Minutes of Information Management Network Meeting
7th December 2022, 3PM MMT, online via Zoom

Agenda

1. Results of the Myanmar Agricultural Performance Survey (Feb – July 2022) - *Presented by IFPRI*
2. JIAF approach in the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) process - *Presented by UNOCHA*
3. Updated Gender (In)equality Infographics - *Presented by MIMU*
4. Updates on cluster/sector/agency initiatives
5. AOB and other discussions

Attendance

Chair: Shon Campbell (MIMU)
Participants: WFP, UNHCR, IFPRI, UNDP, IFRC, Market Analysis Unit, UNOCHA, MIMU (11 participants from 8 organisations)

1. Results of the Myanmar Agricultural Performance Survey (Feb – July 2022) – *Presented by IFPRI*

IFPRI has done a number of phone surveys to understand the country situation. 3 rounds of a Myanmar household welfare survey have been conducted with the last round from July to August. From these surveys, a more focused survey on agriculture was developed - this "Myanmar Agricultural Performance Survey" was conducted in August-September 2022 gathering information on the agricultural performance in the last six months (Feb to July 2022). Overall, about 5,000 crop farmers participated in this survey which covers pre- and post-monsoon period, allowing the survey to contextualize the expectations for the next monsoon. The survey didn't go into details of what the farmers were growing and how important those crops are.

About 22% of the households responded feeling 'very' or 'somewhat' insecure in their community with important regional variations e.g., Sagaing region, Shan (North) and Kayah with higher insecurity. A significant percentage reported a low level of trust to live in their community. Violence and crimes against households are also on the rise. Many farmers noted that they cannot move around without serious concern for security and that fields were not cultivated because of conflict.

Despite all the security issues, most farmers had access to agricultural inputs (labour, mechanisation, pesticides, seeds, and fertilizer), but labour has increasingly become an issue (possible due to migration), and fertilisers are more difficult to procure. The availability of agricultural inputs was found to be affected by insecurity.

Agricultural input prices were higher than the monsoon and post/pre-monsoon periods in 2021. Significant increases were found in labour costs, and particularly in fertilisers due to the 59% increase in the price of urea, an important nitrogen fertiliser.

Surprisingly, it was found that input use (the amount of fertiliser used, money invested in agriculture) remained consistent with relatively small changes in yields overall at the national level and in the area under cultivation. It was discussed that this was a very interesting finding given the security situation, limited sampling and time of survey during the crop cycle.

The relationship between input prices and where the farmers were living was also explored. It was found that the costs of agricultural machines increase as the farmers live further and further away from major cities. As for the labour wages, wages became less as one lives further away from an international border. Factors influencing these phenomena were discussed. It was suggested to explore the idea of creating maps based on this data. (Heat maps)

Farmgate (the money that farmers directly get) prices had been increasing at the national level especially for sesame and groundnut

While sales income increased for most farmers, about 20% of farmers had less income compared to last year. Security was found to have a positive impact on farmers' income, as well as farm size as the farmers with larger farms were more likely to be well-off.

Looking ahead, there are a few concerns. Farmers have had fewer agricultural investments since the beginning of 2021. As an example, only around 3% of water pumps were purchased in the last 1.5 years. Another concern is the increased prices of fertilisers that is causing the lower sales. In the case of urea, there was a decline in sales of about 40% as of July 2022compared to the previous last year.

For the 2022 monsoon, there are no major changes in land under cultivation however the majority of farmers were reluctant to state their expected outputs. For those who stated, their expectations were leading to a lower national output, especially for the insecure farmers.

The survey generated a number of recommendations related to targeting of laborers in aid programmes, expanding cash-for-work programmes and cash grants for farmers, and assuring functioning mechanisation sector. For more on this survey and many other work from IFPRI on Myanmar, please visit IFPRI website.

During Q&A, the accuracy of responses to phone surveys was discussed, specifically whether some questions/topics drew more or less accurate responses. Since getting honest straight answers from surveys are more and more difficult these days, the possibility of using innovative data such as satellite imagery was discussed. IFPRI is exploring two options: big data, and social media (Facebook) data.

2. JIAF approach in the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) process – *Presented by UNOCHA*

The aim of the presentation is to highlight the core methodology of the annual humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) leading to the development of main products such as the Humanitarian Need Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

The work plan was presented in detail and includes Periodic Monitoring consisting of quarterly reports and a quarterly inter-cluster 3W that collects and maintains humanitarian response data gathered from clusters. Regarding the HNO and HRP, even though they are released at the end of each year, preparation took several months starting from May to collect, process and analyse the data. An important part of this process is the JIAF (Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework).

JIAF is a methodology to analyse the multiple needs of populations in crisis. It is a global standard, allowing a people-centered holistic analysis and is being rolled out in Myanmar with the broadening of humanitarian action to a countrywide focus. The JIAF starts with the analysis of almost every possible context, considering political, economy, socio-cultural etc., using available secondary data as well as primary data collected from the Multisectoral Need Assessment (MSNA). The next stages explore events/shocks and their related drivers and factors, as well as their impact on humanitarian access, systems & services, and on people. The final stage is an analysis of humanitarian conditions and calculation of the People in Need (PiN) figures based on severity needs.

The JIAF approach is executed in 5 steps: Planning and designing a joint intersectoral analysis process, Collating and collecting data, Consolidating JIAF data, Conducting JIAF analysis, and validating the analysis. The steps and sub-steps involved are presented in detail on the JIAF website. While the JIAF approach is designed at the intersectoral level, sectors / clusters themselves can use it to get their own PiN figures and related analysis.

The process used in calculating the baseline data for 2023 HPC was discussed, using data from a variety of sources such as MIMU, UNFPA, and UNHCR. For the case of Hlaingtharya (West) and Hlaingtharya (East) townships that were divided as of latest MIMU Pcode, mapping was made using an extrapolation from available WorldPop data.

The calculation of severity of needs at township level has been simplified with the use of an Excel based tool which includes the JIAF indicators and consolidated data. This Excel tool can also produce a configurable mapping of severity of needs for different population groups. This tool is very similar to MIMU Excel Mapping tool and more technical details can be found in the MIMU's tool.

3. Updated Gender (In)equality Infographics – *Presented by MIMU*

This is an update of MIMU's infographic from 2017 using data from more recent national level surveys such as the 2019 intercensal survey. It includes new indicators selected with the support of UNFPA.

UNDP's Human Development Report (2021/2022) was used as the main source as it has two indices quantifying gender situation: the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII), and provides source data that allowed this infographic to be developed as both a static poster and a dashboard in Tableau public software.

The gender inequality situation in Myanmar is highlighted using indicators across three main categories: reproductive health, empowerment, labour market. Reproductive health includes indicators on population (using UNFPA population projections), life expectancy at birth, maternal mortality ratio, and adolescent birth rate. Empowerment includes indicators on education. Labour market includes indicators on labour force participation, annual income, and current activities.

The limitations were also discussed, notably that this infographic is based on available data, most of which dates to before 2021, and it cannot accurately reflect the situation as of 2022. The products are available in MIMU's Gender page in English and Myanmar languages.

4. Updates on cluster/sector/agency initiatives

Food Security Cluster: FSC is seeing similar trends as presented by IFPRI and is making efforts to reach the conflict-affected northwest areas however access is difficult. Even with the focus on cash programmes, it has been a struggle to reach this area with livelihood support and assistance to agriculture and livelihood, which is crucial for resilience, and maintaining food availability. With increasing prices and decreasing availability of agricultural inputs, it is very important to work with development partners to reach assistance to this affected population.

UNHCR: Working on a tool to assess the damaged houses in the northwest regions.

IFPRI: Currently in the 4th round of the welfare survey, hoping to finish it by third week of December. After that, the pre-monsoon round of the agricultural survey will be conducted.

MIMU: Advanced Excel Training in Myanmar language was released as an online course. Just opening up the next Excel distance learning, a 5-week mentored course which will focus in this round on Rakhine-based staff of humanitarian and development agencies. This basic level excel course serves as a stepping-stone towards other MIMU technical capacity building – the Advanced Excel course and Information Management workshop. An interactive product catalogue to find MIMU's products in one place, was released. MIMU is now hosting a number of cluster webpages and can provide monitoring statistics on their use to clusters on request.

5. AOB and other discussions

This is the last meeting of Shon Campbell as Chair and MIMU Manager.
The next regular meeting will be tentatively on February 8th 2022.