

MIMU



Myanmar Information
Management Unit



Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility &
the Myanmar Information Management Unit

VULNERABILITY IN MYANMAR

A SECONDARY DATA REVIEW OF NEEDS,
COVERAGE AND GAPS

June 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cover image :
NASA, 2016. Downloaded May 2018 from
<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Features/NightLights/page3.php>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Myanmar's progress on the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals will largely depend on the country's approach to targeting the poorest and most marginalised people, adhering to the core principle of leaving no-one behind in the country's development. This requires an understanding of pre-existing vulnerability and specifically who is affected, where and how. In addition to enabling more effective planning and policy decisions, this knowledge also supports emergency response.

Vulnerability has no single defining trait; it exists across a diverse range of facets and characteristics, with individuals and groups potentially affected by different vulnerabilities, at different times. There has been little analysis of vulnerability in Myanmar – what does exist is generally at the state/region level, masking differences within and between townships, village tracts and population groups. More detailed analysis is needed to understand variations in vulnerability countrywide, and at lower administrative levels than states and regions.

This report considers vulnerability across Myanmar through a desk review and analysis of national datasets and information at township level over the period 2014-2016. It takes a multi-dimensional approach, using a Vulnerability Index developed specifically for this analysis to better understand vulnerability at township levels. This Index draws on publicly available data to reflect components of human development alongside the impact of conflict and violence in the period under review. Any such Index has its limitations, including the relevance of any particular indicator across different ethnic and geographic areas, the specific indicators selected, and the fact that any index based on township level data cannot show variations within the township. As such, the Vulnerability Index cannot be considered an absolute or perfect measure, but provides an indicative approach to consider the differences across townships.

Gaps in the 2014 Census enumeration have been an important consideration in the results for some townships, particularly in Rakhine. Full Census data was not available for some areas, particularly in Rakhine State, where an estimated 1,090,000 persons were not enumerated, specific areas in Kachin State (46,600 persons from 97 villages not enumerated) and Kayah State (69,753 persons not fully enumerated). Vulnerability in non-enumerated areas may be still higher than estimated. Even with these limitations, Rakhine – as the area with the greatest population not included in the Census - is consistently ranked as one of the most vulnerable locations across the individual and collective indicators examined.

The analysis serves to confirm, and sometimes challenge, current perceptions of vulnerability in Myanmar. It flags specific patterns of vulnerability across the country. Overall it provides the opportunity to review the current emphasis of programming against countrywide vulnerability data, and contributes to a more robust analysis of the nexus between humanitarian and development planning and programming.

A more coherent analysis of the pre-existing vulnerabilities of populations in Myanmar can also support earlier and better targeted emergency response. It promotes a clearer understanding of potentially affected persons who may need assistance while more detailed damage and loss data is being collected, as well as contributing to the establishment of recovery priorities.

MAIN FINDINGS

Climate risk and disaster management: A United Nations report ranks Myanmar among the three most vulnerable countries to extreme weather events with as much as 3% of Myanmar's GDP lost annually due to disasters triggered by natural hazards. The social and economic impact of such events tends to affect the most vulnerable. The Ayeyarwady Delta is one of the most populated parts of the country and particularly vulnerable to climate change with the convergence of a number of compounding factors. The central Dry Zone is also particularly vulnerable with lack of capacity to manage variability in water resources as the source of much of the prevailing poverty and food insecurity in this area.

Conflict: This initiative considered conflict-affected areas as those experiencing active conflict, displacement, riots or protests in 2015-2016. The measure of vulnerability varied significantly across the 68 townships directly affected by conflict in this period with living standards, on average, 23% lower than in non-conflict affected areas. The impacts of living in conflict-affected areas are felt particularly strongly in access to schooling; townships affected by conflict in this period were found to have double the average number of persons who had never attended school or had no formal educational attainment compared to non-conflict-affected townships.

Institutional capacity: Union budgets since the 2011 reforms have been weighted heavily towards electrification, energy generation and infrastructural needs, alongside military spending. Decentralisation is slowly increasing, but state and region allocations remain low at 8%. Allocations for Health and Education have grown substantially since 2011/12, although per capita spending remains low, at USD 35.60 in 2016. Allocations for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement have remained very slight and largely static, hovering around 0.03% of GDP.

Urban and rural differences: Stark disparities were found in living conditions and economic freedoms between the residents of urban and rural areas: 72% of rural villages are not electrified and persons in rural areas have markedly lower access to safe drinking water and sanitation; educational outcomes vary significantly and secondary school attendance in rural areas is half of that in urban areas. Nevertheless, rural areas cannot be assumed to be the same across the country, and urban areas similarly cannot be assumed to require the same approaches.

Aid and civil society: 2016 saw commitments of USD 7.44 billion in international, multilateral and bilateral aid, 24% of which was disbursed in this period. 44% of aid was channelled through aid agencies and financial institutions; at least 33% went directly to government entities. ODA channelled through aid agencies is heavily weighted towards Health and Nutrition, Livelihoods, Infrastructure, Agriculture and Protection sectors. Around a third of the activities reported by civil society organisations were focused in 25 townships which account for about 14% of the more vulnerable population based on this analysis.

Shelter and housing: Housing quality provides a useful indication of vulnerability. A third of all households in Myanmar still have floors of either bamboo or earth, and 36% live under thatch or bamboo roofing. Rakhine and Ayeyarwady have the highest rates of poor roofing and wall materials which are unlikely to withstand cyclonic events or heavy flooding. Townships with the greatest number of households with dirt and bamboo floors are located in northern Rakhine (under-enumerated) and in the agricultural townships in Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing.

Water resource management and sanitation: The 2014 Census indicated that 26% of all households countrywide lacked safe sanitation, and 31% lacked access to improved drinking water (3.4 million households). Rakhine is a clear outlier with the lowest levels of safe sanitation, whereas areas of Ayeyarwady, Bago, Rakhine and Yangon have the least access to improved water sources. Areas with poor water and sanitation coincide, in the main, with those with poor shelter.

Health and nutrition: Myanmar's mortality rate is largely due to communicable diseases and injuries which are both treatable and largely preventable with improved health coverage. Pregnancy and childbirth-related factors remain among the leading causes of mortality and morbidity despite increased health spending and improvements in maternal healthcare. Myanmar's maternal mortality rate and under-5 mortality rate are more than double the ASEAN average, while the infant mortality rate is 2.6 times the ASEAN average. There are wide geographic, ethnic and socio-economic disparities; infant mortality rates are highest in the districts of Labutta in Ayeyarwady and Mindat in Chin, whereas Magway, Sagaing and Tanintharyi have particularly high early years mortality rate. Children in rural areas are more likely to be chronically under-nourished (32% stunting) than those in urban areas (20%). Analysis is, however, limited by the lack of publicly available health and nutrition data at township and lower levels.

Education: 89.5% of people over 15 years of age are literate, but with disparities by age, gender, and geographic locations. Literacy is lower in rural than urban areas, and varies significantly across states and regions. Literacy is particularly low in Shan State which accounts for 18 of the 19 townships countrywide where more than half of children have never attended school; Mongkhet township is especially prominent with 85% of children never having attended school. Other townships with particularly high numbers of persons with no education are in Kayin, Magway and Rakhine. Children from rural families, poor or otherwise disadvantaged groups are less likely to transition from primary to secondary education, or to complete their secondary education.

Livelihoods: Wages in Myanmar remain very low; more than half the population work in the agricultural, forestry and fishery sectors with average earnings 18% lower than the Union average salary. Males are generally paid more than females; male daily wage earners are paid on average 47% more than females. Agricultural household heads earn the least of all sectors and rural households are twice as likely to be indebted as urban households. Households in rural areas of Rakhine, Chin and Magway are clear outliers in spending around 70% of their monthly budget on food. Food costs dominate household spending, even in the more affluent urban areas, and no area spends less than 55% of its household budget on food.

Agriculture and food security: 54% of the workforce are employed in agriculture, fishing and forestry; however, Myanmar has the lowest agricultural profits and the lowest agricultural wages in the ASEAN region. Factors for this low productivity include low rates of farm mechanisation, minimal use of pesticides and fertilisers and heavy reliance on manual labour. Paddy, the most water-intensive of all major crops in Myanmar, presents a significant strain on the water resources of many areas and may be less profitable for smallholding farmers. Agricultural income alone will not be sufficient to bring smallholding farmers out of poverty; expanded and improved agricultural extension services will be key to the needed structural changes.

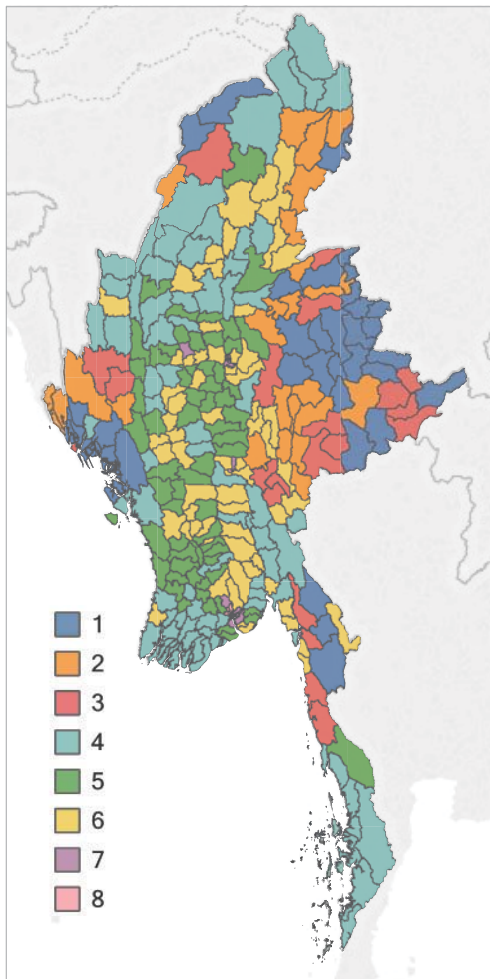
LEVELS OF VULNERABILITY

Based on the Vulnerability Index developed in this review, an estimated 22.7 million persons in Myanmar, or 44% of the population, were found to have some form of vulnerability related to human development and/or exposure to active conflict/violence. These people experience varying combinations of poor housing, lack of education, poor educational attainment, lack of access to safe sanitation and improved drinking water, and direct exposure to conflict.

Shan and Ayeyarwady have the largest populations of vulnerable persons, a function of both their size and relative vulnerability in comparison to other States and Regions. Yangon and Shan show the widest variation in vulnerability across townships (in terms of the number of vulnerable persons and their level of vulnerability), followed by Mandalay, Chin and Rakhine. The poor living conditions of the most vulnerable areas are anticipated to persist, as many of these townships lack the necessary population density to attract investment and employment opportunities.

TOWNSHIP TYPOLOGIES¹

The Vulnerability Index used in this analysis allows a broad understanding of the diversity and distribution of vulnerable persons in Myanmar. Using this Index, Myanmar's 330 townships cluster into 8 main typologies based on their shared characteristics and development needs – illustrating a wide variation within states and regions as well as certain similarities among townships from different parts of the country. The result is a lens allowing the most vulnerable to be considered more methodically in policy and programme planning. The report also highlights the importance of sharing and analysing available data - at township and lower levels of disaggregation - to strengthen our understanding of vulnerability.



Type 1: Extreme outliers in terms of development needs and/or exposure to conflict

Type 2: Conflict-affected areas with poor human development

Type 3: Hubs in conflict-affected areas

Type 4: Very low access to basic services and infrastructure

Type 5: Agricultural townships with the highest profits per capita

Type 6: Agricultural areas with secondary cities and towns

Type 7: Up-and-coming peri-urban and urban areas

Type 8: Affluent, densely populated city centres

¹ Township values, other than population numbers, are based on Census-enumerated population and may not fully reflect non-enumerated groups.

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