**Myanmar Cash Working Group**

**Weekly Update #30 (15 - 21 May 2021)**

| **Myanmar Situation Updates** |
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| **Situation Update**  The banks and cash liquidity situation continued its slow deterioration in the past week. With partners continuing to experience delays and difficulties accessing physical cash MMK for program operations and distributions to program participants. Withdrawing MMK from bank branches requires a limited token system (which reportedly is most accessible to religious and vulnerable populations), and ATM withdrawals continue to see long lines, with many running out of cash early and often. The restrictive withdrawal limits continue to preserve bank liquidity, and there are continued reports that the CBM is having difficulty disbursing funds to banks. With few deposits from clients, the bank liquidity situation is not likely to improve. Some incentives offered by banks, like higher interest rates and unlimited withdrawals for new types of accounts, do not seem to be drawing interest. As the fear grows around inflation and that personal savings will be locked in bank accounts, many people are increasing their spending on consumer goods using their bank debit cards with retailers that still accept.  As an example of the current withdrawal limits, see below the latest information from AYA bank. Other banks have instituted similar restrictions.   * AYA individual: 300K MMK for ATM and 500K MMK from savings accounts, however the maximum total cap from both ATM and savings account is 1 million MMK per week. These are Yangon AYA branches, but it will be less in other townships depending on the cash available in the townships branches. * AYA for organizations: Organizations can withdraw 5 million per week (down from 10 million MMK starting this week), but NGOs can only withdraw after getting approval from CBM. * AYA iBanking ( both individual and organization): working fine for interbank transfers and is worth using, but can only transfer 10 million MMK per day.   USD withdrawals from MFTB are capped at USD 3000 per week. Access to MMK through informal networks continues to be possible, but fees exist for their services. It is now difficult to access MMK at fees in the low single digits, with most service fees around 9-11%.  The MMK continues to weaken against the USD, now over 1650 MMK to 1 USD. At least for now, market prices for most commodities have held steady or are only slightly increasing. Cooking oil has seen the most significant increases, 6% month over month, and more so in other regions such as Rakhine (12-16%). This is on top of the increases in both February and March. Rising fuel prices are also of concern, rising 8-10% depending on the fuel type and township. Please see the links to the WFP and Mercy Corps Market Monitoring Dashboards in the resource section for the latest data.  International remittances into Myanmar continue to be a challenge and prone to lengthy delays. Banks are required to report all inward remittance transactions of INGOs and NGOs and obtain CBM’s prior approval for remittances above USD 10,000. Specific details are requested, including organizational registration and utilization of funds. International inwards for INGO and NGO are approved quicker if for things like staff salaries payments as opposed to funds for program-specific activities.  Regarding CVA transfer modalities, electronic transfers to bank accounts, e-wallets and even interbank are feasible and encouraged by authorities. However, they are no longer widely accepted by partners or suppliers due to not being able to withdraw MMK successfully from their bank accounts. Mobile money programs are becoming more difficult as agents are having problems securing enough physical cash liquidity. It is reported that in many townships, Wave Money agents cannot make payments. Given the issues, agents who can secure liquidity are now forced to charge fees over 5%, and even higher in some places. Mobile Money Operators (MMOs) are not able to control this. In addition, the MMOs can no longer guarantee the liquidity of agents, even through their contracted cash distributor networks. However, it is important to note that M-Pitesan has been engaged and supported partners to develop solutions when possible, including negotiating tenable service fees with agents.  Voucher programs have been facing significant constraints for a while now, as vendors, for the most part, are unwilling to accept bank transfers as reimbursement. Although some, mostly larger peri-urban vendors, have expressed a willingness to accept bank transfer with service fees. Payments to voucher vendors or other types of suppliers via bank accounts outside of Myanmar are another option to explore.  For specific support or options for your organization regarding remittances or cash and voucher programs, please reach out to the CWG.  **Key Resources:**   * [Myanmar CVA 4W](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xnQ8pFbqxr45WE4tXFFAKg3522Qyv8eR7cbpS8lm1Bw/edit#gid=1230035561)s is available online and the dashboard can be found [here](https://datastudio.google.com/u/0/reporting/1ab3123c-1589-42c7-bcbe-29bae99a0281/page/IAE6B/edit). * Mercy Corps Myanmar publishes the **Market Price Report Dashboard -** The dashboard is [live on MIMU](http://themimu.info/rakhine-market-analysis-unit) and [standalone here](http://mau-mpr-dashboard-beta.herokuapp.com/). * WFP also has a nationwide market monitoring [dashboard](https://analytics.wfp.org/t/Public/views/MarketMonitoringDashboard/MainSummary?:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&:embed=y) and recently released the detailed [March Market Price Update Report](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D5JYIowBBl-HzWhTBx2VuswnJWeE4sAO/view?usp=sharing).  A comprehensive financial service provider mapping and [Emergency Cash Transfer Programme Tools for Humanitarian Actors](https://themimu.info/fsp-mapping) site are available on the MIMU website.[Myanmar-Emergency-Cash Assistance-Dashboard](https://analytics.wfp.org/t/Public/views/MyanmarEmergencyCashAssistanceInformation/OverallPage) together with FSP dataset and CTP SOPs can be found on the page. **In the News:**   * Japan will consider cutting off all official development assistance to Myanmar, even for ongoing projects, if the situation does not improve, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told [Nikkei](https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Japan-ready-to-freeze-all-Myanmar-development-aid-Motegi). * The regime-controlled Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has approved 15 projects, including a US$2.5-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) power project, which would be the biggest single investment since the military takeover on Feb. 1. [Read here](https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/162007.html) * The US-ASEAN Business Council has called for Washington to appoint a special envoy for Myanmar, saying bold US leadership could help resolve the crisis. According to [Irrawaddy](https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/business-lobby-group-demands-us-envoy-to-tackle-myanmar-crisis.html). * PetroChina International Singapore Pte Ltd sold a cargo of jet fuel into Myanmar in April, according to government import data reviewed by [Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-jetfuel-exclusive/exclusive-petrochina-ships-jet-fuel-to-junta-ruled-myanmar-data-shows-idUSKCN2D10NX), the first such shipment since before the military seized power in a coup in February.  [Fears for supplies in Myanmar as exodus grows from fighting](https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2118315/fears-for-supplies-in-myanmar-as-exodus-grows-from-fighting#:~:text=People%20displaced%20by%20an%20upsurge,that%20seized%20power%20in%20February.); "We have enough rice and dry peas, but we have to go and find vegetables. There is a shortage of oils and fuel for motorcycles. There are no medical supplies. Even if we have money, we cannot buy groceries," told Reuters by messaging app.  * Britain announced sanctions against state-owned enterprise Myanmar Gems Enterprise (MGE) on Monday, saying the move would deprive the military junta of a key source of funding. [Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/uk-sanctions-myanmar-gems-enterprise-bid-cut-off-junta-funding-2021-05-17/) * Canada said it coordinated with the United States and Britain on Monday in imposing additional [sanctions](https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2021/05/additional-myanmar-sanctions.html) on individuals and entities tied to the Myanmar armed forces. * Last Monday, Swedish fashion retailer H&M [(HMb.ST)](https://www.reuters.com/companies/HMb.ST) said it was gradually beginning to place new orders again with its suppliers in Myanmar after a temporary pause following the military coup in the country in February. [Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/hm-begins-placing-orders-again-myanmar-2021-05-17/) * Humanitarian groups operating in Myanmar have been forced to go underground in the face of restrictions by the military junta that took power on Feb. 1, members of the groups told [RFA](https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/charity-05132021181544.html). * Myanmar’s banking system has nearly collapsed, with the country’s banks seeing fewer deposits and more withdrawals. The Central Bank has also had trouble disbursing enough funds to private banks to cover amounts being withdrawn for account-holders’ daily needs. [RFA news](https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/banking-05122021183455.html) * The US Treasury imposed sanctions thon e Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) governor, Than Nyein, on May 17. N[ews here](https://www.centralbanking.com/central-banks/governance/people/7834611/us-sanctions-myanmar-central-bank-governor) |

| **Recently published:** **Articles/Blogs/Research/Guidance/Discussion threads/Policy briefs** |
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| **In Myanmar:**  **Publication:**   * IFPRI has published the project paper on [**Is poverty in Myanmar on the rise? Poverty predictions from Google mobility data**](https://www.ifpri.org/publication/poverty-myanmar-rise-poverty-predictions-google-mobility-data)**.** In this note, we present the most recent evidence on changes in Google consumer mobility data, since these are leading indicators of changes in household income, and use a previous econometric model linking mobility indices to survey-based household poverty to predict what may be happening to poverty in Myanmar in 2021. * IFPRI published the “[**Monitoring the agri-food system in Myanmar: Agricultural urban wholesale markets – April 2021”.**](https://www.ifpri.org/publication/monitoring-agri-food-system-myanmar-agricultural-urban-wholesale-markets-%E2%80%93-april-2021)Prices of major agricultural products in the two major urban wholesale markets of Mandalay and Yangon were collected during the month of April 2021. Compared to prices from a year earlier in April 2020**.** * Recently, IFPRI just released the survey result of “[**COVID-19 undermines incomes, livelihoods in rural Myanmar”**](https://www.ifpri.org/blog/survey-covid-19-undermines-incomes-livelihoods-rural-myanmar)**.**  [An analysis](http://doi.org/10.1111/agec.12632) of the survey results, published recently in *Agricultural Economics*, shows the crisis has had persistent, worsening economic impacts that depressed rural household incomes. * Plan International Myanmar has recently started implementing a project ‘supporting food security for vulnerable girls, women, boys and men IDPs in Rakhine State’. The project has a combination of both in-kind and cash modality. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was necessary primarily to guide the team for the smooth implementation of the project and in order to produce the intended outcome. It is hoped that this will be a useful reference for the peer agencies who are implementing a similar project in the area. It is available in [CaLP library](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/standard-operating-procedure-for-food-and-cash-distribution-for-vulnerable-girls-women-boys-and-men-idps-in-sittwe-rakhine-state/).   **In General**  **Publication and Research:**   * ALNAP and CaLP recently published ‘[Cashing in: Turning challenges into opportunities when evaluating humanitarian cash assistance](https://www.alnap.org/help-library/cashing-in-turning-challenges-into-opportunities-when-evaluating-humanitarian-cash)’, which explores some of the issues identified as being most critical to consider and improve upon for when it comes to evaluating cash assistance in humanitarian contexts.   **Blogs and Podcasts:**   * Samir Hafiz (ALNAP) and Ruth McCormack (CaLP) draw on the findings of the study to highlight five key considerations when evaluating humanitarian cash assistance. Access the blog [here](https://www.alnap.org/blogs/five-things-to-consider-when-evaluating-cash-assistance). * CaLP Director Karen Peachey writes about how [CaLP is growing](https://www.calpnetwork.org/news/calp-is-growing/). |
| **Webinars and Events** |
| **Upcoming webinars and events:**   * How is using CVA for health different to other forms of humanitarian cash programming? CaLP, with strong support from key stakeholders, has carried out a review of the different approaches used or planned in the MENA region for programming cash and voucher assistance to improve access to health services for people in crisis. In addition to providing a light touch of stocktake of regional experience in MENA, the review contributes to the existing analytical framework of enabling factors and key challenges that are encountered when using CVA to improve health outcomes in humanitarian programming globally. Join us on Wednesday 2nd June at Amman 15.00 for a presentation of findings and discussion of the recommendations made. The [link](https://www.calpnetwork.org/event/cva-for-health-outcomes-in-mena/) to register. |
| **Survey, Resources and Trainings** |
| * Save the Children, Plan International and the Women's Refugee Commission are developing a training package on Child Protection & Cash and Voucher Assistance that will be available on-line and in person formats. To ensure the training package is tailored to gaps and needs at the field-level, a survey is conducting which is live now through May 2nd which specifically targets country-level child protection and CVA practitioners. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes and is available in English, French, and Spanish [here](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=V20wlrdexE2lvSKg5cwKq0pXD-qPIMNFp0nlFpyXQJBUNlAwQjNCOTUwMlk4WUNJTlVWS1FDUDVLNi4u). Further questions about the online survey, get in touch with Hannah Thompson on: Hannah.rachel.thompson@gmail.com * [Socialprotection.org](https://socialprotection.org/) continues to host a space on [social protection responses to #COVID19](https://socialprotection.org/connect/communities/social-protection-responses-covid-19-task-force) which provides access to a series of events, newsletters, mappings etc. In addition, the website hosts a number of online communities including one specifically focused on [social protection in crisis contexts](https://socialprotection.org/connect/communities/social-protection-crisis-contexts). CaLP has a dedicated space on [CVA and COVID-19: resources, guidance, events and questions](https://www.calpnetwork.org/themes/cva-and-covid-19-resources-guidance-events-and-questions/) and [CaLP-produced guidance on CVA considerations for COVID](https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CaLP-summary-guidance-version-5-16-April-2020_.pdf)-19 (including a section specific to SP/HCTs). * The Cash Hub (hosted by the British Red Cross) has developed a number of tip sheets on delivering CVA and advocating for the use of CVA in response to COVID-19. Whilst targeted towards Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, the resources can be adapted to the needs and approaches of other organisations. They can be found [here](https://cash-hub.org/resources/cash-and-covid-19) in English and Spanish. * The Cash Hub platform also provides quarterly updates which provide a useful consolidation of CVA-related topics. Subscribe by clicking on this [link](https://r1.dotmailer-surveys.com/4952l7ad-074f9u4b). * A multi-country cash transfer research initiative – the Transfer Project – provides a quick-access round-up of COVID-19 related resources [click here](https://transfer.cpc.unc.edu/cash-transfers-covid-19/?utm_source=Transfer+Project+Newsletter&utm_campaign=df0f757bb9-)   **Resources:**   * CCD has a page on [Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash](https://www.collaborativecash.org/social-protection-working-group) which includes country case studies and guidance. * **Foundational webinars**: The [first webinar](https://socialprotection.org/linking-cash-and-voucher-assistance-and-social-protection-demystifying-entry-points-humanitarians) from GB cash sub group series to demystify the concept of linking social protection and HCT; good introduction and primer to the topic. Second: How can SP Systems respond to the COVID-19 crisis? sets the scene on how SP systems can respond and the challenges governments are facing; [recording here](https://socialprotection.org/how-can-social-protection-systems-respond-covid-19-crisis). And thirdly, [Lessons learned and Opportunities: Linking SP systems to humanitarian cash in a pandemic](https://socialprotection.org/discover/blog/lessons-learned-and-opportunities-linking-social-protection-systems-humanitarian-cash). Includes examples within the context of COVID-19 for measures to link SP/HCT. * Click the link to access [Ugo Gentilini’s Weekly Social Protection Links newsletter.](https://www.ugogentilini.net/) Packed with valuable information, focusing on social protection developments and action across the globe but also referencing humanitarian action where relevant, the newsletter is a helpful resource for practitioners and policymakers alike. * **CaLP’s Global Capacity Building Team** has some great video playlists on CaLP’s YouTube channel, combining new training videos, with previous webinars and shorter sound bites! Topics include: * Gender & CVA * Monitoring CVA * Multipurpose Cash (MPC) * COVID-19 & CVA * Data Responsibility & CVA * Preparedness & Organisational Capacity Building for CVA * Market Based Programming * Improving our work on Minimum Expenditure Baskets * Cash Coordination   Take a look [here](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtu6QnuH68z3thAeFt8o5Og/playlists).   * CaLP has updated a number of its tools for training facilitators including for the “Linking CVA and Social Protection” course. You can find the materials [here](https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=603).   **Surveys:**   * CaLp page creates to share and learn about ongoing and planned CVA research. If you are undertaking CVA related research, you can submit details and information will usually go live within 48 hours. Webpage [here](https://www.calpnetwork.org/resources/ongoing-research/) |
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