Food Security and Development in Myanmar:

Ongoing MDRI-MSU-IFPRI Work in support of a Mon State Rural Development Strategy

May 27, 2015
Washington, DC
Mateusz Filipski (m.filipski@cigar.org)
Outline

• Background
• Insights from Mon scoping
• Mon State Livelihoods Survey
Background
Myanmar recent events

2008: Hurricane Nargis

2010: National elections

2011: End of Military rule

2015: National elections scheduled
Myanmar Food Security Program

- USAID-financed program led by Michigan State University
  - National partner: Myanmar Development Resource Institute (MDRI)
  - Five year program: October 2014 to September 2019
- Builds on earlier 2-year USAID financed scoping phase
  - 2 background papers identify lack of reliable data as a major issue
- Government demand for evidence-based rural development strategies
  - Including at regional level (decentralization)
Myanmar Food Security Program

- Training and Outreach
- Policy Advising
- Research
  - Livelihoods survey
  - Fish / seafood value chain
  - Other product and input value chains
  - Rapid Rural Assessments

- 2015-16 Work Plan:
  - Livelihoods survey in Mon State
  - Mon State Rural Development Strategy
    - Challenges, opportunities, policy actions
Why Mon state?

- Easy access
- No security concerns
- Election year
- Serves as pilot, proof-of-concept
  - Other states will follow (Shan?)
Mon State Basic Info

- South-Eastern Myanmar
- 2-3 million people
- Mawlamyaing (Moulein) = fourth largest city in Myanmar, pop about 400k
- Close to Thailand (physically, culturally, historically)
- Rural economy = rice + rubber, fruits to a lesser degree
- Relatively well off compared to other regions
Poverty in Mon state

% of population who are poor

Source: IHLCA 2009-2010 (Myanmar), WB WDI 2010-2011 (Bangladesh)
Comparative indicators: child health and protection

Child nutrition (% under 5):
- Stunting: Mon State 29.7, Myanmar 35.1, Bangladesh 41
- Wasting: Mon State 5.9, Myanmar 7.9, Bangladesh 16

DTP vaccination:
- Mon State 100, Myanmar 97.8, Bangladesh 97.8

Not living with biological parent:
- Mon State 18.7, Myanmar 5.4

Source: MICS 2009-2010 (Myanmar), DHS 2011 (Bangladesh)
Comparisons – access to services

Access to Improved Water and Sanitation (%)

- Improved water source
  - Mon State: 86.3
  - Myanmar: 98.5
  - Bangladesh: 82.3

- Improved Latrines
  - Mon State: 91.2
  - Myanmar: 84.6
  - Bangladesh: 53.3

Net Enrolment Rate in Primary School

- Mon State: 87.5
- Myanmar: 87.7
- Bangladesh: 74.8

Source: MICS 2009-2010 (Myanmar), DHS 2011 and WDI 2010/2011 (Bangladesh)
Fieldwork insights
Rural Mon State challenges and opportunities

- Survey design informed by scoping
- Context: labor force migration
- Challenges: Rice and rubber economies both in crisis
- Opportunities: High value added alternatives
Migration

• Mostly to Thailand (also Malaysia, Singapore, Gulf states, etc.)
• Short, medium, long-term (rarely permanent)
• Large influx of cash
• New law for worker permits in Thailand
Migration and agriculture

- Land rental/sale markets
- Labor shortages => rising wages
- National migrant workers from central Myanmar
- Rapid Mechanization
- Shifts to low-labor-intensity crops
- Transplant -> broadcast
Rice production squeezed

- Costs are rising
  - Mainly labor costs
- Productivity is falling
  - Single-season
  - Irrigation systems not maintained
  - Pest issues (snails)
  - Underperforming varieties
• Data until 2010 perhaps not very reliable
• Large potential for improvement
• Dire need for research and extension
Rubber economy in crisis

- Low-quality/low-price equilibrium
- Prices low for the past 3 years
- Increasing quality requires:
  - Expensive inputs (formic acid)
  - Quality control
  - Reliable outlet
- Coordination is key
• In Mon:
  – Many invested in early 2010’s
  – Prices now below profitability levels
  – Labor costs rising (skilled)
  – Nursery sales fell by 2/3 in past 3 years
Orchard opportunities

- Mon state is famous for quality of fruits
  - Rambutan, Pomelo, Mangosteen, Durian
- Very profitable
- Need inputs:
  - High-tech irrigation
  - Labor intensive
Vegetables

- Gourd, sweet potato, eggplant, chillies
- High value added, very profitable
- Off-season crop on paddy land (legal constraints)
- But labor requirements high
Pulses

- Not very significant in Mon state, but there is potential
Remittances for investment

- Massive influx of cash
- Used for consumption / construction / investment
- Scope for policies promoting investment
Mon State Livelihood Survey
Survey stats

- May-June 2015
- 1680 Households
- 140 enumeration areas (12 hh / EA)
- Township-representative
- Household + community questionnaires
Data collected

• Standard roster, education, activities etc.
• Particular detail on:
  – Migration
  – Land ownership, markets, etc.
  – Ag production
• Recall questions for 5 years ago (opening-up)
  – Gvt. service provision
  – Crop diversity, mechanization, commercialization etc.
Capacity building

• Survey work
  – 7 MDRI researchers
  – 60 enumerators (3/4 are female)

• Data analysis
  – Stata
  – Reporting
Expected outputs

• Livelihoods analysis
  – Map income sources

• Mon State Rural Development Strategy
  – Document/quantify the constraints, opportunities, trends, etc.
  – Set of actions
  – Case studies to complement survey data, policy relevant

• Fits into broader 5-year project
Mon data coming soon, despite monsoon
Thank you