

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION

2.1 Background

The expanding process of globalization has hastened the integration of economies. Moreover, technological development in communication and transportation has further expanded linkages and migratory possibilities. Trade liberalization, rapid access to information and easy movement of people from place to place is the consequences. Globalization is accelerating migration. People move from one place to another for the purposes of visiting places, seeking economic opportunities, studying abroad, settling down in a new place and fleeing from political oppression. During the twentieth century, international migration was a means of improving and changing the lives of millions of people.

One of the consequences of globalization has been a shift in the global demand for labour. Southeast Asia region also favoured the development of international migration. The massive increases in oil prices in 1973 resulted in a massive demand for workers in the Middle East. The demand for workers in capital-rich countries but with labour-shortages in the Gulf region in the 1970s started large scale labour migration from and within Asia that continues to this day (Asis, 2005). Several Southeast Asian countries sent their unskilled labourers to join the workforce including Thailand. With the rising Newly Industrialized Countries (NICS) in the region, the labour market became open for the Thai workers. Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia are new destinations (Kanchai S. & Kaung Y. M., 2002).

Thailand has been a labour-sending country in Asia since 1970. During the past decade (1990-2000), 1.63 million Thai workers migrated abroad (Ibid.). At the end of the decade of the 1980s, Thailand changed its status from a sending country of migrant labourers into a receiving country of migrant workers from foreign countries.

Economic growth provides many Thai workers with opportunities to find better work situations and creates labour shortages of unskilled workers. The combination of demographic transition and upgrading of the skills of its workforce has left Thailand facing a labour shortage of unskilled labour, which migrants from neighbouring countries have been more than willing to fill. Indeed, Thailand's much higher income, fast growth, and more favourable social and political climate act as a magnet for people in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar trying to escape poverty (Revenga et al, 2006). Migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar started to flow into Thailand for filling the labour gap to work in the 3D jobs (difficult, dirty and dangerous) in the early 1990s. The number of migrants and migrant workers increases steadily every year. In 2004, there were 1.27 million migrant workers registered in Thailand since the government started conducting registration in 1992 (Asis, 2005). As of February 2005, according to the figures provided by the Employment Department, 1,284,920 migrants registered for a temporary Identification card with the Ministry of Interior and 838,934 migrants registered for a work permit in 2004 (AMC, 2005). However, the actual migrant numbers including undocumented migrants is estimated to be much higher.

The improvement in transportation and communication due to the globalization process enables people to move easily across national boundaries. Due to the limited job opportunities, economic hardship in Myanmar and due to the income gap between Thailand and Myanmar, Myanmar people migrate to Thailand to find a greener pastures. People especially from the States of Kayin, Mon and Shan of Myanmar, that border Thailand, cross the boundary to work in Thailand to support their families. Several parents from Myanmar cross the border and migrate voluntarily to earn a living.

2.2 Background Information of Kayin State and Hlaing Bwe Township

Kayin State shares the border with Yamethin District, Shan State and Kayah State in the north, Toungoo, Thaton and Mawlamyine districts in the west, Ye Township in the south, within Myanmar and Thailand in the east. The area of the

State is 11,731 square miles. National races such as Kayin 59 per cent, Bhamar 12 per cent, Mon 12 per cent, Pao 5 per cent, Shan 3 per cent, Ya Khaing 1 per cent and others 8 per cent are residing in the state. Kayin State had a population of about 1.6 Million in the year 2003 (see map in page 34).

Kayin State has a cultivated area of nearly 700,000 acres. The state grows over 300,000 acres of monsoon paddy yearly, with an annual yield of 14.5 million baskets. There are over 10,000 acres of silted-land farms and over 5,000 acres of garden farms. As the state gets large amounts of rain every year, monsoon crops do not need irrigation. Only seasonal crops grown during the cool season are cultivated with irrigated water. Paddy is the main crop of Kayin State. Winter groundnut is cultivated on silted-land and monsoon groundnut on hill-side farms. Other crops grown in the region are sesame, beans and pulses, sugarcane, rubber, areca, coffee, coconut and fruits. Minerals such as iron, lead, copper, tin, coal and antimony are mined in the state.

After the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)⁵ took over the authority in 1988, there was more fighting between military and ethnic armed groups in Kayin State. More forced labour and “portering⁶” occurred in the villages. Migration started to take place from this period onwards. Many villagers moved to refugee camp along border area because to flee from fighting, and later they proceeded further inside Thailand for earning. In 1994, after the Democratic Karen Buddhist Association (DKBA)⁷ separated from the Karen National Union (KNU)⁸, some villagers returned to their native places while some proceeded further into Thailand for jobs. Better communication and transport facilities make migration rate higher day by day.

⁵ Name of Myanmar Military Government

⁶ Army collect male villagers by force to carry weapons and loads for the soldiers in the battle fields

⁷ Karen Buddhist rebel group separated from KNU and signed ceased fire agreement with Myanmar government

⁸ Karen rebel group

After 2000, the number of people working on traditional farming work decreased and the number of migrants increased. Moreover, people migrate to earn regular income because of economic hardship. Among migrant population, the majority are young or middle aged and there are more females than males because of demand from receiving country. Those migrants move to Thailand by crossing the border legally through Thai-Myanmar border official pass and some illegally through the porous border. They initially cross the border with this pass but they continue staying in Thailand to work and become illegal migrants.

Hlaing Bwe Township, with an easy access to Thailand, is one of the townships in Kayin State where the migration rate is high. The long and porous borders between Thailand and Myanmar, and an active recruiting industry with complacent border enforcement have contributed to an increase of migrants. Job opportunities in Thailand and insufficient income from the traditional farming work urge people from this area to migrate without consideration of risks.

2.3 Types of Cross Border Migration

Migration can be voluntary or forced. People migrate voluntarily as labourers to join the work force of the destination country for economic reasons. Forced migrants include refugees, asylum seekers and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), those displaced by development projects, environmental degradation or natural disasters, returnees and victims of human trafficking (Castles, 2005). Large numbers of migrants from Kayin, Mon and Shan ethnic groups enter Thailand voluntarily and by force. Voluntary migrants enter Thailand as economic migrants to find jobs even though there may be other reasons for migration. Some migrants step into Thailand because of armed conflict between military and ethnic minority groups in their place of origin. Some flee from their place because the government has confiscated their land and displaced the people. Many, finally, will become asylum seekers. Currently in Thailand, the numbers of displaced persons, registered migrant workers and irregular migrants from Myanmar is probably between 1.5 million and 2 million (Huguet and Punpuing, 2005).

Refugees are the groups of person seeking a safe shelter and living in Camps⁹ near the Thai-Myanmar border. Large numbers of Myanmar civilians are internally displaced by the military government especially Kayin (Karen) and Kayini (Kareni) ethnic minorities who live in border areas. Myanmar has one of the world's 10 worst displacement situations, based on a combination of factors such as size of IDP population, protection concerns, government response and humanitarian access (Altsean, 2007). Myanmar army forcibly relocated several villages in Kayin state and extrajudicially executed the Kayin civilians and as a result, hundreds of people have fled to Thai refugee camps (Amnesty International, 2002). They are considered as displaced persons by the Thai Government and the camps are considered to be temporary shelters. There are nine refugee camps along Thailand-Myanmar borders. As of June 2004, number of persons registered in camps along Thailand-Myanmar border was altogether 117,559 in all camps (Huguet and Punpuing, 2005).

2.4 Reasons for Migration

Myanmar labour migration into Thailand is a complex issue. It is difficult to give clear reasons for the cause of migration because of the many factors involved. However, it can be categorized into three main factors: economic, political and social pressure. Severe economic hardship is experienced by people in Myanmar, poverty is widespread, and inflation is rising while income is constant. Many families have to struggle very hard for their most basic needs and are not able to survive in this situation. Lack of adequate land may push family members to find work elsewhere in order to maintain the economic viability of the family unit. In this regard, many of those people migrate to search for better economic opportunities.

Civil war between military government and the ethnic groups such as Kayin, Kayini and Shan has been going on. This makes the country and its people devastated. Forced relocation also occurs throughout the country. Military government forced the citizen to work in their projects without paying any wages. In some places, people are

⁹ Camps were established for them by the Royal Thai Government and the camps were referred to as "temporary shelters".

taken by the army to work as porters in the army under harsh conditions. The regime imposes arbitrary taxes throughout the country particularly in the area where there is conflict. People no longer can stay under these circumstances and finally migrate to other countries.

Social pressure is also one of the factors responsible for migration. Social pressure has a significant effect on migration. The perception of individual to migrate reflects the outcomes of interaction among family members. Family problem resulting from gambling, alcohol and drug abuse also makes the family members to migrate. Migration to Thailand provides a means of coping with family problems (Panam et al, 2004). Some migrants who have already been working in Thailand for a certain period could improve their family's economic status. This situation creates the rest of people in the village to emulate and follow suit.

People from Hlaing Bwe Township migrate due to economic, political and social pressure reasons, the main reason being avoidance of economic hardships. The major aim of the economic migrants is to work abroad and to support the families who remain behind. As the local economy is farming, farmers earn just enough to feed the family – one day at a time. There is no extra money to pay for children's education, family health and social welfare activities¹⁰. There are also those migrants who had been previously employed by the government but who have now migrated because they could not survive on the very low salaries they had received¹¹.

2.5 Migration from Myanmar

Myanmar shares borders with Bangladesh and India in the west, China in the northeast and east and Thailand in north and northwest. Many people cross the border from Myanmar to neighbouring countries. Over the past ten years, the borders between Myanmar and China and Thailand have seen the largest flows of migrants in decades (Caouette, n.d.). The concerned governments have acknowledged over two

¹⁰ An interview with Karen women in Kayin state (Panam et al, 2004)

¹¹ *ibid*

million people from Myanmar have migrated into neighbouring countries including China, India, Bangladesh, and Thailand (Archavanitkul & Guest, 1999). However, it is difficult to get the exact number of migrants because of porous border, frequently movement of migrants and their undocumented status in the host country.

Myanmar is the largest source country of migrants in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Many people in border areas migrate to neighbouring countries by crossing the border because of several factors. The majority do so for economic reasons and although some are for political reasons. Economic and political oppression, forced labour and porters, forced relocation, direct attacks on villages and other human rights abuse also lead to the increase in migration from Myanmar to neighbouring countries. It is estimated that approximately 10 per cent of Myanmar population migrates from Myanmar to seek refuge and livelihood abroad. There is an estimated one and a half million people from Myanmar currently living in Thailand (AMC, 2005). The government of Myanmar estimates that 74.1 per cent of those migrating out of the country cross the border into Thailand, with 17.6 per cent crossing into China and the remainder into Bangladesh and India (Ministry of Immigration and Population, 1997).

2.6 Migration into Thailand

Thailand shares borders with four countries with a total of 5,656 kilometres in length. 2,401 kilometres is shared with Myanmar, 1,810 kilometres with Laos, 789 kilometres with Cambodia and 647 kilometres with Malaysia (Vungsiriphisal, Ausalung & Chatavanich, 1999). Cross-border migration into Thailand has steadily increased in recent years. Thailand's economic development is driven by industries that require plentiful supplies of cheap, unskilled labour, and there is an increase in the number of migrant workers arriving from across Thailand's borders to meet these industries' needs. The establishment of the industries in Thailand at border locations takes advantage of abundant and low-cost labour in neighbouring countries and this facilitates cross-border movement (Caouette et al, 2005). In this regard, people from neighbouring countries move into Thailand to meet this economic opportunity. In

Thailand, of the 814,000 persons who applied to Ministry of Labour for work permits by mid-December 2004, three fourths were from Myanmar and roughly 100,000 each were from Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Huguet and Punpuing, 2005: 30).

Thailand has emerged as the major country destination in the cross-border migration. Movement of people along borders of China, Myanmar and Thailand is easier through the improvement of roads, transportation and communication. These changes have helped to accommodate an increased floating population of migrants within each country and across all three national borders. The economy in rural areas of these countries has become increasingly dependent on the supplemental income of migrant workers. The result has been increased cross-border migration between China, Myanmar and Thailand that affects millions of people (Caouette, n.d.: 16).

There is an increasing number of migrants from Myanmar and is regarded as predominantly a sending country. Myanmar people are flowing into Thailand to flee from economic hardships and the military oppression. Myanmar male migrant workers work as labourers in construction, fisheries, agriculture and factories. Majority of female migrant workers work in factories and as domestic workers as well. Some female migrant workers can be seen in entertainment works and in sex industries.

Many Myanmar migrant workers working in Thailand are not registered. The majority especially those working in the border towns do not have registration cards. They can be easily exploited by not being paid wages for many months and long working hours. Wages are relatively lower compared to Thai workers. Even though their wages are significantly low, working in Thailand is still much better than staying in their country. Although they usually receive only 70-100 baht for daily wages, this is comparatively high as this is two to three times of what they would earn in their own country of origin. Although they are confronting with working conditions where severe exploitation is the norm rather than the exception, Myanmar migrant workers still consider it better than staying in Myanmar (Arnold, 2007).

2.7 Literature Review

2.7.1 Migration of Parents

People from poorer regions of the globe wish to migrate to more prosperous countries. People have always moved within the region or from one region to another in order to escape poverty, war, famine and/or to give their children better opportunities. In Thailand, it is estimated that about half a million children aged 0 to 14 years are left behind by their international migrant parents – mostly fathers (Bryant, 2005:4). The Scalabrini Migration Centre (SMC) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration in the Philippines estimated (based on statistics and assumptions) that in 2003 out of a total of 3,463,540 Filipino families with at least one child in the 10 to 12 year age group, there were around 2.7 per cent or 91,790 of deployed migrant workers with at least a child in that age range left behind (SMC, 2004: 12). For the Philippines case, the reason behind a parent's migration has been generally perceived in a noble light, particularly in response to the economic need of the family (SMC, 2004).

There have been changes in pattern of migration – with more women migrating independently and as main income earners instead of following male relatives (Jolly and Reeves, 2005). This statement is supported by a study of the Filipino migrants mentioning that in the 1980s, women started to take up jobs abroad and the trend has become irreversible (SMC, 2004). The majority of children have been left behind by their mothers, given that female migrants outnumber their male counterparts in the Philippines (Yeoh and Lam, 2006). The research findings in Sri Lanka by *Save the Children*¹² described that, in the year 2000, among 858,000 migrants, 590,420 were women and within this group, 75 per cent were married and 90 per cent of these married women have children. Mothers started to leave their babies earlier (when babies are below 1 year old) in order to migrate to work (Sukhantavanich and Angsuthanasombat, 2000 cited in Chantavanich, 2001: 26). Pottinger and Brown (2006) supported the statement that parents' decision to migrate

¹² International Non-Governmental Organization working in Sri Lanka

is based on the belief that a mother will do anything to let her children have a better life.

Parents of younger children from Myanmar migrate to escape economic hardships and to seek job opportunities to support their families. Their major aim is to provide for the needs of their children. In a report of *Migrant Domestic Workers*, an interview with a female domestic worker from Myanmar supported the statement (Panam et al, 2005: 67). She had to leave for Thailand because she could not support her daughter's schooling although she worked hard in the country. Another 32 year old widowed Shan¹³ woman expressed that she came to Thailand in order to support her children financially because her father's income was not enough to support them (Ibid: 59).

2.7.2 Effects of the Parents' Absence on the Left Behind Children

The growth of international migration in Southeast Asia has affected a significant number of children. Children are left behind due to migration of their parents, or they accompany their parents through the migration process or they independently migrate by themselves. In the Background paper (2005) for DFID migration team, Whitehead and Hashim mentioned that the numbers of children affected by contemporary migration flows world-wide is very high, they can be affected as children left behind when either father or mother or both parents migrate; as children in families that have migrated and when they migrate themselves independently of their families.

The large numbers of immigrants to Bangkok include many women who migrate without their children, leaving them in the care of relatives in rural areas (Richter, 1993 cited in Hugo, 2002). Supang (2001) supported that for female migrants, domestic works and child rearing must be done by other people usually sisters or mother or husband. The study of *Save the Children* in Sri Lanka showed that when mothers migrate the primary caregivers were fathers, but mostly were close

¹³ One of the ethnic group in Myanmar

female relatives and the majority of them were grandmothers. The case is similar to China, when parents migrate to urban area, children are left behind with the grand parents (China People's Daily, 2004). *Mexican Family Life Survey* revealed that nearly a quarter of children in Mexico under the age of 15 live in households at least one absent biological parent and the vast majority are living apart from their fathers (Nobles, 2006:4).

On the one hand, migration affects children's education in negative ways. There was a case in a rural area of Mongolia. Due to high rate of migration, it has led to falling enrolment in some rural schools which in turn produced declining resource allocation and services as well as created the threat of schools closing down (Yeoh and Lam, 2006:16). This point is supported by the study of Mexican children. Absence of parents is causing problems back in their home communities, with children doing poorly in school, dropping out or turning to crime (National Public Radio, 2006). On the other hand, migration also contributes to the betterment of the children's ability in school performance. The Philippines study revealed that school performance of children of migrant parents is better than children of non-migrants (Asis, 2006: 51). The situation varies depending on the condition of migrants' place of origin. Children who live in the places where there is a good communication system benefit through parents' migration. Regular contact and encouragement from the parents can improve the children's ability in every activity.

Emotionally, children, whose parents are away, experience loneliness and have lower levels of school performance than those with both parents present. Children may face issues of loss and attachment to their parents. Proponents of the attachment theory may argue that the resulting disruption to the parent-child bond from migration puts the child at risk not only in the short term but also for poor long-term psychological adjustment (Bowlby, 1982). Children with parents away suffered in their social development and in their psychological and emotional wellbeing particularly when mother was abroad (Hugo, 2002). The study findings in Sri Lanka indicated that love, attention and proximity of the mother were not replaceable by even the best care givers. Children expressed that they feel lonely due to the absence

of the mother (Save the Children, 2006). Bryant (2005) mentioned in his study of *Children of International Migrants in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines*, that one NGO staff reported the case of children becoming estranged from their parents and seeing them as the sources of gifts and money. Another case is children blaming problems such as delinquency, drugs, and premarital sex on the parents' absence (Bryant, 2005:6). Even in a country like the Philippines where migration benefits children through parents' remittances and regular contact, Asis pointed out that the mother's departure was felt deeply by the children left behind (2002:78).

Most families experienced the absence of parent(s) as another form of stress and sadness especially for children. Although family members had extended kin support, where emotional endurance is concerned, relatives were little equipped to handle grief and sense of loss. In his article of *Migration-Latin America: Remittances Do Not Fill Gap for Children Left Behind*, Raúl Pierri (2006) expressed that the loss of their most important role models, nurturers and caregivers has a significant psychosocial impact that can be translated into feelings of abandonment, vulnerability, and loss of self-esteem, among others. In a study of Mexican children, a boy who was left behind with the extended family expressed that he felt discriminated against and as though he was nothing more than trash after his father left (National Public Radio, 2006). Pottinger and Brown (2006) supported that many children who are left behind receive little or no physical or emotional nurturance from surrogate caregivers and often experience a sense of abandonment by their parents. According to the International Labour Organization, "prolonged migrant workers with their families lead to hardships and stress situation affecting both migrants and the family left behind and prevent them from leading a normal life" (IOM, 2004:7).

2.7.3 Important Actors between Migrant Parents and the Children

2.7.3.1 Role of Remittances

Remittance money of migrants plays an important role in the migrants' family left behind to provide economic benefits for migrants and their families. Parents'

migration usually benefits children economically. The remittance money of parents can support children's school fees, health fees and social expenditure. In the research on *Children of International Migrants in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines*, Bryant described that in the Philippines case, migrants on average receive incomes that are four or five times higher than they would at home, which is usually more than enough to offset the cost of migration and hence to boost standards of living (2005: 5). The study in South Africa also showed the positive effect of remittances. It largely results from increased level of educational expenditure, reduced level of child labour which associated with increased level of income from remittances (Lu and Treiman, 2006). For Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore, families used their remittances in six major areas (in order of priority): basic consumption, repaying debts, purchasing / regaining land, renovating their houses, making loan to relatives (for migration purposes) and obtaining an education (Rahman and Fee, 2005: 77). However, Nguyen, Yeoh and Toyota (2007) argued that though remittances contributed positively to the education of 'left-behind' children, the negative effects suggest that the presence of parents in some cases is so important that it cannot be compensated for by remittance flows.

In some developing countries, migration is used as a strategy to tackle the livelihood rather than gaining better lives for the family. Remittances are used as alternative sources of income when traditional income source such as agriculture fail to sustain the household economy. Therese Caouette and others (2006) found out in their study of *Labor Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)* that the sending countries in GMS where the local economy is very weak, migration is the first stage and mostly composed of unskilled and irregular workers. Remittances are employed as a household survival strategy rather than for productive investment. In his study of *Migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor*, Tasneem Siddiqui found out in the Bangladesh (rural-urban migration) case that, migration contributes to the livelihoods of the poor. It is more likely that the extremely poor people migrate to other parts of the country (Siddiqui, 2003). In a case study of Darfur in Sudan, Helen Young (2006) indicated that labor migration is the main source of cash income available to rural households of Darfurians.

In terms of channel of remittance, there are various ways for migrants to remit their money back home depending on the situation of the host and home countries. Indonesia female migrant workers working abroad remit their money in two channels: formally through banks or post office and informally through the Indonesian shop (specifically in Hong Kong) or middle person or returned relatives and friends (World Bank, 2006; ADB, 2006). In countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, there is a limited communication system with no access to official banking venues. Migrant workers have to use only the informal system to transfer their money to their families back home. Cambodia migrants transfer money via a middle man with 30 percent for service fees but Myanmar domestic workers prefer to use underground brokers at a fee of around 20 percent (Caouette et al, 2006: 60). Others use their relatives and friends because they do not want to take risks of unscrupulous middle men (Ibid). Thus, the remittances may not be regular for the illegal Myanmar migrant workers. The channel used depends on the services' availability between the two countries and the preference of migrants themselves. The selection of money transfer channel and the amount sent also depend on their income and the condition and duration of the migrants' stay in the host country.

2.7.3.2 Role of communications

Communication is a very important tool to maintain the family relationship when someone is abroad. In the study of left behind Filipino children, Asis (2006) expressed that regular communication has kept the families together and made possible the maintenance of family ties. She further mentioned that due to the cheap and ready access to communication facilities, migrants and their families can communicate more frequently and more instantaneously which help maintain the family ties despite the separation due to migration. In the Philippines, modern technology helps parents maintaining contact with their children and children's care givers by the use of mobile phones and text messages (Bryant, 2005). Rahman & Fee (2005) supported this idea, saying that the migrants maintain contact with their homes in Bangladesh through the mail or by telephone. "Migrants whose family members

are within the reach of telecommunication facility or whose houses are near a *Thana*¹⁴ make telephone calls frequently to their family in Bangladesh, and spend a good deal of money on such international calls” (Rahman & Fee, 2005: 75). This point is further supported by the report of the Secretary General of UN in *International Migration and Development* that “penny-a-minutes phone cards keep migrants in close touch with family and friends at home and just a few seconds are needed for global financial system to transmit their earnings to remote corners of the developing world, where they buy food, clothing, shelter, pay for education or health care, and can relieve debt” (UN, 2006:5).

However, this is contradictory in the case of Mekong countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar where there is limited access to communication facilities especially in rural areas. Therese Caouette and colleagues (2006) mentioned in their study of *Labour Migration in the Greater Mekong Sub-region* that migrants’ inability to communicate with their families back home lead to misunderstandings about the experiences and needs of those migrating and those left behind. For migrants working on the fishing boats at sea (for months at a time), there were no opportunities to keep in touch with family and friends back home (Caouette et al, 2006). Lack of telephone or postal services, illiteracy or limited knowledge of those communication systems and control of the employers over the communication channel create barriers between migrants and the left behinds. In the rural areas of Myanmar, there is no telephone and postal service to communicate. So, communication between parents and children will not be regular. Many Myanmar parents are separated from their children for a number of years and they even lose contact with them as a result of their constant mobility and difficulties in communication (Caouette, n.d: 109).

2.7.4 Role of Caregivers

Many studies showed that children of migrant parents were left behind with the extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, relatives, friends and

¹⁴ Local-level Administrative Unit in Bangladesh

neighbours as their caregivers (Asis, 2006; Save the Children, 2006). Majority of the Philippines kids are left behind with their female relatives as their primary caregivers in the absence of both parents (Asis, 2006). The extended family provides significant support for the left behind family members. In Southern Sulawesi, Indonesia, Bugis women have little difficulty in coping with their husbands' absence because members of the extended family move on and provide companionship and other support (Lineton, 1975 cited in Hugo, 2002: 24).

In the UNICEF *Innocenti Working Paper*, Bryant (2005) indicated that all research on migration in the Philippines emphasized that children and their parents do not have to cope with the effects of migration on their own. As the extended family plays a major role in the decision to migrate, in the preparation for migration and in the spending of remittance money, it also helps fill the gap left by the absent parents (Ibid.). Study of young adults left behind by migrant parents in the Philippines shows that although children experienced emotional hardship, the support from extended families and communities, communication with their parents, and an appreciation of why their parents has to leave ease their difficulties (SMC, 2004).

Myanmar family pattern is a close knit one and the feeling of kinship is very strong. There is also a close kinship with grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. This pattern applies also to the ethnic minorities. Traditionally, support for children comes from relatives and neighbours but general poverty restricts everyone's capacity to help others in need. Poverty contributes to migration of local people. For the areas where poverty is widespread, majority of adults migrate to other countries for earning. Majority left behind are older people and children in the community. Older persons are incapable of taking care of those left behind children because they also have to work for earning. In some cases, older children have to help the family in farming as well as to take care of their younger. As a consequence, children will lose interest in lessons and dropout from school.

2.7.5 Role of Community

Apart from support of extended family members, community is also an important source in supporting the families and children left behind in the absence of parents. A society safety net of religious institutions, informal foster care and extended family networks exists for children who are in need of protection and often successfully catches them before they become the prey of trafficking. There are the grass root level bodies which play a pivotal role in enlisting community participation for education and bringing the community and schools closer to establish an interactive and effective school management system (Pradesh, n.d.).

Positive community attitudes provide a potential for galvanized community support for the children. In some villages in border area in Myanmar where the community is incapable of providing support for the villagers, armed groups provide assistance for the children in terms of education facilities. For many ethnic minority children living in remote border areas, the only education available has been that provided by the various armed opposition organizations. (Save the Children, 2005).

Regarding the family and community environments, Myanmar has a strong tradition of volunteerism, particularly in rural areas, where the entire community takes part, provides funds (donation) and labour. Traditionally village elders, village chiefs and religious leaders have an important potential role at community level in every rural community. In every part of Myanmar, there is a tradition, particularly in the rural areas, of people collectively helping with each other's work, family and participating in communal activities. "People in the village and among ethnic group, for example, will collectively help each other in such activities as cultivating and harvesting paddy and other crops, repairing bunds of paddy fields, digging wells, repairing roofs of houses, emergency in health etc." (Myanmar's Net, 2006).

