

# Community perceptions of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Myanmar

## Insights from the second round of the National COVID-19 Community Survey (NCCS) – July/August 2020

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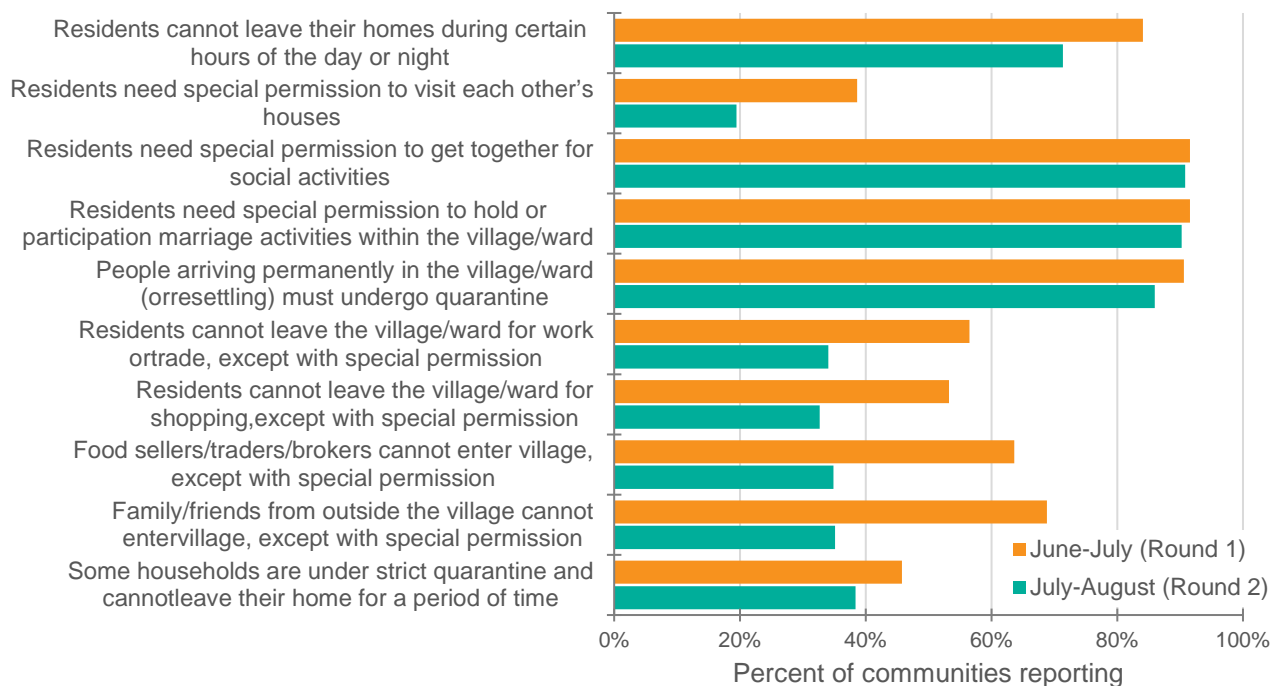
### Introduction

To better understand the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on Myanmar's diverse rural and urban communities, a large-scale community telephone survey was conducted. The first survey round was implemented in June and July 2020 with respondents from 308 different communities covering 168 of Myanmar's 356 townships.<sup>1</sup> A second survey round was conducted in July and August 2020 with respondents from the same communities and from communities in an additional 185 townships. We report key findings from this second round, comparing to those from the first round.

### Key Findings

- **Relaxation of COVID-19 prevention measures.** Fewer measures were in place during the second survey period in July/August compared to that of the first survey in June/July. For example, only 35 percent of communities reported in the second survey that family members or friends from outside the village could not enter their village or ward, compared to 64 percent in the first (Figure 1). However, restrictions on large gatherings mostly remain in place.

**Figure 1. COVID-19 prevention measures in place, June/July 2020 versus July/August 2020**



Source: NCCS community survey rounds 1 (June/July 2020) and 2 (July/August 2020)

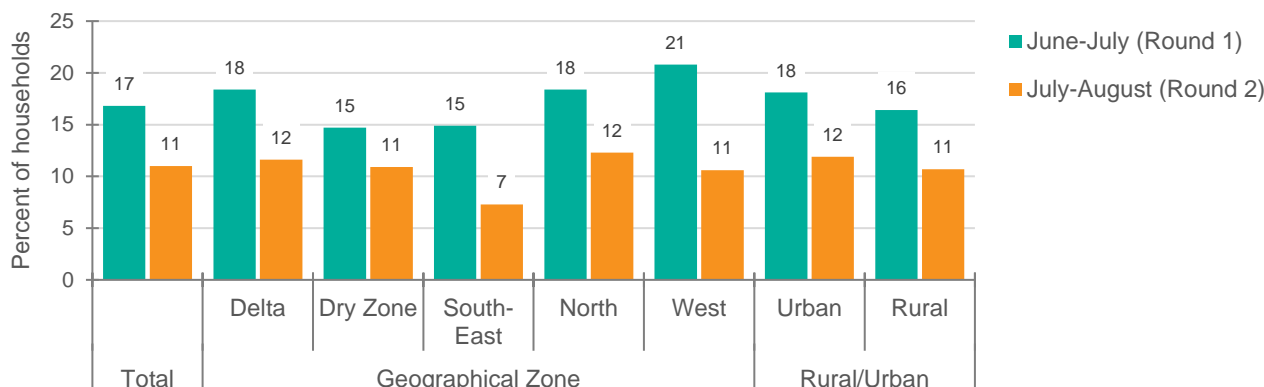
- **Social protection modalities have changed towards non-food assistance.** Government assistance received between January and June was mostly in the form of food assistance, with only 7 percent of

<sup>1</sup> Lambrecht, I., D. Headey, T.Z. Oo, and S. Goudet. 2020. *Community perceptions of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Myanmar: Insights from a National COVID-19 Community Survey (NCCS) – June and July 2020*. Myanmar Strategy Support Program Policy Note 29. Yangon: International Food Policy Research Institute.

communities reporting in June/July having received non-food assistance, either cash or non-food items. However, in July/August, 68 percent of the communities surveyed reported receiving non-food assistance.

- **Reduction in reported extreme poverty.** On average, 11 percent of households were considered in need of urgent assistance in July/August, whereas in the same set of communities in June/July, 17 percent of households had been considered in urgent need (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Average of estimates of share of community households in need of urgent assistance, July/August 2020 compared to June/July 2020, by geography**



Source: Community Phone survey (Round 1: June/July 2020 and Round 2: July/August 2020)

Note: Such households are those that, by the respondent's estimation, are very short of food, suffering from hunger, and in urgent need of assistance.

- **Households are further reducing expenditures on essential non-food items to cope with income losses.** More households were reported to have reduced expenditures on non-food essentials, such as education, health, and clothing, in July/August (17 percent) than between January and June (6 percent).
- Students had resumed secondary school in only 79 percent of communities
- Communities were particularly **affected by weather shocks**. Bad weather in the previous month was reported to have affected 40 percent of the communities in July/August, whereas only 33 percent of the communities reported having been affected by bad weather between January and June. This is particularly relevant to rural communities, where 48 percent reported this as a shock in July/August. Communities affected by bad weather in July/August mostly experienced too little rain (65 percent), though there is some geographic variation.
- **Three local priorities for action** are consistently stated. These are **improved infrastructure**, particularly roads, sanitation, and water (by 67 percent of the communities surveyed); **income generating activities**, including job creation (44 percent); and **direct income and food support** (43 percent).

## Policy recommendations

- Continue raising awareness on the COVID-19 prevention measures in place and the importance of complying with these rules in the context of recently increasing COVID-19 cases.
- Community estimates of extreme poverty fell in July/August but are likely rising again because of renewed COVID-19 cases and the re-imposition of prevention measures that earlier were eased. Scaling up social protection measures will be important for supporting the most vulnerable populations.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation (MOALI) and its development partners should closely monitor weather patterns and pest outbreaks in 2020 and continue supporting farmers. Agricultural production levels must be sustained or enhanced to reduce the risk of higher rates of poverty and food insecurity. Improved agricultural production levels can be attained through adopting more productive agricultural techniques, expanding irrigation, and changing crop types to reduce the impact of adverse weather conditions.