

## MYANMAR | Operational Update

The intensification of armed conflict since the military takeover on 1 February in the North and the South-East between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and/or People's Defence Forces (PDFs) have resulted in civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands of people. Disruptions to communications, banking services, healthcare, and supply chains, as well as cyclical natural hazards, such as flooding, continues to impact the humanitarian response and exacerbate the vulnerability of communities.

UNHCR and partners continue providing critical life-saving humanitarian assistance, while following the development of the situation closely to understand the full impact on people of concern (PoCs), including IDPs, stateless populations and host communities. Early warning systems, initiated by UNHCR and partners, are employed to detect changes on the ground which could impact on operations and PoCs with the view to inform timely mitigating measures and responses.

Despite incremental improvements to the COVID-19 infection rate, which had surged again mid-year, the impact of the ongoing pandemic continues to affect people of concern, particularly in light of the already strained or disrupted health services across the country. While integrating COVID-19 prevention and response into regular programming, UNHCR takes proactive measures to adapt in an agile manner to the evolving context to minimize risks to PoCs and to devise ways in which to continue interventions that support them.



**Disclaimer:** The names shown, the boundaries and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNHCR

### NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

**600,000**

Estimated stateless Rohingya in Rakhine State, of which some **148,000** are living in 21 displacement camps as well as among the host community since 2012

**593,300**

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayin, Mon states, and Bago (east), Sagaing and Magway regions, including some **84,000\*** in around **200** sites in Rakhine and southern Chin displaced due to the AA-MAF conflict, and an estimated **223,300** due to the resumption and intensification of clashes between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and/or People's Defense Forces (PDF) after 1 February

**55,233**

Displaced and affected people in Myanmar supported with basic **non-food items** and **shelter support** by UNHCR and partners in September and October

Financial requirements in 2021 (as of 26 October 2021)

**USD 62.6 million (52% funded)**

**UNHCR in Myanmar** works with partners and relevant stakeholders to progressively realize favourable and inclusive protection environment so that its populations of concern have access to rights, services, and sustainable solutions, aligned to people-centred and age, gender, and diversity principles. UNHCR's strategic priorities are; responsive humanitarian protection and assistance delivery; contributing to improving legal/policy frameworks and the human rights environment; promoting resilience and phased pathways to durable solutions.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS | September - October 2021

### South-East

- The security situation in the South-East region of Myanmar continues to deteriorate with sustained armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and/or People's Defense Forces (PDF) reported in all regions across the South-East (SE) leading to the displacement of an estimated 165,600 people as of 1 November 2021. Displaced populations in the SE continue to experience significant challenges in accessing basic needs and services, in particular food, healthcare, and shelter material. While humanitarian needs increase, humanitarian access continues to be seriously hindered by insecurity, roadblocks, land mine risks, and logistical constraints.
- In September, heavy rains and flooding in Myawaddy Township, Kayin State led to the temporary displacement of around 3,000 individuals living in low lying areas who have since returned to their homes. Emergency support, such as food and water, was extended by the local community.
- In response to ongoing humanitarian needs, UNHCR has ensured the provision of **critical lifesaving material and infrastructure support** in several locations across the South-East. During September and October, UNHCR reached 2,192 individuals with non-food item (NFI) support, including mosquito nets, sanitary kits, blankets, and sleeping mats. In Kayah State, six solar energy systems were installed in IDP sites, improving lighting in public spaces, enhancing safety and security. In addition, five bathing spaces were completed and the construction and renovation of water supply systems in three locations were completed, benefitting over 6,000 IDPs and members of the host community.
- The implementation of **community-based projects** in Kayin State progressed with the aim of improving infrastructure and supporting peaceful co-existence among communities. Projects, including construction of primary schools, health centres, and bridges are in various stages of completion, with UNHCR carrying out remote monitoring assessments during the reporting period. In total, 10 projects are planned for completion in 2021.
- In October, a four-month **online training** on trauma healing began, targeting 20 community leaders from Kayah and Shan (South) states, as well as UNHCR protection focal points.



*Before and after: Construction of a primary school in Kayin State. Photo: UNHCR*

### Rakhine and North-West

- As of 1 November 2021, over 84,000 persons remain displaced across around 200 sites and in host communities in Rakhine and Chin (South) states due to conflict between the Arakan Army (AA) and Tatmadaw. In addition, since 1 February, some 19,400 individuals remain displaced in Chin State, and another 19,300 in Magway and Sagaing regions. Around 15,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring India according to estimates by the Indian state governments.
- **Support to displacement sites and IDP camps** continued throughout September and October despite operational challenges faced notably since 1 February. Families affected by natural hazards, such as flooding, as well as conflict affected communities in Rakhine and southern Chin states were provided with critical non-food and shelter items reaching 42,683 individuals during this period. Items provided include blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats and kitchen sets. In addition, 2,332 individuals (424 households) moved into transitional shelters (longhouses) that had been reconstructed by UNHCR and partners, enhancing living standards of these families.
- 1,827 **people with specific needs** (PSNs), including elderly, people with disabilities, children, people with serious medical conditions, and female headed households, were supported through home visits with referrals made where possible. An additional four PSNs were supported with cash assistance.
- Measures continue to be taken to advance and enhance the sustainability of UNHCR **community-based projects** implemented in Rakhine (North) State, including road rehabilitation. Nearly 18,000 people of concern are benefitting from these projects. Around Sittwe Township, 48 members of youth development committees completed various trainings, including on community mobilization, conflict mitigation and resolution, and inclusive representation.
- **Counselling and information sessions** reached approximately 218 individuals, improving their knowledge on key issues pertaining to housing, land and property, civil documentation, and access to rights and services.
- An overview of the response to the AA-Tatmadaw conflict can be found [here](#).



*Village access road improvement, Rakhine State  
Photo: UNHCR*

## Kachin and North-East

- As of November, some 3,800\*\* individuals remain displaced in Kachin State and 15,200 in Shan State (8,100 Shan (North), 7,100 Shan (South)) due to ongoing armed clashes between the Tatmadaw, EAOs and/or the PDF.
- UNHCR and partners continue to provide [support to persons with specific needs \(PSNs\)](#), including persons with disabilities, elderly, single/female headed households, and those with serious medical conditions, through provision of [emergency cash assistance](#) reaching 602 PSNs and their families during September and October. The support is aimed at addressing their most pressing needs such as medical expenses while reducing the risk of resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as borrowing money, taking on debt, or reducing expenditure on key items including water, food, education, and healthcare.
- UNHCR continues to provide [non-food items \(NFI\) and shelter support](#) to meet the needs of displaced persons. In September and October, UNHCR distributed NFI items including blankets, kitchen sets, mosquito nets, solar lights, tarpaulins, sleeping mats, jerry cans, and buckets to 7,592 individuals (1,808 households) in Kachin and Shan states. Shelter support reached 425 individuals though support with maintenance and repairs on existing shelters. In addition, UNHCR provided 1,832 corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets to support the construction of 100 transitional shelter units in Mansi and Bhamo townships.
- Throughout September and October, UNHCR facilitated a number of [trainings and capacity building](#) initiatives for partners and camp management staff. Topics of trainings included protection and CCCM orientation, introduction to criminal law and procedure and the justice system, and basic mental health and psycho-social support.



*NFI distribution at an IDP camp in Shan State. Photo: Relief International*

## COVID-19 response

- At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR Myanmar adopted a 'stay and deliver' policy.' Since then, UNHCR has integrated COVID-19 prevention and response activities into regular programming, including through pairing provision of assistance with the distribution of face masks and hand sanitizer. Activities have focused on continuing, adapting and increasing delivery of protection and assistance, while ensuring fair and equal access to essential services for internally displaced persons and stateless populations. UNHCR continues to work closely with partners to assess the situation and ensure that preparedness and preventative measures remain in place.
- In the South-East, UNHCR and partners delivered essential COVID-19 PPE items and medical equipment to 25 hospitals and clinics in Bago (East) and Tanintharyi regions and Kayin State.
- In Rakhine State, distribution of cloth masks reached 8,262 IDPs and local community members, and 14,000 surgical masks, 70 boxes of hand sanitizers, 1,000 boot covers, and 200 protective goggles were donated to public facilities in Rakhine (North). In addition, 44,800 cloth masks were donated to camp management agencies, with distribution ongoing in Rohingya camps.
- In Kachin/ Shan states, PPE items, including surgical masks, soap, hand sanitizer, and NFI items were delivered to 11,635 people. A community-based isolation centre in Kachin State was supported with items including sleeping mats and tarpaulins to improve conditions in the centres.



*Handover of PPE items in Kayin State. Photo: UNHCR*

## Working in partnership

- UNHCR Myanmar collaborates closely with relevant stakeholders including UN agencies, international and local NGOs, as well as other humanitarian and development partners. The Agency is an active member of the UN Country Team (UNCT), the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the Cooperation Partners Group (CPG). As part of the inter-agency response in Kachin, Shan (North) and central Rakhine states, UNHCR leads the Protection Sector and the Shelter, Non-food Items (NFI), Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster at the national and sub-national levels. In the three northern townships of Rakhine State, UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian response through the Maungdaw Inter-Agency Group (MIAG) under the overall leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO). UNHCR also co-chairs, alongside UNDP, the South-East Working Group (SEWG), which has been the main forum for coordination and discussion related to the peace process and major development issues, and chairs state/regional Inter-Agency Coordination in Kayin and Kayah states. In response to the deteriorating situation in the South-East of Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR have strengthened the humanitarian pillar of the SEWG.
- Read more about the regional impact of the current crisis in Myanmar [here](#).

\*\*Displacement figures for the northeast (Kachin and Shan (North) states are according to OCHA/UNHCR data as of 1 November 2021

## Accountability to affected populations (AAP)

- UNHCR continuously takes steps to ensure **accountability to affected populations (AAP)**, adopting **age, gender and diversity (AGD)** approaches throughout programmes and activities. UNHCR engages directly with communities including various community groups such as women and girls, youth and adolescents, persons with disabilities, elderly, men, and boys, to better understand their needs and the challenges and risks they face.
- Despite operational constraints experienced post-1 February 2021 as well as due to COVID-19 related restrictions, particularly with the spike in cases observed mid-year, UNHCR continues to maintain and enhance effective **communication with communities**, including through the early warning systems and community feedback mechanisms. During September and October, complaints response mechanisms in Rakhine State camps received over 4,400 queries and complaints, largely related to issues concerning distributions, shelter, livelihoods, and other critical needs. In response to such complaints, camp management agencies provided immediate referrals for urgent cases (e.g., health, protection), or facilitated awareness campaigns to share information widely (e.g., distribution timelines).
- During September and October, UNHCR carried out at least 108 **protection monitoring missions**, and when physical presence was not possible, employed remote methodologies to maintain contact with communities making over 1,700 **phone calls** to people of concern.

## Early warning systems

- Following 1 February, UNHCR, with support from partners, put in place **early warning systems (EWS)** in areas of coverage including in Rakhine and southern Chin, Kachin and Shan (North), and in the South-East, enhancing communication with communities. The EWS aims at analyzing changes in the situation on the ground, including human rights violations and the potential impact on people of concern, to inform timely mitigating measures and responses by UNHCR and partners. Some trends observed over September and October include ongoing strengthening of the Arakan Army's military and administrative presence in areas under its influence, sustained fighting and increased tensions between the Tatmadaw and EAOs and/or PDF in some areas in the North- and South-East, and transportation and commodity prices adversely affected by skyrocketing fuel prices and continued decline of the Myanmar Kyat against the U.S. dollar – exacerbating vulnerabilities in an context seeing incommensurate wages and high unemployment. Key concerns among communities include challenges in accessing local markets, challenges in accessing basic services, including healthcare and livelihoods, risk of landmines, and continued rising commodity prices.

## Accessing civil documentation and citizenship

- Through outreach and counselling, UNHCR and partners continue addressing awareness around the importance and processes in obtaining **civil documentation** for all groups and communities. Investment is also being made to support community led structures and **paralegals** in expanding outreach to improve knowledge on civil documentation. At the same time, UNHCR supports individuals and their families in obtaining civil documentation should they wish to do so, by providing information and advice through its legal assistance programmes.
- Collaborating with a community of national and international partners working in various spheres, UNHCR aims to enhance understanding of challenges and opportunities in obtaining civil documentation for all communities in Myanmar. This includes delving into issues related to the overall country framework, difficulties faced by different age, gender and diverse groups as well as good practices in addressing awareness and access to civil documentation.
- At field level, UNHCR and partners mainstream civil documentation in all aspects of its work through - camp profiles, protection monitoring, community engagement – in order to understand access to civil documentation. This in turn informs programming and further advocacy on **prevention and reduction of statelessness**.

## UNHCR Myanmar's programme in 2021 is in partnership with:



UNHCR is very grateful to donors who have provided softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions to UNHCR Myanmar and globally: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America

For more information please see: UNHCR Myanmar Operational Data Portal | Refugee Response in Bangladesh Operational Portal | Thailand-Myanmar Cross Border Portal | Global Shelter Cluster - Myanmar | Global CCCM Cluster - MYANMAR | Or contact: Stephanie Ferry, Reporting Officer (ferry@unhcr.org).