Myanmar

DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 3

Results and recommendations
July 2022

Data collection 17 March to 5 May 2022
Methodology

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), launched a household survey in Myanmar in March 2022. The survey monitors agricultural livelihoods and food security through the Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) System.

This third-round survey utilized a random sample of 3,518 rural households. The data were weighted by population, location (rural/urban) and education of the head of household. It was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) between 17 March and 5 May 2022 in 14 states and regions: Ayeyarwady, Bago, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Magway, Mandalay, Mon, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan, Tanintharyi and Yangon. Note that due to connectivity and responsiveness issues, sample sizes were small in Chin, Kayah and Tanintharyi and caution should be used when interpreting data from these states. The survey was interrupted for two weeks to observe the Thingyan holidays from 9 to 24 April. This third-round survey followed the second-round survey conducted from 9 August to 9 September 2021.

Figure 1. Countries with established DIEM-Monitoring Systems


Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

About DIEM-Monitoring

FAO established the DIEM-Monitoring System to collect, analyse and disseminate data on shocks and livelihoods in countries prone to multiple shocks. DIEM-Monitoring aims to inform decision making by providing regularly updated information on how different shocks are affecting the livelihoods and food security of agricultural populations.

At the core of the DIEM-Monitoring System are country-level dashboards. Readers are encouraged to explore these dashboards to gain more insight into the context of Myanmar and other countries.

> Learn more at https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/pages/monitoring
Income and shocks

Sixty-one percent of surveyed households were affected by at least one shock compared to 55 percent in the second round. Economic shocks continued to affect most of the households (35 percent) in the surveyed areas. Loss of employment was less frequent than in round 2 and fell from 27 percent to 15 percent, while higher food and fuel prices were more prevalent in round 3 (Figure 2).¹

Figure 2. Main shocks affecting households (percentage of respondents)

Fewer households reported no income (2 percent) compared to last round (18 percent), a likely result of relaxing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with seasonal work opportunities. Reduction of income remained high, with 60 percent reporting less income compared to last year. Wage/casual (farm and off-farm) labour and self-employment were the income sources that declined the most.

¹ Note that round 2 did not include Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing and Tanintharyi states/regions.
Crops

Figure 3. Myanmar crop calendar


The second round of data collection found a reduction in the area planted compared to a typical year. As indicated by this third-round survey, the planted area has not increased and access to fertilizer continued to be a problem. The share of farmers whose planted area dropped was particularly high in Rakhine and Shan states (more than 30 percent). The survey found that farmers who planted less were also those more frequently affected by shocks.

Access to fertilizer continued to be a frequent problem, in particular for rice and vegetable producers (56 and 50 percent, respectively). Lack of water, plant diseases and access to fuel (especially for vegetable and cash crops) became more common issues since the last round (Figure 4). Among rice producers, 55 percent reported a drop in harvest. In addition, a high share of farmers (more than half) reported a decrease in production in Yangon and Ayeyarwady regions and Rakhine state.
Figure 4. Main difficulties affecting crop producers (percentage of respondents)

Compared with the previous round, crop marketing conditions improved from a situation where farmers had several constraints to reach the markets, and sale prices were low, to a situation where less reported marketing difficulties (29 percent, down from 40 percent in round 2). However, difficulties persisted for vegetable producers and cash crops, coupled with a decrease in sale prices.
Livestock

Among livestock producers, 42 percent reported a decrease in herds/flocks compared to the previous year – especially poultry producers. Diseases were a major problem for livestock production (Figure 5). Trouble accessing livestock feed was more frequent (50 percent) compared to the previous round (42 percent). These difficulties were more frequent among swine farmers, and in Mandalay.

Figure 5. Main difficulties affecting livestock producers (percentage of respondents)

Livestock marketing conditions did not improve much when compared to the previous round. Livestock producers were still facing low demand and low sale prices, particularly in urban areas. Reported difficulties concentrated among cattle producers (55 percent) are likely due to the continuing export ban from traditional markets because of ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. Low output prices were the most common problem, but so were damages/losses due to the lack of accessible markets (for poultry), low demand and higher marketing costs.

Food security

Food security was assessed with individual indicators of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), the food consumption score (FCS), the reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI), and the Livelihood-based Coping Strategy Index (LCSI), as well as through the Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of food insecurity (rCARI).²

Comparison between rounds

Compared to the previous round, food insecurity improved slightly, likely due to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and seasonal improvements in work opportunities and food consumption. This was felt particularly in rural areas with very little change in the prevalence of food insecurity in urban areas. Overall, 16 percent of the surveyed population had poor or borderline food consumption, which is a slight improvement from the 19 percent found during round 2. In rural areas, food consumption indicators showed more improvement compared to the previous round (reflecting the recent harvest), while they worsened slightly in urban areas. Use of crisis and emergency coping strategies improved from 55 percent in round 2 to 40 percent in round 3, with a slightly larger improvement in rural areas compared to urban. The moderate and severe recent food insecurity (RFI)³ decreased from a prevalence of 28 percent in round 2 to 20 percent in round 3. Severe RFI remained at a prevalence of approximately 1 percent. Like FIES, rCARI identified 20 percent of the population as food insecure (moderate and severe), a decline from 25 percent reported in October 2021.⁴ In total, an estimated 10.8 million people, including 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), are estimated to be food insecure compared to 13.2 million in October 2021. Both FIES and rCARI show greater improvement in rural areas compared to urban.

Current situation

In round 3, the three indicators of food insecurity (FIES, FCS, LCSI) converge in identifying Kayah, Chin (these states had a small sample size), Rakhine, Kayin and Magway as the states with the worst outcomes. In addition, southern Shan was identified as an area with 29 percent prevalence of poor and borderline food consumption. According to the rCARI, the highest proportion of severely and moderately food insecure households were in Kayah (47 percent) and Chin (37 percent), followed by Rakhine, Kayin and Shan (25-29 percent). Figure 6 shows the proportion of households in each state/region that that are moderately and severely food insecure as assessed through RFI (Figure 6a) and the rCARI (Figure 6b).

² The rCARI consolidates elements of household economic vulnerability (income source and change), food consumption and livelihood change in assessing food insecurity status.
³ RFI is based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) – an experience-based metric of food insecurity. When applied to the 30 days preceding the assessment (as was the case for this survey), the data can be used to estimate the prevalence of RFI at different levels of severity.
⁴ In 2021, 1 in 4 people (25 percent) were identified as food insecure based on the results from two surveys – the FAO and WFP round 2 survey and a separate WFP survey conducted due to the limited coverage of the FAO and WFP survey.
Figure 6. Percentage of households that are food insecure (moderately and severely) in each state/region, as assessed by:

(a) FIES (b) rCARI


Food consumption gaps and livelihood assets’ depletion were associated with shocks, and with poverty conditions and economic stress (i.e. households that have no income/informal employment, decreased income compared to last year, incurred debt in the last year, non-permanent residency status including IDPs, high income dependency ratio, and a decrease in the number of income earners compared to last year).

Food consumption was worse among rural households, casual farm labourers, non-permanent residents (IDPs and migrants), and those who live in less durable housing conditions. LCSI indicated a high frequency of crisis and emergency strategies in Kayin, Rakhine and Kayah (this state had a small sample size), among livestock producers, non-agricultural households and casual farm workers, as well as those who were economically stressed.

Consumption coping strategies correlated strongly with asset depletion, insufficient diets and indicators of economic stress. Overall, 40 percent of households relied on less preferred, less expensive foods. In Kayin and Rakhine, as well as in households dependent on wage labour, more than a quarter reduced adult consumption so that children could eat.
The profile of the most vulnerable households is consistent with a deterioration of purchasing power that cuts across urban/rural milieus and agricultural/non-agricultural households. Households experiencing ongoing economic stress (taking on debt, decline in number of income earners, high income dependency ratio), as well as those with more traditional vulnerabilities (proxies being poor housing, female-headed households, low education of household head) have a higher proportion of food insecurity (Figure 7). Those without access to markets and non-permanent residents (IDPs and recent migrants) are more vulnerable as well. Household resilience is tested in the face of multiple shocks and particularly economic shocks, with a greater share of households facing food insecurity among those who experienced economic shocks and multiple shocks. While the situation has improved slightly since round 2, particularly in rural areas, due to seasonal changes and a reduction in COVID-19 restrictions, the continued erosion of purchasing power amidst escalating prices raises concerns as the lean season approaches.

Figure 7. Proportion of households that are food insecure by key household characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of shocks</th>
<th>No shocks (13%)</th>
<th>1 shock (18%)</th>
<th>2 shocks (30%)</th>
<th>3+ shocks (29%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic shocks</td>
<td>No (15%)</td>
<td>Yes (28%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to market</td>
<td>Yes (19%)</td>
<td>No (31%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in number of income earners</td>
<td>Increased (70%)</td>
<td>No change (17%)</td>
<td>Reduced (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt</td>
<td>No (34%)</td>
<td>Yes (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income dependency ratio*</td>
<td>Low (17%)</td>
<td>High (30%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency type</td>
<td>Permanent resident (18%)</td>
<td>Non-permanent resident (34%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing type</td>
<td>Permanent (14%)</td>
<td>Semi-permanent (20%)</td>
<td>Temporary (26%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of household head</td>
<td>Higher education (9%)</td>
<td>Secondary school (17%)</td>
<td>Primary school (17%)</td>
<td>No education (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of household head</td>
<td>Male (19%)</td>
<td>Female (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* High income dependency ratio is the equivalent of one income earner supporting more than four household members.
Needs

Cash and food assistance were the most frequently reported needs (61 percent and 39 percent, respectively), followed by medical supplies (14 percent). For farmers, the most frequently reported need was fertilizer (10 percent) and seeds (5 percent), while 8 percent of non-agricultural households mentioned shelter as a need. About 14 percent of surveyed households received humanitarian assistance in the three months preceding the survey. Of those that received assistance, the most common type was food (57 percent), and cash or vouchers (28 percent).
Recommendations

> Immediate humanitarian assistance is needed to address food consumption gaps and emergency livelihood support for the most affected households, but especially in the most conflict affected areas; for non-permanent residents (IDPs, recent migrants) and communities who have lost access to their livelihoods and/or who do not have access to markets; and for households that present key vulnerability characteristics.

> Emergency agricultural support is recommended to recover vital crop and livestock production, to rebuild assets, and to improve access to agricultural inputs. The support of income generating activities and diversification of rural income is recommended to prevent extreme decapitalisation.

> Scale up support to social protection activities for the economically vulnerable:

  o Markets remain physically accessible in this context, for the most part, but increasingly financially inaccessible due to deteriorating purchasing power because of declining income and rising prices. The provision of cash/vouchers is recommended to support households in obtaining nutritious foods.

  o Asset creation programmes are recommended for those who are depleting assets most severely, including smallholder farmers.

> Support the diversification of marketing channels of livestock products.
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