

MYANMAR | Operational Update

The **COVID-19 health crisis** has placed the forcibly displaced and stateless populations at heightened risk with the delivery of critical protection services and assistance severely restricted. Ensuring equal and fair access to essential services for these populations remains a key priority. For many, the impact from loss of income and livelihood opportunities will become more severe as the pandemic prolongs; UNHCR will continue to monitor the socio-economic impact and resilience of populations of concern.

In Rakhine State, the lull in armed clashes between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and the Arakan Army (AA) observed since the beginning of November continued throughout December, yet still more than **92,000 individuals remain displaced in Rakhine and 11,000 in southern Chin states*** as of 31 December. Identification of needs and provision of emergency relief assistance continue in coordination with the Government and humanitarian partners.

In the south-east, **clashes erupted between the MAF and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)** early December in several locations in Kayah State, and sporadic fighting between the MAF and KNLA have been recorded throughout the month. As the situation continues to evolve, UNHCR and humanitarian partners are working to assess the scale and severity of the impact on civilians, including new displacement, as well as their most immediate needs.



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 **130,000** are living in 21 displacement camps as well as among the host community since 2012

200,000

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Rakhine, Kachin, northern Shan, and Kayah State, of which some **110,000** are living in 138 camps and more than **92,000** are recently displaced in 190 sites due to AA-MAF conflict

47,385

Newly displaced and affected persons across **188** displacement sites in Rakhine State provided with assistance by UNHCR and partners in 2020

60,000

COVID-19 testing kits delivered and over **400** quarantine centres supported in 2020 aimed at bolstering the Government's prevention efforts

Financial requirements in 2020 (as of 05 January 2021)

USD 52.2 million (60% funded)

UNHCR in Myanmar works with the government and partners 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.

Kachin & northern Shan

- In December, UNHCR and partners continued **support to persons with specific needs**, including persons with disabilities, elderly, single/female headed households, and those with serious medical conditions, through provision of **emergency cash assistance benefitting 304 IDPs**. 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 undocumented migrant labour.
- UNHCR continues to provide **targeted non-food items (NFI)** to meet the needs of IDPs as they prepare themselves for returns. In December, UNHCR distributed 325 NFI kits, comprising of blankets, mosquito nets and plastic mats, in northern Shan State. In Kachin State, UNHCR supported 34 households (209 individuals) with mosquito nets, blankets, tarpaulins, plastic mats and kitchen sets, and supplemented another 10 households (61 individuals) with plastic mats; these families had relocated to a temporary site in preparation for their voluntary return to their village of origin.



NFI distribution in northern Shan State.
 Photo: Meikswa Myanmar

Rakhine & southern Chin

- As of 31 December, the Rakhine State Government estimates more than 92,000 newly displaced persons in 190 displacement sites in Rakhine State.
- **Support to displacement sites and IDP camps continue** despite limitations imposed by the current COVID-19 context. During the month of December, 3,455 households in two IDP camps in central Rakhine benefitted from **NFI support**, including mosquito nets, sleeping mats, blankets, and kitchen sets. A further 3,020 households received blankets and mosquito nets, and 150 families benefitted from **shelter material** including bamboo poles, tarpaulins and Myaw posts.
- To support hygiene efforts, **16,170 bars of soap** were distributed to 1,078 IDP households in Mrauk U township during December. **Support to persons with specific needs** including soap, jerry cans, blankets and solar lamps was extended to 469 individuals in two IDP camps in Sittwe.
- Field activities under the **tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** in Rakhine State between the Government of Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR are resuming after suspension due to COVID-19. During December, UNHCR prepared for the delivery of urgent NFI assistance, including warm clothing, in several locations in Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Works on a road construction project which re-commenced in November in northern Rakhine continued in cooperation with UNHCR's partner and in consultation with affected communities.



Shelter support in Kyauktaw township.
 Photo: UNHCR

South-east

- Promoting **sustainable and lasting solutions** for some 97,000 Myanmar refugees displaced in Thailand remains a key priority for UNHCR. Since 2016, UNHCR has been working in Kayin and Kayah states to support the Government and reintegration efforts in return areas through the implementation of community-based projects (also known as QIPs, or quick impact projects) to improve community infrastructure, promoting coexistence and benefitting both the existing host communities and returning refugees.
- In December, **community-based projects such as the establishment of a community revolving fund, the construction of two primary schools, and the provision two of gravity flow water systems, were completed** in five villages in Kayin State, while **two kitchen and dining units were completed** in Kayah State. The 30 QIPs ongoing throughout 2020 included the provision of school furniture, installation of water tank and piping system, provision of roofing sheets, NFI distribution in quarantine centres, mask distribution, and capacity building in the form of psycho-social training for partners.



Completed primary school. Photo: UNHCR

Through continually monitoring the situation concerning spontaneous return, UNHCR gains a better understanding among spontaneous refugee returnees as to their prospects upon return and challenges faced, including protection concerns, which informs programming in areas such as service delivery and identification of QIPs.

- In collaboration with partners, [capacity building](#) sessions on human rights, housing, land and property, sexual and gender-based violence, were held in 19 villages in Bago East. [Information sessions](#) on civil documentation and housing, land and property were provided in eight and 17 villages respectively, while 59 people benefitted from individual counselling.

Naypyitaw

- UNHCR Representative, Ms. Hai Kyung Jun submitted her credentials to the Ministry of International Cooperation, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin on 25 November via video link.
- In December, the Representative and Deputy Representative, Ms. Yukiko Iriyama, also held courtesy calls on several government ministries in Naypyitaw.



UNHCR Representative presenting her credentials. Photo: MoFA/ GoM

COVID-19 response

- UNHCR in Myanmar has redoubled efforts to support the Government of Myanmar in responding to the COVID-19 health crisis. 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.
- During the month of December, UNHCR handed over an additional **50,000** Cobas SARS-CoV-2 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) [test kits](#) to the Government of Myanmar, adding to an earlier contribution of 10,000 tests kits in July. Read more about UNHCR's [US \\$9.4 million programme](#) to aimed at ensuring the inclusion of persons of concern in Myanmar's COVID-19 response [here](#).
- Also, in December the Republic of Korea donated 416,958 KF94 masks to the Ministry of Health and Sports through UNHCR to support Myanmar's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



UNHCR Representative presents the donation of COVID-19 test kits to Union Health Minister. Photo: UNHCR

Working in partnership

- UNHCR Myanmar collaborates closely with the Government of Myanmar, 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, northern Shan 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); a platform bringing together development, peace and humanitarian stakeholders engaged in the states where the Office is working to support refugee returnees from Thailand.

UNHCR Myanmar's programme in 2020 is in partnership with:



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