



**COVID-19
RESPONSE**

UN in Myanmar: Research Digest No. 9, July 2021

Monitoring Socio-Economic Development

The socio-economic situation in Myanmar is rapidly changing due to the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis that has unfolded since the military takeover on February 1, 2021. To monitor the socio-economic situation, United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Myanmar are conducting a multitude of studies and assessments to better understand the impacts across sectors, population groups, and geographic areas. These assessments provide an essential evidence-base upon which the UN's support to the people of Myanmar is built. The research includes forecasts of trends and scenarios, household surveys, deep dives into sectoral impacts, and assessments of impacts on specific population groups. This digest aims to summarize the key findings from this research to ensure that the knowledge accumulated is easily accessible to the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes and their partners.



Employment in Myanmar since the military takeover: A rapid impact assessment

country panel data regression analysis. The definitions of employment and working hours applied are based on the international statistical standard which are also utilized in the Myanmar Labour Force Survey.

Research Information

Organization	International Labour Organization
Type of Research	Empirical study based on cross-country panel data regression analysis
Demographics	Nationwide
Date Published	July 2021

Summary

This assessment aims to estimate labour market trends since the military takeover on February 1. It includes an assessment of working-hour and employment losses and presents estimates of the impact on the three hardest hit sectors: construction, garments, and tourism and hospitality. The assessment extends on established ILO methodologies for estimating labour market trends and is based on a cross-

Key Findings

- Following the military takeover in Myanmar on 1 February 2021, the political crisis has paralyzed the economy – which was already weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic – with serious impacts on enterprises and workers.
- **Impact on working hours**
- The assessment indicates an estimated **14% of total working hours** were lost between the fourth quarter 2020 and the second quarter 2021.
- Under the assumption of a 48-hour work week, the contraction of working hours is equivalent to the working time of at least **2.2 million full-time workers**.
- These working-hour losses come on top of the hours lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Relative to the fourth quarter 2019, the pre-pandemic baseline, working hours in the second quarter 2021 were 29% lower,

equivalent to the working time of 5.9 million full-time workers.

Impact on employment

- Compared to the fourth quarter 2020, **employment contracted by an estimated 6%** in the second quarter 2021, reflecting **job losses of 1.2 million**. This contraction illustrates the large number of workers that are no longer in employment.
- Relative to the fourth quarter 2019, 3.2 million or 15% of all workers are no longer employed, highlighting the compounded impact of the pandemic and the military takeover on employment.

► **Figure 2. Total employment in Myanmar, millions**



Gendered impacts

- **Women workers have been disproportionately affected by job loss**, both in terms of working-hour and employment.
- Female workers experienced working-hour losses of **15%** between the fourth quarter 2020 and the second quarter 2021, compared to 12% for male.
- During the same period, 580,000 women are estimated to have lost employment, with job losses of more than 7%, compared to less than 6% for men.

Impact in key sectors

- **Critical sectors have been hard hit.** In the first half of 2021, employment in construction, garments and tourism, and hospitality decreased by an estimated 35%, 31% and 25%,

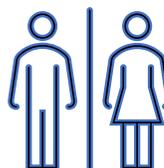
respectively, with even higher relative losses in working hours.

Learn more

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Access the full report [here](#).



Gender Profile for Humanitarian Action

Research Information

Organization	UN Women and UNFPA
Type of Research	Analysis based on stakeholder consultations and desk research.
Demographics	People in need of humanitarian assistance in Rakhine, Kachin, Northern Shan and Kayin States.
Date Published	June 2021

Summary

The Myanmar Gender Profile for Humanitarian Action (GiHA Profile) provides an overview of the context for gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, highlights key sector/cluster-specific and cross-sectional gender issues, needs, gaps, responses, constraints/challenges - how to address these, recommends strategic goals and further action needed to strengthen gender mainstreaming. The GiHA Profile is produced annually and the 2021 version includes an analysis of the gender-related impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to a lesser extent the political situation post February 1, 2021.

The focus of the GiHA Profile is on people in need of humanitarian assistance in Rakhine, Kachin, Northern Shan and Kayin States. The analysis is based on secondary literature review, as well as

sector/cluster-specific consultations from national and sub-national level.

Key Findings

Overall gender context

- Ongoing conflict, COVID-19 and the political context have disproportionately affected women and girls by perpetuating and exacerbating pre-existing, gender and social inequalities, gender-based violence (GBV), and discrimination.
- Preexisting gendered barriers lead to a lower ability and opportunity for women and girls to survive and recover from crises.
- Women and girls, and those most at-risk, experience additional barriers to accessing humanitarian services, which have increased in the context of COVID-19.
- Men and boys have been disproportionately exposed to some human rights violations such as forced recruitment, arbitrary arrests, and landmines due to their gendered roles as protectors/defenders, heads of households and breadwinners.

Rakhine

- Restrictive **social norms** are barriers to women's access to humanitarian services as well as public life across Rakhine communities.
- While **movement restrictions** against women and girls have further increased with the introduction of COVID-19-related prevention measures, boys are exposed to specific protection risks such as engagement in unsafe casual labour.
- Rohingya women and girls' **ability to attend school** is greatly limited due to prevailing gender norms, of all Rohingya students in Rakhine, only **37%** are female.
- Only **19%** of women **give birth in professional health facilities** compared to 37% nationally. Unsafe abortions is a key cause of maternal mortality - reportedly responsible for **15%** of all maternal deaths in Rakhine State compared to the national average of 10%.
- Rakhine State has the lowest **labour force participation** rate in Myanmar at 58.8%,

driven mainly by the low participation rate for women **38.1%**. It also has the highest **unemployment rate** **10.4%**, with higher unemployment among women (12.8%) than men (9.1%).

- Rakhine State has the highest percentage of ever-pregnant women who have **experienced violence during pregnancy** (**8.6%**) among all states and regions of Myanmar. **Domestic violence**, including intimate partner violence (IPV), is the most prevalent form of GBV reported.
- Women's **political representation** is among the lowest in Myanmar. In recent years there has not been any female parliamentarians elected to the Rakhine State Parliament, and only three women were elected from the Rakhine State constituencies to the Union Parliament in 2015.

Kachin

- Women in both IDP camps and host communities face challenges in **access to healthcare**, with maternal health care being particularly unreliable.
- The ratio of girls to boys **attending primary level education** is at 0.95. The drop-out rate for boys at primary level education is higher than for girls, as boys often tend to be encouraged to seek work as family providers.
- The **labour participation rate** among women is considerably lower (**46%**) than among men (85.7%).
- Increased militarisation and outbreaks of fighting have had a severe impact on **freedom of movement and security** for women and girls. The issue of **land mine** infestation especially impacts men and boys who are among the main victims of landmine injuries and deaths.
- Kachin benefits from an active civil society, especially from women-led organisations. However, **women's leadership** remains low at all levels, with women holding only two state-level ministerial positions in Kachin, and only **0.25%** of ward/village tract administrators being women nationwide.
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Northern Shan

- While women have little **decision-making power** in their homes, due to widespread drug use among displaced men, women often take on the role of provider for the family, which traditionally is a role assigned to men.
- There are high rates of **forced male recruitment** (including forced recruitment of boys).
- The ratio of girls to boys **attending primary level education** is at 1.04. Shan state has the lowest female literacy rate among young women at **59.4%**.
- **Access to justice** for survivors of gender based and sexual violence is very low due to lack of formal legal service providers and the existence of tensions between informal and formal justice systems. Survivors of violence are also hesitant to report due to community blame and stigmatization.
- **Trafficking** of women and girls in particular for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage remains a major threat for women and girls.

Kayin

- In the Kayin **society** men are traditionally placed as the primary breadwinners, heads of household and decision-makers, while women are relegated to the private sphere as primary caregivers and caretakers of the family unit.
- Only **15%** of married women in Kayin have **access to modern family planning** services, compared to just below 40% nationwide.
- The **literacy rate** among females (**70.9%**) is lower than among men (78.4%).
- The **labour force participation** rate among men (81%) is almost the double of the rate for females 41%.
- Evidence suggest that **sexual violence** remain an ongoing risk for women and girls. Two legal systems/authorities exist that enforce different legislation in areas under their control (areas controlled by de facto authorities and EAOs controlled areas) and provisions on GBV remain unclear.
- Women have been excluded from **participating in voting** in local elections for

village tract administrators. Despite this, Kayin is the state with the highest percentage of women village tract administrators 2.4% after the election in 2012.

Learn more

Access the full report [here](#).



Ayeyarwady Region and Circular Migration

Research Information

Organization	International Organization for Migration funded by the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT)
Type of Research	Data collection through household survey and qualitative focus group discussions.
Demographics	Data collected in three townships in Ayeyarwady Region.
Date Published	April 2021

Summary

This assessment seeks to enhance the understanding of the patterns of circular movement for people in the Ayeyarwady Region, as well as the impact that migration has on the migrants themselves and their home communities. Based on the assessment findings, the study provides a set of recommendations for stakeholder engaged in supporting migrants and migrant-sending communities in benefitting from circular migration.

The assessment is based on a quantitative survey including 252 circular migrants from 15 villages across three townships and 9 focus group discussions with a total of 90 participants from across the three townships.

Key Findings

Drivers of migration

- The assessment finds that circular migration is used by men and women in the Ayeyarwady region as a **poverty reduction strategy**.
- Many migrants are landless casual labourers prior to migration, who migrate for seasonal work during the agricultural off season.
- More women (96%) than men (81%) reported that they migrated because of their need to supplement their household earnings, while a slightly higher share of men (75%) cited that there was not enough work in their home village (compared to 72% of women) as a reason for migration. 56% of both female and male respondents also pointed to circular migration as a means for repaying household debts.

Patterns of migration

- Circular migrants move both within and outside of the region (rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural), mostly to Myanmar's commercial hub, Yangon.
- The **duration of the migration** period depends on the type of job and ranges from around **3 to 8 months**. The length of stay was found to be longer for women than men. While 64% of women reported that they stayed away from

home for 5-7 months only 27% of men reported staying away that long.

- The **sector of employment** also differs between men and women. While almost half of men (47%) find employment Yangon's construction sector, the majority of women (60%) find work in manufacturing/textiles in the peri-urban areas of the city.
- The majority of migrants (72% of women and 73% of men) are between 20 and 40 years old.

Impact of migration

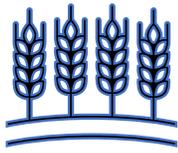
- Most **migrants earn more while away** than at home. 23% of migrants reported earning more than 150,000 kyats (the highest income bracket included in the survey) when away, while only 17% reported this level of earnings at home.
- Most migrants support the income of their household at home through sending **remittances**. On average, migrants send between 50,000 to 100,000 kyats per month.
- While more women than men reported sending remittances, the amounts sent by women were on average smaller than among men.
- Migrants with a longer migration stays were found to send slightly more in remittances.
- The study further finds that migrant-sending villages benefit from the **skills of returned migrants**, when the new skills are applied in local level social infrastructure projects (such as improving schools and housing).

Impacts of COVID-19

- Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, **remittances** among surveyed circular migrants and their households have **dropped by over a third**.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic only 10% of migrants reported not being able to send regular remittances, after the outbreak this figure went up to 75%.
- Many migrants face a range of insecurities, including late salary payments, precarious employment, and job dismissal at their destination.

Learn more

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Myanmar: Agricultural livelihoods and food security in the context of COVID-19

Research Information

Organization	Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme
Type of Research	Monitor based on telephone interviews.
Demographics	Agricultural households, food traders and input retailers across 75 townships.
Date Published	May 2021

Summary

This study monitors the food security and livelihoods of actors in the agricultural, livestock and fisheries value chains. It provides insights about production constraints, price developments, food insecurity, coping strategies, and overall challenges faced by agricultural households. Periodic data was collected through computer-assisted telephone interviews with agricultural households, food traders and input retailers. The assessment covers 75 townships across the following states or region: Mon, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine, Shan and Yangon. The data was collected between mid-August to mid-October 2020.

Key Findings

Agriculture production constraints

- The main difficulties faced by the agricultural households surveyed were not directly related to COVID-19 restrictions: unfavorable weather, difficulties in hiring labor and outbreaks of pests.

- However, **cash constraints** faced by producers have contributed to difficulties in hiring labour and accessing inputs, which may lead to smaller yields of the 2020/21 agricultural season.
- Approximately **one fourth** of livestock-producing households surveyed reported having experienced difficulties in the production cycle.

Price developments

- **36%** of agricultural households surveyed reported lower-than-usual **farm gate prices** as a major constraint, presumably driven by a reduction in market demand due to reduced income levels among consumers.
- **Retail food prices** remained relatively stable during the data-collection period, with only small price differences identified with respect to the same period in the previous year. Overall, most monitored markets continued to function normally apart from those in Paletwa in Chin state.

Food insecurity

- **Food insecurity** levels among the surveyed households were closely linked to a reduction in income levels and the interruption of income flows resulting from COVID-19-related restrictions.
- This, coupled with challenges **accessing markets**— which represent the main source of food during the lean season, when the survey was undertaken – have had a negative impact on households and their ability to access sufficient nutritious food.
- Rural households showed higher levels of food insecurity than urban ones.

Coping mechanisms

- Many vulnerable households resorted to **coping strategies** to ensure their access to food and other basic needs. Among the most frequently cited negative coping strategies were the use of savings, the **reduction of non-**

essential expenditures and the purchase of food on credit.

- Surveyed households in the Chin and Rakhine states showed higher levels of adoption of “crisis” and “emergency” coping strategies.
- Rural households employed “emergency” coping strategies more than urban households.

Challenges faced by households

- The most frequently reported challenges faced by the surveyed households include: (i) decreased income; (ii) lack of access to markets; and (iii) insufficient food to consume. There were no significant differences between female- and male-headed households in terms of challenges faced.
- When comparing urban and rural populations, a higher share of rural surveyed households reported a lack of access to markets and not enough food.
- The top three concerns reported by surveyed households were: getting sick; lack of work; and food shortages. Rural surveyed households were more worried about food shortages than urban households, while urban households were more worried about a lack of work.

Learn more

Access the full report [here](#).

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

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