

## CHAPTER IV

### Social Network of Migrant Factory Workers

In this chapter, this study will start with two selected case studies, then following this up with social network mapping and social network analysis will be made base on the two selected case studies. After this the study will explain how they create their social network in the mist of poor working and living conditions at the Haling Tharyar Industrial Zone in Yangon.

#### 4.1 Selected case studies

This study interviewed nine Rakhine migrant factory workers. However, this study selected two migrants; one female and one male for a more intensive case study out of the nine people. The reason of selecting these two participants is their different background and utilization of social networks to improve their life.

##### 4.1.1 Case study one (Male Migrant Worker)

His name is Nyi Nyi. He is a 21 years old man from Minbya township. There are six people in his family. He is the youngest. Their family is a middle income family in Rakhine and they grow rice in the rainy season. The other seasons they work as general laborers. Nyi Nyi passed middle school but he failed the grade 11 exam at high school twice. He left school and help his parents in their paddy farm but he did not have a full time job or was unable to earn money in Rakhine.

One day, he received information from a friend that there was a man in Minbya who could help him to get a job as a general construction worker in China earning 80 Yuan (13 USD) per day. To do this he would have to pay 400,000 Kyats (400 USD) per person. When he heard that news, he wanted to go to China to earn money but initially his parents did not want him to go away as he is youngest in his family and his parents worry that he would become a victim of people trafficking. Later, his parents allowed him to go as there were some people from his village and near by villages that also were

going. His parents sold bags of rice to pay for his travel costs and agent fee. There were 10 Rakhine people, 7 men and 3 women who went to China to work in a construction site as general workers. In 2011 he left his family for the first time when he was around 18.

The agent arranged and led their group. Their group entered into Yunnan province in China illegally. They were introduced to the Chinese boss in Chinese language. In a few days the agent left their group. The Chinese boss and his manager who is Kachin from Myanmar came to them and told that they had to work for 40 Yuan (7 USD) per day in the forest to cut down trees for a tea plantation. All the group members complained as they had come to work in a construction site for 80 Yuan (13 USD) per day. They all realized that they had been cheated by the agent. but they decided to work there because 40 Yuan is an acceptable amount for them.

The manager took them to the forest to cut down the trees and bushes. Two or three elders in their group led their group and they worked and lived in the forest. The manager visited the site every week. However at the end of the month the manager did not come to the site and did not pay any money. So they went to town and contacted their families in Rakhine by telephone and explained their problems. Fortunately, one of the people from their group had information about a Rakhine Association in Yunnan province from their family. And they made contact with the Rakhine organizations. The organizations is an ethnic based organization and it is helping Rakhine and other migrants from Myanmar.

The Organization sent one representative to help them and to find the Chinese boss and manager. With the help of the organization they meet with the Chinese boss who said that he had paid their salary weekly. So they went to find the manager and have him arrested for stealing their money. The representative of the organization explained to them if they sued the manager, they will be arrested because they were illegal migrants in China. However, they sued the manager at the police station. They were also arrested and put in jail for one month being illegal migrants to China. The police took them to the border to go back Myanmar after their time in jail. The

organization paid transportation cost for their return to their village. Most of their group members went back to their villages but Nyi Nyi wanted to search for a job and earn money so he did not go back.

He went to Lashio where his uncle from his mother side lived and stayed at his uncle's home. He worked as a helper loading and reloading goods on to a lorry with the help of his uncle who drove the lorry car. The work was very tiring and he did not get a regular income. He then contacted his brother-in-law who worked in a food processing factory and migrated to Yangon. He stayed with his brother-in-law at a rented house. When he left his village he was still young so he did not have a national registration card. Beside, he did not have a police certificate, a ward certificate or labour registration card. As he did not have these documents which he needed if he wanted to apply for a job in a factory and did not know how to get these documents. One of his brother-in-law's friends who works at the General Administration Department (Shwe Pyi Thar) helped him to get the necessary documents in order to apply for a job.

In 2011, September, he got job information from a friend of his brother-in-law, who shares the rental house with them and worked in the study factory's office. He got a job in a studied factory's Store section. His main duty was to carry raw material. There are many Rakhine in his section. There are many challenges for factory workers especially for new migrants. As mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, the factory does not have concrete policies on promotions and types of leave which lead to ,discrimination in work place. Also the factory required many working hours with little salary, while language barriers and lack of job relevant skills was also an initial problem. He could not handle all these challenges by himself.

To overcome these challenges he needs the support from someone(s) who can help him. One individual person is not always available to support him, therefore he created his own social networks with many people in the factory. He already had a friend in the factory who helped him to get the job. When he created his social network he used his friend as a bridge. He made friends with people from his section by working and talking together but he could not interact with people from other sections during working hours because as this study mentions is chapter 2, the factory does not allow

labourers to go to other sections during working hours. However, he can make friends with people from other section by having lunch and doing social activities with them during break time or on their holiday.

He used to play football and sepaktakraw when he was in Rakhine and this supports him to make friends with colleagues. He created strong social networks with his colleagues not only by working together but also by participating in social activities such as playing football, sitting at the teashop and drinking beer outside the factory. Besides, when he went back and forth to in his place of origin, he used to bring Rakhine traditional food and snacks as presents for his colleagues and supervisor to build trust and create a strong social network.

In the factory hierarchy competition for promotion is very high, seniors do not generally want to share their knowledge or job relevant skills. Seniors share only with those who they have a strong connection with them or if they trust a person who is good to them. Nyi Nyi could learn how to calculate a variety of raw material, checking the quality and quantity of it from his senior colleagues. However, one of the challenges for him was the language barrier. He understands Burmese but Burmese people cannot understand him, this causes communication issues with his colleagues. To solve this problem, he learnt Burmese from senior Rakhine colleagues. So after one year in the factory, when he has the relevant job skills and has created social networks with colleagues and supervisors, he became a supervisor when there is vacancy.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the factory does not have a social benefits scheme and labourers rights. Labourers from this studied factory respond to these challenges together and went on strike 5 times. There are four organisations inside the factory which provide psych-social and financial support if labourers have health problems or a wedding or having a baby. Among the four organisations the Labour Union advocates for labourers rights on behalf of labourers. He got involved in three organisations in order to get their support from the organisations if he faced social or health problems. But he was not involved in Quality Control group because he is not from that section.

Fortunately, he does not need to give money to his family because his elder sibling supports the family. And his parents can work in the paddy farm. He neither gives money to his family nor asks for money. He manages and uses his money by himself. Sometimes if he wants to buy a watch or shoes, he participates in a saving group. He saves the money together with his colleagues and friends of his colleagues. If he needs money urgently, he can borrow it from his colleagues but if it is more than 10 USD, he can not borrow it from them as his colleagues as they are poor also. If he needs more money than that he can borrow it from his brother-in-law or loan providers.

He has a very limited education and limited access to books or newspapers. Generally, he gets information from his colleagues and supervisors. He gets information about Rakhine from his co-ethnic friends. When hears about Rakhine traditional and social events in Yangon he goes with his friends. Sometimes he gets involved in Rakhine traditional sport for fun. When he participates in Rakhine events, he feels good and at home and forgets about his difficulties.

To entertain himself in his free time, he learnt how to play the guitar from his friends. Playing the guitar is a cost effective way to entertain himself. Sometimes if he feels bored or wants to relax, he goes to the tea shop or restaurant with his friends. Sometime, his friends bring their friends so he can extend his network or can build good a relationship with his friends and friends of friends. He spends most of his time in the factory so he has very few friends outside the factory. He does not have a strong linkage with people near his home.

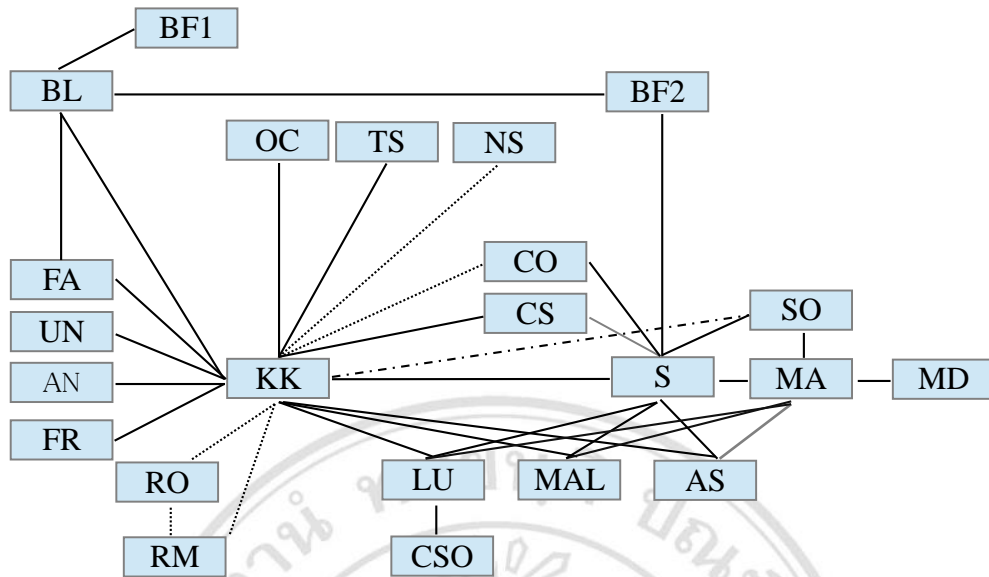
After one and a half years working in the factory, he moved to a new shoe making factory which was founded by the Korea translator at the studied factory because he was offered more money. The translator knew and trusted his ability, skills and experience. He worked in the same section and same position but with a higher salary. Unfortunately, 9 months later, he become jobless. As the factory reduced staff because there was very few orders from buyers. He asked his old colleagues to help him to get a job again in the studied factory but the Managing Director of the factory did not want him to work there again. When he worked in this factory, he used to help his

colleagues as a supervisors and so his old colleagues requested the Managing Director to re-appoint and give him a chance. The Managing Director allowed him to work because of his colleagues request.

One day, when he visited to his aunty, a private bank manager, she informed him that a private bank is going to open a branch office in Hlaing Tharyar township and encouraged him to apply. This was a great opportunity for him. If he got a job in the bank his salary would be three time higher than his salary at the factory as a worker there and he would get more holidays. He applied for the bank job and got an invitation to attend an interview. At that time there was a lot of orders and the factory did not want to give him any leave. His friend in the office helped to get a half day leave for the interview. In the interview, he was able to answer well because his aunty had already informed the interviewers in advance and told him how to answer the questions.

After two months, he got the information from his aunty that he was selected as an office helper to carry money and support office staff so he resigned from the factory. He felt two things at the same time; happy for getting a job and feeling sad for leaving his friends who supported him all the time. Anyway, this is a great opportunity for him to promote his life with the help of his friends and kin members. He still will have a connection with his old colleagues from the factory. He continues to share social activities with them when he has free time. Then they go to the tea shop or restaurant, he pays more because his income is higher than his old colleagues. He has a desire to get married and raise his family on his own and settle down in Yangon.

Below is a social map of Nyi Nyi's social network that assisted him in Yangon.



**Figure 4.1** Social mapping of selected male migrant

NN	Nyi Nyi (Male Migrant)	S	Supervisors from same sections
FA	Family	SO	Supervisors from other sections
UN	Uncle	BL	Brother in Law
AN	Aunty	BF2	Brother in Law' Friend from the study factory
FR	Friends in Rakhine	BF1	Brother in Law' Friend from General Administration Department
RO	Rakhine organization	OC	Old Colleagues
RM	Rakhine Monastery	CO	Colleagues from other sections
LU	Labour Union	CS	Colleagues from same section
MAL	Myinttar Ah Lin Group	TS	Translator
AS	All Supervisors Group	NS	Neighbors
CSO	Civil Society Organization	—	Strong Connection
MD	Managing Director	.....	Weak Connection
MA	Managers		

#### 4.1.2 Case study two (Female Migrant Worker)

Her name is Zarchi. She is originally from Moe Shwe Gone village, Taunggoke township. There are 5 people in her family; her parents and two brothers. She is the eldest in her family. Her parents are poor farmers and own two acres of farm. Her parents can not support her to attend university although she passed the matriculation exam (grade 11 exam) in Rakhine. To attend university she needs to earn money. It is impossible for her to attend Sittwe University while working because there are no relatives and close friends in Sittwe plus it would be difficult to find a job at

there. So in 2004 she migrated to Yangon where her cousin's-brother lives with the aim to get her education and a job there. Her cousin's-brother works as a sub-contractor in carpentry work. She determined that she will not go back to Rakhine if she does not get a degree.

She lived temporarily in her cousin's-brother's home in Tharkayta township. Her cousin's-brother helped her to get the necessary documents to apply for a job. She searched for a job with the help of her cousin's-brother but initially she did not find a job and she does not want to work in construction with her cousin's-brother because she is thin and weak. It is difficult to find a job in Yangon if someone does not have the connections with those who can provide job information and support her to get a job. Her cousin's-brother helps her but he does not have the connection with job providers so it takes time. It took her three months to find employment in Yangon. She got a job as a helper in a garment factory in Shwe Pyi Thar township where her cousin's-brother's friend works.

This is her first factory job and she is fearful to work there with many people but her cousin's-brother's friend, a Karean migrant from Ayeyawaddy region, helped her to settle down in the factory. When she got the job, she moved to Shwe Pyi Thar township from Tharkayta township to live in a hostel with her colleagues because Tharkayta is too far away from the factory. The factory did not provide transportation and did not allow her to attend university so she resigned from it after working there six months. As a result of having no job, she could not afford to pay hostel charges so she moved to Tharkayta again to live with her cousin's-brother again.

One day, she met her friend from her village at Tharkayta Rakhine monastery. Her friend helped her to get a job at the studied factory in Haling Tharyar township. She got a job as a helper in the sewing section. When she got this job she moved to Shwe Pyi Thar township to live with her old colleagues temporarily before she got a room at Hlaing Tharyar township. Three months later, the cost of living in Hlaing Tharyar is very high so she can not afford to hire a room at the hostel. She lives in a shared room with friends of her colleagues in Hlaing Tharyar.

Being a new workers in the factory, she has to learn job relevant skills in the sewing section, the nature of the job and what behaviour is expected from her colleagues and from her seniors. Working in the Sewing section is very tiring and she earns little money. Besides, the supervisor from that section does not give her study leave so she wanted to move to another section to get study leave. For this reason, she made friends with people from the Quality Control section and learned from them how to check errors in shoes during break time and when they have lunch together.

When there was a vacancy in that section she changed her work place from the Sewing section to the Quality Control section. The Quality Control job is more comfortable and there is less overtime than the sewing section. After she joined this section, she requested from her supervisor for study leave to attend the University of Distance Education at the weekend. It was a big obstacle for her to get this leave. She insisted that her supervisor recommend her to get the leave. Then she requested that the Korea translator inform the Managing Director when it was appropriate. Finally she got study leave without pay because she has good connections with all her supervisors.

She had to save money not only to attend university but also to send to her family in Rakhine. She saved the money in a group with her trusted friends and sent around 100 USD every three months. When she transferred the money, she did not use the bank because she worked in at factory during bank business hours. She transferred the money with Lu Kyone (which means someone who goes to her village or near her village). Sometimes, she sent the money to her family with a friend of friends who was going to Rakhine or sometime if her family needed money urgently she transferred the money via the high-way bus that she uses to go back to Rakhine. She transfer the money to her family by using her social network.

Sometimes after she remits the money, she only has little money left and it is not enough to her pay university enrollment and tuition fees. If she can not borrow this money from her friends, she borrows it from her cousin's-brother. Sometime, if her cousin's-brother can not lend money to her she borrows it from the loan providers. Sometime, when she needs the money she gambles on a football match or an illegal lottery together with her colleagues.

If the factory gets a lot of orders from buyers, labourers have to take overtime up to mid night and it is risky for the women to go home late at night. Therefore, if she has to work to mid night for the over time she sleeps at the home of her colleagues who live near by the factory.

The Hlaing Thar township is one of the most dangerous townships in Myanmar. Sometimes people lose their property while they are go away from home. Zarchi made friends with local people who live near her home. If there is a donation ceremony or wedding near her home, she goes to make friends with the local people. Although she makes friends with the local people who live near her home, she does not get any other support from them except social safety.

When she is in Rakhine, if she had a health problem she consulted with her parents and took traditional medicines, but in Yangon, she discusses her health problems with her friends. She gets health information as well as medicine from her friends. She follows her friends suggestion but if the symptom are serious she goes to a clinic or hospital. The studied factory does not have a social welfare scheme and the government social welfare is not reliable so she is involved in all three organisations that support labourers health expenses and advocate for labour rights. If she is seriously ill or goes to hospital, she can get some money from these organisations. She not only gets health information but also general information from her colleagues and friends who can access information from the internet. She can not afford a smart phone as she has to spend her money on her education and remit to her family in Rakhine. She is usually very busy and has little money so she does not read any kind of books or newspaper but gets information mostly from her friends.

Sometime, she participates in the Arakan National Social Association's cleaning pagoda floor in Hlaing Tharyar because her hostel owner is one of the leaders of that Association. Occasionally, she goes to the Rakhine monastery in Thakayta township because the Rakhine monks from that monastery are from her village. Most of the lay men who come to that monastery are Rakhine. The monastery provides Rakhine food to the people if there is a ceremony. Whenever she goes, she donates something to the

monk. When she heard or meet someone who is talking in the Rakhine language, she feel like they are one of her relatives because of the spirit of Rakhine.

Prices of commodities increase day to day but her salary does not increase. She has to manage all her income and expenses. To reduce living expenses she has to learn how to find cheap food, where she can stay at a cheap place and how to take the bus and so on. Learning these survival techniques is very important for her to settle down in Yangon quickly. She is single but she has a desire to get married and raise their family in Yangon because she does not think Rakhine will give her a job with a proper income.

She has been working in the studied factory for about eight years but she was not promoted to supervisor because she did not learn enough about job relevant skills and she takes leave very often. Labourers promoted to a supervisor have job relevant skills and come to the factory punctually. But she studies outside the factory to create a better life for herself. She is very ambitious so she does not want to devote her life to the factory. She believes that her life will always be miserable if she works there. That is why, after she got a degree in Physics from West Yangon University, she learns about computers to promote her life. Attending training outside the factory is a very good opportunity for her to interact with people from outside the factory, to create her social network wider in the host community and to learn about career development.

ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่  
Copyright© by Chiang Mai University  
All rights reserved

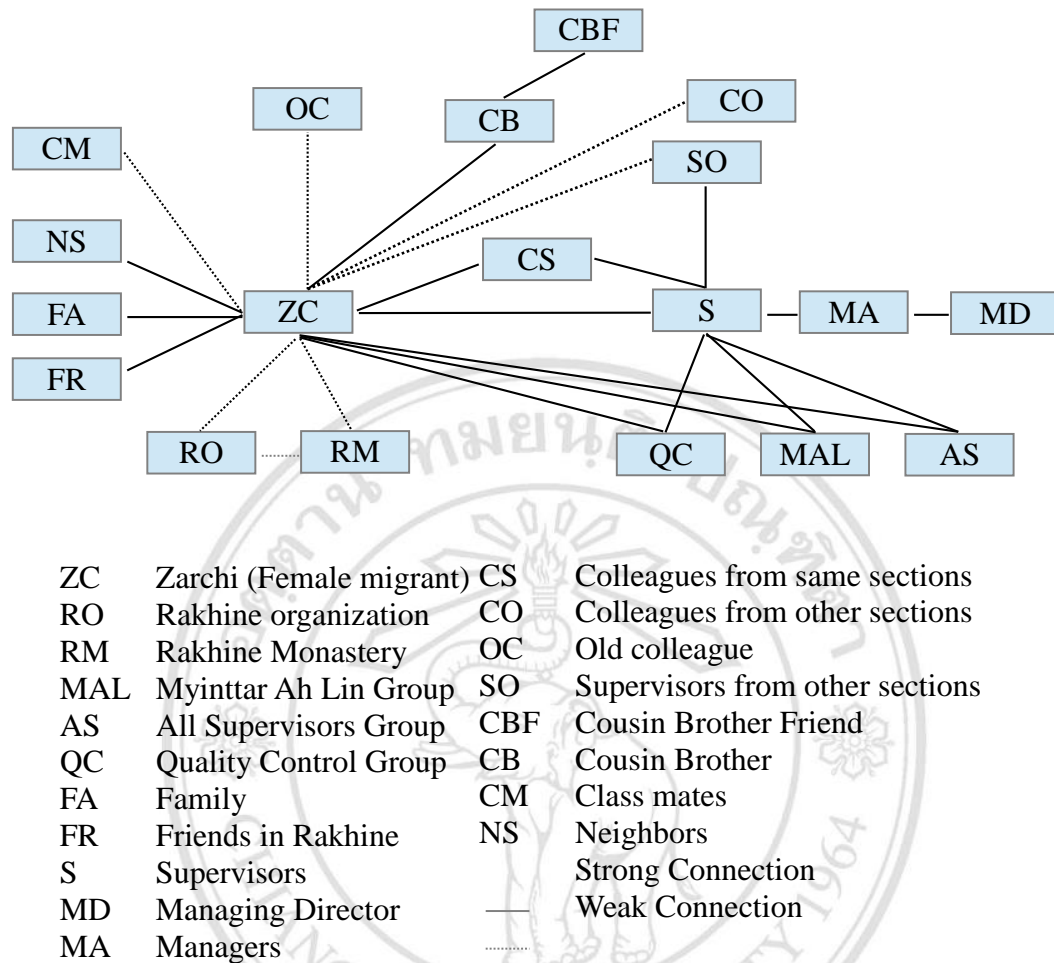


Figure 4.2 Social mapping of selected female migrant

#### 4.2 Social network mapping and analysis of the migrants

This study analysis of the social network of Rakhine migrant factory workers is based on two selected migrants to elaborate the quality of connections and who they connect with for what. Both participants, Nyi Nyi and Zarchi have connection with Rakhine organizations but they are not members of these organizations. They just participate occasionally in the Rakhine traditional and social events which are organized by these organizations. There are 77 Rakhine organizations which are helping people from Rakhine in many different ways. Among them the Rakhine Thahaya Association, Rakhine Youth Sweeping Association, Arakan National Social Association and Rakhine Monasteries are important for migrant factory workers including the selected two

migrant because these organisations organize Rakhine events which provide psych-social support to them.

Some Rakhine organisations provide scholarship opportunities to attend local Universities, computer training, English language training and vocational training such as repairing electronic machines or plumbing or welding while some organisation organize Rakhine youth gathering events in Yangon. There are some limitations for the Rakhine migrant factory workers to access the resources provided by Rakhine organisations because most Rakhine organizations and their resource centres exists in downtown Yangon which is far way from Hlaing Tharyar township because factory workers live in sub-urban area of Hlaing Tharyar. If migrants go to Rakhine organisations to access their resources it may take many hours to reach them.

Additionally, migrants are working in the factory for many hours and get only a few holidays in a month. These are limitations for migrants to access resources of the Rakhine organizations. Nevertheless, Rakhine migrant factory workers can connect and get resources if they have serious problems like legal issues or a funeral. Until now the participates have not had such a problem so they have not had to connect with these organisations. The connection between the participates and Rakhine organizations is weak because Rakhine migrant workers link to these organisation very rarely. That is why, migrants cannot get immediate support from these organisation.

Beside, all Rakhine migrants are Buddhist. They use to go to monasteries occasionally although they are busy at the factory. If Rakhine migrant workers go to a monastery, they go to Rakhine monastery rather than Burmese monastery because the monks at the monasteries are co-ethnic with them. They also provided accommodation when they first migrated to Yangon or their relatives. The migrants donate food and cash to the monastery and the monastery also provides accommodation and food if they need it. There is reciprocal support between migrants and monasteries. However, migrant factory workers including selected migrants very rarely go to monasteries because of time and financial resources limitations. Therefore, there is weak connection between Rakhine migrants and monasteries.

Most of the participant including two selected migrants have connections with social groups inside the factory. There are four social group inside the factory. They are Myinttar Ah Lin group, Quality Control group, All Super group and Labour Union. These organisation are found to claim and protect labourers rights. Labourers can access resources of these organisation at anytime inside the factory. These organizations provide support only to those who are member. If a labour is not members of these organization, he/she cannot get any support from these organizations.

Among the two selected migrants, Zarchi, a female migrant does not have a connection with the Labour Union because she dared not participate in it. In other factories, Labour Union members are fired by factory owners because of fear that workers will claim their rights and may be strike against the peace inside the factory. Nyi Nyi, the male migrant did not have involvement in the Quality Control group because he is not from that section. This group does not allow people who are not from that section to join. Overall, most of the participants including the two migrants from the selected case study have strong connections and interaction with social groups inside the factory though they do not have good connection with the organisations outside factory.

Furthermore, the participants, have connections with Supervisors and Colleagues. As mention in chapter two, migrants work many hours in the factory. Thus, it can be said the factory is their world and people in the factory are like their family members. But quality of connection with supervisors and colleagues are different among factory workers. If there is a different quality of connection, there will be different ability to access resources of the supervisors and colleagues. Not all the migrants can build good relationship with supervisors and colleagues but two selected migrants did build strong connections with them in order to get favours for promotion and leave request. All the participants did not have direct connections with factory Managers and Managing Director. Migrant factory workers cannot get support from the factory Manager and Managing Director because they do not have direct connection. If factory workers want to connect with them, they have to connect with a supervisor first. So the role of supervisors is very high in the factory. Promotions and leave allowances depend on the quality of connections between factory workers and supervisors.

Both of the selected two migrants have strong connection with their family. Although they have the connection with their parents, the support they gain from them is different because their parents have different capacity and resources. The selected female migrant's parent are poor. She is also the eldest in the family so she remits part of her salary once in three or four months to support her family. Therefore she does not get much support from her family except psych-social support. On the other hand the male migrant does not need to remit his salary because his family is a middle income family in Rakhine and he is the youngest. That is why, he does not need to worry about his family and can spend more money than the female migrant.

Also both migrants have relatives in Yangon. Their relatives helped both of the migrants but the male migrant got more support from his relative than the female migrant because his relatives have more resources. His relative helped him to get job in the factory and Bank. The female migrant's relatives also helped her but they have less capacity and resources so she took three months to find a job. This study also found out that even though the quality of a connection is strong, people get varying support from that connection because it depends on the capacity and resources of persons they connect.

Moreover the male migrant can maintain good relationship with his old colleagues whereas the female migrant cannot keep connection with her old colleagues because the male migrant uses social activities together with his old colleagues. For the female migrant she is a student and has to study so she cannot spend much money. This is a barrier for her to maintain her relationships with her old colleagues. On the other hand, she can build good relationships with her neighbours while male migrant does not know who his neighbours are. The female migrant stays at home more than the male migrant, she visits her neighbors in order to build good relationship for her social safety being a female migrant in a new environment.

Overall, according to the social mapping of the selected two migrants, they create strong social networks with individual people and organizations inside the factory and with their kin members. However, the majority of migrants could not have strong

connections with people from outside the factory. However, the female migrant from the selected case study can create a social network with people from outside the factory by attending a distance education course at the university. According to this study finding, none of the participants, the Rakhine migrant factory workers are alone no matter how poor or uneducated or lower class they are. They have someone or some group to support them if they have problems or if they need. In the next section, this study will analyse how they create their social network in the mist of poor working and living conditions in Yangon.

#### **4.3 Creating and extending social network**

The majority of respondents moved to Yangon with the help of their kin members. Most already had family members or relatives in Yangon. They got a job in the studied factory with the help of friends of their family members or relatives. Most of their time is in the factory so they created their social network in the factory with the colleague and supervisors. When they created their social network with their colleagues and supervisors, they use their existing social network as a bridge. After working a few days in the factory the migrants get to know some people from their work place. Migrants create their social network with their colleagues from their section by working together.

Although they can create their social network with people who are working in their section by working together, they cannot create their social network with people from other sections because this factory does not allow workers to go to other sections during working hours. So they create their social networks with people from other sections by talking during the break time and doing social activities together. Social activities usually involve playing football, sepaktakraw, sitting in the teashop, watching video, football matches, shopping, exchanging information, drinking for males and sharing personal experiences. Factory workers celebrate Myanmar traditional and religious festivals inside the factory. There are many social and religious events which are lead by the factory. Migrants create their social network with people from other sections by doing social activities together.

There is another tool that migrants use to create their social network with supervisors and colleagues. This involves paying respect through their social events.

A female migrant from packing section said that

“After one month of working in the factory, one of the supervisors in my section got married. Most of our colleagues talk about it a lot and invite me to go together. I did not know her well but I went there to create a good connection with them. By participating in the social activities, I can build trust with them.”

The Rakhine migrant factory workers are internal migrants so they can go back and forth to their place to origin more than transnational migrants. When migrants go back and forth, they do not go with empty hands. Migrants usually give traditional food and snacks to colleagues and supervisors although they do not have much money to buy presents. Migrants use this as a tool to create their social networks. Migrants give presents not only to their colleagues but also to their family and friends in the place of origin. Though migrants are away from their family, they connect with them via telecommunication very often. Migrant maintain their social networks with their family and friends by giving present and phoning them.

When migrants settle down in the host destination, they try to increase their kinship network by facilitating and supporting their kin members to migrate.

A female Rakhine migrant from the Quality Control section said;

“When I got a job and settled down in Yangon, I asked my younger brothers to come to Yangon in order to work while I studied at the University of Distance Education (West Yangon). They can search for a job while staying at my home. When my younger brothers came with me I feel more relax and safe. If they get a job and settle down, our parents can follow and live with them in Yangon.”

When migrants leave their village they are young but after years, they grow up in the host destination. They find their life partner. Their life partner is most important and supportive for them to get a quick response when they are in trouble in the host destination. Three respondents got married after they left their place of origin. Among the three married people, two people came from Ann and Gwa township and married someone from a different ethnic group. It is common to be discriminated against among Rakhine if she marries from another ethnic group. On the other hand, for migrants factory workers in Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone especially female migrants they do not have much choice because they have to work many hours in the factory. This study found out that most of the Rakhine migrants do not care whether their life partner is Rakhine or non-Rakhine but they care whether they are supportive or not. Migrants extend their kinship network by getting married.

Hlaing Tharyar is one of the most dangerous townships in Yangon because it is one of the most populated township (7 Day Daily, 2015) and is receiving the most migrants in Yangon. There are many crimes committed in the township; people's property is stolen while they go away and sometimes people are killed by thieves. So it is essential for migrants to create their social network with local people who live nearby their home for security both of their property and their life. This studied factory provides transportation for all factory workers. By taking the bus that is provided by the factory together with their colleagues, migrants get to know who lives near their home. Migrants can visit their colleagues' home and create a social network with their colleagues family members.

If migrants feel bored or do not want to stay at home, they visit their colleagues home and hang out with them at the teashop. Sitting in the teashop is one of the popular activities in Myanmar. At the teashop, people can buy food, watch football matches and videos. When they go to the teashop not only migrants and their colleagues go but they also can bring people who live near by their home or close friends. All the respondents answered that they sit at the teashop, meet new people who live near by their home and exchange information there. It can be said that the teashop is a social space for migrants.

Another social space for the Rakhine migrants is Rakhine traditional food shops (Mont-Te shop). The owners of these shops are mostly Rakhine. Mont-Te shops are not big. Cost of it is just around 300 Kyats (0.3USD) so people can afford it. At the shop, people have to sit closely whether they know each other or not. By sitting at the shop, Rakhine migrants can connect with the shop owner and local people who come to the shop and this may result in the creation of a social group. All the respondents answered that they have more friends who have a different religion, who have a different sex and who belong to different ethnicity with them in Yangon than in their place of origin.

Migrants create and extend their social networks not only with individual people but also with social groups inside and outside the factory. Of the 77 Rakhine organizations which are functioning in Yangon, there are four organizations outside the factory that the respondents connect with: The Rakhine Thahaya Association, Rakhine Youth Sweeping Association, Arakan National Social Association and Rakhine Monasteries in Yangon . Three organisations (not the Rakhine monasteries) organize Rakhine traditional and social events in Yangon. All the respondents participated in these events. These Rakhine traditional and social events are a kind of Rakhine gathering in Yangon so by participating in these events, migrants can connect with the existing Rakhine community in Yangon.

There are 15 Rakhine monasteries in Yangon (Rakhine Thahaya Association, 2012). The term “Rakhine Monastery” means the monastery where there are Rakhine monks who are in charge or a senior monk at the monastery or many Rakhine monks who live in that monastery. It does mean all the monks are Rakhine in that monastery. All the respondent went to a monasteries even though they are busy at the factory. As mentioned in chapter two, some of the Rakhine migrants get accommodation and food temporary from Rakhine monastery before they get a job. Rakhine migrants then donate to the Rakhine monasteries occasionally. There is mutual benefits between Rakhine migrants and Rakhine Monastery by connecting with each other.

Additionally, there are four social groups inside the factory that directly connect with Rakhine migrants. These groups are Myinttar Ah Lin ( Light of Loving Kindness), All supervisors group, Labour Union and Quality Control group. All the groups are

founded by factory workers, especially supervisors in order to support labourers rights, to provide financial support if labourers have serious health problems and to help each other. In order to get support from these groups, factory workers have to pay a membership around 1000 Kyats (1USD). By participating in these social groups migrant gain financial support for health care, get labourer rights and can create social networks with their colleagues. Overall, the respondents created social networks with individual people as well as social organizations inside/outside the factory.

#### **4.4 Summary**

Rakhine migrant factory workers have very limited education, earn meager salaries, migrant from rural areas and work many hours in the factory so they have poor living and working conditions in Yangon. When they migrate to Yangon, they leave their family, relatives and friends in their place of origin. They face many challenges and struggles in Yangon, particularly if they do not have friends and family members to support them. The factory does not have clear policies and guidelines for promotions and leave. That is why social networks is very important for them if they want a favour.

Most of the migrants spend their time in the factory so creating social networks in the factory is important. Rakhine migrant factory workers create strong social networks with their colleagues, supervisors and managers. When they create these social networks they use many tools such as giving presents, building trust by working and doing social activities together. Although they spend most of their time in the factory, they also create their social network with local people who live near their home in order to get security for their life and property. Moreover, migrants connect with the Rakhine organisations and participate as a member in social groups including the Labour Unions inside the factory by paying a members fee to get psychological and gain financial support if they have serious health problems.

The majority of Rakhine migrants have strong social networks with their family members, relatives and supervisors. Although they have strong social networks with them, the support they get from them is different and is dependent on the capacity of

these people rather than the quality of the connection with them. Most of their time is in the factory so they cannot create strong connections with local people. This study found out that all the respondents can create strong connection with individual people and organisations inside the factory but they cannot create strong social network with individual people and organisation outside the factory.



ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่  
Copyright© by Chiang Mai University  
All rights reserved