In Brief

Labor Mobility As a Jobs Strategy for Myanmar

STRENGTHENING ACTIVE LABOR MARKET POLICIES TO ENHANCE THE BENEFITS OF MOBILITY

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RAPID SOCIAL RESPONSE

Foreword

Jobs are a key ingredient of Myanmar's development. Significant economic reforms have facilitated an economic transformation that has led to job growth that averaged 13 percent annually between 2014 and 2016. There are now more than 24 million jobs in Myanmar that are the main source of income for households. These jobs provide a path out of poverty and can bolster social cohesion in a country grappling with ongoing conflict. The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018–2030), a national strategy to inform policies and institutions that drive inclusive and transformational economic growth, recognizes that jobs are one of the foundations of Myanmar's economic development. One of the plan's five goals is devoted to job creation and private sector–led growth.

However, jobseekers in Myanmar are often in different locations than job opportunities, particularly the good ones. As a result, 4.7 million people, or nearly one in ten people, had moved from their usual place of residence in the five years preceding the 2014 Census, most of them migrants for work. Indeed, much migration flows to Myanmar's dynamic economic centers, particularly Mandalay and Yangon, as well as beyond Myanmar's borders to Thailand, Malaysia, and more distant countries. These people move in search of higher-paying jobs that can support families back home. The average monthly wage in Myanmar was about US$60 per month in 2015; Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand make around three times that

amount. The benefits of these jobs come in the form of remittances that can reduce poverty, lead to new skills, and shift gender norms.

People on the move face different types of risks than other jobseekers, and so strategies to increase their access to high quality and inclusive jobs in Myanmar must take these risks into account. Internal and international migrant workers face higher costs to look for jobs, which can deter mobility or lead them to choose informal channels. Myanmar migrants using informal channels to migrate to Thailand spend around 30 days and US$536 versus 45 days and US$794 for those using formal channels. Though informal channels may have lower initial costs, informal migrants tend to earn less and send home fewer remittances, meaning that the net benefits of migration and its ultimate benefits for Myanmar may be reduced. For instance, a recent survey found that three-quarters of regular migrants were paid above the minimum wage versus less than half of that for irregular ones. Irregular migrants are also more likely to report problems during migration. These unique experiences mean that measures to increase access to good jobs must be tailored to the needs of jobseekers who are on the move.

Labor Mobility As a Jobs Strategy for Myanmar shows how active labor market policies that aim to generate more and better employment opportunities can be adjusted to the needs of jobseekers on the move. The report examines these

Myanmar migrants using informal channels to migrate to Thailand spend around 30 days and US$536 versus 45 days and US$794 for those using formal channels.

adjustments for different types of active labor market policies. Labor market data can be expanded to include information about safety, particularly about avoiding human trafficking. Job matching and placement may require both a more active private-sector recruitment industry and more active government oversight. Training should incorporate knowledge about the demand from firms overseas, and it may also involve soft skills and safe migration training. Financial products can be tailored to alleviate credit constraints based on the remittance-linked income streams of migrants. Notably, these policies need not promote migration; some may even reduce the incentives for migration by improving access to income-generating opportunities at home.

The government recognizes the important role of mobility in Myanmar's labor markets. The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan includes components related to migration, including a strategy to promote legal, affordable, and secure migration to increase the contribution that migration makes to development. The government has also published two national plans of action on international migration that would increase development impacts. However, additional efforts could strengthen the positive impacts that migration has already had for Myanmar's development. This report shows how Myanmar's initial efforts can be expanded through a four-pronged strategy of short- and longer-term actions to deploy strategic investment to strengthen employment services, improve coordination to fill gaps in services, use technology to improve the efficiency of service delivery, and leverage data to inform investment, coordination, and technology. Undertaking such a strategy would help more people in Myanmar access good jobs.

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The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive Directors of the World Bank, the governments that they represent, or the counterparts with whom they consulted or engaged during the study process.

Abbreviations

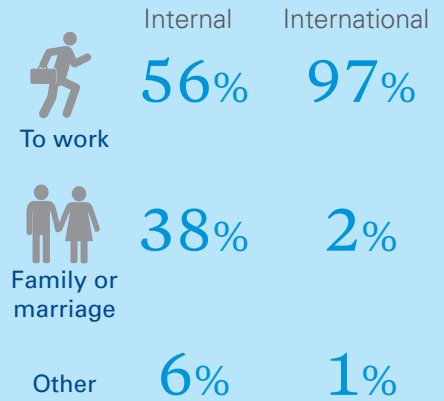|	
ALMPs	Active Labor Market Policies
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LEO	Labor Exchange Office
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Migrant Resource Center
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRC	National Registration Card
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises

Myanmar Migration in Numbers

Migration Movement

Within states and regions

Between states and regions

International

👤 = 100,000 migrants

Reason for Movement

	Internal	International
🚶 To work	56%	97%
👫 Family or marriage	38%	2%
Other	6%	1%

Number of migrants

— 70,000 – 115,000
— 115,000 – 160,000
— 160,000 – 205,000
— 205,000 – 250,000
— greater than 800,000

International Migrants by Country

Thailand 1.4mil 70%

China 90,000+ 5%

Malaysia 0.3mil 15%

Singapore 80,000 4%

Other countries 130,000 5%

Age Profile of Migrants

Age 15-24   Age 25-54   Age 55+

All migrants

Internal

International

Myanmar WAP
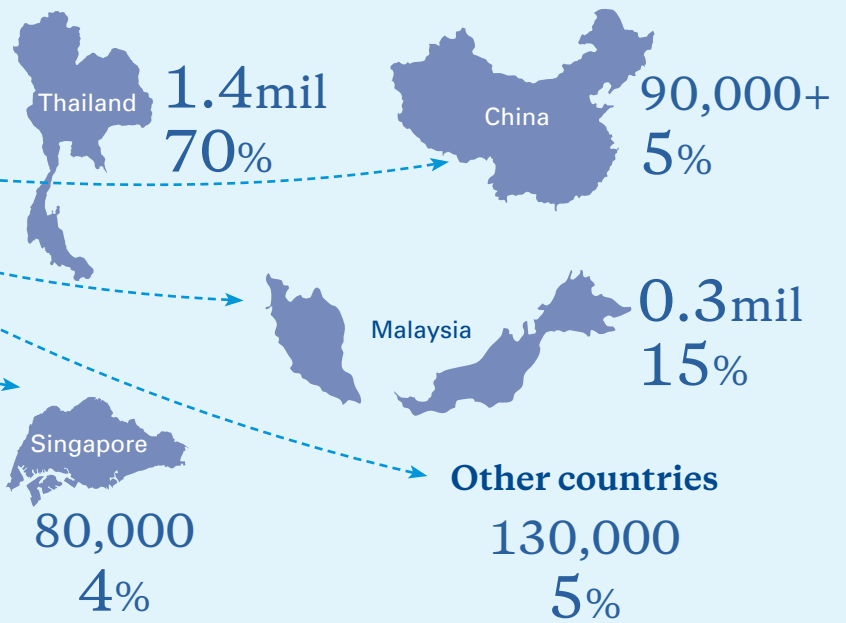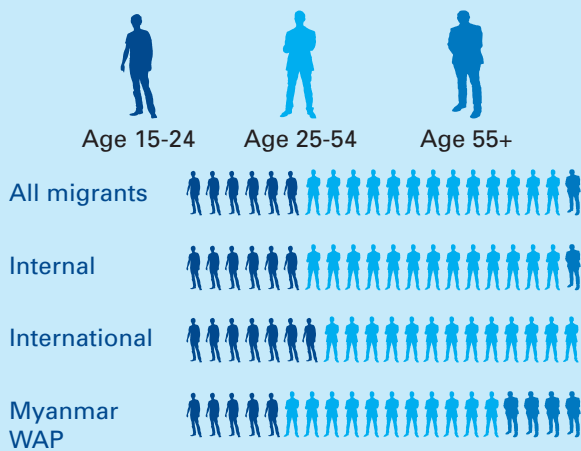
*WAP - Working age population

Education Profile of Migrants

None   Less than primary   Any middle   Secondary or higher

All migrants

Internal

International

Myanmar WAP
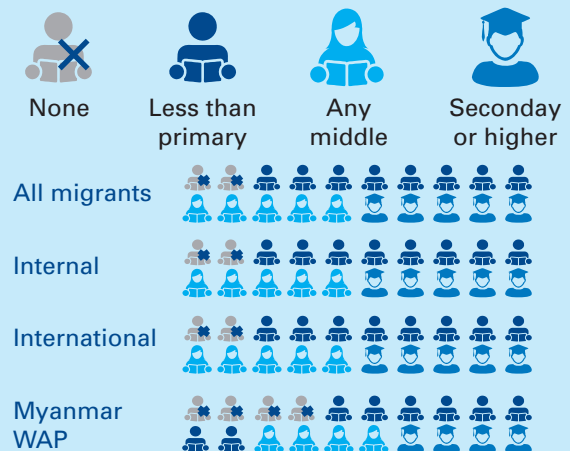
Maximizing the Benefits of Migration in Myanmar

Migrants have different motivations for moving

JOBS
Job opportunities and income diversification

Higher earnings

Social aspirations

Shock response
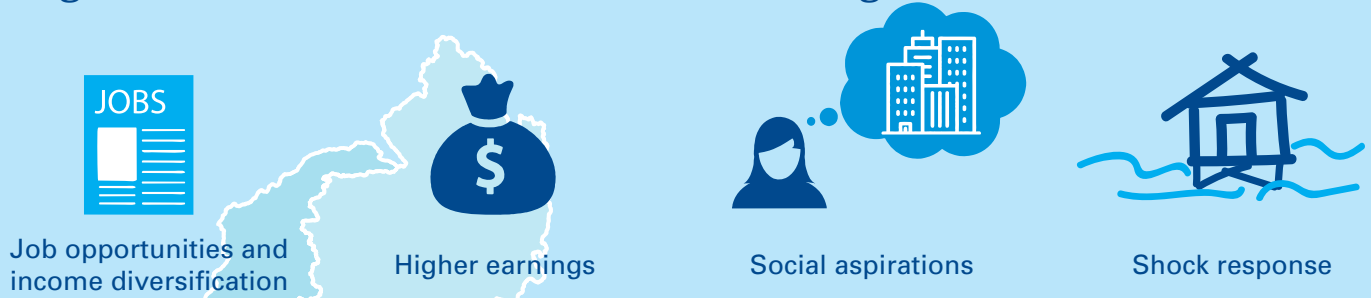
The channels they use to migrate lead to different outcomes

Informal migrants → Informal brokers →

Earn less & send home fewer remittances

42% Paid above minimum wage

46% Send remittances

Formal migrants →

Earn more & send home more remittances

76% Paid above minimum wage

82% Send remittances
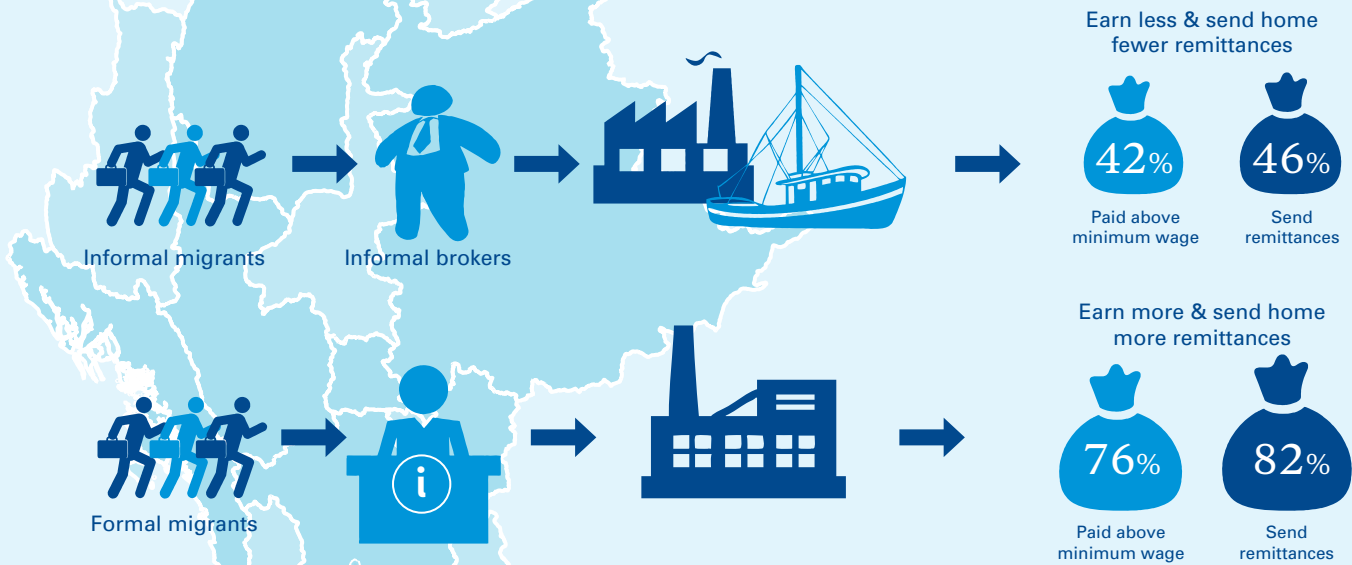
ALMPs can help maximize the benefits of migration

Safe migration and market-driven skills training

Timely and relevant labor market information

Targeted job matching and placement services

Skills acquisition and entrepreneurship

More income and higher consumption

Female empowerment

Legislative and institutional framework supportive of migrants

Financial assistance adapted to migrant needs
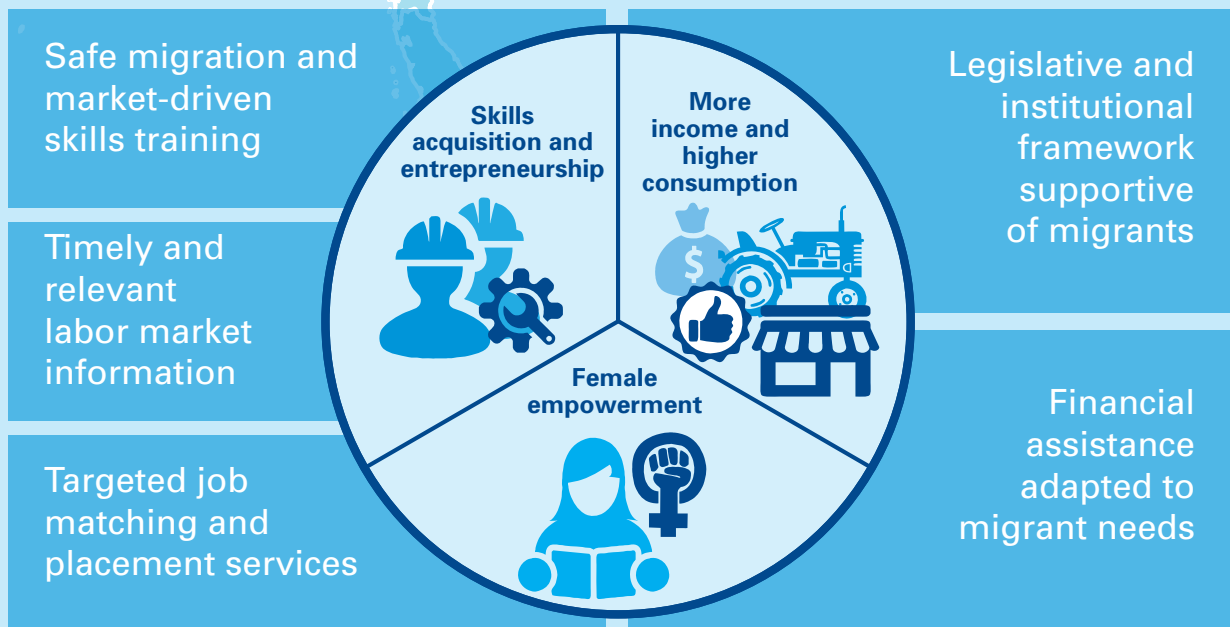
Somrerk Witthayanant/ Shutterstock

The government of Myanmar is committed to creating new and better jobs, including for migrant workers. In 2018, they introduced the Myanmar *Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030)*, a national strategy to inform policies and institutions that drive inclusive and transformational economic growth. Goal 3 of that plan focuses on job creation and private sector–led growth, and it includes separate strategies for job creation in rural areas, in industry and services, and in small and medium enterprises (SMEs); another part of Goal 3 addresses the need to improve the enabling environment for investment. Protecting the rights and harnessing the benefits of work, including for migrant workers, is likewise addressed in the government's plan. The Ministry of Labor, Immigration, and Population also released two National Plans of Action that highlight the importance of migration for Myanmar and the need to improve its management.

Achieving the goals of this jobs agenda requires overcoming significant constraints (Cunningham and Muñoz 2018). While there are more than 24 million jobs in Myanmar, which are the main source of income for households, the high-quality and inclusive jobs that lead to more growth and enhanced well-being are limited. Constraints to creating new and better jobs range from weaknesses in macroeconomic management to low agricultural productivity, low levels of private-sector engagement in the global economy, lack of access to land for SMEs, and an inadequately trained workforce. Additionally, jobs are not evenly distributed throughout Myanmar; most job growth is concentrated in its main economic centers, Yangon and Mandalay, with much less economic activity outside of these urban agglomerations.

Widespread and longstanding conflict in Myanmar exacerbates these challenges. Civil conflict is ongoing, and subnational conflict impacts one-third of townships in the country, which has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and cost valuable public resources. A range of factors can inhibit job creation in conflict-affected areas, including the lack of functioning markets, weak institutions, weak connections to the larger economy, lack of investment due to uncertainty, and less asset ownership by households. Conflict can also lead households to migrate in search of safety, stability, and income. In the border states, in particular, migration across the border has been a response to conflict and political factors.

10%

Percentage of the population that moved from their usual place of residence in the five years preceding the 2014 Census

In a well-functioning labor market, matches between jobseekers and employers occur quickly and easily. However, market failures can mean that access to training is limited, labor market information is incomplete, and access to credit is inadequate. Firms may underinvest in training because they fear that workers will leave once (transferrable) skills are learned. Jobseekers lack information about employers and employers about jobseekers, with the result that job search costs are inefficiently high. Failures in credit markets mean that poor households cannot finance job searches or launch self-employment activities. Symptoms of these problems have arisen in Myanmar, where access to training is limited, labor market information is incomplete, and access to credit is inadequate.

These breakdowns in the labor market can be particularly severe when jobs are remote. Myanmar is a highly mobile country—nearly 10 percent of the population had moved from their usual place of residence in the five years preceding the 2014 Census (Figure ES.1)—and most of these migrants
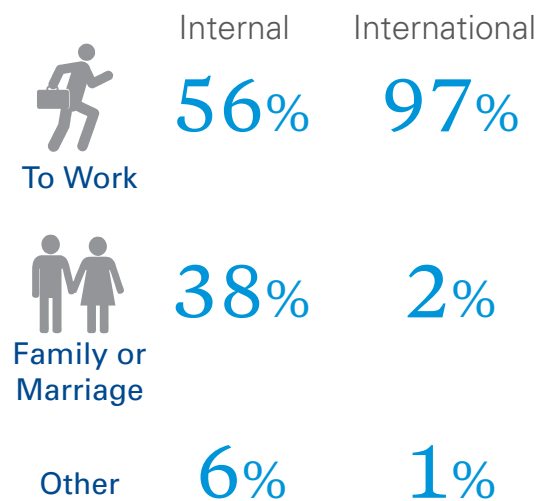
Figure ES.1

Myanmar is a highly mobile country...

Within states and regions	👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤
Between states and regions	👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤
International	👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤

👤 = 100,000 migrants

Source: Department of Population 2016.

Figure ES.2

in which most migrants move for work

	Internal	International
To Work	56%	97%
Family or Marriage	38%	2%
Other	6%	1%

Source: Cunningham and Muñoz 2018.

Figure ES.3

Formal migrants are more likely to earn higher wages...

Formal migrants

76% 82%

Paid above minimum wage
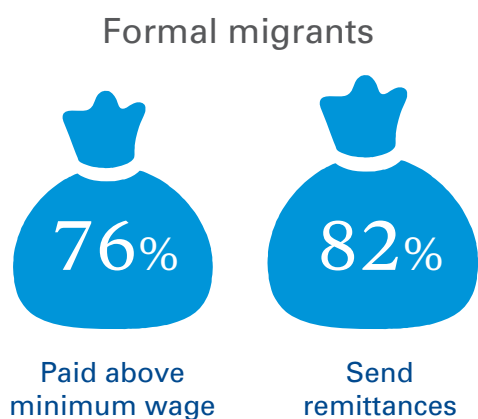
Send remittances

Source: IOM 2019.

Figure ES.4

and send remittances

Migrants with no documentation

42% 46%

Paid above minimum wage

Send remittances
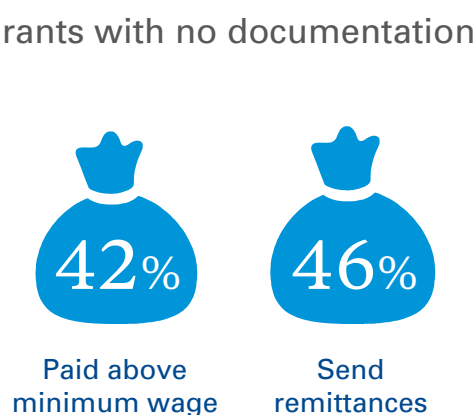
Source: IOM 2019.

are looking for work (Figure ES.2). Credit constraints and lack of information about in-country and international job opportunities can inhibit job searches in more distant locations and can lead migrants to use informal brokers or channels. These channels may be faster and cheaper than the official ones, but informal migrants tend to earn less and send home fewer remittances, which means that the net benefits of migration for families and its ultimate benefits for Myanmar are reduced (Figures ES.3 and ES.4). Firms' incentives for training international migrants may be even weaker than for domestic workers, because international migrants often have time-limited work permits, reducing the time horizon over which firms can expect a return on their training investment.
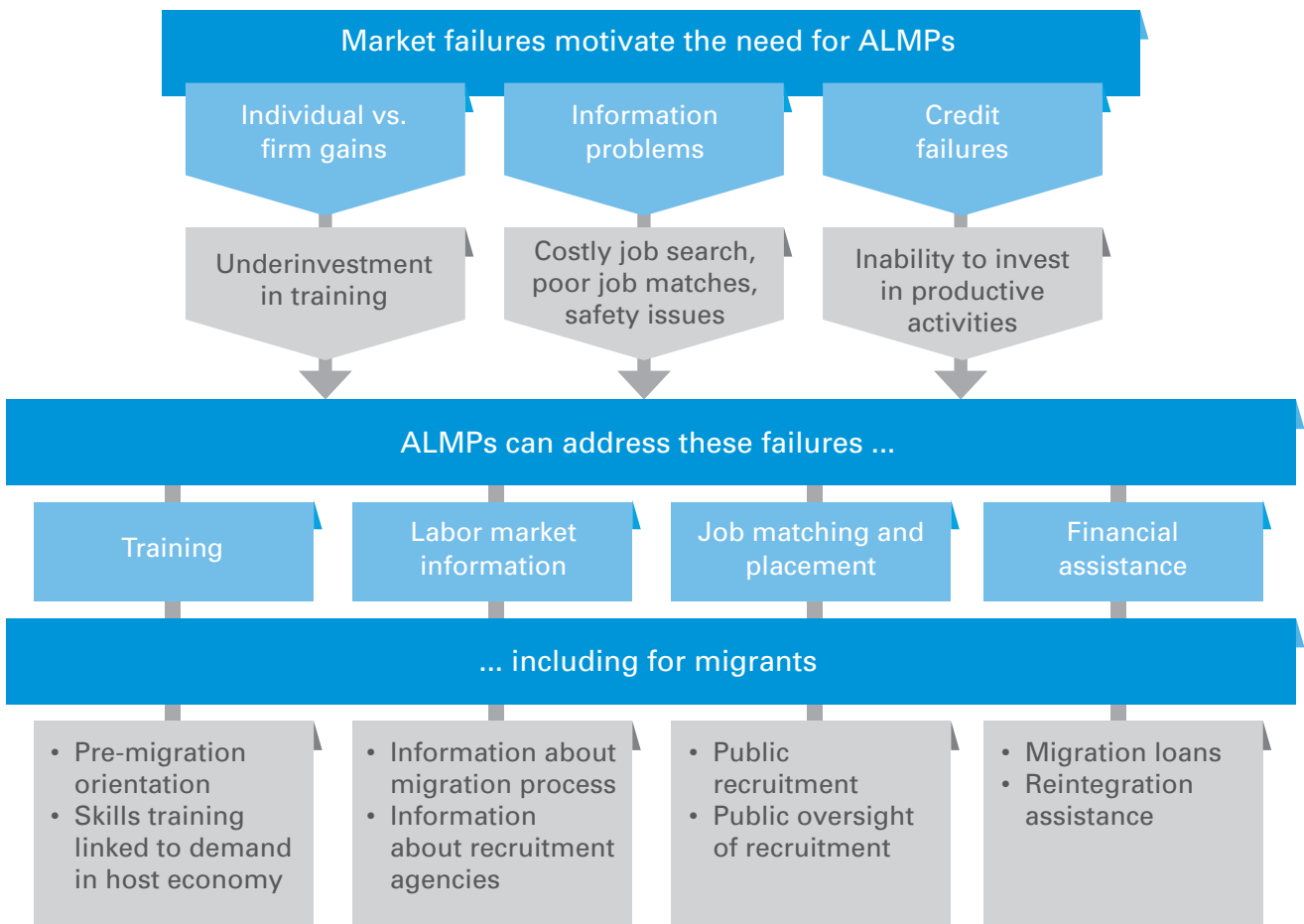
Active labor market policies (ALMPs) aim to address these market failures in order to generate more and better employment opportunities for workers (McKenzie 2017). These policies include skills training programs that increase employability and self-employment, subsidies that increase the demand for workers and

opportunities for entrepreneurship, and job-matching and -placement services that help match workers to jobs. It has been shown that ALMPs can lead to higher employment rates and, to a lesser extent, higher earnings (Betcherman and Moroz 2018). Still, ALMPs are only one part of a larger jobs agenda, and they have had positive impacts in some cases but not in others. The more effective programs tend to be targeted to specific groups and are designed with those groups in mind (Betcherman and Moroz 2018). Importantly for Myanmar, the most promising programs seem to be those that facilitate access to different labor markets and help overcome the mismatches in supply and demand that arise across space and across sectors (McKenzie 2017).

If deployed in Myanmar, different categories of ALMPs can address the market failures that have led to its labor market inefficiencies. Training financed by the government can increase investment in human capital to an efficient level. Labor market information and job-matching and -placement services can reduce job search

Figure ES.5

Typology of active labor market policies in the context of migration

Market failures motivate the need for ALMPs		
Individual vs. firm gains	Information problems	Credit failures
Underinvestment in training	Costly job search, poor job matches, safety issues	Inability to invest in productive activities

ALMPs can address these failures ...			
Training	Labor market information	Job matching and placement	Financial assistance

... including for migrants			
• Pre-migration orientation • Skills training linked to demand in host economy	• Information about migration process • Information about recruitment agencies	• Public recruitment • Public oversight of recruitment	• Migration loans • Reintegration assistance

costs and result in more efficient matches. Financial support can allow households to invest in income-generating activities. These actions would help both migrants and nonmigrants.

However, ALMPs must be targeted to the needs of migrant jobseekers. Labor market information should list the rules and regulations related to migration in addition to information about job vacancies. Information about safety, particularly about avoiding human trafficking, is particularly important. Job matching and placement may require both a more active private-sector recruitment industry and more active government oversight. Training must incorporate knowledge about the

demand from firms overseas, and it may also involve soft skills and safe migration training. Financial products can be tailored to alleviate credit constraints based on the remittance-linked income streams of migrants. Notably, ALMPs need not promote migration; some ALMPs expand livelihood opportunities at home through training and financial assistance that stimulates self-employment and entrepreneurship. In these cases, ALMPs may even reduce the incentives for migration by improving access to income-generating opportunities at home. Figure ES.5 summarizes the market failures that can motivate the need for ALMPs and how ALMPs can be adapted to the needs of migrants.

Domestic jobseekers

Myanmar has some of the necessary infrastructure in place to deliver ALMPs to domestic jobseekers, including internal migrants. This infrastructure is complemented by active private-sector training and recruitment industries that are focused on high-skilled workers. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and international development agencies are active in providing ALMPs to less-skilled workers. Overall, however, the ALMPs in Myanmar are primarily small scale and have limited geographic coverage. Publicly provided ALMPs, in particular, serve only a very small population.

- **Training.** Skills training is provided by many ministries and agencies in Myanmar, including the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (within the Ministry of Education) and several departments in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation. There are also private providers of training in Myanmar that range from small and informal training centers to larger ones geared to highly skilled jobseekers. CSOs, NGOs, and international development organizations also offer many skills training programs. These programs tend to focus on a particular geographic area of Myanmar, and they help link trainees with jobs after completion of the program.

- **Labor market information.** Labor market information is collected by the Myanmar government through censuses, surveys, and from administrative data. The census collects data on the entire population; the surveys are based on a representative sample of a portion of the population; and the administrative data, which is collected in the process of delivering services, may have more or less detail than survey data but permits analysis of the labor market in smaller geographies. Two censuses have been conducted in Myanmar in the last 4 decades, one in 1983 and the latest in 2014. In addition to other surveys, a labor force survey began collecting biannual data in 2017. Administrative data on the labor market is available via jobseeker, vacancy, and placement registrations at Labor Exchange Offices and with private recruitment agencies.

- **Job matching and placement.** Labor exchange offices (LEOs) are the primary providers of job matching and placement assistance. LEOs provide this assistance in a three-step process that registers jobseekers, registers vacancies, and then matches registered jobseekers to registered vacancies through a manual matching process. State and regional Department of Labor offices also host job fairs to facilitate job matching. The private market for job-matching and -placement services in Myanmar is segmented into licensed recruitment agencies, informal recruitment agents and brokers, and online job matching agencies. The use of these private services is limited; around 5 percent of jobseekers report registering with a job search agency, and only 1 percent report replying to ads in newspapers or posters or on the internet (Cunningham and Muñoz 2018). The skills training provided by by several CSOs, NGOs, and international development agencies have incorporated job-matching and -placement services into their programs. Public employment service providers and not-for-profit providers in Myanmar tend to focus on low-skilled jobseekers, while most private providers tend to target mid- and high-skilled workers.

- **Financial assistance.** Financial assistance is provided via NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies to promote livelihoods and self-employment, but it is generally not offered for job searches or wage employment.

International jobseekers

Myanmar's system for managing ALMPs for international jobseekers has matured in recent years, including by adopting two national plans of action on managing international labor migration. The private-sector recruitment industry is integral to placing Myanmar workers in jobs overseas. The government regulates this process through review of overseas employment offers, oversight of the recruitment industry, and bilateral agreements with countries of destination. NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies actively provide services, like labor market information, to potential international migrants. However, significant gaps in ALMPs for international jobseekers remain.

- **Training.** Most of the training for international migrants tends to be geared to raising awareness about migration procedures, risks, and soft skills, rather than technical skills training. Only 22 percent of migrants surveyed after returning from migration abroad reported receiving skills training prior to departure, although this percentage is higher than for migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam (ILO and IOM 2017). The Department of Labor offers a predeparture orientation-training course—free of charge to anyone considering migration, as long as they have a national registration card (NRC)—at its training centers in North Dagon in Yangon, and in Mandalay. CSOs, NGOs, and international development agencies also provide predeparture orientation courses.

1%

Percentage of jobseekers that report replying to ads in newspapers or posters or on the internet

- **Labor market information.** LEOs generally do not have information about employment opportunities abroad. Instead, overseas employment agencies identify both opportunities abroad and the workers to fill those opportunities. Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) at the LEOs offer information about the formal migration process and safe migration, and they provide a list of licensed overseas employment agencies to potential migrants. State and region Department of Labor offices host job fairs to introduce jobseekers to international migration and overseas employment agencies. Several projects implemented by CSOs, NGOs, and international development agencies create and disseminate labor market information. One novel approach, developed by the ISSARA Institute, makes information available through an Android application. Recruitment agencies, agents, and informal contacts, like friends, relatives, and community members, are important sources of information about the labor market.

- **Job matching and placement.** The private sector is deeply engaged in providing job matching and placement assistance to international migrants, primarily through recruitment agencies. Currently, a migrant cannot migrate formally without the involvement of a licensed overseas employment agency, which the public sector regulates. Companies wishing to recruit workers for employment abroad must obtain a license from the Department of Labor. More than 200 overseas employment agencies are licensed in Myanmar, almost all of them based in Yangon. The government sets the recruitment fees that the agencies charge migrant workers. The relationship between international jobseekers and public and private providers of job-matching and

22%

Percentage of migrants surveyed after returning from migration abroad that reported receiving skills training prior to departure

-placement services continues beyond the placement of a migrant worker in a job; public and private agencies provide assistance during migrants' employment abroad, their return home, and their reintegration.

- **Financial assistance.** Financial assistance to improve access to overseas labor markets is very limited in Myanmar. One innovative program is offered by the social impact business, Proximity Designs. Their On-the-Go Loan is offered to rural farm families who have not yet received remittances from a household member who has recently migrated. Beyond this program, there does not seem to be any financial assistance or financial products specifically designed for migrant workers. The lack of loans for migrants and the underdeveloped financial infrastructure limit the ability of aspiring migrants to borrow from formal financial institutions at reasonable rates of interest.

There are deficiencies in Myanmar's ALMPs, which range from human and financial resource constraints (that prevent more robust service provision) to a lack of engagement with NGOs, CSOs, international development agencies, and the private sector (that could potentially help fill some of the gaps in service provision created by resource constraints). Table ES.1 summarizes these weaknesses.

Table ES.1

The weaknesses in Myanmar's ALMPs

Area	Domestic jobseekers	International jobseekers
Legal and institutional framework	• Multiple functions performed by LEOs • Lack of coordination	• Centralization of decision making • Complicated and time-consuming migration requirements
Training	• Lack of links to private-sector demand • Lack of resources	• Predeparture training is centralized • Financial literacy training is limited
Labor market information	• Limited collection of job vacancies • Lack of dissemination	• Limited information available to migrants • Lack of dissemination
Job matching and placement	• Resources constraint • Inefficient business processes • Little or no local oversight of recruitment	• Lack of local oversight of recruitment • Lack of assistance for migrants after they are placed in a job abroad • Absence of reintegration and diaspora engagement policies
Financial assistance	• Financial assistance is generally absent	• Financial assistance is generally absent

Source: Authors.

Policy reforms are necessary to address the strengths and weaknesses of Myanmar's ALMPs. Improvements to the legislative and institutional framework could make the process of migrating less time-consuming and costly. Focusing on providing migrants with skills that are in demand, and with training before and after departure, could expand the job opportunities available and enable migrants to access them safely. Improvements in coordination among the private sector, NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies could enhance both the collection and dissemination of labor market information in the short run. Targeting job-matching and -placement services to low-skilled and disadvantaged workers would focus these services on the underserved individuals most likely to benefit from them. Financial assistance could help connect jobseekers to jobs in other locations, and they could also generate livelihood opportunities at home. Table ES.2 summarizes the individual policy recommendations to strengthen and fill gaps for each type of ALMP.

The proposed reforms are designed to improve ALMPs, primarily for poorer and less-skilled individuals who are considering moving for work. As Chapters 2 and 3 show, private-sector firms provide many ALMP services, from skills training to matching and placement. However, this provision focuses primarily on highly skilled and wealthier jobseekers, leaving a gap for those with fewer skills or less resources—those who frequently search for jobs in limited networks of families and friends. The recommendations would improve Myanmar's ALMPs, which would in turn enable poorer and less-skilled individuals to have access to services not available to them from the private sector. The current clientele of LEOs is low-skilled individuals; few seem to visit LEOs specifically to learn about internal or international migration. The proposed reforms would align ALMPs to less advantaged jobseekers, make ALMPs more attractive and accessible to this group, and help these jobseekers find jobs inside and outside of Myanmar more quickly and easily.

Table ES.2

Policy recommendations to strengthen and fill gaps in ALMPs

Rationalizing the legislative and institutional framework supporting migrants and ALMPs		
	Short term	**Longer term**
Rationalize administrative tasks and approvals	• Reconsider the requirement that all jobseekers register at LEOs • Reconsider the requirement that high- level approvals are needed for all demand letters	• Business process review and automation
Continue strengthening bilateral migration relationships	• Disseminate widely information about the Thailand Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) • Use the Thailand MOU as a platform to engage Thailand on migration issues	• Work to limit administrative steps in the Thailand MOU • Explore the potential for MOUs with other countries
Evaluate the costs and benefits of migration restrictions	• Carefully consider restrictions on destination countries and on occupations	
Strengthen migrant resource centers (MRCs)	• Raise awareness about MRCs • Provide training to MRC staff	• Expand the role of MRCs • Expand the number of MRCs
Update the law relating to overseas employment	• Clarify responsibilities at national, state and region, and local levels • Fill gaps in current law, especially those related to services for migrants and enforcement	
Transitioning to an employer-driven skills strategy for training		
	Short term	**Longer term**
Transition to an employer-driven skills strategy	• Enhance cooperation with local and international employers on the development and delivery of skills training	• Explore the possibility of publicly financed training vouchers for disadvantaged students
Fill gaps in training for migrants and potential migrants	• Expand the availability of predeparture training, possibly by providing this training at LEOs and MRCs • Incorporate financial literacy training into predeparture training, potentially in coordination with NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies	• Explore the possibility of an online and mobile-accessible standardized training module • Expand the informational materials that labor attachés can provide to migrants in destination countries

Table ES. 2 Policy recommendations to strengthen and fill gaps in ALMPs *continued*

Expanding access to labor market information		
	Short term	Longer term
Fill gaps in labor market information	• Create a voluntary mechanism for reporting vacancies through partnerships with employers, recruitment agencies, and online job portals • Encourage LEOs to reach out to employers to uncover vacancies and skills needs	• Conduct surveys of migrants at different stages of the migration cycle
Improve the dissemination of labor market information	• Encourage LEO officers to provide job openings in other locations to jobseekers • Post overseas job openings from demand letters on MyanmarJob.gov.mm/ • Make administrative data available to CSOs, NGOs, international development agencies, and the private sector • Make the Myanmar Labor Force, Child Labor, and School-to-Work Transition Survey publicly available • Create clear information bulletins about deployment restrictions and requirements and publicize them widely	• Use an enhanced information system to allow jobseekers to access job openings in any location from any LEO • Develop a devoted portal for overseas job openings
Enhance the analysis of labor market information		• Expand the labor market information analysis function of the Department of Labor and LEOs
Explore new technologically informed service delivery channels		• Provide employment information to jobseekers via text message • Develop a Department of Labor mobile app to provide information, allow job searches, and permit communication with workers
Developing targeted job-matching and -placement services		
	Short term	Longer term
Invest in an information management system	• Address technical gaps in data quality and integrity and data security in existing online employment services systems (modest option) • Customize the existing online employment services system to replace all offline functions (ambitious option)	• Establish an integrated platform that supports end-to-end automation of employment and migration services

Target job-matching and -placement services to low-skilled and disadvantaged jobseekers	• Target job-matching and placement services to low-skilled and disadvantaged jobseekers	• Explore the creation of a competitive market for low-skilled and disadvantaged jobseekers
Improve the oversight of overseas employment agencies	• Encourage the adoption and use of the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation's Code of Conduct rating system by providing data, publishing the ratings, and providing incentives, such as priority processing or relaxed scrutiny for demand letters	• Involve LEOs and MRCs more actively in the oversight of internal and international recruitment
Strengthen the assistance provided to migrant workers while they are abroad	• Target job-matching and placement services to low-skilled and disadvantaged jobseekers	• Explore the possibility of a migrant worker welfare fund to finance services to migrants employed abroad • Explore the possibility of making recruitment agencies liable for the actions of employers abroad
Explore diaspora engagement policies		• Create a database of expatriate Myanmar workers
Incorporating financial services into ALMPs		
	Short term	**Longer term**
Explore the potential of financial assistance to help connect jobseekers to jobs in other locations	• Explore targeted subsidies for job searches or transportation • Explore predeparture loans for international migrants	
Explore the potential of financial assistance to link people to livelihood opportunities	• Explore the potential for remittance-backed loans • Explore the possibility of implementing economic inclusion programs in partnership with CSOs, NGOs, and international development agencies	• Explore pilots to reintegrate returning migrants, perhaps targeting groups of migrants in specific occupations or sectors • Explore opportunities to scale up economic inclusion programs linked to broader social protection schemes

Source: Authors.

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Many policy reforms are needed to improve and expand ALMPs in Myanmar, and they must be prioritized for success, efficiency, and budget considerations. The recommendations for short-run interventions are the most crucial and have the highest likelihood for impact. Longer-run changes are more ambitious and may require additional resources. Beyond this short- and longer-term prioritization, several themes emerge from the policy recommendations, which provide a rubric for reform. Figure ES.6 outlines this rubric.

- **First,** strategic investments are needed to strengthen the ALMPs. In the short term, budget constraints mean that strengthening existing services is preferable to a significant expansion of offerings. A short-term priority is to improve the current information system, which would save time and resources related to the registration of jobseekers, offer a comprehensive set of job listings, and manage the demand letters for international jobseekers. In the longer term, when budget constraints are relaxed, an expansion of services can be considered.

- **Second,** improved coordination is needed to fill the gaps in services. In the short term, the services provided by the Department of Labor and other agencies should be supplemented with those provided by the private sector, NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies. The Department of Labor can coordinate with the private sector on ways to address the needs of less-skilled individuals, and partner with NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies to expand their efforts to link jobseekers with good jobs. In the longer term, the Department of Labor can take on more of the services currently provided by NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies, and identify areas where these groups can complement public services.

- **Third,** technology will need to be deployed to improve the efficiency of service delivery, including the information management system. In the short term, the Department of Labor can work with NGOs, CSOs, and international development agencies, which incorporate technology-informed

tools into their delivery of ALMP services. To take one example, the data held by the Department of Labor on overseas employment agencies could significantly improve the value added of existing informational mobile applications developed by nonprofit agencies that work with international migrant workers. In the longer term, the Department of Labor can explore ways that technology can be used to provide its own client-facing services.

- Fourth, collection, analysis, and dissemination of data will need to be strengthened. In the short term, the focus will need to be on improving the dissemination of existing data while in the longer term, the focus can shift to collection and analysis as well.

Creating more good jobs in Myanmar will require a coordinated jobs agenda with policy reforms across many different sectors. Strengthening ALMPs is just one

Many policy reforms are needed to improve and expand ALMPs in Myanmar, and they must be prioritized for success, efficiency, and budget considerations.

part, although an important one, of this jobs agenda. Better ALMPs for jobseekers in Myanmar can address failures in the labor market that result in less skilled and disadvantaged jobseekers receiving insufficient training, labor market information, and job-matching and -placement services, making their job searches more challenging. With some tailoring, ALMPs can be made particularly useful to internal and international jobseekers who face unique challenges in accessing remote jobs.

Figure ES.6

Priority areas for reforming ALMPs

	Short term	Longer term
Strategic investment is needed to strengthen employment services ...	Invest to strengthen existing services	Invest to expand services
... with improved coordination to help fill services gaps.	Coordinate to supplement services	Coordinate to complement services
Technology can improve the efficiency of service delivery ...	Use technology to improve business processes	Use technology to improve client-facing services
... while better data can inform investment, coordination, and technology.	Focus on data dissemination	Focus on data collection and analysis

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