

MYANMAR | Operational Update

The resumption or intensification of armed conflict since the military takeover on 1 February in multiple locations across Myanmar between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and/or People's Defense Forces (PDFs), resulting in civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands of people, shows no sign of abating as the year ends. Disruptions to communications, banking, 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 improvements to the COVID-19 infection rate, the impact of the ongoing pandemic continues to affect people of concern, particularly in view 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

690,900

Internally displaced people (IDPs) living in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Mon states, and Bago (east), Sagaing and Magway regions, including some **79,000*** in around **182** sites in Rakhine and Chin (South) displaced due to the AA-MAF conflict, and an estimated **320,900** 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

170,500

Displaced and affected people in Myanmar supported with basic non-food items (NFIs) by UNHCR and partners in 2021

Financial requirements in 2021 (as of 29 December 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 | November - December 2021

South-East

- The security situation in the South-East (SE) 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 171,000 people as of 30 December 2021. In addition, some 4,700 people have been displaced cross-border into Thailand**. Displaced populations in the SE continue to experience significant challenges in accessing basic needs and services, in particular essential household items, food, healthcare, and shelter material. While humanitarian needs increase, humanitarian access continues to be seriously hindered by insecurity, roadblocks, checkpoints, land mine risks, and logistical constraints. The prevailing situation in the SE contributes to a precarious protection environment. Insecurity in displacement sites, family separation and the psycho-social impact of conflict remain key protection issues in the SE.
- 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 November and December, UNHCR reached 2,248 individuals with non-food item (NFI) support, including mosquito nets, sanitary kits, blankets, and sleeping mats, and 10,333 individuals with emergency shelter support such as tarpaulins and rope. In addition, 2,165 winterization kits, comprised of winter clothing items such as fleece jackets, socks, and gloves, were provided for IDPs in Kayah State. In Kayin State, water supply systems were installed in several villages, benefitting over 4,600 individuals, including IDPs as well as members of the host community.
- The implementation of **community-based projects** in Kayin and Kayah states and Bago East Region progressed with the aim of improving infrastructure and supporting peaceful co-existence among communities. 23 projects, including construction of primary schools, solar light installation, and water supply systems were completed by the end of 2021 in the South-East.
- In November, protection **capacity building** trainings and CCCM training were carried out for UNHCR partner staff.



Beneficiaries of water supply systems, Kayin State. Photo: UNHCR.

Rakhine and North-West

- As of 5 January 2022, over 79,000 people remain displaced across around 182 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 33,800 individuals remain displaced in Chin State, 20,100 in Magway Region and another 78,300 Sagaing Region. 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 November and December 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 Chin (South) states were provided with critical non-food items reaching 46,834 individuals (10,157 families) during this period. Items provided include blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats and kitchen sets, while 14,535 individuals (3,292 families) received emergency shelter assistance, including ropes, tarpaulin, and bamboo poles. Additionally, 3,060 individuals (544 households) moved into transitional shelters (longhouses) that had been reconstructed by UNHCR and partners, enhancing living standards of these families.
- 3,762 **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. In addition, 1,318 winterization kits were provided to PSNs in Rakhine State.
- Measures continue to be taken to advance and enhance the sustainability of **community-based projects** implemented in Rakhine (North) State, including construction/rehabilitation of community infrastructure and targeted assistance for people with specific needs, for example. Over the course of 2021, 50 such projects have been implemented across 27 villages. Additionally, throughout 2021, 20 **peaceful co-existence projects** were implemented in 13 villages in Sittwe, Pauktaw and Kyauk Phyu, including community grants, leisure events, installation of solar street lighting, road construction and trainings, benefiting nearly 13,000 individuals.
- As part of 16-Day of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence activities, sanitary kits were distributed to 772 women and girls.
- An overview of the response to the AA-Tatmadaw conflict can be found [here](#).



Focus group discussion during 16 Days of Activism Rakhine State. Photo: UNHCR

**Estimates of displaced refugees in Thailand by the Tak Provincial Border Command Centre (TPBCC)

Kachin and North-East

- As of December, some 3,300*** individuals remain displaced in Kachin State and 14,400 in Shan State (7,400 in Shan (North), 7,000 in 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 1,447 PSNs and their families during November and December. 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 November and December, UNHCR distributed essential household items including blankets, kitchen sets, mosquito nets, solar lights, tarpaulins, sleeping mats, jerry cans, and buckets to 6,123 individuals (1,817 households) in Kachin and Shan states. UNHCR provided 5,634 corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets to support maintenance of existing shelters and the construction of transitional shelter in several townships in Kachin State.
- In November, UNHCR facilitated a number of [trainings and capacity building](#) initiatives for partners and camp management staff, including on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and basic protection principles.



NFI distribution for newly displaced IDPs in Shan (North). Photo: Meikswa

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, COVID-19 awareness raising sessions were carried out in several villages, accompanied by the distribution of face masks and hand sanitizer. In addition, UNHCR's partners distributed 250 sets of oxygen masks and pipes, 4,214 boxes of face masks, 4,210 surgical gowns, 15,300 N-95 masks, over 4,525 bottles of hand sanitizer, 52 oxygen cylinders, 75 oximeters, and 4,317 boxes of gloves.
- In Rakhine State, UNHCR continued to provide PPE items to communities and public facilities in the face of rising case numbers. The distribution of cloth masks, made as part of a livelihoods project, reached at least 24,000 IDPs, while items including 700 medical face masks, 7,500 boxes of surgical masks, 4,750 boxes of gloves, 16,000 safety goggles and protective goggles, and 20 fingertip pulse oximeters were provided to health centres.
- In Kachin and Shan (North) states, UNHCR reached 46,417 individuals with COVID-19 preventative support, including PPE items such as face masks, gowns, and hand sanitizer, as well as some medical supplies such as oxygen concentrators, COVID-19 test kits, oximeters, and glucometers.



PPE distribution in Rakhine 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). UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster and the combined 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 27 December 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. Despite the evolving operational constraints, UNHCR endeavoured to ensure women, girls, men and boys of all ages, abilities and diverse backgrounds/locations participated in their protection and solutions outcomes. A country-wide **Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Action Plan** was finalized to understand challenges and opportunities, as well as chart measurable outcomes in UNHCR's engagement with affected populations.
- Drawing from finding from **protection monitoring, communication with communities** and **early warning systems**, UNHCR and its partners responded to the multi-faceted difficulties - while harnessing coping mechanisms the community employed during displacement and crisis. Community feedback mechanisms including recently established social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) recorded over 100 queries related to legal and physical security matters, shelter, livelihood, food, and other critical needs.
- During November and December, UNHCR carried out at least 148 **protection monitoring missions**. When physical presence was not possible, employed remote methodologies to maintain contact with communities making over 1,700 **phone calls** to people of concern.
- In December, as part of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, UNHCR coordinated two **focus group discussions (FGDs)** between Rohingya and Rakhine community members in Sittwe to promote communal interaction. Discussions on gender equality was also facilitated by UNHCR in Maungdaw.
- UNHCR and partners conducted some 22 **protection and needs assessments** among displaced communities, including for example, a rapid protection assessment in Kayin State to support the response of 3,500 displaced people in Myawaddy Township.

Accessing civil documentation and citizenship

- 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 in Myanmar. Findings shared by partners following their engagement with different communities highlighted the wide-ranging impact of not having civil documentation and the importance of preventing and reducing statelessness especially amongst marginalized populations.
- 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. In Sittwe UNHCR undertook an analysis on access to **citizenship, civil documentation, and birth registration** through 16 FDGs at IDP camps, villages, and displacement locations with over 80 women and men from Rohingya, Kaman, and Rakhine communities. Findings will inform a larger strategy and humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding nexus programming.
- UNHCR and partners continue addressing awareness on the importance and processes in obtaining civil documentation for all groups and communities while supporting individuals and their families wishing to obtain documentation. In December, UNHCR and partners conducted a foundational training of paralegals in Sittwe to support them in responding to queries/issues on civil documentation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | UNHCR Myanmar 2022

In 2022, UNHCR will 1) continue to work with partners to **ensure access to people of concern** and people-centred delivery on protection and solutions. 2) Work to **support a favourable protection environment** so that people of concern have access to rights, services, and sustainable solutions. 3) Strive to **provide responsive humanitarian protection and assistance delivery**, maintain basic safeguards, and prevent forced returns, while building resilience and phased pathways to durable solutions for displaced and stateless populations. 4) **Swiftly respond** to evolving operational context and needs, harnessing existing data and assessment tools to inform programming, address gaps, and respond to populations at heightened risk. 5) **Address urgent needs and reduce dependency** to humanitarian assistance through building resilience. 6) Maintain **protection leadership** through standards setting and effective

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