

99% of Ward/Village Leaders carry Mobile Phones. Only 89.2% of these are personal phones. Yet, this is the 2nd most favoured method of communicating with the people of his/her jurisdiction

JULY 2015

The Ward/Village Tract Leaders are important Government-appointed administrative officers in Myanmar because they touch the lives of everyone who lives in or visits a ward or village. They have frequent communication with the residents of the Ward/Village and mediate their interactions with other branches and levels of Government.

A recent survey of 420 Ward/Village Leaders across Myanmar shows that nearly 99% carry a mobile phone. But only 9% have an official (i.e. Government issued and paid for) cell phone. The vast majority carries a personal cell phone.

60% of households across the country already have access to at least one mobile phone. More citizens in each ward or village will acquire a mobile in the near future. In this context, the mobile can be an efficient device that Ward/Village Leaders can use to communicate information to their community. Might it behoove the Government to consider partially covering the cost of their mobile phones, and then to actively consider “shifting” the delivery of public services to mobile phones?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Phones are the second most popular way for ward leaders to disseminate information to people in the ward or village.**
- 2. But only 9.6% of phones used by these Leaders are supplied by the Government**

- 3. At least 90% of the nation has mobile signal today**
- 4. States may benefit by proving their ground staff with mobile phones. The timely and accurate flow of information can**

be increased. More services can move to digital platforms (m-Government, mediated by Ward/Village Leaders, where necessary), making processes more efficient.

I. FIRST NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY OF ICT USE IN MYANMAR

LIRNEasia conducted what is considered to be the first nationally representative sample survey of ICT & knowledge uses & needs in Myanmar. While the focus was 8130+ surveys of individuals at household level, a second survey was carried out at cluster level. (A cluster refers to a ward in urban areas and a village in rural areas). 420 such surveys targeting Ward/Village Leaders were completed. The fieldwork was carried out in February/March of this year (2015), and is representative of 91.8% of the population, with +/- 2.5% margin of error (1).

II. 29% OF WARD/VILLAGE LEADERS' OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH PHONE CALLS

A surprising finding of the research was that even in the most rural of villages, the Village Leader would

use his/her phone to communicate to the people under his/her jurisdiction. Phones were only second to megaphone/public address systems (used by 60% of Ward/Village Leaders) as a mode of communication.

III. 99% OF WARD/VILLAGE LEADERS USE PHONES BUT ONLY 10% OF THEM HAVE OFFICIAL PHONES

99% of these officers had access to mobile phones, but less than 10% had access to an official mobile phone.

IV. FLOW OF INFORMATION TO/FROM THE COMMUNITY CAN BE MADE MORE ACCURATE, TIMELY AND PERHAPS COST-EFFECTIVE IF MORE HAD ACCESS TO MOBILE PHONES

While some Ward/Village Leaders DO use their personal mobile phones for communicating official purposes, it is clear that cost of calling/SMSing (which is incurred as a personal expense) is preventing more widespread use.

The research clearly shows that timely, accurate and relevant information can be disseminated through all levels of Government using mobile phones. The information dissemination can be both ways (citizen to Government and Government to citizen). Other additional services (e.g. location based services, which help in the over-night visitor registration in wards) can easily be facilitated using mobile technologies.

As such it may be prudent for Government to consider partially reimbursing the costs of phones/usage of Ward/Village Leaders as part of their official compensation, and to encourage the use of mobile phones by enabling m-Gov services via mobile phone and new apps.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Center (Canada)

SOURCES

(1) Detailed methodology note at <http://lirneasia.net/projects/2012-2014-research-program/responding-to-the-policy-window-in-myanmar-to-help-lay-foundation-for-inclusion/btr/dm/>

FURTHER INFORMATION

Helani Galapaya | LIRNEasia | helani@lirneasia.net | www.lirneasia.net

Phyu Phyu Thi | MIDO | +95 94 2001 5590 | phyuphyuthi@gmail.com | www.myanmarido.org