

# Myanmar

September 2019

On 23 September, UNHCR and UNDP received authorization to commence the fifth round of rapid needs assessments as part of the implementation of the **tripartite Memorandum of Understanding**. Thus far, 1,400 persons have been assessed in 75 locations in northern areas of Rakhine. Access authorization has also been granted for 43 community-based initiatives, of which 29 are underway.

In Rakhine and southern Chin state, **armed clashes between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF)** prevail. Rapid needs identification as well as provision of relief assistance has been scaled up, in coordination with aid partners.

In south east Myanmar, the fourth **repatriation exercise** of 310 camp-based refugees in Thailand took place in July, in a process led by the Royal Thai and Myanmar Governments in coordination with UNHCR and partners. Since October 2016, over 1,100 refugees have participated in the exercise.

## KEY FIGURES

**600,000** stateless persons in Rakhine State (estimate), including 128,000 internally displaced

**30,000** Newly displaced persons estimated by Rakhine State Government due to AA-MAF clashes

**107,000** Displaced Persons in Kachin and northern Shan States

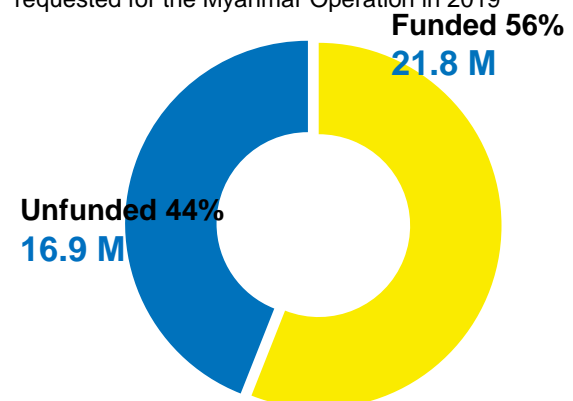
**11,028** Displaced persons in camps in the South East and some **120,000** in IDP-like situations in Kayah, Kayin, Mon States, Bago and Tanintharyi regions

**1,102** persons voluntarily returned to Myanmar from refugee camps in Thailand since 2016

## FUNDING (AS OF 24 SEPTEMBER 2019)

**USD 38.7 M**

requested for the Myanmar Operation in 2019



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

**134 National Staff**

**32 International Staff**

### Offices in:

- 1 Branch Office in Yangon
- 1 Sub Office in Sittwe
- 3 Field Offices in Hpa-An, Maungdaw, Myitkyina
- 6 Field Units in Bhamo, Buthidaung, Hakha, Loikaw, Lashio and Nay Pyi Taw



*So far in 2019, a total of 875 refugees voluntarily returned from Thailand following decades of displacement in a facilitated return movement led by the respective governments and supported by UNHCR and partners. Photo: UNHCR/ E. Sein*

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR collaborates with the Government of Myanmar, UN Agencies and NGOs to deliver assistance and protection services to stateless persons, IDPs, IDP and refugee returnees and local communities.
- UNHCR is the lead agency for the Protection Sector and for the Shelter, Non-Food Items (NFI), Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster in Kachin, northern Shan States and in central Rakhine as part of the inter-agency humanitarian response to ensure effective coordination, advocacy and operational delivery. UNHCR also delivers services to IDPs and stateless people in the same sectors.
- Under the overall leadership of the Resident Coordinator's Office, UNHCR facilitates the coordination of the Maungdaw Inter-Agency Group (MIAG), a body composed of 20 UN and NGO members operational in the northern part of Rakhine. The UNHCR-led MIAG provides overall leadership and coordination of the response, including development of common positions, advocacy and key messages, and encourages the integration of humanitarian, development and self-reliance programmes.
- UNHCR also co-chairs the South-East Working Group (SEWG) with UNDP, a body composed of 16 UN, NGOs as well as donor members operational in the area. The SEWG develops common strategies to bring together humanitarian, development and peace responses designed towards durable solutions to displacement, by bringing together community based and civil society organisations (CBOs/CSOs), cooperation partners, government and UN Agencies and NGOs.
- UNHCR works with civil society, lawyers and other key stakeholders on research to identify groups who may be at risk of statelessness and map their challenges to access documentation, builds capacity on the right to nationality and supports civil society capacity to improve access to civil documentation.
- In 2019, UNHCR works in partnership with 18 NGOs across the country, nine of them local organizations.

## Main Activities

### Protection

- UNHCR's protection activities include protection monitoring and analysis to conduct evidence-based advocacy on issues relating to displacement, statelessness and sustainable solutions. By regular monitoring of the situation on the ground, UNHCR and partners identify protection risks faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless people and returnees. Protection incident-reporting and referral mechanisms have been established to facilitate required action and follow up.
- UNHCR ensures capacity development among Government as well as the UN, non-government organizations and civil society on protection topics such as citizenship, documentation, durable solutions, IDP Guiding Principles, and other protection topics, while also providing technical support and capacity building to identify and resolve statelessness.
- As the lead agency for the Protection Sector, UNHCR coordinates the protection response in Rakhine State, and in Kachin and northern Shan states. Initiatives include protection mainstreaming, protection incident monitoring systems (PIMS), and the development of referral pathways and protection assessment tools.
- UNHCR protection activities also include support to community-based protection groups, as well as assistance to persons with specific needs (PSN). UNHCR and partner organizations provided cash and non-cash assistance for 3,241 persons in need in Myanmar in 2019, including extremely vulnerable older persons, women-headed households, persons with serious medical conditions and persons living with disabilities.
- Effective humanitarian access remains a fundamental condition to carry out protection work and requires being able to consult, freely and independently and on a day-to-day basis with affected communities, including in Rakhine, Kachin, northern Shan and South East.

### Shelter / NFIs / CCCM

- An important component of UNHCR'S protection activities is to guarantee access to adequate shelter and household items to persons affected by crisis, including emergency shelter in camps and in response to natural disasters. Communities affected by conflict, displacement and statelessness are particularly vulnerable, facing restrictions in their freedom of movement and challenges in accessing livelihoods and basic services.
- UNHCR provides assistance to the most vulnerable persons of concern based on needs, including through the provision of shelter/Non-food Items (NFI). In 2019, UNHCR has provided NFIs to some over 63,000 families, and a further 16,000 persons were supported by shelter interventions (construction, renovation, roofing improvements, care and maintenance) in central Rakhine and Kachin and northern Shan States.

- UNHCR and partners are supporting CCCM activities in 138 camps in Kachin and northern Shan (out of a total of 170 locations) benefitting 95,036 persons and 17 camps in Rakhine State benefitting some 118,000 persons (out of a total of 23 camps/camp like settings in the region).
- UNHCR continues to advocate and work with the Government of Myanmar to develop a comprehensive and sustainable strategy to address the internal displacement, including concrete measures to remove restrictions on freedom of movement and facilitate access to livelihoods and services, in the spirit of the Recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission and in line with international standards, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- UNHCR is also lead agency of the Shelter/ NFI/ CCCM Cluster, providing guidance and support along with critical coordination to all partners responding to these needs in Myanmar.

### Durable Solutions and Social Cohesion

- UNHCR, UNDP and the Government of Myanmar (GoM) signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 6 June 2018, which was extended for a year in June 2019. The tripartite MoU aims at supporting the GoM in creating conditions conducive for voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of refugees to their places of origin or of their choosing when they decide to do so. The tripartite MoU is the first and necessary step to support the GoM's efforts to improve the situation and the living conditions of those remaining and supporting recovery and resilience-based development for the benefit of all communities in Rakhine State. Thus far, four rounds of independent needs assessments have reached 75 villages, with implementation of 43 prioritised QIPs underway aimed at improving community infrastructure, as well as re-establishing economic and social interactions.
- In Myanmar's south-east, key non-state actors present in areas of refugee and IDP return have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015 and political dialogue is ongoing through the '21st Century Panglong Peace Conference' process. These are positive steps towards peace and reconciliation, and a facilitated refugee return program is in place for the refugees who wish to return. Since 2016, four groups of refugees in Thailand have opted to voluntarily return through this programme coordinated by the Royal Thai and Myanmar Governments, with the support of UNHCR and partners: 71 in October 2016, 93 in May 2018, 565 in February 2019 and 310 in July 2019. UNHCR and partners support refugees who voluntarily wish to return from Thailand to Myanmar by providing information on conditions in return areas, counselling, and other assistance, such as transportation and reintegration support. UNHCR works to ensure that any returns are voluntary, safe, and conducted in a dignified manner.
- In south-east Myanmar and Rakhine State, UNHCR supports peaceful coexistence initiatives designed in partnership with, and benefiting, all communities in order to foster trust, establish (and where required rebuild) economic linkages and promote social cohesion and confidence-building between all affected populations. Further, recognising that the pursuit of small-scale solutions self-initiated by IDPs in Kachin State including local integration, return and resettlement, are likely to emerge, UNHCR is also preparing to extend community initiatives to the north east.

### Donors Relations

Total recorded contributions for the operation in **2019** amount to some **US \$21.8 million** thanks to **Australia, Canada, CERF, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), France, Germany, Italy, Japan**, and the **United States of America**. UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR with un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

*Special thanks to the donors of softly earmarked and unearmarked funds in 2019 | USD*

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