

MYANMAR SITUATION EXTERNAL UPDATE #1

May 2013

FUNDING

UNHCR's revised requirements
US\$80.6 million

Contributions
US\$ 14,090,226 (cash)

17% funded

The UNHCR **Revised Requirements** document of March 2013 covering the Myanmar Situation is based on the needs assessment in the protection sector and the different clusters it leads: shelter, non-food items (NFIs) and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), and other operational areas. This budget also includes needs for displaced persons in Kachin State, and for preparatory activities in the south-east of Myanmar, for the possible return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Thailand.

The inter-agency **Rakhine Response Plan** (revised November 2012) covers initial UNHCR needs for protection, shelter, NFIs, and camp coordination and camp management for 2012 and projected needs in first half of 2013. UNHCR's increased needs for 2013 are reflected in its revised requirements.

An revised inter-agency **Kachin Response Plan** is expected to be released shortly covering needs for March-December 2013. It will reflect UNHCR needs in protection, shelter, NFIs, and camp coordination and camp management.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In **Rakhine State** more than **115,000 people**, and up to **140,000**, remain **displaced** by inter-communal violence since June 2012. UNHCR has provided either **permanent or temporary shelter or tents to 45,000 people**. Additional shelters are currently being built for **25,000** individuals before the rainy season.

Total assisted so far:

75,000 IDPs (shelter, relief items and /or protection)
200,000 of 800,000 persons without citizenship

- In **Kachin** there are more than **100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs)**. UNHCR was recently able to access new areas (*Hpakant*), where the Government has established a stronger presence, to distribute aid.

Total assisted so far:

over 50,000 IDPS

- In the **south-east** of Myanmar there are an estimated **230,000 IDPs** and across the border in **Thailand** around **128,000 Myanmar refugees**. Cross-border meetings are being held regularly between UNHCR in Myanmar and Thailand to discuss preparatory activities for the possible voluntary return of refugees; UNHCR also monitors the return of IDPs.

Total assisted :

approx. 50,000 IDPS

General, Security, Access

- In **Rakhine State**, constraints on freedom of movement remain a major concern as they are affecting access to livelihoods, education and health care. Issues regarding land availability for shelter construction are also worrying, particularly because of the upcoming rainy season. Many IDPs are in shelters that are either inadequate or located on flood-prone sites. UNHCR is working to build temporary shelters in Pauktaw and Myebon townships for up to 25,000 people in the next month and half. Access to conflict-affected populations in some areas (for example *Rathidaung*) remains challenging as it requires authorization from the authorities which can delay delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- In **Kachin State**, only around a third of IDPs can be accessed directly by UNHCR, mainly in areas controlled by the Government. Since July 2012, UNHCR has had no consistent access to areas where the Government is not present and has used local partners to reach people of concern. Although effective, there are limitations to this approach (e.g. insufficient monitoring of shelter construction). UNHCR was recently given access to additional areas previously inaccessible. This is a positive step, however, sustained and unhindered access is needed in order to reach all victims of displacement.
- Ceasefire agreements in the **south-east** have yet to lead to formal peace accords. In the meantime, the situation continues to evolve in a positive direction with new prospects emerging for progress towards durable solutions for both IDPs and refugees. However landmines, lack of civil documentation, access to livelihoods, trafficking and gender-based violence all continue to pose challenges for prospective returns in the near future.

Protection, Monitoring, SGBV / Child Protection

- The countrywide **protection monitoring system** is now supported by information management staff in each field office. The improved system will be launched in May enabling regular protection monitoring reports.
- In **Rakhine**, growing protection concerns with the approaching rainy season mean **targeted advocacy** is being rolled out with all stakeholders to ensure the appropriate provision of water, sanitation, health and shelter to persons of concern through all clusters. UNHCR is mobilising partners and working closely with the Government on the urgent need for a **registration** of persons of concern to improve the delivery of assistance and better respond to the needs of the most vulnerable IDPs.
- A **verification exercise** launched by the Government in Rakhine State at the end April to update family lists (record movements between households, births and deaths) was suspended due to lack of confidence in the process expressed by the targeted IDP communities.
- SGBV remains a key concern, UNHCR is working with partners to provide access to services, advocating for safeguards and raising awareness. Inter-agency **SGBV strategies** for Rakhine and Kachin situations are under development, through the protection working groups.
- In **Kachin**, **regular humanitarian access** is needed to for sustainable protection and assistance activities to take place in non-government controlled areas. . A reorientation of the protection response to factor in prolonged displacement foresees a community-based approach and increased activities for child protection and SGBV.
- UNHCR with partners have supported a scoping exercise for possible **IDP profiling** in the **south-east** to design an effective durable solutions strategy. Regular **cross border meetings** by UNHCR teams facilitate information sharing and joint planning for durable solutions .

Shelter and Infrastructure

- In **Rakhine** UNHCR has provided either permanent or temporary shelter or tents to approximately **45,000** people. An additional **25,000** individuals out of the **70,000 in urgent need identified in 14 most critical locations** will be assisted by UNHCR before the rainy season.
- In **Kachin**, UNHCR has built **4,500 temporary shelter** units for IDP families and **700 community buildings**. The target for 2013 is **8,000 new beneficiaries** of new shelter and repair and upgrade of old shelters, provided funding resources are available.
- In the **south-east** UNHCR is not currently working on shelter but so far this year has built **five new water points** and is **rehabilitating 15 existing water points** (*will be completed by June*).



Temporary shelters in construction in rural Sittwe. Photo: UNHCR

Non-Food Items , Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

- In **Rakhine**, **75,000 individuals** have received NFIs since June 2012.
- In **Kachin**, around **50,000 IDPs** have received NFIs (family kits) in both government and non-government controlled areas. In government-controlled areas approx. In 2013, UNHCR is also covering all running costs for some 84 camps. In non-government controlled areas where UNHCR does not have permanent access, the agency works with local partners through humanitarian convoys to deliver assistance which has mainly consisted of shelter, CCCM activities, and assistance for extremely vulnerable individuals (EVIs). This has reached approximately **20,000** persons. As the emergency is nearly two years old, replenishment of NFIs already distributed in Kachin is required, in addition to NFIs for areas not yet reached by distributions.
- In the **south-east**, in addition to our work on water point infrastructure, hygiene awareness has been a part of the life-skills training (*carried out by MRCS*) for communities throughout Kayin, Thanintharyi and Mon States.

Logistics and Operational Support

- Since 2012 UNHCR has distributed over **27,000 NFI kits including basic and complementary items** and over **33,000 sanitary kits for women** in Myanmar. Out of this, over 23,000 NFI kits and 30,000 sanitary kits were distributed in 2012 and the remainder in 2013. Additionally, UNHCR has distributed over **4,000 family emergency tents** in Rakhine. Due to the forthcoming arrival of monsoon season, increasing number of IDPs and the protracted length of the emergencies, **funding for the procurement of at least 25,000 additional NFI kits and 100,000 sanitary kits for women is needed.**

Voluntary return

- In **Rakhine**, UNHCR advocates for the voluntary return of IDPs and for the prevention of segregation or protracted displacement situations. It also promotes **dialogue** in the places of origin to create a conducive environment for possible return and peaceful coexistence.
 - In the **south-east** some spontaneous returns have been taking place from Thailand, however on a very small scale.
- UNHCR has a **monitoring system** in place for spontaneous returns of both IDPs and refugees.

Coordination & Partnership

- UNHCR works closely with relevant Government Ministries as well as **14 international and national implementing partners** in Myanmar, and more than **20 operational partners** (national and international).
- UNHCR leads the **protection sector** in Myanmar, as well as **shelter, non-food items (NFI) and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster responses**.
- The protection sector supports the humanitarian response particularly in Rakhine and Kachin States through the newly established **Nationwide Protection Working Group (NPWG)**, a forum dedicated to humanitarian situations and crisis
- **Field based protection working groups** coordinate protection activities in addressing the displacement situation as well as affected communities in Sittwe and Maungdaw (Rakhine) and recently in Myitkyina (Kachin). The protection working groups are supported by the Humanitarian Protection Working Group with policy direction, guidance and advocacy follow up.
- The well-established **national Shelter/NFI/CCCM forum** focuses on standards of assistance, analysis of overall needs, mobilisation of donor support and engagement with the Government.
- Equivalent Cluster fora have also been established in Rakhine and Kachin. These determine needs at field level, gaps, efforts to ensure adherence to standards, close engagement with the authorities and members of the Cluster to address these needs.
- **Information management** serves as a central tenet of Cluster activities, with Yangon, plus Kachin and Rakhine field offices collating and generating data, maps and info-graphics on NFI distributions, camp profiling, shelter (*emergency, temporary and permanent*) progress, camp lists and “who does what where” matrices. Generation of such data is being done in close collaboration with Cluster members, which include sister UN agencies (*OCHA, WFP, UNICEF*).
- **Current critical needs** are for temporary shelter in Rakhine State where approximately 70,000 IDPs are under makeshift or emergency shelter and on highly flood-prone land. Considerable efforts have been put into generating a joint plan of intervention.
- Regular consultations on the **south-east** continue, led by UNHCR, with a view to maintaining a common understanding of the operational environment and challenges, and forge strategic partnerships in preparation for sustainable return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees. On the operational level, UNHCR undertakes **interagency coordination** with partners in four states of the south-east.

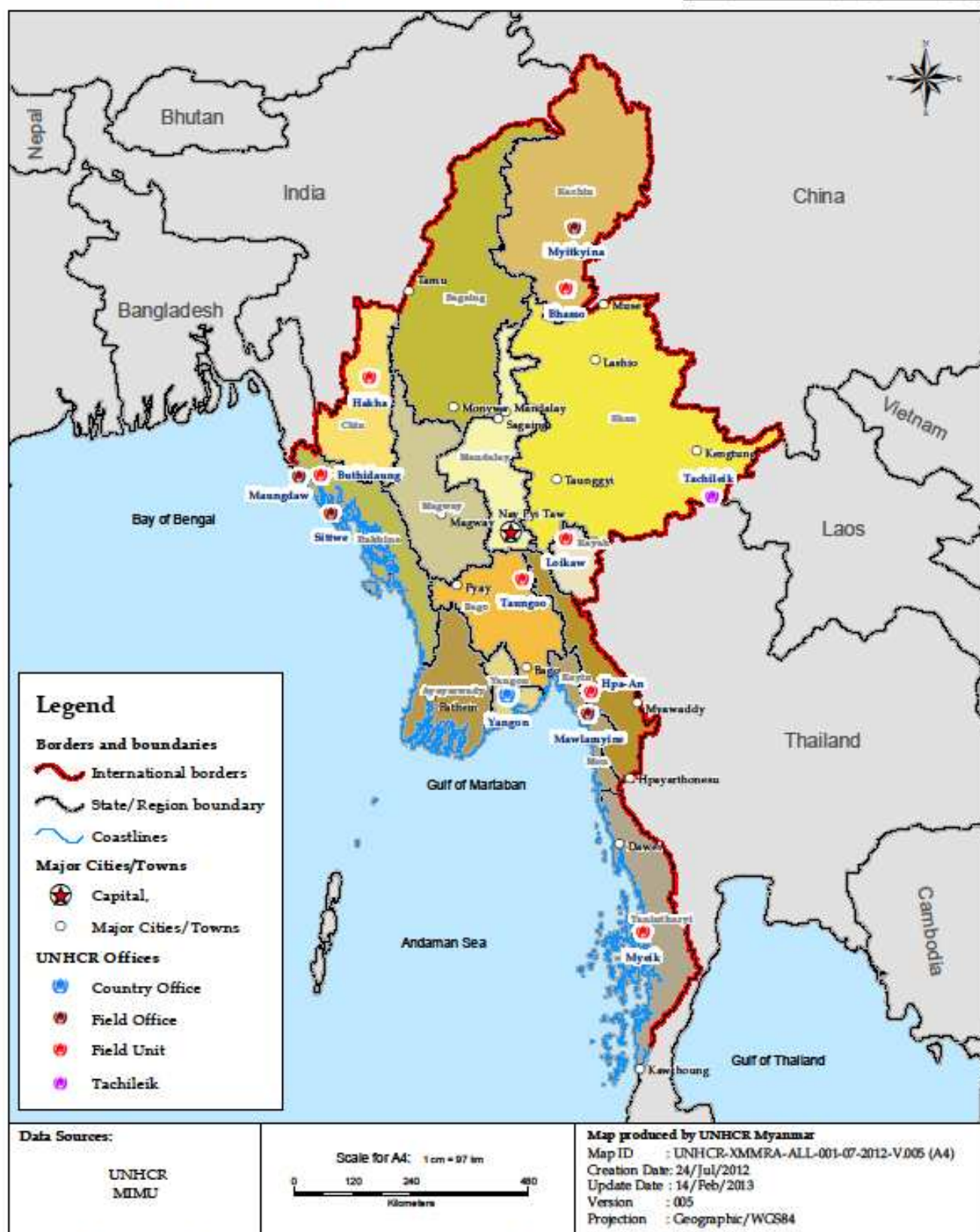
Thailand

- UNHCR monitors the general situation within the nine temporary shelters in Thailand for refugees from Myanmar. Levels of anxiety vary according to degrees of pressures or perceptions on the issue of voluntary repatriation. Many local media reports are simply speculative and others misleading, fueling the rumours that operational planning is taking place and that refugee returns are imminent. UNHCR is networking with the refugees and local community-based associations to counter these rumours and explain that much remains to be done to create conditions conducive to a successful and sustainable voluntary return and reintegration of refugees to the south-east of Myanmar.
- UNHCR's '**Framework for Voluntary Repatriation: Refugees from Myanmar in Thailand**' was up-dated in October 2012 and shared with the Governments of Myanmar and Thailand, the humanitarian community and others including donors and diplomatic missions. It remains the central document advocating the international standards and core protection principles in respect of voluntary repatriation and as such serves as a reference for all stakeholders involved in preparing for and assisting any voluntary return of the refugees.
- The focus of UNHCR efforts to support the refugees has been in preparing them for eventual return at the time that they feel confident and ready to do so, and in accordance with the principle of voluntariness. UNHCR Thailand is in a so-called "preparedness phase" that has including many activities, consultations, briefings, workshops and information-dissemination. Dialogue with the refugees in all nine temporary shelters has been prioritized and UNHCR has invested additional time and effort in ensuring that the refugees' voices are heard. One of the ways that this will be supported is by listening to the refugees' desires and concerns, and building a fuller understanding of their reintegration requirement, should they decide to return. To that end UNHCR has requested a local organization to undertake a **refugee profiling exercise that will start in May 2013**. This will be the most comprehensive survey of the refugee community since their arrival in Thailand. The results and analysis will support the two governments, humanitarian agencies, donors and others in supporting the refugees particularly in the areas of livelihoods, household security and social-welfare activities.
- UNHCR is further strengthening its understanding and assessment of and specific support to the most vulnerable groups and individual refugees that need special care and attention in the broader process of preparedness for their futures, including resettlement if that remains their most viable durable solution.

Regional Overview / Maritime Movements

- Since June 2012 nearly **27,800 people** are estimated to have departed on boats from the Bay of Bengal, the majority believed to be from Rakhine State. More than **800** people are thought to have perished in their attempts since January 2012. The clandestine nature of these irregular movements makes it difficult to know the real scale of the problem.
- Those who arrive safely at the Thai-Malaysian border are at risk of being exposed to traffickers if they are unable to make payments to smuggling networks. Reports of boats being pushed back to sea or "helped on" to other countries increase the risk of maritime accidents and deaths. Some States' reluctance to disembark rescued individuals may negatively impact the long-standing tradition of rescue-at-sea.
- Of the known boat arrivals in 2013, **170** were rescued and disembarked in **Sri Lanka**, some **270** in **Indonesia** and at least **1,800** in **Malaysia**. UNHCR access to these groups varies across countries. While the majority are believed to be from Rakhine State, some Bangladeshi nationals have been identified among them. Another **2,000** recent arrivals are currently in shelters and detention centres in **Thailand**.
- From 18-20 March 2013, a **Regional Roundtable on Irregular Maritime Movements (IMM)** co-organized by Indonesia and UNHCR gathered interested States/organizations in Jakarta to discuss the need for regional cooperation including the development of protocols for disembarkation and post-disembarkation options. At the 5th **Bali Process** Ministerial Conference on 2 April, Ministers recommended that Bali Process members strengthen their cooperation in managing IMM including through the development of a protection-sensitive regional approach.

UNHCR OFFICES IN MYANMAR



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