

MARKET PRICE REPORT – RAKHINE STATE (JAN. 2021)

Mercy Corps - Market Analysis Unit

February 16th, 2021

As part of Mercy Corps' cash and voucher assistance programs in Rakhine State, the MAU tracks market prices in Central and Northern Rakhine State. This monthly report summarizes median prices for goods based on data from three vendors per product per market. January data were gathered Feb. 1 - 2 in Maungdaw, Minbya, Mrauk U and Sittwe Townships.¹ Data for October through December are also provided for comparison.

Highlights: January 2021

- **Prices for essential foods and hygiene products were largely stable in January**, although there were some minor changes in prices, particularly in Sittwe.
- **Prices for both low- and high-quality rice fell 10% in Sittwe in January**, while in Maungdaw the price of high-quality rice rose by 12% (low-quality rice did not).
- **Vegetable prices fell sharply in all markets in January, particularly in Maungdaw** where vegetables are typically most expensive.
- **Despite overall lower vegetable prices in January, prices still varied across markets**, with notable outliers including watercress in Maungdaw and long bean in Sittwe.
- **Prices for fresh and dried fish were mostly stable in January**, although prices were more variable for shrimp and to some extent chicken.

Table 1. Essential Food Prices, by Township: January 2021 (MMK)

Category	Product	Maungdaw	Minbya	Mrauk U	Sittwe
Essential Food items	Better Rice (1 kg)	900	800	700	900
	Cheaper Rice (1 kg)	700	500	500	500
	Palm Oil (1 liter)	1,900	2,000	1,800	1,800
	Pulse (1 viss)	2,500	2,800	2,500	2,300

I. Price Stability in January

Essential Food Items – Prices for essential foods like rice, palm oil and pulses were relatively stable for a fourth straight month in January. Prices for both high- and low-quality rice were steady as usual in most locations, although both fell by about 10% in Sittwe. High-quality rice in Maungdaw rose by 12%, partially rebounding from a three-month low of 800 MMK/kg in December. Prices for pulses and palm oil were virtually unchanged from the previous month, except for minor changes of less than 5% in a few cases.

Vegetables – Vegetable prices fell sharply across the region in January, with the largest drops in Maungdaw where prices are typically highest. Prices for long bean, watercress, eggplant and green chili declined across the board as winter harvest hit full stride. Eggplant prices in Minbya fell most dramatically, declining 50% in January. Otherwise, the largest changes were 20-40% price drops for items like watercress in Maungdaw and Sittwe, green chili in Maungdaw and Minbya, and long bean in Maungdaw and Sittwe. Garlic was stable, but onion prices declined for a third straight month, falling 20% in Minbya and Maungdaw while remaining flat elsewhere.

¹ The MAU collects price data at the end of each month. January data, collected Feb. 1 - 2, was gathered only a couple days later than usual. Prices were not visibly affected by the political events of February 1, 2021.

Hygiene Products – Prices for hygiene products were quite stable in January, although prices for several products rose slightly in Sittwe. Prices for toothpaste, laundry detergent and sanitary pads were virtually unchanged in January, except for in Sittwe where prices rose 8% for sanitary pads and 25% for toothpaste (see below). Soap prices were also fairly stable, despite rising by around 15% in Sittwe and Minbya. In general, January prices for hygiene products remained relatively close to their previous three-month averages. However, prices remained higher than before for sanitary pads in Maungdaw and toothpaste in Sittwe and Mrauk.

Meat and Fish – Prices held steady for fresh fish, dried fish and chicken in January, while prices for shrimp rose and fell in different markets. Prices for both fresh and dried fish were typically stable in January, with the only notable change being an 11% decline in fresh fish prices in Sittwe. Shrimp prices shifted by 20-30% in various markets—sometimes falling, and sometimes rising—but remained below November peaks in all four markets. Chicken prices were fairly unchanged in Sittwe, Mrauk U, and Minbya in January.

II. Price Differences by Market (January only)

Essential Food Items – Prices for rice, palm oil and pulses were again quite similar across townships in January. Prices for low- and high-quality rice were generally around 500 MMK/kg and 800-900 MMK/kg, respectively. However, in Maungdaw prices for low-quality rice were 40% higher than elsewhere (700 MMK/kg), and in Mrauk U prices for high-quality rice were 18% lower than elsewhere (also 700 MMK/kg). Across townships, palm oil sold for 1800-2000 MMK/liter and pulses sold for 2300-2500 MMK/viss (except for Minbya where pulses sold at 2800 MMK/viss).

Vegetables – Vegetable prices varied widely across markets in January, often 15-30% higher or lower depending on location. Prices for eggplant, long bean, watercress and green chili all varied greatly by location. Notable outliers included watercress prices in Maungdaw (2500 MMK/viss) which were more than double those of other townships and long bean prices in Sittwe (800 MMK/viss) which were at least 33% below other townships. Onion prices also varied, selling for 800 MMK/viss in Maungdaw and Minbya and 12000 MMK/viss in Mrauk U and Sittwe. Garlic prices varied little, typically around 3000 MMK/viss (although in Sittwe it sold for 3500 MMK/viss).

Hygiene Products – Prices for toothpaste, detergent and soap were similar across townships in January, while prices for sanitary pads continued to vary by location. Prices were fairly consistent across markets for toothpaste (800 MMK/140g), detergent (600-650 MMK/450g) and soap (300-400 MMK/60g). Toothpaste presented an exception in Sittwe, where higher prices were recorded due to the unavailability of the inexpensive brand usually monitored. Prices for sanitary pads varied considerably in January depending on the market in question, with the obvious outlier being prices in Maungdaw (1200 MMK/viss).

Meat and Fish – Prices for meat and fish were generally similar across townships in January, with a few exceptions. Prices were fairly similar across townships for chicken (7250-10000 MMK/viss), fresh fish (12000-13500 MMK/viss), dried fish (4800-7000 MMK/viss) and shrimp (6000-8000 MMK/viss). The primary exception to this was lower prices for fish in Sittwe (8000 MMK/viss), which typically has the lowest fish prices of these four markets.

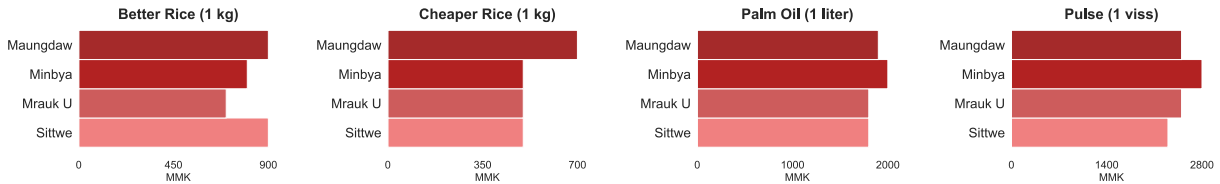
III. Market Price Tables and Charts

Table 2. All Market Prices, by Township: January 2021 (MMK)

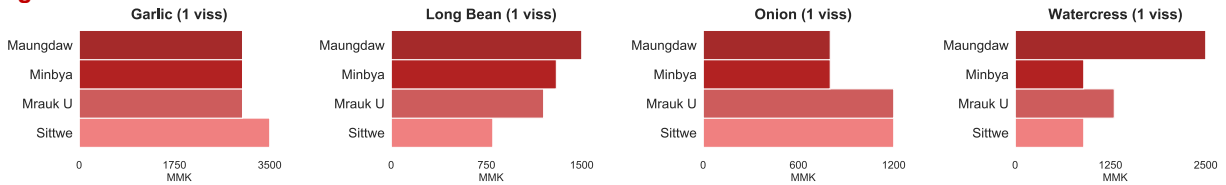
Category	Product	Maungdaw	Minbya	Mrauk U	Sittwe
Essential Food items	Better Rice (1 kg)	900	800	700	900
	Cheaper Rice (1 kg)	700	500	500	500
	Palm Oil (1 liter)	1,900	2,000	1,800	1,800
	Pulse (1 viss)	2,500	2,800	2,500	2,300
Vegetables	Garlic (1 viss)	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,500
	Onion (1 viss)	800	800	1,200	1,200
	Eggplant (1 viss)	1,500	1,000	1,300	1,200
	Long Bean (1 viss)	1,500	1,300	1,200	800
	Watercress (1 viss)	2,500	900	1,300	900
	Green Chili (1 viss)	2,800	1,500	2,500	1,800
	Hygiene	Toothpaste (140 g)	800	800	800
Detergent (360 g)		650	600	600	600
Soap (60 g)		300	400	350	350
Sanitary Pad (10 pc)		1,200	800	500	650
Meat / Fish	Shrimp (1 viss)	8,000	7,000	7,500	6,000
	Fresh Fish (1 viss)	12,000	13,000	13,500	8,000
	Dried Fish (1 viss)	5,000	7,000	6,000	4,800
	Chicken (1 viss)	-	7,500	10,000	7,250
Shelter	Charcoal (1 viss)	1,000	500	1000	550

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

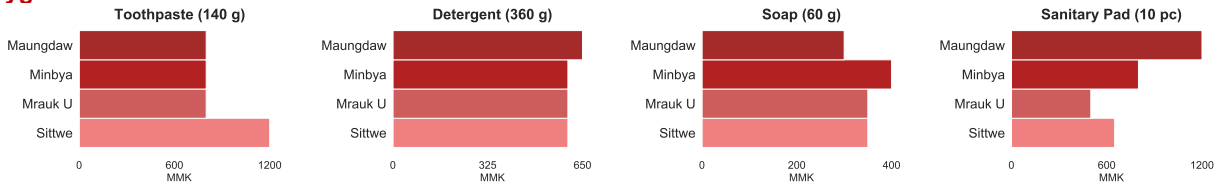
Essential Food Items



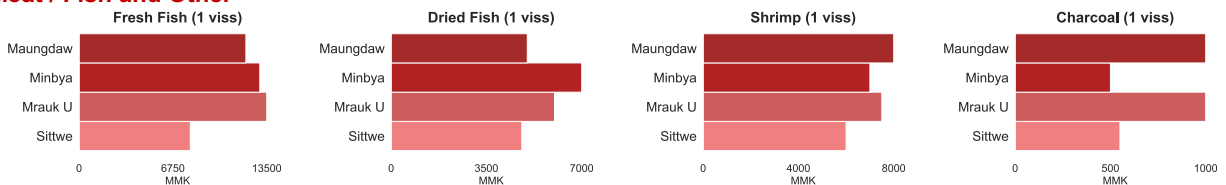
Vegetables



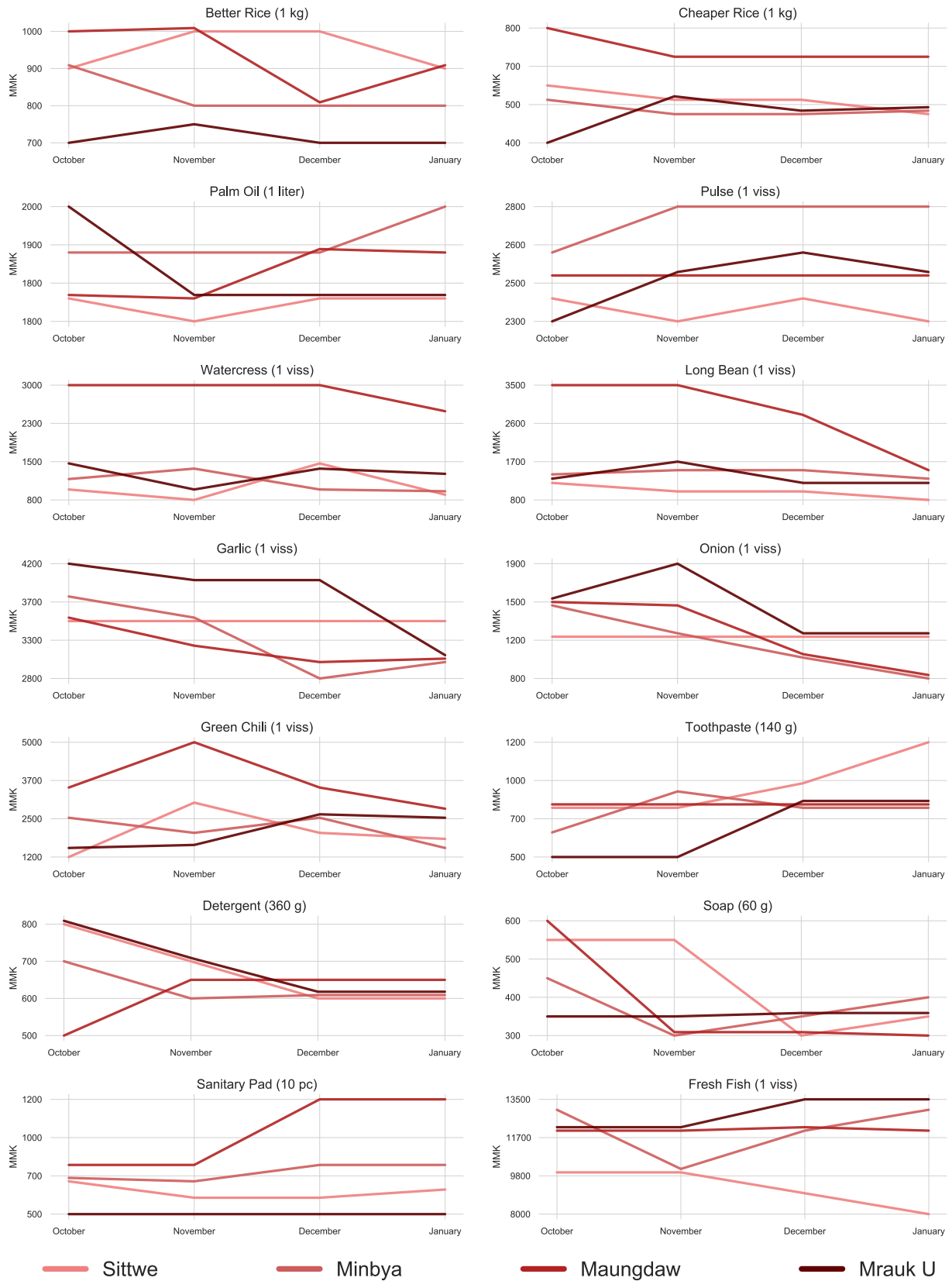
Hygiene Products



Meat / Fish and Other



Charts 17-30. Change in Price for Selected Products (Oct. 2020 - Jan. 2021)



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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