidence-based understandings of the reality of migration dynamics for national and local stakeholders, allowing them to develop narratives, policies, strategies and support for more effective development and poverty reduction interventions. In order to increase its catalytic impact, these studies are often undertaken with strategic partnership involving the government, academic institutions and CSOs.

Recent research activities include a mixed-method study on labour migration patterns and impacts on rural livelihoods at the individual, household and community levels in four states and regions of Myanmar; a qualitative study exploring brokerage practices in international labour deployment; and studies examining the impact of migration on specific social groups such as the elderly and children.

SERVICE PROVISION

Skills development prior to migration enables migrants to become more employable and access better jobs. Migrants can also aim to upskill during migration, and/or use their acquired skills in their home communities upon return. Remittances-receiving families may need new skills with which they can start businesses using remittances as start-up capital and diversify their income. The LMHD Programme's skills development trainings provide aspirant migrants and migrant-sending households with practical skills for employment and self-employment through migration. Following the trainings, a job facilitation service assists graduates of skills development courses in finding employment through collaboration with employers. Service provision for migrants also includes supporting the Ministry of Labour Immigration and Population in establishing and running Migrant Resource Centres which provide official, reliable and useful information about international migration and offer counselling and referral to various services needed throughout the entire cycle of migration.

OUTREACH

Community outreach in rural communities provides aspirant migrants and their families with useful information and tools to frame migration within their overall livelihood strategies, consider various migration pathways, understand ways to manage the positive and negative consequences of migration and set clear migration plans and goals. IOM Myanmar's LMHD Programme strategically cooperates with local CSOs and influencers who are embedded in communities and can communicate in a way that is culturally appropriate and locally understood. Methods include face-to-face trainings, campaigns and theatre shows, IEC materials, media outreach and social media engagement – in line with the socio-economic, migration and development contexts of target audiences. In order to overcome financial barriers to migration for vulnerable rural households, IOM's community-based revolving funds channel funding to finance migration journeys through committees managed by villagers themselves.



A trainer demonstrates cooking skills at a hospitality training session in Shan State © IOM 2018