This edition of the Food Basket Bulletin attempts to provide detailed analysis on food prices, casual labor employment and wages for 2 time periods:

- Section A is based on an analysis of trends over relatively longer time-period. This period being the last week of September 2008 – March 2009. This section is divided into two parts with Part 1 dealing with rice price trends and Part 2 with labor and wage trends. A brief analysis of data from April has also been included at the conclusion of Part 1 and 2.
- Section B consists of a more detailed analysis at the village tract level for the period January – March 2009

This report describes the ability of poor and vulnerable households in selected areas in Myanmar to meet their basic food needs. The report is produced by the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit at WFP Yangon.

Data was collected with the help cooperating partners, including ADRA, World Vision, WHH, REAM, CARE, KMSS, OISCA, AMDA, Shalom foundation and Field Staff from ten WFP sub-offices and two field offices.

Market data related to household access to rice is collected on a monthly basis from WFP's current operational areas: Northern Rakhine State, Dry Zone-Magway, Northern Shan State: Lashio Areas, Kokang Special Region, Wa Special Region; Kachin State, Taunggyi area; Delta Areas and Yangon as shown in the adjacent map. The data collected includes rice prices, daily wages, and employment opportunities.

**Section A: Wage, Price & Employment Trends across Myanmar over a Period of Six Months**

**Part 1: Rice Price Trends across Myanmar over a Period of Six Months**

A look at rice price trends across the country presents 2 scenarios; (1) states / divisions where prices have increased over 6 months and (2) areas where price has decreased. It is to be noted that a particular area for example, Lashio, may have seen a decrease in the price of rice across seven of its nine village tracts. Thus, for the Township as a whole we can say that prices have decreased over a 6 month period. Behavior of prices for each township is listed in greater detail elsewhere in this Bulletin.
(a). Areas that have seen an overall decrease in rice prices

The following areas across the country have seen an overall decrease in prices:

**Northern Rakhine State**
For the period September 08 – April 09, the state has seen rice prices decrease by approximately 32%. Every township in the state reported a decrease in prices with greatest percentage decrease in prices being seen in Zedi Pyin, Rathedaung and Kha Htee Hla. Although rice prices in NRS have decreased they are still 25% higher than they were at this time in 2007. The significant increase in late 2007 and early 2008, in line with global price increases, further pushed prices beyond the reach of many resulting in continued food insecurity. The current reduction in prices now is seen as simply price ‘normalization.

**Lashio**
With the exception of Mone Koe and to a lesser extent Man Pan all other areas in the state reported a sizeable decline in prices over 6 months notably in Man Tone and Galen with the average fall in price being approximately 30% (in areas that reported a decrease in prices).

**Kokang**
Apart from Morhtai, which saw a relatively high increase in rice price, other areas have shown a decline notably Tar Shwe Tan, on average a decrease of 20% over a 6 month period.

**Kachin**
Across the state, while there has been a decrease in prices; compared to the above states, this decrease has been relatively less – a 16 % decrease in prices.

**Taunggyi**
While prices have decreased in this division, the change was far lower compared to other states / divisions. The notable exceptions were Bikin (where prices decreased by 25%) and Saung Byang (increased by 25%). However overall the state has seen a decline, albeit marginally, in prices.

**DryZone**
Presented a clear anomaly. While in Magway rice prices increased by 38%; in Myit Cha prices decreased by 48%. Other areas in the DryZone showed negligible decrease in prices.

The following Village Tracts (VT) have seen the highest percentage decrease in prices over a six month period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Change (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Man Tone (Lashio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Galen (Lashio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Myit Chae (Dry Zone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Kha Htee Hla (NRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Rathedaung (NRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Kha Htee Hla (NRS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 53 %
- 50 %
- 48 %
- 43 %
- 43 %
- 41 %
(b). Areas that have seen an overall increase in rice prices

**Bogale**
Out of the 6 Village Tracts (VT) from where information could be collected, only 2 tracts depict price increase in the period September 08 – April 09. However in both these areas the increase is drastic. In Bogale town, prices have doubled over a 6 month period. A possible reason for this could be an influx of people from surrounding areas into Bogale town thus driving prices up and it can be expected to fall following greater availability after the summer harvest. The other areas to show price increase was KaDonkani where prices have increased by more than 40%. The remaining areas of Bogale showed little change.

**Yangon Division**
Rice prices have increased drastically in Mee Kywat (by more than 60%) and Kyi Myin Daing (35%) in the 6 month period September 08 – March 09. On the other hand Tha Ke Ta shows a negligible increase. Yangon being a net consumer rather than a producer, it is to be expected that prices could increase in the long term. However the rate of price increase is marked. Latest figures however now show a decrease from an average of 600 Kyat per kilo in end-March to 420 Kyats in the second week of April.

**Mawlamyinegyun**
Prices have increased across the township except in Mawgyun itself which saw a price decrease of approximately 17% for the period September 08 – March 09.

The following Village Tracts have seen the highest percentage increase in prices over a six month period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage Change (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bogale 100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mee Kywat (Yangon) 63 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>KaDonkani (Bogale) 43 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Magway (Dry Zone) 38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Morhtai (Kokang) 36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kyi Myin Daing (Yangon)35 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the country the following areas have seen the highest price for a Kg of lower quality rice (in absolute terms i.e. in Myanmar Kyats) in April 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village Tract / Township</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Average Price of 1 Kg of Rice in April’ 09 (in Kyats)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mone Koe</td>
<td>Lashio</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Wai Moe</td>
<td>Kachin</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Laukai</td>
<td>Kokang</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morhtai</td>
<td>Konkang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Taunggyi</td>
<td>Taunggyi</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Kyi Myin Daing Tha Ke TaMee Kywat</td>
<td>Yangon</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2: Labor & Wage Trends across Myanmar over a Period of Six Months

Data on wage rates and average days of employment were analyzed and a number of discernable patterns were seen. While other areas, not listed below (e.g. Kachin) did show change, this was not significant in terms of increase or decrease relative to the patterns seen below.

Northern Rakhine State

- The state presents a distinct difference between casual labor wage patterns for men and women over the period of half-a-year. Across the state wages have largely seen no change, remaining stagnant in most VTs. The exceptions being Rathedaung with an increase of 50%. Wages of women, however, depict a very steep increase across the state. In VTs such as Kha Moung Zeik and Kyein Chaung, wages for women have increased by 75% and 60% respectively. On the other hand wages for women in Kha Htee Hla and Buthidaung have decreased by 40%.

- The average difference, across the state, between wages of men and women was 1000 Kyat.

- A similar pattern is seen with respect to weekly employment (calculated as the average number of days per week employed). Across the state there has been little change in average number of days men were employed although Taung Po and Kha Moung Zeik saw some decrease. These two VTs also saw a decrease in days employed for women. However most of the remaining VTs shared a high increase in average days employment for women.

Thus across the state, it can be assumed that household earnings have marginally improved due to the increase in average salaries of women combined with an increase of days per week that the average earning women worked. However, it should also be kept in mind that this increase of salary is an increase from a very low base.

Lashio

- For the state as a whole there has been little change in wage rates (for men). The average change in wages has been 20% with 3 VTs reporting an increase and a similar number depicting a decrease (of 20%) in average wage amounts earned. The exception being Man Pan which has seen an increase of more than 30%. Mone Koe and Nansalatt saw no change over 6 months.

- There has been a distinct reduction across Lashio with respect to number of days employed. The greatest change is seen in Mone Baw where the average numbers of days of employment for men has gone down from 7 days a week to 3. For the state, the average number of days is reduced from 5 to 4 days per week.

Bogale

- In Bogale there has been a minimal increase in wage labor amounts for men although insufficient information is available with respect to women. There has been a slight increase in average number of days of labor with the average increasing from 3 to 4 days per week.

Yangon

- Yangon has seen an increase in men’s wages by approximately 30%. However the highest increase in average wages are in the same areas that has seen the highest increase in rice prices thus negating any benefits that could accrue from higher household income.

- Almost no change is seen in average number of days of employment for men over 6 months (Note: Data for women was unavailable).
Mawgyun
- While no change was seen in male wages or employment, there has been an increase, across the township, in average amount of female wages with Kyet Sher and Shauk Chaung seeing a 100% and 50% increase in amounts respectively.

### Number of Days per Week Employed - April 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Days</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Highest average number of days (per week) employed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lowest average number of days (per week) employed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Highest average number of days (per week) employed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Lowest average number of days (per week) employed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Casual Labor Wages Earned per Day - April 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wages Per Day (in Kyat)</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Highest reported wage rate from casual labor</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lowest reported wage rate from casual labor</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Highest reported wage rate from casual labor</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Lowest reported wage rate from casual labor</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section B: Wage, Price & Employment Trends for January – March’ 09

In this section, the analysis attempts to provide a rough indicator of food security trends based on 3 key factors; changes in staple food prices, wages and employment opportunities.

For the period January and the first part of February there was a reduction in price volatility as compared to the later part of the month and March.

Prices in Kokang and the Dry-Zone saw the greatest degree of price change with prices decreasing, in Kokang, markedly in the month of February (from the previous month) and increasing in the Dry-Zone in March.

The townships of Bogalay, Pyapon and Mawgyune had the lowest prices for rice and furthermore, the latter 2 townships depicted little or no price fluctuation over 3 months.

The charts that follow in this section provide comparisons between the Current Minimum Standard and the Basic Survival Threshold of HHs in a given location. The charts have been compiled based on the assumption that households do not have significant access to self production and therefore rely on casual wages to generate income.

Calculation method:
The two lines in attached charts denote the following:
BLUE: current minimum standard (the average weekly income of a poor household), derived from the formula: [number of earners] x [no of days of employment]x[daily unskilled wages]
RED: basic survival threshold (the minimum expenditure per household per week to survive, only rice), derived from the formula: [ 0.5 kg cheap rice price] x [ number of persons per household] x [seven days per week]  These calculations take into account "compulsory collateral expenditures" in urban areas (weekly):

Northern Rakhine State

During this period the household food security was poor in Taung Pyo, Alel Than Kyaw, Buthidaung, Zedi Pyin and Taung Bazzar. The opposite trend can be seen in Maungdaw and Rathedaung (for February and March).

For Kha Moung Zeik, Kyein Chaung, Kha Htee Hla and Nyaung Chaung, the situation fluctuated with the current minimum standard briefly exceeding the basic survival threshold.

The highest price for rice in Taung Pyo(MD) and Alel Than Kyaw(MD) in Jan were 360 Kyats/kg and 330 Kyats/kg respectively. The lowest wages in Myin Hlut(MD) and Zedi Pyin(RTD) during February and March were 1000Kyats/day and 1500Kyats/day.

The average rice prices gradually decreased from January to March. However access to food continues to be a problem and thus negates potential advantages of a reduction in price with the net effect being that most of the areas in the state continue to be food insecure.

Average household of 6.7 with 1.4 earners.
Northern Shan State: Kokang Special Region

Across the region the trends in household wages, prices and employment opportunities were sufficiently stable and adequate and thus a clear gap between the minimum standard and the basic survival threshold is seen (overall for the period Jan – March 09). A key factor being the ability of HHs to earn adequately to cover their basic rice need during the post-harvest period.

Employment has remained stable in all areas but wages has slightly changed during this period.

Job availability was high during all 3 months in Man Ton Par, Par Sin Kyaw, Tar Shwe Tan, Laukai and the rice price doesn't change in Man Ton Par, Par Sin Kyaw and Honai areas. Wages in most of Kokang areas increased during February and March except in Honai and Shaokai.

Though the basic survival threshold trend line remained nearly constant, the current minimum standard trend line fluctuated in most areas (apart from Laukai a Shaokai where both were nearly constant).

Average household of 6 with 2.2 earners.
Note: no data available for January in Morhtai (Kokang)
Northern Shan State: WA Special Region

(Note: Analysis for this region is for only January and February as VAM did not receive data for March)

The price of rice, wages and job opportunities were stable in most of the areas during this period. In January, the lowest rice price in Wa area was 2 Yun/kg (340 Kyats/kg) whereas wages for causal labor was 20 Yun/day (3400 Kyats/kg). Based on this information we can state that the food security situation (with respect to staple food price, wages and employment opportunity) in Wa seems to be stabilizing.

Except for a decrease in income generation in Man Tun, Mong Pawk and HoTao; the gap between income and expenditure is large and positive. In other words some areas in the region are relatively food secure. Furthermore areas such as Pang Khan, Wein Kao and Naung Khit depict a gradual lowering of the Basic Survival Threshold.

Average household of 5.4 with 2 earners.
Northern Shan State: Lashio Area

Significantly, the gap between income generation and food security at the HH level is extremely wide for Lashio and Galen implying (based on the 3 concerned indicators) that they are food secure. Monkoe and Mone Baw, on the other hand see very slight difference in their Current Minimum Standards and the Basic Survival Threshold.

The average rice price had gradually decreased in this period with a wages of 4000 Kyats/day being the highest reported figure, in Pan Say, among all of Lashio (NSS) areas. It was commonly seen, for example in Tarmoenye that an increase in wages was offset by a decrease in number of days employed per week. Thus the lack of adequate employment opportunities was a common cause of food insecurity.

Average household of 5 with 2 earners.
Southern Shan State: Taunggyi Area

During this three month period, wages and employment opportunities in Sebu and Bikin were stable (2000 Kyats/day and an average employment of just one day a week). The highest rice price was reported to be 438 Kyat/kg in Taunggyi in March while 250 Kyat/kg was the lowest reported price in Phe Kon. The average number of days employed was 5 in Taunggyi and Phe Kon areas with the overall result being poor food security in the region (apart from the above 2 areas).

Sepu, Bikin, Moe Bye were significantly below the poverty line for all three months. With respect to Seikaung the current minimum standard was higher than the basic survival threshold for January and March but lower in Feb. Hsi Hsaing depicts the opposite pattern.

Average household 4.92 with 2.57 earners.
Dry Zone: Magway Area

Except for Magway, Yenangyaung, most of the areas in dry zone are food insecure.

There was no change in price, wages or number of days employed for the months of January and February in most of the dry zone. While Magway, Pakhangyi and Pakokku areas reported an average of 3 days of employment in Yenanchaung, employment availability was 6 days/week and wages were 1200 Kyats/day during January to March.

One of the most food insecure areas in Magway was Pakhangyi.

Average household 5 with 2 earners.
Kachin State: Special Region I and II

In Kachin, 3 out of 5 areas, Namsanyang, Sadone, Wai Moe, depicted adequate food security (with respect to staple prices and labor opportunity). However data from Wai Moe (where the Chinese Yuan is the generally accepted currency) indicated borderline food security. The opposite pattern can be found in Garayang which saw a deterioration in Jan but with situation improving in February and March. The difficult period in January is probably linked to seasonal variation in food and job availability.

The highest employment rate of 3 days per week could be seen in Sadone, Wai Moe for February and March.

In January and February, the trend for basic survival thresholds and current minimum standards in Namsanyang, Sadone and Wai Moe are similar.

*Average household 5.4 with 2 earners.*
Yangon Area

The price of rice has slightly increased during three months. Employment has remained stable at 6 days per week available.

Yangon’s urban character increases the ability of households to cover their basic rice needs, primarily due to higher wage levels combined with an almost permanent employment capacity. The situation (with respect to rice consumption) in all areas of Yangon is good when compared to other areas in the country.

*Average household 5.4 with 2 earners.*
Delta (Pyapon, Mawgyune, Bogalay, Laputta)

Delta (Pyapon)

Generally the price of rice has proven to be stable. However Pyapon saw an increase in prices (from 150 Kyat/kg to 225 Kyat/kg) between January and March. The average number of days employed per week during January to March was 2 days and wages have decreased. 1500 Kyats was the lowest wages per day in Kyaik Latt and Dedaye.

*Note: no data available for March in Kyaik Latt (Pyapon Area).*

Average household 5.3 with 2 earners.

Delta (Mawgyune)

In Mawgyune, Kyet Shar, Htee Yar Li and Shauk Chaung experienced some adverse conditions as prices increased.

In Shauk Chaung and Mawgyun, the rice prices increased in February, but decreased in Mawgyun from 300 Kyat/kg to 250 Kyats/kg. Employment availability was 2 days/week and wages were 1500-2000 Kyats/day during January to March.

*Average household 5.3 with 2 earners.*

Delta (Bogalay)

The average rice price across Bogale was 200 Kyats/kg, at least 2 day per week of employment and 1000-2000 Kyat per day average wage.

In Set San, the income generation trend line was below poverty line; while the situation (as far as staple food prices go) was slightly better in Bogalay area, Poe Oo San, Kyein Chaung, KaDonKaNi and MyinKaKone.

The most difficult period for Set San is February, linked to seasonal variation in food and job availability. The trend for basic survival thresholds and current minimum standards in Poe Oo San, Kyein Chaung and KaDonKaNi are similar.

*Average household 5.3 with 2 earners.*

Delta (Laputta)

The average rice price in Laputta was 350-400 Kyats/kg in with 1000 Kyat per day being the lowest reported wages and the number of day worked per week being very low at 1.

*Average household 5.3 with 2 earners.*

*Note: no complete data available for January, February and March in Laputta Areas*
For questions or comments concerning any aspect of this report, please contact Siddharth Krishnaswamy (Siddharth.Krishnaswamy@wfp.org).