

MARKET PRICE REPORT – RAKHINE STATE (DEC. 2020)

Mercy Corps - Market Analysis Unit

January 28th, 2021

As part of its cash and voucher assistance programs in Rakhine State, Mercy Corps gathers market prices at town markets in Central and Northern Rakhine State. This monthly market price report summarizes median product prices, based on data from three vendors per product per market. December data were gathered Dec. 29 – 31, 2020 in Maungdaw, Minbya, Mrauk U, Pauktaw, Ponnagyun, Rathedaung and Sittwe Townships. Data for September - November are also provided in section one for comparison across months.¹

Highlights: December 2020

- **High-quality rice in Maungdaw fell to a four-month low of 800 MMK/kg in December**, but other essential food prices held fairly stable for a third straight month.
- **High- and low-quality rice in Pauktaw was 20-40% higher than most other townships** in December, but essential food prices were otherwise similar across the region this month.
- **Onion and garlic prices show possible signs of a downward-trend of late**, although prices for other vegetables both rose and fell depending on the location.
- **Vegetable prices were highest in Maungdaw and lowest in Minbya and Ponnagyun** in December, although in general vegetable prices again varied widely across the region.
- **Prices for sanitary pads varied by market with Maungdaw by far the most expensive**, but otherwise prices for hygiene products were fairly similar across townships.

Table 1. Essential Food Prices, by Township: December 2020 (MMK)

| Category | Product | Maungdaw | Minbya | Mrauk U | Pauktaw | Ponnagyun | Rathedaung | Sittwe |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|------------|--------|
| Essential Food items | Better Rice (1 kg) | 800 | 800 | 700 | 1,000 | 700 | 850 | 1,000 |
| | Cheaper Rice (1 kg) | 700 | 500 | 500 | 700 | 500 | 520 | 550 |
| | Palm Oil (1 liter) | 1,900 | 1,900 | 1,800 | 1,800 | 1,800 | 2,000 | 1,800 |
| | Pulse (1 viss) | 2,500 | 2,800 | 2,600 | 2,800 | 2,500 | 3,000 | 2,400 |

I. Price Stability: Essential Foods and Vegetables (Sept. – Dec. 2020)

Essential Food Items – Prices for essential foods like rice, palm oil and pulses held stable in December, continuing a three-month trend. Rice prices were even more stable than usual this month, with several markets seeing no change at all since November. The primary exception to this was high-quality rice in Maungdaw which fell 20% to a four-month low of 800 MMK/kg (Mrauk U rice also fell slightly). Pulses and palm oil prices showed typical stability as well, with moderate increases of just 5% in a few locations.

Vegetables – Most vegetable prices again showed mixed volatility in December, although garlic and onion showed signs of a possible downward trend. Onion prices fell by 15-35% in three of four townships in December, and garlic continued a gentler two-month slide in Minbya and Maungdaw (while holding steady elsewhere). By contrast, prices for long bean, watercress and green chili rose and fell in different locations as peak-harvest arrived (all three crops are grown widely in the region). Most notably, watercress prices nearly doubled in Sittwe in December,

¹ Longitudinal data includes just four townships where prices were available for all four months: Maungdaw, Minbya, Mrauk U and Sittwe Townships.

where they had previously been among the lowest in the region. Chili prices were also quite volatile in December, rising by 25-55% in Minbya and Mrauk U but falling by 30% in Maungdaw and Sittwe. Meanwhile, long bean prices ended a two-month slide in Sittwe, although they fell by 20-30% in Mrauk U and Maungdaw (Minbya prices were stable as usual).

II. Market Prices for December 2020 (by Category)

Essential Food Items – Palm oil and pulse prices were relatively consistent across the region in December, while rice prices were slightly more variable than usual.² Palm oil sold for 1800-2000 MMK/liter and pulses sold for 2400-3000 MMK/viss in December. In most townships, low-quality rice sold for around 500 MMK/kg and high-quality for around 750 MMK/kg. Pauktaw rice stood out in December, with prices for high- and low-quality rice 20-40% higher than elsewhere. Prices were also elevated in Sittwe for high-quality rice (1000 MMK/kg) and in Maungdaw for low-quality rice (700 MMK/kg). However, prices for high-quality rice in Maungdaw were also notable for being more in line with other townships than usual (typically they are significantly higher).

Vegetables – Vegetable prices varied widely across townships again in December, which is not unusual during peak winter crop harvest when supply is in flux. Maungdaw vegetables were as usual more expensive, with watercress, long bean and chili prices at least 40-100% higher than other townships. Vegetable prices in Minbya and Ponnagyun were generally lower than elsewhere. Sittwe and Mrauk U, which typically offer cheaper vegetables, were however on the high-end of December prices for garlic (3500-4000 MMK/viss) and onion (1200 MMK/viss) as prices fell elsewhere. Among the six vegetables monitored in this report, prices were most variable for watercress (800-3000 MMK/viss), long bean (1000-2800 MMK/viss) and eggplant (1300-2500 MMK/viss), all of which are widely grown in the region and highly perishable.

Hygiene Products – With few exceptions, prices for hygiene products were again fairly similar across townships in December. This was particularly true of soap (300-350 MMK/60g) and detergent (600-700 MMK/360g in most markets). Toothpaste and sanitary pads held some exceptions. Toothpaste, which was 700-800 MMK/140g in most townships in December, sold for 20-25% higher in Pauktaw and Sittwe. Sanitary pads sold for 500 MMK/10pc in three townships, but they were 20-60% more expensive in Pauktaw and Minbya and more than twice as expensive in Maungdaw Township (1200 MMK/10 pc).

Meat and Fish – Chicken and fish prices varied greatly across townships in December. Mrauk U and Rathedaung Townships often had higher prices than elsewhere. For example, chicken prices in Rathedaung and Mrauk U Townships were 20-100% higher than in other markets. Fresh fish prices in Rathedaung were also double the price of cheaper locations like Pauktaw and Sittwe Townships, while dried fish in Rathedaung was often 30-80% higher than elsewhere. Shrimp prices were elevated in Mrauk U and Maungdaw Townships, where they were 25-100% higher than elsewhere. Sittwe Township often had the lowest prices for chicken and fish.

² While the time series data presented above indicates little change in rice prices in four townships since September, prices from a larger group of seven townships (including Pauktaw, Ponnagyun and Mrauk U) shows slightly more variation between townships in December than in previous months.

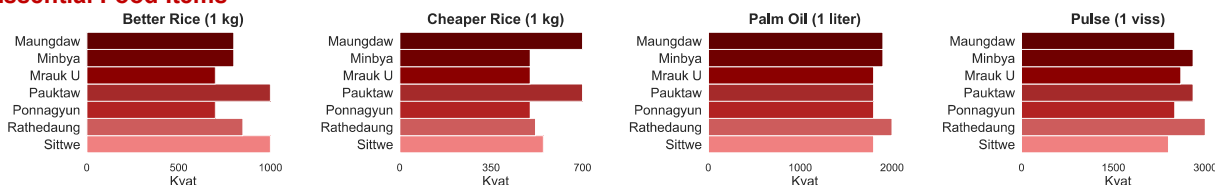
III. Market Price Tables and Charts

Table 2. All Market Prices, by Township: December 2020 (MMK)

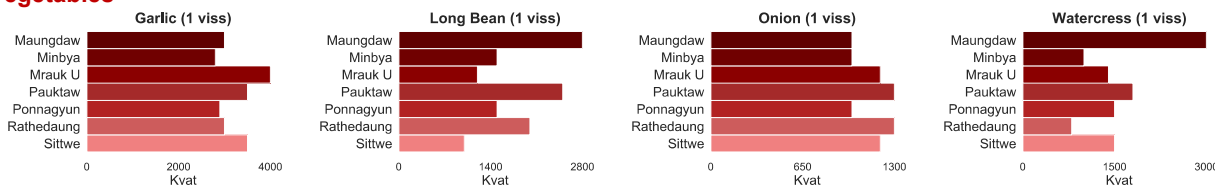
| Category | Product | Maungdaw | Minbya | Mrauk U | Pauktaw | Ponnagyun | Rathedaung | Sittwe |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|------------|--------|
| Essential Food items | Better Rice (1 kg) | 800 | 800 | 700 | 1,000 | 700 | 850 | 1,000 |
| | Cheaper Rice (1 kg) | 700 | 500 | 500 | 700 | 500 | 520 | 550 |
| | Palm Oil (1 liter) | 1,900 | 1,900 | 1,800 | 1,800 | 1,800 | 2,000 | 1,800 |
| Vegetables | Pulse (1 viss) | 2,500 | 2,800 | 2,600 | 2,800 | 2,500 | 3,000 | 2,400 |
| | Garlic (1 viss) | 3,000 | 2,800 | 4,000 | 3,500 | 2,900 | 3,000 | 3,500 |
| | Onion (1 viss) | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,200 | 1,300 | 1,000 | 1,300 | 1,200 |
| | Eggplant (1 viss) | 1,800 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 2,500 | 1,800 | 2,000 | 1,300 |
| | Long Bean (1 viss) | 2,800 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 2,500 | 1,500 | 2,000 | 1,000 |
| | Watercress (1 viss) | 3,000 | 1,000 | 1,400 | 1,800 | 1,500 | 800 | 1,500 |
| Hygiene | Green Chili (1 viss) | 3,500 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,000 |
| | Toothpaste (140 g) | 800 | 800 | 800 | 1,000 | 800 | 700 | 950 |
| | Detergent (360 g) | 650 | 600 | 600 | 800 | 700 | 600 | 600 |
| | Soap (60 g) | 300 | 350 | 350 | 350 | 300 | 300 | 300 |
| Meat / Fish | Sanitary Pad (10 pc) | 1,200 | 800 | 500 | 700 | 500 | 500 | 600 |
| | Shrimp (1 viss) | 10,000 | 7,000 | 10,000 | 8,000 | 5,000 | 7,500 | 5,000 |
| | Fresh Fish (1 viss) | 12,000 | 12,000 | 13,500 | 10,000 | 12,000 | 15,000 | 9,000 |
| | Dried Fish (1 viss) | 5,000 | 7,000 | 6,000 | 6,000 | 6,000 | 8,000 | 4,500 |
| Shelter | Chicken (1 viss) | 5,000 | 7,000 | 10,000 | 7,000 | 8,000 | 12,000 | 7,750 |
| | Charcoal (1 viss) | 1,200 | 500 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 900 | 500 | 550 |

Charts 1-16. December Market Prices (by Category and Township)

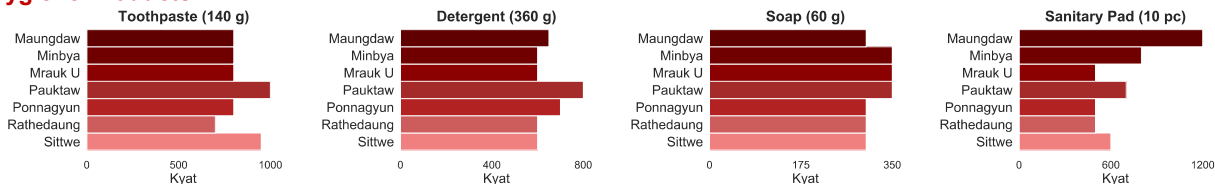
Essential Food Items



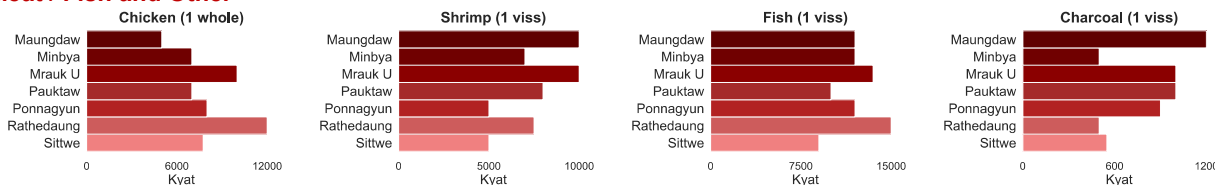
Vegetables



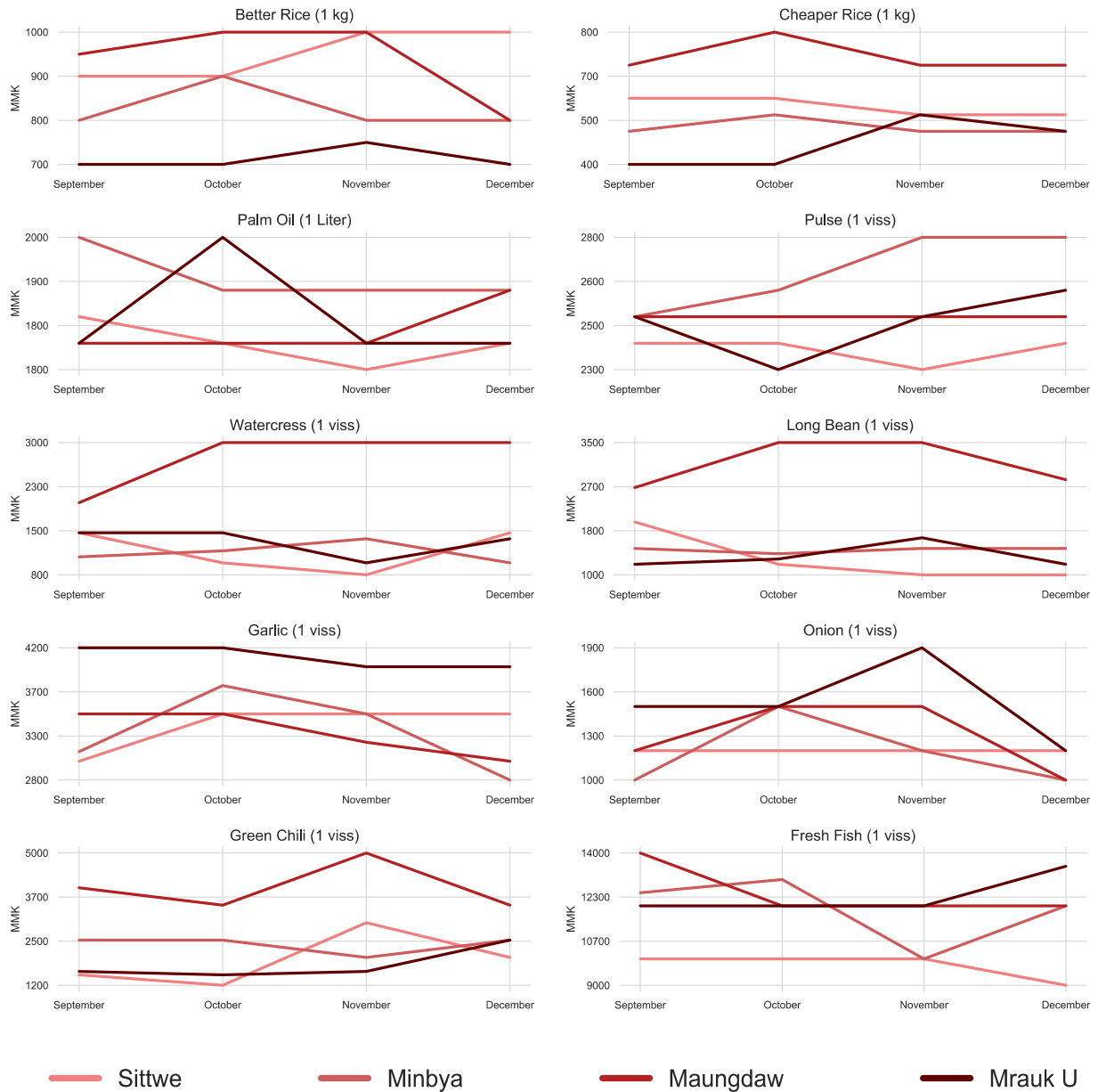
Hygiene Products



Meat / Fish and Other



Charts 17-26. Change in Price for Select Items (Sept. - Dec. 2020)



Mercy Corps' Market Analysis Unit (MAU)

The Market Analysis Unit provides development practitioners, policymakers and private sector actors in Rakhine State with data and analysis to better understand the present and potential impacts of COVID-19, conflict and other crises on:

- **Household purchasing power**, including coping mechanisms, safety nets and access to basic needs;
- **Supply chains**, including trade, cross-border dynamics and market functionality (particularly as it relates to food systems);
- **Financial services**, including financial services providers, household and business access to finance and remittances; and
- **Labor markets** (formal and informal), with a focus on agricultural labor and low-wage sectors (e.g. construction, food service).

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