

## Rapid assessment of the economic impact of COVID-19 restrictions on vulnerable households

December 2020



### Drop in Household Income

The Household Vulnerability Survey (HVS): conducted by the Central Statistical Organization of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry and supported by the United Nations Development Programme.



The HVS is strongly signalling that poor households are being pushed further below the poverty line, vulnerable households will now be moving even closer to it and previously financially secure households face massive shocks due to the temporary closure of their small businesses. It has been a universal setback for Myanmar's households.

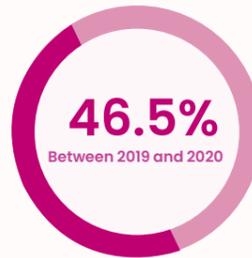
**94.4%** of respondents reporting a loss of income in this activity

Over four-fifths of households in Myanmar have reported a drop in income since the beginning of 2020. Rural households and households with children are affected. Household businesses related to buying and selling have been massively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions with 94.4% of respondents reporting a loss of income in this activity.

Overall **4.9%** of the waged workers have lost their job

35.8% of workers were working as usual. However, over a third were temporarily not working because of COVID-19 restrictions. Professionals, permanent job holders and urban households were most likely to be temporarily not working. Overall 4.9% of the waged workers have lost their job because of COVID-19 issues.

HVS shows how households are affected by, and coping with, the changes in their economic circumstances due to the restrictions relating to COVID-19. HVS respondents lived in households that had been interviewed three years previously, by the CSO, for the Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017 and the results show the differences in relation to the MLCS poverty status.



Between 2019 and 2020 households have, on average, faced a 46.5% drop in their household income. Urban households and households in the regions have seen the biggest reduction. Household businesses in the regions have seen their household income drop by 61.6%.



Having a professional occupation provides protection and stability as 39.2% of professional workers have lost income compared to 85.3% working in elementary jobs such as agricultural labourers, mining and construction labourers and street vendors.



When asked whether any of the household wage earners are currently working in a different location to that in which they worked in before COVID, 57.6% of wage earners were working in the same location. Around a quarter were working in a different location (probably home) all the time and 21.7% for some shifts. Professionals and other occupations and permanent positions are the most likely to have the flexibility to work in other locations.



### Sources of information about COVID-19

**69.5%** get information about COVID-19 from a variety of Government sources and if a household is using only Government sources of information

**97.0%** trust the information provided.

**40.8%** of poor households are reliant on information from friends or family, showing the reduced access to online information.

### Food

Has reached fewer households (35.1%) but the targeting has been better with 48.0% of poor receiving food compared to 21.6% of financially secure households.

**89.3%**

At the beginning of COVID-19 the MoEE introduced a policy to cut electricity tariffs. 89.3% felt that the price cut had a positive effect on their household income.

**9.2%**

Almost a tenth of rural households had received a Government provided special relief loan to farmers.

**33.4%**

The highest awareness of the government seed production scheme was amongst farming households who owned a tractor or tiller (33.4%).

### Government support

Nearly half of households had received cash from the government in relation to the COVID-19 situation. Payments had generally been targeted with poor households almost twice more likely to receive cash than secure households. Households in regions, rural households and households with children were more likely to receive cash.

### Cash



#### INQUIRIES

For further information about this publication and related statistics, please contact:

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## Debt

Since March 2020 nearly half of households have borrowed money.

Borrowing is most common in the regions and in rural households.

**37.6%** had taken on a formal debt - highest among households with children and vulnerable households.

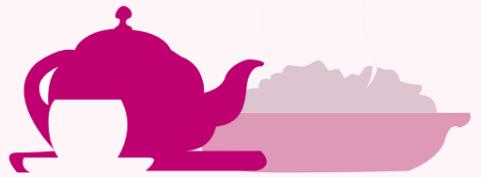
**21.3%** had relied on the help of extended family members to cover living expenses - highest among financially secure households and urban households.

## Access to food during the last six months

Almost a half of the households living in the states reported eating less than usual since March 2020.

Almost two-fifths of households had purchased food on credit or borrowed food from shops or neighbours since March 2020. The situation was worse for poor households where more than half of households had resorted to this.

**50.0%**



Overall

**44.0%**

of farming households had eaten most of their crop production and this rose to 59.4% in farming households without a tractor or tiller.

**59.4%**

in farming households without a tractor or tiller.



Eating the majority of own production was particularly widespread in households relying on paddy as the main source of agricultural income.

## How farmers are coping with the COVID-19 restrictions

Three quarters of farmers said they would be able to sell their crop in the usual location.

A quarter of farmers reported having difficulties getting inputs.



**3.7 %**

of farmers had changed the crops grown on their farm because of COVID-19.

**8.4 %**

of farmers had left the farm fallow because of COVID-19.



## Pulse

Statistics need to take centre stage in the monitoring of the pandemic and rarely has access to timely, high-quality data and analysis been so vital. The CSO and UNDP have responded quickly to the need for data in this rapid assessment.

Further interviews will be taken in 2021 in order to take a periodic pulse of the economic and social impact of COVID-19 on households in Myanmar.

## Phone Interview

HVS has two "firsts" for the CSO.

**1st** telephone survey using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) where the data is entered directly into a tablet.

**1st** longitudinal survey for CSO where the same people are re-interviewed again. The sample was some of the people who had been interviewed for the 2017 Myanmar Living Conditions Survey.

Fieldwork took place from September 21 until October 26 2020.



## Social Cohesion

58.4% of households reported no change in the way their community is supporting each other. Poor households were the most likely to report that the community is supporting each other more now.

