

**The Survey Research on the Post-Coup Socio-Economic Impact of
the Women and Working Peoples from Peri-urban Areas**

Executive Summary & Recommendations

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Executive Summary

The military's Coup d'état on 1st February 2021 had torn down the democratic progresses of Myanmar and ignited the widespread civil war again. The people of Myanmar united and established its revolution (also named as Myanmar Spring Revolution) with the ambitions of ending the dictatorship and building a federal democratic union. The peoples' revolution was featured by creative & bold movements including civil disobedience movements (CDM) especially those of government staffs. Moreover, crowd-funded armed resistances became popular after the people had felt that there was not enough support or response from the international governments. As the result, it's not possible for the military to establish the proper local administration even 2 years after the attempt to coup.

The people, at the same time, were suffering doubled burden – coup related pressures together with post-covid economic stresses. This research aimed - (1) to study the socio-economic impacts of women breadwinners & working peoples in post-coup situation and (2) to identify the short-term & long-term development needs of urban women labors and women-headed households. The research used 2 methods – Survey questionnaires and Case Studies – to collect the data. Altogether 60 respondents (women breadwinners, women factory workers, housewives from families of working peoples, and CDM-ers) from Hlaing Tharyar and South Dagon participated in the research – 33% (20 p) of them are women-headed households.

The average age of the participants was 42-years (youngest at 21 and oldest at 73). 30% (18 p) was factory workers and 25% (15 p) was casual labors. 47 of 54 married respondents (87%) had children and 28% of their children (27 of 97) were at school-going ages. Average number of family members was 3 and average number of people with income was 1. The calculation showed the ratio of working people to family member was 3:8 – meaning that only 3 in 8 people had an earning job.

Most of the families (60%) had only one source of income and average monthly income calculation showed 208,860 MMK (99 USD)¹. Thus, average daily income ranges from 2.69 USD to 3.81 USD, which is just surviving from the extreme poverty line² specified by the World Bank in September 2022. However, it wasn't an exception for the factory workers as their minimum wage was set at 4,800 MMK (3.6 USD)³ per day since 2018, without further updates till the present day. It means that the value of daily wage rate dropped to around 2 USD (1.6~2.3 USD) as per post-coup hyperinflation. The factory workers in previous situation could survive together with overtime compensation and

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- 1 Exchange rate on 2nd December 2022 was 2,100 MMK per one USD according to www.xe.com. However, the actual money exchange was only happening at the black market, which set around 3,000 MMK per USD. If the calculation was done by the actual exchange rate from illegal market, the average monthly income would be 70 USD.
 - 2 The World Bank updated the global poverty lines in September 2022 and the new extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day based on purchasing power parities (PPP) from 2017. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/05/02/fact-sheet-an-adjustment-to-global-poverty-lines#11>
 - 3 Minimum wage specification became effective on 15 May 2018 and exchange rate was 1,333 MMK per USD on that day according to www.xe.com

other benefits, which was no longer available due to lesser demand or ceased contracts from the companies. Moreover, the factory workers had no option except sticking to the existing job for survival, regardless of workplace with labor rights violations, and without anyone or any agency to help resolve the labor disputes.

Casual labors were also facing the problems with job scarcities or wages together with the economic sufferings of the peoples and their businesses. The people who joined the civil disobedience movement (CDM) against junta were facing the worst situation. Many CDM peoples had no income and no longer possible to make lives by their professions. There was no other support for them, too. Therefore, they were surviving by selling out their properties, asking out or borrowing from their parents and a few close friends.

Joblessness, lesser job opportunities, not having regular work or income, and not getting the living wages were not new problems, however, worse after coup. Coup related declining the trust on banks and Myanmar Kyat led to cash shortage, hyperinflation, reduction in currency value, and skyrocketing prices of food & medicines, which hurt terribly to the families of working peoples. Peoples' attempt to sell food & basic commodities at cheaper prices, offering of low-cost lunches, and food donations were the "people-to-people" programs especially for urban poor, casual workers/labors and working peoples, even though the scope & sustainability of those programs were limited. Nonetheless, the peoples' inaccessibility to food means the way to the country's famine.

Daily live making became difficult as per devaluation of earned wages and higher commodity prices. The families tried to cut meals to reduce household expenditures, however, the medical costs were exception and consuming the large portion of the regular expenses for some families. 65% (39 p) of families in the survey and 50% (5 p) of the families in the case studies said they have at least one member with chronic disease or who needs special care/attention for his/her health. They couldn't afford to cure but only to relief the suffering by taking medicines, in all of those cases.

Uncertain to make income or to increase income, but certain to become bigger expenses – which led to debt cycles. The needs for daily live making, health and other family expenses had to rely on casual loans from maximum available source for maximum available amount. No other option except to endure the bitterness of debts and high interest rates, especially for women who are taking responsibilities for household management. Imbalanced income-expense and being in debt-cycle become the underlying cause for domestic violences.

Pressures experienced within family also include the education for the children and participating women themselves. According to the National Youth Policy (2017)⁴, youth definition ranges from 15 to 35 years of age. Therefore, there were 21 youth women (35%) in the survey and 5 youth women (50%) within the case studies. The research didn't include specific questions on the education status of the respondents however 17 youth women responding to the survey questions (81%) and 4 youth women cases (80%)

4 The Republic of the Union of Myanmar – Youth Policy (November 2017), <https://www.dsw.gov.mm/sites/default/files/ebooks-download/Youth%20Policy.pdf>

mentioned for their children's education, where everyone was facing the challenges which were directly related with the coup.

The people (either for themselves or for their children) chose to boycott both the basic education and higher education (universities), showing the disagreement to the coup. There were attempts to create or support new teaching-learning approaches – online, informal or vocational educations. However, those new forms of learning were not yet for the children and young peoples from the ordinary families. For the families of the working peoples who are in debt cycle and difficult live making, the educational goal or expectation (especially for the primary & middle schooling children) is just simply accomplishing the classes (levels) year by year. Most of the children of high-schooling age and university students had to choose to struggle for their lives with the disrupted education. It had already been 3 years the children & young peoples were away from the school (1 year for covid control and 2 years post-coup situation).

On the other hand, the junta was pressuring the universities & basic education schools to open and the students to attend the classes. There were also attempts to quickly refill the staff gaps left by the CDM movements. These situations had risen the concerns of CDM students and staffs for their future, in addition to the challenges for their daily live making and security problems.

Concerns over the safety & security, live making and debt cycles were followed by the threats outside home – widespread & increasing violences, robbing, and criminals – which were affecting both physical and psychological distresses. The number of attempts and accomplished suicide cases were increasing and there were 44 dead (30 men & 14 women) by suicide during February 2021 to September 2022⁵. Gambling and illegal lucky draws were some of the money draining stress relief options to escape a moment from daily life struggles & distresses.

The working peoples and poor families from suburban areas were continuing their struggles differently regardless of the patterns & intensities of the oppressions & distresses. There were peoples who expects for the worst (worse than now) and some expects for the best (better than now). In summary, the role of young peoples & women, working peoples and poor families who are sacrificing themselves at the frontline of the existing peoples' revolution and for future nation building – we must recognize and honor in due diligence.

5 Frontier (27 September 2022), "Suicides surge in post-coup Myanmar", Frontier Myanmar, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/suicides-surge-in-post-coup-myanmar/>

Recommendations

General Recommendations for Follow-up Researches

This research was done by limited resources, to a small sample size and with generalized questions to learn the socio-economic situations of the families in brief. In this regard, there should be more in-depth studies and researches to identify and prepare for remedies on the sufferings & coup-impacted socio-economic situations.

Recommendations for Immediate Actions

The people's power must be in the hand of the people – is the foundation to relieve the sufferings and to build the flourish lives. There are also immediate actions needed while marching towards this revolutionary goal.

- ◆ Establishing & supporting the programs to improve the access to safe food in dignify manners for the working peoples and for the people of Myanmar.
- ◆ Ensuring the international aids reach to the place in actual needs. Supporting local trades where the people can sell & buy the food and basic commodities at reasonable prices. Establishing & supporting the farmer markets where the seller & buyer meet directly.
- ◆ Preparing to overcome the possible food crisis – prepare to have food sources nearby (such as growing & sharing foods).
- ◆ Taking care of each other for live making, health, safety & psychological challenges.

Recommendations for Long-term Actions

Daily live challenges of the urban poor and working peoples became worse after 2021-coup, however, generally not the new problems. During the transitioning to federal democratic union;

- ◆ There must be policies and programs those ensuring to improved accessibility to quality public services (including health, living, food system, education & transportation) and to prosper the lives of the urban poor, working peoples, factory workers and civil servants.
- ◆ There must be remedies and transition justice for the victims of human rights violations, dispossessions by many reasons, and reducing the quality of lives.
- ◆ There must be remedies or compensations to the loss of and supporting for re-envisioning the future of civil servants and students who participated in the civil disobedience movements.