



ADVANCE EDITION

# REGRESSING GENDER EQUALITY IN MYANMAR:

Women living under the pandemic  
and military rule

The **Women living under the pandemic and military rule survey** is one of the early pieces of work falling under the umbrella of the **UNDP Myanmar Development Observatory**. The Observatory will inform the international community, development partners and Myanmar civil society with up-to-date insights on Myanmar's socio-economic trajectory as the current situation develops. The data-driven in-house think-tank is constructed around three pillars:

1. **Economy**, to track the economic impact of the military takeover and pandemic, including relating to poverty.
2. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, to assess regressions on key development indicators especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations.
3. **Conflict**, to monitor evolving dynamics with a particular focus on the nexus among conflict, poverty, livelihoods and the SDGs.

Data collection for the Women living under the pandemic and military rule survey was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), under the steering of the UNDP Myanmar Development Observatory, and undertaken by Myanmar Survey Research.

## Foreword

One year after the military takeover, it is difficult to foresee any rapid improvement in the divisive course of events in Myanmar. Women are starting to see their future disappear before their eyes. They are scared to leave their homes and the peace, political and economic rights they enjoyed for a decade are rapidly disappearing.

UNDP and UN Women brought their complementary mandates and capacities together to conduct this study. This alliance has generated much-needed data on the impact of the twin crises on women. This complements datasets already held by both organizations, supports analysis to highlight the gendered nature of the pandemic and military takeover and provides a solid foundation for designing gender-sensitive interventions.

**The Women living under the pandemic and military rule survey** looks at the way that women are affected by macro developments and trends. It is important to understand the real-time social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and the military takeover, not just for measures of income poverty but also for vulnerability more generally and for how the double crisis is impacting Myanmar's women both at the family and individual levels.

Data from the survey on the **Women living under the pandemic and military rule survey** shows the following worrisome findings across women's living standards as it relates to security, health outcomes and economic impacts:

### ***Women are witnessing violence against women and girls***

One in five women in the survey has seen violent behaviour against a woman or girl living in their neighbourhood since COVID-19 began and, 6 percent know a girl or woman who has sought support to deal with domestic violence in the same period.

### ***Women are experiencing increased insecurity and fear, with links to women's health and living standards***

The military takeover coming on top of the pandemic brings another massive issue to the fore: fear. One in three women feel unsafe in their own home at night. Half of women are afraid to leave their own ward or village during the day. The UNDP recently created the Civilian Vulnerability to Violence Index (CVVI) ranking townships by the extent of violence against civilians. Linking this index to the survey data shows that living in one of the top 100-most violent townships is correlated with being more likely to have experienced COVID-19 symptoms since March 2020. "Women report that getting to health services have been more difficult." This clearly shows that exposure to violence is intertwined with increased vulnerability across development indicators.

### ***Women report significant difficulties in accessing COVID-19 vaccinations and mistrust official information***

Looking at impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, this new data shows that only half of the women have had a second dose of vaccination and they recount that access to health services has seriously declined. The report suggests that the number of people dying from COVID-19 is several times higher than the official counts. The results also show the

divergence from official COVID-19 information, as women seem to have increasingly less trust in those sources.

***Women are bearing the brunt of drastic coping mechanisms to deal with falling incomes***

Four out of 10 households' have cut down on how much they eat as a way of dealing with their constantly declining incomes. In a third of these households, it is the women who have been cutting down most. Families are increasingly compelled to cut back on what they buy, cut into their savings (most common among young, educated women) and borrow from friends and relatives. The burden of these coping strategies are several times more likely to fall on women alone than on men alone.

***Nearly half of women report a significant increase in their unpaid care and domestic work, reducing their chances to earn a livelihood***

Women, who had always taken on more of the housework and caring roles, are now faced with even more 'time poverty.' Two out of five women with increased caring responsibilities, say this has impacted their ability to earn a livelihood and nearly a third say they can no longer do paid work because they must care for children or elderly people in the household.

Myanmar is undergoing a developmental U-turn, and this is *the* time to step up commitment. Efforts must be made immediately to halt the risk of women being left behind as the two crises continue into 2022.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) sincerely thank the 2,200 women in Myanmar who provided valuable insights and gave their time to take part in this survey.

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# Acronyms

<b>CATI</b>	Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing
<b>CDM</b>	Civil Disobedience Movement
<b>COVID-19</b>	Corona Virus Disease 2019
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistical Organisation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>HFHS</b>	High-Frequency Household Surveys, World Bank
<b>HVS 2020</b>	Household Vulnerability Survey 2020
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>MLCS 2017</b>	Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>PPSoGS</b>	Public Perception Survey of Government Services 2019
<b>SAC</b>	State Administration Council
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

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