

Intersectionality and Livelihoods of Conflict-Induced Displaced
Myanmar Women in Mae Sot, Thailand



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in International Development Studies
FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2022
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อำนาจทับซ้อนและการดำรงชีวิตของสตรีผู้พลัดถิ่นจากความขัดแย้งชาวเมียนมาร์ในอำเภอแม่สอด
ประเทศไทย



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาการพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ ไม่สังกัดภาควิชา/เทียบเท่า
คณะรัฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ปีการศึกษา 2565
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Thesis Title	Intersectionality and Livelihoods of Conflict-Induced Displaced Myanmar Women in Mae Sot, Thailand
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ชู เมียท ธวี : อำนาจทับซ้อนและการดำรงชีวิตของสตรีผู้พลัดถิ่นจากความขัดแย้งชาวเมียนมาร์ในอำเภอแม่สวด ประเทศไทย. (Intersectionality and Livelihoods of Conflict-Induced Displaced Myanmar Women in Mae Sot, Thailand) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : รศ. ดร.นฤมล ทับจุมพล

รายงานเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน (พ.ศ. 2565) เน้นวิกฤตการณ์พลัดถิ่นทั่วโลก เนื่องจากประชากร 24.5 ล้านคนได้รับผลกระทบจากความขัดแย้งภายในกลางปี พ.ศ. 2564 311 จากทุกๆ 100,000 คนทั่วโลกแสวงหาที่ลี้ภัยนอกประเทศผ่านทาง วัฏจักรการย้ายถิ่นจากเมียนมาร์มายังประเทศไทยมีประวัติที่พิเศษ โดยมีปัจจัยหลายอย่างมาตัดกันของการบังคับย้ายถิ่น และแนวโน้มใหม่จะเกิดขึ้นหลังวันที่ 1 กุมภาพันธ์ 2564: พบผู้พลัดเพียง 1,527 รายในศูนย์พักพิง 9 แห่ง ; 986,670 คนเข้าประจำการในฐานะแรงงานข้ามชาติในปี 2564 ; นับหมื่นที่ไม่ได้บันทึกไว้ บทบาทของวีรสตรีไร้เสียงของพม่าไม่อาจลืมได้ จากประเทศอนุรักษ์นิยมทางสังคมวัฒนธรรมที่ร่างรัฐธรรมนูญโดยสถาบันปรมาจารย์ ผู้หญิงมีส่วนร่วมในการปฏิวัติมากขึ้นทั้งในฐานะผู้มีบทบาทที่แข็งขันหรือเป็นกองหลัง ในขณะที่การต่อต้านด้วยอาวุธทวีความรุนแรงขึ้น - 44% ของแรงงานประจำในเมียนมาร์ในประเทศไทยเป็นผู้หญิง เมื่อตำแหน่งงานส่วนใหญ่ที่เปิดรับสำหรับผู้หญิงมักจะอยู่ในภาคส่วนที่ไม่เป็นทางการ เนื่องจากความขัดแย้งในเมียนมาร์ที่พัฒนาไปอย่างรวดเร็ว ในขณะที่เหตุการณ์ความไม่สงบที่ยืดเยื้อหรือเหตุการณ์ล่าสุดมักถูกมองจากเลนส์รักษาความปลอดภัยแบบดั้งเดิม ความละเอียดอ่อนของบทบาทของผู้หญิงในการตั้งถิ่นฐานข้ามพรมแดนและธรรมชาติที่เข้าใจยากของการแบ่งแยกในรัฐภาคีนอกอนุสัญญาฯ มักไม่ค่อยได้รับการพิจารณาจากมุมมองด้านความมั่นคงของมนุษย์

งานวิจัยนี้ให้มุมมองที่เชื่อมโยงกันในการศึกษาทางวิชาการเกี่ยวกับความมั่นคงของมนุษย์ในการดำรงชีวิตข้ามพรมแดนที่เกิดจากความขัดแย้ง ในขณะที่เดียวกันก็เน้นทักษะการปรับตัวของผู้หญิงที่ถูกมองว่าเป็นบุคคลและครัวเรือนในสถานการณ์การพลัดถิ่นในช่วงเวลาความขัดแย้งท่ามกลางธรรมชาติที่เข้าใจยากของการเลือกปฏิบัติในระดับต่างๆ โดยเน้นเรื่องความมั่นคงของมนุษย์ของสตรีชาวเมียนมาร์ในแม่สวด โดยตั้งคำถามว่าสิทธิมนุษยชนในประเทศต้นกำเนิดของเมียนมาร์และอคติต่ออัตลักษณ์ส่วนบุคคลที่ขาดความสมบูรณ์นั้นตัดกันอย่างไรกับการได้รับความคุ้มครองทางกฎหมายและสถานะทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมในประเทศเจ้าบ้าน ประเทศไทย ทวนการทำมาหากินที่บุคคลมีพอๆ กับหน่วยงานของมนุษย์ และวิธีที่ผู้ดำเนินการสร้างหลักประกันดังกล่าวในแง่ของความมั่นคงชุมชนได้รับการสำรวจผ่านข้อมูลเชิงบูรณาการจากผู้ปฏิบัติงานที่เชี่ยวชาญและผู้มีบทบาทในชุมชน ความช่วยเหลือจากอาเรียนสามารถช่วยสร้างความยืดหยุ่นให้กับประชากรดังกล่าวเพื่อบรรลุการดำรงชีวิตที่ยั่งยืน

สาขาวิชา	การพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ	ลายมือชื่อนิติ
	
ปีการศึกษา	2565	ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก

6584006124 : MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

KEYWORD:

Su Myat Thwe : Intersectionality and Livelihoods of Conflict-Induced Displaced Myanmar Women in Mae Sot, Thailand. Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. NARUEMON THABCHUMPON, Ph.D.

The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2022) highlighted the global displacement crisis as 24.5 million population impacted by conflict by mid-2021; 311 out of every 100,000 people worldwide seeking refuge outside their country of origin[1]. The cycle of migration to Thailand from Myanmar has a special history with many intersecting factors of forced migration and a new trend emerges following 1st February 2021: only 1,527 cases in 9 shelters[2]; 986,670 regularized as migrant workers in 2021[3]; tens of thousands of unrecorded. The role of Myanmar's unsung heroines cannot go forgotten. From a sociocultural conservative country with a constitution drafted by a patriarchal institution, women have increasingly involved in the revolution either as active actors or as a rearguard while armed resistance intensifies - 44% of Myanmar regularized workers in Thailand are women when most of the job openings for women tend to be in informal sectors[4]. Due to the fast-paced development of the conflict in Myanmar, while the prolonged civil unrest or the recent events are often viewed from a traditional security lens, the subtlety of women's role in the cross-border settlement and the elusive nature of intersectionality in non-convention party state are rarely approached from a human security perspective.

This research provides a gendered intersectionality perspective on academic studies of human security in conflict-induced cross-border livelihoods while, at the same time, accentuating the resilience of women in displacement situations during conflict times amidst the elusive nature of discrimination at different levels. Through focusing on the human security of Myanmar women in Mae Sot asking how the unfulfilled aspects of human rights in country-of-origin Myanmar and prejudice towards individual identities they hold onto intersect with getting legal protection and socioeconomic standing in the host country Thailand, which livelihood assets the individuals have and in what ways the actors are ensuring such have been explored through integrative inputs from expert practitioners and community actors to introduce how transdisciplinary approach to participatory humanitarian assistance can help build the resilience of such population to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

[1] UN DESA (2022). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 - July 2022. New York, USA: UN DESA. © UN DESA. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>

[2] TBC (2021, 2022). Refugee Camp Population: January 2021 vs Refugee Camp Population: December 2022. The Border Consortium.

[3] ILO. (2022). TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note: Myanmar (July to September 2022). Bangkok: International Labour Organization.

[4] Sakulsri, T. (2022). Challenges of Labor Migrants to Thailand: Issues of Bilateral Agreements for the Employment of Workers in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Journal of Population and Social Studies.

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Field of Study: International Development Studies
Academic Year: 2022

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Advisor's Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My utmost appreciation goes to my thesis advisor Associate Professor Dr. Naruemon Thabchumpon who took me under her wings not only as a student and a supervisee but also as a researcher at ARCM-CE and introduced me to transdisciplinary. Without her continued support, superb mentorship, detailed guidance, expertise in migration studies and patience with my stubbornness, completion of this thesis is unimaginable.

I would also like to express my gratitude to our program director Dr. Bhanubhatra Jittiang who brought me into the displacement and refugee research and enthusiastically supported all along, and Professor Dr. Javier Revilla Diez who patiently guided me through the complex nature of this thesis. Through my thesis committee and as part of Cologne's international research cluster, I got to meet with amazing academicians and various stakeholders for which I will always be grateful.

Being given a chance to work with P'Tuk, Jo and colleagues at Asylum Access Thailand who are so dedicated for urban refugees rights has been indeed the best learning and growing experience. And I am extremely grateful for being given a chance to work with Human Rights and Development Foundation without which interdisciplinary efforts would not have been fruitful. It was just a few weeks, but I could not thank

enough to P'Lily, Ko Sai, P'Mei, P'Yam, P'Aeh and San San for welcoming me with open arms and helping me through and through.

Given the complexity of this research, the completion of data collection, let alone the paper itself, would be hardly possible without being able to get immersed with the actors in the field. I am sincerely grateful for all the inputs and support that Arakan Workers Organization, MAP Foundation, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), Overseas Irrawaddy Association and Burma Academy have given. And more importantly, my sincere admiration and appreciation go to my research participants in Mae Sot for being most strong, amazing, capable, and kindhearted women as they are.

Last but not least, I am and will always be grateful for my parents' unconditional faith in everything that I do. I would not have been here without the support mechanism that we have with MAIDS-GRID program and CSDS, Clare, Kaimook, Aran, Fresh, Solomon and all friends in 2022 cohort, our struggling seniors, P'Pong and team as well as each and every one of our professors. And this thank you note cannot end without mentioning my research partner Simon and my friends APL, Minnie, Caroline, Thomas, MK, Stan, and everyone at Mae Sot and Bangkok for being nothing but genuinely supportive.

Su Myat Thwe



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

While talks on the unachieved indicators of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are ongoing despite considerable accomplishments recorded up to 2019, Human Development Report 2021-22 (UNDP) underscored these reversals in human development for almost every country causing “uncertain times, unsettled lives” are of not only by the destructive impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on global trade and cooperation, but also by the conflicts from failed diplomacy in different sides of the world causing humanitarian crises interlinking with both direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic itself and threats to different layers of human security.

(The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2022) highlighted that cost-of-living crisis felt around the world have led to millions more people living in extreme poverty and suffering from increased hunger compared to pre-pandemic levels, lives of close to 15 million people lost from straining global health systems and disrupted essential health services posing major threats to progress in fighting other deadly diseases, significant effects on learning and wellbeing of estimated 147 million children who missed more than half of in-person instruction over the past two years. The socioeconomic fallout has disproportionately affected women as they struggled for food security due to lost jobs, disadvantaged from limited mobility shouldering unpaid care work burdens, and suffered in silent from intensifying domestic violence.

1.1.1. Global Crisis of Conflict-Induced Displacement

Migration and human mobility are a complex historical phenomenon. While (IOM, World Migration Report 2022, 2021) reported the estimates of international migrants in the world as per 2020 statistics at 281 million and claimed this number reflecting only 3.6 per cent of the global population meant staying in home country is a norm despite the globalization. However, that changed over time with, as COVID-19 related immobility gradually lifted, great majority of people suffer from livelihoods peril in aftermaths of pandemic choosing for economic migration, those resettling to similar

geographic planes as undetected climate change effects escalated, and communities moved out of homes due to push factors as conflicts befell on them.

By mid-2021, the number of people forced to flee their countries due to war, conflict, persecution, human rights violations, and events seriously disturbing public order had grown to 24.5 million; which marked the highest absolute number on record with, 311 out of every 100,000 people worldwide are refugees outside their country of origin, 44 per cent rise from cross-border displacement data in 2015 (United Nations, 2022). This was hugely reflecting the worst refugee crisis in recent history more than 6 million people, the majority of whom are women and children, moving out of Ukraine as of 23 May 2022 records.

While the wars and conflicts imposed huge security threats to life and living in homelands; but cross-border migration routes were no different. According to the International Organization for Migration's Missing Migrants Project, the brutality of these paths caused deaths of 5,895 people fleeing their countries in 2021 alone, making it the deadliest year on record for migrants since 2017. Cross-border migration resulting from conflict-induced displacement has become a pressing global issue, with profound implications for the affected individuals, host countries, and regional stability.

While world's focus is on the shock waves sent by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, (ICG, 2023) also highlighted there are several other conflicts around the world creating similar political and economic ramifications if not as considered a proxy as the Europe war is. However, the Eurocentric takes focusing on first world's involvement in such conflicts have completely left a conflict as tragic as Ukraine, if not suffering more casualties. While eyes are on human mobility within Europe, the forgotten crisis of forced migration is alarming increasing for neighboring countries of conflict-stricken Myanmar.

1.1.2. Conflict in Myanmar: Renewed crisis of displacement

This paper focuses on the specific case of cross-border migration in Thailand, which has been significantly influenced by the renewed political and military crisis in Myanmar. The deteriorating political situation in Myanmar has led to an escalation of

violence, human rights abuses, and widespread insecurity, forcing many people to flee their homes and seek refuge across the border. The political and military crisis in Myanmar has had a significant impact on the neighboring country's migration dynamics.

This humanitarian crisis on conflict-induced displacement and livelihoods security is more evitable in the case of Myanmar and Thailand where the two countries share the border of 2,416 km (Burma, 2022) length starting from tripoint with Laos up to coast of Andaman Sea coast in the south. Such geographical proximity has facilitated the movement of displaced individuals seeking safety and stability. The crisis has led to a sharp increase in the number of Myanmar nationals crossing the border into Thailand, driven by the urgent need for protection and the search for a better future.

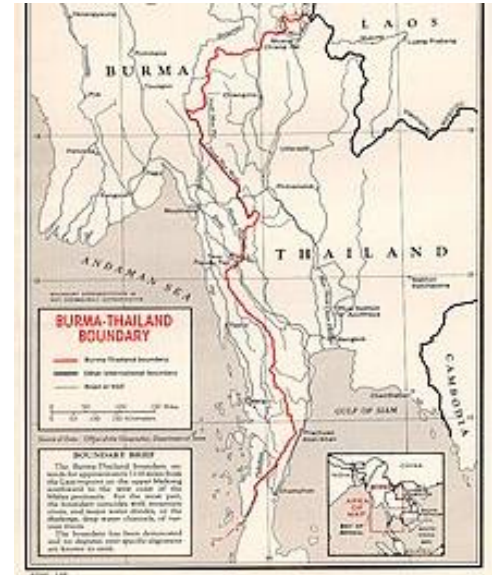


Figure 1. Map of Thailand-Myanmar border [WikiCommon]

The consequences of conflict-induced displacement are multifaceted and have far-reaching implications for the individuals and communities involved. Displaced individuals often face immense challenges, including limited access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, and adequate healthcare. They also confront legal and administrative hurdles due to their undocumented status, which further exacerbates their vulnerability and restricts their rights. Thailand has traditionally been a host country for refugees and migrants, with a history of accommodating displaced populations from neighboring countries. However, the renewed political and military crisis in Myanmar has placed significant strain on the country's resources and infrastructure. The sudden influx of displaced individuals has overwhelmed existing support systems, created urgent humanitarian needs and stretched the capacity of both the Thai government and humanitarian organizations to provide assistance.

By analyzing the specific context of cross-border migration in Thailand and the impact of the renewed crisis in Myanmar, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the complexities surrounding conflict-induced displacement. It seeks

to inform policy discussions and interventions that can effectively address the needs of displaced populations, protect their rights, and promote their integration and well-being within host communities. Ultimately, a comprehensive approach is necessary to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance, address the root causes of the conflict, and work towards sustainable peace and stability in both Myanmar and Thailand.

1.2. Problem Statement

1.2.1. Cross-border Migration from Myanmar to Thailand

The cycle of migration to Thailand from Myanmar is a very special case with many forced migration factors intersecting with regular, undocumented, and seasonal economic migration particularly since Myanmar struggled with ongoing civil unrest along the Thailand's neighboring ethnic areas for decades. The nine temporary shelters along Thai-Myanmar border as listed by The Border Consortium (2021) recorded 79,523 population in Ban Mai Nai, Soi Ban Mae Surin, Mae La Oon, Mae Ra Ma Luang, Mae La, Umpiem Mai, Nu Po, Ban Don Yang and Tham Hin at the end of January 2021 in addition to those in workforce registered or undocumented.

The political unrest in Myanmar unfolded following the declaration of state of emergency on 1st February 2021 by Tatmadaw (military of Myanmar) transferring all political powers to the Commander in Chief. Toppling of the civilian government and arresting of former cabinet members on grounds of alleged electoral fraud had led to resistance movement by the citizens which the armed oppressions followed. Intensifying armed oppressions on civilians and resuming attacks on ethnic areas under ceasefire agreement escalated into full-blown civil war across the country. This has pushed many people out of homes and resulted both internal and cross-border displacements.

While tens of thousands of Myanmar people fled the country for life and economic security, (Refugee Camp Population: December 2022) reported barely 1,527 cases increased from February 2021 to December 2022 for the refugee camps. This showed that the tracing on conflict-induced cross-border displacement from Myanmar to

Thailand is highly impossible. Those in search to gain some legal status, instead of going into the shelters, relied on the regularization program with amnesties granted periodically by the Thai government in the name of “Management of migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam for Thailand’s restoration.” It allowed those irregular migrants recruited by the employers under a recognized industry to be registered in accord with cabinet resolutions as 986,670 Myanmar people did during those rounds on 13 July 2021 and 28 September 2021 (ILO, 2022).

1.2.2. Unsung heroines: post-coup livelihoods of Myanmar migrant women

Talking about the displaced population and how they suffer from atrocities of the conflict, the important role of Myanmar women shall not be forgotten. While being a sociocultural conservative country where the 2008 constitution in force was drafted by patriarchal institution ‘Tatmadaw’, the revolution this time has shone light upon the role of females. In addition to having increasing number of female activists such as Esther Ze Naw Bamvo and Ei Thinzar Maung listed in TIME’s most influential 100 and increasing ratio of females in the cabinet of shadow civilian government National Unity Government (NUG), parts of the resistance are also organized and carried mainly by women such as female-dominated health and education workforce taking up largest ratio of the renowned civil disobedience movement (CDM) movement, or Federation of General Workers Myanmar spearheading the mass public protest and still leading labor strikes. The aspect of women is further highlighted either politically or economically, with men joining ethnic armed organizations or people’s defense forces to take on protector job for the oppressed civilians, when women take on the breadwinner status of the families without male figure to make income and provide, care children and elderly, manage socioeconomic sustainability of households, and to financially support those in resistance acts.

Even from the accounted regularized 1,556,408 Myanmar migrant workers as of September 2022 (ILO), 44% are women. Myanmar women as part of Thailand’s regular workforce already play a huge role in the infamous seafood processing industry as well as in the garment factories and seasonal agricultural labor. Even

though most jobs available for migrant women are in un-regularized industries such as domestic care and sex entertainment pushing them to stay without any legal protection or social welfare entitlements, Myanmar women in Thailand are still sustaining their economic standing to provide for families and comrades back home.

The silent outcry of these population amidst inapplicability of renowned ‘durable solutions’ is heartbreaking and yet how such marginalization happened at policy nexus is under addressed.

The disregarded second exile that Myanmar displaced women were forced to be in is an intersectionality of several discriminations as well as the lack of protection from both the home and host countries. But they are not weak at all despite them silently enduring the numerous abuses and many overlooking the fearless roles Myanmar women take on for the family, the community or the country, the threats to human security for these heroines shall no longer go unspoken.

1.3. Research Questions

This research is approached through intersectionality of marginalized identities in terms of the multifaceted layers of human security with the focus on identifying the vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods and the resilience-building.

Main research question is “What are the human security concerns for displaced Myanmar women migrant workers to build resilience in cross-border livelihoods?”

This question is further broken down into two sub-questions as follows: -

- a. How are the marginalized identities impacting political and economic security – in structural context?
- b. In what ways such intersectionality has created vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods and what are the adaptive responses through human agency?

By answering these questions, this intended transdisciplinary research integrates scientific knowledge of academics and applied experience of the practitioners to create holistic approach to understand how the actors help build the resilience to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

1.4. Objectives of research

The objectives conducting research on the issue are:

1. To assess multifaceted human security concerns amidst sustainable livelihoods efforts of Myanmar women in cross-border displacement as societal problem.
2. To explore the intersectionality of marginalized identities in the context of human security for bridging the gap between knowledge and practice.
3. To analyze the sustainable livelihood approaches in-use by the actors on ground helping to enhance resilience of the affected community.

With that, this paper aims to fill the academic gap in conflict-induced displacement nexus from lens of human security as intersectionality is applied through integrative research to propose possible countermeasures to achieve sustainable livelihood.

1.5. Key Arguments

The main argument is that the marginalization creates vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods in interconnecting aspects of human security – especially in political and economic securities – based on this case study of being a displaced woman from conflict-induced home country ‘Myanmar’ living as undocumented irregular migrant worker in foreign country ‘Thailand’.

It is explored through sub argument that, by using transdisciplinary approach with integrative inputs from expert practitioners and community actors, participatory humanitarian assistance can help build the resilience of such community to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

1.6. Significance of research

This research is to be served as intersectionality perspective on academic studies of human security in conflict-induced cross-border livelihoods while, at the same time, accentuating the resilience of women in displacement situation during conflict times amidst elusive nature of discrimination at structural level. Through focusing on human security of Myanmar women in Mae Sot, the explorative research asked how the unfulfilled aspects of human rights in country-of-origin Myanmar and prejudice in

host country Thailand towards individual identities they hold onto intersect with getting legal protection and socioeconomic standing in such a transit situation.

As the way forward, this paper can help participating organizations and other actors to identify the specific needs of the displaced population living in Mae Sot, in terms of both immediate and tertiary human security concerns endangering their livelihoods and formulate effective and efficient development programs targeted for resilience-building in a constrained status. This research paper, as scientifically carried out and peer reviewed, could serve as policy brief for the humanitarian assistance of irregular migrants in Thailand as well as guiding paper in intersectionality for future policy implementation initiatives under the national screening mechanism or that alike.

In summary, the significance of the study lies in its contribution to the field of international development studies, particularly in the context of conflict-induced displacement, as study aligns with the broader goals of reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). By identifying the specific individual needs and structural vulnerabilities of the displaced population, the study can contribute to the allocation of government spending and resources to sectors that benefit women and vulnerable groups. Not only that, shedding light on the interplay between Myanmar women's unfulfilled human rights, social prejudices, and their pursuit of legal protection and socioeconomic standing in Thailand also brings forth the financial burdens and recruitment costs they face, contributing to an understanding of the economic dimensions of migration and displacement. By examining the resilience of displaced women with multiple intersecting identities, it goes beyond just comparing the two opposite counterparts such as 'male' vs 'female' or 'citizens' vs 'immigrants' but brings out the unique experiences told by the individual themselves and the challenges each household face through the lens of caregiver. With that, the study helps inform policy and humanitarian interventions that promote the well-being and empowerment of individuals, households and even communities in Mae Sot with one or all of marginalized identities, and ultimately, foster more inclusive and effective approaches for irregular migrants in Thailand.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Neglected Population: Uncertain Times and Unsettled Lives

While people moving from places to places searching for fertile lands and better livelihood opportunities is what it may have shaped the ecology as a whole, the complex nature of migration in lack of direction where various forms of violence or exclusion often goes unrecorded. With the arrival of sustainable development goals (SDGs) (United Nations), livelihoods, gender equality, power relations, institutional structures, crimes, and justice have been mainstreamed into development studies together with the whole discourse of migration – especially where people are forced into the vulnerable status. Sovereign states are not only responsible for facilitation of orderly and safe migration through planned and well-managed policies under indicator 7 of SDG 10, but also to protect labor rights of all migrants and take immediate measures to eradicate any form of exploitations with special attention given to unnoticed forms of violence against women and children (5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 8.8, 16.2; SDG 2030).

Since the history of migration and the patterns of mobility are of a cobweb nature, it is inevitable but to see overlapping characteristics in a migrant especially in a south-south regional context. Thailand has been no stranger to the influx of conflict-induced refugees but the limitations with their legal terminology put a constraint to clearly understand who a refugee really is, or how forced displacement is generally considered in the public administrative mechanisms of Royal Thai Government (RTG). This paper starts of by trying to understand which legally practicable scope that this new population from Myanmar fit into in terms of best upholding for their rights and dignity on contesting debates of identity.

2.1.1. Defining Displacement and Refugees: Voluntary vs Forced Migration

Refugees or, as generally considered, people seeking refuge in a place other than their homes can be understood in different senses as it lacks one universally true definition. Looking at the literary definition of the word 'refugee', (Cambridge) specifies

departing from a country location saying it is a person who has escaped from their own country for political, religious, or economic reasons or because of a war; while (Oxford) generalizes the original home as just any context a person who has been forced to leave their country or home, because there is a war or for political, religious or social reasons. (Merriam-Webster) emphasizes on destination location and fear in general, including but not limited to a country, that person is the one who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution; but the former two sources expand the reasoning behind the move to include non-immediate push factor such as economic reasons and even to allow the existence of choice.

The thin line between voluntary and involuntary choices to migrate makes the discourse of refugee studies difficult. For one person in their whole life, they may have to go through different levels of mobility either temporary or permanent. There are hardly very few percentages of the world population who did not have history of migration along their line of ancestry. But in this very policy-oriented age of the world with intensifying geopolitics over borders and sovereignty, the highly legalized labels do not help but rather handicap the nature of humans to migrate especially when they face some degree of coercion. The limitations of forced migration seem very apparent looking at just the term 'refugee' but how do we categorize, under different international legal instruments, if someone is a refugee, asylum seeker or stateless person; a migrant or displaced person either internally, cross-border or transnationally; a victim or survivor of human trafficking; a felon or accomplice of smuggling; a child on the move protected or abused (Hynes, 2021).

Talking about social justice for refugees in decades, the frameworks introduced were much limited around border regimes and state protection mechanisms either internally, bilaterally, or regionally but the accounts of real lived experiences are far more complex than what those policies let them surface. Disaggregating of politics and law is what the international definition and protection mechanisms should embrace. With the supreme instrument of refugee context in practice today being 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the associated 1967 Protocol, the scope was very vaguely even though somewhat more expressively given. In such a

case, the international, regional, or national bodies struggle to decide on three characteristics of a person

- i. being unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin – where the debates of ability persist as the situations changes over time while the willingness is often a subordinated definition
- ii. owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted – of which the subjectiveness of fear to that individual and objectiveness of it to have concrete ground of reason shall exist together with the burden of proof for actual possible persecution
- iii. for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion – and when the conflicting issue of labelling the basis lingers if that person needs protection for any of their identities not entirely fitting under these five categories

What will we do if such a person does not satisfy the above three requisites while the deciding credibility of their status is often politically and morally influenced? If they cannot be determined as a refugee seeking refuge in that destination, are we seeing their migration as voluntary? Especially in the case of a host country being a non-signatory to refugee convention which national authorities have rejected responsibility to receive and shelter non-citizens, how will those ‘recognized’, ‘undetermined’ or ‘rejected’ of refugee status under the international convention be defined and protected?

With the 1951 convention was shaped primarily on the circumstances of migration in Europe, the term refugee embodied mostly about the flight status of a person who is seeking of freedom in a safe(r) nation state. However, (Zolberg, 1989) theorized that creation of nation-states was in itself a refuge generating process, for which the human mobility is in anthropological nature and it no way should have been illegal, as he argued that refugees being a by-product of social change pushed into political categorizing. Following that, the original meaning of the refugee may best lie in the assumption of a person who is worthy of being, and ought to be, assisted and protected from the causes – not confining to the above five reasons of race, religion,

nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion – and consequences if necessary (Goodwin-Gill, 1996).

Despite the several arguments about exclusionary definition of the ‘refugee’ in international laws and politicized historical framing of those, there are still many states, even being a party to the convention and/or having their own well-structured refugee status determination instruments, the treatments towards the refugees grow more and more negative oftentimes viewing them as undeserving of protection, burdens to the country, threats to national security, dependents to the citizens, bogus in nature, devils to the local resources, terrorizing problems or even over victimizing their vulnerabilities. (Malkki, 1995) pointed out that almost all the asylum states and international agencies dealing with refugees tend to share the premise that refugees are not just ordinary people but necessarily a problem. It is undeniable truth that getting refugee status and legal protection is hardly possible in any party state; and that the unprotected population at non-party state being intentionally neglected has become a common case.

Narrowing down to situation in Thailand, the enforceable power of 1951 Convention is vested to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) alone as it being the only agency with mandate to protect refugees cornering a principle known as non-refoulement (Hynes, 2021). However, with the legal scope of the Kingdom of Thailand never using the word ‘refugee’, the term in practice has been interchangeably used as ‘person of concern’ by UNHCR while this UN Refugee Agency expands the latter term from refugees to include asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless population, those returned and repatriated or even others of concern not directly fall under such displaced status.

With this broadening concept of refugee, displacement out of original residence (either home, town, province, state or region) was born leading from mere short distance, repetitive, temporary movements to cross-border, transnational global movement and permanent resettlement involving corporeal travel of people themselves, the physical movement of objects i.e. personal belongings and documents,

intangible move of lived experiences of self, retold narratives of history and imaginative aspirations for future (Büscher & Urry, 2009). Displacement covers, in fact, not only the human mobility but also overlapping gang crimes smuggling these people for border crossing or trafficking them at any stage of such process or even modern slavery. The tragedies arise due to failure of states protection, if not of their intentional disregard, and collapse of humanitarian logistics framework, if not explicitly banned as happened in the case of those from Myanmar seeking refuge in Thailand.

In this study, one cannot simply disregard the whole context of failed promise for federal democracy creating civil unrest of seven decades under different military regimes. Cross-border refuge and repatriation as well as migration and integration are the two commonly coexisting phenomena that academics and practitioners see in Thailand for the case of people from Myanmar. Thus, displacement itself is best understood not as a one-off event, but as a process that could last many months or years with several mobilities evident depending upon whether the displaced are located in urban areas or camps, whether they have easy access to the basic resources that they need, whether they are fearful of renewed violence or political stress, and whether they expect or aspire to return home (Gill , Caletrío, & Mason).

Human displacement cannot be fully understood in all its political, cultural, economic and technological complexities without looking at the distinctive nature interlocking mobilities in terms of voluntary and forced migration where the line is often fluid and arbitrarily drawn (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018) with complex overlap between a variety of different areas such as context of developing and developed nations, existence of choice or decision making power to move or stay, movement from one location to another uncertain of the future or destination, tensions of geopolitics in such movement creating human security concerns which is of no celebratory cause – which leads back to complex relationship between degree of push factor with or without the choice to make decision to move and suffering of a forced migrant due to lack of protection or even persecution from their state (Gill , Caletrío, & Mason).

One key question remaining in defining the modern experience of forced or voluntary movement is that, as there is no single theory of migration (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014) as international migration is a central feature of the contemporary world with the political salience of migration strongly increasing in recent years, whether the simplified frameworks pushed forward in terms of push and pull factors are applicable in the conflict situation. Castles claimed that the distinction lies in choice and that forced displacement is often related to not having any choice despite several other theories of humans holding choice to remain or move in any critical life-death situation, (Richmond, 1994) insisted the inexistence of single sociological explanations of conflict or ethnic relations. This is applied to the more commonly referred label by Thailand for Myanmar cross-border displaced people throughout the history of off-and-on armed clashes as 'displaced persons fleeing fighting' or for the recent influx as 'fleeing arrest'.

When these discussions in forced migration discourse are narrowed down to the setting of cross-border movement from Myanmar to Thailand specifically following the February 2021, (Tun, 2022) defined the push factor as security concerns to reject the exitance of safer choice, meaning it is either be displaced out of homes or be suffered from different insecurities, not only limited to five categories under refugee status determination but also extended to a vastly extensive aspects of security. In the sense of defining the conflict-induced displacement, the conflict incorporates, but not limited to, newly witnessed armed clashes and civil warfare. The conflict more diversely covers the disputes existed before this defined period of post 2021 but heightened following due to coup d'état - between fascist roots of state's military (Tatmadaw) and oppressed civilians, autocratic regime and democratic politicians, nationalist ideology and federal process, Burmese chauvinism, and ethnic identity.

2.1.2. Intersectionality in Human Mobility and Livelihoods

Development theories and practice have seen gradual increase in gender sensitive lens starting from the 1970s with the increasing feminist scholars challenged the androcentrism of development thinking, the normative assumptions about how

households, communities, states, regions or the world behave (Bastia, Intersectionality, migration and development, 2014). Critiques by (Cornwall, Harrison, & Whitehead, 2007) (Jackson & Pearson, 1998) (Kabeer, 1994) expressed concerns on persistence of gender-based inequalities across the world especially visible today in that of developing stage of which are often compounded of not only gender but also complex social relations and multiple identities. While these create the basis of inequalities and nurture them to persist even to this day, the interlocked effect of them is seldom considered in either development theories or development practice but rather differentiated in separate compartments.

2.1.2.1. Intersectionality beyond Feminist Legal Studies

The approach of testing intersectionality, serving as the analytical tool for these complex notions under development studies, is rooted in feminist legal theories to link the power relations with the conjoined nature of oppressions as (Crenshaw, 1991) took her aspiration from critical race theorists, who rejected class, race and ethnicity are separate essentialist categories, to emphasize on the interconnection between the categories creating disadvantages for the people, especially women (Davis, 1983).

Even though different types of inequalities have always been present as a salient issue within development studies, including issues of race (Kothari, 2006), the uptake of intersectionality has been rather slow. Intersectionality was proposed as an alternative approach to tackle identity politics, which made exemplary claims of black men as subject to racism and white women to sexism (Prins, 2006), leading to obscure the intra-group differences that black women suffered starting with very visible crime of gender-based violence quoted as

“In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experiences are often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242).

Even though the feminist theories contributed to development studies to underscore the inequalities that women and non-masculine gender suffer, the intersectionality

remains largely under-theorized in mainstream development papers especially in the area of migration politics where the real people are often disregarded under the states' patriarchal standpoints. Intersectionality aims to destabilize discrete forms of oppression, whereby understanding the categories of oppression to be interconnected and interdependent, and individual identities, subjected to vulnerable positions in that specific context, to expose the failure to notice such complexity in the structural discourse (Squires, 2008).

But further digging into the development literature, (Mohanty, 2019) plated critiques towards the feminist intersectionality based on Western sisterhood mindset often victimizing 'Third World women' which is also a form of oppression entrenched in the capitalist-class system by pushing gender alone as the supreme form of discrimination disregarding the equal influence of other identities of those women.

The notion of identity can be generally described as a person's (un)belongingness to the collective structure of others with many be, but limited to, political, economic, social, cultural, legal, environmental and technical elements (Hughes, 2006) which further shape that person's identity such as nationality, citizenship, race, ethnicity, religion, spiritual, sex, gender, etc. The important take on these identities is that they are not innate but rather a social construction, repetitive patterns and personal preferences which exhibits the position of that specific interlocked identities in that defined society (Britton, 1991).

Although this phenomenon is visible whether patriarchal or non-patriarchal settings of migration, the matriarchal shaping of livelihoods and caregiving in the conflict-induced displacement discourse where men are sent to war and women are left behind to shoulder all the financial and economic burdens, this study is to specifically focus on the discourse of Myanmar displaced women in a foreign country where the impacts may be from either intentional or unintentional activities. But the further understanding of intersectionality with western-capitalist roots is necessary before adapting it into post-colonial global south context of more complex cultural

phenomenon with great differences to that of purely liberal democratic American black women basis.

Seeing the demand of women in workforce for their unique feminine capabilities as we now see in domestic and aging care sector beyond their entry to historically male-dominated industries, it could be argued that intersectionality is just as useful as a tool to analyze the privilege as it is for vulnerabilities. It is important for the research to not limit the scope on disadvantages alone but instead keep an open perceptions for inclusive intersectionality findings where the perceived marginalized identities may somehow bring about the benefits empowering the resilience as supported by importance of including both advantage and disadvantage to reveal how collective identity of gender and nationality intersect with other personal identities such as marital status, age and education, legal economic standing in displacement discourse on livelihoods (Kynsilehto, 2011).

This flexibility of intersectionality, even enabling the historical analysis of power interlinked within traditional social norms and colonial legacy, gender relations change through the process of migration, on the other hand systematically linked gender, ethnicity or nationality and class or socioeconomic status (Bastia, 2011). Extending intersectionality from feminist lens is highly relevant, especially in the global south migration context, since gender explanatory is only partially conclusive for the barriers these migrant women face or the choices they made throughout the cycle of migration.

Women holding economic standing across the border are not purely workers planning for repatriation or integration for themselves but also daughters, wives and mothers saving to invest in their aspirations to climb the social ladders in pursuit of higher class for their families. And the definition of class is an interlinked concept of collective racial and ethnicity together with individual experiences and perceptions. This kind of combination seems to be essential to avoid depoliticizing intersectionality and using it merely as a tick-boxing exercise, as with the well-known consequences of the widespread use of 'gender mainstreaming' (Pearson, 2005).

Having said this, there are also many studies which adopted intersectional approach such as (Pratt, 1999) did to unpack classism and racism through gendered lens for the Filipino migrants in Canada. But such studies on labor market or economic migration did not exactly referenced intersectionality as a concept let alone as a methodology tool. Seeing that, it may be assumed intersectionality serves more as an essential thematic approach to gain in-depth insights of other more systematically structured frameworks.

2.1.2.2. Intersectionality into migration studies: displacement, survival, and livelihoods

The starting point of intersectionality for migrant populations was gradually developed over the years as seen in three phases identified by (Prodoliet, 1999): 1) compensatory approach to visualize migrant women in conventional migration studies, 2) attributive approach to highlight distinct characteristics and experiences migrant women seeing them as autonomous movers, and 3) power dynamics approach to construct of masculinity/femininity in the socialization process, the role of the private/public divide, and exploitation/oppression between native and migrant women. This new embedding intersectionality in migration studies has gradually reached from noticing the excluded experiences of women to empowering women as actors in labor market integration in host countries, rising forces in remittance transfers, investors in home or host countries contributing economic development. However, the points that (Lutz & Amelina, 2021) made criticizing quantitative studies of socioeconomic integration relying on a male breadwinner role model to examine such issues as labor market integration or immigrant fertility does not seem to fit with the global south settings, especially for Asia context where the role of women was not historically forbidden but rather included in more feminine perspectives. In such a way, it can be seen that the literatures have failed to change not only the privileged social position of scholars but also the white male heteronormative approach when the distinction is tried to be made between the majority society of citizens and immigrant minorities in need of integration.

It is not a shocking secret to say that the people in forced migration status need immediate integration into the workforce. But it is important to understand that they are not strategically integrating but rather entering the workforce to secure the livelihoods in temporary sense, especially for the conflict-induced displacement either by armed clashes or of political pressures as (South, 2007) highlighted. Integration of forced migrants into labor market (Müller, Pannatier, & Viarengo, 2022) in the context of Switzerland or other countries which grant refugee status and protect the asylum seekers is not only probable but also measurable due to state's official administrative records and social security data. But even the probability of it was barred, not to say the empirical measurability, when these forced migrants cannot even be called as refugees let alone official status. Then, the intersectionality shall not be confined into European context of immigrants versus citizens but need to be adapted into specific regional context.

While the intersectional debates by (Collins P. , 1990) argued on critical-political philosophies of post-structuralism and postcolonialism to present the classical inequality triad race-class-gender, ethnicity/race, age/generation, disability/health and North/South later come into the space (Amelina & Lutz, 2019). The modern unfolding of refugee situations or migration patterns in general have brought out the importance of differentiation between the origins of theories and applicability into global south in general or Asia as a region or cross-border as very specific. Because, even when the recorded displacements between Thailand-Myanmar have been going on since 1980s, those crossing the border have never been legally recognized in Thailand as refugee unless otherwise integrated into the country's immigration systems.

The divisibility is obvious in identities of displaced people to link back into intersectionality. While it seems acceptable to test labor-market integration right off the bat, the barriers to integrate does not only come from the lack of legal status but also from the geopolitics and strategical marginalization of specific nationalities, such as Cambodia or Laos Hmong (Savin, Sack, Clarke, Meas, & Richart, 1996). When there is the state violence from the home and state intentional neglect at the

destination, should the instant concern of these people - after getting a momentary chance to keep the life - be to become a labor or should it be to secure the living in temporary sense? From the perspective that sustaining the livelihoods lies across the cycles of cross-border displacement and the situations are interconnected most of the times, various aspects are needed to be scientifically studied for better identification of intersectionality for their short-medium term livelihoods and how they may(not) integrate into labor-market as of now or into socioeconomic nexus later.

Thus, to avoid conflicting limits of intersectionality as the only consideration of challenges in their livelihoods, this paper based upon human security as the sole social science framework in testing the threats (and opportunities) to cross-border livelihoods resulted by vulnerable intersecting identities of Myanmar displaced women. By doing so, the generalizability is narrowed down to researchable scope of identities which may be expanded to both oppressions and opportunities under very specific structural context.

2.1.2.3. Intersectionality and powers: marginalization in the structures

As migration and social norms are mutually constitutive (Lewis & Mills, 2016), the movements of people can shape and reshape both the home and host societies. Until late 20th century, the studies on migration and human mobility have been gender blind as development studies did due to the assumption of men as primary migrants for economic 'voluntary' migration and women as secondary migrants for associational migration following the spouses (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalans, & Pessar, 2006). This traditional view excluding women from central idea of migration is no longer applicable not only in the forced migration context that Myanmar women faces but also in the voluntary migration of female workers in this twenty-first century labor market.

Among the several weaknesses of how this newly founded and spreading popularity approach is not applicable as scientific tool, the first claim made (McCall, 2005) was the high generalizability of defining powers in a society as the studies are focused only on lived experiences of the marginalized individuals leading to 'intra-categorical

complexity. The metaphorical debates also include with applicability of intersectionality – whether it is limited to marginalized identities or expandable to all identities of both privileges and oppressions (Nash, 2008) – for its anti-exclusionary school of thought.

Another weakness of the theory is that focusing on the oppressive experiences of specified characteristics (at the micro-level) neglect the main structural problems creating such inequalities in the first place (in the macro-environment). This exclusion can unintentionally lead to victimization of such community instead of finding ways to empower their resilience and wellbeing by adding several other interlinking factors such as nationality and ethnicity (Yuval-Davis, 2007), migration condition and transnationalism (Chow, 2011) or disability and religion (Valentine, 2007) even.

While displacement is a political insecurity itself, cross-border livelihood is a mode of survival is conceptually offered as valuable approach that works through living with cross-border networks based on place-based differentials as displaced persons use various tactical means to achieve a relatively good life. New insights into the geopolitics and biopolitics of border control have been discussed in (Zhou, Wu, & Su, 2022) as the similar but stricter rejection is observed along China-Myanmar border where the refugee or asylum seeking is outright rejected and yet subjectivity from refugees to border residents is provided through open doors to explore opportunities of cross-border trade and jobs for livelihood improvement. This was one of the many examples on how displaced persons adopt necessary tactics to improve their livelihood, with or without external help, through their own agency and negotiate with harsh structural surroundings.

While Thailand is often referred to as ‘transit’ through international refugee policy and humanitarian intervention organization rhetoric, (Coddington, 2020) argued that the kingdom produces and maintains the status of transit country as ‘a place where no one will stay’ through several discursive and material tactics, including security spectacles, legal maneuvering, and migrant destitution to manage, control and exploit such populations. In such a very political way of structural marginalization, ethnic women from Myanmar fleeing the conflict are more prone to livelihood and security threats as discovered through person-centered perspective adopted by (Koning, 2019)

characterizing and measuring violence embedded in displacement, including the structural violence against women that is perpetuated across displacement contexts and embodied over time even underlining social and health inequities in host countries.

2.1.3. Migrant's Human Security: (un)protection nexus in Thailand

When talking about the development of human security as notion in the first place diverting from traditional military security, it can be assumed of a contesting philosophy born during cold war era arguing that the states are vulnerable due to their reliance on military as the sole power source even though it may inevitably cause conflict and weaken the security (Morgenthau, Thompson, & Clinton, 2005). The traditional realist view of dominance in international politics and diplomacy persisted (Hoadley, 2006) while approaching into Cold War Era but the emergence of a new political environment, where the 'transnational threats' (Cusimano, 2010) happening within the own sovereign not between two sovereigns made it obvious that these transnational multifaceted issues cannot be solved by traditional security notion alone. When the earlier concept of non-traditional security was first perceived as part of western neo-liberalism (Ullman, 1983), scholars from Berkeley noted that the first adoption of a more comprehensive security in East was by Japan in 1978 (Alagappa, 1988) extending the definition of transnational threat to include non-military powers. Which was gradually seeped into diplomatic philosophies of other neighboring nations with lesser military power to focus on other socioeconomic issues such as the perceived threats of immigration waves in terms of non-traditional national security for host country, bilateral diplomacy and conflict in the region of Asia Pacific (Dupont, 1996).

The realization of such weaknesses in traditional security and shift towards comprehensive security is what brought towards the alternative approach to conflict and security studies which was then advocated by United Nations Development Programme through publication of the whole ground of human security as a discourse in 1994 Human Development Report. Since this research project tries to adopt concept by (UNDP) on human security as the key research guideline, the overlapping context

of displaced people will be put into find intersectionality between two components of human security itself, namely: livelihoods security requiring protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life whether in jobs or in communities, and personal security from chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression in terms of abuses and exploitations.

The characteristics of incorporating human security into the academic studies and practical activities have been laid down in (UNDP, Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security, 1994, pp. 20-32) as: human security being a universal concern; its components to be interdependent; early prevention making easier to ensure it than later intervention; the basis of philosophy being on people-centered development; and inclusive decision-making process especially for vulnerable communities. The framework is to be complementarily used together with several indicators for premature alarm of threats such as human rights issues, racial and religious tensions, military expansion, food scarcity, and environmental risks.

Despite the wide dissemination of framework by United Nations agency and a specific commission called Commission of Human Security being set up in early 21st century, it is widely criticized for being a vague analytical tool in security field where the threats are utterly invisible to be called as a security concern. (Newman, 2010) Severely other critiques involve the framework being influenced by globalization and neoliberalism while proposing contrasting visions of economic integration and social inclusion; trying to weaken the role of sovereign as the sole responsible institution for security of the people. But the conclusive review of critiques based on five differing clusters on conceptual critiques, analytical point of view, political implication, moral implications and implementations by (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, Human Security: Concepts and Implications, 2007) claimed that the human security concept is an additional responsibility put on the state acting as a complementary to traditional security purveyor role.

That, when applied the universality of human security as states' responsibility to the context of forced migration where the country of origin lacks the capability to provide the human security, the country of destination and the country of transit if any shall

also be held accountable for the provision of human security to those seeking refuge inside their borders. This responsibility has been extended to all countries under the scope of international laws, especially under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol for refugee, beyond refugees to include all people in refugee like situations (Amnesty International, 2006) for their home government, in this case the State Administrative Council of the Republic of Union of Myanmar, failing to protect the human security for these people.

But where does this responsibility lie when a state, such as the Kingdom of Thailand, rejects on the ground of not being a party to the international convention? Many countries are yet to be a member of convention for its primary formulation being centered around the European migrants and not reflecting much on other parts of the world especially with the trends in the Global South. When looked at ASEAN specifically, only the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of the Philippines are party states (Wahab, 2011) while, in reality, those two are placed in the country-of-origin zone. While some experts claim that not only the refugee convention but also the other international legal instruments can be extended to those non-party states for providing protection of human security for all migrants documented or not as human security is the basic right of a person (Jastram & Achiron, 2001), refugees and asylum-seekers who live in ASEAN non-signatory countries have to deal with additional exploitations and structured oppressions due to the lack of protection from either the host country or the international agencies.

In talking about ASEAN as a regionality with lack of protection for the asylum, Thailand is of no excuse despite them accepting forced migrants on humanitarian grounds for four decades starting with Indochina influx (Issa, 2022). As said before, since Thailand does not recognize refugees, all of them coming will be treated as illegal migrants and offenders of Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (1979) who can be subjected to arrest, detention, prosecution and deportation with a few exceptional leniencies granted on a case-by-case basis only (Chantavanich & Jitpong, 2022). In talking about leniency or any kind of humanitarian assistance that Royal Thai Government may grant to those seeking refuge or as they refer to as 'UNHCR persons

of concern', very little compassion is shown towards those from neighboring countries especially for people from politically turmoiled Myanmar with recorded influx since 1984. (Lang, 2001) This reluctance towards displaced people from Myanmar, sticking to aid on a temporary basis as persons fleeing from fighting but discouraging long-term stay pushing for repatriation as far as to breaching of non-refoulement, is taken as a lesson learnt on 'traditional security measure' for Thai authorities after experiencing from granting UNHCR for determination, sheltering and resettlement in helping Indochinese refugees that allowing such can serve as a pull factor for more people to come to Thailand deteriorating bilateral relationship with the government of Myanmar as well as putting burden on the kingdom as the sheltering will never be a temporary thing. (Vungsiriphisal, Chusri, & Chantavanich, 2014)

Due to cases of repatriation programs that previous previously took place before the pandemic, many of those refusing to return and of new displaced live outside of the temporary shelters along Thailand-Myanmar border to not be restricted of freedom and rights as those camps are managed directly by the Ministry of Interior, Kingdom of Thailand. (Lang, 2002) The whatever relief programmes provided to displaced persons on cross-border have been a relatively little publicized, politicized or internationalised response, mostly managed and provided by local committees representing the displaced and NGO service providers, with only minor engagement of international organizations until the advent of resettlement operations - which again is rarely a possibility for Myanmar people given the history.

Also, with the poor facilities given at those camps and limited mobility have raised human security concerns multiple times as the ministry's sufficiency approach is to make the administration functions with bare minimum of international staff, provisions of basic living standards, encouragement of self-sufficiency among the population and that little to no publicity allowed (Lang, 2002). This has been raising a lot of human security concerns long before the pandemic, even without the fear of exploitations, coercion, arrest, detainment or deportation as those outside these camps face on a daily basis, (Song, 2015) as refugees suffer many implications in terms of

political, economic and environment security even though the basic personal, food and health securities - except from the mention of education - are guaranteed by the interactions and feedback loops created among the camp leadership, international organizations and non-governmental organizations as well as security within the community itself. This highlighted political and economic freedom is the main debated insecurity factor for new displacement reasons following the February 2021 where, in addition to the pandemic-related and other restrictions for access to those regulated shelters, many of those displaced are for protection of life and livelihoods which is indeed economic and safety concerns as RTG is now referring to as 'persons fleeing from arrest'.

Thailand officially hosts 303,678 migrant workers from Myanmar as of September 2022 per the statistics from Thailand's Ministry of Labor (TRIANGLE in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note: Myanmar (July-September 2022)) where some exceptions were granted on cabinet resolutions to be registered under the formal bilateral labor migration governance. Such program, despite giving some breathing air for Myanmar people when granted some exemptions for those stranded in Thailand, there are a lot of constraints due to its complicated, lengthy and expensive procedures as well as for exclusion of domestic work under the labor laws putting ropes on all those in cashless displaced situation especially for women. Conclusively it can be said that, despite several other efforts made by the Royal Thai Government pre-pandemic including the drafting of national screening mechanisms, the informal entry to the country persisted with various policy and institutional marginalities tightened around Myanmar displaced population especially threatening the livelihoods of women even with the ad-hoc regularizations of migrants. Narrowing it down on the livelihoods using the seven indices of human security, intersectionality of different identities that these displaced persons possess and the fear and want concerns of security including but not limited to sexual and gender-based violence or even coercion and trafficking may well be contested.

2.1.3.1. Political (in)Security: political economy of labor-market

integration

The intersectionality of political insecurity for the forced migrants is that the legal status and the perception of threat in host country limit them to get economic security or to get employed at all. While labor-market integration is a multidimensional term related to how likely an immigrant is to be part of the workforce extending from (un)employment to consider earnings, working hours, nature of a contract and skills utilization. (Zinatsa & Saurombe, A framework for the labour market integration of female accompanying spouses in South Africa, 2022) Literatures around labor market integration of forced migrants highlight the complexities of the integration process due to the process being highly context-specific and is influenced by various factors that produce variable outcomes for the individual or community.

Through the intersectional approach, equal attention is paid to various levels of oppression and advantage as they are faced by women (Chinyakata, Raselekoane, & Mudau, 2019) and it can address how racism, economic disadvantage, patriarchy, and other discriminatory mechanisms work in tandem to produce inequality in workforce. (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019) argued that complete understanding of the settlement needs of migrants requires the intersectional approach, as it tackles pragmatism and provides full engagement in the sources of difference which helps identify those who are most in need and in such a way humanitarian aids can be adequately targeted for integration programs.

In the context of integration, labor market experiences are the outcomes of both governing technologies, that is, factors which either positively or negatively mediate various overarching power relations and the attempts of these migrants to resist or counter any restriction despite being marked differently because of race, country of origin, class or other social locations (Atewologun, 2019). Based on such identities, they are likely to be subjected to immobility, precarity and informality in the labor market, as linked variously to gendered, ethicized and racialized governing technologies (Zinatsa & Saurombe, 2022) Regarding their integration into the labor market, the participants were likely to cite issues such as underutilization of skills

because of being over-skilled, underpaid and precariously employed by the nature of employment, that is, professional versus nonprofessional and the inability to secure permanent contracts (Zinatsa & Saurombe, 2022).

It has been pointed out that political economy of conflict and displacement for Myanmar people is sparse, and most investigators have been constrained by their own socio-political emphasis on ‘problem-finding’ leading to take account of the positive trends that have emerged in the past decade. Either voluntary or forced in the first place, migration itself constitutes a coping mechanism gradually shifting to economic migration which the agency of displaced people in economic development at the destination is positive rather than viewing them as passive victims. For many Myanmar nationals over the history, patterns of often cyclical migration involve periods spent as laborer in other countries and/or more extended periods as refugees in neighboring countries as (South, 2007) pointed out. Thus, this new (increasing) population of displacement will have some percentage of them integrated into Thailand’s economic sphere in the long run, but the security for them to get stability of livelihoods remains the key challenge for all of them now.

Growing complexity of recent migration trends and inappropriateness of durable solutions, several in-depth analyses have pointed out on insufficient understanding of human security despite it being a recently developed framework. The tool was primarily developed to test the internal security for the people within the border that they belong, but it needed to be linked back to a more traditional take of political security in order to understand the interconnected nexus of all aspects for the cross-border situations.

“People move because of some threat to security or to improve their security. In so doing, they are often seen as a threat to the security of the receiving population, or at least sections thereof, particularly if the movement is large enough in numerical terms or dissimilar enough in qualitative terms.” (Graham & Poku, 1999)

While human security impact assessment may well start at the point of political security for such a conflict-induced displacement nexus since the insecurities at home are the main driving force, the unprotection and marginalization from political standpoint of host country in limiting legal status shall not be overlooked. Such marginalization leads to vulnerable situations for the communities to be heavily impacted with food and wellbeing insecurity. Countries in Africa and Asia are recognized as low-income food-deficit countries by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) with food comprising between half to three-quarters of household purchasing power in these regions, which creates a condition of leaving no margin for survival in emergencies (Kuntjoro & Jamil, 2008).

Asian scholars have discussed about post-colonial forced migrations where often the labels that the migrants get are meant to be justified for political oppression than to protect their rights. While the donor countries see them as victims, host countries view them as terrorists. Such nationalism philosophies have what seemed to have shaped both the home and host countries with the struggles for liberation continue in different parts of the region and refugees often feel more connected to their original homes. (Murshid, 2014) pointed out that the manipulation of states in refugee identity as 'outsiders' and their resistance against notions of human rights to promote the ideal of the nation-state is what creating protracted refugee crises.

This view towards presence of refugees and displaced populations increasing the risk of subsequent conflict in host and origin countries through their expansion of rebel social networks and negative externality of civil war has been also seen in several modern literatures. (Salehyan, 2006) said that although the vast majority of refugees never directly engage in violence, refugee flows may facilitate the transnational spread of arms, combatants, and ideologies conducive to conflict; they alter the ethnic composition of the state; and they can exacerbate economic competition. His argument aligned with the conflict situations of Myanmar in a sense that the country has never been peaceful as a whole with, depending on the regime of that specific period, movement of insurgents, proliferation of weapons, provision of resources for

domestic opposition going on. The traditional geopolitics security view of Thailand with its neighbor and fear of competition with migrants by local people, as Myanmar being historical archenemy, for employment and natural resources is what justifying their strict policy responses towards forced migrants. It is their take on political security.

(Lischer, 2001) laid down total of five categories of refugee-related political violence: between refugees and government of sending state 'Myanmar', between refugees and government of receiving state 'Thailand', between groups of refugees 'ethnic races', between refugees and local population of receiving state, interstate war or unilateral intervention, and between refugees and transnational non-state armed groups. With such a view on political security for Thailand as nation-state, the unprotection behavior towards Myanmar people come into place by both the state actors and the local citizens. The country not being a party to the less Asian context reflected international convention and not yet having an effective domestic legal mechanism is relatable; but barriers to active involvement of UNHCR, despite it being presence in the country since 1975 and been praised for humanitarian and non-political efforts over the course, for the recent asylum seekers from Myanmar creates intentional marginalization.

Such a marginalization of people from Myanmar based on traditional (political for the receiving states) security as a whole has been based of wrong concept of these people being insurgents terrorizing Thailand as was proven by (Chaijaroenwatana & M., 2020) for the case of Rohingya people and it seems to be extendable for displaced population from Myanmar and neighboring countries in Asia. As Thailand uses Immigration Act of 1979 to regulate all foreigners including recognized refugees by UNHCR, all irregular migrants are considered "illegal" and are subject to arrest, detention and deportation which applies to all the urban refugees especially those in displaced situation at border areas.

While most scholars agreed that defining political security from traditional internal armed strife and rights-based political oppression cover for Myanmar displaced

population, it cannot be said that they are safe from political insecurities just because they are out of the country. Lack of legal status and hostility that they receive are what is shaping the politically insecure status of them as the modern view of human security extends to organized crime, exploitation, and discrimination. (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2006) The human security approach prescribes a cooperative global approach toward conflict resolution with inbuilt guarantees for freedom of expression, representation, and action for all as the preferred approach to security; with which political security actually extends to enjoyment of civil and political rights, freedom from political oppression from any actor, and entitlement to economic and sociocultural rights.

Having been forced out of Myanmar by the conflict and rejected of proper recognition by any state of international actors in Thailand, political security of Myanmar people can never be guaranteed with all refugees in Thailand are severely limited in their ability to freely associate, assemble, and express themselves. Political autonomy in Thailand is inherently limited even for the previously welcomed and sheltered camp refugees (Jackson E. , 2012). Those people not registered under UNHCR cannot vote or represent in the camp committees; and those camp committees do not have financial or entry/departure decision-making power as that is entirely up to the Thai authorities.

Human security adopts a context-specific approach that takes into account the particular context, insecurities and the needs of the most vulnerable in a given situation of significantly varied expressions, impacts and root causes of the economic and structural factors behind food insecurity. Moreover, human security encourages the consideration of contextualized solutions that are embedded in local knowledge, experience, and realities, while building on untapped capacities at the community level as the previous cross-border case study from Myanmar has proven (UN, 2009). Faced with loss of income, inadequate food security, lack of education and multiple health challenges, the broad range of human security challenges confronted by the targeted communities need to be addressed and the socio-economic alternatives

highlighted to achieve food and economic security during the transition period into new location (Lovendal & Knowles, 2005).

2.1.3.2. Economic (in)Security: unnoticed struggle of women in cross-border livelihoods

Talking about displacement in recent decades, while most assume internal displacement is the first start but almost half of the world's recorded displaced population seek safety in geographically close countries. (Konečná & Mrva, 2021)

While there are many empirical studies focused on countries that provide protection for the refugees under international laws, the recent conflict situations make it very clear that such established countries are far from the violence-torn states; leading to 86% of the documented refugees being hosted by the developing countries which may well not be the prosperous ones in terms of economy or of human rights or both. These situations of refugees not getting decent living conditions with or without the recognized entitlements by such states are no longer a discerning news as they are struggling to provide such conditions for their own populations.

Displacement is, in fact, just a sudden change in status to grab a glimpse of survivability in very short-term and there is still a long dark path remaining in front.

The intersectionality is the very basis approach serving as the groundwork of understanding threats (and opportunities) for the migrant population as a whole and how it affects them in the further struggle to achieve sustainability of livelihoods.

While Thailand is known as the industrialized country in ASEAN, agriculture sector cannot be left outside of the context. (Wongboonsin, 2004)

The main types of threats to economic security are unemployment and insistent poverty. The unemployment comes from a displaced migrant worker not having freedom of mobility due to being illegal under immigration laws, not possessing proper documentation from entry without planning, not knowing the means to communicate in local language, not matching for skills required in common job openings or just from the host country being short of job opportunities as pandemic recessions hit. (Laiphrakpam, Aroonsrimorakot, & Paisantanakij, 2022) Myanmar

migrant workers constituted high ratio of the labor population in Thailand way before but those were all mostly in the low-skilled sector and, despite them fueling Thai economy, the negative perspectives towards them by the population were deep rooted (Kulkolkarn & Potipiti, 2007) viewing them as reasons for joblessness of local low-skilled workers.

Even though the refugees are not allowed to work outside the camp officially, many find jobs and work illegally in Thailand despite those jobs do not offer any stable income to sustain adequate standards of living (Lee, 2014), which is the biggest problem for refugees' self-esteem and self-reliance. Various NGOs offer vocational trainings such as sewing, hair-dressing, engine repair, electricity safety, cooking, concrete flooring, bamboo growing, service, entrepreneurship and computer skills to prepare refugees to be more employable when they eventually leave the camp (Song, 2015), but such are recorded for camp refugees who had some basic necessities ensured. Urban refugees or those displaced outside the camp in penniless and landless situation are always the most heavily impacted in situations of food insecurity especially when a non-male figure is an only abled adult taking care of many children and/or elders.

Thailand has seen attempting to regularize the irregular migrant workers not only from Myanmar but also from neighboring countries Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam over the years but the bilateral agreements scheme did not seem to work well for these migrants due to employer bondage and 54 percent of non-agricultural work force relying on informal sectors (Komin, Thepparp, Subsing, & Engstrom, 2021). By means of informal work, the migrant workers either taking up tasks those are not recognized under the labor laws for social welfare protections or being employed under a boss under ripped wage scheme without proper work permit. (Sakulsri, 2022) Despite such tasks being dirty, dangerous, and difficult, these undocumented displaced people will turn to them for pressing need of cash; and such will create economic marginalization, making them especially vulnerable to the effects of the government's shutdown of the economy to as seen in pandemic measures.

Such an economic insecurity is in fact creating additional issues of human security. The lack of legal status, exclusion from the policy, and little to no sustainable income have increased vulnerability of displaced people. In most developing countries, women in displaced situations are at the risk of being sexually exploited as they try to sustain themselves since women also tend to work in the informal sector for example as domestic workers and in entertainment industry. (WCRWC, 2006) outlined a broad range risks faced by silent survivors of human rights violations 'displaced women and girls of flight' including rape, domestic violence, harmful traditional practices, child abuse, exploitative labor practices, involuntary recruitment into militia and armed forces as combatants, servants, cooks and sex slaves, torture, trafficking, abandonment, lack of safe access to water, food, fuel and other assistance for self and family, coercive family planning practices, arbitrary arrest and detention, extortion, coercion, extreme poverty, lack of familial and community support structures, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

This has shown that, when gendered approach is taken towards the human security of displaced people, it is evident that interconnecting nature of political and economic security not only limits the labor market integration but also threatens the livelihoods in terms of personal security - which again the health and community cannot be overlooked especially when females are looked at. Those hosting countries may reject the civil and political rights, in addition to refugee protection, being it too overwhelming for its own stumbling foot, however, an individual's fundamental rights to life, liberty, security of person, to freedom from slavery or servitude, from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and from arbitrary arrest and detention are proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Right and cannot be rejected (UDHR, 1948).

Just as the oversimplification of intersectionality, livelihoods post-conflict is too often approached as a linear process from war to peace, from humanitarian relief to rehabilitation and labor-market integration, from reconstruction to development. (CHS, 2003) noted that while the common presumption is on feasibility of short-term relief immediately after the conflict but, in reality, post-conflict recovery does not

follow such a continuum and cannot be compartmentalized into distinct timeframes under conventional, sector-based approaches. This is more evident with intensifying civil war situations across Myanmar with highly decentralized resistance armed groups freshly entering into the scene while established ethnic armed revolution groups with diverse backgrounds have already been there. Such militarization and traumatic oppressions faced cannot be omitted when such displaced people are to be protected and integrated.

The victimization of Myanmar people comes from, again, the marginalization. Five main themes of personal security namely violence, homelessness, prostitution and early marriage, child labor, and deadly journeys were identified by (Akgul, Gurer, & Aydin, 2021) based on study of Syrians refugees. Such a failure to promote the human security of the refugees and letting them expose to several human insecurity parameters at the individual level raises a new category 'freedom from indignity' in addition to 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. This is also link back to the health security which is often viewed as access to health facilities, and pandemic has proven many have been rejected of that even if they can afford. Often times, non-respiratory diseases go unattended as it seems to not threaten the national security but other communicable diseases (hepatitis/ dermatitis) and non-communicable diseases including maternal and child health is very important. (Papadimos, Pappada, Lyaker, Papadimos, & Casabianca, 2020) Plight of displaced women extensively include the need for mental healthcare starting from first-hand survivor of conflict to sexually abused by partner, peer, smuggler or even police as well as the want for reproductive healthcare which include, but no limited to, contraception and sanitary.

The exclusion of women from the studies or practices usually occurs due to seeing them as insignificant or subordinate in economy. But, based on Afghanistan, (Finley, Shimkus, & Dani, 2020) women have actively proven that their role is important in improving productivity, and therefore, support economic development, contribute to sustainable livelihood development and improve food security; and in general, women are the primary caretakers in the domestic family setting, have specific roles in farming and solely responsible for livestock, demonstrate excellent skills in many

industrial jobs such as garment – making them a very important factor in economic development even with these traditional prejudices. In areas fraught with conflict, especially for Myanmar and the cross-border zone, instability of both crop-based and livestock-based agriculture plays a very significant role in economic productivity, livelihood development and public health and it is of no secret that poor, undernourished, and ill populations are more vulnerable and rarely excluded out of economic integration. (South, 2007)

From the whole human security perspective, today's post conflict strategies have many shortcomings (CHS, 2003, p. 59), leaving many gaps in international responses as the international architecture is segregated along security, humanitarian and development lines, encouraging fragmented and competitive responses; the tendency of focus on mandates emphasizing coordination rather than integration; too little attention on building state capacities and institutions which results in the absence of national ownership; failure to consider the impact on reconstruction and development activities but instead focusing on speedy interventions; long hierarchy to mobilize resources and implement humanitarian activities leads to hampering the longer term development strategies.

In order to get added value of the human security approach in livelihoods people after escaping the conflict, individuals and communities shall be at the center of analysis to understand dynamic and interrelated forms of such interconnections to frame the designing of multi-sector strategies in an integrated manner. (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004) Large numbers of actors involved in post-conflict situations calls for collaborative and participatory frameworks that can best manage diversity and ensure capacity-building through human security approach, which provides the analysis for identifying local capacities and resources as well as the framework for linking top-down and bottom-up, with its emphasis on people-centered solutions advances such a framework in a collaborative and integrative manner (UN, 2009).

2.1.4. Resilience building: vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods

Resilience is understood by (Holling, 1973) is that the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables. The definition of resilience by (Chapin III, Kofinas, & Folke, 2009) was through recognition of coupling between social and ecological systems in order to understand current and future changes or crises. In this context of responding to stress and crisis, (Grothmann & Patt, 2005) used an agent-based model of the adaptive capacity of human to simulate the influence on future socio-economic attributes such as social relationships and people's reliance. The application is supported based on cluster analysis of people's socio-economic attributes; regression analysis of historical and structural attributes; and future trends in the economic and environments.

While (De Haan, 2012) highlights livelihood approach is an important actor-oriented perspective in development studies, the critique was on neglect of power relations. Understanding of the operation of power in livelihood strategies can effectively contribute to livelihood enhancement as generalizations of community and policy harm the interventions. (Gibson-Graham, Hill, & Law, 2016) recommended steps towards strengthening resilience starting on human scale with appreciating, caring for and repairing the longstanding relationships by capturing the interdependence of economies and ecologies with the concept of socio-ecological resilience. This puts people within the communities and that power relations between structural and human is fostered.

2.1.4.1. Ensuring human security through sustainable livelihoods approach

The growing focus on trifecta of 'self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion' in development-led approaches for refugee assistance programs seems to carry the positive outlook but (Omata, 2023) these buzzwords can damage both refugees and hosts as the words are given moral power by policymakers and are setting up exemplary behaviors. The better theoretical approach to avoid such thing is look through a lens of 'reframing' to redefine social problems and thereby control

discourses as informed by the policymakers to gain political and economic incentives around development opportunities.

Steps shall be taken to reduce vulnerability and build resilience by strengthening the ability of communities to cope with and adapt to the new location starting with policy responses sensitive to equity concerns and the social dimensions with an explicitly normative focus on those who are most marginalized from institutional decision-making – the poor, women, children, the elderly, migrants, indigenous peoples and others who are socially marginalized through discrimination and prejudice (Elliott, 2012). Among other things, resilience building in terms of livelihoods should “realistic analysis of [people’s] livelihood strategies [to] provide an adequate understanding of how they live” at the local, household and individual level, (FAO, 2017) and how they are therefore likely to respond to pressures (Martin, 2010).

Using human security as a framework is to suggest an adaptation strategy where the governance encompasses bottom-up policymaking for those who are most at risk and most disadvantaged through consultation with communities, or at least the field experts, and their involvement in the design and implementation of legal and policy frameworks. Based on several literatures on security, (Elliott, 2012) suggested that the move to politics of adaptation and resilience-building would be read as a de-securitization of traditional national security, or as more reflectively said, counter-securitization by means of rights-based human security. When the arrival of new migrants is witnessed, the usual concern of the host community is the scarcity of resources which may create human insecurities for themselves. However, (Bulder, 2017) argued that such a situation may even benefit the host community as humanitarian organizations often also enter the region as the refugees arrive and that their assistance help not only to alleviate the grievances of the displaced but to uplift the general level of social services in the area. Such assistance of non-governmental organizations was suggested as a positive impact for both the displaced and the host helping achieve the sustainable livelihoods.

The term “sustainable livelihood” has been defined in a variety of ways by various authors in the context of resource allocation, poverty alleviation and rights-based development. While Brundtland Commission prioritized very poor to poor people for helping to secure livelihoods, it implied the potential of less distress migration (Chambers, Sustainable livelihoods, environment and development: putting poor rural people first, 1987). The principle as discussed by (Hoon, Singh, & Wanmali, 1997). Through the participatory research projects, 14 factors affecting sustainable rural livelihoods, have been identified as in DFID¹'s conceptual framework, including the five capital assets (human, social, financial, physical, and natural), institutional methods, organizational structure, livelihood resilience or vulnerability, livelihood strategies, and livelihood outcomes (Pasteur, 2002). People utilize five capital assets to engage in various livelihood strategies such as income-generating or income-earning activities, household coping, adaptive or survival methods, and livelihood strategies in order to achieve livelihood objectives (Scoones, 1998) by responding to their circumstances, including (Wanmali, 2001).

The situation of displaced persons from Myanmar living in the temporary shelters in Thailand, which began around 1984 and continues until today, if not the tremendous influx seen at the moment, has been described as the largest protracted refugee situation in East Asia (Banki & Lang, 2008). And with the renewed political conflict and civil war, it is unlikely that displaced persons will be able to repatriate soon especially with loss of locality from destructed assets and villages or from shortage of human resources. Past research papers in the field of forced migration studies, especially regarding Myanmar refugees in Thailand, has concentrated on repatriation and resettlement as durable solutions but the possibility of local integration has not been adequately studied (Jacobsen, *The Forgotten Solution: Local Integration for Refugees in Developing Countries*’, in ., 2001) but a few studies have focused on finding alternative and sustainable solutions. One of the practical means proposed in 2014 was to let the displaced persons find employment legally to improve their

¹ Department for International Development, UK

livelihoods and access local services to help them gain self-sufficiency (Thabchumpon, Moraras, Laocharoenwong, & Karom, 2014).

The condition faced by Myanmar displaced population is different from the common sustainable livelihoods approach of rural poor, as (Jacobsen, 2014) asserted, they are now in very poor stated from losing assets, family and community in home country, and from sociopolitical and legal challenges in the host country, which the poverty is usually - without the conflict as push factor - they may not have experienced. Being said that (Harrell-Bond, 1986) has already pointed out the dependency of refugees is not inherent in themselves but through the way the host limits their capability and the policy bars their network as well as from how the humanitarian organizations try solving this with cash and kind instead of advocacy and capacity building. (De Vriese, 2006) noted the resourcefulness of refugees and the strategies they use before defining the concept of livelihood for each community based on the triangular resilience of (Chambers & Conway, 1991) combining capabilities, assets and activities required for a sustainable mean of living.

Many action researchers of the organizations in the field have started formulating sustainable livelihoods approaches following 1992's the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development where the sustainability was considered as a tool for linking socio-economic and environmental issues, thereby, shifting focus to people and their livelihood activities (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003). Aforementioned DFDI's model of five capitals help understand what kind of capitals that households own which they utilize through transforming structures 'institutions', and processes 'policies' to reduce the vulnerability of households or communities to risk (Bennett, Lemelin, Koster, & Budke, 2012). (Jacobsen, 2002) said in addition to attracting the international aid, refugees also provide a huge resource of human and knowledge capital which, if allowed to be integrated, could create economic security not only for themselves but also for the host community. This contradicts the old fear of competition for scarce resources and that was also emphasized again and again by other researchers like (Whitaker, 2002) and (Bulder, 2017) in the case of Tanzania,

(Abedtalas, et al., 2021) for Turkey, (Omata, Refugee livelihoods and the private sector: Ugandan case study, 2012) for Uganda.

The fundamental human security needs of the displaced population as seen in humanitarian emergencies, crisis, war, and conflict should not be placed to the side as separate concerns (Milner, 2014). The purpose of human security is to access the lacking points and to find ways to address them so that the insecurities become secure leading to 'human development'. Putting resilience at the center should be a long-term strategy for refugees' livelihoods for reason that the interventions need not be the temporary dependency nature. (Jjuuko, 2022) pointed out that the existing focus on human development programs by both the governments and non-state actors targeting only citizens while keeping a large number of human resources 'displaced population' forgotten. (Carciotto & Ferraro, 2020) highlighted that, in the case of Kenya and Uganda, the countries with large number of displaced populations can get success through building resilience and self-reliance of these people because human development survives in an environment that promises right to work, freedom of mobility, access to education and capacity building, transnational networks and knowledge-sharing community for refugees often maintain ties with their home country and often utilize them for their economic activities for example through remittances.

The question with the Myanmar displaced people post-2021 is that this is still an emergency stage where the planning is far from that of protracted refugee situation in camps. Even if this is to be treated as temporary situation, the planning for quasi-durable solutions is necessary. Still, it is already evident that repatriation is not happening soon, and resettlement is not in their book yet. (Chalamwong, Archapiraj, Promjene, & Meepien, 2014) saw the necessities for the displaced persons in Thailand, in or out of temporary shelters, as food, clothing, shelter and medicine. But due to the laws and restrictions in the kingdom of Thailand, it would indeed be difficult to let displaced persons fill the demand gap at the national and regional levels but more practical and feasible at the provincial level. Local entrepreneurs in border

provinces were willing to employ displaced persons if they were permitted to work and local farmers in the surrounding areas were also reported to be willing to employ displaced persons during the harvesting and planting seasons (Chalamwong, Archapiraj, Promjene, & Meepien, 2014). However, the researchers also found the reluctance points from employers for these displaced persons are considered to be enemy of the government of Myanmar, and therefore employing them could create unnecessary cross-border conflicts.

2.1.4.2. Role of Actors: Knowledge Integration from the field experts

In this actual societal issue requiring in-depth understanding of the intersectionality, the need to have holistic outlook on how the effected communities perceive these vulnerabilities and what the various stakeholders are doing on the ground to actually help build the resilience of them. In this development studies, it is crucial to step out of academic discipline and create a bridge between those in the field implementing the program. This idea is not new, but the problems are tried to be understood by trying to change and reflect through collective inquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history as part of the participatory research (Hall, *Participatory research: an approach for change*, 1975).

This is drawn from multiple disciplines, extending from just observing the scenario and analyzing it scientifically, in a hope to actually test the possible solutions, collect the real results and recipients' feelings, reflect on the findings through multi-level stakeholder network and formulate a better workable intervention. The idea is exemplary in terms of marginalized communities even with the proven success shown in social sciences academia since mid-nineteenth century with Lewin's use of participatory technique in (*Action Research and Minority Problems*, 1946).

The participatory action research – combining a wide range of influences from different fields of work with practitioners in the field, lived experiences of the people and narratives retold from the history - benefit from an interdisciplinary development (Hall, 2005) drawing its theoretical strength from adult education, sociology, political economy, community

psychology, community development, feminist studies, critical psychology, organizational development and more (as this issue link with development studies, economic livelihoods, political science, public policy, sociology and human rights) (Hall, 1992)

While this bottom-up approach seems to help address the action gap in research field, missing data were always an issue in community-based longitudinal studies calling into question the representativeness of samples and bias in conclusions that the research has generated. populations in light of potential bias created by missing data remains an open question (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013) highlighted open question of missing data creating potential bias and reasoned that by pointing out the difficulty of implementing random sampling procedures in such complex studies and/or the inherent difficulty in sampling hard-to-reach segments of the population being studied.

The interdisciplinary scientific research and participatory approach were linked together very early in the anthropology studies, however, the distinguishment of transdisciplinary did not come until the end of 1970s, (Kockelmans, 1979) proposes it to be continually provoked through reflection, where it is required to do the task for everyone, not only for disciplinary philosophers, in a critical attitude. Transdisciplinarity (International Transdisciplinarity Conference in Zurich, 2000) was defined as: a manner of learning and solving problems with the cooperation of society and academy to face the challenges of the societies.

According to (Mittelstraß, 2005), transdisciplinarity is a principle of research and science but not a method which pursuit two paths simultaneously—a path committed to the exploration of new options for solving societal problems (the practical path); and a path committed to the development of interdisciplinary approaches and methods (the scientific research path). Carried out at the interface of society and science, transdisciplinary research explores and finds solutions for societal problems, by making these problems, and the societal actors involved, a central reference point of research and by further developing the scientific research tools it has employed.

The model of a reflexive transdisciplinary research process was developed by Institute for Social-Ecological Research (ISOE) (Jahn, Bergmann, & Keil, 2012) setting scientific and practice-related foundations for transdisciplinary research to examine how research and cognitive processes change when applied to problems in the context of sustainable development through further theoretical, conceptual and methodological principles that facilitate at the same time high-quality science and social impact within transdisciplinary research processes.

The methods of a transdisciplinary knowledge integration are normally described as relating to a specific societal problem and in the context of the specific constellation of a given research team, one composed of various disciplines, scientific fields and societal experts as case-related; then, one wants to apply these methods to any other transdisciplinary problem and discipline, these methods must be decoupled from their original contexts as decontextualized, and described in general terms. (Bergmann, et al., 2010) The new methods developed have served to integrate knowledge generated throughout the research process. In this sense, transdisciplinarity is, then, not a method; rather, it is a way of doing science, a mode producing knowledge that requires research methods developed and adapted to its own specific approach.

Transdisciplinary is a matter of “distinguishing and linking disciplinary knowledge bases, as well as scientific knowledge and knowledge drawn from daily practice” real-world-focused approach is integrated with science-focused approach. In the real-world-focused approach, the problem dealt with is often a matter of so-called services of public interest and participation by experts drawn from the societal practice fields in question is highly valued. A science-focused approach may be called for when complex internal scientific issues are at hand Here outputs are used to improve scientific research and its results. (Jahn, 2008) At the same time the development of concepts or models may also lead to new research needs; in this case, the circle must close. But these two are often inseparable and complement each

other instead of contrasting that ISOE model simultaneously pursuit two epistemic paths offering both practical problem-oriented challenges and a scientific stimulus.

This parallel implementation of both approaches produces “added value” and moves beyond a merely individual case study or discipline-bound approach to research. Added value is characterized by cognitive integration problems (epistemological, social, communicative, and technical) and by participative research arrangements (orientation towards the needs of the societal actors affected; inclusion of users or stakeholders; and a commitment to a process of mutual learning). (Bergmann, et al., 2010) It aims at supporting societal interventions and are normally conducted in the form of projects and carried out by temporary teams assembled for the purpose at hand. The goal is to have a practical effect on the world beyond science and, in contrast to disciplinary research, to have some potential for a reflective monitoring of the research process.

In such a way of addressing societal problems that are experienced in real life require the proposal of solutions from different scientists in collaboration with those in face of crisis and those in field of aid. (Hernandez-Aguilar, et al., 2020) The importance of contemplating re-education and awareness of society should not be forgotten as the scientific community may also teach and work with society to create great impact to the world by allowing evolution of societies not involution. Despite its complex overlapping approach there is increasing acceptance of transdisciplinary research in the world scientific community but there remains a need of change for it to achieve its objective of intervention in systems, help thrive the societies and contribute to evolve the nations.

Considering the two opposing tendencies— demand of scientific differentiation on the one hand, and for integrated solutions to societal problems on the other—the claim that an integrative orientation is more or less incompatible with the real motives of scientific research is not tenable in light of the history of science. As a result, it is crucial to get the non-scientific actors involved and, where possible, to bring these into the research process

itself. A central epistemic attribute of transdisciplinary research, therefore, is the development of methods for integrating knowledge across disciplinary boundaries. (Krohn, 2008) The need for integration within research practice can be distinguished according to three dimensions known as a communicative, a social or a cognitive dimension.

Since transdisciplinarity offers a different philosophy and approach to effectively address issues and to improve and change difficult situations people have been experiencing in the modern world based on an ongoing “dialectic synergy” between disciplines, methodologies, scientists and researchers in various forms and at many interactive levels (Mylonakou-Keke, 2015), the researcher will position oneself as scholar of the university mainly but flexibly engage with the stakeholder organizations as an intern or interpreter as situation allow to enable cross-referencing among various scientific discourses and, by means of this combining and relating, to make possible new ways of seeing and understanding problems and to help find new approaches to solutions.

2.1.5. Research Gap

It has only been two years since the military coup d'état once again happened in Myanmar and the migration trends surrounding conflict are still hugely ambiguous and abrupt to fully understand. A few global literatures have taken a particular attention on the conflict-induced displacement from the lens of democracy backsliding and civil war which causes political and economic insecurity. However, the region-specific studies seem to be more focused on transnational protection mechanisms and long-term solutions for sustainability of livelihoods, to no surprise, from the overwhelming human rights concerns amidst the humanitarian crisis. With much focus on the higher-level, the subtlety of women's role in displaced livelihood and resilience-building has made the secondary discriminations on the ground invisible.

While gender inequality has been embedded in studies of human security as a whole and at several different layers, the concept is not commonly intersected in the studies

of livelihoods struggles in forced migration. Also, the inequality as tested are more on comparison with the male counterparts rather than trying to understand the unique experience and how such inequality may create opportunity in some ways.

Push and pull factors for cross-border migration of Myanmar people, protection mechanisms and livelihoods of migrant workers in Thailand, and discriminatory barriers in socioeconomic integration have been known for several years and many research works have also been done by the academics from Thai and international universities and various civil society organizations. However, the literatures did not fully reflect the intersectionality of marginalized identities, including but not limited to nationality, education, legal status, gender, or how the actors involved to enhance the resilience of such communities in the conflict times.

Due to fast-paced development of recent conflict in Myanmar especially during the pandemic period, while the prolonged civil unrest or the renewed events are often viewed from traditional security lens, subtlety of women's role in cross-border livelihoods is rarely approached from 'actors of change' perspective. The research will be part of a contribution to the understanding on the intersectionality of identities marginalized from protection mechanisms, elusive nature of barriers to sustainable livelihoods, and the resilience of such communities through sustainable livelihood assets.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature sources and observations of the situation, refugees are often viewed as problem by Royal Thai Government, as many host countries still do, and generally avoid using the term 'refugee' by either pushing them to UNHCR 'persons of concern'. Or, historically recapping the legal status of Myanmar refugees, they were mostly referred to as 'displaced persons fleeing from fighting' as they are often seen by war as push factor and put in temporary shelters managed by the authorities. But following the 2021 conflict, this 'fleeing from fighting' context is no longer fully applicable for those recently 'fleeing from arrest' due to political activism or of civilian resistance, or even from 'poverty'. So, to set the definition of conflict-induced

displacement, in addition to general refugee view of threat to life or freedom, loss of locality and occupation are also added in as the operational definition for forced migration as push factor ‘conflict-induced’. The term ‘cross-border displacement’ is used instead of ‘refugee’ in order to avoid confusion of legal status in Thailand as well as to not mix with ‘internal displaced people’ inside Myanmar. And with the inactive status of UNHCR’s RSD for Myanmar urban refugees at the moment, as this study is focusing on post-coup migration alone.

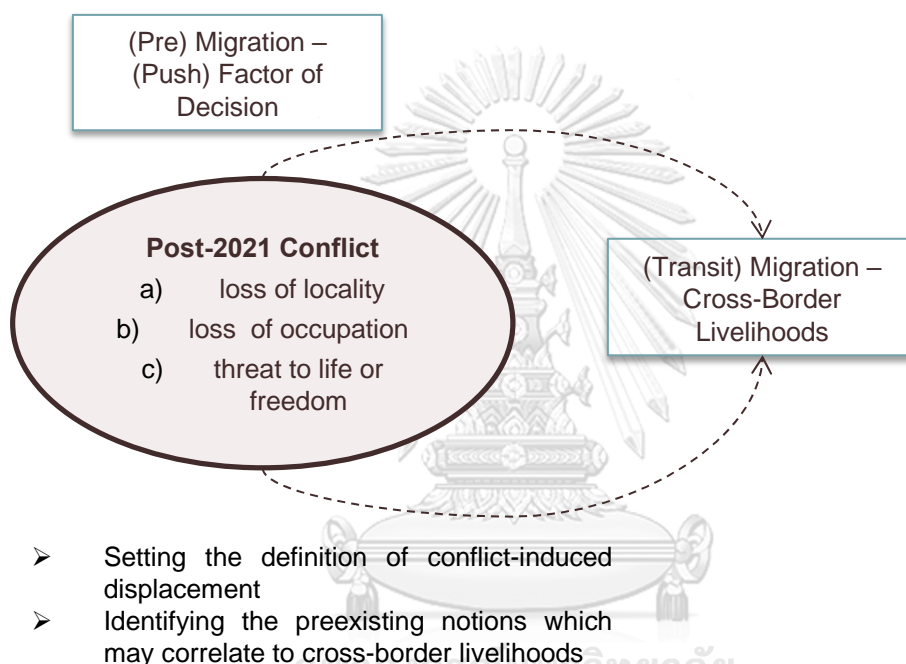


Figure 1. Operational Definition: Conflict-induced Displacement

2.2.1. Intersectionality in livelihoods: Theorizing marginalized identities for the study

Intersectionality is an approach to understand the essence of identity and its relationship to power. Originating from feminist legal theory (Crenshaw, 1989), the modern theory has extended to acknowledging that a person's life is shaped by their identity, relationships and social factors which then combined into intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on that person individual identity and existing power structures in their society.

(Monjurul Kabir , et al., 2022) also underpinned the importance to keep in mind the transformative potential of intersectionality, which goes beyond simply focusing on

the impact of overlapping identities to understand elusive nature of discrimination in societal relations such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia, and racism for most disadvantaged and reflexivity.

Intersecting political and economic aspects of human security based on the case of ‘women migrant workers’ in forced migration study helps bring out the policy gaps, identify needs for survival and barriers to achieve sustainable livelihoods for the conflict-induced displaced population. Such an exploratory analysis shines light on how complex identities that Myanmar women migrants uphold in the multiplicity of discriminatory mechanisms affect them in the power relations of specific society such as the patriarchal regimes that both home and host countries possess, social hierarchy of misogynist views in socio-cultural structures, and labor markets denying equal access to job opportunities, income levels and other social protections.

The main notion of putting cross-border displaced women from Myanmar at the center is based on the intersectionality of four identities which, to not set the prejudice of these creating vulnerabilities, lie at the center of marginalized status in the politics of policy as follow:

1. Marginality of people from country ‘Myanmar’, as per the traditional political security view of ASEAN centrality, rejected of refugee or asylum seeker status, racism from prolonged history of civil unrest, to face limitations of integration into transit or third country with dignity, etc.
2. Marginality of irregular migrant workers, as per the conditions they face on arrival at host country, to regularize in terms of legal status, integrate into socioeconomic environment, acquire constitutional rights, and labor protections limited to citizens, etc.
3. Marginality of forced displacement, as per the situations compelling them to leave their origin either domestic or transnational, to lose former socioeconomic status, to travel under unsafe conditions, to sustain necessities individually and collectively, to face threats from people in power, etc.
4. Marginality of women in patriarchal state, as per the physical and cultural oppressions, to suffer threats or violence to physical or psychological aspects in

country of origin, on route of migration, at country of destination, to carry the burden of care, to face limitations in maintaining or acquiring socioeconomic status due to slow feminization, etc.

2.2.2. Marginalization in cross-border livelihoods: Identifying vulnerabilities and resilience-building through human security lens

While the multi-disciplinary of rights, security and migration were brought into the livelihoods and dignity for people-centered development, (Guild & van Selm, 2005) re-conceptualized human security of immigrants as an intersection of 'political and legal security', 'personal and economic security' together with layers of sociocultural discrimination. Encompassing human security offers a complex and dynamic discourse beyond rights to understand experienced fears and unfulfilled wants of displaced population in cross-border settings. Human security framework, when applied in full scope, includes seven components: political security, economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security and community security (UNDP, 1994).

All displaced people in Thailand, with or without UNHCR refugee status, are treated as illegal migrants and offenders of Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (1979) and always at the risk of arrest, detention, prosecution and deportation (Chantavanich & Jitpong, 2022). By not having a legal status, their political security is limited which in turn creates barriers to labor-market integration creating vulnerabilities in economic security. Such political and economic intersection leads to various levels of oppression from tandem of racism, economic disadvantage, and (non)state discriminatory mechanisms (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019) (Chinyakata, Raselekoane, & Mudau, 2019). For the conflict-induced displacement, the need-based approach starts with securing food and ending poverty (SDG, 2015). By doing gendered intersectionality, it is hoped that gaps in some other components of human security such as personal security and health security (2020) could be identified.

It has been assumed that, based on the literatures focusing on the protracted refugee situation in Thailand, the to be identified gaps in human security that Myanmar displaced people are facing right now are from marginalization and that such created vulnerabilities have been alleviated through the help of various actors. Thus, the resilience of the people themselves will also be explored through the five capitals of DFID's (1999) sustainable livelihoods approach including human, physical, social, financial and natural.

2.2.3. Conceptualizing the study

Since this study intends to identify the vulnerabilities in human security as a result of the marginalization in the host community, the interconnecting nature of political and economic (in)securities for cross-border livelihoods will be at the center to do the bottom-up interpretation. This main analysis is to be complemented with five capitals model to find out how the community build resilience to achieve human security and how the actors enhance such resilience for sustainable livelihoods.

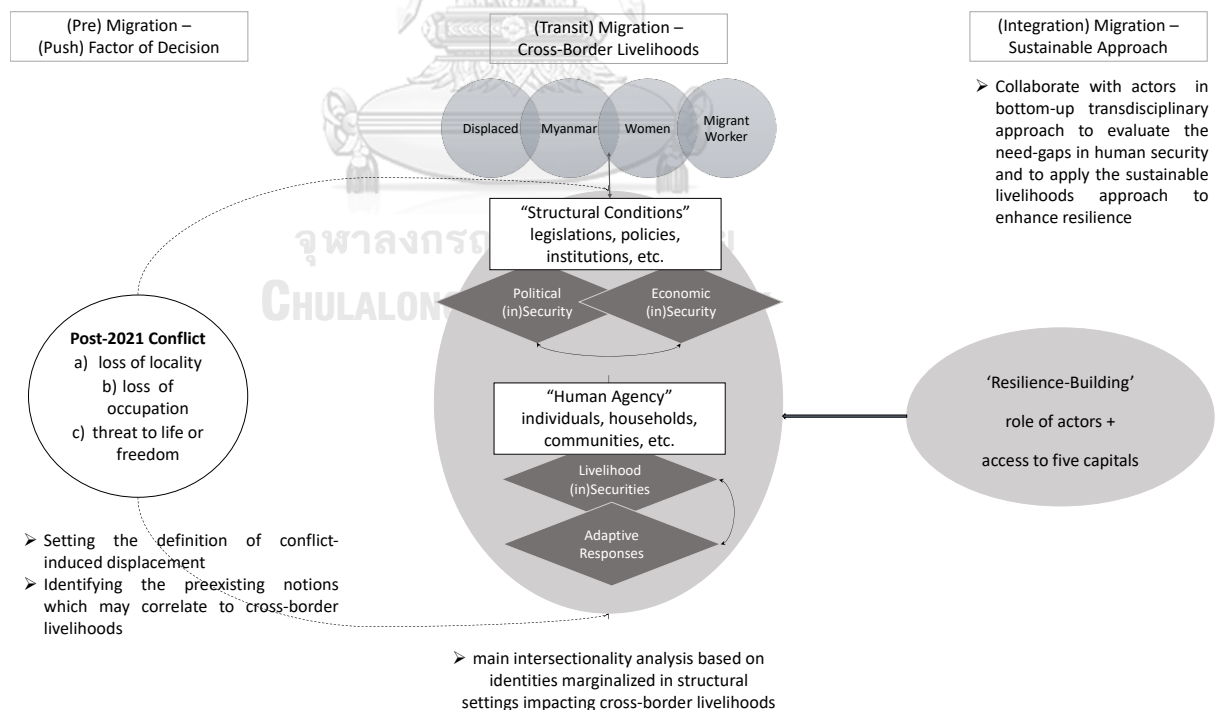


Figure 2 - Conceptual Framework on intersectionality analysis of human security in cross-border livelihoods and resilience-building

This design testing the intersectionality of marginalized identities aimed to take the transdisciplinary approach to identify and propose problem-reflective solutions for resilience-building through sustainable livelihoods approach for alleviation of vulnerabilities in human security. The findings in this academic research are co-inputs from field actors including social workers, healthcare practitioners, human rights activists, legal aids, civil societies, and communities themselves from non-academic background.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Criteria of the Case Study Selection and Research Design

This research uses qualitative methodology to address elusive nature of intersectionality in cross-border livelihoods. The focus will be on human security framework as the tasks expand to: (i) understand how the marginalization impact political and economic security; (ii) map the vulnerabilities in livelihoods through human security lens; and (iii) to uncover possible ways of resilience building to enhance human security.

Before conducting the fieldwork, the researcher conducted a documentary analysis on relevant Thai laws impacting the legal status of Myanmar urban refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand and their right to work while volunteering as a legal advocate for Myanmar emergency response team under Asylum Access Thailand starting from February 2023. The overview of the situations on the ground through various lens including but not limited to authorities of Royal Thai Government, international and local organizations working for both camp and urban settings as well as the opinions on forced migrants from political parties, refugee and labor rights advocates, policy actors and border security regimes have been observed not only through Chulalongkorn University field trip in March 2023 but also through talks, panels and debates leading up to Thailand General Elections in May 2023 and preexisting networks of researcher both in and out of Myanmar.

With the general understanding of political and economic status of these post-coup cross-border displaced population, the case study has been framed in Mae Sot for bottom-up data collection.

3.1.1. Defining the Unit of Analysis

The study exclusively focuses on Myanmar women who migrated to Thailand after February 2021. They fit under the conflict-induced displacement status - not limited to being forced out of homes from war and persecution but extended to various forms of

unplanned migration either due to political or civil relations or due to loss of jobs and sustainable incomes - which would not have been the case without this conflict.

The term Myanmar has been used throughout the paper to avoid confusion between the nationality of the country 'Myanmar' and ethnicity of majority race. 'Burmese' as 'Myanmar' universally cover all people from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008) regardless of ethnicity, religion, status, or possession of citizenship.

3.1.2. Defining the location

Since the nine refugee camps, officially known as temporary shelters, along Thailand-Myanmar border are under the administration of the Ministry of Interior to shelter those rural ethnic 'people fleeing from fighting', there are already several limitations on them for mobility and work. This research of cross-border livelihoods is an extensive study where the focused population is on those outsides of the temporary shelters, in urban settings, integrating into the workforce.

Hence, the data collection is exclusively done in Mae Sot where most of Myanmar irregular migrants have historically and currently sought the first shelter and occupational start. Those displaced from Myanmar, with or without warrants on their back, trying to secure livelihoods through labor market integration has been focused - extending from urban refugees and asylum seekers to migrant workers in agriculture, factory, domestic or other (in)formal sectors.

3.1.3. Defining the time and mode

While the documentary analysis and observations commenced since around February 2023, the actual start date of field data collection was 1st May 2023 lasting up to first week of June 2023.

3.1.3.1. Integrative design thinking

Phase A of the study was for academic researcher to meet with stakeholders (experts from human rights organizations, humanitarian aids, civil societies and administrative actors as well as leaders of local communities and representatives of unions) in order to get their perspectives on the livelihoods through human security lens, explore the various techniques in use to tackle these situations, and to identify the vague points

where concerns are unclear or of which the extent of intersectionality is unknown. This was first done in March 2023 to stimulate the participation of actors by getting their opinions on the political and economic security from intersectionality nexus – which also served as their hypotheses through field observations and experiences. The discussions reinitiated and extended to several other actors in May 2023 to attract any perceived problems to be brought to the table.

3.1.3.2. Interdisciplinary approach

In Phase B of the study, the researcher formally involved in a legal aid organization ‘Human Rights and Development Foundation’ working on migrant worker issues and human rights violations through the Labor Law Clinic (Mae Sot) as an intern/researcher to get involved with the context of recent and ongoing cases, do non-participatory observations at judiciary spaces, assist in facilitation of the programs for the migrant workers communities and to partake in meetings, workshops and events with several organizations amidst their existing and planning collaborations. This helped building the trust between the researcher and the locals, understanding the capacity, adaptability, and limitations of the actors in such a complex situation and formulating the exploratory prompts that they wish to get answers from the interviewees.

3.1.3.3. Field data collection

As Phase C of the research, the researcher conducted the bottom-up data collection from the actual people of the set marginalized identities who are passive recipients of the human security threats in cross-border livelihoods and active players in building their own resilience through labor market integration.

The data collection utilized the qualitative exploratory approach, (Stebbins, 2001) designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description of identities and understanding of intersectionality. The interviewees were asked the collaboratively designed prompt questions to initiate the retelling of experiences without guiding or influencing. The broader explanatory issues were then narrowed down using Funnel Technique through follow-up and specific questions by the researcher to identify the intersectionality in human security nexus and resilience

through sustainable livelihoods approach for each person; and to address the hypotheses of the assistance and resilience in greater social relations heuristic.

While the actors involved through interdisciplinary discussions acted as focal contacts for the researcher to reach out to the respondents, the involvement of these organizations may be minimal depending on the security.

3.2. Primary Data Sources and Data Analysis

Given the research focusing on exploratory approach to understand the highly complex situations escalated within a short period of time, the data collected are solely based on primary sources for the analysis to be done from scratch in time and context relevant manner. This research utilized Data Source Triangulation (DTS) to get comprehensive understanding of the situations as with each person having their own unique experiences, link it back to the broader context of structural problems as well as verify the themes that have been discovered objectively through field observations and integrative inputs (Patton, 1999). DTS has been derived through discourse analysis on document sources to understand policy nexus, exploratory observations through a wide range of stakeholders, and thematic analysis focusing on in-depth interviews of case study scope providing well-rounded understanding of intersectionality and increasing the validity of livelihoods data collected. (Patton, 1999).

Type	Mode of collection	Number	Method
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative Instruments Cabinet Resolutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 (effective); 2 (delayed) 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourse Analysis on Immigration Act (1979) and Labor Protection Act (1998)
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working under organizations Research project appointment Joining panels, conferences, meetings, and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 (legal aid) 5 (local orgs) 19 (Intl/Thai/Myan) under anonymity Occasionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VLA (AAT)/ Intern (HRDF) non-participatory observations through events and orgs (AAPP, AWO, OIA, MAP and BA)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshops • Visiting RTG administration/ judicial spaces 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal anonymity and institutional confidentiality ensured
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research in-depth interviews recorded under full consent • Casual conversations with facts consented for research use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 Myanmar women migrant workers • 22 Myanmar women as individuals/ households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Exploratory Interviews conducted strictly per research ethics - Thematic analysis Researcher + Legal/PFA Provider

Table 1. Primary Data Sources for Triangulation

3.2.1. Documents

Following the non-signatory status to 1951 Refugee Convention, Thailand's scope and criminalization of aliens under Immigration Act, B.E. 2522 (1979) and limitations on rights to work for women migrants under Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998) have been analyzed using discourse analysis.

To add onto the political-economic security scope, discourse analysis has been extended to understand how the effect of current two legislations could be possibly remedied with implementation of National Screening Mechanism under Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister On the Screening of Aliens who Enter into the Kingdom and are Unable to Return to the Country of Origin B.E. 2562 (2019) as well as to lessen criminalization with the enforcement of Anti-Torture Act officially known as Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act B.E.2565 (2022).

3.2.2. Observations

Before and at the time of fieldwork, the researcher was working under two legal aid organizations: i) as Volunteer Legal Advocate (Myanmar Emergency Response

Team) under Asylum Access Thailand based in Bangkok, Thailand but services covering all urban refugees and asylum seekers including those in Mae Sot; 2) as Intern/Researcher (Labor Law Clinic) under Human Rights and Development Foundation located in Mae Sot, Thailand providing services to migrant workers and displaced population in Tak province.

Acting as research fieldwork coordinator for the sub-project under University of Cologne x Chulalongkorn University – International Research Cluster on “Conflict-induced displacement and socio-economic resilience: Learning from neglected conflicts in Cameroon and Myanmar” conducted through MAIDS-GRID Program, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, five appointments have been made – as quantitative researcher joined two appointments in-person and three through notes – with Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), Arakan Workers Organization, Overseas Irrawaddy Association, MAP Foundation and Radio FM 99/102.5, and Burma Academy.

Through Labor Law Clinic, the researcher did non-participatory observations in Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child Rights, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Committee, Anti Human Trafficking Network, and other working coordination for access to justice. Occasional visits to administrative offices or judicial spaces have been made through Chulalongkorn University field trip, legal aid activities of Labor Law Clinic and other on ground experiences being with the communities.

Per the security concern of the communities involved and the limitations of some organizations, both personal anonymity and institutional confidentiality, have been ensured for the actors in interdisciplinary based on the level of data sensitivity and the informed consent.

3.2.3. People: case study on Myanmar women

3.2.3.1. Research Scope

Minimum research scope has been set to conduct in-depth interviews with 10 female respondents in cross-border displacement status following February 2021 currently working or is intended to get a job.

3.2.3.2. Building trust and recruiting

Being wary of security and trust concerns, the focal contacts of participating actors helped with recruiting of 1-2 women each based on their scope of services and researcher's preference. As part of building trust with the respondents and abate any possible repercussions, 100 per cent anonymity has been ensured without collecting name or any other identification information.

Following that, after building the mutual trust with interviewees and providing legal consultations or psychosocial support depending on the likeness of each of them, the interviewees reached back to researcher for those willing to meet and talk about their concerns and seek help from the researcher as a legal advocate or as a psychological first aider. Through such snowballing technique of peer recommendation networks, security tensions have been reduced both for the interviewees and the researcher.

Sr	Code	Date	Mode of Interview	Mean of Recruitment
1	Interviewee A	6-May-23	in-person at interviewee's workplace	through interdisciplinary actors
2	Interviewee B	8-May-23	in-person at private meeting space	through interdisciplinary actors
3	Interviewee C	13-May-23	phone call as per interviewee's safety	through interdisciplinary actors
4	Interviewee D	13-May-23	phone call as per interviewee's safety	snowballing through interviewees
5	Interviewee E	13-May-23	in-person at interviewee's residence	through interdisciplinary actors
6	Interviewee F	14-May-23	in-person at interviewee's residence	snowballing through interviewees
7	Interviewee G	14-May-23	in-person at private meeting space	snowballing through interviewees
8	Interviewee H	14-May-23	phone call as per interviewee's safety	snowballing through interviewees
9	Interviewee I	17-May-23	in-person at interviewee's workplace	snowballing through interviewees
10	Interviewee J	18-May-23	phone call as per interviewee's safety	snowballing through interviewees
11	Interviewee K	19-May-23	in-person at interviewee's residence	snowballing through interviewees
12	Interviewee L	20-May-23	in-person at interviewee's residence	snowballing through interviewees
13	Interviewee M	20-May-23	in-person at interviewee's workplace	snowballing through interviewees

1 4	Interviewee N	24-May-23	in-person at interviewee's residence	snowballing through interviewees
1 5	Interviewee O	25-May-23	phone call as per interviewee's safety	snowballing through interviewees
1 6	Interviewee P	28-May-23	in-person at private meeting space	snowballing through interviewees
1 7	Interviewee Q	28-May-23	phone call as per interviewee's safety	snowballing through interviewees
1 8	Interviewee R	2-Jun-23	in-person at interviewee's workplace	through interdisciplinary actors
1 9	Interviewee S	3-Jun-23	in-person at private meeting space	snowballing through interviewees
2 0	Interviewee T	4-Jun-23	in-person at private meeting space	snowballing through interviewees
2 1	Interviewee W	6-Jun-23	in-person at interviewee's residence	through interdisciplinary actors

Table 2. Recruiting research participants and conducting interviews

3.2.3.3. Ensuring Security: Executing interviews

Gaining the trust and connections, the researcher has been approached by several Myanmar women in conflict-induced displacement status either to participate in formal research interviews or to seek assistance for their concerns by expressing their vulnerabilities through interning organizations or other actors.

With such, researcher had to breakdown the characteristics of such interviews by dividing those which the meetings were set up in private space for both the researcher and participant at the time of conversation, and the researcher positionality as well as the use of data, anonymity of the interviewee, possibility of pause or stop at any time or recording medium have been clearly communicated with the interviewee before the interview and received full verbal consent. A total of 21 Myanmar women of set marginalities were interviewed either in person as researcher visited their residences or their work locations of the interviewee's choice; or through phone call at quiet and private setting for both researcher and interviewee who at the time of research live far from downtown Mae Sot or have high security concerns for possibility of researcher being tailed.

For other people, given the settings of time and place no private or mode of their approach being seeking help, where the researcher was not able to go through with research ethics and get communicated consent before the session, these 22 women have been identified as casual conversations. The data collected are the notes the

researcher has taken down in the journal which each of them has given consent at the end of the meeting for such to be used for research purpose.

There were concerns about language barriers in case of some interviewees not being Burmese-tongue but during the research, such was not an issue for the researcher. Do no harm policy has been mindfully practiced throughout the formal interviews or casual conversations always checking in with the comfort of responding person and ensuring breaks as seems fit.

3.2.3.4. Analysis: Finishing the research

As some of the interviewees seemed reluctant to consent with voice recordings, the researcher mainly used journal to take the notes throughout the in-depth interviews. For the fully consented recordings, transcripts are extracted. Such notes or transcripts are grouped together with additional observations such as facial expressions and body language of the respondents, narratives of lived-experiences and fact-checking of the timeline. To find similar and contrasting patterns of intersectionality in each facet of the human security, the main analysis is based on six steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The key reason of choosing this specific tool of qualitative research in psychology is because this study is based on the discourse of livelihoods in both observable objective phenomenon of labor market integration and retold subjective experiences of human security which explore to the roots of individual feelings, collective perspectives, social behaviors, and states mechanisms altogether.

3.2.3. Limitations

Since this research is part of the joint project between University of Cologne in Germany and Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, the limitations for the study include bilingual demand and time constraint. Although main language for the research project is set as English, due to this nature of qualitative study, the many meetings with participating actors were in Burmese language while the actual field work of data collection demanded intensive communication in Burmese. This bilingual demand was not a dilemma as the researcher is a native speaker of Burmese language and has experience in translation.

This paper being partial fulfilment of one-year master's degree program with very limited time, the participatory field study had to be designed to fit 5 weeks period - also to align with the visa duration of collaborating researchers. Mindful of the uncertainty of cross-border tensions at the location, the data collection was done through secure focal contacts of the participating institutions and organizations, and the study was designed for flexibility.

3.3. Positionality of the researcher

The researcher self-identifies as a woman from Myanmar who is part of conflict-induced migration following February 2021. The researcher is outside of the research scope which extensively focused on those in cross-border livelihoods with their legal and economic status mostly excluded from both domestic and international protection scheme. Throughout the study, the researcher positioned oneself as the academician from the university facilitating the collaborative transdisciplinary efforts with non-academic institutions and the community.

At this stage, the identity of researcher as Myanmar women speaking Burmese language and hands-on experience of the oppressions, as lived through the military coup in Myanmar for eighteen months and as part of the migration to post-conflict migration in Thailand under the same legislative structure, played as the key role to build connection with the interviewees. Working position with legal aid organizations advocating rights for urban refugees and migrant workers helped gain the trust of this insecure population mainly through receiving the questions back from the respondents and help providing legal consultations or the service providers information to them; not merely asking them the questions that the researcher has intended for. Also, the context experience from humanitarian works in borderland before the academic fieldwork as crisis psychological first aid responder helped researcher equipped with 'do no harm' concept and extended psychosocial support for the participants throughout the time in field. However, the positionality of researcher remained as an outsider onlooking the specific and broader context.

3.4. Ethical Issues

As the study focused on human respondents, ethical considerations were put in highest regards. Ethical approval for this research was done under Cologne International Forum, as the researcher being visiting research fellow at University of Cologne (Universität zu Köln), through International Research Cluster “Conflict-induced displacement and socio-economic resilience: Learning from neglected conflicts in Cameroon and Myanmar”. The fieldwork and methodology measures have been reviewed under the project “The socio-economic integration of migrants and refugees from Myanmar living in the border region”.

Throughout the fieldwork and for triangulation efforts before and after the time in field, integrity, objectivity, due diligence, and transparency of researcher’s positionality were upheld with professional behavior and due respect towards interviewees, participating actors, stakeholders and communities. Upon the introduction, the academic position was made clear as a postgraduate student under Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University acting as a fieldwork coordinator for the University of Cologne’s international research cluster and student researcher under Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM-CE) under Institute of Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University. Professional position of the researcher was also clarified as an intern/researcher at Labor Law Clinic of Human Rights and Development Foundation in Mae Sot with continued focus on urban refugees as a legal advocate for Asylum Access Thailand in Bangkok.

All the sessions with interdisciplinary actors were carefully framed to avoid any possible repercussions to the participating personnel and were proceeded with informed consent and confidentiality communicated with each person and respective body. The intended academic use of this study as thesis paper and publication was explicitly clarified before requesting the appointment, at the start of interview, and after concluding the session to again confirm with the level of anonymity and confidentiality that the organizations and people prefer.

Each in-depth interview participant was required to provide consent before and end of the session. Full anonymity was promised with regards to high-risk situations that the population live in, and thus, the participant names have been coded with just very

basic general demographic characteristics. All the interviewees were made fully aware that the participation is completely voluntary, and they have free choice to decide whether they join the interview, not respond to some questions, allow for pause during the discussion, stop at any time or to not consent all/some part of their responses being used in the research. Researcher ensured that both the voice recordings (if any) and journal are accessible to the researcher alone and such will not be put into any free or encrypted cloud storages to avoid data breach. Only the research findings and analyzed data will be shared with others that anonymity is highly and strictly ensured by not asking about name or personal information of the respondent at any stage of the study as well as informing the deletion of their contact information from researcher's devices at the end of the session.



CHAPTER IV

POPULATION IN EXILE: STRUGGLES AMIDST INTENTIONAL DISREGARDS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the first sub-question of the thesis to understand how the marginalized identities - ‘displaced’ ‘Myanmar’ ‘migrant worker’ ‘women’ - of the focused case study population are creating intersectionality in structural context. This is tested through human security lens taken as political and economic (in)securities based on the displaced population from Myanmar in cross-border setting of Thailand, especially in Mae Sot area, is experiencing at the time of research. The findings of this chapter are mainly extracted through the intended transdisciplinary efforts as the researcher worked with Bangkok-based legal aid organization for urban refugees and asylum seekers in Myanmar response team; and also practically involved with team of labor rights lawyers on the ground in Mae Sot meeting several actors in various disciplines.

The purpose of this chapter is to shine the light on complex situations on the ground that not most may have expected shining light through policy/institutional level gaps. Later in the chapter, the categories of displaced population will be explored with observed commonality in political and economic status using the case study findings, however, the important thing to note is that, not one individual will have the remotely similar status with another individual in the same category for many may belong to different categories at the same/varying times.

4.2. Types of displacement: (in)security in country of origin Myanmar

The push factor is identified as the military coup d'état that took place on 1st February 2021 and the events following that. The day was intended to be the first day of parliamentary sessions following the 8 November 2020 General Elections but the heads of state and cabinet members of winning party in office at the time were detained by the security forces overnight just a few hours before the new parliament session was set to be convened. Later in the morning, the military-appointed First Vice

President, claiming the authority of President, declared the State of Emergency invoking Article 417 of the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar basing on alleged voter fraud of the winning party in incumbent sovereign positions as sufficient reason threatening the Union's disintegration (Alexander, 2021).

Push Factor	Reason of Displacement	Positionality
Events following 2021 Coup	Degree of involvement in Spring Revolution	a) Political Position
a) Direct Political (in)Security	a) Active Players	i. Temporary Asylum Seekers in Mae Sot
b) Political to Economic (in)Security	i. Political Activism ii. Non-violent Resistance iii. Anti-junta Administration iv. Armed Defense Network	ii. Asylum Seekers seeking for resettlement/reloca tion
	b) Passive Victims	b) Economic Position
	i. War-torn/Border Population	i. Seeking Temporary Shelter/Survival in
	ii. Poverty/Economic Refugees	ii. Seeking Labour Market Integration Opportunities

Table 3. Identifying push factors and positionalities as seen from field observations

4.2.1. 2021 Coup D'état: Events contributing to displacement and reasons of cross-border decision

The 2021 military coup in Myanmar marked a significant turning point in the country's political landscape and had far-reaching consequences for its citizens. The military coup led to severe violations of rights, including the suppression of freedom of speech, assembly, and expression. Tatmadaw not only imposed restrictions on the media and social platforms but also set up data firewalls and internet shutdowns further curtailing citizens' access to information. Authoritarian oppression became prevalent in Myanmar following the coup, as the military took control of the government, dissolved the elected civilian government, and detained political leaders,

activists, and journalists. Whoever suspected of participation in protests or expression of opinions against the coup either on the ground or on social media are being put under surveillance putting them at risk for midnight checks at home by security forces, being stopped on the road for checking mobile devices and belongings, taken into custody at closet police station for questioning or even worse to unnamed interrogation centers.

Political (in)Security

The oppression was based on the legislative grounds that SAC has since amended including the arbitrary suspension of sections 5, 7, and 8 of the Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens eroding basic protections for individuals; insertion of a new provision 'Section 505A' under Penal Code making any comment or act causing hatred, disobedience or disloyalty toward the military and the government is imprisonable; significant broadening of the provisions on 'treason' in Section 124 of the Penal Code for any criticism, incitement or disloyalty against the security forces; revoking the need of warrant for specific crimes through amending Code of Criminal Procedure; and increasing surveillance on ground and on internet through amendments to the Ward or Village Tract Administration Law and Electronic Transactions Law (HRW, 2021).

The regime's repressive measures and the subsequent human rights abuses led to a significant deterioration of the political security situation, driving people out of their own homes and everyday space, eventually pushing them to seek safety in ethnic-controlled liberated areas or in neighboring countries. The brutal crackdowns on peaceful protests and extreme oppression and coup exacerbated existing civil wars and conflicts within Myanmar, resulting in increased violence and loss of locality. Ethnic minority groups, who had already experienced discrimination and marginalization for decades, had to face heightened insecurity as the military crackdown intensified. Displacement and loss of homes and belonging communities pushed many individuals to consider migration as a means of escaping the devastating consequences of civil wars.

Political to Economic (in)Security

The retrogression of financial systems following the coup had severe economic implications for the people of Myanmar. International sanctions, restrictions on banking services, and the disruption of trade severely impacted the country's economy. The loss of investor confidence and the withdrawal of foreign direct investment resulted in job losses and a decline in economic opportunities. Consequently, individuals faced increased economic insecurity, further motivating them to seek better prospects elsewhere through migration. The coup also contributed to the rise of depression and dirty businesses in Myanmar. The political instability and the Tatmadaw's grip on power created an environment conducive to corruption, illicit activities, and the exploitation of vulnerable populations. The loss of lands due to military actions, confiscations, and forced evictions had a devastating impact on communities, leading to increased poverty. Many individuals relied on agriculture or lived in rural areas, and the loss of their lands and livelihoods left them without means to sustain themselves and their families. The resulting poverty and lack of basic necessities pushed many towards migration, hoping to find better economic prospects and support their families in alternative destinations. Understanding these factors is crucial for policymakers and organizations dealing with migration issues, as it underscores the importance of addressing the root causes and providing support to individuals affected by such circumstances.

Field Observation Results

This section outlines the reasons for displacement as seen in Mae Sot based on each person's degree of involvement in Myanmar's Spring Revolution, categorized into two main categories as active players and passive victims further broken down into political activism, non-violent resistance, anti-junta administration, armed defense, armed defense networks, war-torn/border population, and poverty/economic refugees.

- **Political Activism:** Individuals actively involved in defending human rights and advocating for justice faced increased risks and persecution following the coup. In addition to human rights defenders, the those engaged in political activism, including student leaders and (contesting)parliamentarians, became

prime targets for the military junta. More commonly seen groups in earlier months of coup also included not only those active on the ground but also those on digital landscape. In addition to individual identity, those working in pro-democratic organizations that actively opposed the military junta also found themselves at significant risk. Fearing arrest, detention, or violence, they sought refuge in Thailand even since the earlier months to avoid persecution and hopefully to continue their political activities in a safer environment.

- **Non-violent Resistance:** The forefront of this resistance is spearheaded by civil servants, or otherwise called gazette government officials, participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) to halt the authoritative mechanisms. The CDM is extended to students who boycotted military-controlled education, members of the public who tried to stop being a part of junta-manipulated schemes, and public figures who advocated the notion of CDM to many through their fanbases, professional platforms and art mediums. Such individuals and communities faced gradual increase in persecution over the months under act of treason and incitement for destabilizing the law and order.
- **Anti-junta Administration:** Later 2021, the revolution evolved from protests to the forming of more structured administrative institutions. Members of the National Unity Government (NUG), which served as a shadow civilian government, had to sought refuge abroad to continue their resistance efforts and provide an alternative leadership structure. For those involved in the administration or political pillars of minority ethnic liberated areas, otherwise known as Ethnic Revolutionary/Resistance organization (EROs) also had to sought personal safety and professional mobility outside of Myanmar. Around end of 2022, the arrival of individuals providing support to setting up of People's Administration Teams (PATs) majority Burmese liberated areas had to leave the country to provide governance and intel from a safe location. Such individuals would face high treason charges at the minimum and unimaginable level of violence if their profiles were made known.

- **Armed Defense:** The trickiest part of identifying the livelihoods of new entrants since coup is to follow the needs of those actively or passively involved in armed resistance. There are military personnel who defected from the Tatmadaw and joined the CDM – who, at the moment, some are waiting for third country relocation while others are not. Members of the People's Defense Force (PDF) established under the NUG take the cross-border migration either as an opening for temporary shelter to seek medical treatment and rehabilitation or as a way to shift focus on more sustainable resistance means. Self-commanded PDT (people's defense teams) or L-PDF/LDF (local people's defense force) or members may make similar choices but their networks and access to support mechanisms may be different making them more vulnerable. Given the sensitivity of the resistance and increasing air strikes against civilians, these people tend to be very low profile and not identifying so much as population integrating in host. Members of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) have been involved in armed defense against the oppressive regime for many decades that their means of temporary livelihoods sustainability seem more coordinated and less detectable. A rarely detected part of this may also include those of underground groups living under incognito identities for their activities encompass riskiest nature one could ever imagine.
- **Supporting networks in revolution:** Individuals providing financial, logistical or other support to the CDMers were also targeted by the military regime. Those individuals involved in collecting intelligence or insider updates on the military junta also faced significant risks. More severe persecutions have been witnessed since later 2022 for those individuals involved in coordinating or supporting the armed defense network against the military junta even if that was just monetary support. This may also involve spouses, family members and friends of those actively invested in the resistance. These people had to discreetly leave the country and sought safety in Thailand to continue their

supporting efforts and contribute to the resistance movement from abroad. But their role is barely detected for lack of profiles in the revolution.

- **Passive victims:** Other than those in revolution, there are families living in war-torn areas or along the border regions who face ongoing violence, displacement, and insecurity even before the coup. The military coup exacerbated these conditions, compelling many to seek safety and stability by migrating to other countries making them refugees due to poverty. In addition to visible loss of land or locality, the socio-economic consequences of the coup, including retrogression of financial systems, depression, and confiscation of assets, led to economic instability creating dire circumstances for many urban or rural population to see migration as a means to seek better economic security in other countries.

In conclusion, reasons for displacement varied depending on individuals' involvement in political activism, non-violent resistance, anti-junta administration, armed defense, armed defense networks, being part of the war-torn/border population, or seeking refuge as poverty/economic refugees. These intend to highlight the complexities and multiple dimensions of displacement resulting from the military coup and provide insight into the diverse challenges faced by individuals seeking safety and stability in Thailand.

4.2.2. Positionality as based on Political-Economic Factors

Following the reasons, the observed general categories of these displaced population from Myanmar who have recently relocated to Thailand in the aftermath of the 2021 military coup, could be put under two key aspects: political position and economic position depending on their current situation in.

Political Position

One group observed in consists of temporary asylum seekers who have fled Myanmar seeking safety and protection. These individuals are primarily driven by the immediate need to escape political persecution and violence in their home country. They often lack proper documentation and rely on the support of humanitarian organizations and

local networks to secure temporary shelter and basic necessities in Mae Sot or border areas.

Another group comprises individuals who have moved to Thailand with the intention of seeking resettlement or relocation to a third country. These individuals, often recognized as refugees, aspire to find a more permanent and secure environment where they can rebuild their lives. They actively engage with international organizations and agencies involved in refugee protection and resettlement processes.

Economic Position

Some individuals from Myanmar have relocated in Mae Sot due to poverty and economic reasons. They seek temporary shelter and survival opportunities in the town. These individuals may have faced significant economic hardships as a result of the coup, such as job loss, financial instability, or the inability to sustain their livelihoods. Their primary objective is to find a place where they can meet their basic needs and survive until they can explore better economic prospects.

Another observed group consists of individuals who have moved to Thailand in search of employment and integration into the local labor market. These individuals, often skilled or semi-skilled workers, hope to secure job opportunities in Mae Sot or elsewhere in Thailand that can provide them with a stable income and better economic prospects. They may face challenges related to language barriers, work permits, and competition in the job market.

The transdisciplinary study has revealed distinct groups of individuals from Myanmar who have recently migrated following the military coup. Understanding the positionality and motivations of these individuals is crucial for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and local communities in providing appropriate support and assistance. It is essential to address the specific needs of each group, ranging from legal protection and documentation for political asylum seekers to vocational training and employment opportunities for those seeking economic integration. By recognizing and responding to these diverse positions, efforts can be made to ensure the well-being and resilience of individuals from Myanmar who have sought refuge in Thailand.

4.2.3. Political and legal insecurities: displaced population from Myanmar

This section is based on the retold narratives and status of 21 in-depth interviewees who are all women of ages from 16-71 of different ethnicity and religious roots with varying experiences of geographical, education and economic backgrounds.

Reasons of Displacement	Mobilization Routes	Current Documentations
17 - Political Activism	4 - border trade cargos	3 - no ID at all
9 - Non-violent Resistance	12 - night-time river crossing	11 - invalid passport
5 - Anti-junta Administration	1 - air travel	4 - Myanmar ID/ border pass
3 - Armed Defense Network	1 - MoU green channel	7 - monthly police card
7 - War-torn/Border Population	2 - border pass	5 - pink card only
11 - Poverty/Economic Refugees	1 - other transport	1 - pink card+CI/passport
		1 - non-Thai tribal ID
		1 - student ID

Table 4. Case study findings on reasons of displacement, mobilization routes and legal status

As seen in the table above, there is no specific category for each person to be classified. The rapid shifts in the revolution landscape have pushed many people to face turning points over several occasions. Of course, some people had been vocal and active in the pro-democracy movements either through institutions or as activists. However, many of the people from urban origins such as Yangon, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, Mawlamyaing and Bago retold their narratives as going out on the streets to join the protesting mass as they were burning with anger towards the coup. Some of these protestors identify themselves as politically unaffiliated civil servants or non-members of political-minded unions but happened to have joined or incited the non-violent resistance. And with the forming of NUG, some of those former civil servants have voluntarily joined the relevant ministries to help facilitate – which some are categorized as democracy defenders together with former members of parliaments by international donors. And there is also overlapping identities for youth activists of

specific expertise backgrounds including not limited to technicians, artists, publicists and photo/videographers or human rights defenders later involved in armed resistance networks or pushed into the economic refugees as their assets getting confiscated.

With each person's narrative being high-context and their choices of identity over the past two years have been inspirational yet risky, the main reasons of displacement have been extracted by exactly identifying the time of their decision-making to finally cross the border. Even then, some people have expressed two or more reasons happening at the same time due to the thin line of identification for the tasks that they themselves do as well as based on their family members' or friends' involvement. When looked at the mode of border crossing, those have family or friend connections with migrant worker communities came along with border trade cargos officially crossing the gates since late 2020. And since many of them retold their experiences of moving from places to places with some ending up in Lay Kay Kaw and surrounding locations until December 2021 raids (Frontier, 2022), the point of time for fleeing across the border only allowed for illegal river crossing. Only one interviewee who came to Mae Sot in 2022 as to meet the family member in refuge used official air travel but, at this moment, she is also an illegal alien for not being able to secure a job offer or afford for student visa. And later in 2022, economic migrants without warrants on their backs have started using green channels as MoU workers but most of them move further into other parts of Thailand and now new entrants have started using border pass as a way to cross the border.

4.3. Status as irregular migrant: (in)security in host country

Thailand, as a host country for refugees and asylum seekers, presents unique challenges due to its non-signatory status to the 1951 Refugee Convention. This prologue provides an overview of the legal framework governing refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, emphasizing the absence of specific domestic legislation for their protection.

Thailand has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, and consequently, refugees and asylum seekers are subjected to the general Thai Immigration law. This means

that individuals entering the country illegally can be arrested under immigration law, with their legal status determined by the type of visa they hold. This is a significant concern for asylum seekers and even those recognized refugees, as the absence of specific legislation means that they are still considered aliens who are residing illegally in Thailand. Thai authorities do not differentiate between asylum seekers, refugees, and other foreigners without a valid visa; their primary focus is on the individual's legal status and possession of a valid visa. Asylum seekers and (un)registered refugees do not receive special protection under Thai law. Regardless of their status with UNHCR or any other third country, the absence of specific legislation leaves them vulnerable to legal repercussions and potential removal from the country.

Thai immigration law plays a crucial role in determining the legal status of asylum seekers and guiding the operational procedures relating to urban refugees. It is important to recognize that even with a refugee status, individuals do not automatically have the right to legally remain in Thailand. Under immigration law, they are still considered as aliens staying illegally in the country. Thailand's non-signatory status to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the absence of domestic legislation specifically addressing the protection of refugees and asylum seekers contribute to a complex legal landscape. The Thai authorities prioritize adherence to immigration law, focusing on individuals' possession of valid visas rather than considering their asylum-seeking or refugee status. Consequently, asylum seekers and recognized refugees lack special protection within Thailand's legal framework. Understanding these challenges is crucial for policymakers, organizations, and individuals working towards ensuring the rights and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand.

4.3.1. Criminalized under Immigration Act

Section 4 of Immigration Act, B.E. 2522 (1979) defines any person who is not of Thai nationality under the nationality Act as "aliens". The execution power of this Act is vested in Ministry of Interior as stipulated in Section 5.

All aliens, regardless of nationality or status, will be considered a criminal when committed any offense under this act and, therefore, shall abide by the criminal justice process.

The common charges for Myanmar nationals include:

- Lack of documentation: not having a genuine and valid passport or documentation in lieu of passport such as certificate of identity or border pass.
- Illegal entry: not crossing the official immigration check points meaning not having an exit stamp from Myanmar side and entry stamp from Thai side.
- Illegal stay: not having a valid visa or stay permit in lieu of visa unless eligible under bilateral visa exemption (only air travel is applicable for Myanmar nationals)
- Overstaying: either holding an expired visa beyond the stamped date or staying on an invalid work permit without an employer for more than fifteen days

In the case of Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot, border migration has become a normalized day-to-day event due to the geographical proximity of the region. Mae Sot, located near the Thailand-Myanmar border, serves as a primary entry point for many individuals seeking refuge or better economic opportunities. The regular movement of people across the border has resulted in a certain level of acceptance and familiarity within the local community. Moreover, due to limited knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of legal entry procedures, many migrants are unaware of the specific legal requirements for crossing the border. As a result, the distinction between illegal and legal entry becomes blurred, contributing to a prevailing perception that border migration is an ordinary and unremarkable occurrence in the daily lives of both migrants and the local population. This normalization of border migration in Mae Sot highlights the complex socio-geographical dynamics that shape migration patterns and the challenges in enforcing strict legal boundaries in regions characterized by fluid border movements.

The Myanmar people seeking refuge in Thailand following the 2021 coup faced significant challenges in utilizing legal entry points, even if they possessed passports. Firstly, the pandemic-induced border lockdowns posed a major obstacle to their ability to cross the border through official channels. The restrictions on movement, implemented to control the spread of COVID-19, limited the accessibility of legal entry points, making it difficult for individuals to seek refuge in Thailand through established procedures. Secondly, the fear of arrest upon exit from Myanmar deterred many from attempting to leave through airports or other formal checkpoints. Given the political instability and oppressive regime in Myanmar, individuals were apprehensive about being targeted or detained by authorities, either while departing the country or upon arrival in Thailand. These dual concerns of pandemic-related border closures and potential arrest at official entry points compounded the challenges faced by Myanmar people seeking refuge in Thailand, pushing them towards alternative and often irregular migration routes to ensure their safety and security.

The commonly found cases would be those with migrant worker networks crossing the border with cargos (as manual labors) as the border trade resumed since around October 2020 (Pinitwong, 2020). While the Ministry of Labor announced Thailand was ready to resume the importation of waitlisted and new MoU migrant workers in November 2021, the initial COVID-19 precautionary criteria and quarantine measures splitting the workers into green, yellow and red groups did not favor those economic migrants suffering from poverty and lack of access to vaccination at the time. The official movement of migrants was only gradually resumed following the lifting of quarantine measures in June 2022 for MoU migrant workers coming through bilateral channels (Post Reporters, 2022). Even with that, the land border crossing gates in Tak were not fully reopened until January 2023 for all migrants crossing to and from Myanmar (TAK(NNT), 2023). Seeing that incidents of political persecution was visible since first half of 2021, severe economic and health poverty inflicted on vulnerable population in third quarter of 2021 as the blow of third wave of COVID-19 hit the country, and brutal armed oppressions witnessed since second half of 2021

before quick escalation into full blown civil wars in 2022, such prolonged border lockdown limited the options for those political and economic migrants from Myanmar to cross the border.

Constantly under threat of arrest, detention and deportation

Myanmar displaced population, faced with limited options, had to resort to risky methods such as crossing the Thai-Myanmar border through the river at night to reach Mae Sot. These perilous journeys involve navigating treacherous waters under the cover of darkness, with the constant fear of being detected and shot by soldiers guarding the border. The people are acutely aware of the risks they face, as the border is heavily patrolled and the consequences of being caught can be severe. However, driven by desperation, they had to take these dangerous routes, hoping to find refuge and opportunity in Thailand. But upon arriving to Thailand, they face with totally different situation where the host country alienated them and criminalize them for illegal entry while they did not have other choices. These people were faced with misery as to the refugee agency UNHCR not providing any kind of documentation remoting securing their status even if they are not fully protected under Thai legal system.

Amongst a range of political and legal insecurities in Thailand, the people become totally powerless particularly when they come into contact with the judicial pillar. When Myanmar migrants are arrested by police, their political insecurity is evident. However, the arrested individuals have certain rights, including the right to an interpreter, the right to call a lawyer, and the right to call a friend or relative. At the court trial stage, undocumented migrants have the support of a lawyer who can accompany them – at which stage the legal aid organizations come in and provide assistance or representation as necessary. But they are to face court trials while in custody for bail inapplicable due to their lack of legal visa status.

As with usual proceedings, court always presents two options: pleading guilty or pleading not guilty. Pleading guilty may result in a reduced penalty sentence; but if not, the examination of evidence and witnesses can prolong the trial process

depending on the complexity of the case. Upon receiving the penalty, such as a fine, the court also orders that the offender cannot remain in Thailand. Most of the times, people misunderstood the penalty and thought they would be released after serving the sentence in jail or settling the monetary penalty (usually THB 500 per night of imprisonment) but this was proven to be a mere obtuseness.

After the court trial, immigration police assume custody of the individual for deportation purposes. The detained migrants are sent to immigration bureau near Thai-Myanmar friendship bridge for immediate repatriation – usually within a week. However, for cases with the person expressing concerns of safety to be repatriated given the political or armed conflict situations or for those where critical consideration was given on non-refoulement involving informing the UNHCR and submitting a letter to immigration officers, as mandated by Section 54 Clause 3 of the Immigration Act, these people are transferred to immigration detention centers (IDC) either in Mae Sot or in Bangkok suspended from deportation and wait until ready for transfer to another country as regulated under the act.

The IDC serves as a place of detention prior to deportation. While this detention is not part of the punishment under the criminal justice process but rather a step towards deportation, people fear this the most for its prolonged and indefinite term of confinement. Detainees have access to legal advice from lawyers during their time in IDC, however, under the pandemic measures, such rights were rarely accessible with not only the legal aid organizations but also the protection officers of UNHCR were limited of access to IDC. The lack of transparency and restrictions to legal assistance and support services further exacerbates the vulnerability of detainees in IDCs while these people from Myanmar do not hold a recognized refugee status. Additionally, the absence of a formalized system for processing asylum claims or conducting individual assessments creates a situation where people are caught in a state of limbo, uncertain of their future and unable to pursue a durable solution.

In addition to a hardly plausible option for Myanmar detainees of being relocated to a third country, such a chance to be bailed out is also very limited given the fact that

access to lawyers is limited and the procedures, especially in Mae Sot IDC, for non-refugees is quite vulgar. To be bailed out, a person not registered with UNHCR better be belonged to certain vulnerable groups, such as mothers with children, detainees with severe medical conditions, elderly detainees, detained fathers with children outside IDC. Even when the bail is considered, there comes another burden of securing a Thai guarantor and paying THB 50,000 to be allowed temporary residence in Thailand.

In Mae Sot situation, being a border town itself, the Burmese-speaking interpreters are easily accessible and such an identity of being a Myanmar national seems to have some advantage as well. However, the lack of protection from home country has contributed to any Myanmar migrant, when found out, being questioned, and thoroughly investigated oftentimes. And even for the human rights lawyers, if someone is working on displaced persons from Myanmar, they seem to be treated in a way of promoting refugees' presence.

4.3.2. Rejected of a status: Any glimpse of hope for protection?

Since around 2005, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has not been registering Myanmar refugees in Thailand for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) processing especially for those urban refugees. This means that UNHCR does not assess Myanmar refugees to determine their eligibility for recognition as refugees under the 1951 Convention. As a result, these refugees are not granted recognized refugee status at the moment. This situation has persisted even after the military coup in Myanmar in 2021. Additionally, UNHCR's resettlement program for Myanmar refugees in camps has not been operational since the democratization process in Myanmar.

Instead, UNHCR in Thailand has been providing limited assistance to Myanmar refugees, primarily through protection counseling over the phone for specific cases and offering support to individuals arrested under non-refoulement principles. However, the scope of UNHCR's work and assistance in these circumstances remains

unclear and lacks specificity. Many individuals face difficulties in reaching UNHCR or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for support and guidance.

UNHCR advises newly arrived Myanmar refugees in Thailand to notify them of their presence. While UNHCR cannot register individuals from Myanmar for the RSD process at the moment, they may be able to engage in negotiations with authorities in the event of arrest and deportation, providing an additional layer of protection. The contact information for UNHCR is available on PowerPoint slides for reference.

In the meantime, UNHCR reaches out to Myanmar refugees through phone contacts to gather their personal information and offer general protection advice regarding their status in Thailand. However, the lack of registration and RSD processing leaves Myanmar refugees in a state of uncertainty and without official recognition of their refugee status, limiting their access to essential rights and assistance.

Overall, the current situation highlights the challenges faced by Myanmar refugees in Thailand and the limitations of UNHCR's capacity to provide comprehensive support. There is a pressing need for improved mechanisms and expanded assistance to ensure the protection and well-being of Myanmar refugees and to address their long-term solutions and prospects for a secure and dignified future.

4.3.3. Political (in)Security leading to second exile

When attempted to examine the correlation between the delayed implementation of National Screening Mechanism under Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister On the Screening of Aliens who Enter into the Kingdom and are Unable to Return to the Country of Origin B.E. 2562 (2019) while the pandemic impacts have long been subdued and the significant influx of conflict-induced displaced population from Myanmar, the study also sheds light on the perceived brutality of the RTG, which criminalizes these individuals who are neither eligible for registration by the UNHCR nor protected from undignified confinement or deportation under yet another delayed enforcement of Anti-Torture Act officially known as Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act B.E.2565 (2022). This is an intersectionality seen through having a displaced status in exile and being a citizen of Myanmar where priority pushed back.

Discourse analysis has been conducted based on several integrated inputs from policy and rights advocacy groups, briefings from Coalition for the Rights of Refugees and Stateless Persons and Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand, as well as based 6th April 2023 event hosted by MWG, CRSP, MRN, The Reporters, TPBS on 'Thai Political Roundtable: Policy Surrounding Refugee and Migrant Workers' to explore possible reasons behind such intentional cruelty towards Myanmar's population in exile, including national security concerns, perceptions of the Thailand host community, the relationship between Myanmar and Thailand, and political tensions within Thailand.

The RTG adheres to the non-interference policy of the regional organization ASEAN, prioritizing solidarity and stability within the neighborhood. Thailand's interest lies in bringing the State Administration Council (SAC) and resistance forces to conflict resolution through dialogue, relying on ASEAN's five-point consensus. The Thai-Myanmar borderland's vulnerability to smuggling activities, including arms and resources, poses national security risks, particularly with organized crimes intensifying in the region. The Thai government may view "persons fleeing arrest" as noisy asylum-seekers creating instability, drawing from lessons learned during previous activism by Myanmar's political dissidents. Moreover, restrictions on UNHCR activities may be driven by the fear of resettlement programs creating a pull factor for asylum seekers, as Thailand shifted its focus from temporary solutions to regulating illegal immigration. Concerns also arise from refugees' involvement in resistance schemes and the potential for mass protests and public nuisances.

Negative perceptions of Thai communities towards high-skilled refugees, their lack of social integration, and the contest for non-3D jobs contribute to fears surrounding the integration of Myanmar migrants. Host communities expressed concerns about the struggling status of the job market, post-pandemic economic recession, and scarcity of resources. Historical animosities between Thailand and Myanmar, coupled with the portrayal of Myanmar people in Thai curriculum, contribute to unsympathetic behavior towards Myanmar refugees.

Thailand's reliance on Myanmar for energy, particularly in gas consumption, creates a significant power dynamic. The Yadana project and potential pipeline connections pose concerns over resource monopolies and maritime disputes. The economic and

anti-crime reliance within the golden triangle further complicates the relationship between the two countries. The bilateral relations between Myanmar and Thailand involve a give-and-take approach, including intelligence transfers. Thailand's political relationship with Myanmar centers around constitutional brotherhood, with both countries adopting military-dominated barriers to constitutional reforms.

Recognizing Myanmar's failed democracy through UNHCR's RSD reinitiation would indirectly admit Thailand's own unconstitutionality. Thailand's political fears also stem from digitalization trends in Ukraine and Myanmar wars, where coordinated efforts between Myanmar and Thailand's student/youth unions for democratic calls are not favored. Political power control and concerns about activists create a tense environment within Thailand.

The general elections results and pending power transfer in Thailand have been met with mixed views regarding their potential impact on the environment for Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers. While there is observed leniency towards migrant workers due to Thailand's economic reliance on them, the mention of illegal migrants in political agendas may hinder progress. Some political parties are consulting on future policies for migrant workers, but skepticism persists regarding any positive change for Myanmar refugees, especially with the fear of armed forces living on the Thai side.

To address these challenges, international pressure and condemnation are necessary to mitigate power reliance dynamics, overcome manipulation of refugee identities and promote notions of human rights are crucial steps towards resolving the protracted vulnerabilities limiting this huge population from accessing the right to work and dignity jeopardizing economic security score.

4.4. Labor market integration: (in)security of the working age

For individuals who have entered Thailand illegally, such as undocumented migrants from Myanmar, acquiring a high-skilled work permit becomes significantly challenging due to the restrictions imposed by the immigration act. The act explicitly alienates those who have entered the country illegally, rendering them ineligible for the work permit application process. Despite their capabilities and qualifications, these individuals are unable to access legal employment opportunities due to their

undocumented status. This creates a barrier that hinders them from fully integrating into the formal labor market and accessing higher-skilled job opportunities. As a result, they are often left with limited options, resorting to informal or low-wage work, which exposes them to exploitation and further perpetuates their vulnerable situation. The restrictions imposed by the immigration act contribute to the marginalization of undocumented displaced migrants, depriving them of the opportunity to utilize their skills and contribute meaningfully to the Thai economy.

4.4.1. Need for Job and Regularization

Thai employers have imposed strict requirements for migrant workers, particularly those from Myanmar, to have valid legal status or work permits in order to be hired. In response to this situation, the Thai government has introduced various amnesty programs through cabinet resolutions to address the issue of undocumented migrant workers. These programs allow employers to assist in registering their workers, but in reality, the workers themselves are often required to pay a significant amount of money to their employers and brokers to facilitate the work permit application and obtain a pink non-Thai identification card. Without sufficient financial means, these individuals are unable to change their legal status, creating a barrier to finding formal employment. This approach not only serves as a means of ensuring economic security but also contributes to political security.

The management of low and semi-skilled migrant workers in Thailand has always been complex and characterized by ad hoc solutions, often relying on cabinet resolutions. The only long-term policy in place has been the importation of workers through Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), which requires cooperation with the country of origin. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problems related to the legal status of migrant workers. To manage the situation during the pandemic, the Thai government focused on waiving measures, extending deadlines, and regularizing undocumented workers through the ad hoc mechanism of cabinet resolutions. The consideration of importing workers through MoU resurfaced later due to demands from the private sector.

Thailand made efforts between 2016 and 2018 to establish a comprehensive legal framework for managing labor migration, including the adoption of the Royal Ordinance Concerning the Management of Employment of Migrants. This framework was implemented alongside the MoU processes, which were designated as the official channel for migrant workers in 'elementary' occupations to enter Thailand. However, Section 64 of the Royal Ordinance provided an exception known as the border employment regulation, allowing employers to hire migrants in border areas on three-month visas. Nonetheless, due to the porous nature of Thailand's borders, the cumbersome and expensive processes involved in MoU registration, and the limited functionality of the border employment scheme, many migrant workers continue to enter Thailand irregularly.

In response to this ongoing challenge, the Thai government has relied on periodic regularizations and amnesties to address the issue of irregular migrant workers. Many migrants from neighboring countries, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, have taken advantage of these ad hoc amnesties and registration windows to obtain legal status. The waivers granted to migrant workers' legal statuses can be categorized into two types: those for workers who previously had legal statuses that ended due to changes in laws, and those for illegal smuggling or undocumented migrants. The numbers reflect the significant population affected by these policies, with a large number of migrant workers falling under the amnesty program initiated on 7 February 2023, totaling over 1.5 million individuals.

However, a significant number of migrants continue to work irregularly, either due to the short registration windows or the high fees associated with the registration process. For individuals who lack the economic means to pay employers and brokers to assist with work permit applications and non-Thai ID pink card processes, their legal status remains unchanged. This creates a situation where only those who can afford the expenses can attain legal status and seek employment. This practice of requiring migrant workers to cover the expenses of the registration process highlights

the intertwined nature of political and economic security. By ensuring economic security through legal status, the Thai government aims to maintain political stability.

4.4.2. Integrating into Informal Sectors

Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998) of Thailand (as amended in B.E. 2541 and B.E. 2553) provides certain protections for workers but has limitations when it comes to sectors available for foreigners to work. The act designates specific sectors in which foreign workers can be registered and obtain work permits, while other sectors are not open to migrant workers. Migrant workers are allowed to work in designated sectors that require specific skills and expertise, usually referred to as dirt, dangerous and demeaning jobs typically in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries, and certain service industries. The aim is to fill labor shortages in these sectors and contribute to the overall economic development of Thailand.

However, certain sectors are excluded from the scope of the provisions for foreign workers. For example, domestic work, which includes roles such as housekeeping, aging and childcare, is not open to migrant workers. This restriction often poses challenges for individuals seeking employment in these fields, as the demand for domestic workers is significant in Thailand. Similarly, the tourism sector, which is a major contributor to Thailand's economy, is not accessible for migrant workers under the act. Jobs in hotels, restaurants, and tourism-related services are typically reserved for Thai nationals. This limitation aims to protect local employment opportunities and ensure that Thai citizens benefit from the tourism industry's growth.

Mae Sot, a border town in Thailand, has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many factories and industries in the region have experienced a slowdown or temporary closure due to the restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus. This situation has had a direct impact on the employment opportunities for Myanmar migrant workers residing in Mae Sot.

The influx of new entrants from Myanmar, driven by the political turmoil and the military coup in their home country, has resulted in an excess of manpower in the area. However, due to the economic downturn and limited job opportunities, these

new arrivals have struggled to access formal sectors and regularize their status as migrant workers. As a consequence, they are unable to enjoy the legal protections and benefits that come with being officially recognized and registered migrant workers.

The formal sectors, such as manufacturing and construction, which were once the primary employers of Myanmar migrant workers in Mae Sot, have been severely affected by the pandemic. Many factories have scaled back their operations, leading to job losses and reduced opportunities for regular employment. The limited availability of formal sector jobs has further marginalized the newly arrived migrants, leaving them with limited options for sustainable income and employment stability.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that these migrants are unable to access legal channels to regularize their status. Without proper documentation and work permits, they are vulnerable to exploitation, low wages, and unsafe working conditions. Their lack of legal protection leaves them at the mercy of unscrupulous employers who may take advantage of their precarious situation.

Due to the lack of formal job opportunities and limited access to regular employment, many other migrants in Mae Sot are forced to seek income-generating activities within the informal sector. These activities often involve working in small-scale businesses, street vending, or day labor. In Mae Sot, these new high-skilled displaced population from Myanmar find themselves relying heavily on Burmese or Karen led community-based organizations (CBOs) and local non-governmental organizations (L-NGOs) to secure income and support their livelihoods. However, the nature of their employment in these informal sectors poses significant challenges in terms of regularization, obtaining legal documentation, and accessing social protections. While these organizations play a vital role in providing income-generating opportunities, the informal nature of the work poses obstacles to their formal recognition and protection. Without legal documentation or work permits, urban refugees face difficulties in obtaining the necessary social protections and benefits accorded to formal workers. They are unable to access healthcare services, formal education, and other essential social welfare programs. Without being able to care for these, the main concern of

people seeking economic security starts with freedom of mobility to travel to and from the workplace. Many have resort to obtaining police cards as a form of identity assurance. These cards, although not officially recognized as work permits, provide a sense of identity and minimal protection against arbitrary arrest and detention when stopped and check by Tak police. However, they do not grant the same rights and benefits as official work permits, leaving them in a precarious position if checked by immigration police or those from other provinces.

In some cases, people may be able to secure a legal status by "hiring a boss" – paying an employer to help register them as workers under a factory or a workplace. This process involves significant financial costs, with many often having to have paid substantial amounts from their limited life savings just to facilitate safe travel across the border in the first place cannot. This arrangement of paying to get a migrant worker status, while providing a semblance of granting a documented status allowing them to move freely in the province, not only does not guarantee access to formal employment but also is financially burdensome, exploitative especially due to unclear process, high reliance on the brokers, thus exacerbating the vulnerabilities of those in search for economic security.

4.4.3. Lack of feminization in policy nexus

The lack of consideration and acknowledgment of gender-specific issues and disparities within the policies and regulations of the country have been seen promoting equality on the surface and gender-blindness at the core as in certain laws, such as the Immigration Act, B.E. 2522 (1979) and the Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998), through closer examination. Wearing gendered intersectionality binoculars, it becomes visible that immigration act explicitly excludes undocumented migrants – which is the case for many of these Myanmar population in conflict-induced displacement – from accessing legal employment opportunities, regardless of their capabilities and qualifications. This restriction forces undocumented migrants, including many women, into informal or low-wage work, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and perpetuating their marginalized situation. By not considering the specific challenges faced by undocumented migrant women, the gender-blind policy

contributes to their economic insecurity and limits their ability to contribute meaningfully to the Thai economy as job sector limitations are set on very specific Thai-owned workplaces.

Additionally, the Labor Protection Act designates specific sectors where foreign workers can obtain work permits, excluding sectors such as domestic work and tourism that have higher demand for sociocultural skills possessed by women migrant workers. This limitation aims to protect local employment opportunities but restricts women migrant workers' access to job sectors with better job security and social protections. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation, as the economic downturn and border closures have limited job opportunities, making it challenging for newly arrived migrants, especially Myanmar women, to access formal sectors and regularize their status. As a result, many women migrant workers are forced into informal sectors with exploitative working conditions, low wages, and unsafe environments.

Waiver on migrant workers' legal status have been occasionally granted by Ministry of Labor as amnesty program considering COVID-19 consequences to ensure economic security for both the host businesses and migrant workers (Arunmas, 2023) as it did with cabinet resolutions dated 13 July 2021 (for documented but with expired status), 28 September 2021 and 5 July 2022 (to regularize undocumented), and the latest one dated 7 February 2023 (to extend validity until 31 July 2023). However, neither the legislative frameworks nor policy implementations laid down gender-reflective considerations in terms of labor market integration and job sector limitations.

In reality, not matter how much 'equal before law' concept is said or women-occupied garment sector is witnessed in Mae Sot, women are facing barriers to enjoy such status regularization programs which often require significant payments from the workers themselves to facilitate the work permit application process. This financial burden is indeed, especially women in housewife role seen less-appropriate for labor-intensive job markets, a dilemma for individuals lacking the economic means to change their legal status which further exacerbates their vulnerability and hindering their access to formal employment.

Moreover, the Labor Protection Act designates specific sectors where foreign workers can obtain work permits, while excluding others. Sectors such as domestic work and the tourism industry, which are significant sources of employment in Thailand, are not commonly accessible to migrant workers from Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. This limitation aims to protect local employment opportunities but restricts women migrant workers' access to job sectors with higher demand for their sociocultural skills. Consequently, many women migrant workers, especially those from Myanmar, are forced to seek employment in informal sectors with limited job security and social protections.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation for migrant workers in Thailand as the economic downturn and reduced international trade effected the operationality of existing workplaces. This situation in Tak province has been witnessed to be worse for the deacceleration of Mae Sot-Myawaddy Special Economic Zones and the border closures which is an intersectionality of pandemic and coup. Such limited job opportunities have made it challenging for newly arrived migrants, especially Myanmar women, to access formal sectors and regularize their status marginalizing these migrants, leaving them with limited options for sustainable income and employment stability.

Consequently, many women migrant workers, despite possessing high levels of education and skills, entered into informal work sectors barely making ends meet through manual day-to-day labor or other little to no secured working spaces. Limited access to formal sectors leads to lack of legal documentation and work permits; which prevents women migrant workers from accessing social protections, healthcare services, formal education, and other essential welfare programs. Without proper recognition and protection, these women are exposed to exploitative working conditions, low wages, and unsafe environments. Their economic insecurity is further compounded by the high fees associated with the registration process and the financial burden of obtaining a documented status. This underutilization of highly skilled individuals represents a loss for the host country undoubtedly. The lack of access to formal financial services further jeopardizes their economic stability and inhibits their ability to save, invest, and protect themselves against unforeseen circumstances.

4.5. Analysis and Conclusion: Intersectionality and Gender Blindness in Thailand's Policy Framework

Based on the exploratory analysis explained, it was seen that the intersectionality happened at several structural levels and in various forms. It is, of course, based on marginalized identities as conceptualized:

- The intersectionality of conflict as political insecurity in country-of-origin Myanmar – as it forced them out for migration – and lack of legal recognition and international involvement as another form of political insecurity as host country Thailand marginalized all displaced population in general.
- The intersectionality happened again as political and legal insecurity bar these population to get hired by the employers leading to economic insecurity as rights to work was not given any attention.
- In the context of economic insecurity, the intersectionality of COVID-19 pandemic induced depression and coup-inflicted border trade struggles have further limited all migrant workers to seek stable income.
- And in the structural situations, it is also seen that being a Myanmar national could also become an advantage rather than a vulnerability always as someone with some economic security can achieve political security through regularization when amnesty cabinet resolutions are made for neighboring four countries only.
- Lastly, the intersectionality is once again seen in the cases of women migrant workers being inaccessible to nature-gifted domestic care jobs for those to be in their official work permit as the sectors excluded all immigrant.

The plight of newly arrived Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot highlights the urgent need for comprehensive policies and support mechanisms to address their challenges. Efforts should be made to facilitate their regularization and provide pathways for safe and legal employment. This includes streamlining administrative processes, expanding the sectors open for migrant workers, and raising awareness about the rights and protections available to these new population out of the original migrant worker communities.

Furthermore, it is essential to strengthen collaboration between relevant government agencies, civil society organizations, and international bodies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). By working together, stakeholders can develop effective strategies to ensure the welfare and rights of Myanmar migrant workers, especially in times of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the political instability in Myanmar.

Throughout additional interdisciplinary inputs and working on the analysis part, the lack of feminization in Thailand's migrant labor workforce is serious of a concern. While there has been an increase in the overall feminization of the labor market in Thailand, it is true that migrant women workers particularly from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam countries often face specific challenges and barriers to formal employment and equal treatment due to gender-blind labor policies. While Thailand's labor policies claimed equality in front of the law and adherence to international human rights, these policies often fail to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrant women – especially those in displaced setting with political insecurities. Gender-blind policies do not consider the unique circumstances faced by migrant women, such as language barriers, limited access to information and resources, and their disproportionate responsibilities in caregiving and household work.

Such gender blindness in Thailand's policy framework, lack of efforts on streamlining administrative processes, and expanding migrant workers accessible formal sectors, welfare and rights of women migrant workers will continue to be limited to absent. Such an intersectionality of political and economic insecurity creates vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods as women struggles not only for themselves but also carry the burden of safeguarding the whole household.

CHAPTER V

ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS IN CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT

5.1. Introduction

Based on the general situations of intersectionality observed on the ground as laid down in the preceding chapter, this chapter further explored second sub- question of the thesis to understand ways through how we dig deeper into such intersectionality creating vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods. The adaptive responses through human agency were also touched upon the case study findings to understand the gaps in human security and how the population is silently suffering. The vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods through intersectionality of political and economic security mainly based on the in-depth interviews with Myanmar women; and to get basic understanding on roles of actors in resilience building for sustainable livelihoods as per the formal research and informal observation meetings with several organizations and communities in Mae Sot including AAPP, AWO, OIA, MAP, BA as well as in coordination workshops with Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child Rights, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Committee and Anti Human Trafficking Network consisting altogether 19 international and local (Thai/Burmese) helping such displaced and migrant populations with access to livelihoods, health, education and justice.

By delving into the lived experiences of Myanmar women, as gathered from in-depth interviews and casual conversations, the following session helps gain a deeper understanding of day-to-day struggles and vulnerabilities through the lens of the human security framework, and identify potential avenues for intervention using sustainable livelihoods assets to assess the resilience mechanisms. The human security framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the multidimensional challenges faced by individuals, households and communities. By considering the intersectionality of political and economic security mapped in detail in the previous chapter, vulnerabilities encountered by Myanmar women in cross-border displacement have been explored further as to how these

encompass the lack of legal protection, limited access to decent work, exploitation, and precarious livelihoods.

To assess the resilience mechanisms available, the sustainable livelihoods framework has been employed by analyzing the availability and effectiveness of five key assets - human, social, natural, physical, and financial - to extensively evaluate the capacity of women to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses. Human assets encompass individual's skills, education, and health which becomes critical for opportunities for skills development, quality education and affordable healthcare.

5.2. Marginalization creating insecurities: fears, burdens and shocks

The displacement of Myanmar people across the border into Mae Sot following the 2021 coup has brought about significant challenges to their livelihoods and overall well-being under an intersection of political and economic insecurities as discussed and stipulated in previous chapter as well as in the case study of twenty-one women migrant workers. As they navigate the complex dynamics of cross-border livelihoods, it becomes crucial to examine the vulnerabilities they face and the resilience they demonstrate in various dimensions of human security.

This introductory paragraph sets the stage for an academic exploration of the multiple facets of their experiences, specifically focusing on food security, health security, personal security, and community security. By understanding the dynamics of these dimensions, we can gain insights into the complex interplay between displacement, vulnerabilities, and resilience among the Myanmar population in Mae Sot, shedding light on the urgent need for support and intervention to safeguard their human security.

5.2.1. Surviving the crisis: fears, needs and wants

Marginalization of Myanmar women who are urban refugees and considered "illegal" in Thailand can create various insecurities and challenges, particularly in terms of their livelihoods. The research findings presented in this section shed light on the experiences of Myanmar women displaced migrant workers in Mae Sot, focusing on the insecurities they face as a result of marginalization within social structures through exclusion and/or oppression in policy frameworks, legislation scope, and institutional practices. The following context explores three key aspects that emerged

from the research starting with the fears surrounding exploitations and harassments that create personal insecurities for these women; the needs they have in terms of accessing quality healthcare, which are hindered by their lack of legal status and protections; and finally, the wants they express for equitable opportunities, as they often find themselves excluded and neglected within the existing political and economic systems. Understanding these findings is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies to address the multifaceted challenges faced by Myanmar women displaced migrant workers in Mae Sot.

5.2.1.1. Fear on exploitations and harassments: personal insecurities of women

As "illegal" refugees, Myanmar women living in urban areas in Thailand may constantly fear arrest and detention by immigration authorities. This fear hinders their ability to seek employment, engage in income-generating activities, or access essential services. The constant risk of being apprehended and detained undermines their sense of security and stability.

Regardless of whether they are under official MoU migrant worker visa status with a passport of

CI or had obtained some form of official regularization such as pink and green non-Thai ID card for migrant workers or pink and white non-Thai ID card for tribal people, all interviewees expressed a deep sense of wariness when venturing outside. The freedom of movement for individuals of Myanmar nationality in Mae Sot is constantly threatened, as police checks are a regular occurrence. In an attempt to mitigate the risks, individuals often resort to paying a monthly fee of 300-350 THB for a police card, which provides them with a sense of security when confronted by Mae Sot police during routine checks. However, this measure is ineffective when dealing with immigration police or police officers from outside the Mae Sot jurisdiction – not even Tak province, particularly those from the Bangkok metropolis temporarily stationed for anti-human trafficking or related projects.

It becomes worse for those without any proper political security. Having one of the documents (if valid) in below photos would keep these people from getting arrested

under immigration act, penalized, detained, and deported. However, as the findings showed, it is not possible for those without economic means – having either an employer in formal sector or enough finance to pay for the process. As discussed in food security part, many of these migrants are relying on THB 250 per month support that monthly THB 300 payment for a police card itself is beyond their scope not to mention THB 3,000-65,000 charges for different types of these documentations.



Figure 4. A migrant worker wearing “Power Rangers in Thailand” shirt. From left to right – blue Thai work permit, red Myanmar passport, Green CI book, purple temporary passport, pink non-Thai ID card [Photo taken from Thailand for Burma Facebook]

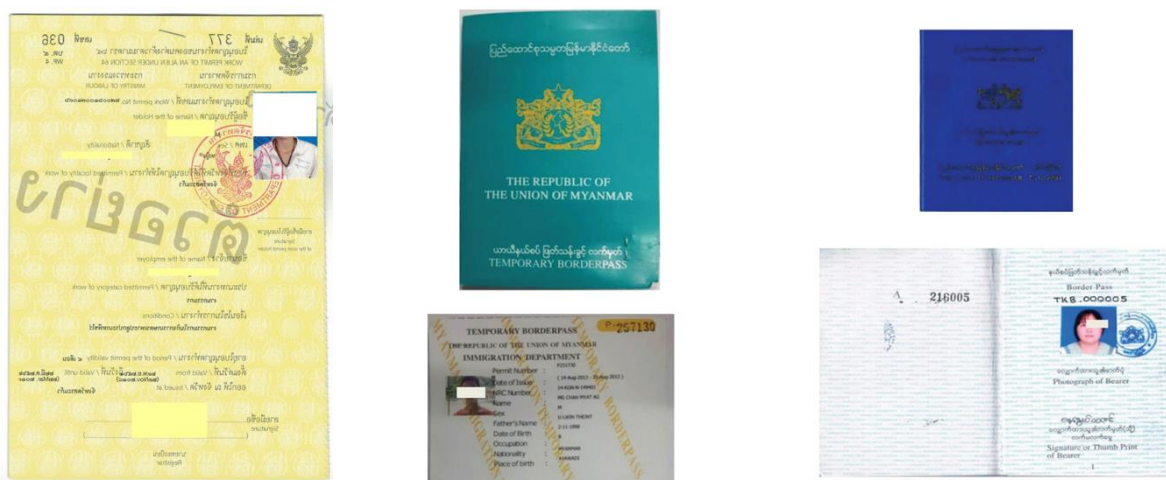


Figure 5. Other types of border pass documentation. From left to right – yellow section 64 seasonal workers, green temporary border pass, blue border pass [Photos from DOE letter no. 0029.132/7 dated 31 January 2019]

Two of the interviewees were arrested and penalized under aforesaid immigration act despite one has valid police card at the time of arrest. They could not negotiate better and were given a choice for voluntary repatriation after the court trails which their sentences were more or less satisfied with the days under judicial detention. Both of them could not afford anything for bail of such that one economic refugee immediately made up her mind to follow with voluntary repatriation as she did not have threat of immediate arrest if back to Myanmar side. The other who was arrested with her children could not decide on the spot and thus they were put in detention room for a week where she mentioned is a gender-mixed hall overcrowded with people of different nationalities put together. She and her children showed severe mental trauma after that experience and mentioned that some of the inmates were visibly suffering from psychiatric disorders due to prolonged detention without any certainty.

Also, there were cases of being questioned further simply for not wearing helmets properly or to checking bike or driver license which causes panic among the people. Those new arrivals in Mae Sot working with actors helping with the migrant or refugee populations in any way mentioned that they have also faced incidents of police checking the tool box and shopping packages probably on some occasions with

weapon smuggling intel, regardless, it is a serious concern for people that they already lack enough economic security for food and shelter that they would not be able to seek the help of interpreters who often ask ridiculously high amount of negotiation money from these frightened people. While three of the interviewees were retelling their experiences, they also mentioned that they had to tolerate flirts from police or the interpreters for them being vulnerable to those men's pity. Such harassments could be seen as same old power hierarchy stories but new addition to common domestic or gender-based violence issues.

The lack of a recognized legal status leaves these individuals vulnerable to scrutiny and potential apprehension by authorities, undermining their personal security and exacerbating their already precarious situation. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and inclusive policies that address the personal security concerns of undocumented migrants, ensuring their safety and protection within the community.

5.2.1.2. Needs to access quality healthcare: lack of status and protections

The undocumented status of Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot serves as a major barrier to accessing adequate healthcare. Without legal documentation, they face challenges in navigating the healthcare system and often find themselves excluded from social protections and public medical services. While the urban border city Mae Sot may not face significant environmental challenges compared to rural or disaster-prone areas, it is still important to address environmental security in a health and wellbeing sense beyond just climate-related issues. The observed environmental aspects that Myanmar migrant population face starts with air pollution from burning of fields during season as such prolonged exposure adversely affect pregnant women, children, and individuals with respiratory conditions. It is also worth noting that the focus may currently be on communicable diseases like COVID-19 and dengue for viral infections have been spreading just in time for monsoon and seasonal influenza crawled back in.

The interviews conducted with Myanmar women migrants revealed a concerning picture of individuals and their families grappling with various medical conditions. Among the interviewees, several reported having medical conditions themselves or caring for family members with chronic illnesses. Two respondents disclosed that they were dealing with

moderate to severe autoimmune diseases, which require ongoing medical attention and treatment. But the access to healthcare is not only limited but also barred as they fear to travel to the health facilities for notorious police checkpoints and arrests in proximity of Mae Tao Clinic or Mae Sot General Hospital even.

“Yes, there is one checkpoint close to Mae Tao Clinic. For me, I look just like typical Burmese with tanned skin. So, I dress like a maid and put Thanakha on before going there monthly. Fortunately, my home is not too far so I just do around twenty minutes bicycle ride. In that way, the police usually think I am normal poor migrant labor not a refugee.” - Interviewee R on 2 June 2023 (in-person)

Mental health and physical medical conditions are interconnected, and the impact of mental well-being on physical health cannot be overlooked. Stress and mental distraught can have adverse effects on the body, including the reproductive system. In the case of the twenty-one women interviewed, it was found that seventeen of them were experiencing menstrual issues, which can be attributed to the psychological burden they carry. Stress and emotional disturbances can disrupt hormonal balance, leading to irregular menstrual cycles, severe cramps, and other related symptoms.

Furthermore, four of the women had been diagnosed with serious gynecological problems that required medical treatments, regular follow-ups, and even surgical procedures. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive healthcare approaches that address both mental and physical well-being to ensure holistic care for individuals experiencing mental health challenges and related physical medical conditions. Further attention on this is crucial to better diagnose and provide healthcare for silent survivors developing targeted interventions that promote overall wellness.

“I tried to go to Mae Tao Clinic once but there was no medical doctor let alone OG [obstetrics and gynecology specialist]. I knew my conditions and it needs extensive treatment by now and they couldn't provide me that. And I don't have money to go to Mae Sot General Hospital as well. So, I will just have to rely on painkillers for now.” - Interviewee P on 28 May 2023 (in-person)

5.2.1.3. Wants on equitable opportunities: excluded and neglected

The economic security of refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, where their status is not recognized and access to formal work is inaccessible, relies on a combination of informal employment, financial support from family and community, humanitarian assistance, and the utilization of their skills and talents. These strategies help them navigate the challenges of limited economic opportunities and sustain their livelihoods in the absence of formal recognition and rights. However, it is crucial to

address the systemic barriers that hinder their access to legal employment and financial inclusion.

Marginalized Myanmar women may face significant barriers in accessing formal employment opportunities due to their legal status. This forces them into the informal sector where they may encounter exploitative working conditions, low wages, and job insecurity. The lack of legal recognition also restricts their ability to access social protection mechanisms, such as healthcare and social security benefits.

Limited access to formal jobs and debt bondage: The research highlights that access to formal employment is scarce for Myanmar women migrants who arrived after 2021. As a result, the issue of debt bondage for pre-departure costs, as commonly raised in MoU employer-tie scheme, was not commonly reported among this group. Their reliance on informal and low-wage jobs often leaves them with limited financial resources and exposes them to exploitative working conditions.

Addressing these insecurities requires comprehensive approaches that include legal recognition, protection, access to livelihood opportunities, and support services for marginalized Myanmar women in Thailand. This involves promoting their rights, combating discrimination, and ensuring their inclusion in policies and programs aimed at improving their livelihoods and overall well-being.

5.2.2. Access to food, shelter and basic necessities: burden of care in households

5.2.2.1. *Poverty, survival and availability of food*

The term extreme poverty (Gierszewski, 2017) is used by OECD economists to describe the life of persons who are unable to afford at least four out the nine expenses namely housing (rent, mortgage, bills), heating, regular consumption of meat or protein, holidays, possessing a washing machine, a telephone, a television set or a car, and being able to cover unexpected expenses noting that poverty combined with social inequality is the basic threat to human social security.

While food security encompasses availability, access, utilization, and stability of food for individuals and households, ensuring food security becomes even more critical for displaced populations forced to leave their homes due to conflict or other adverse circumstances. And for those who had to seek shelter in Mae Sot for more than just mere days, with the marginalization they suffered under the intersectionality of political and economic insecurities limiting their chances of making an income, meeting basic food needs becomes a significant challenge. Though the witnessed initiatives aim to address immediate food needs, the sustainability and long-term food

security of the displaced population remain a significant challenge that requires further attention and intervention.

Among the interview respondents, four women have expressed that they have relied on such food packages and three of them are still in need of any support even if it is just THB 250 per month under the name of her youngest child even though this amount is often insufficient to cover the basic food needs of a household, especially considering the rising costs of food and other essential items. Consequently, women, as primary caregivers, and household managers, bear the burden of ensuring their families' survival with meager resources. Several people interviewed or conversed who involved in political activism also mentioned receiving support from AAPP upon arrival, but many others said they did not apply for it as they either thought that support is for political prisoners only or waived the chance for those more in need. But the level of food security is still low given that many households have children and elderly who require additional nutrients more than just rice.

“I don’t have any mean to go out and find job as I don’t even have enough money to get police card. On every other day, those living together with us at this safe house cook extra portions for me and my two children. I feel bad so I try to contribute at least rice or cheap salad dishes and bring it on the table.”

- Interviewee C on 13 May 2023 (phone call)

5.2.2.2. Adequate, safe, and secure shelter

In the context of the Myanmar displaced population in Mae Sot, access to housing and shelter presents significant challenges. While urban settings may provide better infrastructure compared to rural areas in terms of environmental security, the lack of economic means and legal documentation becomes a major obstacle for individuals and families seeking adequate housing.

All of the interviewees expressed their concerns regarding the financial constraints that prevent them from affording decent housing. Limited job opportunities, low wages, and unstable income sources make it difficult to meet the high costs of rent in urban areas. As a result, they often struggle to secure suitable living conditions, forcing them into overcrowded or substandard accommodations such as a six-member family living with another three families in a village home. About one-third of the

people met, conversed or interviewed, they are relying on the safe houses that organizations provide under several different categories including but not limited to democracy defenders, freedom of expression activists, victims of domestic or other violence, etc. The uncertain situation of such safe houses in following months make them feel really unsettled as in case they are not eligible for next round of priority list, they may even have to consider extreme means such as illegally crossing back into Myanmar and seek free shelters in the jungles – liberated areas.

Another critical issue is the lack of legal documentation for those who still have any limited economic means to pay or share the rent. This also applies for non-displaced migrant workers or border population in general. Without proper identification or legal status, undocumented individuals may face challenges in renting accommodation as landlords are required to check official documents and proof of legal status before entering into rental agreements and report the stay of foreign nationals to the local immigration office within 24 hours of their arrival under TM30. The absence of such documents may lead to discrimination, exploitation, or even eviction, leaving many Myanmar displaced people without stable housing options.

5.2.2.3. Nature of care: heroines for households, communities and nation-states

The interviews conducted with Myanmar women migrants revealed a concerning picture of individuals and their families grappling with various medical conditions. Among the interviewees, several reported caring for family members with chronic illnesses. Common conditions mentioned included hypertension, diabetes, cardiac and coronary diseases, and arthritis.

“My husband and my mother both have hypertension with daily prescription, but my husband tries to keep himself fit through diet and exercise for we do not have money to buy medicines. For my mother, we have to set aside some money to keep the minimum required dosage.” Interviewee R on 2 June 2023 (in-person)

The health challenges extended beyond the adults, as children in these families were also affected. The lack of proper vaccination, not only for COVID-19 but for other preventable diseases as well, put the children at risk. The lack of proper

documentations as resulted through political insecurity limits these children from accessing to social welfare services and, thus, pushed out of the immunization programs.

“I gave birth to my son while in hiding. I crossed the border alone for his safety but he has not gotten any vaccination yet.” Interviewee W on 6 June 2023 (in-person)

Consequently, they sometimes suffered from illnesses such as pneumonia, dengue/malaria, or typhoid. Due to the financial constraints of undocumented status, the mothers had to resort to teleconsultations with Burmese doctors, purchasing medicines at pharmacies out of their own pockets, and nursing their children at home as seeking hospital care was often unaffordable for these families which forced them to manage the illnesses to the best of their abilities within their limited resources.

Beyond the household levels, Myanmar women also carry the burden of care for the community. Being unsung heroines, they

The findings highlight the critical need for accessible and affordable healthcare services for undocumented migrants, particularly for individuals with chronic diseases and vulnerable children who require proper medical attention and preventive measures.

5.3. Exploring livelihood resilience: adaptive response mechanisms

Exploring resilience through livelihood capitals tests the various resources that individuals and communities can utilize to improve their livelihoods and achieve greater security. The population in Mae Sot under the marginalized structural conditions may draw upon different livelihood capitals of their own at individual or community levels to remedy the shocks in urgency and to still get resilience through adaptation.

This section examines what are the capacities of women in case study and which adaptive resources they are currently using for the cross-border livelihoods. This is additionally implemented by their current employment status as a (potential) migrant worker to understand the labor market integration chances in the structural conditions and how they try or plan to integrate into workforce.

Former Occupations	Adaptive Resources	Employment Status
2 - Higher Education Academics	3 - rely on family remittances	4 - (informal) working in
3 - Basic Education (CDMers)	4 - rely on personal savings	Myanmar CBOs

2 - Healthcare (CDMers)	2 - rely on spouse	3 - (informal) working on pro-
2 - Democracy Defenders	4 - rely on CBOs	democracy projects
2 - Human Rights Defenders	5 - joined TVET trainings	3 - (informal) remote digital
1 - Corporate Staff	4 - entrepreneurial work	4 - (informal) entrepreneur
2 - Farming/Cultivation	6 - employed by Myanmar	2 - (informal) Thai employer
2 - Factory workers	6 - employed by Thai	4 - (formal) Thai factory
2 - Entrepreneurs		1 - student
2 - Housewife		
1 - Student		

Table 5. Case study findings on former occupations of interviewees, adaptive resources in use, and currently employment status in Mae Sot, Thailand

5.3.1. Women as actors of change: utilizing livelihood capitals amidst uncertainties

5.3.1.1. Human Capital

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of individuals. Organizations working with Burmese refugees in Thailand may provide vocational training programs to enhance their employability and income-generating potential. The pivotal role of human capital in shaping the livelihood strategies of Myanmar women facing challenging circumstances should not go unrecognized as this capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that individuals possess and can utilize to generate income and sustain their livelihoods. Being down in the field revealed a range of ways in which Myanmar women leverage their existing knowledge and expertise to overcome economic hardships through several means as follows:-

Informal virtual jobs: One significant strategy observed is the utilization of digital means to engage in informal online jobs. Women leverage their existing knowledge and skills to provide services such as data analytics and digital marketing or other remote jobs of their former or newly found connections. By capitalizing on their human capital, they can secure income-generating opportunities even in the absence of formal employment structures.

Utilizing expertise in informal way: In some instances, Myanmar women, especially those formerly worked under bureaucratic organs of the country before joining in civil disobedience movement, find themselves working in little or no wage jobs under similar administrative organs of the National Unity Government (NUG). Despite the lack of financial compensation, they continue to contribute their skills and knowledge, recognizing the importance of their continued usefulness within their communities and the greater good.

Entrepreneurial micro businesses: Another livelihood strategy observed is the establishment of micro home businesses, such as meal box services or catering, based on the culinary skills that they possess. Women leverage their gastronomic expertise to meet the demands of the local community especially those who misses the taste of warm home cooked meals and authentic cuisines of specific ethnicity. These micro home businesses provide flexibility and enable women to contribute to household income while utilizing their culinary knowledge.

Becoming educators or social workers: Myanmar women with diverse educational backgrounds, not only those formerly worked as gazette teachers or academicians, often engage in teaching roles at migrant learning centers or within their communities. They leverage their educational qualifications to impart knowledge and contribute to the education and development of individuals amidst the education gap which many have continuously suffered since pandemic times. Additionally, some women volunteer or work through Burmese-led humanitarian aid organizations, utilizing their skills for rights-based development initiatives.

Daily wage jobs for survival: For women with skills related to farming or agriculture from their home country, taking up daily wage offers becomes a viable option despite such odd jobs being available only on seasons. The agricultural sector in Mae Sot has been an access to (semi)formal employment but yet more stable offers go to males leaving women with flowers or corn picking stuff. That being said, their efficiency in these occupations may be limited due to unfamiliarity with local agricultural practices and other factors. Interviewee K said “an experienced migrant worker could made 400 baht per day from corn picking job but since we have not been in proper agricultural occupation before so we barely make 40 baht per day.” Furthermore, older women or

those with medical conditions may hesitate to engage in physically demanding jobs, fearing the potential financial burden of medical bills if something were to happen.

Skill development for formal employment: Recognizing the demand for specific job skills in Mae Sot, some women actively pursue learning opportunities, such as sewing and knitting, to enhance their employability. By acquiring these demanded job skills, they aim to secure formal employment that offers stability and better wages. This strategy enables them to diversify their income sources and improve their economic prospects.

These findings demonstrate the resilience and resourcefulness of Myanmar women as they navigate uncertain times by leveraging their human capital. However, it is important to recognize that challenges and limitations exist, such as limited income in certain jobs and concerns about healthcare expenses for those with medical conditions.

5.3.1.2. Financial Capital

Through examining the financial capital of Myanmar women migrants and the strategies they employ to sustain their livelihoods in a new and often challenging environment, this study aims to shed light on the diverse financial resources and assets that these women utilize to support themselves and their families in their host community of Mae Sot. Based on in-depth interviews and casual conversations with Myanmar women migrants, this research explores the different dimensions of financial capital and its implications for their livelihood resilience as follows.

Reliance on personal savings: The research findings indicate that 80% of the interviewees heavily rely on personal savings, including gold and jewelry assets they carried with them during their migration journey. These savings serve as a crucial safety net and are often used to cover the costs of safely crossing the border or for emergency health-related expenses. They mentioned that these are being kept, without immediately dissolved for use as business capital, as the last resort not only because of the sentimental value but also as possible safeguard in case of arrest or other security issues.

Microenterprises and income-generating activities: Many of the women migrants with accumulated household savings choose to invest in income-generating activities. Burmese restaurants and grocery stores are observed as common business ventures

among this group. The findings suggest that these microenterprises provide a source of sustainable income and contribute to their overall financial stability. However, such businesses are often managed with their spouses or male colleagues together as a personal security measure as well as for smoother logistics purpose.

Family inheritance and loans: Economic refugees, particularly those who migrated through secure channels, often rely on family inheritance or sell ancestral farmlands to secure financial resources. Some also take loans from neighbors, with family members taking responsibility for monthly interest payments. This strategy allows them to finance their migration and initial settlement expenses.

Remittances from family members: This is not uncommon scenario for those in Thailand living in protracted refugee crisis. Especially for younger student activists and migrants, their elder family members working in other cities provide financial support through remittances. This support enables them to pursue interim education while in Thailand and contributes to their overall financial well-being. Sometimes, for those women living with their spouses engaged in migrant occupations such as farming, market cargo loader or night guard, rely on their spouses for a more stable income but that was said to be unimaginable to cover the whole household expenditures.

While above are listed out as individual and household's financial capital, the study reveals that many women migrants rely on social safety nets for their livelihood challenges. Cash support programs provided by organizations like the AAPP or OIA, along with health insurance reimbursements from the M-FUND, are identified as crucial sources of support for many pushed under vulnerable situations. Additionally,

These diverse strategies employed by Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot to access and utilize financial capital for sustaining their livelihoods include relying on personal savings, engaging in microenterprises, utilizing family inheritance and loans, accessing remittances, and leveraging social safety nets. However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges faced by these women, such as limited access to formal employment and the potential risks of debt bondage with either party. Understanding their financial capital and the resources they tap into is crucial for designing targeted interventions and support systems that promote their economic empowerment and

resilience in uncertain times. The findings also highlight the importance of community solidarity and support in addressing the basic needs and well-being of Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot.

-2021 Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot, Thailand, using the UNDP Human Security Framework as a conceptual lens. The primary data from interviewees have been quantified to give clearer view on former occupations that they have pursued before displaced here in Thailand, financial and other types of resources that each of them have to adapt with intermittent (in)secure income status, and current employment status of these migrants to shed light on their economic vulnerabilities. It emphasizes the challenges faced by these individuals in accessing formal sectors and the underutilization of highly skilled workers.

5.3.2. Empowering human agency through societal actors: fostering community security

Social assets refer to networks and support systems which include families, friends, colleagues and organizations that they could get in touch. Examining social capital and community cohesion can provide insights into the extent to which women can rely on social networks for support. Given that many displaced Myanmar women rely on agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods, it is important to evaluate the sustainability of natural resources and whether women have secure access to them in their proximity environment. Assessing the availability of infrastructure, safe and affordable housing and access to essential services including technology is essential to know the physical assets. Last but not least, the financial assets including income, savings, and access to credit serve as the major point of interview narratives as understanding the economic opportunities available to displaced women can shed light on their ability to meet their basic needs and invest in their future.

By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of resilience mechanisms through sustainable livelihoods assets, the complex challenges these women encounter and limitations that the organizations face in targeted interventions to empower, protect and enable them to rebuild their lives and contribute to sustainable development.

5.3.2.1. *Physical Capital: providing food and shelter*

Community-based social assistance initiatives, such as resource pooling and shared shelter, amenities, and food, are common among the migrant community. The assistance ensured by the communities themselves as seen through BA as a societal

actor is that whenever someone newly arrives, those within the community accumulate their resources and share with them to until they have found a way to build self-reliance. The common thing with improving access to basic needs do not explicitly come as cash or monetary support but a package of shared shelter, amenities, food and other necessities.

Food security is a critical concern for the displaced people from Myanmar in Mae Sot, particularly those who have fled the ongoing conflict and violence. Integrated inputs and findings revealed that efforts are being made to address this issue through a coordinated response system known as the Myanmar Emergency Response Network. This network involves various actors, including Thai authorities, the IOM, international and local NGOs, and Myanmar CBOs. However, it is important to note that these coordinated efforts primarily focus on providing support in very temporary shelters, such as those set up at RTA designated temporary areas or in closer proximity to self-established shelters in the no man's land between the Thai-Myanmar border lines.

Several actors try their best to provide food security for new arrivals with intended longer stay and those individuals with emergency needs among the identified displaced population in Mae Sot. Organizations such as OIA provides monthly food packages. These initiatives aim to support vulnerable individuals and cover their immediate food requirements. However, despite their efforts to reach as many people as possible, there are challenges related to funding and the uncertainty of continued support from donors. In the past, food packages consisting of essential items like rice, peanut oil, tuna cans, and beans, worth THB 500, were distributed to approximately 6000 individuals in a month. However, in recent months, only THB 250 in cash could be provided to barely a thousand individuals. The allocation of funding for the upcoming months remains uncertain.

The combination of economic and legal challenges creates a precarious situation for the displaced population in Mae Sot, making access to safe and affordable housing a significant concern. This not only impacts their physical well-being but also affects their overall livelihood resilience and social integration. Addressing the housing and

shelter needs of Myanmar displaced individuals requires comprehensive strategies and collaboration between relevant stakeholders not just providing safe houses but also promoting dialogues between authorities, landlords and donor organizations to enhance access to affordable and dignified housings.

5.3.2.2. Social Capital: Positionality, cohesion and conflict resolution, dialogue and peacebuilding

Social capital encompasses the relationships, networks, and social connections through which an individual or a household within a community can form networks among in the own community, with other Myanmar communities and integrate within the host Thai community. Organizations facilitate the formation of social networks among these displaced and migrant workers, creating support systems and platforms for sharing information and resources. Community-based organizations and targeted programs can provide social support, promote community cohesion, and facilitate collective decision-making processes. The capital is influenced by the norms, values, and social institutions within a community shaping behaviors, expectations, and social interactions.

This is what has been seen through with all interviewees as well as on the field observations. As explained in 4.2.3. Political and legal insecurities: displaced population from Myanmar, the decentralized nature of Myanmar's Spring Revolution and each person's disparate narrative of life before and after the coup have led to creation of different sets of norms and values for a displaced person. Those the researcher had casual talks with, except from the Karen and Karenni ethnicity who had racial connections with those arriving earlier in Mae Sot or who they themselves are familiar with the borderlands, expressed that their forming of community is based around the type and level of involvement in revolution.

Providing assistance and protection: Those coming as economic refugees, especially of agricultural or manual labor experiences, are relying on their pre-existing social networks such as their friends of friends living in a village close to corn field. The small village that they refer may not even have a name as it may just be a part of Tak's village administration, but they might have a de facto leader(s) of the migrant farmers' village who keep close relation and mutual trust with the village administrator of Thai nationality. This is also a similar situation for those in formal sectors where they have trusted agents and the employer taking care of them. In case of any challenge, the migrant workers seek help within their extended networks which is, in fact, very well established and connected within Mae Sot that, for example, OIA

advise them on relevant matters, LLC assist them on process, AWO shelter them in the meantime, MAP collaborate with others to facilitate everything, and the empowerment efforts for all those in same situation or case at the time continue in full swing. This is a social capital in the form of promoting basic and labor rights.

Seeking societal links through connections: In other case of political refugees, it is of very complex nature for the people seek societal links with those who they have had close connection with - in the times before coup. That is, the artists connect with artists in exile and rely on, for example, the artist shelter; or students on the run for activism contact those from their student unions and seek suggestions. Overtime, the communities of those in activism such as education advocates, strike committees and fundraising units overlap and form a bigger network as seen through with AAPP and BA. This type of social capital is more with a common goal oriented towards rights to freedom and democracy; and their asset also comes from those of similar backgrounds, data security technicians per se, in the international communities who may or may not be politically interested in their cause but keen on their works.

Connecting back to the roots: Another, a unique category probably only seen in Myanmar's displacement scenario, group is that of CDMers who have proven to be of a huge population and yet they remain undetectable unless otherwise involved in activism. They rarely integrate into formal work sectors but rely on informal jobs that their networks secure for them. Even among them, some could be placed in a different tier as they were involved in legislative pillar and parliamentary works as framed by some donors as democracy defenders while others are more of administrative pillar bureaus which they may get involved with NUG's cabinets before and/or after crossing the border. In that case even, there is another form of network for CDM medical personnel who go through different organizations of Mae Tao Clinic and may get acquainted with each other under health ministry's actions as well. The missing gap here may be the teachers, especially those in basic education, who may become reliant through migrant learning centers or completely cut off out of the expertise and end up as low-skilled migrant labor. This form of social capital, if tried fitting it to one category, could be said as self-actualization for some prioritize to keep their status quo regardless of financial constraints, to choose resistance values over other things, or to focus on gaps in the socioeconomic integration.

The research findings highlight that whether relying on pre-existing social networks, formal or informal sector employment, or specialized skills, the displaced populations draw on their connections to seek help, advice, and resources. The solidarity and mutual support within these networks are essential in providing emotional and practical assistance as seen through humanitarian interventions and advocacy works of community-based organizations and collaboration with various stakeholders. Additionally, social capital plays a significant role in preserving cultural identity and traditions, as well as facilitating access to information and resources. The study has further revealed that social capital extends beyond the community and includes relationships with the host community as the already integrated people of Myanmar nationalities over the past decades have helped building bridges between new Myanmar arrivals and the local population to promote understanding, cooperation, and access to resources especially educating their Myanmar friends on Thai culture and Mae Sot environment. Such connections contribute to the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods. By recognizing and strengthening social capital, policymakers, organizations, and communities can contribute to the empowerment and integration of Myanmar refugees in Mae Sot, enabling them to rebuild their lives in uncertain times.

5.4. Analysis and Conclusion: Alleviation of vulnerabilities in human security through community security

As the previous chapter outlined the intersectionality of political and economic security, it became evident as Myanmar women faced a multitude of challenges that were interconnected, political instability and conflicts in Myanmar often act as catalysts for cross-border displacement, leaving women vulnerable to exploitation and abuse; economic insecurities exacerbate their vulnerability, as limited employment options force them into low-paying jobs with little social protection. The interplay of political and economic factors creates a complex web of vulnerabilities for these women. Earlier sections of this chapter discussed the various dimensions of human security and the vulnerabilities faced by Myanmar women in the context of political instability and economic insecurities, while the later parts on exploring means of alleviating these vulnerabilities and promoting the well-being of individuals and communities through all livelihood assets of resilience building.

The analysis of the various dimensions of human security in the livelihood context of Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot reveals the importance of social capital in alleviating vulnerabilities and promoting resilience. Social capital, as a form of collective resources embedded within social networks and relationships, plays a crucial role in facilitating access to information, resources, support systems, and collaborative problem-solving. It interacts with other forms of capital, such as human, financial, physical, and natural, to shape livelihood strategies and overall well-being. Social capital, as a crucial component of the sustainable livelihood framework, recognizes the importance of social relationships and collective action in shaping livelihood strategies and accessing resources. The formation of Myanmar communities in conflict-induced displacement based on shared experiences, involvement in the revolution, or pre-existing social networks plays a significant role as it encompasses both formal and informal relationships within communities and provides individuals with access to information, resources, and support systems. Enhancing social capital can contribute to resilience and sustainability by fostering social inclusion, knowledge exchange, and collaborative problem-solving. In the case of Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot, social capital plays a significant role in their livelihood strategies and overall well-being. The findings reveal that social connections, such as family ties, friendships, and community organizations, enable these women to navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities. They rely on their pre-existing social networks, both within the migrant community and with Thai locals, to access job opportunities, financial support, and essential services.

Thus, when the studied population, together with their stakeholders within and interconnected periphery of the conflict-induced displacement, defines what is 'normal' and what are 'gaps' to that normal as in (Flora, 2007), social capital is therefore the cornerstone capital which can increase development across other capitals for the community as a whole. This concept of empowering the social capital for achieving of enhanced community security can create the buffer across economic and political security directly effecting the vulnerabilities created through crisis in Mae Sot's social structure.

For economic refugees, social capital has been built around their pre-existing connections in the agriculture or manual labor sectors. They rely on the trust and

mutual support within their extended networks, which include village leaders, employers, and friends. In case of any challenge, they seek help and assistance from their networks, which are well-established and interconnected within Mae Sot. This social capital promotes the protection of their basic and labor rights. In the case of political refugees, social capital takes a more complex form. These individuals seek connections with others who share their political goals and experiences. They rely on social networks formed through activism and connect with like-minded individuals, such as artists, students, or members of specific organizations. These networks provide them with support, guidance, and shelter. The social capital in this context is oriented towards the promotion of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

The social capital of Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot is crucial in addressing their vulnerabilities and enhancing their human security. It provides them with a sense of belonging, support, and access to resources that can help them overcome economic challenges, secure employment, and meet their basic needs. The community-based social assistance initiatives, such as resource pooling and shared shelter, demonstrate the power of collective action in providing for the well-being of the migrant community. As seen through, financial capital is a complex dimension for Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot. Relying on personal savings, engaging in microenterprises, utilizing family inheritance and loans, accessing remittances, and leveraging social safety nets are strategies employed to sustain their livelihoods. However, limited access to formal jobs and financial inclusion poses challenges. Addressing systemic barriers to legal employment and financial inclusion is essential to promote economic empowerment and resilience among these women.

Ensuring equitable access to fundamental community security include services such as healthcare, education, water, sanitation, and housing helping to address socio-economic disparities, enhance well-being, and promote social stability. Effective governance, accountability, and the rule of law are essential for community security. A transparent and responsive governance system that addresses the needs and concerns of community members helps to maintain social order and stability. Community security includes providing economic opportunities and reducing socio-economic vulnerabilities. Sustainable livelihoods, decent work, and income

generation opportunities contribute to economic security and reduce the risk of poverty, inequality, and social unrest.

To alleviate vulnerabilities of the community and promote human security, it is essential to recognize the needs of donors and the expanded scope of grants. Donors and organizations supporting livelihood initiatives should acknowledge the importance of addressing invisible vulnerabilities that are often overlooked. This includes providing financial support for those who do not fit traditional vulnerability criteria but still face economic hardships or lack access to basic services. Furthermore, donors should prioritize initiatives that promote the development of social capital among Myanmar women migrants. This can be achieved by supporting community-based organizations and networks that foster social inclusion, provide mentorship and skills training, and facilitate knowledge exchange. Investing in initiatives that strengthen social capital will contribute to the resilience and well-being of individuals and communities.

In conclusion, the analysis of cross-border livelihoods through dimensions of human security reveals the gaps and vulnerabilities created by marginalization in intersectionality of political and economic context. Testing the human agency to address, respond and adapt these stresses through livelihood capitals at individual, household and community levels have shone light on importance of social capital in alleviating vulnerabilities and promoting resilience among Myanmar women migrants in Mae Sot. Enhancing social capital through fostering social inclusion, knowledge exchange, and collaborative problem-solving can contribute to their livelihood resilience and well-being. Donors and organizations assisting with livelihoods should recognize the diverse vulnerabilities faced by these women, including invisible vulnerabilities, and expand the scope of grants to cover all those in need. This includes addressing challenges related to limited income, healthcare expenses, access to safe and affordable housing, formal employment, and financial inclusion. By investing in social capital and supporting the empowerment of Myanmar women migrants, donors and organizations can.

Access to Justice: Ensuring access to justice is another important aspect of community security. Burmese refugees may face legal challenges and human rights violations. Community security initiatives work towards providing legal assistance, advocating

for refugee rights, and ensuring refugees have access to fair and effective legal mechanisms. This helps protect them from discrimination, exploitation, and other forms of abuse.



CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary of Analysis: Urgency to address freedom from fears, needs and wants

This research aims to address the pressing issue of conflict-induced displacement and its impact on the livelihoods and human security of Myanmar women migrant workers in Thailand. The study recognizes the multifaceted challenges faced by displaced individuals, particularly women, who often endure discrimination and lack of protection from both their home and host countries. By exploring the intersectionality of marginalized identities and identifying vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods, the study seeks to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice and propose countermeasures for sustainable livelihoods. Being hopeful for a transdisciplinary approach and the involvement of various actors, including practitioners and community members, the study aims to contribute to building resilience and achieving sustainable livelihoods for the affected population. Ultimately, this is to shed light on the unsung heroines and their struggles, ensuring that their threats to human security are no longer overlooked or unspoken.

The situation of undocumented migrant workers in Thailand, especially those from Myanmar, highlights the complex dynamics between employers, government policies, and the economic and political security considerations. The reliance on amnesty programs and the challenges faced by migrant workers in obtaining legal status underscore the need for comprehensive and long-term solutions to ensure the rights and well-being of these individuals while also addressing the economic and security concerns of the host country. The first thing needs to be addressed is for these people to achieve freedom from fear as per the insecurities identified are caused by an intersection of politics and economic reasons.

6.1.1. Intersectionality of Political and Economic Insecurities

The four marginalized identities of being a woman of Myanmar nationality, in displaced status, and engaged as migrant worker in either sector have a significant impact on political and economic security in Mae Sot, Thailand, in the post-coup

period. This paper highlights the intersectionality of marginalized identities in the context of cross-border livelihoods in Thailand, which is embedded in an interconnected scope of political and economic factors for Myanmar migrant workers. The analysis has shown that these insecurities are deeply knitted and occur at various structural levels, leaving the migrant population vulnerable amidst multiple challenges.

“Most urgent issue is rights, safety and well-being of thousands of new refugees who fled into many districts of Thailand, at many different times, after the 2021 Myanmar coup.” (KPSN, 2023)

As with possible openings to dig deeper into intersectionality, beyond high-level structural context alone, to see if other personal characteristics such as those with sickness, disabilities, newborn babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly, this paper laid down only the basic grounds directly impacting livelihoods of focused population altogether.

The analysis accentuates the urgent need for comprehensive policies and support mechanisms to address the challenges faced by this new growing influx from Myanmar seeking survival pathways in Mae Sot. Efforts should focus on facilitating transparent and 100% free regularization programs and providing safe and legal employment opportunities for them. This includes streamlining administrative processes, expanding sectors open for migrant workers, and raising awareness about their rights and protections.

The lack of feminization in Thailand's migrant labor workforce presents a serious concern, as gender-blind labor policies fail to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrant women. Gender-blind policies overlook the unique circumstances faced by migrant women, such as disproportionate caregiving and household responsibilities. This leads to unequal treatment, limited access to formal employment, and economic insecurity for migrant women, particularly those in displaced settings with political insecurities from home country Myanmar where protection under bilateral MoUs is barely accessible. Moreover, gender-blind policies in Thailand's labor framework present a significant concern, especially for women migrant workers. Specific challenges and barriers hinder their formal employment and equal treatment due to gender-blind labor policies. Addressing these gender-specific

vulnerabilities is crucial for promoting the welfare and rights of migrant women and their households.

The legislative frameworks and policy implementations in Thailand do not adequately consider refugee rights as human rights nor on gender-specific issues and disparities. Undocumented migrants, including many able-bodied and highly skilled women, are excluded from accessing legal employment opportunities, forcing them into informal or low-wage work and perpetuating their marginalized situation. While some waivers on migrant workers' legal status have been granted, they lack gender-reflective considerations in terms of labor market integration and job sector limitations. The financial burden of changing legal status further exacerbates the economic vulnerability of women, hindering their access to formal employment.

Limited access to formal sectors also prevents women migrant workers from accessing social protections, healthcare services, formal education, and essential welfare programs. The lack of recognition and protection exposes them to further vulnerabilities and inhibits their economic stability. The gender-blind policies, administrative complexities, and lack of efforts to expand access to formal sectors contribute to the limited rights and welfare of women migrant workers. This intersectionality of political and economic insecurity not only affects the individual women but also burdens the entire household, as they struggle to safeguard their livelihoods in cross-border contexts.

Addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of Myanmar women migrant workers in Mae Sot requires gender-responsive policies, streamlined administrative processes, and expanded access to formal sectors. Recognizing their skills, qualifications, and contributions would lead to the utilization of highly skilled individuals and benefit the host country's economy. By ensuring equal opportunities, access to social protections, and financial services, Thailand can improve the political and economic security of these marginalized populations, promoting inclusivity, stability, and resilience in Mae Sot and beyond.

6.1.2. Displaced in borderland: livelihood vulnerabilities of Myanmar women

Conflict-induced displacement has exposed various vulnerabilities in cross-border livelihoods, influenced by the intersectionality of political and economic insecurities. Through a gendered intersectionality lens, it is evident that Myanmar women face

gaps in human security across multiple dimensions, including food security, health security and personal security. The findings emphasize the urgent need for support and intervention to safeguard their human security and address the challenges they face.

Food security is a critical concern for displaced migrant workers, with limited resources and overwhelming demand posing significant challenges in ensuring sustained food security. While efforts have been made to address immediate food needs through coordinated response systems, the long-term food security of the displaced population remains uncertain. Women, as primary caregivers, bear the burden of ensuring their families' survival with meager resources, highlighting the gendered impact of food insecurity. While their reliance on organizations such as OIA is strong, the uncertainty of monthly package or the changing priority scope has made them unsettled and anxious.

Undocumented status and limited access to healthcare services present barriers to health security for migrant workers. The Mae Tao Clinic plays a crucial role in providing healthcare, but its capacity is limited, leaving individuals with complex medical conditions vulnerable. Financial limitations exacerbate health security concerns, with the coverage provided by the M-Fund often proving insufficient for individuals requiring intensive treatments. The lack of proper vaccination and preventive measures also puts children at risk, emphasizing the need for accessible and affordable healthcare services for undocumented migrants, particularly for individuals with chronic diseases and vulnerable children.

Personal security is compromised for Myanmar displaced women in Mae Sot due to the constant threat of police checks and the risk of being criminalized. The lack of recognized legal status leaves them vulnerable to scrutiny and apprehension, undermining their personal security and exacerbating their already precarious situation. While no serious abuse cases have been found out in this study, the feeling of being at the mercy of police and tolerating with their provocative speeches in hope for leniency in fines or arrest are alarmingly high. The harassment that they have suffered or prepared to be suffered is a far cry from having personal security for anyone regardless of identities. Comprehensive and inclusive policies are urgently

needed to address their concerns and ensure their safety and protection within the community.

In addition to these dimensions, environmental security – which seems quite inapplicable for an urban setting – and community security – as is more of a tool providing resilience rather than vulnerabilities – also play vital role. Environmental challenges, such as air pollution and communicable diseases, impact the well-being of the migrant population. Equitable access to fundamental community security, including healthcare, education, water, sanitation, and housing, is essential to address socio-economic disparities and promote social stability. Building social cohesion through dialogue and understanding between different communities is crucial to address tensions and promote inclusive and respectful coexistence.

Overall, a gendered intersectionality lens highlights the gaps in human security faced by Myanmar displaced migrant worker women in Mae Sot. Understanding these vulnerabilities and resilience demonstrated by these women is crucial for developing comprehensive support and intervention strategies to safeguard their human security and improve their well-being in the cross-border livelihood context.

6.1.3. Adaptive strategies of actors: creating social asset to livelihoods despite limitations

Actors involved in building resilience in the human security concerns of Myanmar women displaced in Mae Sot play a crucial role in helping these women achieve sustainable livelihoods. The findings have highlighted multidimensional strategies employed by women to navigate uncertain times and ensure economic stability. The actors involved, including the women themselves, community organizations, NGOs, and social networks, contribute to the resilience of these women by leveraging their human, physical, natural, financial, and social capital.

The thematic analysis revealed the importance of human capital, where women utilize their knowledge and skills to engage in informal online jobs, establish micro home businesses, become educators or social workers, and pursue skill development for formal employment. It also recognizes the challenges faced in accessing safe and affordable housing, and the need for comprehensive strategies and collaboration to address this concern. Financial capital comes hand in hand with all other aspects deciding if someone is more or less vulnerable in cross-border displacement as

women rely on personal savings, engage in microenterprises, utilize family inheritance and loans, access remittances, and leverage social safety nets. The study emphasizes the need to address systemic barriers that hinder access to legal employment and financial inclusion.

In the vital part, social capital emerges as a crucial asset, as women rely on social relationships and collective action within communities to access resources, exchange knowledge, and solve problems collaboratively. Despite the resilience and resourcefulness demonstrated by Myanmar women in Mae Sot, challenges and limitations persist, such as limited income in certain jobs and concerns about healthcare expenses. It is essential to recognize and address these challenges to ensure the sustainability of their livelihoods and enhance their overall well-being. The findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions, support systems, and community solidarity in promoting economic empowerment and resilience among Myanmar women displaced in Mae Sot. By working together, the actors involved can contribute to the creation of sustainable livelihoods and a brighter future for these women.

In conclusion, the actors involved in building resilience and addressing human security concerns of Myanmar women displaced from their homes play a crucial role in helping them achieve sustainable livelihoods. However, the challenges they face, such as the changing focus of donors and the impending end of grants and support programs, pose significant obstacles to their efforts. The uncertainty surrounding the renewal of support and the shifting criteria for assistance make it increasingly difficult for organizations to effectively assist those in dire need of safe shelters and food supplies. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the actors involved in this process continue to demonstrate adaptive spirit and dedication in their commitment to empowering Myanmar women and creating lasting positive change. To ensure sustainable solutions and support for Myanmar women in displacement, it is imperative for actors at all levels, including governments, NGOs, and international donors, to prioritize the long-term well-being and security of these vulnerable populations. By providing consistent and comprehensive aid, fostering empowerment and capacity-building, and advocating for policy changes that address the root causes

of displacement, actors can help create a more resilient future for Myanmar women, one that allows them to rebuild their lives and achieve sustainable livelihoods.

6.2. Theoretical contribution and the way forward

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in its exploration of the interconnecting aspects of human security, specifically political and economic securities, from the case study focused on cross-border livelihoods of displaced women from Myanmar living as undocumented irregular migrant workers in Thailand. The main hypothesis, which posits that marginalization creates vulnerabilities in these livelihoods, has been proven true through the examination of the Myanmar-Thailand relationship and the gender-blind labor policies in Thailand.

Furthermore, the research highlights the sub-hypothesis that participatory humanitarian assistance, facilitated by a transdisciplinary approach involving expert practitioners and community actors, can contribute to building resilience among this population and supporting their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. The research frames the need for coordinated efforts and emphasizes the importance of bringing relevant actors to the table to achieve effective collaborative interventions.

However, the fieldwork also uncovers challenges encountered on the ground in this very special borderland, such as diverse positionalities of the displaced population, surveillance on the organizations, and limited official capacity. These factors contribute to longstanding trust issues and intensified security concerns, impeding the integration of networks and hindering the realization of the envisioned collaborative outcomes. Consequently, the researcher had to engage with various actors separately through appropriate academician positionality, adopting an unbiased outsider perspective to gather insights and promote interdisciplinary understanding.

As a theoretical contribution, this research underscores the necessity of implementing more structured and sustained transdisciplinary efforts in the field. It emphasizes the importance of dedicating time and patience to gradually build trust among the actors involved. Only through such efforts can effective collaborative humanitarian interventions be developed and presented on the international stage. By addressing these theoretical gaps, future research and practice can strive towards more

comprehensive and impactful support for displaced women in their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods, ultimately enhancing their human security and well-being.

The uniqueness of this research, as conducted through legal aids organizations and advocacy groups, utilizing interdisciplinary method in the field, a fresher use of capital has been noticed even though the capital is not a new one. The social capital is complemented by political capital (Bourdieu, 1986) which accumulation of small powers through the able individuals and organizations as the actors of the communities engage with decision-making processes and influence policies to bring about the structural change back up from the human agency that a link is created in between. The advocacy works on rights of these newly displaced population from Myanmar in Thailand with escalating scale of conflict continues in the country, the voices should be amplified and participation in policy discussions are to be well supported and evidence backed. Building on through the starting point of transdisciplinary efforts that this research has adopted and intersectionality testing of livelihoods in cross-border setting laid down, this paper is to serve as groundwork for supplementary to political capital in community resilience building mechanism.

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Appendix

In-depth Question Prompts

Q0. Do you consent to this research interview and for your answers be recorded?

Introducing positionality as the MA student of Chulalongkorn University, graduate researcher of ARCM and fieldwork coordinator of international research cluster on “Conflict-induced displacement and socio-economic resilience: Learning from neglected conflicts in Cameroon and Myanmar”

Explaining the purpose of the research for humanitarian assistance program restructuring, use of data for graduate research thesis, possible publications/conference on analyzed information

Ensuring strict confidentiality of the data storage and anonymity of the interviewees

Q1. What would be your life history before 2021 and how did you come here?

To identify the basic demographic data such as age, ethnicity, religion, marital status, family size, dependents (children, elderly, PWDs), educational background, occupational field, etc.

To possibly get a glimpse of push factor under conflict-induced displacement, period of stay in Thailand since arrival, journey of status regularizing efforts

Q2. How is your economic situation here in Mae Sot?

To know the legal (un)documented status by possibly exploring political (in)securities
To kick start the discussion of economic (in)securities based on marginalized identities

Q3. What are the needs and challenges in your day-to-day livelihoods?

To identify the gaps in all seven aspects of human security based on political-economic

To understand the impact of intersectionality creating vulnerable situations

To find out how they are building resilience and to what extent the actors are (not)helping them through five capitals of sustainable livelihoods

To know what they think about life in Thailand: current livelihoods in transit, future sustainable integration in host, or other envisioned durable solutions

These questions are to kick-start the general wider narratives. Specific information to be narrowed down through funneling technique for clarification and validation.

Coding In-depth Interview Participants

Sr	Interviewee Codes	Date of Interview	Characteristics (gender, marital status, age, ethnic/religion)	Date of Arrival to Thailand
1	Interviewee A	6 May 2023	Female; Single; 30s; Burmese/Theravada Buddhist	Q2 2022
2	Interviewee B	8 May 2023	Female; Married without kid; 30s; Burmese+Chinese/Mahayana Buddhist	Q2 2022
3	Interviewee C	13 May 2023	Female; Married with two kids; 40s; Burmese/Therevada Buddhist	Q1 2022
4	Interviewee D	13 May 2023	Female; Single; 20s; Karen/Baptist Christian	Q4 2021
5	Interviewee E	13 May 2023	Female; Single; 20s; Karen+Mixed/Anglican Christian	Q4 2021
6	Interviewee F	14 May 2023	Female; Single; 20s; Burmese/Buddhist	Q2 2022
7	Interviewee G	14 May 2023	Female; Single; 20s; Burmese/Atheist	Q3 2022
8	Interviewee H	14 May 2023	Female; Married without kid; 20s; Indian+Burmese/Atheist	Q3 2021
9	Interviewee I	17 May 2023	Female; Widowed with kid; 30s; Indian/Mohammedan Muslim	Q4 2021
10	Interviewee J	18 May 2023	Female; Married with infant; 30s; Burmese/Theravada Buddhist	Q4 2022
11	Interviewee K	19 May 2023	Female; Engaged; 30s; Burmese+Rakhine/Theravada Buddhist	Q3 2022
12	Interviewee L	20 May 2023	Female; Married with kid; 50s; Burmese/Theravada Buddhist	Q1 2023
13	Interviewee M	20 May 2023	Female; Seperated with kid; 40s; Burmese+Mixed/Roman Catholic	Q4 2021

14	Interviewee N	24 May 2023	Female; Married with two kids; 50s; Burmese/Therevada Buddhist	Q2 2022
15	Interviewee O	25 May 2023	Female; Single; 10s; Burmese+Karenni/Atheist	Q2 2022
16	Interviewee P	28 May 2023	Female; Single; 20s; Burmese+Rakhine/Atheist	Q1 2023
17	Interviewee Q	28 May 2023	Female; Widowed; 60s; Burmese+Karen/Baptist Christian	Q4 2022
18	Interviewee R	2 June 2023	Female; Married with kid; 50s; Burmese/Theravada Buddhist	Q1 2022
19	Interviewee S	3 June 2023	Female; Widowed; 70s; Burmese+Shan/Buddhist	Q4 2021
20	Interviewee T	4 June 2023	Female; Married without kid; 20s; Indian+Mixed/Muslim	Q4 2022
21	Interviewee W	6 June 2023	Female; Seperated with kid; 20s; Burmese+Mixed/Atheist	Q1 2022

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