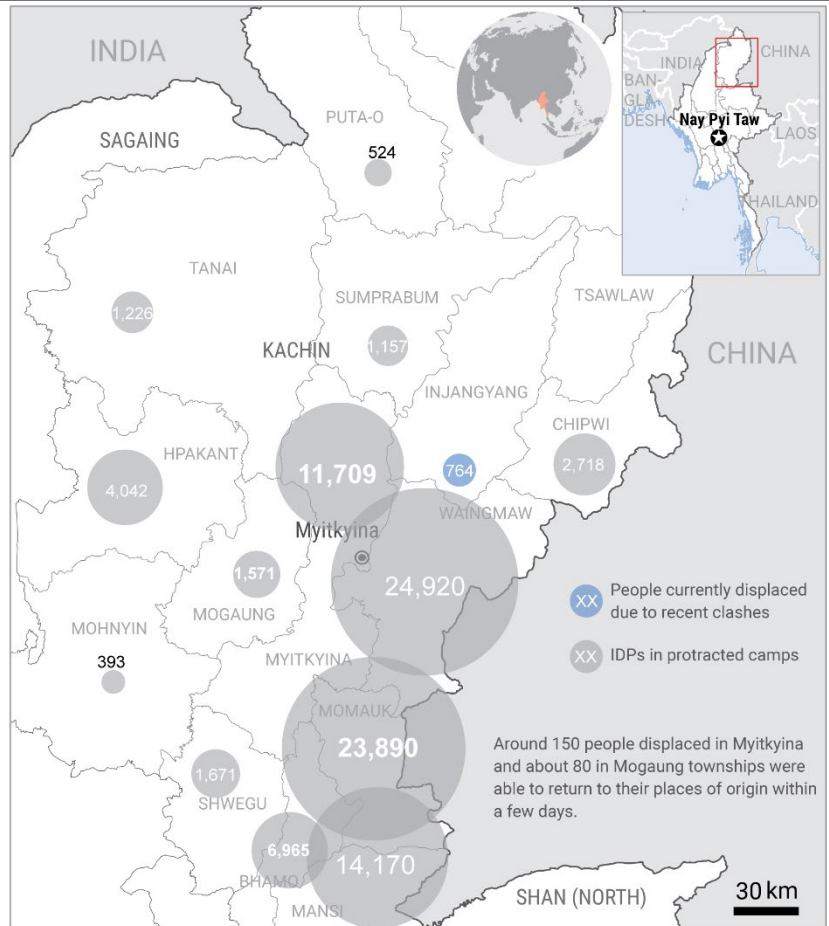


This regular humanitarian update, covering the period from 25 February to 23 March, is produced by OCHA Myanmar in collaboration with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group and UNHCR. The next update will be issued towards the end of April 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The political crisis is having an impact on supply chains and markets, as food prices rise across the country, with significant increases for some basic commodities in Kachin and Rakhine states, according to the World Food Programme.
- Banking system disruptions and limited availability of cash continue to hinder humanitarian operations.
- Armed clashes between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) have taken place in Kachin, where there had been no major hostilities since mid-2018.
- New displacement was recorded in Kayin State in southeastern Myanmar due to clashes between the MAF and the Karen National Union (KNU).
- In Mrauk-U Township, Rakhine State, over 2,570 people in Tein Nyo displacement site were affected by a fire that destroyed over 660 shelters.
- Small-scale returns of people displaced by the MAF - Arakan Army (AA) conflict continue to be reported in Rakhine State, which has experienced a lull in clashes since November 2020.
- The 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan remains severely underfunded, with less than 10 per cent of the required funding received so far (US\$23.6 million received against \$267.5 million requested) - [FTS](#).



KEY FIGURES

126K

IDPs in camps since 2012 violence in Rakhine

99K

people displaced by conflict in sites and host communities in Rakhine and Chin

106K

people in protracted displacement in Kachin and northern Shan

7K


people displaced in the South-east

2.5K


people affected by a fire that destroyed over 660 shelters

SITUATION OVERVIEW

POLITICAL CRISIS IMPACTS SUPPLY CHAINS AND MARKETS: As the political crisis continues to impact supply chains and markets, the latest data by the World Food Programme (WFP) indicates that the cost of rice increased by 20-35 per cent in Bhamo and Putao townships in Kachin State from mid-January to mid-February compared to a 3 per cent average increase across the country. These two townships host over 8,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in protracted camps established since 2011; about 95,500 IDPs are hosted in camps across Kachin, 40,000 of whom in areas controlled by non-state armed actors. A spike in prices for cooking oil has been observed in northern Rakhine, where the average retail price increased by 27 per cent from January to February. In Maungdaw Township, the price of pulses jumped by 15 per cent. Increases of 11 per cent on average in the price of cooking oil were observed in central townships in Rakhine State, according to WFP's monitoring [snapshot](#), which also notes an increase in prices of petrol and diesel in Rakhine by 33 per cent and 29 per cent respectively, compared to 15 per cent countrywide. Over 756,000 people are in need of assistance and protection services across Rakhine State, which includes about 210,000 IDPs, 126,000 of whom have been in camps established in 2012, according to the [2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#).



35% increase in
cost of rice in Kachin State



33% increase in
petrol prices in Rakhine State

The rise in prices for basic commodities, the disruptions to the banking sector, widespread limits on cash availability, the decrease in remittances, as well as ongoing insecurity may exacerbate the vulnerability of people in conflict-affected areas. WFP will continue to provide monthly cash and food distributions to over 360,000 IDPs. Partners across other sectors are also monitoring the situation to respond to emerging needs.

GROWING OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES HAMPER HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: The disruptions to the banking system and the limited availability of cash, compounded by cash withdrawal limits, continue to hamper the operations of humanitarian organizations. For example, Shelter/NFI/CCCM partners faced difficulties paying incentives to focal persons in camps and making payments for camp running costs due to bank closures. The shelter sector construction plan for 2021 has been temporarily paused due to cash shortages and the limited availability and increased prices of materials in markets. Many partners are using online banking services to run operations, especially for intra-bank transfers, and ATMs remain the easiest way to obtain cash despite the withdrawal limits and internet disruptions. Food and non-food item suppliers are increasingly asking partners to pay in cash rather than bank transfers or checks, a trend which the Cash Working Group (CWG) expects to continue.

According to the CWG, partners are using mobile money to run operations or pay staff and volunteers, as this option continues to function and remains one of the most feasible ways of delivering cash, despite recent disruptions due to mobile internet shutdowns. Notwithstanding the obstacles, a few mobile money operators have been flexible in supporting partners' ability to deliver humanitarian assistance. Overall, the situation remains challenging and is having a significant impact on cash-based programmes and operations more generally. The CWG continues to work with partners and other clusters to identify solutions to ensure continuity of cash and voucher programmes.

ARMED CLASHES RESUME IN KACHIN STATE AFTER TWO AND A HALF YEARS: Armed clashes between the MAF and the KIA have taken place in several townships in Kachin State in recent weeks, resulting in small-scale population displacements and civilian casualties. In Myikyina Township, at least 150 people, including IDPs in camps, were displaced due to hostilities on 15 March. The displaced families were able to return to their places of origin after staying for a few days in a church in the same township, where partners provided basic food assistance. Around 80 people were temporarily displaced in Mogaung Township. According to a partner, more than 760 people from five villages in Injangyang Township were also displaced, fleeing mostly to the neighboring jungle on 22 March. In Kamaing Township, artillery shelling reportedly injured four people, including two children; another civilian was reportedly injured in Hpakant

Township due to fighting between the same parties on 18 March. The details of civilian casualties or internal displacement could not be verified by the time of reporting due to access challenges. Kachin State, where about 95,500 IDPs are hosted in protracted camps established in 2011, had not seen any major armed clashes since mid-2018.

There have been reports of sporadic armed clashes between the MAF and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) or between EAOs in northern Shan, where about 3,000 people remain displaced in Kyaukme, Namtu and Monghsu townships since January and are in need of food and basic household material support. About 9,800 IDPs remain in protracted displacement camps in northern Shan established since 2011.

OVER 7,000 PEOPLE REMAIN DISPLACED IN SOUTHEASTERN MYANMAR: Sporadic armed clashes between the MAF and the KNU continued in Kayin State and Bago Region, resulting in the displacement of about 1,820 people in Lu Thaw, Dwe Lo and Bu Tho townships of Hpa-pun District in Kayin State. A total of 7,120 people have been displaced by conflict and insecurity in Kayin State and Bago Region since late December 2020; many of the displaced families in Kayin State are hiding in jungles in Hpa-pun Township. There were also reports of two civilians killed by a landmine blast on 1 March in Kyaukkyi Township, according to public sources. Meanwhile, humanitarian partners continue to face severe challenges in accessing the displaced families, who are in need of emergency assistance, including food and basic household materials. Kayin State and Bago Region already hosted a total of 13,000 IDPs in camps established since 2011. In addition, there are reports of continued tensions in the area due to the ongoing political crisis, possibly generating further population movement, including across the border to Thailand. The Thai authorities are reportedly preparing shelters in several Thai provinces bordering Myanmar, from Chiang Rai in the north to Ranong in the south.



7,000

people remain displaced since late 2020, in Kayin State and Bago Region due to clashes between the MAF and KNU and insecurity

OVER 2,500 PEOPLE LOST THEIR SHELTERS IN RAKHINE DUE TO FIRE: Over 2,570 people lost their shelters after a fire destroyed more than 660 houses on 17 March in the Tein Nyo displacement site in Mrauk-U Township in Rakhine State, which hosts about 3,300 people displaced by the conflict between the MAF and the AA. At least eight people, including a child, were reportedly injured in the fire, which was accidentally set by a candle. The affected families are currently sheltering at the nearby monastery, school and a community quarantine center in the Tein Nyo Village, where they continue to receive assistance from humanitarian partners and the local community. Partners are looking at ways to provide more support to the affected families, who have now been displaced more than once in the last two years.

IDP RETURNS REPORTED IN RAKHINE: There have been reports of small-scale IDP returns in Ann, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships in Rakhine State. Discussions to facilitate returns in other townships where the MAF is conducting demining activities are reportedly taking place. The ongoing or planned returns concern IDPs displaced by the MAF-AA conflict. According to data of 15 March, over 99,300 people remain displaced by the conflict in 180 sites in Rakhine and southern areas of Chin states. Some 82,360 people were hosted in 153 sites in Rakhine State, while humanitarian partners indicated that some 9,840 people remained in 27 sites in Chin State.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Humanitarian assistance and protection services for affected populations were considerably affected by the political developments since 1 February and insecurity, exacerbating an already precarious situation in conflict-affected areas, with the disruptions to the banking system, communications and supply chains impacting delivery modalities. While many partners paused their operations in early February to assess the situation and review existing modalities, many have resumed since.

In Rakhine, where most partners have resumed many operational activities, access constraints remain principally linked to the Travel Authorization (TA) system and are compounded by the challenges resulting from the disruptions to the banking systems and supply chains. About 32 per cent of activities for which a TA

was requested were approved with specific restrictions and conditionalities, such as the requirement to hand over humanitarian supplies to village tract administrators or camp management committees or limiting activities to COVID-19 prevention. Access to many displacement sites (of population displaced by the MAF-AA conflict) remains restricted and unpredictable, particularly in rural areas. An estimated 22,500 people in 52 displacement sites as well as 3,000 people in 16 host communities remain inaccessible due to various restrictions.

In northern Shan and Kachin, restrictions on access to populations, especially in areas controlled by non-state armed actors, remain in place. Logistical challenges and staff safety and security considerations since 1 February have further constrained humanitarian access in all sectors, with protection, health and food assistance activities most affected. Increased conflict and displacement and a larger presence of security and military personnel in some locations have further complicated the situation. According to a recent inter-sectoral analysis carried out in Kachin, health-related protection services such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) have been impacted by a lack of referral services. Education services have been interrupted due to lack of cash for staff salaries, as well as concerns related to logistics, safety and security for children. WASH services, particularly the maintenance and upgrades of WASH infrastructure, could become urgent in the near future, if these are further delayed.

In northern Shan, health services have been affected by logistics, transportation and broader access-related challenges. Health and nutrition partners warn of possible interruptions in services for infants, if these challenges persist. While most protection services are partially continuing (see below for details), partners note that even temporary interruptions can compound the vulnerabilities of groups that receive protection services, including child protection case management and Mine Risk Education activities.

CLUSTER/SECTORAL HIGHLIGHTS

Protection

- In Rakhine, Kachin, northern Shan and Kayin, despite the ongoing challenges, the GBV partners continued critical GBV services, including case management and psychosocial support, conducting these activities remotely as well as in-person, where the situation permitted. The partners visited Kyaukme and Hsipaw townships in northern Shan to provide GBV services to the people displaced due to the recent hostilities, distributing dignity kits, including sanitation pads and ready-to wear longyis (sarongs), to a total of 1,300 women and girls. In Kachin, the partners continued assistance to persons with specific needs, including material support.
- In the central areas of Rakhine State, partners continued remote protection monitoring activities in hard-to-reach areas, while starting in-person protection monitoring in camps and sites. The partners have been updating the mapping of existing protection monitoring to improve coverage and response. The partners have also developed a workplan for post-1 February and will be undertaking a system review to enhance existing monitoring and response mechanisms. A mapping is being done to identify persons with specific needs in camps and sites for tailored assistance. The Humanitarian Advocacy and Communications Group and the Communication with Communities Working Group are working to develop messaging for communities, who are raising concerns about the aid continuity.
- Meanwhile, the increased presence of security forces has instigated fear among IDPs in all conflict-affected areas. The Child Protection partners experienced delays in provision of protection services, in addition to the distribution of mental health and psychosocial support materials in Paletwa Township in Chin State due to constraints related to access as well as transportation challenges.

Health

- Health-related protection activities have been impacted due to lack of referral services since 1 February, while COVID-19 prevention response activities, including surveillance and contact tracing, laboratory testing, infection prevention and control, case management, and operational support and logistics have significantly deteriorated since. Additionally, partners continue to experience operational challenges due

to the suspension of banking services and supply chains. In terms of response, the partners are providing essential rehabilitation services either through volunteers or remotely, mainly using mobile phones. Health volunteers at the IDP camps and villages could provide primary health care services with the remote support from health partners, while for secondary and tertiary health care services, emergency referral supports are still functioning in most camps and villages.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- The partners have been coordinating to address the water shortages reported in displacement sites in Rakhine and are arranging water trucking in Nyaung Chaung and Taung Min Kalar displacement sites in Kyauktaw Township and water boating for IDPs in protracted camps in Pauktaw Township. The partners in Kachin are also trying to provide WASH support through water supply activities and maintenance services, including desludging sanitation. Meanwhile, distribution of hygiene items and promotion of hygiene knowledge awareness raising continue in most camps and displacement sites.

Education in Emergencies

- UNESCO, UNICEF and Save the Children released a joint [statement](#) on 19 March, expressing concerns about the occupation of over 60 education facilities across the country by the security forces – a serious violation of children’s rights - while reminding them of their obligation to uphold the rights of children. This includes cases in which teachers and other educational personnel faced direct violence. The EiE sector partners are collecting 3Ws (Who does, where, what) on the home-based learning materials that have been disrupted in different locations, to be able to analyze and enhance learning opportunities and address the emergency needs of the nationwide learning situation.

Shelter/Non-Food Items/Camp Coordination and Camp Management

- The partners continued to face challenges regarding honorarium to the focal persons and payments for camp running costs due to bank closures. The new shelter construction plan for 2021 has been paused due to cash shortages and the limited availability of materials in markets, while existing projects from 2020 are ongoing. Many partners continue to adopt a “wait and see” approach to start new constructions. Field visits are ongoing in many locations but limited in some areas due to security concerns. In Kachin, the partners provided accommodation and immediate assistance to five families, who were newly displaced in Myitkyina due to armed clashes in Injangyang Township. In central parts of Rakhine, the partners completed a stockpile of NFIs for contingency planning, while ensuring the continuation of NFI supply provisions for emergency cases. About 6,800 people received essential NFIs and other material assistance. Meanwhile, COVID-19 prevention awareness raising activities continued in camps and displacement sites throughout February.

Nutrition

- A total of 2,520 children under five years of age and 1,620 Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) from Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan were able to obtain preventive nutrition services during the reporting period. At the same time, more than 50 PLW with acute malnutrition and 320 children aged 6-59 months with moderate and severe acute malnutrition from Rakhine received treatment. Meanwhile, community-based nutrition services are paused due to the political crisis. In areas controlled by non-state armed actors in Kachin and in northern Shan, the provision of nutrition activities was limited in scale due to armed conflicts and COVID-19 related travel restriction. A new TA requirement – recommendation from ward administrator and overnight stay registration document – impeded mobile team services offered by partners in northern Shan. Nevertheless, partners distributed about 500 face masks to communities, as part of COVID-19 prevention control measures.

Food Security

- In Rakhine, cash for work activities in Pauktaw Township and the distribution of cash grants for 60 beneficiaries in Thae Chaung Camp in Sittwe have been postponed due to bank closures and subsequent cash shortages. The partners obtained TAs for food distributions in northern areas of

Rakhine State for March and April. In Kachin, the partners have also experienced delays in operations due to the logistical challenges. The increase in fuel prices and low demand from retailers negatively impacted the commercial gardening activities of beneficiary producers, resulting in a reduction in income. Similarly, mobile grocery store owners encountered reduced incomes due to low demands and security constraints. Many beneficiaries had limited livelihood opportunities due to transportation costs and movement restriction imposed by both the MAF and EAOs.

Logistics

- The WFP-operated relief flights, connecting Kuala Lumpur and Yangon are now flying every second Sunday. Across the country, payment for goods and service suppliers is becoming challenging to settle due to disruptions to banking system, with suppliers mostly requesting cash payments. This is in addition to labor shortage at warehouses and jetties, imposition of the Martial law in some areas, as well the staff safety and security that continue to hinder humanitarian supply chains. In northern areas of Rakhine, the commercial and public transport from Sittwe is active and there has been no major changes in routes to Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships, while the “Department of Inland Waterway Transport” in Rakhine conducted a survey on the waterway access between Sittwe/Kyauktaw and Paletwa to resume ferry services in March.

Maungdaw Inter-Agency Group

- The Maungdaw Interagency Group (MIAG) coordinates the multi-sectoral humanitarian response for northern Rakhine, in both villages and displacement sites. In February, the MIAG partners were able to reach about 277,000 people with assistance and life-saving support. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the MIAG partners have continuously adapted and readjusted programming in line with COVID-19-related instructions and have integrated COVID-19 risk reduction measures into ongoing operations. The MIAG partners continue to monitor the unfolding political developments, while activities have largely remained with minimal interruption since 1 February. The partners have been able to successfully deliver services across a number of sectors, including food distributions, support to mobile clinics, health referrals, COVID-19 prevention and response activities, non-food items distribution, infrastructure support (construction of schools and water points) and some protection activities to IDP sites and villages.

2021 RESPONSE PLAN IS SEVERELY UNDERFUNDED

Almost three months into 2021, the [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) (HRP), which seeks US\$276.5 million in funding to provide assistance and protection services to around 945,000 people, has been funded only at 8.5 per cent, according to [FTS](#). Insufficient funding could critically impact the plans and operations of partners on the ground who are using all available resources, including funds carried over from 2020, to sustain response efforts.

The implementation of the projects supported by the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) 2020 standard and reserve allocations, of a total amount of US\$16.2 million, is ongoing in conflict-affected areas. For 2021, the MHF aims to mobilize US\$31 million, which represents 15 per cent the funds mobilized for the 2020 HRP and as of 24 March, four donors - Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany and Switzerland - have contributed or committed US\$6.28 million to the MHF for 2021.

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