



# Northern Part of Rakhine State

## Remote Emergency Assessment mVAM Myanmar | Release #2



**Trends:** This second release focuses on the food security situation in Maungdaw Township. A greater sample size has allowed for a better understanding of the living conditions in the surveyed areas strengthening the evidence of rapidly deteriorated food security.



**Food Security and livelihoods:** Food insecurity remains highly widespread throughout the township. The situation seems most problematic in the north where markets are non-functioning and access to agricultural land or fishing grounds appears restricted. Livelihood opportunities remain scarce, and the lower demand for daily labour has had an immediate impact on the most vulnerable - usually engaged in unstable livelihoods - facing sustained reductions in their level of income and escalating debts.

- mVAM is a WFP tool meant to remotely monitor food security through live phone calls.
- Phone interviews of 116 respondents in 70 villages on 21 November – 13 December.
- As of 27 December 2016 WFP reached 28,096 beneficiaries in 169 villages in Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships
- On 28 December, access to northern Maungdaw Township was again restricted by the local authorities.

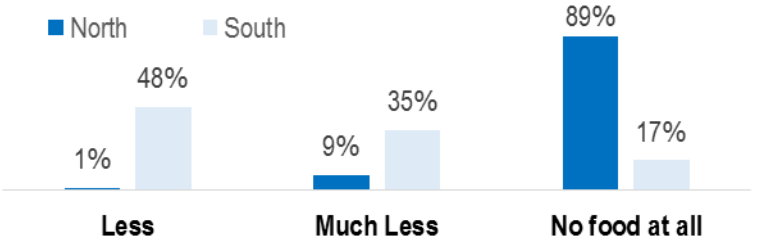
### ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

Since November, WFP has been monitoring food security in Maungdaw Township through phone based interviews. Since the first release, a greater sample size has allowed for a more clear understanding of the food security situation in Maungdaw Township. As of 13 December, WFP was able to reach 116 respondents in 70 villages in the township. Of these, 70 respondents from 34 villages were located the north and 46 respondents from 27 villages in the south.

### FOOD PRICES AND SUPPLY

In the north, markets appear not to function with nearly all respondents reporting serious damages to market infrastructure or exhausted food stocks. In the south, almost all respondents contacted by WFP have confirmed that markets are functioning regularly. However, access appears safe only to the population living nearby and supplies are significantly lower than normal. The price of rice has considerably increased, on average, by 28 percent in the north and 21 percent in the south since October despite it being after the harvest, when prices should be normally lower.

Perceived food supply in the nearest market compared to October 2016



### OVERALL SITUATION

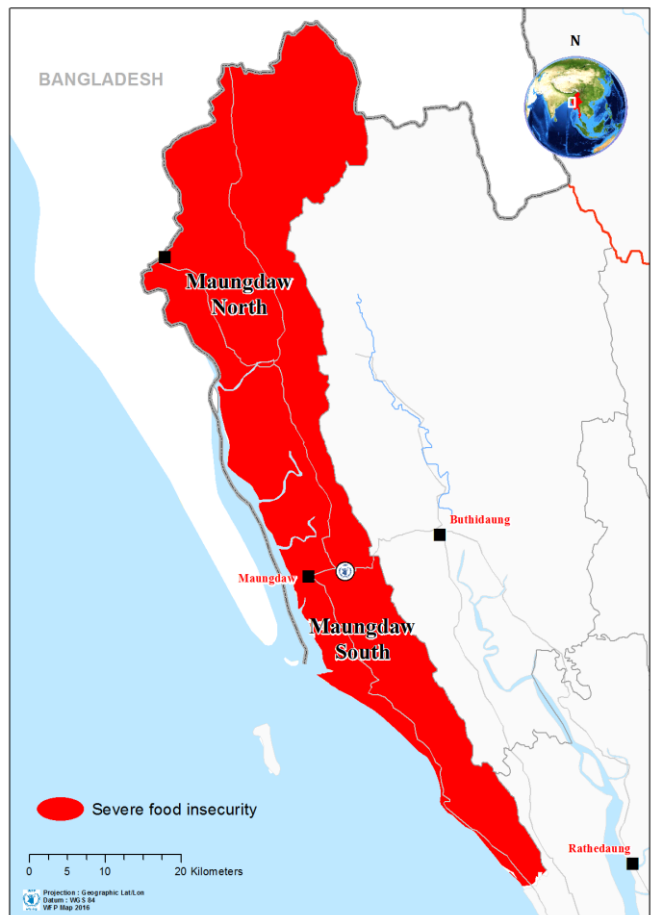
#### Maungdaw

In the surveyed villages, severe food insecurity appears highly widespread. In the north, non-operating markets and depleted food stocks have led to serious food shortages. Also in the south, severe food insecurity seems to have affected most of the population despite functioning markets.

The vast majority of respondents - 88 percent in the north and 82 percent in the south – have reported an increase in the number of households suffering from hunger in their village with respect to October 2016. More than three quarters of the households reached by WFP have already exhausted their food stocks and are borrowing food from neighbours and relatives.

Livelihood opportunities remain scarce, while access to markets, agricultural land and fishing areas continues to be restricted. Nearly all households have communicated to WFP that movement restrictions and loss of employment were the main factors causing difficulties to obtain food.

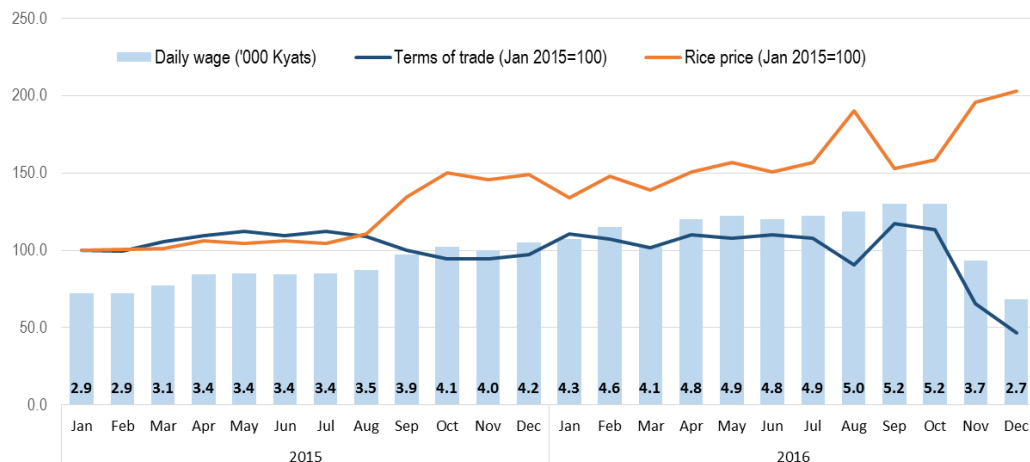
Limited access to farm land has led to a lower demand for daily labour and has deepened the risk of crop losses which put at risk availability of food in the near future as well as undermine the capacity of the most vulnerable population to access sufficient food in the long-term.



## LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

In December, daily wages have further decreased to less than half of the October values and are now below the January 2015 levels. The purchasing power of households is at its lowest and households can only afford nearly one third of the quantity of rice that could be purchased with a daily labour in October and half of what was possible in January 2015.

### % variation of average price of rice, daily labour wage, and purchasing power measured by the terms of trade in Maungdaw Township (January 2015 - December 2016)



Access to agricultural land or fishing grounds continues to be restricted. Nearly all households interviewed reported a reduction in their income and negative prospects for the future. In the north, 80 percent of respondents could not access agricultural land the month prior to the interview. Despite less severe constraints in the south - 18 percent of respondents could not access land or fishing areas – the majority of the population faced partial restrictions as a result of checkpoints, lack of civil documentation and fear of arrest.

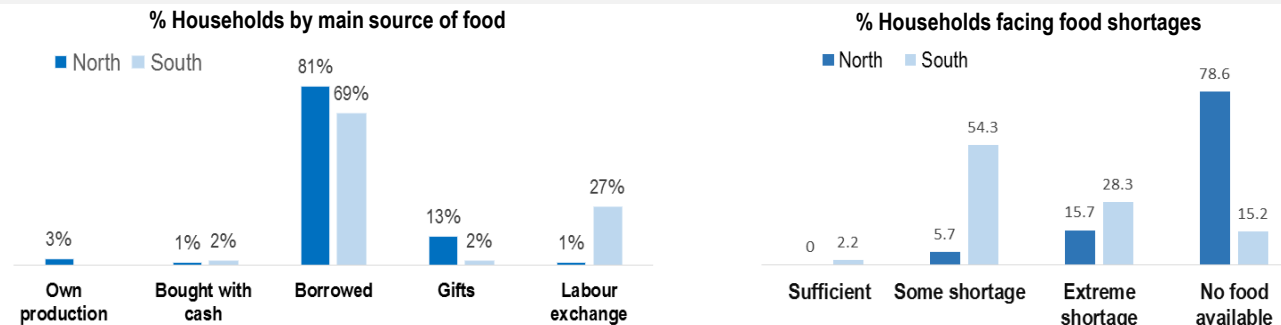
## INDICATORS USED TO MEASURE FOOD SECURITY

**Coping Strategies** are used to measure the frequency and severity of negative behaviours when a household has not enough food or money to buy food.

**Terms of trade (ToT)** between poor quality rice and casual labour are a proxy indicator used to measure household purchasing power by showing the quantity of rice that can be purchased with the wage earned from one day of casual unskilled labour.

## MORE ON FOOD SECURITY

Most of the households are facing food shortages reflected in the reduction of the average number of meals consumed the day prior to the survey that dropped from 3.0 in June to 1.9 in December. The main source of food for most of the households - 94 percent in the north and 71 percent in the south – have been neighbors or relatives lending or gifting food. In the south, nearly one third of the households have received food in exchange for labour which may indicate slightly better livelihood opportunities than in the north but also unsafe market access and preference over in-kind rather than cash entitlements.



## UPDATE ON WFP OPERATIONS

Since some access restrictions were instated after the 9-October violence, WFP has been negotiating with authorities at various levels for the soonest resumption of humanitarian activities in northern Rakhine State. On December 17, all UN agencies received an approval for the resumption of emergency operations in 17 villages in Buthidaung. On 18 December, humanitarian actors, including WFP, were granted further access to over 100 villages affected by violence in Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships. Following the authorization from the local authorities, WFP has managed to shortly resume relief and nutrition activities and assist 28,096 food-insecure and vulnerable people in 169 villages of Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships. Since 19 December, WFP has reached 18,740 people in 95 villages of Maungdaw and 9,356 people in 74 villages of Buthidaung. On 28 December, access to northern Maungdaw Township was again restricted by the local authorities. WFP will continue negotiating with the Rakhine State Government to expand the coverage as well as to secure approval for other than relief and nutrition activities such as school feeding and community asses creation.

## LIMITATIONS

This remote survey is mostly based on phone interviews with key respondents. Due to the nature of such phone calls, only a limited amount of information could be collected. Given the limited access of the affected population to mobile phones and the inherent bias in mobile surveys, an important note is that the results of these surveys could not be seen as precise estimates of food insecurity, but rather as a way of capturing patterns and relative levels of food insecurity across areas.