Myanmar High-frequency Monitoring of COVID-19 Impacts
Background

• Myanmar’s economy is expected to suffer greatly from COVID-19, with GDP growth rate expected to fall to 0.5 percent in fiscal year 2019/2020.

• The pandemic and containment measures are likely to affect households’ livelihoods through losses in employment and income, due to disruption in large employment sectors.

• Up-to-date evidence is required to assess the impact of the crisis and thus inform policies to protect poor and vulnerable households.
Myanmar COVID-19 Monitoring

**High-frequency phone survey – households**

Monthly survey of 1500 households starting May 2020 to monitor welfare changes.

**High-frequency phone survey – firms**

Monthly survey of 500 enterprises starting May 2020 to monitor changes in economic activities and adaptation.

**Community assessment**

Key informant interviews to assess changes within communities, with a focus on social cohesion.
Highlights (1)

Employment

- Job losses affect 54% of households' main workers. Agricultural workers are the least resilient with more than 60% of them having lost employment.
- Job losses are felt across the welfare distribution.
- Among households’ main workers still working about 55% have experienced reduced income. Agricultural workers were particularly hit.
- Reductions in income affect more households in the bottom quintiles.

- Household businesses are not making as much as they used to. Since March 2020, about 80% of households in retail trade have lost earnings.
- Half of farming households cannot perform their activities as usual.
- In May 2020, about one out of ten rice growing farmers is concerned they may lack access to finance to be able to plant this season.
- Difficulties in farming are experienced by households across the welfare distribution.
Highlights (2)

Livelihood changes
- Households are not able to diversify as much as they used to before March 2020. About three quarters of households have lost an activity or experienced reduced income.
- About 12% of households were receiving remittances in the last 12 months, but 73% of them have received less or no remittances since the beginning of COVID-19 containment measures.

Food security
- Households are able to access to food, but about 10% of households ate less in the last seven days than before March 2020.

Coping mechanisms
- About half of households have reduced food or non-food consumption to cope with shocks.
- Food security could become a concern.
Survey 01
Design

- **Method:** Panel survey conducted monthly through 20-25 minute phone interview on 1,500 households starting May 2020. Central Statistical Organization providing technical support to implementation.

- **Tracked indicators:** Labor market and livelihood strategies, food security and poverty, households’ coping strategies in the first round. Behaviors, access to health and to education, and migration will follow in later rounds.

- Respondents were sampled from an existing list created by a private firm. Respondents are adult women and men, irrespectively of whether they are household heads.

- Estimates are representative at the Union level.
Sample distribution of MLCS 2017 and HFPS 2020 is very similar
... strengthening confidence in the representativeness of the HFPS

### Household size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>MLCS (unweighted)</th>
<th>HFPS (unweighted)</th>
<th>MLCS (weighted)</th>
<th>HFPS (weighted)</th>
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### Dependency ratio

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<th>MLCS (weighted)</th>
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Implementation plan

Round 1
18 May – 03 June
Modules: employment, coping, food security, asset ownerships

Round 2
15 – 30 June
Modules: employment, coping, behaviors, migration, food access and security

Round 3
July 2020
Modules: employment, coping, migration, food access and security, poverty

Round 4 to 8 by end of November 2020
Demography
HFPS aimed to capture a diversity of respondents and households.
Employment & Income
One of the channels of the COVID-19 impacts on welfare can be measured:

- Through changes in employment, in own businesses, or in farm activities
- Through reduction of income from these activities
- Through reduction of non-labor income from remittances
- Looking at the situation in May 2020 and comparing that to the situation before March 2020
Three out of four households have one main worker engaged in any type of work before the end of March 2020...
However by May 2020, 54% of them have stopped working and 55% of the ones still working are earning less.
By May 2020, two out three workers engaged in the agriculture sector have lost their job. This is critical given agriculture was one of the main sectors of employment before March 2020.

The retail sector, second largest sector of employment, was badly hit: nearly half of main households’ workers engaged in retail sector have lost their job.
The share of households’ main workers who stopped working is the same across all quintiles.
Main workers’ employment and income

Among main workers who are still working, 55% have experienced reduced income.
Still working but facing income losses

Nearly seven out of ten workers engaged in agricultural sector have experienced reduced income in May 2020.

Six out of ten workers engaged in retail or in tourism/transport have experienced reduced income.

Workers in public or private administration are more resilient.
In relative terms, more households’ workers in the bottom welfare quantiles have experienced reduced income than households’ workers in the top welfare quintile.
Household businesses

One out of four households has a business in the last 12 months...
Three out of four household businesses are losing earnings

- **60%** of these businesses are in retail, 10% in personal services, and about 9% in agriculture (outside farming).
- Losses in business earnings affect all sectors. **80%** of retail businesses having lost earnings.
Household businesses with reduced earnings

In relative terms, more households in the top welfare quintiles have businesses experiencing reduced earnings, compared to households in the bottom welfare quintile.
Half of the households are working in farm activities:

- 71% cultivating land;
- 58% growing crops;
- 50% owning livestock; and
- 3% doing aquaculture.

But half cannot farm.
Households not able to farm

More households in the **bottom quintile** are engaged in farming activities.

However, issues to farm since March 2020 affect households in all welfare quintiles.
Rice cultivation

- **43%** of agricultural households are planting rice.
- But **26%** of them are facing problems to plant rice.
- About **12%** of rice growing farmers are facing financial problems.
Diversified livelihood sources

Households have diversified livelihood sources and **12%** of households also receive remittances.
Households’ sector participation

Before March 2020, about 17% of households were engaged in two sectors. 13% had no activity.

In May 2020, fewer households rely on agriculture for their livelihood and more than 1 out of 5 households have no activities.
Fewer sources of livelihoods

On average, **52%** of households have experienced disruptions in their activity since March 2020.

In addition, **73%** of households usually receiving remittances have received **less in remittances**.
Food access and security
Food access and security

Households do not report any issues accessing the main food products. About 11% of households report eating less than before March 2020.
Coping mechanisms
Households are adopting coping strategies that could worsen their welfare in the long run.

Half are reducing food consumption or non-food consumption.

A third of households are using their savings.
Implications

Employment & income losses
Jobs and income losses are huge concerns. Compared to other countries, agriculture does not represent a buffer as farming households are also suffering.

Livelihood diversification
Households have fewer ways to diversify their livelihood sources as all sectors of the economy are affected. It is very hard for them to switch activities.

Food security & coping mechanisms
Concerns over food security could increase, as households are reducing food consumption to cope with shocks. Close monitoring is required.
Next steps

• Discussions with relevant stakeholders, with support from CSO

• HFPS activities
  – Round 2 data collection completed (July 2020), panel constructed over 1150 households.
  – Modules: food security (follow-up), migration, and behaviors as part of Round 2.
  – Preparing for the new school year and adding questions on access to schools in Round 3 or 4 depending on school reopening.
Thank you

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