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Social Networks and Remittances as Social Capital for Rural Community Development, Chin State, Myanmar: A Case Study of Vanzang Village

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The Background of the Study

Decades of civil war and the isolationist policy of the Burmese socialist regime between 1962 and 1988 resulted in Myanmar being listed as one of the least developed countries while neighboring countries like Thailand, China and Malaysia experienced dramatic economic growth. The growing demand of labor in these economic booming countries became the pathway of liberating of Burmese people from the social, economic and political repression of the Burmese socialist regime. Economic instability and extreme poverty exist throughout the country but are partly acute in areas of forced displacement and underdeveloped rural border regions (Brenda 2002). This also includes Chin State.

Locates in the southern part of northwestern Myanmar, bordered by Bangladesh and India to the west, Rakhine State to the south, and Magwe and Sagaing Divisions to the east, Chin State is known as the "Chin Hills" due to its mountainous geography with an average elevation of 5000-8000 feet. The State is home to an estimated 500,000 Chin who are of Sino-Tibetan origin and who inhabit a mountain chain which roughly covers the present Chin State in western Burma through to Mizoram in northeast India (where they are related to the Mizos, Kuki, and others) and small parts of Bangladesh. While the term "Chin" generally refers to one of the many ethnic groups in Myanmar, they are ethnically and linguistically diverse, composed of a number of ethnic groups such as the Asho, Cho, Khumi, Kuki, Laimi, Lushai, and Zomi. Each has its own language which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language branch (Lian H. Sakhong 2003). In this study, I use the term Chin people or the Chins interchangeably as a common name although my research target group is considered Laimi by other groups in Chin State. Chin people are mostly protestant Christians. The religious institution of the church is an integral part of Chin people and society. Historian Lian H. Sakhong (2003) argued that Christianity is a unifying force for the otherwise divided tribal groups, to form the entire nationality of Chin ethnicity.

The lack of infrastructure, natural resources, and economic opportunities compounded with oppressive policies of the military government and pervasive human rights violations including forced labor exacerbated poverty in Chin state (Human Rights Watch 2009). Rapid militarization in Chin State since 1988 combined with widespread ethnic and religious discrimination have resulted in a litany of human rights violations perpetrated by the Myanmar army. More than 150,000 Chin people are currently seeking refuge in India and Malaysia, while hundred thousands more are estimated to have moved to other areas inside Myanmar, outside of Chin State (Chin Human Rights Organization 2010). This failing

socio-economic condition has resulted in the massive migration of Chin people into neighboring countries. Migration and remittances have thus become their alternative livelihood. Several thousand Chin people are scattered in Europe, Australia and New Zealand as immigrants; most do not return to Chin State. However, Chin people who stay in India's Mizoram state bordering Chin State can go back and forth and thus, can be categorized as temporary migrants.

Chin migration is a mixture of social, economic and political nature. Many economic migrants migrate to work in India, Thailand, and Malaysia. Some of these migrants returned home with their accumulated capital; the majority did not. They go to third countries as refugees and have not returned home. Refugee status thus provides Chin people the path way out of the deteriorating socio-political and economic conditions of Chin state. Several factors keep Chin migration unabated including transnational network which connects the migrants and home, the constant flows of capital, and the socio-economic impacts of remittance on the recipient households. Importantly, services that remittances render in time of financial crisis or in the areas of education, health and improved household economy have been noticeable in many rural Chin villages whose economy is largely an agricultural-based subsistence. About 85 percent of Chin people who live in Chin State today rely on shifting cultivation for their livelihoods (Human Rights Watch 2009). However, steep mountains and deep gorges prevalent in the Chin Hill hinder substantive agricultural development. Soil erosion and exhaustion are common as a result of the lack of viable farm land and of the farming on sloping hillsides. These environmental factors limit crop production and increase food insecurity in Chin State. Increasingly, the major population of Chin state is depending on remittance flows from its people living abroad. Remittance flows have since the 1990s been sustaining the local livelihood of the Chin people.

As more Chin people migrate overseas and with the potential rise in remittances over the years, this necessitates a systematic inquiry into the factors involve in the calling for and management of remittances especially for community development, as well as into the role of community network in mobilizing oversea migrants for community remittance. This paper is based on the case of Vanzang village in Chin state.

The Migration Background of Vanzang Village

Vanzang village is located in the northern part of Chin state, 20 miles from Thantlang town. It has 106 households of which 38 are non-migrant families. Migration of Vanzang people to Malaysia started initially due to the increased military oppression, early in the 1990s. The village has been severely suffered from the atrocities committed by the military in its attempt to suppress and control the political movement of the Chin students known as the Chin National Front (CNF) , the army wing called Chin National Army which operated in and out the India-Burma border in the aftermath of the students uprising in Myanmar in 1988. The atrocities have caused many villagers to migrate to neighboring countries, especially Malaysia . At this time, Malaysia was economically growing and labor of demand was high. Generally speaking, Myanmar youth started going to work in Malaysia. Many foreign

employment started sending workers to Malaysia and it gain popularity even Chin State as migrant workers would get much more salaries than it was in Myanmar. One villager of Van Zang was working as the broker sending chin people to Malaysia. Having this connection, it was easier to go to abroad for the people of Vanzang. Faced with the oppressive Burmese Army and the persuasive recruitment of the CNF , plus the extreme poverty , the Vanzang people started to go to Malaysia . As mentioned in the introduction, in the migration of Vanzang people can be divided into two groups, one is those who have migrated into Malaysia for economic purpose and the other one is those who go after the acceptance of Burmese migrants as refugee by UNHCR or the UNCHR resettlement program. This pattern of migration generally characterizes Chin migration history.

The first group is those who flee the country for economic gain after experiencing the military oppression. In rural chin state, especially in the 1990s, the military's atrocities towards the chin people living in the red areas where the insurgents are active was severe and most of the youths including the young educated ones did not consider working in the country or in the government as they are paid very less and migrated to work in foreign country. This has caused many to leave the country for a better economic status. I categorize this as the first group oversea migrants from Vanzang village. Most of Vanzang people go to Malaysia, whereas a few go to Guam for working. The second group is those that leave the country for seeking refugee status in Malaysia. Some of the people go as per the invitation of their family members working in Malaysia. These people are included in the case file of those who have received refugee status. Those who came in the first group apply and got refugee status and later invite their siblings to join them. Their siblings are included in their case file of refugee status. Later arrived siblings can join the previous receiver of refugee status. Therefore, this migration can be described as refugee family migration. There are many who came to Malaysia mainly to seek UNHR status. These two group characterized Vanzang people migration into developed country. Totaling both these groups, this Vanzang village has over a hundred oversea migrants, two third of which live in developed countries, mainly USA, Europe and Australia through UNHCR refugee resettlement program.

After they migrated to other third countries including the USA, Australia, and other European countries., the villagers and oversea migrants can form a community network through the formation of Vanzang Group Mail (VGM). Remittance has brought noticeable changes in developing community infrastructure. Several community projects have been implemented with fully and partially funded by workers' remittance including construction of the village football ground, mini hydro power, rotating rice loan for livelihood security among many others. Remittances are mobilized through Vanzang Group Mail which is the center of communication and mobilization, connecting all oversea migrants and the villagers in one virtual interactive group. All community projects are initiated by the migrants and the villagers through exchange of views, information and resources in the group mail. In mobilization of remittance, the villager uses this network as their social capital to develop and improve the quality of their community. In the absence of government development programs in rural communities of Chin state, the villagers utilize this networking with oversea migrants as their community resources and mobilize to meet various needs of the community. I examine this community network and its effects on development of Vanzang community.

Literature Reviews on Social Network and Capital

Social capital has been conceptualized by many scholars with different emphasis. Among scholars who theorize social capital, two names stand out: Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam. Bourdieu defined social capital as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119). Putnam (1993: 167), in his emphasis on the role of social capital in civic engagement, defined social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions."

Accessing social capital involves the issues of ties and trust. Trust earns from social relationships also is the underlying requirement for accessing social capital. Those who have tense ties within the network can call upon those resources with ease. However, This pattern of relationships tends to reproduce inequality as this excludes others to participate in the network. As access is not equal to everyone, some segments of the society are excluded and result in the continuity of inequality of access to social resources. Putnam (1993) in his conceptualization of social capital, networks, norms and trust of the social groups takes paramount importance in facilitating a common shared objective rather than that of kinship. Portes (1998) referred to this as “bounded solidarity,” a sense of community solidarity which results from collective shared experiences of community.

Applying Bourdieu's notion of social capital, Woolcock (2001: 3) refers to social capital as that which “one’s family, friends and associates constitute as an important asset, one that can be called upon in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake and/or leverage for material gain.” Meanwhile, another scholar James Coleman (1994) defined social capital by its function. For him, social capital is not a single entity but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common. They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure (Coleman 1994:302).

Understanding social networks as social capital in the context of remittances necessitates an understanding of the relationships between social networks and social life. A social network consists of a finite set or sets of actors and the relations defined on them (Wasserman, 1994:20). Of importance is the interdependence of actors and their actions. Some of the members of a set of actors are connected by a set of one or more relations (Knoke and Yang 2008:8). Social life is thus influenced by relations and patterns or systems formed by these relations which are in turn defined by linkages among interacting units. Relationships or linkages are channel by which non material or material resource flows. Importantly, the regular patterns among concrete entities (individual, groups or nations) affect the perceptions, beliefs and actions of the entities as they are socially constructed. Knoke and Yang (2008) argued that these structural relations are not static but dynamic processes which keep changing through the interactions among their constituent people, groups or organization.

Some scholars suggest social life can be understood in the forms of points and lines in which individual is presented by points and lines represent their social relationships to one another to form a total network of relations. Mitchell (1969) called these interpersonal relations the "personal order" - pattern of personal links that individuals have with a set of people and the links these people have in turn among themselves (Mitchell 1969:10). He further explained these interpersonal networks as involving a flow of information and transfer of resource and services. The flow of resources depends on the continued relationships maintained in a network of various entities in which the intensity and durability of relationships which fosters elements of reciprocity, mutual trust and sharing play an important role. In addition, Scott (2011: 31) suggests interpersonal networks can be analyzed through the concepts of reciprocity, the intensity and the durability of the relations. Remittance and migration is affected within this web of relationships.

The role of social network especially kinship and friendship networks has been recognized in migration studies as facilitating and encouraging factors in migratory movement (Haug 2008; Heering et al. 2004). According to Massey et al. (1993), a migration network can be defined by a composite of interpersonal relations in which migrants interact with their family or friends. Migrant networks are defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Massey et al. 1993: 448). These interpersonal relationships are influencing factors to support migration, and after migration becomes a foundational source for information regarding accommodation, jobs and emotional support (Boyd 1989). Migrant networks depend on the underlying principle like reciprocal exchange, resources and perceived needs of those in the networks (Gurak and Caces 1992: 152). Importantly as social networks provide a foundation for the dissemination of information as well as patronage or assistance (Haug, 2008), they are social capital (Flab and Boxman 2000). Understanding social capital in terms of being rooted in social networks and relations Lin (1999: 40) defined social capital as "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions".

In a related note, Burt (1997: 340) asserts that "social capital is based on a person's relative position within a given network, rather than the individual's direct relationship with people in the network". In a network, a person's strategic location is crucial for bridging or linking different entities. Sometime a person strategically positioned in a network acts as intermediary linking what would be otherwise unlinked. This is link to Freeman's (1979) concept of "betweenness" - a particular point which lies in the "between" of the various other points in the network graph. This particular position in a web of networks is crucial as it bridges others which otherwise would not be connected. A person who stands in this strategic position of "between" can act as intermediary or broker that link the structural hole (Burt 1997). They channel information, resources and create linkages. Since people's position in a given network is different in the realm of the status, power, prestige located, the resources or benefits they can access are greatly unequal and asymmetric.

This study will employ the meaning of social capital as both the collective assets as explained Bourdieu (1992) and as norms, trust, and shared objectives as espoused by Putnam (1993). Furthermore, I will

make use of Coleman's (1994) emphasis on the function of social capital especially in its facilitation of certain actions of individuals who are within the social structure. I found the definition and explanation of social capital by these three scholars to be relevant and useful for my analysis of the roles of social networks in the management of remittances for community development in the rural Chin community.

Community Network as Social Capital

Community network means here networking of migrants and villagers for initiating various community projects for Vanzang village and the welfare of the villagers. I also define community remittance as that which is transferred for community projects mobilized by the home community which is aimed at benefiting all members of the village, which is different from household use and religious purposes. In the first section, I discuss about the structural organization of Vanzang community network with their oversea migrants, pointing out the actors, the way they function and the development of an informal to formal community networking. . The arrival of a good number of Vanzang people into developed countries including the USA, Australia and Europe countries, the networking with them through VGM has become the social capital for the villagers in mobilizing oversea migrants to develop their community and solve their common struggles. Around 200 Vanzang people are living in developed countries. This Vanzang community network involves a set of actors (Wasserman 1994) as the network graph below shows.

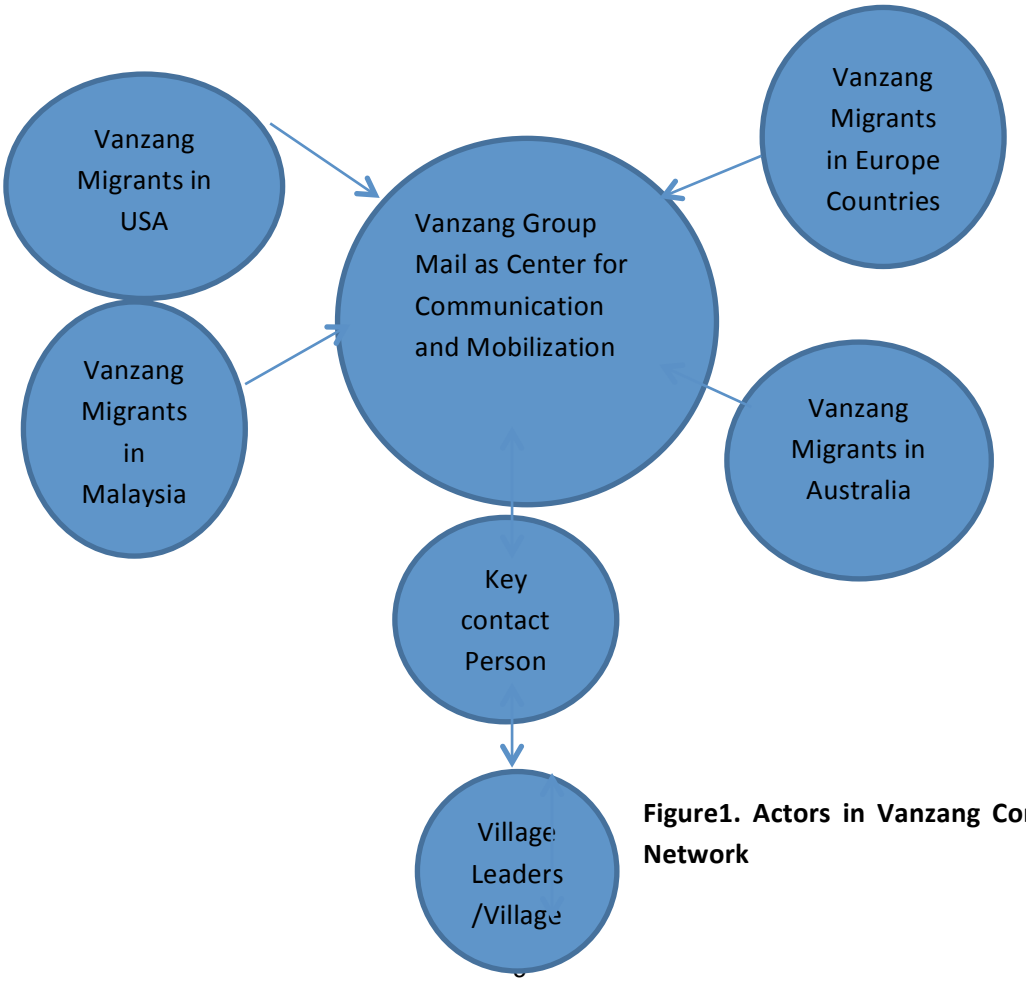


Figure1. Actors in Vanzang Community Network

Vanzang Group Mail as Center for Networking

When asked about the existence of Vanzang community network between the migrants and Vanzang villagers, U Sang Hup the key contact person for oversea migrants explains;

> "While Vanzang people were in Malaysia, we could not have networking with migrants on a community level, though there were some people who donated for our village. Communication was bad at that time and we hardly contact our children in Malaysia. It was after our people arrived into developed countries that we could have networking with oversea Vanzang people on a community level. "

He added on this,

> "As far as my knowledge is concerned, we have a kind of community level network especially the Vanzang Group Mail was created. I did not know the year exactly, but that was the time we can talk with our oversea migrants, we exchange information about our village back and forth. We use VGM through public internet café. Throughout these years, this VGM has been our center of communication. This is the channel we use most for informing our village issues."

As the number of the Vanzang people settling in developed countries increases, the villagers and the oversea migrants can form as one village community through the formation of VGM. Living in developed country, they can have advanced access to the internet and the online group mail has since been the social interactive space for all who have access to the internet. At the same time, in the early 2000s, the government gave permit to open internet café. Since it was expensive, only a few cafes were available even in towns. Most of migrants' families connect their oversea family through public internet café. The coming of public internet enables to create a community network and brings the people from different countries into one virtual group. In VGM, all Vanzang people whom they know are added to the VGM. This has become the place where Vanzang villagers from all around the globe interact and exchange information and knowledge. When asked about the role of VGM for community network, Pu Kep explains,

"This has remarkably become a forum where exchange of views, needs and cooperation take place. Sometimes, the community issues are critically debated and votes are taken for implementation decision. The migrant also discuss here how much single or family would contribute when we have collective donation. This helps us connect with Vanzang villagers living in different countries, to exchange perspectives and work for the various needs of the village development." (Personal Interview on 17,02, 2015).

This helps develop a cohesive relationship among themselves regardless of ones' residence of countries. Community life is globally shared again. These virtual interactive relationships help to efficiently communicate back and forth from personal to community issues from village and fasten Vanzang people's solidarity as belong to one village. Every community project is discussed and mobilized in this

group mail. Any concerns related to Vanzang people are shared globally. A sense of belonging to one village "bounded solidarity" (Portes, 1998) unite them and help pool resources for their community back home. It is the social space where the oversea migrants can consume virtually the village life and share about their memories and stories. This reconnects them as belonging and sharing collectively one village or one community and maintains their presence in the village through involving in community projects. It is important to note that only Vanzang people are added in this group and the members can only benefit the resources available in this community network. Under this structure of network, the members facilitate community projects which all the villagers can benefit. The VGM plays crucial role in connecting all Vanzang people in different countries and helps organize for the people for community solidarity.

The Formation of Vanzang Global Development Group

In addition, as oversea people got involved in different projects for the community, the collective coordination for remittance for Vanzang people necessitates the establishment of Vanzang Global Development Group (VGDG) in 2008. It is envisioned that the arrival of Vanzang people in developed countries benefit not only the migrant family but also all members of Vangzang village. It aims collectively to coordinating the community efforts for leveraging remittance for social and economic development of the people.

"To organize better community project and mobilize the oversea people, we decided to form VGDG. In different countries, we have representatives who will help mobilize oversea people. We have subcommittee in the village here. These representatives are just volunteers they do not have any power to say on whether to implement a project or not. The public decides and these people work out for the project. We have done projects informally, we thought we should function more formally, so oversea migrants agree and we form this. After forming this, any issues are through the VGDG." (Pa Kep, Interview, 20,02, 2015)

The GVDG does not control any migrant for helping the community; the door is still open for those who want to make individual contribution. There are still some cases where the individual or family makes important contribution for the community or religious affiliation. The GVDG have representatives in different countries where Vanzang people are settled. They are linking lines by whom all members are connected (Mitchell 1969). Through these linkages, information, resource or services flows to reach other members. These representatives are responsible to mobilize the people living their given countries. They also take responsibility for raising and sending funds to the GVDG. The subcommittee of GVDG is formed in Vanzang village. A representative of Vanzang village is selected and this man stands as connecting agent for both the migrant and the villagers. This man takes responsibility of communications for the migrants. When a project is proposed or implemented, this man is responsible communicator. Since the GVDG is lately formed, most of the community projects discussed was implemented before its inception

Communication and Mobilization Procedures

The VGM is the center for communication and mobilization. As discussed earlier, any idea for community project is shared in the VGM. Though all may not be implemented but all are presented in the forum. For the villagers it is the only channel that they can raise their concerns to the oversea migrants. It is the place the migrants and the villagers exchange views and issues, communicate and consult on various issues of the village. Although any one can propose ideas for community projects, most of the time, the village leaders or the subcommittee of the GVDG proposes the projects. Before they propose, there would be a kind of formal discussion among them and the issue would be brought to the VGM for the oversea migrant to consider. Since internet is not available in Vanzang village, in order to send a message to oversea migrant through email, any of the village leaders has to go to Thantlang town. From the village, there is one man who is the key contact person or messenger between the village and the oversea migrants. He is the former villager head man. He would bring any issues from the village into the VGM to convey to all the oversea migrants. This man act as the particular nodes or the position of betweenness (Freeman, 1979) representing all villagers in networking with oversea migrants. In other words, he is the intermediary agent between the villagers and the migrants. Even though someone from the village proposes any ideas, when it comes to implement, this man plays the leading role in the communication and mobilization process. Sometimes, the ideas raised in the VGM are discussed, debated among the oversea migrants. When decision is made, it is informed to the village and the villagers implement the projects, usually they also contribute the labor. In implementing the projects, especially, before the formation of the GVDG, the village Council and other community leaders worked together. After the formation, the sub-committee of GVDG raises issues and also implements community projects

Mobilization and Implementations of Community Projects

It is important to note here that all the ideas for community projects are presented and mobilized through the GVG. Overseas migrants can be easily mobilized by the villagers for various reasons most of which are directly related with the community life in the village. In mobilizing the oversea migrants, the villages use different reasons to give weight to their formulated issues. These issues are mostly their shared struggles and central to the basic infrastructure development and welfare of the community. The villagers also mobilize the oversea migrants in order to support or accomplish the existing or already initiated community projects. In this case, the villagers use their continued struggle as community issue or important thing for the community life. In some cases, the necessity or the opportunity available for the community gives birth to forming community projects. In order to mobilize oversea migrants, the villagers make also use of the traditional life practice or system to raise funds for changing with modern facility. Sometimes, their ideas for community projects are influenced by outside factors. In Chin state, there is a trend where the people construct a mini-hydro power by using remittance as Rual Lian Thang's (2012) study also shows. Many villages have constructed this kind of mini hydro power to generate electricity for the people as the Chin state government does not give electricity to villages. In the

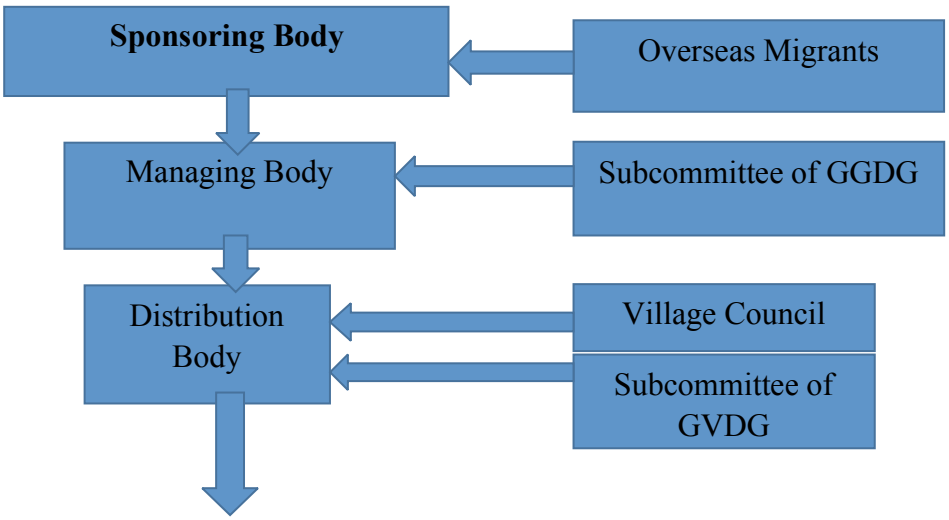
absence of government initiatives, this is a mechanism the local people uses their community resource to develop their villages. In what follow, I discuss some case studies of the community projects that have been mobilized by the villagers.

Project 1: Rice Loan

The primary concern of the Vanzang villagers is to address the insecurity of the livelihoods of the villagers. They depend solely on the cultivation of the hills for their livelihoods using the method of the slash and burn form of traditional agriculture. Even though other factors like political oppression and economic hardships play some parts in the reasons for migrating, livelihood insecurity is common for all migrants. In Vanzang village, a few families are successful farmers. Those who have wetland for rice fields have secure livelihoods. Most of the people depend on rice cultivation on the hills and its success is largely depending on the weather. Therefore, the livelihood of the majority is at risk all year. Every year, the majority of the village encounters this livelihood insecurity. Pu Sang Hup recalls how they brought the matter into the VGM to start this project,

"We raised this issue to our oversea people. We informed that many families in our village did not gain sufficient food to live for a year from their harvest. It was a pressing need for our community. At that time, we knew that Vanzang people have arrived in developed countries, now they could do something for our people. Many people interested to help. The strategy of the project was later formulated by exchange of views from different people and that was implemented here in our village." (Personal Interview, 17, 02, 2015)

In an attempt to help these families which comprise the largest part of the village population, the first and foremost community initiative, was the rice loan. The Vanzang villagers and oversea migrants came up with the idea to start a self-sustaining project called rice loan. Initial capital, of 10,00,000 kyats was provided in the village. It was designed of that rice would be bought and sold with no profit so that the less fortunate and poor segment of the village community could buy at a cheaper cost. It is commonly expected that the initial capital would be rotating and never lost, each year the people will have this fund for securing food. The subcommittee of GVDG manages the funds and the distribution of rice is carried out in collaboration with the Village Council.



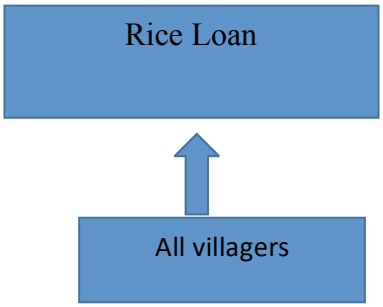


Figure 2. Rice Loan Management

Pu Sang Hup continues to explain how they distribute the rice and the vision

> "When we started this, our overseas migrants envisioned to add more funds to this project if needed, they wanted to see first how it functions. This project is specifically aimed to ensuring food security for our villagers. Access to this rice project is open to all. But those who have harvested rice for their survival do not come to buy. Through this, we could help a lot of non-migrant families". (Personal Interview, on 17, 02, 2015)

The oversea migrants also envision adding more funds to this project if the needs arise in the near future. In other words, this is generally aimed to ensuring food security for the villagers. Although access to this rice project is open to all, it is especially targeted to those families in the village who do not have enough rice to eat. Non-migrant families have full access to this rice at a lower than normal cost. It was started in 2005. An interview with Sang Kung, one of those beneficiaries of the rice loan project describes the benefits;

> "For my family, it is quite difficult to live when my harvest does not yield sufficient rice to sustain my family. I do not have any brothers and sisters, or relatives working abroad who would send me remittance. So, if my family experience famine, it is quite difficult for us to buy food. But, I am really grateful for our villagers who have started the rice project; I can buy rice cheaper than the shop and it helps my family survive. Having members of our community living oversea is really beneficial to us. My family also profited from migration and remittance". (Personal Interview, 11, 02, 2015)

For the villagers, oversea migrants are their social capital that they can mobilize by using the common experience of the community. Food insecurity is the common fate that the local people are facing. This project is specially designed to bounce back the agricultural shock, usually resulting in the threatening of livelihoods of many villagers. For migrant's families, in such circumstance of drought, they can depend on the rice loan project created through remittance funds. But for non-migrant families, it is overwhelming important as their level of vulnerability to climate change

effect on agriculture is alarming. And in that situation, the remittance, in the form of rice distribution project reduces their livelihood vulnerability.

Project 2: The Construction of Mini Hydro Power

Vanzang village has a stream called Haipizung. It locates 2 km from the village. The geographic location of the river is appropriate for building a small dam. Having this stream, the villagers think that they may be able to set up a dam from it. They have observed other villages which have constructed the dam, and gained knowledge about it. . Additionally, mechanical and electrical experts are consulted for the feasibility and possibility of construction of mini dam and the water force is examined. After conducting the primary research the village leaders, the matter was brought to the group mail to discuss and raise money for the project. Vanzang village has never had any electrical light in its history. Electricity is considered as the essential for its all-around development. The initial idea of constructing a mini-hydro power was put forth to VGM by the villagers.

U Sang Hup describes the whole process;

> "We shared the idea of building a mini dam with our oversea migrants. Our villagers used pine tree for light at night in the olden days. Those who can afford would use candles at home. It was a pressing need for kids, as they wanted to study in the night. Most of our migrants have experienced this while they were in the village. Actually, even after these people arrived in developed countries, our village has not changed. It is dark in the night without electrical light. We cannot use any electrical products in our village though the people can buy them. Confronting with this, we propose to the oversea migrants the building of small dam at Haipi zawng (the name of the river). At first, we were not confident about this for both for the funds and the possibility of the construction. When we have knowledge about this from other villagers who have done this and the funds are raised through GVDG, we were able to build this. It was a great venture between the oversea Vanzang people and the villagers." (Personal Interview, 14, 02, 2015)

In order to start the project, a lot of preliminary research was carried out in the village. Additionally, mechanical and electrical experts were hired the construction of a mini dam and for the setup of the machine. All Vanzang oversea migrants were mobilized to get the funds necessary for the project through networking with its representatives and members in different countries. A total of 14,200,000 kyats was raised among its members for the project and given to the village subcommittee. This village subcommittee takes the lead in implementation of the project and managing the funds and the construction. The building of the hydro was completed in 2007. One of the villagers reveals the benefit of having electricity:

> "We have never had this before. When we started using it, we were amazed to see our village is full of light. We never thought this could be done. We never dreamed of any possibility to set up a hydro power plant. Now we can watch TV. Many houses have their own TV now. Our children can study at home under electrical light. We have street light

> now. And this also helps all the villagers benefiting from oversea migrants. Everyone household is given light. This is one of the major community developments done by our people abroad." (Lian Ham, Personal Interview, 14, 02, 20`15)

In this case, it required a lot of factors to set up a mini hydro power including the mechanical knowledge, the geographical location of the water, the capital and the cooperation of the people. The possibility of developing infrastructure is often gained from other social networks and later seeks the possibility realized with the combination of local and foreign input. What happened with this project is the common shared knowledge about the location and the difficulties to obtain hydro power motivated the migrants to find solutions for the community. The villagers on the other hand, saw the possibility of bringing light into their village. Trans-nationally developed projects come with the sharing of common knowledge and resource within each group, villagers and migrants, and the full participation of the local people. In other words, the shared benefit drives the resources and labor for the common cause.

Project 3:The Renovation of Village Football Ground

Vanzang village has a very small football ground. The people love to play football. Football is commonly played in Chin state. For the youth, there is no other sports facility that they can access in the village. Football is the only game they can play with their leisure time. Usually, it is played on Sunday which is the day most of the villagers rest. In Thantlang township, there are 6 village tracts, of which Vanzang village tract is one. Once in a year, a football tournament at township level is organized in Thantlang town for the youth. The youth selected from Vanzang village tract also participate in this event.

There are five villages in Vanzang Village Tract. They all have large and good football grounds. Additionally, every year, a football tournament is organized for all these villages. The youth of Vanzang have wanted to expend their football ground. So they increased the football ground's size using their labor; however it was not up to the level of football grounds in other villages. Vanzang people did bring this matter into the forum of GVDG. Immediately GVDG took up the matter and mobilize funds for the remaining work to get done. A total of 1,350,000 kyats for the constructions of football ground was raised and sent to the village subcommittee. The bulldozer was hired to enlarge the football field. The renovation of the ground was completed in 2012. In other parts of Chin state, it is observable that remittance is mobilized for enlargement of football ground. Vanzang village is no exceptional. Not only was the footfall ground expanded and leveled but also the front ground of the primary school was also leveled for the school kids to play. Pu Za Cung, one of the youth leaders in the village states ;

> "Networking with overseas Vanzang people has brought many changes in our village, especially the project like the construction of football ground. Vanzang youth living abroad have a strong interested in the young people. There is constant relationship being migrants and village youth. The overseas are interested in the cause of youth's unity and solidarity. When the community needs especially any work that is beyond their capability, GVDG assists. What I see is the GVDG is more interested in locally started project. So far they never deny any project we locally started. And from our village we all always proposed a

> community shared project. In one way, Remittance is driving many of our community projects and it benefits all. (Personal Interview 12, 02, 2015)

He continues to state;

> "We have invested a lot of labor by ourselves. We informed oversea Vanzang people that if we had money, now, from our village, we could hire the bulldozer to enlarge our football ground. We informed them that if they all support us to hire the bulldozer, our villagers would have large and good football ground and especially the youth would enjoy the recreational facility. We also informed them that many neighboring villages' football rounds had enlarged by oversea migrants; we were left behind (Personal Interview 20, 02, 2015)

In this case of expansion of football ground, the villagers convey their struggle to enlarge the football ground. They also pointed their invested labors for expansion and their financial constraints to hire the bulldozer to enlarge it. Therefore, the issue is raised in a way that the migrants' role in sponsoring for the rent of the bulldozer could bring the standard creational facility for the community. In the mobilization process, the villagers make use of the shared community struggle to convince the oversea migrants for raising community remittance.

Project 4: The Donation of Tin Roofing Materials

Furthermore, the GVDG is also in association with the villagers to consider the need to help those families whose houses are roofed with thatch in the village. During the 1990s, when Vanzang people were starting to migrate there were several houses with thatch roofs in Vanzang village. When a storm hits, usually in the beginning of the rainy season, those roofs often blow away. Oversea migrants also experienced this when they were in the village. Those who have tin roofing they are safe from the strong wind. In the 1990s, only the economically better families could have such roofing. After Vanzang people migrated to developed countries, many good houses have been built and it is recognizable to see who are the migrant families and non-families by the condition of their house. To help these families, Pu Sang Hup explains how the idea was shared to the oversea migrants;

> "Since we have many houses with thatch roofing in our village, we propose the idea to help these families with tin plates.to the forum of GVDG. These families tend to be poor in our village. We know that thatch is as plenty as before. At the same time , we aspire that all our villagers have tin roofing. The oversea migrant take into consideration our proposal and raise money among them and so we can help these families." (Pu Sang Hup, Personal Interview, 13, 02, 2013)

Those who cannot build new houses still use the thatch roofing. Traditionally, the Chin people used this for centuries. Actually, it is local resource. As I argue before, some of the local resources used is considered as undeveloped or backward. Both the villagers and the migrants are of the same line of thought on this. And in a transforming village, such thatch roofing remains a symbol of the past. Particularly as many households have been rebuilt with new construction materials. At least, tin roofing

become modern or development in some way. In another respect, it is how the remittance is shared among the less fortunate families who have not access to remittance.

Apparently, the oversea migrants consider those families as disadvantaged in the economic structure of the village. Often, these families are widowed and/or newly established families. On the other hand, for these families, to find thatch in the forest it should be noted that it is not easy like before. As the weather condition changes, there are not many areas in the forest of Vanzang village where thatch can be harvested. In this newly transformed village, thatch roofing denotes a kind of poverty line. That sparks interest in the minds of the oversea migrants as to help those families without tin roofing. The GVDG mobilizes all Vanzang overseas to contribute towards this project. In 2013, a total of 12,000 tin plates were donated for thatch roofing houses. The purchase of materials and the distribution of work is carried out by the subcommittee of the GVDG. And all the villagers houses have been roofed with tin plates.

In summary, the involvement of migrants on their community is holistic. It is also further observed that ideas for village community development are brainstormed by both the migrants and the villagers. Not all the projects are initiated by either oversea migrants or the villagers. Usually, to get the whole process of a project started, a lot of discussions and views are exchanged from both sides. At the same time, it is important to note that the ideas of development tends to follow the same pattern among migrant communities in Chin state with social networking of Chin migrants abroad and community to community relations in the home community. None of these community projects are implemented in isolation; in fact, they are harnessed in association with other remittance sponsored projects observed in other villages. The role of government can never be diminished in the remittance funded community projects. Some of the projects came as a result of the government opens opportunity for development. However, since the government is not responsively working for community development, dependency on remittance for community life improvement is apparent.

Conclusion

For the Vanzang community network, the formation of VGM plays crucial role in connecting with all Vanzang oversea people virtually in one place and solidarity with the villagers abounds afterwards. This reinforced cohesive relationships among themselves through virtual group resulted in the birth of various different projects in the home community. It is found that one key person stands out as mobilizer for the villagers to the oversea migrants. For the villagers, their main mobilizing strategy is to pinpoint the shared struggles and experiences in the community life. As it is seen above, for basic infrastructure development, the community raise the issues in such a way that the possibility of a new improvement clearly demonstrated in the understanding of the overseas migrants. And all the issues raised are central to the welfare of the community life. Most of the development issues are raised by the villagers basing on the needs of the community. The migrants are the sponsors for community development programs implemented. In this community network, both the committee and the members are agent and initiator of development. Though some ideas may originate from the village or

from overseas, some are transported from networking to other community, like neighboring villages. In most cases, community projects help share the remittance to the non-receiving families. In the remittance initiated community projects, the poorer segment of the community are not marginalized but centered or equal beneficiaries of the development. It is the community projects that are reaching equally its members. The distribution of remittance through community development is effective to harness remittance for social and economic development in the rural regions where the government is not responsive to its overall development. It is noticed that several projects were carried out without formal leadership system. It was a loose network without any rule or regulations, but function effectively under this structure. Later on, this necessitates the formation of Vanzang Global Development Group in 2008 for coordinating community projects and mobilizing all Vanzang people from Myanmar and abroad is the important development of the community network. Community network helps to exchange information and mobilize more effectively for the cause of Vanzang people.

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