

MARKET PRICE REPORT – RAKHINE STATE (SEPT. 2020)

Mercy Corps - Market Analysis Unit

October 29th, 2020

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. Data were gathered September 21-29 in Ponnagyun, Maungdaw, Sittwe, Mrauk U, and Minbya Townships. Data for May and July 2020 are also provided for comparison in section two.¹

Highlights: September 2020

- September **food prices were generally higher in Maungdaw** than other townships, while **food prices were lower in Ponnagyun**.
- Among essential food items, **pulse prices were most consistent across townships**.
- **Vegetables prices varied by township**, particularly for green chili and bamboo shoots.
- **Vegetable prices in Minbya were slightly lower** than elsewhere in September.
- Prices for **kitchen goods were slightly higher in Maungdaw and lower in Sittwe**.
- Prices in **Maungdaw tracked closest to other townships for shelter goods**.
- From May to September, **Maungdaw prices were often higher than elsewhere** for essential food items, while **Ponnagyun prices were more often lower**.

Table 1. Market Prices in this Report (by Category)

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Essential food items | High-quality (better) rice, low-quality (cheaper) rice, palm oil, salt, and pulses. |
| Vegetables | Green chili, long bean, potato, onion, bamboo shoot, etc. |
| Shelter goods | Blankets, mosquito nets, plastic mats, plastic tarps, towels, etc. |
| Kitchen goods | Plates, cooking spoons, kitchen knives, cooking pots, cups, etc. |
| Other goods | Hygiene products, fish/shrimp, various household products, etc. |

I. Market Prices: September 2020 (by Category)

Essential Food Items – Essential food prices exhibited some variation across townships in September, with the exception of pulses. Salt showed the greatest variation among essential items (200-600 MMK/500g), while pulses showed the least (2400-2500 MMK/viss). Broadly speaking, prices for essential food items were highest in Maungdaw and lowest in Ponnagyun. The main exception was high and low quality rice, for which Mrauk U saw the lowest prices in September (700 and 400 MMK/kg). By contrast, Maungdaw saw the highest September prices for high and low quality rice (950 and 700 MMK/kg, respectively).

Vegetables – Vegetable showed considerable price variation across townships in September, with green chili and bamboo shoots being among the more variable. Chili prices varied from 1500-4000 MMK/viss, while bamboo varied from 1100-3000 MMK/viss. Less variable were potato (1300-2000 MMK/viss) and onion (1000-1500 MMK/viss). At a township-level, Maungdaw saw consistently higher vegetable prices in September. No townships saw

¹ Data for May and July also included markets in Rathedaung, Pauktaw and Kyauk Taw Townships. However, data collection at these markets was not possible in September due to lockdown measures.

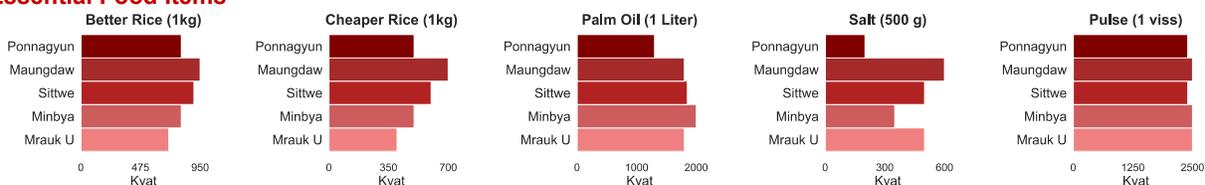
consistently lower vegetable prices, but Minbya was often on the low end (notwithstanding chili). Relative to other townships, a few prices stood out as exceptionally high (e.g. bamboo in Sittwe and onion in Mrauk U) and low (e.g. watercress in Ponnagyun).

Shelter Goods – Shelter goods showed a mixed picture for price variation across townships in September. No township had across-the-board higher or lower prices for shelter goods. However, Maungdaw prices stand out for being relatively in line with other townships for shelter goods (in contrast to prices for vegetables and essential food items). Among products with more uneven prices were tarps (5000-14500 MMK/unit) and towels (1200-2000 MMK/unit), although this may also be due to unavailability of identical goods.² In particular, the prices for plastic tarp (Maungdaw) and blankets (Sittwe) stand apart from other townships.

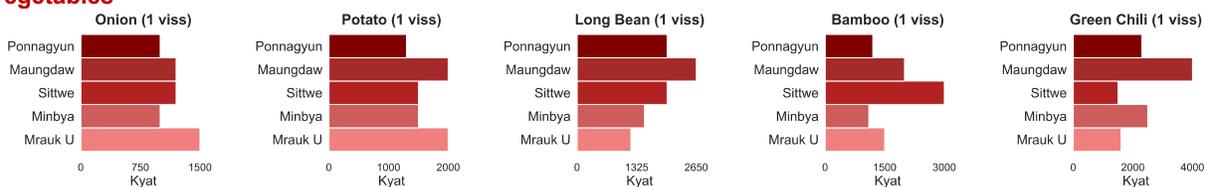
Kitchen Goods – Kitchen goods showed a mixed picture for price variation across townships in September. No township had across-the-board higher or lower prices for kitchen goods in September. However, Maungdaw prices were generally on the higher end and Sittwe prices generally on the lower end. Some products showed uneven prices across townships, such as kitchen knives (300-1000 MMK/unit) and cooking spoons (500-2000 MMK/unit). This may be due in part to unavailability of identical goods.

Charts 1-20. September Market Prices (by Category and Township)

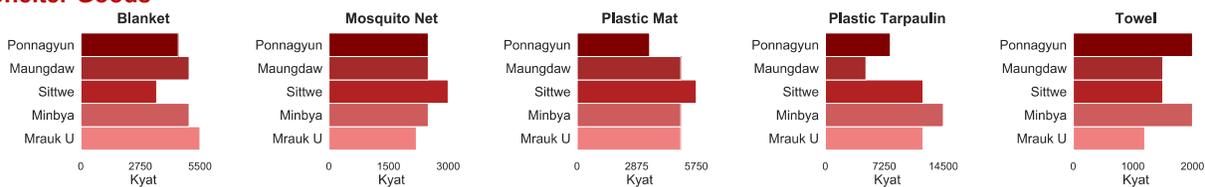
Essential Food Items



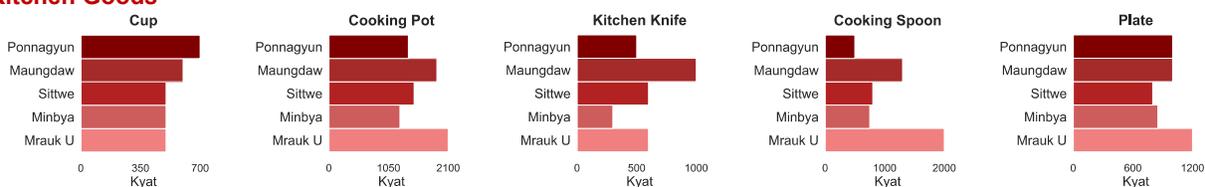
Vegetables



Shelter Goods



Kitchen Goods

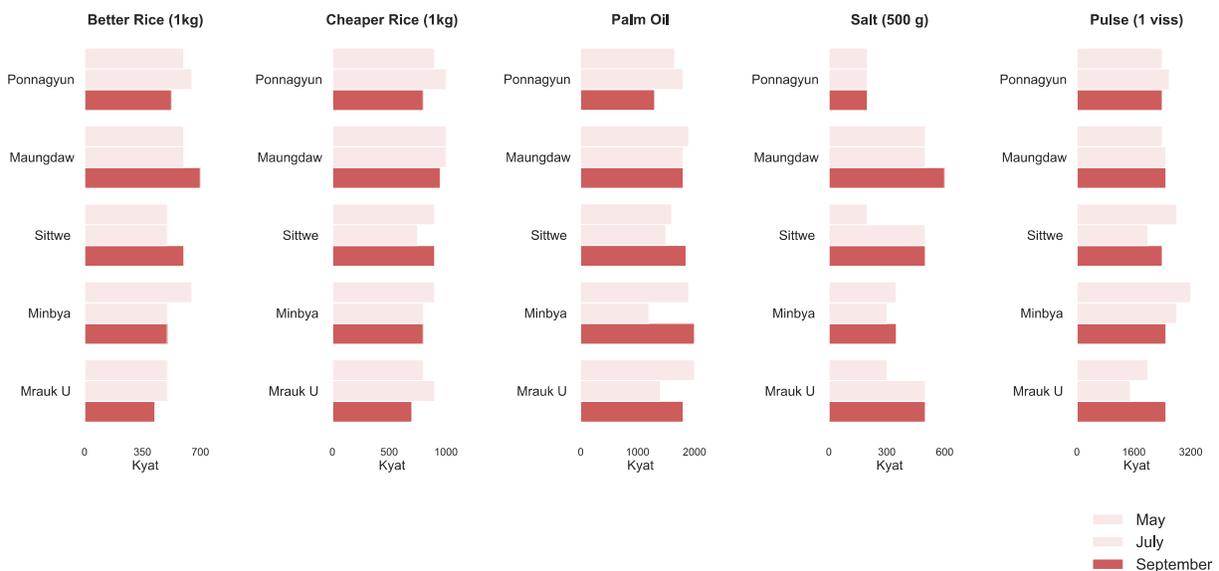


² Comparing prices across townships can be more difficult for non-food items (NFIs) if available goods are not perfectly identical in size and quality. To the extent possible, prices are collected for identical products or the nearest available alternative.

II. Price Stability: Essential Food Items (May – Sept. 2020)

Essential Food Items – Price data for essential food items gathered in May, July and September indicate a variable picture of price changes by product and location. Among townships, Maungdaw and Ponnagyun showed the least change across the three collection periods—they also most consistently sat on the high and low end of prices, respectively. By contrast, the data suggest Sittwe, Minbya and Mrauk U saw more price swings between May and September. Among products, rice showed the least dramatic price swings over time. While prices for pulses were consistent across townships in September, this has not been the case in past months with Sittwe, Minbya and Mrauk U all showing change. Data collection in July and September—which straddled the recent COVID-19 resurgence in Rakhine State—point to prices rising in Sittwe, although the picture is mixed in other townships (some prices had begun to readjust by late September).³ Maungdaw, already at the higher end for prices, saw prices either stable or rising between July and September. Charts 21-26 compare prices for essential food items collected in May, July and September 2020.

Charts 21-25. Prices for Essential Food Items (May, July and Sept. 2020)



³ Beyond general observations, caution should be used in reading too much into price changes from this data, as it represents changes over eight-week periods. During the two-month window between collection periods a number of events may push prices higher and lower and obscure broader trends. Beginning in October, this report will include a more robust look at monthly changes in price data.

III. Market Price Table: September 2020 (by Township)

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

| Category | Product | Ponnagyun | Maungdaw | Sittwe | Minbya | Mrauk U |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|--------|---------|
| Essential Food Items | Better Rice (1kg) | 800 | 950 | 900 | 800 | 700 |
| | Cheaper Rice (1kg) | 500 | 700 | 600 | 500 | 400 |
| | Palm Oil (1 liter) | 1,300 | 1,800 | 1,850 | 2,000 | 1,800 |
| | Pulse (1 viss) | 2,400 | 2,500 | 2,400 | 2,500 | 2,500 |
| | Salt (500g) | 200 | 600 | 500 | 350 | 500 |
| Vegetable | Bamboo Shoot (1 viss) | 1,200 | 2,000 | 3,000 | 1,100 | 1,500 |
| | Bitter Gourd (1 viss) | 1,800 | | 1,500 | 1,550 | 1,200 |
| | Cabbage (1 pcs) | 2,500 | | | 1,500 | 1,000 |
| | Garlic (1 viss) | 2,800 | 3,500 | 3,000 | 3,100 | 4,200 |
| | Green Chili (1 viss) | 2,300 | 4,000 | 1,500 | 2,500 | 1,600 |
| | Long Bean (1 viss) | 2,000 | 2,650 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 1,200 |
| | Luffa (1 viss) | 1,500 | 2,800 | 2,000 | 1,550 | 1,000 |
| | Okra (1 viss) | 1,500 | 3,500 | | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| | Onion (1 viss) | 1,000 | 1,200 | 1,200 | 1,000 | 1,500 |
| | Potato (1 viss) | 1,300 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 2,000 |
| | Roselle Leaf | 1,000 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 1,500 | 1,300 |
| | Tomato (1 viss) | | 4,000 | | 2,100 | 2,000 |
| | Watercress (1 viss) | 600 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 1,100 | 1,500 |
| Fish | Crab (1 viss) | | | 5,000 | | 8,000 |
| | Fish (1 viss) | | 14,000 | 10,000 | 12,500 | 12,000 |
| | Shrimp (1 viss) | | 7,000 | 7,000 | 8,000 | 14,500 |
| Kitchen | Cooking Pot (1 can) | 900 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 1,050 | 1,000 |
| | Cooking Pot (2 can) | 1,400 | 1,900 | 1,500 | 1,250 | 2,100 |
| | Cooking Spoon | 500 | 1,300 | 800 | 750 | 2,000 |
| | Cup | 700 | 600 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| | Kitchen Knife | 500 | 1,000 | 600 | 300 | 600 |
| | Plate | 1,000 | 1,000 | 800 | 850 | 1,200 |
| | Vacuum Flask (15 cups) | 10,000 | 6,500 | 12,000 | 7,500 | 12,000 |
| | Water Jar | | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,600 | 2,000 |
| Shelter | Blanket | 4,500 | 5,000 | 3,500 | 5,000 | 5,500 |
| | Candle | | 450 | 675 | 375 | 400 |
| | Charcoal (1 viss) | 5,000 | 1,250 | 6,250 | 600 | 1,500 |
| | Firewood | 1,000 | | 1,500 | 600 | 150 |
| | Mosquito Net | 2,500 | 2,500 | 3,000 | 2,500 | 2,200 |
| | Pillow | 1,500 | 5,000 | 3,500 | 2,000 | 1,200 |
| | Plastic Chair | 6,500 | | 6,350 | 5,500 | 6,500 |
| | Plastic Mat | 3,500 | 5,000 | 5,750 | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| | Plastic Tarpaulin | 8,000 | 5,000 | 12,000 | 14,500 | 12,000 |
| | Towel | 2,000 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 2,000 | 1,200 |
| Hygiene | Umbrella | 3,000 | | 3,500 | 3,500 | 5,000 |
| | Detergent (400g) | 1,000 | 500 | 725 | | 800 |
| | Sanitary Pad | 500 | 600 | 600 | | 500 |
| | Soap (60g) | 300 | 300 | 600 | | 350 |
| | Toothbrush | 300 | 500 | 650 | | 500 |
| | Toothpaste | 800 | 800 | 750 | | 500 |

Mercy Corps' Market Analysis Unit (MAU)

The Market Analysis Unit provides development practitioners and policymakers operating 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, coping mechanisms and access to basic needs;**
- **Value chains**, including **trade** (ag. Inputs, machinery, supply), **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 (construction, factories, food services).

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