**Minutes - Information Management Network Meeting - July 8th 2020**

Chair: Shon Campbell, MIMU Manager.

Participants: Urbanize Policy Institute, DAI, IFPRI, UNICEF, World Vision Myanmar, CISU/UNOPS, Centre for Social Integrity, Phandeeyar, UN RCO, World Bank,

The Asia Foundation, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Jhpiego, UNHCR, UNOCHA, Trocaire, NRC, MIMU

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| **1.** | **COVID related Activities****COVID-19 Information Support Unit (CISU) - Dr Thet Aung, UNOPS (CISU)**CISU is a temporary UNOPS initiative to collate available knowledge, data and information related to COVID-19 in Myanmar in one place to support key stakeholders to make data-driven decisions in their response. It was started at the end of May and is expected to run to the end of August 2020, staffed by a four-person team from UNOPS, MIMU and two short- term consultants. The main activities of CISU are as follows;* Monitor and map data from different sources
* Support information and knowledge creation where this does not duplicate existing resources
* Field queries from Access to Health Donors and other partners like UN Countries Team(UNCT)
* Disseminate public information through the MIMU website in COVID-19 Page
* Build an understanding of information flows and possible gaps which could be supported to improve information availability for decision-making
* Produce a brief weekly summary of new information/knowledge for circulation to the Access to Health donors and UNCT.

CISU has collected almost 300 information products from different sources which are shared through a central, publicly available information repository on the MIMU website (MIMU COVID page) – these will be searchable through a COVID-19 Information Products Listing Dashboard. 90% of information products collected are reports (government situation reports, newsletters, various assessments and factsheets; other products include Dashboards (4.2%), Datasets (6.3%) and Maps (1.4%). Most of information products are from the health sector due to main theme on COVID, however there are also resources from other sectors including protection, governance, agriculture, economics, and peace building. Products come particularly from government sources (the frequent daily sitreps), as well as UN, NGO, media and Individual data producers.CISU has produced and maintains five additional datasets which are shared publicly via the MIMU website:1. COVID-19 indicators mapping2. Relevant articles from Media3. Comparison of existing dashboards in the public domain4. Cash donations received from the Central Committee for COVID-19 response activities5. In-kind donations received from the Central Committee for COVID-19 response activitiesThe COVID 19 Myanmar Surveillance dataset and COVID 19 Medical Supply Distribution dataset being maintained by one of the CISU team have been very useful for wider community including technical persons. CISU is also reviewing information flows to review the gaps and areas for support. CISU focus information flows on four main areas; COVID 19 testing from township level up to central level MOHS; data related to quarantine centres; data for migrants; and data on aids and donor commitments. CISU also assists the Access to Health donors and UNCT with specific information requests, drawing on the information they have been able to collect from other sources. **Survey of COVID-19 Impact on Business - Mr. Ville Peltovuori, The Asia Foundation**The first Myanmar Business Environment Index (MBEI) was published in 2019 focusing on issues such as business entry costs, access to land, infrastructure, transparency, labour availability, environment, and law and order at state/region and township levels. 5,605 businesses were interviewed for the MBEI 2020 between November 2019 and February 2020, providing the baseline for a survey of the impact of COVID 19 on these businesses. 750 businesses were randomly selected from the MBEI 2020 sample frame and interviewed by telephone between April 28 and May 10, 2020, including primary industries such as Agriculture, Mining, and Forestry. The questionnaires mostly focused on business performance including business operation, sales, profitability, cash flow, etc… as well as pandemic related questions. The study found that only 24% of businesses were operating as usual, with 29% of businesses closed down completely, mostly due to issues of safety and lack of customers because of COVID-19. 76% of businesses had reduced operations and, as a result, sale revenue reduced and 52% of businesses lost profits during the COVID crisis compared to 12% prior to the COVID-19 situation. In addition, nearly two thirds of businesses expect to face cash flow problems, putting their survival at risk - the accommodation, food and beverage sectors are found at high risk.Businesses were found to have sought more loans from microfinance institutions to address their needs for cash, however this can mean higher interest rates and 75% of businesses reported concerns on repayment of their loans. Among the businesses surveyed, an average 16% of employees had been laid off due to COVID-19 crisis. Most businesses were taking measures to protect their employees and customers; for example, over 90% of businesses reported making sure that their employees frequently wash their hands and wear face masks in the workplace. The COVID-19 survey also found out that most businesses were not aware of government support programs including exemption from paying 2% advance income tax on exports, deferral of quarterly income tax payments and commercial tax. Only one third of the businesses surveyed were aware of the Emergency loan scheme to SMEs in the textile and tourism industries. The survey of COVID-19 Impact on business provides six recommendations * Increase publicity of government policies and schemes that support businesses to enable more eligible businesses to benefit from them.
* Ensure that frontline government officials have a good understanding of these policies and schemes, with appropriate and clear decision-making power, in order to put them into practice in a transparent and uniform manner.
* Explore ways for government and private banks to offer suitable loan solutions that address the business needs of having operating capital to overcome COVID-19.
* Encourage businesses and banks to actively seek an agreement to restructure loan interest and principal payments.
* Assess the adequacy of the government COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan in supporting employees who have lost their jobs and explore additional or better ways of targeting these employees.
* Continue monitoring the situation. To support the government with this, The Asia Foundation is planning to repeat this COVID-19 survey to find out how the situation has changed once the economy starts to revive.

**Phone Surveys on COVID-19 impact on Agriculture and Rural areas - Isabel Lambrecht, IFPRI**The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has offices in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw and focuses on in the agriculture sector and food and nutrition security more broadly. With the support of USAID, LIFT and the World Food Programme, IFPRI has conducted a series of phone surveys to review the impact of COVID-19 on the agriculture and food security sectors in rural areas, - these look at who has been affected, how, and what is changing/not changing over time. * On the INPUT side, several survey rounds with agriculture input retailers and mechanization service providers.
* On the PRODUCER side, IFPRI is currently conducting the fourth round of a high-frequency survey of poultry farmers as a sector which is significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, as well as a household-level survey on Agriculture production and Gender in two sites in the Dry Zone, comparing the current situation to baseline data collected in early 2020.
* On the OUTPUT side, IFPRI will gather information on the impact of the crisis on rice millers and is in the fourth round of an agricultural trader survey. Another survey on urban food retailers will look at the small shops in Yangon and Mandalay to see the changes in purchase patterns. It is intended to do five rounds and then will be evaluated to follow up the results on these retailers.
* On CONSUMER side, IFPRI interviewed 1000 women in urban areas and 1000 women in rural areas as first round via phone for rural and urban Food Security and Nutrition survey and the results are currently being analysed. Livelihoods are also a focus of the Agriculture production and Gender survey in the Dry Zone. Finally, an Urban and Rural Community survey is interviewing key informants (male and female) from 200 townships across the country to get an overview of the wider context in the COVID crisis.

Phone surveys are being used as it is not currently possible to conduct visits/interviews in-person. The challenges with this approach is how to represent the problems faced by communities without phones or with limited phone connectivity. The main problem IFPRI has encountered is in the phone surveys for the Agriculture Production and Gender survey where the first round was conducted in person – for the follow-up, there is sometimes no phone number of only the contact number of neighbours (of their key informants). The baseline data has been useful to look at who are least represented from the wider population to know who should be included. Information from these surveys will be shared quickly in short, usable reports in English and Myanmar language. IFPRI is also coordinating with other agencies such as Proximity Design and Mercy Corps in agriculture, livelihoods and nutrition, and conducting modelling work (social accountability matrix). Moreover, all can check IFPRI’s Myanmar microsite via <http://myanmar.ifpri.info/> for materials and blogs on COVID-19 as well as other work. Moreover, the publications can be found via <http://myanmar.ifpri.info/resources/publications/>**Three tiered exercises on COVID -19 impact on Households - Anna Maria Levi, UNICEF**UNICEF is in process of completing a three-tiered exercise gathering information on the impact of COVID-19 in Kayin, Shan, Kachin, Yangon, Mandalay and Rakhine as areas with priority townships for UNICEF’s COVID response. A rapid monitoring of household-level changes was undertaken in April, May and June through asking monthly questions to 120 households in six states and regions on their work/income situation and changes in consumption, knowledge and behaviour around COVID-19 prevention, psychosocial well-being and stress coping strategies, household dynamics and gender roles. In partnership with CSO and UNDP, UNICEF is using the 2017 Myanmar Living Condition Survey (MLCS) data to model the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, focusing on household income and consumption to better understand child poverty and vulnerability. A further monitoring exercise is reviewing the stimulation the impact of social protection response. Analysis of the results from these three approaches are being brought together with case studies and stories of families to understand what this data means in practice for families and children. The findings will be shared in modular reports - (1) analysis of child poverty pre-COVID-19; (2) The forecast post-COVID-19; (3) A micro-simulation of possible social protection response; (4) Insights from families across the country; and (5) A call to action on investing in human capital. Initial findings from Rapid monitoring exercise indicate that half of the respondents reported changes in their working situation (particularly in their income), and half reported increased prices in April, May and June. Most are aware of main preventive measures in term of knowledge and behaviours where responses are very positive. 94% reported being stressed and worried, especially parents, on their livelihoods and income situation and for their children’s education with the uncertainty about schools reopening. A large majority of women said that their share of household work has increased due to COVID-19.Initial findings from Modelling of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 show that the rate of child poverty is larger than the National poverty rate, due to the large number of children in the households just above the poverty line. Only around a third of the children in Myanmar are considered to be non-poor insecure. The COVID situation is expected to increase child poverty, inverting what had been a recent decreasing trend. Cash transfers can mitigate this effect. For dissemination, the reports will be finished in next weeks.  |
| **2** | **Updates on National Initiatives** **COVID-related initiatives**1. **Socio-economic plans** (ADDITIONAL DETAIL ADDED HERE FOR INFORMATION):
* **Government plan for response to COVID socio-economic impact**s: Myanmar’s government has established a Working Committee for Remedial Works on Economic Impacts of COVID-19 (March 13th), an Emergency stimulus package of $70 million (March 19th), and a COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (April 28th), estimated at $ 2-3 bn. The plans aim to (1) Improve the macroeconomic environment through monetary stimulus; (2) Ease the impact on the private sector through improvements to the investment, trade and banking sectors; (3) Ease the impact on labourers, workers and households; (4) Promote innovative products and platforms; (5) Strengthen healthcare systems; (6) Increase access to COVID-19 response, and (7) address Constraints on Government Response. There are a number of challenges including limited control over transmission which includes regional and global reduced fiscal space, very low coverage of social protection systems, conflict and political uncertainty with an election year), and the monsoon season.
* **UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 in Myanmar**: Recognises that the COVID-19 crisis is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable segments and groups within the society, and it is revealing and compounding pre-existing marginalization, inequalities, and vulnerabilities. Understanding these impacts across sectors, population groups, gender, and geographic areas is essential for designing effective policies and measures to mitigate the impact of the unfolding crisis and recover better. The strategy proposed by the UN-SERF aligns with the government’s COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan and integrates principles of the Agenda 2030 (SDGs) as well as Myanmar’s Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) with principles of Leave No One Behind, Human Rights, Gender Equality, Environmental sustainability and resilience, and Accountability. It aims to strengthen response to the current external crisis while creating “durable mechanisms and institutions that will propel Myanmar towards the kind of economy [and society] the Myanmar people need and deserve.” The UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 IN Myanmar was launched by the UN on June 24. **UNRCO** is providing support to the UN-SERF. Activities will be monitored by a dedicated Monitoring and Reporting Working group.
* **World Bank** Myanmar Economic Monitor Report includes a review of the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, looking at micro and macro aspects and simulation. It can be found on World Bank and MIMU websites.
1. **Education: COVID 19 Response National Recovery Plan in the Education sector** is available on the Ministry of Education website. They also looking at the survey of COVID 19 impact on Myanmar education sector and stakeholders of different states and regions including area of conflict.
2. **COVID-related Assessments: UNRCO** has the list of assessments related to COVID- 19 in excel sheet which is a long list and complementary to other assessments. **MIMU** Assessment Tracking also includes planned, ongoing and completed assessments to help people to coordinate questionnaire or other information. A new feature has been added to allow COVID-related assessments to be registered and searched more easily. Assessments and publications can be submitted at any time online via MIMU website.

**National Indicator Framework (NIF) for measurement of the MSDP:** Activities are ongoing to develop the monitoring framework for the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan. Indicators were developed in 2019 which include 60% of monitoring requirement of SDGs. UNDP is working with the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) to collect data from responsible ministries and institutions against these indicators and review the reliability of data for monitoring. The Planning Department will be responsible for reviewing progress against the baseline data. NIF data in 2020 will be a strong foundation to move forward to process of review next year. **WFP:** Ongoing initiative collecting data on market functionality and cost efficiency in 60 townships in which WFP is operating. Information is regular updated on the market price of the four main products - rice, pulses, oil and salt. In addition, WFP with FAO, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation have been conducting a survey on short-medium impact of livelihood and food security in 64 townships in 7 states and regions. Information is also being sought from agri-import traders and households on the COVID impact of food security and livelihoods opportunities including in high risk areas of Yangon. |
| **3.** | **Updates on cluster/sector/agency initiatives** **IFPRI**: in addition to the COVID-related studies, planning an integrated rural household survey on food security and nutrition in six state and regions in 2021. **DAI:** planning to release a dashboard of conflict incidents based on data from ACLED / the global Armed Conflict Location events Database and MIUMU base data. The DAI conflict dashboard will also include research products such as monthly, in-depth and ad-hoc reports. **Urbanize Policy Institute:** Urbanize is a local think tank founded in June 2018 in Myanmar to support the development of local research capacity. Urbanize conducts research in a variety of fields including urban and regional planning, decentralization, federalism, the peace process, education, health, land rights, business and human rights, labour rights, and natural resources management. Its vision is to contribute to fostering local political eco-systems, at the regional, township, and municipal levels, where elected representatives, civil servants, representatives of political organizations, civil society organizations, the business community, and the media, can better participate in public debate and political decisions in defining the future of their regions, cities and towns. Urbanize projects have included leading research initiatives and publishing reports and articles developing local research capacity, building networks, engaging stakeholders and fostering local political eco-systems. Recent research has focused on the education sector, including a paper on ethnic language teaching in Sagaing region and Chin State. **Centre for Social integrity:** COVID 19 related awareness sessions and distribution of materials such as maps in Rakhine state alongside their other activities. **JHPIEGO:** focus on the health sector, especially on maternal and child health. Main activities are ongoing and being adapted to the OVID -19 situation. **UNHCR:** Protection sector 4W information is being collected for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan monitoring. CCCM: Regular monthly cluster analysis report for Kachin and Northern Shan (June 20 report coming out soon). For the Central Rakhine quarterly analysis, the Q1 report was not possible due the COVID-19 situation, however the second cluster analysis report will be produced. Round 10 of the CCCM camp profiling exercise in Kachin and Northern Shan was partially completed in March, and the round ten camp profiling exercise will be restarted in Kachin and Northern Shan in July. **World Vision: C**onducting COVID- 19 response activities in targeted areas of their current programme from April to July. An early recovery rapid assessment was conducted in May and will shortly be released. World Vision is focusing on new Area programme assessment in Tada-U township in Mandalay alongside the three other new Area Programmes (Patheingyi TSp, Paung Tsp,and Kangyidaunt Tsp).**MIMU:** TheCOVID 19 Update page provides a central repository of resources from different sources, including key messages in 18 ethnic languages, situation updates, MOHS statements, technical guidance, and links to key dashboards and publications tracking the evolution of the pandemic globally and in Myanmar. The page is being widely used with over 16,700 downloads in the February and March alone. MIMU is also providing support to CISU / COVID Information Support Unit with UNOPS. MIMU has created an Online Photo Archive to provide space for MIMU partners (humanitarian, peace and development agencies) to share clearly-attributed photographs of their activities around the country. Watermarked images will be visible to all MIMU users, however high-resolution images can be uploaded/downloaded only by registered users. Following a final pilot phase, it will be launched for use by MIMU partner agencies (UN, NGOs, Red Cross agencies, CPG members providing inputs to MIMU products). A new version of the MIMU Excel Mapping Tool has been released to enable users to prepare simple countrywide state/region and township 'heat maps' comparing and contrasting data from Excel spreadsheets (i.e. different indicators from larger, national datasets such as those provided through the MIMU Baseline Dataset, as well as agencies' own information from different areas. March MIMU 3W products were released as planned in April/May and include detail on 212 agencies’ activities in over 80% of village tract around the country as of March 27, 2020 in 154 humanitarian, development and peace sub-sectors.Capacity building: MIMU face-to-face trainings have been suspended due to the COVID situation (Power BI, Information Management and Basic QGIS courses). Thanks to the IM Network members who participated in the Power BI pilot – based on the feedback the planned one-day training is being extended to two days for more hands-on practice. MIMU’s mentored Excel Distance Learning programme is ongoing with a focus on improving quality of COVID related information being collected in border areas in particular with partners selected with the Joint Peace Fund. MIMU Online Training materials in Myanmar-language (Basic Excel and Basic QGIS) are freely available through the MIMU website with close to 40,000 downloads in the first 6 months, indicating a high level of interest in local language online materials – MIMU can share experience of preparing these and can help direct users to materials by other agencies. Mapping questions (Maungdaw): MIMU released a Technical Note (June 9th) providing clarification on incorrect information in a public complaint from a UK-based group regarding MIMU village mapping in Maungdaw. It notes the reason some villages did not appear on the recent MIMU maps (reclassified as Wards in the recent GAD notifications), and clarifies that names of villages have not been removed from the MIMU Place code listing – in fact the Pcodes provide the only comprehensive overview of settlements in Myanmar and is the one place in which village names and administrative changes are recorded over time and publicly shared. Currently the Pcode listing includes details of 3,200 villages reported by verified field sources in addition to those included in the Government Listing, and a record of changes in official administrative status based on the notifications we have been able to trace since 2010. It is an extensive and complex living document which is constantly being updated, clarified and corrected based on available and new information. The Technical Note also clarifies the situation regarding place names which MIMU is not in a position to change. MIMU provides its mapping products as a service to support humanitarian and development activity in Myanmar given the lack of provision of these resources from official sources. Remote sensing for flood mapping: MIMU is developing a masterclass on remote sensing with the Thailand-based Stockholm Environment Institute for a small group of academic sector partners, government counterparts and experienced agency staff. The first phase will focus on development of tools to identify areas at risk of flooding with rising river water levels. National coding system (NCS) and village mapping: MIMU and OneMap Myanmar have been providing technical support to GAD as the lead counterpart, with engagement of main data-producing departments, to develop the NCS. The coding system was launched for government use in August 2019, and further revisions were introduced (SAD/SAZ classifications) in early 2020. The national database and training for GAD users were developed by MIMU and have been handed over to GAD. The NCS includes the Myanmar-language names and the NCS code but does not include English transliteration or village coordinates (these form part of the Place Codes based on the information MIMU has been able to collect over time). Following numerous changes to village classifications in the GAD listing, MIMU conducted a joint field visit in Kengtung and Tachileik with GAD to trial MIMU-developed tools that allow GAD township officers to see where the villages are and to clarify the names and locations of those villages. This pilot has been temporarily suspended due to COVID situation. |
| **4.** | **Next Meeting -** The next regular meeting will take place on 2nd of September 2020. |

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|  | **Participants** | **Agency/Organization**  |
| 1 | Nilar Khaing | Urbanize Policy Institute |
| 2 | Win Bo Aung | DAI |
| 3 | Isabel Lambrecht | IFPRI |
| 4 | Anna Maria Levi | UNICEF |
| 5 | Thet Nwe | World Vision Myanmar |
| 6 | Nyein Chan Ko Ko | CISU |
| 7 | Thet Aung | CISU |
| 8 | Linn Linn | Centre for Social Integrity |
| 9 | Nyan Lynn Myint | CISU |
| 10 | Thawn | Phandeeyar |
| 11 | Aye Yupar | UN RCO |
| 12 | Haymar  |  |
| 13 | Emilie Perge | World bank |
| 14 | Sophie | IFPRI |
| 15 | Ville Peltovuori | The Asia Foundation |
| 16 | Yu Yu Mon | Myanmar Red Cross Society |
| 17 | Thura | Jhpiego |
| 18 | Thi Thi Lwin | UNHCR |
| 19 | Muditha Sampath | OCHA |
| 20 | May Myo Chit | Trocaire |
| 21 | Su Yin Win | NRC |
| 22 | Thit Thit Han | MIMU |
| 23 | Thiri May Kyaw | MIMU |
| 24 | Ei Ei Thein | MIMU |
| 25 | Shon Campbell | MIMU |