Hunger Crisis under Double Damage in Myanmar
Thurein Lwin

Photo: Mauk Kham Wah

China is the number one trade partner of Myanmar. Most of Myanmar's exports items to China are natural resources and raw materials. China lock downed all of the border trade gates when Myanmar faced military coup and lack of control on the third wave of COVID-19 outbreak since February 2021. That action negatively impacted the supply chain of the agriculture sectors, and mainly impacted farmers among them.

In the early weeks of February, border trade between the two countries was temporarily halted due to the inability to export goods from Myanmar. China emergency shut down the Man Wein border gate from May 30 when the infection of COVID-19 increased on the China border. Only the Kyin Sann Kyawt border gate is an option to trade in June 2021, however, the complete shutdown of all border gates was imposed again in July. On July 28, China has allowed importing Myanmar only taxes on medical products and other products three days per week. Due to the closure of the border trade, traders changed their transportation channel to Chin Shwe Haw but it has been also closed unlimited days later July. The border gates have been shut down not only in China but also in Laos, Bangladesh, and Thailand.

The coming hunger crisis and extreme poverty will be the biggest challenges in Myanmar. WFP estimated that 3.4 million people across Myanmar are at risk of food insecurity and UNDP revealed that 48.2 percent of Myanmar's population, which is equivalent to about 26 million people, could be living in poverty by 2022 as a worst-case scenario.

The actions of shutting down the borders create a significant impact on the hunger crisis by combing effects of reducing the resilience of farmers, difficulty to operate the business, increasing the debt, lack of job opportunities, and increasing inflation rate.

For this reason, to overcome this crisis, all of the authorities and responsible organizations need immediate advocacy for China and the neighboring countries to reopen the border gates by preparing with the COVID-19 control measures.