

## MYANMAR | Operational Update

Since the military takeover on 1 February, insecurity and armed clashes continue to be reported across much of the country. Disruptions to banking services, communications, healthcare, and supply chains ensue, while armed conflict 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. Natural hazards, such as flooding, has further exacerbated the vulnerability of communities.

Throughout the reporting period, UNHCR and partners continued 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.

The ongoing COVID-19 health crisis continues to pose additional challenges to already strained or disrupted health services, particularly with the surge in cases mid-year, which plunged the country into its most severe wave of infections to date. 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 **144,000** are living in 21 displacement camps as well as among the host community since 2012

## 533,300

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayin, Mon states, and Bago (east), Sagaing and Magway regions, including some **85,800\*** in around **200** sites in Rakhine and southern Chin displaced due to the AA-MAF conflict, and an estimated **176,200** 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

## 31,612

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

Financial requirements in 2021 (as of 31 August 2021)

## USD 62.6 million (49% 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 | July - August 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 across the South-East leading to the displacement of an estimated 142,000 people as of 31 August 2021. Dwindling medical supplies paired with urgent needs for personal protective equipment (PPE) are of growing concern as positive COVID-19 cases are reported in IDP camps/settlements in Kayah and Kayin states, while natural hazards, including heavy rains and flooding, further aggravated the already fragile situation.
- In July, heavy rains in Kayin and Mon states led to the temporary displacement of over 7,000 individuals. Flooding and landslides in Tanintharyi Region and Mon State resulted in four fatalities and the destruction of nine houses. Roadblocks due to flooding resulted in the disruption of transportation, and in August around 2,000 acres of paddy fields were completely inundated in Kayin State threatening food security in the affected area. To respond to emergency needs stemming from these natural hazards, the [Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group](#) in Kayin State was re-activated, co-chaired by UNHCR and Malteser International.
- 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. Solar energy systems were provided to four villages in Kayah State and one village in Shan (South) State to improve lighting in public spaces, enhancing safety and security. Roofing material to improve shelters was provided to some 1,495 individuals (299 households) in Kayin State and a 2,000-liter plastic rainwater collection tank, two water pumps, and cement and sand to construct a 15,000-liter rainwater tank benefitted 402 IDPs in two villages on the Kayah-Shan border.
- The implementation of [community-based projects](#) in Kayin State progressed with the aim of improving infrastructure and supporting peaceful co-existence among communities. During the reporting period the construction of a study hall and bathing place was completed as was the construction of solar streetlight installation. Other projects in various stages of completion include the construction of two schools, the construction of a health centre and corresponding staff housing, and the construction of four wooden bridges. In total, 10 projects are planned for completion in 2021.
- In coordination with the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), UNHCR carried out a four-day [community resilience training](#) to volunteers, building the capacity of 299 community members.



School construction in Kayin State, Photo UNHCR

### Rakhine and North-West

- As of September 2021, over 85,800 persons remain displaced across around 200 sites and in host communities in Rakhine and Chin states and Magway and Sagaing regions in connection with the Arakan Army (AA) and Tatmadaw conflict. In addition, due to armed conflict since 1 February, some 19,000 individuals remain displaced in Chin State, 6,000 in Magway Region and 1,620 in Sagaing Region, while 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](#) remained ongoing throughout July and August despite operational challenges faced 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 22,482 individuals (5,292 households) during this period. Items provided include blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats and kitchen sets. In addition, 3,735 individuals (664 households) moved into transitional shelters (longhouses) that had been reconstructed by UNHCR and partners, enhancing the living standards of these families.
- Among those who received NFI support are 1,040 [people with specific needs \(PSNs\)](#), including persons with disabilities, elderly, or single/ female headed households. In addition, 722 PSNs were supported through home visits with referrals made where possible.
- Measures continue to be taken to advance and enhance the sustainability of UNHCR [community-based projects](#) implemented in northern Rakhine State, including for community ponds providing safe drinking water.
- An overview of the response to the AA-Tatmadaw conflict can be found [here](#).



Pond renovation in Buthidaung. Photo UNHCR



NFI distribution, Chin State. Photo UNHCR

## Kachin and Shan (North)

- As of 30 August, some 12,400\*\* individuals remain displaced in Kachin and Shan (North) states due to ongoing armed clashes between the Tatmadaw, EAOs and/or the PDF, despite a decline in incidents of armed conflict observed in July-August likely linked with heavy seasonal rains and extensive flooding.
- 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 649 PSNs and their families during July and August. 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 July and August, UNHCR distributed NFI items including blankets, mosquito nets, clothing kits, tarpaulins, plastic mats, jerry cans, and buckets to 3,630 individuals (726 households) in Kachin and Shan (North) states. Shelter support reached 170 individuals through support with the construction of makeshift shelters as well as maintenance and repairs on existing shelters. In addition, UNHCR supported the renovation of one camp-based communal hall in Mansi Township.
- Throughout July and August, UNHCR facilitated a number of [trainings and capacity building](#) initiatives for partners and members of the Protection Working Group (PWG). Topics of training included protection referral pathways/service mapping, COVID-19 prevention measures, community-based protection, mission preparation and management, and protection monitoring, among others.



COVID-19 awareness raising sessions, Kyaukme Township, Shan State (North), Photo Meiksw Myanmar

## 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. With the spike in positive cases observed starting mid-year, plunging the country into its most severe wave of infections so far, UNHCR continues to work closely with partners to assess the situation and ensure that preparedness and preventative measures remain in place.
- In Kachin and Shan (North) states, 7,716 individuals (1,718 households) were provided with COVID-19 preventative items, including face masks, gloves, soap, hand sanitizer and non-contact infrared thermometers. One community-led quarantine centre in Mansi Township, with a 100-person capacity, was supported with basic NFIs (e.g., blankets, mosquito nets, tarpaulins) and sanitation items (e.g., gloves, hand sanitizer). Provision of PPE and medical equipment is planned in the South-East in September.
- In Rakhine State, through a livelihood initiative with UNHCR's partner, 44,800 cloth face masks were produced by women from Rakhine and Rohingya communities in July and August and will be distributed in Rohingya IDP camps. An additional 8,810 individuals were provided with cloth masks in July, and over 226,000 bars of soap were distributed in August. During the implementation of community-based projects, COVID-19 prevention messages are passed to the concerned communities through project support groups and other community contacts.

## 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 30 August 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, and men, to better understand their needs and the challenges and risks they face.
- In response to concerns raised by women and girls, for example, UNHCR and partners have provided women and girls with portable torch lights that can be used to allow greater freedom of movement at night, including when accessing latrines and shelters.

## Communication with communities

- 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. In the South-East, for example, a [protection hotline](#) has been rolled out for direct communication, working on trust building with communities and ensuring timely feedback on issues, concerns, or questions related to protection issues as well as access to services and the provision of assistance.
- Timely information sharing with camp residents has been enhanced through efforts of camp management committee (CMC) members who have installed loudspeakers throughout some camps to ensure key messages reach the camp population, such as on food distributions, curfew times, and hotline numbers.
- During July and August, UNHCR carried out at least 179 [protection monitoring missions](#), and when physical presence was not possible employed remote methodologies of maintaining regular contact with communities, making at least 1,400 [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 responsibility 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 July and August include the ongoing strengthening of the Arakan Army's military and administrative presence in areas of its influence, the impact of natural hazards exacerbating vulnerabilities among communities, sustained armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) in Kachin, Shan (North) and the South-East, and COVID-19 restrictions impacting access to services and livelihoods. Some key concerns identified among communities include disruptions to telecommunications, challenges accessing local markets, continued rising commodity prices, and increasing difficulties in accessing food, healthcare, and education.

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



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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](mailto:ferry@unhcr.org)).