

Factors influencing people's international migration in conflict-affected regions: A case analysis of Rakhine State, Myanmar

Abstract

This study is aimed to fill a methodological gap between different research projects focusing on migration patterns and give a theoretical account of how economic and non-economic factors have influenced diverse communities' international migration from various regions of Rakhine State. The study surveyed 840 respondents and conducted interviews with 500 key informants across Rakhine State. The findings suggest that economic migration is the most salient type of migration. Poverty, usually directly stemming from a vicious circle of underproductivity in the farms, higher labour wages on the side of employers and lower labour wages on the side of employees in the agricultural sector, an absence of alternative income sources, and higher unemployment rate, has impelled different community members to decide to pursue international migration. Social and political migration is the second most salient type of migration; with 25% to 33% of the respondents in each sampled group reporting their experience of racial discrimination. A number of respondents also reported their common experience of discrimination by the government's ministerial departments during the private key informant interviews, although they were reluctant to give the same responses through surveys. Moreover, poor access to the government institutions including public services has also affected migration patterns; with 50% to 54% of the respondents in each sampled group articulating their poor or no access to public services such as healthcare, education, transportation, policing, and justice in their areas. A rampant corruption across many government institutions has also affected people's willingness to remain staying in their own regions to a certain extent; with 28% to 37% of the respondents in each sampled group claiming corruption to have impacted the time and/or cost of receiving identity or citizenship documents in Rakhine State. Conflict-induced migration is the third most salient type of migration. A prolonged presence of communities' security concerns stemming from the communal violence and lingering tensions since 2012, and escalating regional armed conflicts between state and non-state security forces since 2016, also has an impact on migration patterns in Rakhine State. The environmental fallout has imposed an indirect impact on migration through some economic factors such as temporary or long-term unemployment, business suspension, or indebtedness; with 46% to 56% of the respondents in each sampled group reporting their short-term or long-term unemployment, 22% to 27% of those reporting their short-term or long-term business failure, and 3% to 6% of those articulating their indebtedness after a particular natural disaster. Social networks also make a significant contribution to the continuation of people's international migration from Rakhine State; with 43% to 64% of the respondents in each sampled group having their family members and 36% to 54% of those having friends living abroad as migrants. However, legal migration institutions are rather weak, while illegal ones are desperately powerful in Rakhine State. Migrants are rarely able to access non-profit organizations providing them with counseling, social services, legal advice, and awareness on immigration laws in other countries.

Introduction

Rakhine State is located on the western coast of Myanmar, sharing its international border with Bangladesh. The total population of Rakhine State was around 3,188,807 persons of whom 2,098,807 persons were enumerated, and an estimated 1,090,000 persons were not counted, by the 2014 census [1]. For every 100 persons, 83 persons live in rural areas while 17 persons live in urban areas [1]. Subsistence farming, fishing, and aquaculture are the main sources of income for the vast majority of the population in Rakhine State. The poverty rate is 78%, almost double the national rate of 38%, which marks Rakhine as the second poorest state of the country [2]. The 2014 census also confirms the high unemployment rate in Rakhine at 10.4%, which is above three times the national average, excluding the entire Muslim population in the State from the calculation [3].

It was recorded in the 2014 census that there were 115,502 Rakhine living abroad. Major destinations for international migrants from Rakhine State are Thailand (74,370 migrants) and Malaysia (28,280 migrants), followed by China (7,833 migrants), Singapore (1,798 migrants), USA (714 migrants), Korea (362 migrants), India (345), Japan (121 migrants), and a few other countries (1,679 migrants) [1]. Since 2012, a growing number of Muslims have migrated to Malaysia and Bangladesh from central and northern Rakhine State. Moreover, an estimated 250,000 Muslims from Myanmar currently live in Saudi Arabia [4] and the vast majority of them are from Rakhine State. Irregular migration is believed to be more common than legal migration largely because it costs less. As Ravenstein (1885) and Lee (1966) suggest, migration is age selective and 'not a random sample of the population at origin' [5]. People aged between 18 and 35 years in Rakhine State are also most likely to migrate internationally. The international migration flow of men is four times higher than that for women and in 2014, 94,903 out of the 115,502 Rakhine recorded as living abroad were men [1].

Theoretically, economic, demographic, political, social, cultural and environmental factors in both sending and receiving countries lead the movement of human capital [6]. Major causes of international migration usually relate to variations in economic characteristics between source and destination countries, and political instability as well as demographic and environmental factors in countries of emigration [7]. People's inclination to pursue international migration is usually motivated by a mix of economic, family, education, and survival reasons, once they encounter conflict, insecurity, political violence and natural disasters in their own regions [4]. It is also often cited by many scholars and policy planners that 'chronic poverty, lack of development and employment opportunities, natural disasters, and communal violence' [3] have served as major drivers behind people's out-migration from Rakhine State. However, this citation is still a common assumption, as there still lacks empirically grounded research systematically focusing on migration patterns in Rakhine State. Despite a few research works embarking on migration studies in Rakhine State, they still lack a comprehensiveness; with some merely focusing on a few ethnic communities and others merely covering a few geographical areas within the State. Moreover, they fail to explain how several issues have affected people's international migration from theoretical perspectives, despite their general explanation of causal factors. This study is aimed to fill such a methodological gap between different research projects and give a theoretical account of how economic and non-economic factors have influenced migration patterns in conflict-prone Rakhine State.

Literature Review

Basically, there are two types of migration theory. One is economic theories of migration and the other is social theories of migration. Both types classically view migration in terms of push and pull factors. The push factors are often cited to be unemployment, poverty, political upheavals, and religious or ethnic conflicts, while the pull factors are often claimed to be jobs, security and increasingly the growing old age dependency ratios [8]. Economic theories include neoclassical economics, new economics of labour migration (NELM), dual labour market theory, and world-systems theory. Social theories comprise network theory and institutional theory. While neo-classical economics, dual labour market, new economics of labour migration, and world systems theories try to explain the initiation of migration, network and institutional theories attempt to explain the course of international migration flows over time [9].

The neoclassical economics posits that an individual is free to decide to migrate to any other region upon his personal experience of lower wage and poor employment opportunity in his own region. That is, individuals or 'rational actors' decide to migrate strategically weighing up the pros and cons of moving relative to staying, based on abundant information about the options [10]. The new economics of labour migration (NELM) postulates that a family or household is influential over an individual's decision to migrate. It argues that 'decision to migrate is not merely an individual decision, but is a collective decision of households or families where their aim is not only to increase income, but is also a risk management strategy in the context of market failures, in addition to failures in the labour market' [11]. The dual labour market theory propounds that people choose to migrate as a response to a structural labour demand in particular countries abundant in capital but scarce in low-skilled labour. It says that 'the demand for migrant workers is generated from structural needs of the economy, rather than by wage differentials or wishes of households or families' [12]. The world-systems theory advances a critical hypothesis that the unfair center-periphery (i.e. North-South) economic relations has contributed to people's international migration. It claims that economic stagnation and lagging living conditions in countries with a weaker economy resulting from its trade with countries with a more advanced economy [13] has led to people's pursuit of migration from the former countries to the latter ones.

Network theory posits that migrant networks defined as 'interpersonal ties linking kin, friends, and community members in their places of origin and destination' [14] facilitate the continuation of migration. 'Individuals who have social ties to prior migrants – through family, community, or institutional (e.g. the church) settings – are more likely to migrate themselves and migrate to the same destinations as those who had migrated before them.' [15] Institutional theory also adds the role of regional or global institutions in the list of networks reinforcing people's migration. It highlights a large number of institutions and organizations which are regionally or globally set up 'to capitalize on the imbalance between the employers of labour-receiving countries and potential migrants of labour-sending countries' [12].

Given that people's decisions to migrate vary across diverse economic, social, political, and even geographic backgrounds, neither of the aforementioned economic or social theories of migration can perfectly explain drivers behind people's migration. There are still sharp discrepancies even between economic theories of migration themselves. Neoclassical economics and new economics of labour migration are mutually exclusive in a sense that the former neglects a household's (family's) influence over its member's decision to migrate while the latter fails to take into account an individual's rational decision to migrate. As opposed to the former theory, the latter one considers not only the labour market but also conditions of other markets such as the capital market or unemployment insurance market as reasons to migrate [16]. Dual labour market theory and world-systems theory also do not take into account the role of such micro-level actors such as individuals and households influencing migration patterns. Instead, both theories merely focus on forces operating at an aggregated macro-level [16]. There is also a disparity even between these two theories holding the same tenet that international migration is explicable in terms of developed countries' demand for cheap foreign labour. The former stresses that this demand is in itself a cause for migration, while the later focuses more specifically on the displacements and dislocations caused by capitalist penetration to explain the driving force behind international migration [17].

Moreover, economic theories are also unable to explain social factors contributing to people's migration decisions. As formerly discussed, they fail to consider the role of migrant networks and institutions in promoting the continuation of people's migration. They also fail to assess the value of 'structural forces

majeures in the international political economy such as warfare, colonialism, conquest, occupation and labour recruitment as well as factors such as shared culture, language and geographical proximity' [18] which are critical to facilitating the initiation of people's migration. Moreover, they also neglect to regard other non-economic factors such as social tensions, political conflicts, and environmental disasters as factors contributing to people's decisions to migrate from developing states in the global south. As O'Malley claims, conflict and migration have been inextricably intertwined since Homo sapiens began to explore the limits of planet Earth [19]. When people perceive a higher level of threat, violence, or security concern than they can tolerate, they migrate [20] & [21]. Moreover, people also tend to migrate from developing countries where the adverse effects of global warming and climate change are most felt [22]. Obviously, many developing countries are heavily reliant on agriculture and production of primary goods; the two economic sectors easily susceptible to climate change and natural disasters [7]. Natural disasters are much likely to lead to increased out-migration when affected areas become economically and socially moribund in the aftermath of crises [23].

Compared to economic theories of migration, social theories of migration are believed to have been relatively more explanatory about migration patterns in developing countries. Neoclassical economics is particularly Eurocentric and pays no attention to sociological and cultural factors which directly affect migration in developing countries [24]. New economics of labour migration also excludes other major forms of international migration such as irregular migration by illegal migrants, forced migration by refugees or asylum seekers, and family migration by migrants' families [25]. Obviously, dual labour market theory fails to take into account push factors connected with demographic transformations in developing countries, despite its exclusive focus on pull factors of migration [26]. On the other hand, network and institutional theories reckon with the importance of social, political and demographic factors in facilitating the continuation of people's international migration.

The cumulative causation theory has developed against the backdrop of such a theoretical imperfection to create a ground where diverse economic and social theoretical approaches are reconciled. It complements network theory and incorporates feedback mechanisms at all macro, meso and micro levels to explain how migration movements are perpetuated, claiming that 'greater labour migration then works to further expand migrant networks and lower migration costs for future migrants' [17]. The theory argues against the neo-classical perspective that migration no longer occurs at a new equilibrium where wage rates are equalized [10], contending that migration is self-perpetuating because past migration experiences make migration a favourable strategic option for individuals, families and communities [27].

Nowadays, many contemporary migration scholars have put forward social theories with fairly powerful explanatory power in relation to migratory processes in developing countries. They have advanced researching how 'social, political, and environmental factors' have influenced the spatial and temporal dimensions of migratory processes in developing countries exclusively or in conjunction with 'economic factors.' Like many other developing countries, Myanmar has also experienced a mass migration of its residents to many other countries as 'the world's eighth largest source country for refugees in 2016' [28]. Rakhine State of Myanmar is the region most affected by persistently severe economic underdevelopment, communal and armed conflicts, environmental disasters, and a large outflow of regular, irregular, and forced migrants. However, there are still limited number of research studies empirically focusing on, and theoretically explaining, migration patterns in Rakhine State. Despite a few literatures touching upon causal factors to people's outmigration from Rakhine State, they fail to explain the situation with reference to all geographical areas and ethnic communities in Rakhine State. This study is aimed to fill such a methodological gap between different research projects and give a theoretical account of how economic and non-economic factors have influenced diverse communities' decisions to internationally migrate from various regions of Rakhine State. The case analysis is ultimately aimed to explain how economic and social factors have influenced people's international migration, which factors are more salient than others, and which theoretical assumptions have proved to be more relevant to understanding migration patterns in conflict-affected Rakhine State.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method approach consisting of both quantitative and qualitative research tools. The quantitative tool was a questionnaire used to collect perceptions of individuals in five most ethnically-diverse townships of Rakhine State. Respondent selection was made on the basis of respondents' ethnicity, age, personal or household migration experience, and potential personal or household migration experience. There are 840 respondents altogether; 170 returning migrants, 472 migrant's family members, 91 potential migrants, and 107 potential migrant's family members. The survey sample was designed to collect answers from different ethnic groups and to ensure statistically sound and unbiased responses from particular respondents across the sample.

Qualitative tools, in the form of key informant interviews, were used not only in five most ethnically-diverse townships but all other townships across Rakhine State. A total number of 500 key informants were interviewed based on a semi-structured interview guide. Unlike the sampling methodology used in the survey enumeration, key informant interview participants were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling. The key informants include influential community leaders, ward/village tract administrators, civil society organization leaders, NGO officials, immigration officers, businessmen, area police and Border Guard Police (BGP) – using a list of potential key informants of these respective groups.

Economic Migration

Migration has proved highly contingent upon the level of economic impoverishment in Rakhine State. Societal poverty, usually directly stemming from a vicious circle of underproductivity in the farms, higher labour wages on the side of employers and lower labour wages on the side of employees in the agricultural sector, an absence of alternative income sources, and higher unemployment rate, has impelled different community members to decide to pursue international migration. Basically, casual labourers, followed by agricultural and livestock farmers, are the group most affected by economic hardship. Agricultural and livestock farmers often own more hard economic assets, like farmland, than casual labourers. This situation has resulted in a smaller number of unemployed agricultural and livestock farmers than that of casual labourers.

Due to the government's rigid travel restrictions, Muslims across all regions of Rakhine State have been unable to go far beyond their own villages and are unable to access the extensive casual labourer job market of the more urban areas. Moreover, the deterioration in mutual trust between the different communities, especially between the Rakhine and Muslims, has rendered the Rakhine community exceptionally disinclined to hire Muslim labourers. Although it is sometimes apparent that Rakhine landowners in a few Rakhine villages have been hiring Muslim labourers where Rakhine labourers are scarce and Muslim labourers are abundant, this hiring of Muslim labourers is usually only done by a handful of influential Rakhine Village Tract Administrators (VTAs), Heads of Hundred Households (HHHs), and elders, as well as some businessmen [29]. This habit of hiring Muslim labourers, however, is never practiced by ordinary Rakhine villagers who perceive relations with Muslims during this critical period to be incredibly risky.

Against the backdrop of the acute shortage of Muslim labourers, Rakhine business owners and agricultural farmers have come to rely on Rakhine labourers more heavily since 2012. However, the scarcity of labourers, combined with the high demand, has cost Rakhine business owners and farmers in the form of comparatively much higher labour wages. These higher wages, coupled with the chronic underproductivity, mean that Rakhine business owners and farmers cannot afford to hire the number of labourers needed. On the other hand, Muslims have proved absolutely self-sufficient or even excessive in the labour force owing to their smaller amount of business and agricultural land and larger number of per-household family members. Despite their labour abundance, Muslims have not gained the appropriate amount of economic surplus because they have, one, not succeeded in normalizing positive relations with the Rakhine and, two, are forced by the rigid travel restrictions to work only in their home areas/villages. The combination of these economic stresses, including among them underproductivity, increased labour wages, underemployment, and a deprivation of access to alternative income sources, has

prompted higher unemployment in all communities – not just Rakhine and Muslims communities – in all townships of Rakhine State. Such a gradually higher unemployment rate has pressured different community members, especially young people, into deciding to migrate regularly or irregularly to other countries where they assume suitable employment can be found.

People have also experienced a high financial instability in addition to a high unemployment. Most people do not earn enough income to cover basic household expenditures in healthcare, education, and other micro-investments, thanks not only to an unemployment, but also to an increase in regional living expenses. 18% to 32% of the respondents in each sampled group have earned only under 13,000 MMK, and around 47% to 60% of those have earned only between 13,000 MMK and 50,000 MMK per week (See Table 1). Moreover, around two-thirds (68% to 84%) of the respondents in each sampled group have no savings at all, while around half the total population (48% to 59%) of those have been indebted at different levels (See Table 2 and 3).

Table 1 - Weekly household earnings

Type of Respondent	On average, how much does your household earn per week?											
	< 13,000 MMK		13,000 MMK - 50,000 MMK		50,000 MMK - 100,000 MMK		> 100,000 MMK		No income		Do not know	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	41	24.12	92	54.12	21	12.35	7	4.12	2	1.18	7	4.12
Migrant's family member (n=472)	149	31.57	224	47.46	47	9.96	18	3.81	10	2.12	24	5.08
Potential migrant (n=91)	16	17.58	55	60.44	9	9.89	8	8.79	3	0	91	3.3
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	29	27.1	52	48.6	11	10.28	8	7.48	1	0.93	6	5.61

Table 2 - Level of household savings

Type of Respondent	How would you assess your level of savings?									
	High		Normal		Not high		I have no savings		Prefer not to answer	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	0	0	30	17.65	22	12.94	115	67.65	3	1.76
Migrant's family member (n=472)	2	0.42	45	9.53	33	6.99	388	82.2	4	0.85
Potential migrant (n=91)	0	0	7	7.69	7	7.69	76	83.52	1	1.1
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	0	0	11	10.28	13	12.15	82	76.64	1	0.93

Table 3 - Level of household indebtedness

Type of	What is your level of indebtedness?
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Respondent	Very high		High		Somewhat high		Not high		I have no debt		Prefer not to answer	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	10	5.88	19	11.18	29	17.06	24	14.12	85	50	3	1.76
Migrant's family member (n=472)	32	6.78	65	13.77	106	22.46	75	15.89	186	39.41	8	1.69
Potential migrant (n=91)	13	14.29	14	15.38	16	17.58	11	12.08	36	39.56	1	1.1
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	9	8.41	17	15.89	21	19.63	16	14.96	43	40.19	1	0.93

However, the finding suggests that not everyone highly indebted has chosen to migrate. For example, not all agricultural and livestock farmers who are being indebted have not chosen to pursue out-migration because they have owned farmlands where they are still able to invest a certain amount of certain amount of financial and labour resources to be able to reap a minimal amount of benefits from their investments. This situation is also compounded by the fact that agricultural and livestock farmers have difficulty gathering enough money to cover migration expenses. Even when they are able to pawn or sell their agricultural lands for financial capital, it has been difficult for them to find buyers who are currently unusually scarce due to the region-wide economic decline. Although there may be a few who are financially rich, they have been reluctant to invest in agricultural lands due to the lack in labour supply and increase in labour wages. Given this context, a large number of agricultural and livestock farmers who are not in the position to migrate are stuck in traditional farming businesses with minimal profits.

On the other hand, people also tend to pursue international migration even when they prove to be enough financially capable to sustain their livelihoods. A noticeably large number of shop owners, traders, service providers, and business owners have also chosen to international migrate (See Table 4), although they are comparatively much more financially resilient than other groups such as casual labourers, agricultural and livestock farmers, and dependents. It means that people choose to migrate internationally not only to tackle long-term unemployment and increase income, as suggested by neoclassical economics, but also to strategically diversify risks of their households' economic wellbeing, as suggested by new economics of labour migration. Moreover, more than two-thirds of migrants from Rakhine State are in Thailand (64.4%) and Malaysia (24.5%), and only a tiny minority of those are in Singapore (1.6%), China (6.8%), Japan (0.1%), Korea (0.3%), India (0.3%), USA (0.6%), and other a few countries (1.5%) [1]. By this, people's out-migration from Myanmar in general and Rakhine State in particular is fairly explainable by dual labour market theory which posits that international migration is primarily driven by labour requirements in the secondary sector of the economy in industrialized countries. However, it is not satisfactorily explainable by world systems theory, as the theory focuses too much on the center-periphery (North-South) analysis when discussing the demand for migrant workers generated from structural needs of the global economy. Migrants' major destinations such as Thailand and Malaysia are still newly industrialized countries and are not still enough powerful to take on capitalist penetration into other developing countries.

Table 4 - Type of individual's profession or source of income

Type of Respondent	What is your profession (or main source of income)?											
	Agricultural & livestock farmer		Casual labour		Civil servant/ Private employee/ NGO staff		Dependent		Service provider/ Business owner		Shop owner/ Trader	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%

Returning migrant (n=170)	36	21.16	46	27.06	8	4.71	28	16.47	22	12.9	30	17.65
Migrant's family member (n=472)	83	17.59	111	23.52	41	8.69	98	20.76	38	8.05	101	21.4
Potential migrant (n=91)	7	7.69	27	29.67	11	12.1	12	13.19	18	19.8	16	17.58
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	13	12.14	32	29.91	9	8.41	23	21.5	13	12.2	17	15.89

Social and Political Migration

Social and political stresses preceded by economic stresses have served as the second most outstanding contributor to international migration in Rakhine State. Despite over half the total population of those in each group of respondents reporting a common experience of no racial discrimination, there is still a significant number (25% to 33% of the respondents in each sampled group) who articulated discriminatory experiences of this kind (See Table 5). Inter-communal discrimination is strongly believed to have occurred between different communities across Rakhine State. Disaggregated by ethnicity, it can clearly be seen that Muslims (both Kaman Muslims and non-Kaman Muslims who self-identify as 'Rohingya') form the group most affected by inter-communal racial discrimination. In addition to Muslims, other ethnic groups such as Chin, Khami, Mro, Daingnet, Thet, Maramagyi, Bamar, and Hindu also reported their experience of racial and religious discrimination. There is a trend among ethnic minorities (especially youths) who are socially marginalised and discriminated against by the two dominant social groups, Rakhine and Muslims. They have already migrated or planned to migrate to other countries as a result of their resentment in the face of social exclusion in their home regions.

Table 5 - Frequency of individual's experience of racial discrimination

Type of Respondent	How often do you experience racial discrimination in your township?											
	All the time		Most of the time		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Don't know	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	11	6.47	12	7.06	23	13.53	9	5.29	108	63.53	7	4.12
Migrant's family member (n=472)	27	5.72	33	6.99	57	12.08	18	3.81	328	69.49	9	1.91
Potential migrant (n=91)	9	9.89	7	7.69	14	15.38	6	6.59	54	59.34	1	1.1
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	5	4.67	11	10.28	16	14.95	4	3.74	68	63.55	3	2.8

Despite not being as statistically significant as intercommunal racial discrimination, the impact of discrimination by the government's ministerial departments on people's decision to migrate has also proved to be fairly considerable. Despite their reluctance to answer through surveys, a number of respondents candidly reported their common experience of discrimination by the government's ministerial departments during the private key informant interviews. As in the case of racial discrimination, Muslims have formed the largest group of people being discriminated against by the government's ministerial departments. Even the Rakhine, despite their dominant role in most socio-economic and political matters, have also reported their experience of discrimination by the

government's ministerial departments. When observing further, through some qualitative interviews, why they perceive such discrimination, a number of Rakhine highlighted that all senior officials are Bamar who have dominated the government's ministerial departments in Rakhine State, and that such a Bamar-dominant environment has served to humiliate and discriminate against not only junior Rakhine civil servants, but also the Rakhine people overall through long-standing abuse of their official mandates. Compared to the Rakhine and Muslim communities, the ethnic minorities such as Chin, Khami, Mro, Daingnet, Thet, Maramagyi, Bamar, and Hindu have faced the discrimination by the government's ministerial departments very occasionally, and therefore reported this issue less, as they seldom directly deal with these departments in their regions.

In addition to inter-communal and government officials' discrimination, poor access to the government institutions including public services has also affected migration patterns. Neither roads nor electricity from the grid have historically been extensive in Rakhine State, thereby limiting the State's economic opportunity [30]. 'The inability to access basic services and low levels of socioeconomic development afflict both Rakhine and Muslim populations' [3]. 50% to 54% of the respondents in each sampled group reported their poor or no access to public services such as healthcare, education, transportation, policing, and justice in their areas (See Table 6). 'Public transportation', followed by 'justice,' is the most inaccessible public service, while 'healthcare' and 'public education' have been assumed by the vast majority of interviewees to be the most accessible services in their regions. About the three-fourths of Muslim population in central Rakhine State have not utilized land routes since the 2012 communal violence due to their perceived fear of any potential Rakhine-generated disturbance or hostility that they might experience overland. Instead, they have used only water routes, whenever they travel from one place to another throughout the region. Only a handful of influential Muslims (e.g. religious leaders) have necessarily chosen land routes when they need to travel distant lengths for training or medical reasons and with the governmental authorities' permission. Where the Muslim population is disproportionate to other ethnic groups and the government has imposed rigid travel restrictions on the Muslim community since the 2012 communal violence, Muslims have lost the privilege to be able to leave their regions and thus are unable to freely travel within the country. As a result, the government, as well as other private companies, have proven to be reluctant to invest in infrastructure projects, especially in public transportation, as they realize that they would have terribly low returns on their investments. This situation of fewer investments in infrastructure projects has led to a poor public transportation environment in the region. Concurrently, the government has also banned Muslims from sea travel for not only migration, but also fishing purposes, unless they have received National Verification Cards (NVCs). Since only a few Muslims have held NVCs in the midst of serious threats by their own community members, the number of people who could use water routes is supposed to be miniscule in relation to the aggregate Muslim population in the region.

Table 6 - Individual's assessment of the quality of the public services

Type of Respondent	How would you rate the quality of the public services in your area?											
	Very good		Good		Poor		Very poor		No public services accessible		Do not know	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	15	8.82	58	34.12	75	44.12	9	5.29	7	4.12	6	3.53
Migrant's family member (n=472)	35	7.42	173	36.65	202	42.79	23	4.87	22	4.66	17	3.6
Potential migrant (n=91)	8	8.79	33	36.26	38	41.79	5	5.49	6	6.59	1	1.1
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	8	7.48	40	37.38	43	40.14	6	5.61	5	4.67	5	4.67

Policing has become gradually less accessible to a large number of local people across many areas in central and northern Rakhine States. For years, the government has deployed countless security forces such as area police, BGP, and some military troops in Maungdaw, which borders Bangladesh and where perennial and recurrent conflicts exist. Since the 2012 communal violence, the government has also deployed a fairly large number of security forces (i.e. area police) in all areas of the State where the Muslim population is nearly proportionate to the Rakhine population, probably assuming that a society with an equal proportion of population between the Rakhine and Muslims is more likely to face intercommunal conflicts. In contrast, there are comparatively lower numbers of security forces in places where either of the two communities is much larger than that of another because the government has assumed that an unequal population proportion between the Rakhine and Muslims is less likely to provoke inter-communal conflicts and has thus deployed fewer security forces in these areas. Despite the lower likelihood of inter-communal conflicts, other security concerns have fomented complaints about the inaccessibility of police. Since early 2019, the Arakan Army (AA) has reportedly threatened, abducted, or killed police officers, law officers, immigration officers, GAD officers, and political party members in Rakhine State. According to Rakhine community leaders, the government officials' severe corrupt practices have amounted to a wide public nuisance in Rakhine State, and when reinforced by the Rakhine community's sense of ethnonationalism, has led to the community's self-endorsement of executing the government's officials through the assistance, or even in the name, of the AA. With their perceived threat by the AA or its supporters, the government officials have been reluctant to perform their duties in their assigned areas of Rakhine State. While police are becoming less active in their assigned areas, the amount of crime has increased in Rakhine State. Theft, followed by burglary, is the most reported issue among locals across many areas in central and northern Rakhine State. As police do not dare to freely travel around their assigned areas, criminals have been more and more confident to commit crimes in the past two years.

Following poor access to policing, justice has also become less accessible to local communities in many areas across the State. The deteriorating capacity of law enforcement institutions, such as area police and Border Guard Police (BGP), has seriously affected the regional justice system. When the police themselves cannot identify and arrest law breakers or criminals and submit them to the appropriate courts, then the courts have failed to employ their jurisdiction against everyone breaching the law. This situation has eroded people's sense of safety in their own regions and discouraged their confidence in the rule of law. A plethora of respondents across the study reported their reluctance to believe in the capability of the legal institutions of their regions. Regardless of ethnicity size in a particular township, people have internalized a lower level of trust in the regional legal institutions and this situation, in turn, has led to their deeper security concerns. A large number of different community members reported a general lack of trust in the regional law courts. They supposed the court's jurisdiction was weakening due to law enforcement officials' (especially, police's) failure to report important criminal cases and submit criminals to the courts for further legal proceedings.

A large crowd of Muslims have also left their own areas illegally, given that they have become extremely reluctant to trust 'the institutional settings and the level of democracy in the home country' [31]. Muslims have tended to decide, or encourage their family members, to migrate once they persistently fail to access fundamental democratic rights such as the rights to citizenship, freedom of movement, and political participation. When scrutinising the availability of citizenship documents to people of various ethnic groups across the sample, around one-fourths (19% to 31%) of the respondents in each sampled group were found to have been holding White Cards or no identity documents at all (See Table 7). Muslims form the only significant group of people who have not received any citizenship documents for several decades. Despite their possession of the White Cards (TRCs), which were issued by the former military regime around the 1990s and which referred to them as temporary residents in Rakhine State, they can no longer use these documents as they were cancelled by the former government in February 2015 and replaced with National Verification Cards (NVCs) by the incumbent government in June of that same year. Assuming that the conferment of the NVCs is a dishonest governmental political campaign that would delay the citizenship verification process, a large segment of the Muslim population in Rakhine State has refused to surrender White Cards and receive NVCs. Although some Muslims have received Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (Pink Cards) [32], the population with these documents is diminutive in relation to the aggregate Muslim population in Rakhine State. Such a chronic lack of citizenship has

rendered Muslims gradually less confident in living in their regions as well as in Myanmar, as they have perceived that other ethnic communities, including the government itself, have treated them as stateless or second-class citizens and humiliated them through racial discrimination and discrimination against them in governmental institutions. Citizenship usually serves as a form of membership in a political and geographic community and translates to legal status, rights, political and other forms of participation in society, and a sense of belonging [33]. Due to lacking citizenship guaranteeing their legal status, rights, and political and other forms of participation in society, a number of people have lost a sense of belonging to where they were born and have been living for many years. In Rakhine State, a number of Muslims (especially non-Kaman Muslims whose indigenous status has been denied outright by the people, including the government) have tended to migrate irregularly in order to search for a better society that would recognise their dignity and respect their rights.

Table 7 - Type of identity document in individual's possession

Type of Respondent	Which identity document do you have?											
	Citizenship Scrutiny Card (Pink Card)		Associate Citizenship Scrutiny Card		Naturalised Citizenship Scrutiny Card		NRC (3-fold card)		White Card (TRC) (Some with NVC)		None	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	132	77.65	0	0	2	1.18	3	1.76	21	12.35	12	7.06
Migrant's family member (n=472)	357	75.64	1	0.21	3	0.64	12	2.54	57	12.03	42	8.9
Potential migrant (n=91)	60	65.93	1	1.1	1	1.1	1	1.1	15	16.48	13	14.3
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	79	73.83	0	0	0	0	1	0.93	12	11.21	15	14

A rampant corruption across many government institutions has also affected people's willingness to remain staying in their own regions to a certain extent. Corruption, from being forced to pay a bribe to receive a government service to sexual extortion directly affects individuals' final decisions to migrate because they are fed up with the system that treats them unfairly [34]. A number of key informants from diverse ethnic communities in Rakhine State widely reported that bribes, often labelled 'tea expenses' (*La Phat Yee Bo*) connoting a minimal amount of money informally charged for services at the government ministerial offices, have been demanded from the local population by civil servants from gatekeepers, through clerks, to junior and senior officials in the government ministerial departments. The larger the case they need to deal with, the more they have charged. For many, engaging in bribery is not optional since the related government officials usually put off fulfilling their duties without extra compensation. For example, corruption serves a key driver of why it took a long time for some people to receive their identity documents while others obtained them within a comparatively short time-frame. 28% to 37% of the respondents in each sampled group believed that corruption had impacted the time and/or cost of receiving identity or citizenship documents in Rakhine State (See Table 8). Compared to other ethnic communities, the Muslim community was found to be more reluctant to speak out against the bribery issues they face, as they have historically been concerned about the anti-Muslim governmental oppression due to any open criticism against the officials' misconduct and corruption. The Rakhine, who are not only considered to be full citizens, have never been concerned about facing a backlash to reporting official misconduct, while the Muslim community in Rakhine State, whose citizenship status is uncertain, have experienced this disquiet.

Table 8 - Individual's assessment of the impact of corruption

Type of Respondent	Do you believe that corruption impacted the time and cost of getting an identity document?							
	Time only		Cost only		Both		Neither	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	16	9.41	25	14.71	16	9.41	113	66.5
Migrant's family member (n=472)	46	9.75	43	9.11	43	9.11	340	72
Potential migrant (n=91)	6	6.59	11	12.09	16	17.6	58	63.7
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	10	9.35	13	12.15	17	15.9	67	62.6

Consequently, a number of people across many regions in the State have become accustomed to the corrupt culture in these regional government institutions. However, this chronic institutional corruption has undermined the image of the government institutions and provoked a lack of trust in these institutions over decades. Moreover, such institutional corruption has gradually rendered the Muslim population less confident in relying on government institutions even for their basic human rights, which have unnecessarily cost them extra. Finally, this tradition of regional corruption has resulted in deep concerns from some Muslims about whether their differing ethnicity and religion, when compared to other indigenous locals, would prompt government officials to demand bribes. This fear about regional corruption is also likely to fuel some (but not a large segment of) Muslims' decisions to migrate to other countries, where they assume they might have access to their fundamental human rights without any accompanying unnecessary cost.

Conflict-induced Migration

War and conflict also seriously affect migration patterns in Rakhine State. As O'Malley suggests, wars and conflicts stem from religious differences and clashing ideologies between warlords, governments and their own people, authoritarian rulers clinging to power and the oppressed, ethnic groups settling historical scores, and the majority rulers and minorities within nation states demanding self-determination [19]. 'Myanmar has the longest armed conflicts based on religion, identity, power, and resource sharing between the central government and many ethnic armed groups resulting in thousands of internally displaced persons and irregular migration to neighboring countries' [35]. Rakhine State is not also exempt from such a protracted conflict situation. From the communal violence of 2012 to today's lingering tensions, different communities have experienced a rise in acute security concerns in Rakhine State. Such a prolonged presence of communities' security concerns has an impact on migration patterns in Rakhine State since the communal violence in 2012. The impact has been more remarkable along with escalating regional armed conflicts between the Tatmadaw and Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), and between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army (AA) in the past few years. Cohesion in the sending country is also an important determinant of migration, as 'social unrest which is a characteristic of little cohesion in a society' [9] has also led to the flight of Muslims from their regions in Rakhine State to Bangladesh as forced migrants.

People's sense of safety also varies with the extent to which the regional security forces are accessible to them and with their levels of trust in particular types of security institutions. Despite the permanent deployment of area police stations, the presence of police forces alone cannot reassure the public that people living in their regions are safe and secure, as the public has lost its trust in the capacity of the police forces for a long time. Further, local people have come to realize that the police have never successfully managed conflicts in their regions and that, in contrast, military intervention could succeed where the area police had failed. As a result, more people living closer to military bases than those staying further away mention that they feel more or less safe. From 2012 up until 2015, the Tatmadaw was

viewed positively by a large quantity of Rakhine community leaders and their fellow Rakhine locals for its ability to facilitate and build conflict prevention mechanisms between different community leaders. The Tatmadaw intervened in conflict-prone areas, prevented communal conflicts, and orchestrated a successful conflict prevention mechanism. Their efforts in conflict prevention involved gathering authorities of diverse communities, including TAs and police, to brainstorm ways of preventing potential communal tensions.

Despite its preeminence in conflict prevention and resolution in the few years leading up to 2015, the Tatmadaw's role in managing inter-communal conflicts has progressively declined in recent years due in part to a reduction of inter-communal conflicts and the onset of ethnic armed conflicts in Rakhine State. Starting at the end of 2017, the Tatmadaw's security focus has shifted from communal conflicts to ethnic conflicts; the number of violent conflicts has gradually been reduced and replaced with ongoing ethnic armed conflicts. Such a Tatmadaw's initiation of militarization of Rakhine State is followed by a severe decline in the Rakhine community's reliance on the Tatmadaw. At the same time, members of different communities including the Rakhine community widely appear to feel and perceive that the outburst of ongoing communal conflicts is intentionally instigated by the state army in order to help gain a stronghold in Rakhine State. Then, communities (mainly Rakhine) hold a sense of resentment against the Tatmadaw for waging a series of offensive warfare against the commonly-supported Arakan Army (AA) and with these armed conflicts come the deaths of innocent Rakhine locals.

As a result of the intercommunal violence in 2012, a large number of Rakhine and Muslims have sought to pursue international migration, while approximately 132,744 Muslims have already been internally displaced [36]. Fierce armed conflicts between the Tatmadaw and the ARSA have forced more than 725,000 Muslims to flee their own areas and live in several refugee camps in Bangladesh since October 2016 [37]. Similarly, 57,803 persons of whom the vast majority are Rakhine have been internally displaced by the ongoing conflicts between the AA and the Tatmadaw since January 2019 [36], while a large number of Rakhine have become far more inclined than before to pursue both internal and international migration.

Disaster-induced Migration

The presence of seasonal disaster risks is acute everywhere in Rakhine State. People have had to face the dangers of storm, flooding, soil erosion, and river bank erosion annually. To investigate how natural disasters used to affect people's livelihoods, they were asked how each of the most recent and disastrous cyclones such as Giri (2010), Komen (2015) and Mora (2017) affected their livelihood situations. 46% to 56% of the respondents in each sampled group reported their short-term or long-term unemployment, while 22% to 27% of those reported their short-term or long-term business failure, and 3% to 6% of those articulated their indebtedness after a particular natural disaster (See Table 9). However, no one articulated their willingness to migrate merely due to disaster risks.

Table 9 - Individual's assessment of the impact of natural disaster on livelihood situation

Type of Respondent	How does a natural disaster usually affect your livelihood situation?											
	Unemployed for a short time		Unemployed for a long time		Unable to continue my business for a short time		Unable to continue my business for a long time		Indebted		Not engaging in any business activity (Dependent)	
Returning migrant (n=170)	75	44.12	13	7.65	6	3.53	36	21.18	9	5.29	31	18.24
Migrant's family member (n=472)	208	44.07	46	9.75	14	2.97	89	18.86	29	6.14	86	18.22

Potential migrant (n=91)	39	42.86	12	13.19	3	3.3	20	21.98	3	3.3	14	15.38
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	39	36.45	10	9.35	3	2.8	26	24.3	6	5.61	23	21.5

Despite its individually weak disaster response, the government has been enough active to initiate disaster preparedness programmes across affected regions in the State, at least in coordination with international organizations. The interviewees mentioned that the government has undertaken some awareness training regarding how to prepare to mitigate potential disaster risks through accepting technical support from INGOs. As disasters come only in the monsoon season and last for four months at most, people living across all regions in the State have been able to adapt to such seasonal, but short-term, natural disaster risks for centuries. Therefore, the presence of these environmental risks was found to have not directly affected people's migration patterns, although there are similarly drastic disaster risks across nearly all regions in the State. Such an environmental fallout, however, has imposed an indirect impact on migration through some economic factors such as temporary or long-term unemployment, business suspension, or indebtedness.

Network Migration

Social networks also make a significant contributor to the continuation of people's international migration. Rakhine situation is also more or less consistent with a country-wide trend that a two-thirds of potential migrants have vested trust in the role of social networks claiming family members and friends to be the most reliable source of information about migration [38]. A large number of households have relied not only on remittances transferred but also 'interpersonal linkages' [9] provided by their family members staying in other countries as migrants. Moreover, regular remittances often serve as a powerful incentive for individuals to join their previously migrated family members and earn more money to send home as remittances. In addition to family members, close friends or acquaintances staying abroad as migrants also play a critical role in forming personal ties with individuals and providing them with necessary information about job opportunities and wage statuses in their respective receiving countries. 43% to 64% of the respondents in each sampled group have their family members, while 36% to 54% of those have friends, who have already lived abroad as migrants (See Table 10 and 11).

Table 10 - Individual's connection with family member living abroad

Type of Respondent	Do you have family members who have already migrated and currently live abroad?					
	Yes		No		Do not know	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	73	42.94	96	56.47	1	0.59
Migrant's family member (n=472)	303	64.19	168	35.59	1	0.21
Potential migrant (n=91)	44	48.35	45	49.45	2	2.20
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	58	54.21	47	43.93	2	1.87

Table 11 - Individual's connection with friend living abroad

Type of Respondent	Do you have friends who have already migrated and currently live abroad?					
	Yes		No		Do not know	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Returning migrant (n=170)	92	54.12	77	45.29	1	0.59

Migrant's family member (n=472)	175	37.08	294	62.29	3	0.64
Potential migrant (n=91)	42	46.15	49	53.85	0	0
Potential migrant's family member (n=107)	38	35.51	68	63.55	1	0.93

However, legal migration institutions are rather weak or even scarce, while illegal ones are desperately powerful in Rakhine State. Most respondents in in-depth interviews reported that not only Muslims but also Rakhine are inclined to migrate through complex networks of human smugglers, although a few on the Rakhine side migrate regularly through legal agents in Yangon. On the Muslim side, it is not easy at all for them to migrate regularly through formal agents, as the vast majority of them have not received any citizenship status in Myanmar, which means that they have not had national identity documents valid for international travel, such as a passport. In this context, their only channel for migration is to approach human smugglers who will send them to whichever country they wish to go. However, this channel has proved too costly for them to be reliant on their own financial capital for travel. Thus, they have taken out loans from Muslim relatives or friends in Yangon and even from Muslim migrants already working abroad, since a few months are required to prepare before travels.

Most Rakhine have also preferred irregular migration to regular migration as well, not because they face the same citizenship issues as the Muslim community, but because irregular migration has been far less costly than regular migration. Unlike Muslims, Rakhine have better access to human smugglers with lower service fees, thanks mostly to the obvious fact that smugglers do not need to smuggle Rakhine out of Rakhine State but only across the country border. Owing to such politically unequal favours between migrants in terms of citizenship status, irregular migration has cost Muslims double what it costs for Rakhine. As illegal migrants, their status always prevents their free movements necessary for the retention of suitable employment in destination countries. Further, migrants' income rates in receiving countries are reportedly far from stable, and employers' exploitation of labour migrants is also notorious in most Asian countries. This inflexibility of income rates has seriously affected migrants' ability to sustainably obtain adequate household income. However, they are rarely able to access any not-for-profit organizations which provide relief to them 'by means of counseling, social services, legal advice, awareness on immigration laws etc.' [12].

Conclusion

Migration for economic reasons is the most salient type of migration. The presence of chronic poverty resulting from agricultural underperformance, higher labour wages on the side of employers and lower labour wages on the side of employees in the agricultural sector, the absence of alternative income sources, and a rising unemployment rate have influenced decisions by the vast majority of migrants and migrants' households in Rakhine State.

Social and political migration is the second most salient type of migration. Chronic social and political stresses such as inter-communal racial discrimination, discrimination in the government's ministerial departments, a lack of efficient government institutions including public services and infrastructure, the denial of citizenship to particular social groups, and deep-rooted institutional corruption, have encouraged individuals from all communities – especially Muslims – to leave Rakhine State.

The conflict-induced migration is the third most salient type of migration. Security concerns stemming communal violence and lingering tensions since 2012, and escalating regional armed conflicts between state and non-state armed groups since 2016 have affected migration decisions by a large number of people from the central and northern regions of Rakhine State.

Disaster-induced migration is the least salient type of migration. Disaster risks have forced some to move within the country for temporary shelter from cyclones or flooding. Such environmental disasters are seasonal and therefore only a temporary issue for residents. Given this context, communities have been

able to respond to these short-term environmental risks through efficient rehabilitation programmes and disaster preparedness plans in close cooperation with government and non-governmental organisations. However, the presence of disaster risks has implicitly affected the pattern of migration through some possible economic factors such as temporary or long-term unemployment, business suspension, and indebtedness.

Network migration is also significant in Rakhine State. A large number of households have heavily relied on 'interpersonal linkages' provided by their family members and friends staying in other countries as migrants. Family members and close friends or acquaintances staying abroad as migrants have played a critical role in forming personal ties with individuals and providing them with necessary information about job opportunities and wage statuses in their respective receiving countries. However, legal migration institutions are terribly weak, while illegal ones are desperately powerful in Rakhine State. Migrants are rarely able to access non-profit organizations providing them with counseling, social services, legal advice, and awareness on immigration laws in other countries.

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