



Rakhine

Market Analysis Unit

December Presentation to IM Network

May 5, 2021

Agenda

1. Introduction to MAU (6 min)
2. Review of Findings (3 min)
3. Approach and Methodology (10 min)
4. Next Steps (1 min)
5. Q&A

Check out our stuff!

<http://themimu.info/rakhine-market-analysis-unit>

Introduction to MAU



Photo from Mercy Corps website.

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Introduction to MAU

Objective

- Generate timely information about how markets respond to crises in order to support humanitarian aid and market development activities in Rakhine State.

Audience

- Primarily: donors and humanitarian / market development organizations in Rakhine State; secondly: policymakers, businesses, researchers, etc.

Outputs

- Frequent 4-6 page reports, monthly market price dataset / dashboard, and infrequent deep-dive reports (these are evolving).

Lifespan

- Launched in Aug/Sept 2020 and funded through end of 2021.

Introduction to MAU

Objective (detail)

Mercy Corps' Market Analysis Unit (MAU)

The Market Analysis Unit provides development practitioners, policymakers and private sector actors in Rakhine State with data and analysis to better understand the present and potential impacts of Covid-19, conflict and other crises on:

- **Household purchasing power**, including coping mechanisms, safety nets and access to basic needs;
- **Supply chains**, including trade, cross-border dynamics and market functionality (particularly as it relates to food systems);
- **Financial services**, including financial services providers, household and business access to finance and remittances; and
- **Labor markets** (formal and informal), with a focus on agricultural labor and low-wage sectors (e.g. construction, food service).

Introduction to MAU

Outputs (detail)

- **Market Price Reports:** Monthly 4-5 page, text / visual summary of monthly prices for 30 products (food, NFI) in 8 townships
- **Dashboard:** Monthly, interactive dataviz of MPR prices / change at township-, product- and month-levels (datasets available for download).
- **Deep Dives:** Quarterly, 20-30 page research / analysis of MAU subjects in greater detail than Snapshots
- **Snapshots:** Frequent, 4-6 page summary / analysis; 3 general types:
 - **Market actor** snapshots (e.g., transportation, construction, retailers)
 - **Panel** studies (e.g., 2020 paddy harvest)
 - **Standalone** snapshots (e.g., food insecurity)

Introduction to MAU

Outputs (detail)

- **MAS-01:** Lockdown conditions (Sept. 2020)
- **MAS-02:** Lockdown conditions (Oct. 2020)
- **MAS-03:** Shipping providers (Nov. 2020)
- **MAS-04:** Agri. input suppliers (Dec 2020)
- **MAS-05:** Shipping providers (Mar. 2021)
- **MAS-06:** Retailers (April 2021)
- **MAS-07:** Construction companies (April 2021)

- **MPR 01-07:** Monthly (Sept. 2020 – Mar. 2021)
- **Farmer Panel:** Four rounds (Oct. 2020 – Jan. 2021)
- **Standalone:** Food insecurity (Jan. 2021)

Findings (for illustration)



Photo from Mercy Corps website.

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Introduction to MAU

Outputs (detail)

MARKET PRICE REPORT – RAKHINE STATE (SEPT. 2020) Mercy Corps - Market Analysis Unit October 29th, 2020

As part of its cash and voucher assistance programs in Rakhine State, Mercy Corps gathers market prices at town markets in Central and Northern Rakhine State. This monthly market price report summarizes median product prices, based on data from three vendors per product per market. Data were gathered September 21-29 in Ponnagun, Maungdaw, Sitwa, Mrauk U, and Minbya Townships. Data for May and July 2020 are also provided for comparison in section two.¹

Highlights: September 2020

- September food prices were generally higher in Maungdaw than other townships, while food prices were lower in Ponnagun.
- Among essential food items, pulse prices were most consistent across townships.
- Vegetable prices varied by township, particularly for green chili and bamboo shoots.
- Vegetable prices in Minbya were slightly lower than elsewhere in September.
- Prices for kitchen goods were slightly higher in Maungdaw and lower in Sitwa.
- Prices in Maungdaw tracked closest to other townships for shelter goods.
- From May to September, Maungdaw prices were often higher than elsewhere for essential food items, while Ponnagun prices were more often lower.

Table 1. Market Prices in this Report (by Category)

Essential food items	High-quality (better) rice, low-quality (cheaper) rice, palm oil, salt, etc.
Vegetables	Green chili, long bean, cotton, onion, bamboo shoot, etc.
Shelter goods	Blankets, mosquito nets, plastic mats, plastic tarp, towels, etc.
Kitchen goods	Plates, cooking spoons, kitchen knives, cooking pots, cups, etc.
Other goods	Hygiene products, toiletries, various household products, etc.

I. Market Prices: September 2020 (by Category)

Essential Food Items – Essential food prices exhibited some variation in September, with the exception of pulses. Salt showed the greatest essential items (200-400 MMK/kg), while pulses showed the least (2400). Broadly speaking, prices for essential food items were highest in Maungdaw. The main exception was high and low quality rice, for which Maungdaw prices in September (700 and 400 MMK/kg). By contrast, Maungdaw saw the highest prices for high and low quality rice (950 and 700 MMK/kg, respectively).

Vegetables – Vegetable showed considerable price variation across September, with green chili and bamboo shoots being among the most varied from 1500-4000 MMK/kg, while bamboo varied from 1100-3000 MMK/kg. Prices for green chili and bamboo shoots were highest in Maungdaw (3000-4000 MMK/kg) and onion (1000-1500 MMK/kg). All Maungdaw saw consistently higher vegetable prices in September. No

¹ Data for May and July are included in the Rakhine State Market Price Report collection at these markets was not possible in September due to lockdown measures.

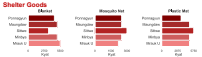


consistently lower vegetable prices, but Minbya was often Relative to other townships, a few prices stood out as low and onion in Mrauk U and low (e.g. watercress in Ponnagun).

Shelter Goods – Shelter goods showed a mixed townships in September. No township had across-the-board goods. However, Maungdaw prices stand out for being higher shelter goods (in contrast to prices for vegetables and other more uneven prices were large (5000-14500 MMK/kg) although this may also be due to unavailability of identical plastic tarp (Maungdaw) and blankets (Sitwa) stand apart.

Kitchen Goods – Kitchen goods showed a mixed townships in September. No township had across-the-board goods in September. However, Maungdaw prices were prices generally on the lower end. Some products showed as kitchen knives (300-1000 MMK/kg) and cooking spoons due in part to unavailability of identical goods.

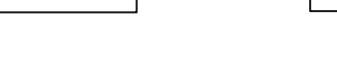
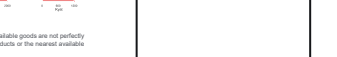
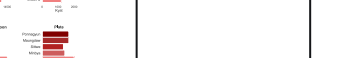
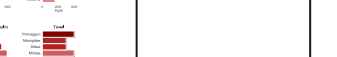
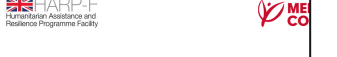
Charts 1-20. September Market Prices (by Category)



II. Price Stability: Essential Food Items (May – Sept. 2020)

Essential Food Items – Price data for essential food items gathered in May, July and September indicate a variable picture of price changes by product and location. Among townships, Maungdaw and Ponnagun showed the least change across the three collection periods—they also most consistently sat on the high and low end of prices, respectively. By contrast, the data suggest Sitwa, Minbya and Mrauk U saw more price swings between May and September. Among products, rice showed the least dramatic price swings over time. While prices for pulses were consistent across townships in September, this has not been the case in past months with Sitwa, Minbya and Mrauk U all showing change. Data collection in July and September—which straddled the recent COVID-19 resurgence in Rakhine State—point to prices rising in Sitwa, although the picture is mixed in other townships (some prices had begun to readjust by late September).¹ Maungdaw, already at the higher end for prices, saw prices either stable or rising between July and September. Charts 21-26 compare prices for essential food items collected in May, July and September 2020.

Charts 21-26. Prices for Essential Food Items (May, July and Sept. 2020)



III. Market Price Table: September 2020 (by Township)

Table 2. Market Prices, by Township: September 2020 (MMK)

Category	Item	Quantity (kg)				
		Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5
Essential Food Items	Better Rice (kg)	800	850	800	800	750
	Green Chili (kg)	3000	3500	3000	3000	3000
	Arhar Dal (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Potato (kg)	2400	2500	2400	2400	2300
	Onion (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Bamboo Shoot (kg)	1200	1300	1200	1200	1200
	Chickpea (kg)	2500	2600	2500	2500	2500
	Green Gram (kg)	2800	3000	2800	2800	2800
	Green Lentil (kg)	2000	2200	2000	2000	2000
	Lentils (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
Vegetables	Onion (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Cauliflower (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Brinjal (kg)	1200	1300	1200	1200	1200
	Green Bean (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Peas (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Spinach (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Carrot (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Radish (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Beans (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Watermelon (kg)	800	900	800	800	800
Fruit	Apple (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Orange (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Pineapple (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Guava (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Jackfruit (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Watermelon (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Apple (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Orange (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Pineapple (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Guava (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
Shelter	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
	Blanket (kg)	1500	1600	1500	1500	1500
Kitchen Goods	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
	Plastic Tarp (kg)	2000	2100	2000	2000	2000
Hygiene	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000
	Hand Soap (kg)	1000	1100	1000	1000	1000



Findings (for illustration)

Outputs (detail)

- **MAS-01:** Lockdown conditions (Sept. 2020)
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Findings (for illustration)

MAS-06 – Food / NFI Retailers (April 2021)

During April 2-8, 2021, Mercy Corps' Market Analysis Unit (MAU) conducted phone interviews with retailers in Rakhine State to measure the impact of recent events on supply chains for common household goods. Data are based on a convenience sample of 160 active retailers in eight townships, most of whom sell at town within marketplaces. The study focuses on retailers of products tracked in the MAU's monthly Market Price Reports.

Key Highlights

- **Nine in ten respondents faced major livelihood challenges in the past month**, often related to poor demand, limited supply, rising prices or poor access to cash and credit;
- **Seventy percent of respondents saw reduced customers and spending last month**;
- **More than one-third of respondents report limited supply and larger lead times**, particularly for non-food-items (NFIs) sourced from outside of Rakhine State;
- **One-quarter of retailers expect to face limited supply next month**, particularly for NFIs like hygiene and kitchenware but also food items like cooking oil and packaged foods;
- **Half of retailers say they may raise prices this month on NFIs and certain foods**, such as cooking oil and locally-produced rice and fish;
- **Half of retailers say their access to cash is sustainable for two months or more**;
- **One-third of retailers expect to earn less income this month than last.**

Findings (for illustration)

MAS-07 – Construction Companies (April 2021)

During April 7-11, 2021, Mercy Corps' Market Analysis Unit (MAU) conducted phone interviews with construction companies which execute government tenders for road, bridge and building construction.¹ Questions focused on measuring the impact of recent events on the sector and workers who rely upon it for their livelihood. Data are based primarily on KIs with 21 companies operating in 12 townships of Central and Northern Rakhine State.

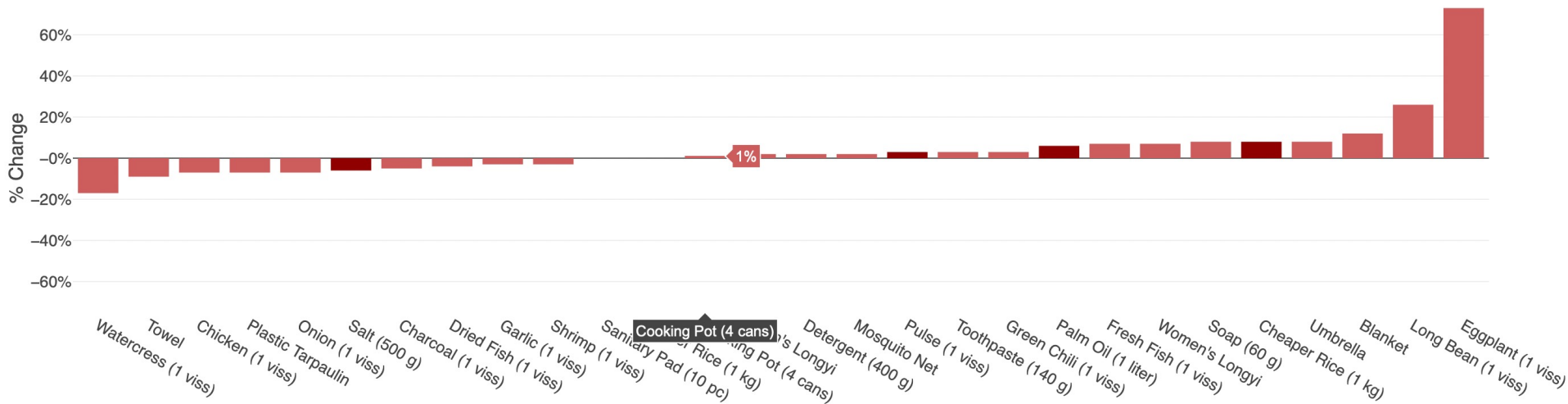
Key Highlights

- **Almost all respondents saw their business income decline in 2020** and all reported additional major businesses challenges in the first quarter of 2021;
- **Almost all respondents struggled with high materials costs and poor cash access** since February, although weak demand and limited supplies were also challenging;
- **Bank withdrawal limits have strained operations during peak construction season**, contributing to project delays and jeopardizing project completion;
- **Materials suppliers in Sittwe report 25-30% increases in cement and steel prices** since February, reducing the profitability of projects;
- **Two-thirds of respondents may lay off workers in the next thirty days** in order to adapt to current challenges, and almost all say there are not enough jobs to meet demand;
- **Roughly half of all respondents believe cash or credit assistance is needed** in the sector, such as higher ceilings on bank withdrawals or more low-interest loans;
- **Difficulties in the sector may lead to job loss and unmet infrastructure needs**, such as road construction in the region.

Findings (for illustration)

MPR (March)

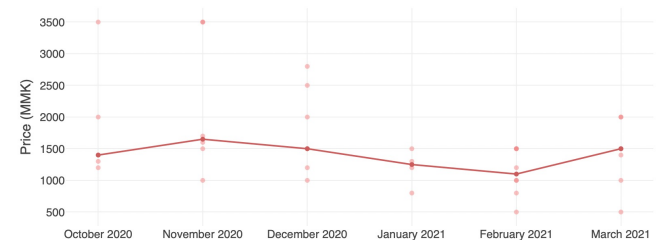
Chart 3. All products - March 2021 Price Change - Township Average



Highlights: March 2021

- **Essential food prices were stable in March, despite some price increases for rice** in Mrauk U, Pauktaw and Ponnagyun Townships;
- **Palm oil prices continued rising** some markets, albeit more gradually at just 5-15%;
- **Vegetable prices rose dramatically across the region** as local winter supply ebbed, particularly for eggplant, watercress and chili;
- **Vegetable price clearly differed between more- and less-producing regions in March**, as is expected late in the winter season when supply is reduced;
- **Prices rose for some NFIs, such as hygiene products in Rathedaung Township**, but in general NFIs were stable in March;

Chart 1. Long Bean (1 viss) - Median Price, by Month



Approach and Methodology



Photo from Mercy Corps website.

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Approach and Methodology

MAU Team

- **Team Leader (1, FT)**
- **Research Coordinators (2, PT)**
- **Interviewers – phonebank / collectors**
- **Independent Researchers***
- **Mercy Corps Staff**

MAU Toolbox

- **Lists** – Mercy Corps beneficiaries (sometimes snowball)
- **Instruments** – Structured surveys, KIs (sometimes combination)
- **Modality** – Phone (sometimes in-person)
- **Survey Tool** – GForms (sometimes others)
- **Cleaning / Analysis** - Python
- **Visuals / Dashboard** - Python

**Plug: We need these!*
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Approach and Methodology

Dissemination

- **Email blast** – Per output basis*
- **MIMU** – Per output basis, plus dashboard
- **Zoom PPTs** – Upon request

Evaluation

- **Informal Feedback** – Continuous
- **Structured Feedback** – Jan. 2021

**Email me, I'll add you!*
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Approach and Methodology

Process (MAU design)

- **Audience definition** – Who are we writing for?
- **Resource assessment** – What lists / skills / resources can we access?
- **Output formats** – What can we “make” for our audience?
- **Output topics** – What will they be about?
- **Systems development** – How can we make Outputs XYZ with resources ABC?
- **Output volume** – How much can / should we output?

Produce! Iterate!

- **Dissemination** – How will we distribute outputs?
- **Assessment** – How will we assess / adapt?

Process (Output design)

- **Population definition** – Who do we think we can describe / give voice to?
- **Output design** – What can we “make” for our audience?
- **Instrument design** – What data points do we want to report?
- **Collection / QC** – Did it work / do we trust our data?
- **Analysis** – What story(s) do the data tell?

Approach and Methodology

Some MAU (rough) Principles for Data Creation

- **Generative** – Collect / create data (to supplement existing hard data).
- **Modular** – Compliment existing collection efforts / data points.
- **Action-oriented** – Focus on “actionable” data (with specific use-cases).
- **Fast** – Provide data for users quickly and often
- **Iterative** – Try many approaches, keep/drop them based on success.
- **Rigorous but realistic** – Be rigorous, but don’t let data quality lead to inaction.
- **Transparent** – Provide context / limitations for proper interpretation.
- **Stewardly** – Attentive to multiple, other data-gathering efforts
- **Collaborative** – Seek opportunities to collaborate / synergize*

**Another plug: Let’s collaborate!*
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Approach and Methodology

Key Limitations

- **Probability sampling** – Samples are not statistically representative of populations.
- **Geospatial data** – Data are typically township-level only (occasionally village).
- **Hard data** – Focus on collecting data (rather than analyze existing data).
- **Analysis** – Data-collection focus crowds out data-analysis (i.e. descriptive, dry).
- **Geography** – Data rarely cover the other 14 States/Regions/NPT.

Other Limitations

- **Speed vs. Planning** – Rapid outputs leaves little time for strategy / evaluation
- **Speed vs. Evaluation** – Same as above.
- **Bottlenecks** – Limits of a small team.

Next Steps



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Next Steps

Outputs (forthcoming)

- **MPR-08:** Late-April date (expected mid-May)
- **Snapshot:** Food insecurity in Rakhine State, n=400 (expected mid-May)
- **Snapshot:** Food insecurity in South Shan State, n=400 (expected late-May)
- **Snapshot:** Food insecurity in Ayawaddy Region, n=400 (expected late-May)
- **Deep Dive 01:** Crab value chain, quali. (expected late-May)
- **Deep Dive 02:** Fisheries labor market, quali. (expected late-June)
- **Deep Dive 03:** Borrowing and business impact, n=1500 (expected late-June)

Planning

- **Future Topics:** 2021 paddy season, inputs markets
- **Future Populations:** Wage-laborers, construction, fisheries, services
- **Future Geographies:** TBD
- **Future Outputs:** TBD

***Last Plug: Currently looking for opportunities to partner
on deep-dive research in Rakhine State***

Q&A

Questions welcome!

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Thank You!

