



MONSOON 2013

Monsoon Highlights

As anticipated, the food security situation has overall deteriorated since the pre-monsoon monitoring round. Household staple food stocks continued to decline in most of the areas monitored, reaching an average of 1.3 months, from 1.7 months before the monsoon.

Despite an overall deterioration since the pre-monsoon monitoring round, household food stock levels, were found slightly higher than during the 2012 monsoon monitoring. In addition, diet inadequacy and hunger were found lower than last year, indicating potential improvements in the overall food security situation compared to a year ago.

Debt loads remained largely stable, with 60% of the monitored households reporting recent debts (contracted within three months of the monitoring round), from 61% before the monsoon. Food purchases continue to be by far the main reason for contracting additional debts. As farmers engaged into monsoon cultivation, more households monitored reported contracting debts mainly to cover agriculture expenses.

Since the post-monsoon monitoring round, deteriorations in the overall food security situation were mainly observed in some townships of Rakhine (Myebon, Rathedaung), Ayeyarwaddy (Ngaputaw township), Shan (Hsihseng, Tangyan, Laukai, Namkham, Kunlong) and Kayah State (Demoso). Improvements were however mainly observed in some of the monitored areas of the Dry Zone (Meiktila, Thazi and Pwintbyu townships).

The FSIN was not able to monitor conflict-affected townships in Kachin State nor was it possible to monitor Sittwe and Kyaukphyu Townships in Rakhine State. However, regular situation monitoring in camps in Kachin continues to indicate a stable situation for the IDPs and host communities receiving regular food assistance.

Food Security Monitoring Methodology

The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) has developed a first of its kind Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) for Myanmar. The FSMS is a simple, cost-effective system, tailored specifically to Myanmar. Monitoring is normally conducted three times per year (Pre-Monsoon, Monsoon and Post-Monsoon) covering close to 60 townships to date.

The FSIN uses a joint approach of limited quantitative data collection, followed by a rigorous and systematic qualitative review of the food security situation. The quantitative data collection is sentinel site-based, with FSIN partners collecting information in monitored townships on core, internationally recognized indicators of food security (including the Household Hunger Scale¹, the Household Dietary Diversity Score, the Reduced Coping Strategies Index, etc). Data collected is analyzed using an IPC-type (Integrated Phase Classification) analytical framework and the information gleaned is intended to provide an initial indication of the situation in the townships monitored.

The qualitative review utilizes secondary information (from surveys, government reporting systems, etc) as well as the knowledge and expertise of field staff and other local actors to better understand how well the sentinel site data reflects the overall situation in the township. After this review, the totality of the evidence is used to classify the food security situation in each monitored township. Classifications are made at regional workshops (Magway, Hakha, Lashio, Taunggyi, Sittwe and Maungdaw) where FSIN members, other local stakeholders as well as local government departments (Agriculture, Health, etc) are able to share information and gain consensus as to the food security situation in each township.

FSIN Membership

The FSIN is a network of technical experts and information managers from lead food security stakeholders. The FSIN seeks to improve information systems by facilitating information flow, harmonizing assessment activities and managing a coordinated Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS). To date there are 30 members of the FSIN, including UN agencies, international and local NGOs and CBOs.

For more information on the FSIN go to:
<http://www.fsinmyanmar.net>

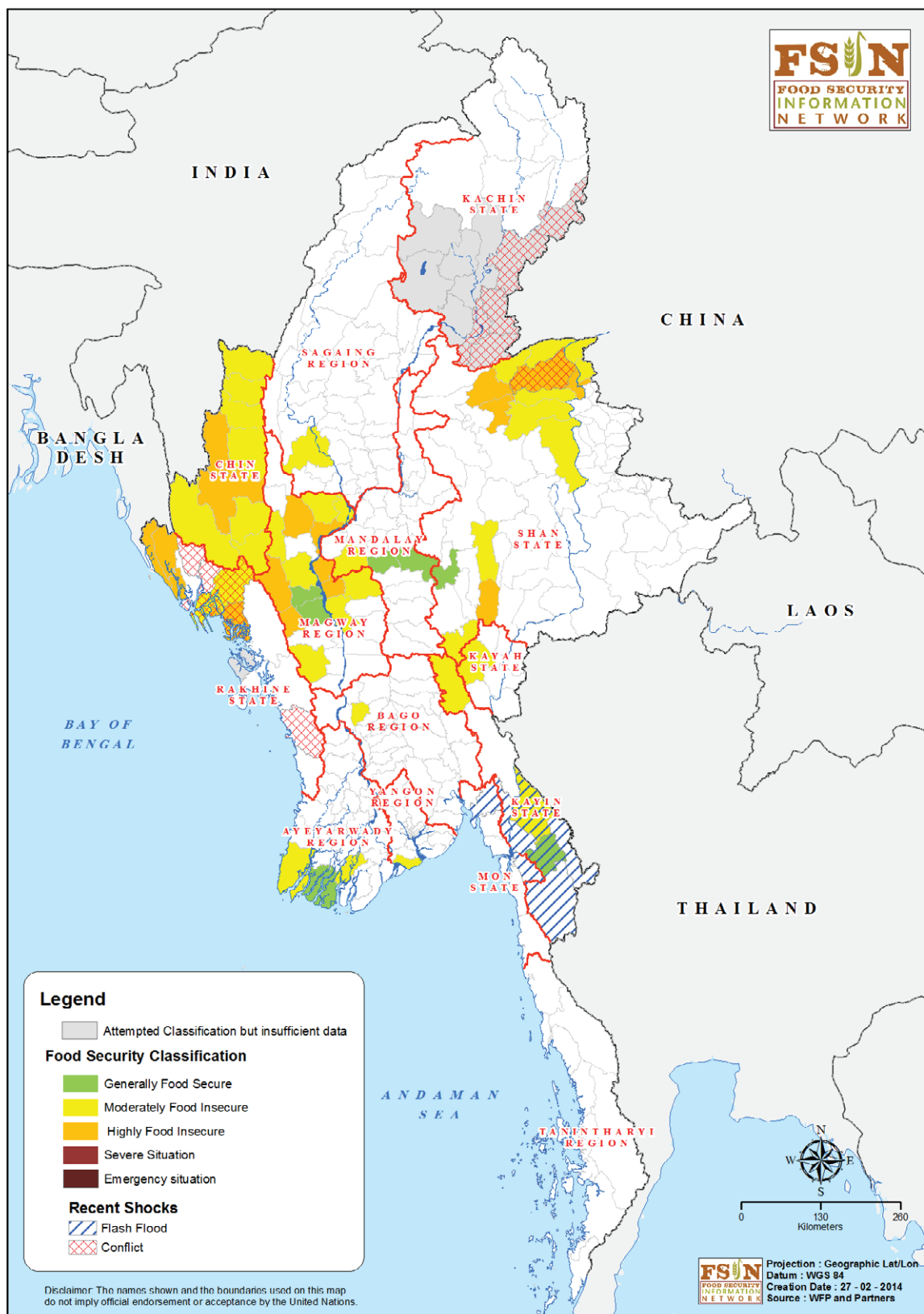


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2013 MONSOON FOOD SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

Food Security Monitoring System - Monsoon food security situation

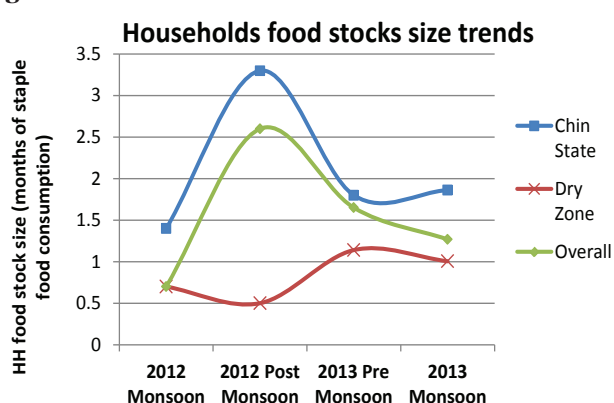


FOOD SECURITY OUTLOOK

Following expected seasonal patterns, the food security situation has globally deteriorated since the pre-monsoon monitoring round, driven by changes in some key indicators such as household staple food stocks, household diet inadequacy, and household hunger. However, comparison on these indicators with the results from the monitoring conducted a year ago (2012) during the monsoon may suggest some slight improvements on the overall food security situation: household staple food stocks were found slightly bigger than in 2012 while less monitored households reported inappropriate diets and hunger. Direct comparisons of monitoring results across years remain however complicated due to the expanding nature of the monitoring.

Household food stocks have continued to decline during the monsoon period, dropping from slightly more than 1.6 months, on average, in May/June, to just above 1.2 months in September/October. This follows the same trend than in 2012 as the bulk of the staple crops harvests are usually completed by November/December. The decrease rate was found lower between the 2013 pre-monsoon and monsoon period than during the 2012 post-monsoon and 2013 pre-monsoon periods.

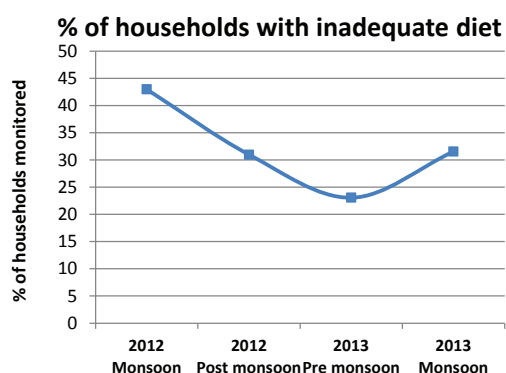
Figure 1:



In particular, in some areas, such as in Chin State, households managed to maintain similar levels of staple food stocks since the pre-monsoon period. Maize harvests, conducted earlier in the rainy season than paddy harvests, are the main contributor and enable households to maintain a proper consumption of staple food. In Chin State, the household frequency of maize consumption increased from 2.8 to 3.1 days a week during the monsoon. Parallel to food stock declines, the household diet inadequacy increased as the monsoon season advanced: 31% of the monitored households were found with inadequate diets during the monsoon monitoring while they were 23% prior to the monsoon.

As they engage into the monsoon cultivation, farming households financial capacities dwindle (as money is also spent to procure inputs, cover agricultural labor costs etc...) and households who need to procure staple foods (mainly small farmers, casual laborers, fishing households) encounter with higher food prices (+6% in average across monitored areas, with a maximum recorded increase of 55% in Tedim township).

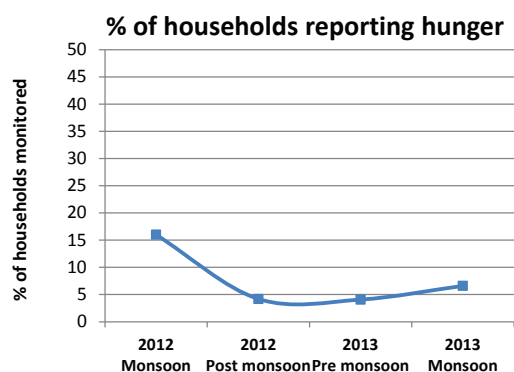
Figure 2:



As in 2012, the FSIN observed an increase in vegetable consumption from the 2013 pre-monsoon to the monsoon monitoring rounds. This increase was however less marked than a year ago, as the vegetable frequency of consumption only increased from 5.5 to 5.7 days a week, while it reached 7 days a week in 2012.

Fruits consumption was however almost cut by half, from 1.5 to 0.8 days a week. The consumption of meat, fish and eggs as well as of pulses remained however largely stable between the 2 monitoring rounds.

Figure 3:



Finally, hunger, measured through the household hunger scale, increased over the monsoon season. However, this overall increase was relatively contained as the proportion of monitored households reporting moderate or severe forms of hunger only increased from 4.1% to 6.6%.

Fluctuations in hunger are very much connected to the factors discussed above. Better capacities to maintain access to staple foods have led to limited deteriorations of the household diet which in turn resulted into lower levels of overall hunger. As discussed in the next section, the capacity to access debts is key in ensuring a basic access to food.

IN FOCUS: DEBTS AND INCOME

Starting from the last 2012 monitoring round (post-monsoon/post-harvest), the FSIN included a section on debts intended to better understand the role debts play in the livelihoods of rural households and in either causing or mitigating food insecurity. The previous monitoring round (2013 pre-monsoon) indicated different debts patterns across monitored areas, with the highest percentage of households observed in Yangon and Bago regions. Overall, the percentage of households reporting having debts (or credits) to reimburse did not vary much during the monsoon with still close to 80% of the monitored households concerned. In addition, 64% of the monitored households had contracted new debts within the 3 months preceding the pre-monsoon monitoring round.

Figure 4:

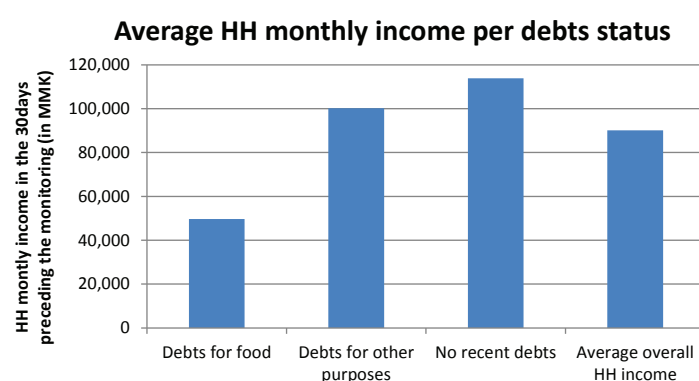
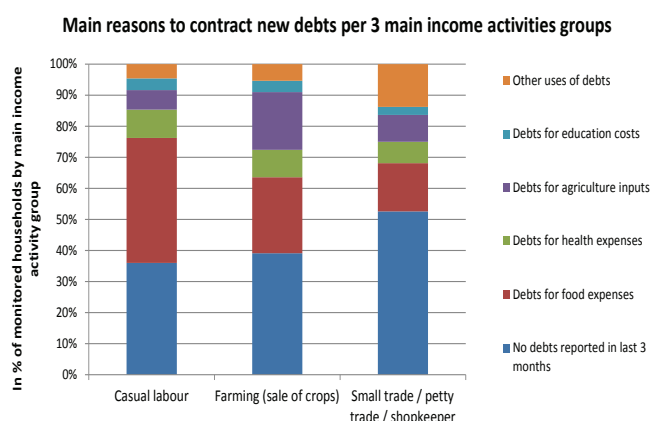


Figure 5:



This slightly decreased during the monsoon as 61% of the monitored households declared having taken new debts prior to the monsoon monitoring. The monitoring data suggests that changes between the 2 monitoring rounds were the most pronounced in Kayah State with 10% more monitored households taking on new debts and in Kayin State and Yangon Region where respectively decreases of 22 and 21% were recorded. Changes in the remaining monitored areas seemed to have been relatively contained. These results indicate limited capacities to reimburse debts during the concerned period. Instead, the majority of monitored households had to contract new debts. Food expenditures remained by far the main reason for contracting additional debts or credits for 52% of the monitored households during the monsoon (51% during pre-monsoon period).

This confirms that a significant percentage of the households had difficulties accessing food through their own production or income generation activities. For example, findings show that households contracting debts mainly for food purchases had a monthly income (during the 30 days preceding the survey) 45% lower than the overall average (90,072 MMK). Comparing to households that contracted debts for other purposes and to households not contracting debts, this difference grows even more, respectively at 50 and 56%. Expectedly the proportion of households contracting debts to cover agriculture costs (inputs and labor costs mainly) increased during the monsoon. The data however suggest that this increase was contained as the percentage moved up by 3% only, reaching 17% of the overall monitored households.

Findings also confirm that farming households have overall less needs to contract debts for food than other households mainly engaged into casual labor, fishing or cutting wood or other forest products. This, again, highlights the importance of farming systems that can directly supply food to the household members as it remains less expensive to produce its own food than procuring it on the markets. However, findings also confirm that monitored farming households across the country are still experiencing food difficulties, with slightly more than 24% of them contracting debts mainly to cover food purchases during the monsoon. Notably, there were more monitored farming households contracting new debts during the monsoon primarily for food rather than to cover agriculture expenses (19% of the farming households).

Finally, information on the debt burdens indicates that current debt loads remain high, with evidence showing that it would take the equivalent of 91 days of casual work, on average, for households to reimburse existing debts with cash. FSIN findings point out towards the importance of having ways to borrow money or purchase on credit to mitigate diets deterioration. For casual laborers of the Ayeyarwady region and of the Dry Zone, it is common to purchase food on credit on almost a daily basis.

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION BY AREA

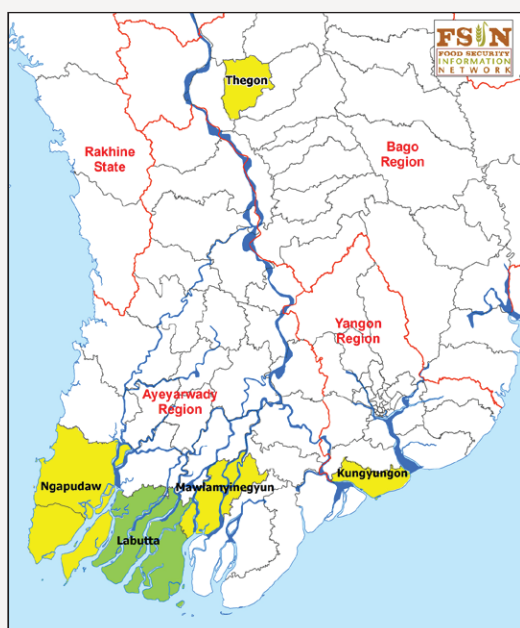


RAKHINE STATE

Significant food insecurity continued to be observed in northern Rakhine State, with Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships classified as highly food insecure. The levels of dietary inadequacy, hunger, daily use of food-based coping as well as malnutrition levels suggest however that more severe levels of food insecurity have progressed in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships since the pre-monsoon monitoring, especially in southern parts of Maungdaw and northern parts of Buthidaung. Preliminary findings from a recent nutrition survey conducted in Maungdaw township revealed critical acute malnutrition levels (WHO standards) as well as very high prevalences of underweight and stunting.

In central Rakhine, more moderate levels of food insecurity were observed. Areas monitored in Pauktaw and Minbya remained classified as moderately food insecure despite seasonal degradations in household staple food stocks and purchasing capacities. In Myebon, deteriorations in food based coping capacities lead to higher levels of food insecurity. In addition, overall, more households in the monitored areas were found with inadequate diets than during the pre-monsoon monitoring. This was mainly driven by lower frequencies of consumption of fruits than during the pre-monsoon period in all monitored places. Lower meat consumption was also recorded in Pauktaw township while in Myebon monitored households had also slightly lower frequencies of consumption than before the monsoon season.

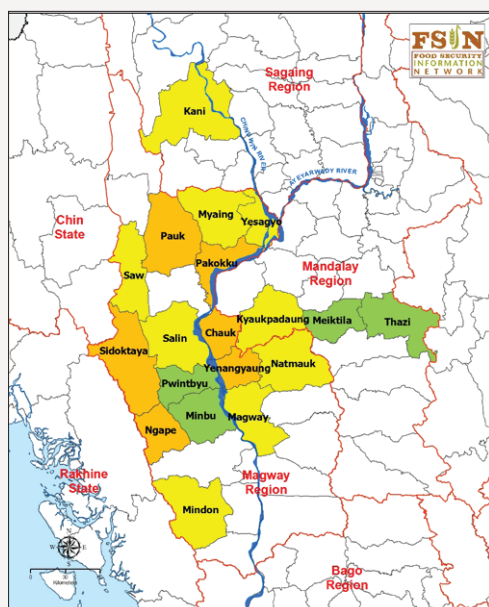
As the FSIN monitoring could not be conducted in Sittwe or Kyaukpyu townships no food security classification could be provided. However, different sources of information confirm that the overall situation in the IDP camps remains precarious with approximately 130,000 IDPs depending on external assistance to cover basic food needs, with reports of aid recipients selling part of their rations to cover other unmet basic needs. Different assessments on livelihoods confirm that amongst non-displaced populations, insecurity continues to impact movements and livelihoods. Despite recent initiatives from the government to bolster livelihoods and increase agricultural production, through the provision of agriculture and farming inputs, additional interventions are required to stimulate local economies. Communal tensions and generalized distrust remain however a key barrier to livelihood recovery.



AYEYARWADY, BAGO, YANGON REGIONS

From the pre-monsoon monitoring, limited changes were observed in monitored areas of Ayeyarwady, Bago and Yangon regions. Main changes were seen in monitored places of Ngapudaw township where the food insecurity increased to a moderate level, from a generally food secure level at pre-monsoon time. This change of food security level seems to be attributed to lower food stocks and lower purchasing capacities combined with increases in seasonal migration compared to the normal. In monitored places of Labutta, Mawlamyinegyun, Kungyungon and Thegon township there was no indication pointing towards an immediate degradation of the food security status. Households diets were generally found adequate enough and capacities to purchase basic food items remained relatively good.

Mawlamyinegyun was however the only area where hunger was perceived by the monitored households. For those households, food based coping mechanisms were not enough to provide enough quantities of food. As limited levels of diet inadequacy were reported, it seems that household members have favored a decrease in the quantities consumed rather than in the quality of the items consumed.



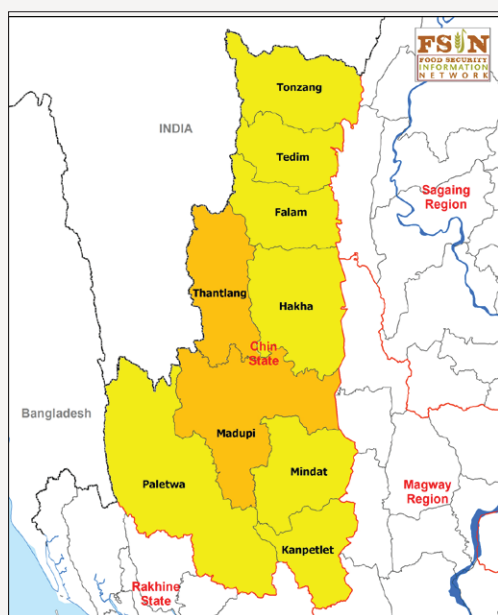
DRY ZONE

Townships monitored in the Dry Zone remained largely classified as moderately food insecure with little changes observed since the pre-monsoon period. However, results of the monsoon monitoring seem to indicate improvements in Meiktila, Thazi and Pwintbyu townships, all classified as generally food secure. Improvements resulted from moderate increases in household staple food stocks, better purchasing capacities and wider households diet adequacy. As rice prices have overall increased by 7% since the pre-monsoon monitoring, stronger purchasing capacities were largely influenced by significant increases in the monthly income for the monitored households. In these areas, sustained levels of sales for cash crops amongst farming households seem to have generated enough money to properly cover food needs. Casual labors on their side benefited from increased job opportunities through harvesting activities.

While monitored areas of Pauk, Pakoku, Chauk, Yenangyaung and Ngape townships remained classified as highly food insecure (as during the pre-monsoon monitoring), changes between the 2 monitoring periods were observed in purchasing capacities with data suggesting that the monthly income was not enough to purchase a basic food basket. These areas experienced higher increases in rice prices than the average for the Dry Zone as well as decreases or low monthly incomes. In Ngape for example, the monitoring data shows an increase of 14% in the rice prices and a decrease of monthly incomes by an average of 71%. Monitored households of Ngape and Pauk had monthly income as little as 16,000 and 25,000MMK respectively. In addition, monitored households in these townships continued to heavily depend on food based coping mechanisms, confirming issues with access to food.

Finally, monitored areas of Sidoktaya were found in a similar situation than the above mentioned townships, with high level of usage of food based coping mechanisms, almost inexistent staple food stocks and very limited capacities to purchase basic food items.

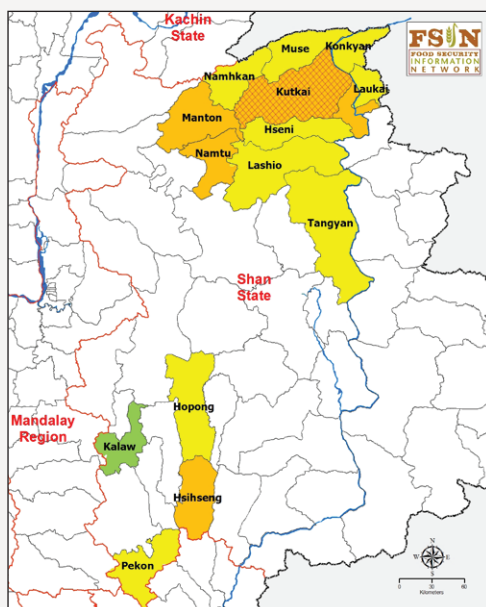
As a consequence, inadequate diets were widespread for the households monitored in these areas with pulses and fruits rarely eaten while meat, fish and eggs were consumed in average 2 days a week.



CHIN STATE

Overall, amongst all areas monitored in Chin State, changes have been limited since the pre-monsoon monitoring round. The only changes in the food security status were observed in Tedim and Madupi townships. In Tedim, the situation in monitored places showed enough improvements to lower the classification from highly to moderately food insecure. Those improvements largely resulted from maize harvests, that enable households to subsequently increase the quantity of staple food stocks. In addition, maize harvests enabled those households to reduce the use of food based coping mechanisms by getting better access to staple and other products found on the markets.

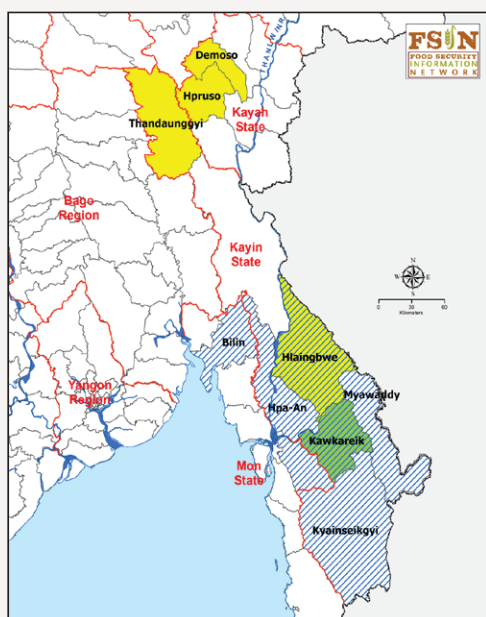
Madupi township however was classified as highly food insecure, while classified moderately food insecure before the monsoon. While food stocks have started to be replenished with early maize harvests, all areas had not harvested at the time of the monitoring. In turn, job opportunities were limited, impacting households' abilities to purchase basic food and leading them to heavily depend on food based coping mechanisms such as reducing portion sizes, preparing rice porridge, reducing the number of meals or prioritizing food for children.



SHAN STATE - NAMKHAM & TANGYAN TO BE CHANGED

In Northern Shan State, the food security situation was overall found as highly food insecure. The classification was changed from moderately food insecure in the pre-monsoon monitoring to highly food insecure in the monsoon period in Tangyan and Kunlong townships. Kutkai, Manton and Namtu remained classified as highly food insecure. In these townships, improvements were observed in households diet through higher frequencies of consumption of vegetables, meat/fish/eggs and pulses compared to the pre-monsoon period. However, in Manton, these improvements were not able to make all diets appropriate as close to 50% of the monitored households were found with inappropriate diets. In these 3 townships, a significant subset (26-36%) of the monitored households continued to frequently rely on food based coping mechanisms as purchasing capacities were not enough to cover the cost of basic food needs and food stocks running as low as only enough to cover the consumption of slightly more than 2 weeks in Manton township. Amongst all townships monitored in northern Shan, Manton showed the lowest average monthly income with less than 36,000MMK earned in the previous month.

In Laukai township, from a generally food secure situation during the pre-monsoon, the food situation was classified at moderately food insecure during the monsoon period. In this township, food stocks of the monitored households also dwindled (-1.4 months compared to previous monitoring) and decreases in household income resulted in generalized difficulties to acquire basic food items.



KAYAH, KAYIN STATES

Overall, for the monitored areas of Kayah and Kayin States, the situation can be described as moderately food insecure with limited changes observed since the last monitoring. Some improvements were observed in Kawkareik township of Kayin State driven by increases in staple food stocks and decreases in the use of food based coping mechanisms. Household diets were found largely adequate and data on income and food prices suggest monitored households were able to appropriately purchase basic food items. In Hlaingbwe and Thandaungyi townships, the situation remained largely stable compared to the pre-monsoon monitoring. In Thadaungyi, however, staple food stocks continued to decrease over the monsoon season, as main annual staple crops harvests were not completed. In August, heavy rains resulted in floodings of low lands in northern Mon and Southern Kayin States, leading to the temporary displacement of up to 73,300 people. An assessment later conducted by WFP, FAO, Save the Children, ADRA and the Kayin Department of Agriculture and Irrigation confirmed that farmers of the most severely affected areas, such as in Hlaingbwe township, partially lost paddy crops and winter seeds. However, in most areas, farmers were found with enough capacities to eventually recover. All in all the situation did not justify any assistance to be provided on top of the initial food and non food items distributions conducted shortly after the floods.

Monitoring results for Demoso and Hpruso townships in Kayah depicted a “typical” monsoon situation, with smaller food stocks (1.9 months in average), lower purchasing power and slight increases in the proportion of households regularly using food based coping mechanisms. Data characterized a moderately food insecure situation in both townships, when food stocks run low, during the cultivation and before the main yearly harvests and when food prices increase.

2013 PRE-MONSOON FOOD SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

Food Security Monitoring System - Pre monsoon food security situation

