Chin State IDPs

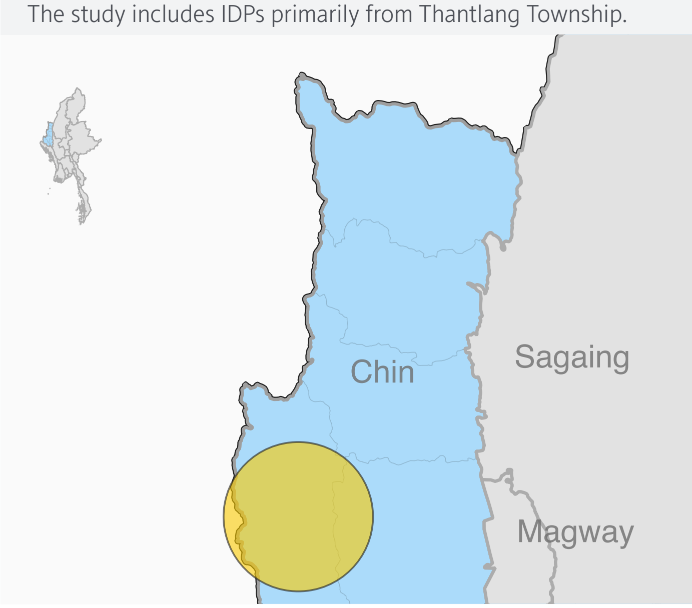
*In late-February / early-March the MAU conducted a third-round survey of displaced households in Chin State to understand challenges they face. The study is based on a probability sample representing 1900 households currently or previously enrolled in cash assistance programs. MAU reports are available online at **www.themimu.info/market-analysis-unit**.*

KEY FINDINGS

- **One-third of households surveyed had returned or resettled** as of early-March, up from 21% in December;
- **The proportion of households in displaced sites like schoolhouses increased** slightly in recent months;
- **Security, shelter and mobility grew worse** for many households between December and March;
- **Conditions like cleanliness and space grew worse** for some households in recent months;
- **Fewer households had access to most products** in March than in December, such as vegetables and meat;
- **Fewer households used cash assistance or savings** to buy food, and access to work remained poor for most;
- **More recipients of remittances used informal channels**, and use of formal channels declined;
- **Nearly all food insecurity indicators worsened**, although nutrition appeared to improve in households with small children or pregnant / breastfeeding women.

The needs of internally displaced persons in Chin State continued to grow in early-2023, despite a brief plateau in total IDP counts. According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Project (ACLED), conflict-related events in Chin State dipped in December before climbing again in early-2023 (see **Figure 1**).[1] Meanwhile, the United Nations estimated that the total number of IDPs in Chin State shrank for the first time since mid-2022. According to UN figures, IDP counts in Chin State declined by 8% between December 2022 and March 2023, falling from 53,700 to 49,500.[2] Yet while some households returned or resettled during this period, the needs of these and other still-displaced households continued to grow: food insecurity grew more severe and access to many goods became more difficult. As armed conflict continues to disrupt critical market systems, more data is needed on the ability of IDPs to meet basic needs.

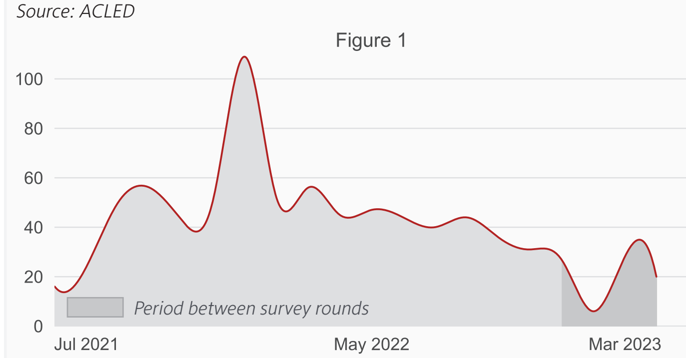
MAP 1. Distribution of study population, by Township
The study includes IDPs primarily from Thantlang Township.



The MAU surveyed current/former IDP households primarily from Thantlang Township about their living conditions and market access. The survey of roughly 400 households represents a population of more than 1900 currently- or previously-displaced households enrolled in one or more cash assistance programs. The study focussed on displacement status, household living conditions, financial resources, access to markets and goods, and food security. The study is not intended to represent all IDPs in Chin State, nor is it intended as an evaluation of the effectiveness of cash programs. This report is based on a third-round survey of the same population contacted in September and December 2022.

FIGURE 1. Conflict Events in Sagaing Region, by Month
Monthly conflict events fell in late-2022 but rose in early-2023.

Source: ACLED

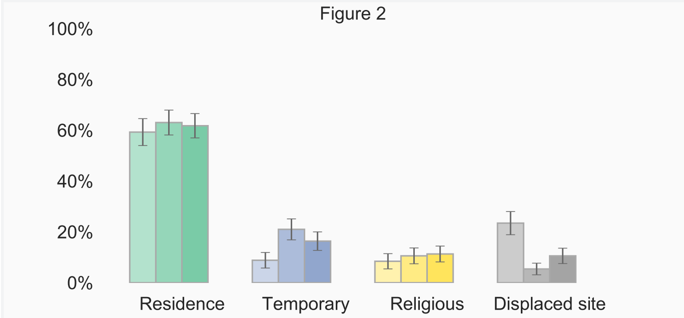


[1] ACLED. April 2023. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. www.acleddata.com.
[2] UN in Myanmar. Febraury 27, 2023. Myanmar Emergency Overview Map.

LOCATION AND SHELTER

Many IDP households returned to their homes or were resettled between December and March, although two-thirds remained displaced. The portion of IDP households who had returned to their homes increased from 15% to 23% between December 2022 and March 2023, and the portion who had resettled climbed from 6% to 13%.[3,4] This would appear to agree with UN estimtes of a decline in total IDPs in Chin State in recent months (see above). However, 64% of households surveyed remained displaced in early-March, (down from 79% in December).[5] As was the case in December, redisplacement was rare in recent months, with fewer than 2% redisplaced in the preceding three months. Further movement of IDPs across state lines also remained uncommon. Most IDPs still lived in residences, but significant portions also still lived in temporary shelters and religious buildings. There was a very small increase in the portion of IDP households living in displaced sites, such as organized camps or school buildings (see **Figure 2**).

FIGURE 2. Type of Shelter
Most households surveyed lived in residences as of early-March.

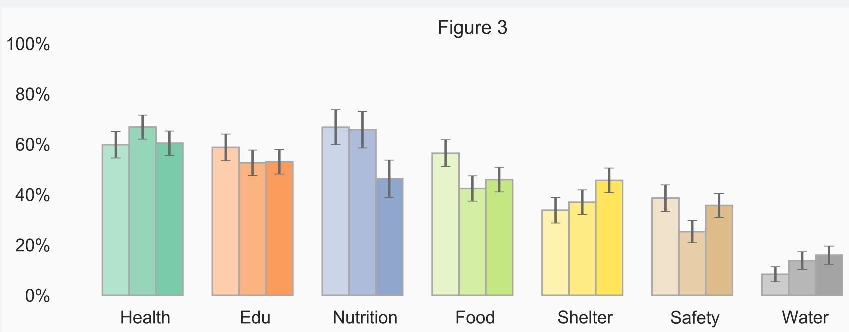


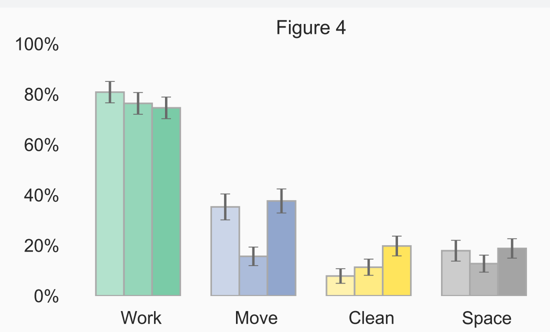
LIVING CONDITIONS

A growing number of households described shelter and security as "poor" in early-March, while other conditions also remained widely problematic. The portion of households describing safety/security as "poor" increased from 25% in December to 36% in March, and the portion describing shelter as "poor" grew from 37% to 46% (see **Figure 3**). Other conditions like access to health care, education and food also fell into a top-tier of widely-problematic conditions, with at least 45% of households describing each of these as "poor." Among conditions monitored in this study, only nutrition improved in recent months (see **Box 2**).

Freedom of movement worsened for many households in recent months. The portion of households describing freedom of movement as "poor" doubled from 16% in December to 38% in early-March (see **Figure 4**). Cleanliness and availability of space also worsened slightly, with one-in-five households describing each of these as "poor." By contrast, there was little evidence of change in

FIGURES 3 & 4. Portion of Households Describing Various Living Conditions as "Poor"
Accsss to education, health, food and safety improved for some since August, but there was little change in shelter, mobility and work.





BOX 1. Living Conditions Measures Used in the Survey

This study asked respondents about conditions related to seven strategic response priorities in the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The HRP represents the coordinated plan for humanitarian agencies to meet the acute needs of people affected by recent crises in Myanmar. The HRP was used a guide only, and data do not reflect progress toward related objectives. The HRP-based measures in this study include:

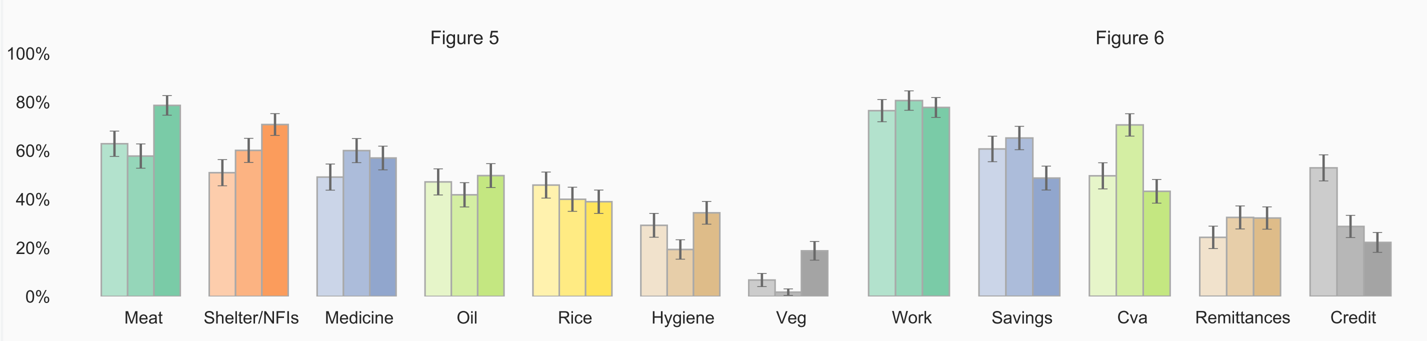
Education - Access to education/materials;
Food - Access to food;
Health - Access to physical/mental health care;
Safety - Conditions for basic safety/security;
Nutrition - Nutritional status of children under age five and pregnant/ breastfeeding women;
Shelter - Access to basic shelter/materials;
Water - Access to water for cleaning/hygiene.

This study also asked about several other ancellary or crosscutting conditions:

Movement - Freedom of movement;
Work - Access to livelihood/work opportunities;
Space - Sufficient space (absence of overcrowding);
Cleanliness - Access to a clean/sanitary environment.

[3] Estimates in this report assume 95% confidence intervals and a 5% margin of error (with the exception of nutrition and remittances).
[4] Market Analysis Unit. December 2022. Survey of IDPs in Chin State.

FIGURES 5 & 6. Access to Products & Sources of Funds for Acquiring Food
Access worsened in early-2023 for most products monitored. Fewer households used cash assistance or savings to buy food.



work opportunities in recent months. Although four-in-five households said at least one member earned income from work during the preceeding month, the same proportion of households nonetheless described access to work opportunities as "poor."

ACCESS TO MARKETS AND GOODS

One-quarter of households still struggled to access markets, and those who could access markets may have traveled further to do so. Despite growing challenges related to movement (see above), roughly three-in-four households continued to be able to travel to a food market in the past thirty days. However, the proportion of households who said there was a market nearby fell significantly, declining from 69% of households in December to 45% in March, the reason for which is unclear. This change was driven by still-displaced households (resettled more often said markets were nearer afterward), suggesting this may have less to due with IDP relocation and more to do with reduced market activity (due to conflict); because most households continued to reach markets, it also suggests that households were traveling further than before. Indeed, the proportion of households unable to reach a market primarily due to poor transportation or distance increased from 35% in December to 58% in March. Traders remained the main source of goods for households unable to travel, although 9% said a friend or neighbor delivers food for them.

Access to some foods worsened for many recent months, and two-in-three households struggled to access meat and NFIs. The portion of households describing access as "poor" increased for meat/fish (79%), shelter/NFIs (49%), hygiene products (34%) and even vegetables (19%); the change was particularly dramatic for meat and vegetables, each of which saw a nearly twenty percentage point increase in households describing access as "poor" (see **Figure 5**). Although there was no measureable change in access to rice, cooking oil and medicines, two-in-five households continued to describe access to these as "poor."

BOX 4. Preferred Aid Modality
Households still prefered cash, but many welcomed in-kind aid.

Most households still prefered cash to in-kind aid, but households increasingly found them both acceptable. Two-thirds of households clearly prefered cash, yet the proportion which saw little difference between the two grew from 7% to 18%, possibly due to market distance or growing urgency (see **Food Insecurity and Coping**).

BOX 2. Children and Pregnant/Breastfeeding Women
Nutrition improved for some households in early-2023.

Fewer households with children and/or pregnant or breastfeeding women reported poor nutrition in March. The proportion of such households fell from 66% to 46% (see **Figure 3**). The reason for this change is unclear, particularly since food security worsened in this period. Notebly, households in residences tended to report better nutrition, therefore it may be tied to recent increased return/resettlement (see **Location and Shelter**).

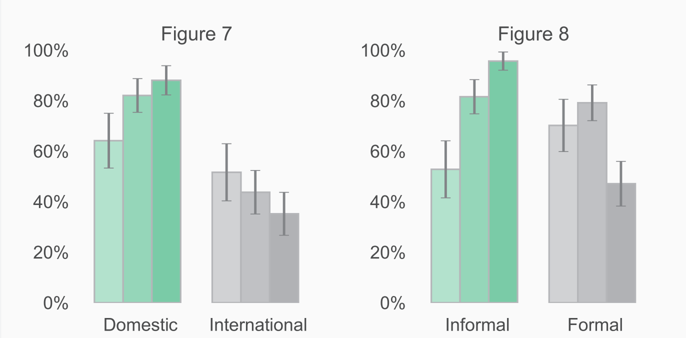
SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR FOOD

Work remained the main source of funds households used to buy food, and fewer households used cash assistance or savings. The portion of households buying food with cash assistance fell sharply in recent months, declining from 71% in December to 43% in March, and the use of savings also fell from 65% to 49% (see **Figure 6**). Roughly one-quarter of households continued to buy food with credit and/or remittances. Work income remained the most common source of funds for buying food (78% of households, which is the same proportion who had a working member). Households without work most often used remittences to buy food.

Since December 2022, recipients of remittances increasingly favored informal channels for recieving them rather than formal channels. Nearly all recipients of remittances (96%) reported recieving them via informal channels in early-March, up further from 82% in December (see **Figure 7**). By contrast, the proportion

[5] Note that the study population now includes many households (36%) that are no longer displaced, due to return/resettlement. For example, Figure 2 shows shelter as proportion of the population, but because the population includes returned/resettled households—all of whom are in residences—the proportion of current-IDPs in residences will differ.

FIGURES 7 & 8. Sources and Channels of Remittances
Households increasingly favored informal remittance channels.

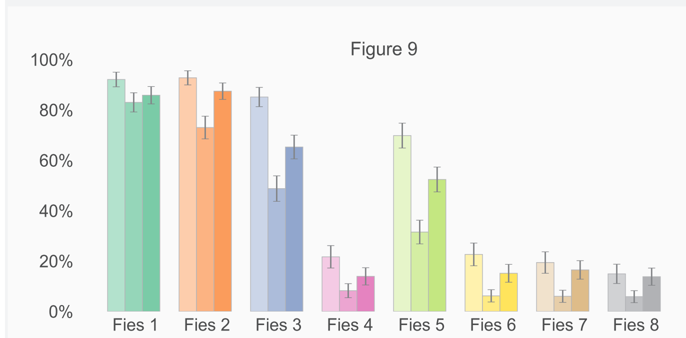


of households using formal channels declined from 79% to 47% in this period. There was no measureable change in the source of remittances in recent months. There was no observable change in the proportion of households receiving either interntional or domestic remittances, and domestic sources remained far more common than international sources (see **Figure 8**).

FOOD INSECURITY & COPING

Food insecurity indicators worsened notebly in Chin State in early-2023. The average Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) score—which focuses on behaviors in the past seven days—grew worse between December 2022 and March 2023, rising from 5.2 to 7.9 (altough this is still well below the 12.4 measured on the heels of the monsoon season in early-September). Moreover, seven-of-eight Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) indicators—which focuses on behaviors in the past month—also worsened between December and March. The proproportion of households reporting less-severe FIES indicators increased by 15 to 30 percentage points in this period, while the proportion reporting less-severe indicators increased by six to eleven percentage points (see **Figure 9**). In early-March, 14-17% of households said at least one household member skipped a meal, ran out of food, went hungry or went at least one day without eating during the past month. The deterioration of food insecurity indicators appears to agree with growing reports of difficulty accessing meat and vegetables (see **Access to Markets and Goods**), however it may be at odds with improved nutrition among households with children under five and/or pregnant or breastfeeding women (see **Box 2**).

FIGURE 9. FIES Food Insecurity Indicators (Past 30 days)
Food insecurity measures worsened in recent months.



BOX 3. Description of FIES Indicators
The MAU regularly collects data on eight Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) indicators, which measure the following behaviors:

In the past thirty days, there was a time when someone in the household...

- **FIES 1** - Worried about not having enough food to eat because of a lack of money or other resources.
- **FIES 2** - Was unable to eat healthy and nutritious food because of a lack of money or other resources.
- **FIES 3** - Ate only a few kinds of foods because of a lack of money or other resources.
- **FIES 4** - Had to skip a meal because there was not enough money or other resources to get food.
- **FIES 5** - Ate less than they thought they should because of a lack of money or other resources.
- **FIES 6** - Ran out of food because of a lack of money or other resources.
- **FIES 7** - Was hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money or other resources for food.
- **FIES 8** - Went without eating for a whole day because of a lack of money or other resources.

IMPLICATIONS

- **Declining security and mobility could aggrevate conditions which improved slightly in late-2022.** Security and mobility worsened for some households in early-2023, and access to markets and goods became more difficult. If sustained, these developments could erode modest improvements in food security since September;
- **Displaced, returned and resettled households may have distinct needs requiring different forms of support.** As of early-March, one-third of households in this study were resettled/returned, yet many still faced major challenges. Resettlement alone will not resolve these challenges, and these subgroups may necesitate a bifurcated aid strategy;
- **Households that rarely use mobile money platforms may be better reached via alternative informal channels.** Households which recieve remittances have increasingly favored informal channels in recent months. Providing assistance through such informal channels may enable aid to reach harder-to-reach households.
- **Food insecurity indicators are likely to worsen further in the months ahead.** Food insecurity indicators worsened in early-March, and foods like meat and vegetables became less readily available. Given seasonal trends, access to diverse and nutritious food is likely to worsen further as the monsoon season approaches;
- **Further monitoring is needed to understand local market functionality.** Data suggest that local market access can change frequently in conflict-affected areas and within highly-mobile communities (e.g., redisplaced, resettled). Additional monitoring is needed to determine active trade networks and market locations/functionality.

Market Analysis Unit (MAU)

The Market Analysis Unit provides development practitioners, policymakers and private sector actors in Myanmar with data and analysis to better understand the 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).

CONTACT

Market Analysis Unit
market.analysis.unit@gmail.com

MARKET ANALYSIS UNIT