



**COVID-19
RESPONSE**

UN in Myanmar: Monthly Digest No. 3, September 2020

Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Myanmar

Understanding the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 across sectors, population groups, gender, and geographic areas is essential for designing effective policies and measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and recover better. To contribute to an increased evidence-base and inform policymaking, the UN Organizations in Myanmar are currently undertaking a multitude of socio-economic impact assessments. These range from forecasts of trends and scenarios and assessments of policy needs and responses, to deep dives into sectoral impacts and the impacts of specific population groups. This monthly digest aims to summarize the key findings of these assessments as the pandemic unfolds and more and more analysis becomes available. The assessments presented are part of the UN's COVID-19 response as outlined in the [UN's Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Myanmar](#).



Rapid Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Rural Communities in Rakhine

Assessment Information

Organization	United Nations Development Programme Myanmar
Assessment type	Rapid Assessment Survey conducted over telephone.
Survey demographics	Village tract administrators from 73 villages.
Time period	May – June 2020

Summary

This report provides a situational overview of socio-economic trends as well as perceptions and support needs of the rural population in Rakhine. It covers respondents' perceptions and knowledge about socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, including changes in the overall economy, employment opportunities, income

trends as well as the needed of the communities in the future.

Key Findings

Public Awareness

- There is high public awareness about COVID-19 and how to prevent its transmission amongst surveyed communities. 94% of households reported receiving information from at least two separate sources, including local government campaigns, radio, tv and community organizations.

Effectiveness of emergency support

- All low-income households in the surveyed communities reported receiving food packages distributed by the government, indicating that emergency distributions have been successful. However, only 10% of communities reported having received supply of hygiene and protective equipment.

Covid-19 related concerns

- Health concerns far exceed worries about livelihoods, income and food security. When asked, 80% of people cited health related concerns as their biggest worry.
- The primary reason for the health concerns were lack of access to affordable, good

quality health care. Other concerns included long distance to the nearest health care facility, and fears over the ability to pay treatments.

- At the same time, nearly all also worry about the economic security of their communities. 90% of respondents stated that people in their administrative area feel less secure on a day-to-day basis today than compared to earlier in the year, because of changes in their economic situation due to loss of jobs, reduced access to markets or movement restrictions.

Social cohesion

- Relationships within and across village communities have deteriorated due to limited social interactions. 80% of village tract administrators reported a weakening of both inter- and intra-village relationships due to limited personal interactions as a result of Covid-19 related restrictions.
- No instances of rising tensions and conflicts were reported. However, this could change if peoples' livelihoods continue to deteriorate and as communities will have to accommodate larger number of migrant workers.

Impact on business

- 95% of MSMEs could have been negatively impacted directly and indirectly by COVID-19 according to estimates.
- Respondents believe that MSME business earnings have fallen between 40- 60% on average as businesses face concurrent declines in demand, increases in the wholesale prices of goods and supply chain disruptions.
- To stay in business, MSMES are considered to require a swift restoration of trade, alongside support measures including access to credit and cash transfers.

Impact on jobs

- Casual labor opportunities have been reduced by an estimated 70% and wage earnings for those still hired fell by an average estimate of

63%. Day laborers have been laid off across a wide range of sectors.

- As wages contribute 55% to monthly household incomes in rural areas, the drop in employment opportunities and wages increase the need for support in form of food, material or cash distributions.

Impact on women

- Women were found to equally affected by the reduction in employment opportunities as men. However, they were disproportionately found to bear the double burden of income earners and caretakers for family members and now out-of-school children.
- There are currently no direct, targeted support measures aimed at women who have lost their livelihoods as a result of the pandemic.

Returning migrants

- At the time of the survey, very few migrant workers had returned to Rakhine.
- However, once migrants return an estimated 78% are expected to require support in the form of food, employment, cash-for-work programs or cash transfers. This will place an additional burden on their families, whom at the same time have lost income due to the stop in remittances.

Situation of people involved in fishing and farming

- Income of fisherfolk and farmers is estimated to have fallen by an average of 56% due to Covid-19 restrictions in movements and trade disruptions, making it difficult for fisherfolk and farmers to sell their goods. No food shortages were reported, implying that the agricultural sector can act as a cushion to mitigate the impacts on the communities.

Impact on poverty

- More than 80% of the rural population in Rakhine was either poor, economically insecure and at risk of falling back into extreme poverty before Covid-19. With Covid-19, the number of people in extreme poverty could increase by 10% based on estimates in this survey.

- A rapid and massive expansion of social safety nets and COVID-19 financial support measures are necessary to protect these people.

[Learn more](#)

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Myanmar and Covid-19: Impact on the Private Sector

Assessment Information

Organization	Investing in Women (Australian Government), Business Coalition for Gender Equality and UN Women
Assessment type	Two online surveys: survey of employers; and survey of employees of a large financial services business.
Survey demographics	24 private sector companies and 6 not-for-profit organizations; 195 employees.
Time period	May – August, 2020

Summary

This report focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on private sector employers and not-for-profit organizations in Myanmar, as well as employees. It shows that businesses have been seriously disrupted by the pandemic employers have adapted by allowing employees to telecommute or work from home and provided them with the required technology. One third of companies were aware of the potential for the pandemic to impact women and men employees differently, primarily on account of care responsibilities.

The responses from employees shows that even where workers did not experience a large decline in income and work had remained relatively secure, pressures to earn an income and manage a changed domestic environment were reported. This changed environment in turn is found to have a negative impact on employee health, especially mental health.

Key Findings

Impact on business

- 50% of the private companies ranked the financial impact and disruption caused by COVID-19 on their business as 8 or more out of 10. Firms in the pharmaceutical industry as well as financial services reported relatively lower levels of impact.
- Two in five private companies were fully operational but teleworking.
- Most companies expect it will take **more than 6 months before regular trading resumes.**

Business challenges

- **Two-thirds** of private businesses reported decline in customer demand the main challenges in the early months of the pandemic. Other challenges included constrained cash flow, absent workers and business partners not operating normally.
- **Four in five** companies allowed employees to telecommute or work from home and provided the required technology.
- **75%** of the companies included women in their COVID-19 Task Force or Crisis Management Teams.
- **One-third** of companies believe that social norms mean women and men are impacted differently by the pandemic.

Business Opportunities

- **50%** of companies reported that the pandemic had created an opportunity to shift to remote working arrangements and new E-commerce and digital markets. However, improved internet support and digital training

for staff is required to support this opportunity.

The employee experience

- Men are more likely than women to experience an increase in income.
- 80% of respondents reported being more or equally productive compared to before the crisis. Decline in worker productivity is mostly due to anxiety and stress about the pandemic.
- A higher proportion of women report a decline in hours of work compared with men.
- Almost 50% of all workers had access to PPE and one-quarter had access to flexible work arrangements. Women are more likely to WFH than men.

Impact on households

- Almost 50% of all workers experienced increased pressure to earn an income.
- More than one third of workers experienced an increase in domestic pressures.
- A higher proportion of men reported intensification of pressure to earn income (49%) whereas more women experienced greater intensification of domestic pressure (39%).

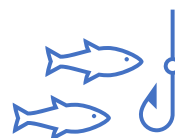
Impact on Health and Wellbeing

- More than one-third of workers have experienced a decline in their mental health with women more effected than men.
- Almost 50% of workers experiencing a decline in mental health say it is due to the stress of the situation and more than one-third report financial concerns as the cause.
- Physical health was identified as the greatest challenge of the crisis period by men.
- Women are four times as likely as men to rate mental health as their greatest challenge.
- Similar proportions of men and women identify financial concerns as their greatest challenge.

Learn more

Access full assessment [here](#).

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Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Fishing and Aquaculture Communities

Assessment Information

Organization	Food and Agriculture Organization
Assessment type	Three phased phone surveys with about 110 members of fishing/aquaculture communities, supplemented by 6 in-depth discussions.
Time period	April-August, 2020

Summary

This survey, which is conducted under the FishAdapt project: *“Strengthening the adaptive capacity and resilience of fisheries and aquaculture-dependent livelihoods in Myanmar”* was undertaken in three phases from April to August, 2020. It surveyed members of small-scale fishing and aquaculture communities targeted by the project to identify how these villages have been affected by Covid-19 and linked restrictive measures. The study looks at the level of awareness of communities, adoption of preventative measures, impact on food security and livelihoods as well as broader affections resulting from the Covid-19 related restrictions.

Key Findings

Levels of Covid-19 awareness

- More than 90% of Community members reported implementing Covid-19 preventative measures. The implementation rate decreased somewhat in the second and third survey round due to lack of available resources and compliance fatigue.
- Community members demonstrated high awareness about the pandemic and public

health messaging was reported to have reached the communities, with the added benefit that it had helped introduce many community members to the use of social media.

Livelihood

- The impact on fishing operations was drastically reduced from the first survey round to the third. In the first survey 47% of communities reported experiencing impacts on normal operations. In the third survey only 14% reported impact. The drop in impacts was attributed to the removal of restrictions and reopening of markets, leading to an increasing trend towards resumption in demand.
- The region that continued to see the highest level of impact in the 3rd survey round was Ayeyarwaddy region. This can be explained by the fact that many workers commute to other regions for work, which has continued to be difficult during Covid-19.
- The majority of communities reported a decrease in market prices in all three survey rounds (64% in the 1st vs. 59% in the 3rd). Only 3% reported an increase in prices in the 3rd survey round, indicating that prices have not yet rebounded.
- In the 3rd survey 86% of communities a decrease in household income. Ayeyarwaddy region reported the largest drop in income.
- In the 1st survey 70% of communities reported an increase in unemployment, with the figure dropping to 46% in the 3rd survey.
- One reported reason for the increase in unemployment was the return of migrants to the communities. In the 3rd survey 31% of communities reported returnees in their communities were unemployed.

Alternative ways to generate income and access to finance

- In the 1st survey 17% of communities reported having alternative ways to generate

income. This increased to 32% in the 2nd survey but fell 10% in the 3rd survey.

- In the 3rd survey 79% of communities reported that members had access to loans. At the same time 72% of communities reported that members encountering difficulties making regular loan repayments on existing loans.

Food security and forward planning

- Food insecurity was not reported as a major issue. In the 1st survey 95% indicated sufficient food availability.
- The survey found that as the pandemic evolved, more and more communities put in place plans for fishing/aquaculture livelihoods for the future. In the 1st survey only 6% has plans in place. This number increased 24% in the 3rd survey.
- In the third survey only 9% of communities reported that households have sufficient cash reserves to meet future shocks similar event to the Covid-19 pandemic.

External support

- At the time of the 1st survey 93% of communities received some support from the government or other organizations. This figure had dropped to 26% at the time of the 3rd survey.
- On the question of needs after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, common responses were: job opportunities; cash stimulus; improved health equipment, materials and knowledge; disaster prevention training and improved technical knowledge; and equipment and materials for fishing and aquaculture livelihoods.

Learn more

Access full assessment [here](#)

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CARE Rapid Gender Analysis – Rakhine State

Assessment Information

Organization	CARE Australia and UN Women
Assessment type	Secondary data review and online interviews with key informants.
Time period	June 2020.

Summary

This rapid analysis assesses the impact of COVID-19 on women, men, girls and boys and at risk or vulnerable groups in Rakhine State. It further proposes a set of recommendations for stakeholders involved in implementing COVID-19 response activities in the State. The analysis shows that the pre-existing challenges in Rakhine, including conflict dynamics, relatively higher levels of poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities and access to public services, as well pre-existing restrictions in movements for people and limited access to information are exacerbating the impact of Covid-19 in Rakhine. Women and girls, as well as other marginalized and vulnerable groups have been, and will continue to be disproportionately affected, and face greater risks to their livelihoods, health and safety.

Key Findings

Household work

- With families spending more time at home, Covid-19 has increased the household care burden. The increased burden is mostly absorbed by women due to existing gender roles. Men have been taking on additional

responsibilities, but this is mostly seen as a help to women rather than a shift in gender roles.

Education

- Covid-19 is likely to have a negative impact on both girls' and boys' education. For girls, the increased need for their help with household work keeps them away from school. For boys the loss of income is increasing their need to work rather than study.

WASH

- Overcrowding and lack of WASH services in IDP camps places the IDP population at a relatively higher risks of infection.
- With health resources being stretched it may become challenging to mitigate infection risks and treat cases in camp settings.

Health

- With health facilities diverting their resources towards the Covid-19 response, and with some local clinics closing, access to essential health services, especially for rural communities is decreasing from an already a low level. The Rohingya population will be particularly affected due to the travel restrictions imposed on them.
- Women and girls will be disproportionately affected as cultural norms are more likely to prevent women than men from traveling to seek help.

Livelihoods

- Covid-19 is having a devastating impact on livelihood opportunities, which were already limited in Rakhine before the pandemic. The Rohingya population and women will be particularly affected.
- The high impact of Covid-19 on livelihoods is due to the prevailing employment structure, including many day laborers whose possibilities for work has reduced significantly due to Covid-19 restrictions, and a high share

of the population involved in the fishing industry which has been hard hit.

- Many remittance depending households have lost income due to migrants losing their jobs and returning home.

Access and mobility

- Restriction in movement across areas and to seek services were already high in Rakhine before Covid-19, especially for women. With Covid-19 restrictions in movement have increased, further limiting access to critical services.
- Restrictions on movement for humanitarian agencies have increased, adversely affecting their ability to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Access to information

- Internet shutdowns during Covid-19 have limited access to timely and reliable information to prevent transmission or access to humanitarian assistance, in particular for rural communities and poor households.

Safety and Protection

- Before Covid-19 women and children were at high risks of gender-based violence and abuse due to the conflict situation and restrictions in movements. Rohingya women as well as women and children in IDP camps are among the most vulnerable.
- The risks have been further exacerbated by Covid-19, which has restricted the access to the coping mechanisms and services used by survivors of gender-based violence and abuse.
- The economic hardships caused by loss of livelihood due to Covid-19 is increasing the risk of early and child marriages.

Key Recommendations

- Up-to-date gender analysis and disaggregated analysis of impact on affected communities is necessary to ensure that humanitarian assistance and development programmes are tailored to the specific and different needs of women, men, girls and boys.

- Engagements with stakeholders should be long-term and flexible to allow for adaptive programming.
- Women's participation and representation in decision-making and leadership should be supported to increase influence over interventions and policies.
- Access to comprehensive health services, GBV prevention and response services as well as education and communication materials should be ensured.

Learn more

Access full assessment [here](#)

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This product is developed by the Office of the Resident Coordinators in Myanmar. You can find all Monthly Digests on our [website](#).

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