

# UNHCR MYANMAR RAKHINE STATE SITUATION UPDATE

19 July 2012



## MYANMAR

### Situation overview

- The State of Emergency in Rakhine State as declared on 10 June following the eruption of communal violence continues. The curfew remains in place in six townships of Rakhine State. Tension continues to be high with risk of violent incidents.
- UNHCR staff temporarily relocated on 10-12 June have now returned to Maungdaw. Anti-UN and NGO sentiments prevail in Sittwe. Pamphlets and t-shirts calling for the departure of international organizations providing support to Muslims have emerged.
- The UN and its humanitarian partners confirmed to the Government their readiness to provide humanitarian assistance to all affected people in Rakhine State. The Government had requested the UN to support their efforts in responding to the humanitarian needs of some 15,000 IDPs (“7,000 Rakhine nationalities and 8,000 Bengalis”) in a letter of 12 June.
- At the invitation of the Minister for Border Affairs, a UN delegation led by the Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General including the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Myanmar and the UNHCR Country Representative visited IDP locations in Maungdaw and other areas in Rakhine State on 13-14 June.
- During the Government-organized visit for UN agencies, I/NGOs and donors to Sittwe on 26-27 June, UNHCR reaffirmed its commitment to the inter-agency response in the areas of shelter, NFIs, camp coordination and EVI assistance. On 27 June a UNHCR team departed for Maungdaw to undertake further needs assessment and distribute relief items.
- As part of the overall UN humanitarian response, UNHCR is assessing needs in the relief camps hosting the internally displaced (IDPs). Distribution of UNHCR relief items (mats, blankets, tarpaulins, kitchen sets and mosquito nets) has so far reached some 5,000 people in the relief camps.

### Security

The level and frequency of disturbances in Rakhine State appears to have decreased in recent days. Reports of security incidents nevertheless continue.

In some areas, members of the local population stay inside their houses day and night and shops remain permanently closed and under shutters. UN Department of Safety and Security in Myanmar confirms that tension remains high with the possibility of violent incidents.

UNHCR Staff who were temporarily relocated 10-12 June have returned to Maungdaw.

In Sittwe and Maungdaw some camp leaders/coordinators, in camps hosting the Rakhine, have rejected needs assessments by and assistance from international agencies stating that they do not want help from those who assist the Muslims. Anti-UN and NGO posters have been sighted in public spaces in Sittwe.

### Displacement

According to official government figures as of 24 June, 78 people have died, 87 have been injured and 3,000 residential buildings are damaged as a result of the violence. **Over 55,000 people remain displaced across Rakhine State.**

Humanitarian partners estimate that around 100,000 people are affected, including new displacement, spread over 82 temporary camps in five townships. Of the displaced 53,390 are Muslims located in seven camps in and around Sittwe. Some 60% of the displaced Rakhines (13,170) are housed in camps in Sittwe alone.

Buthidaung is the least affected area.

Some statements by local officials indicate an intention to separate the two communities in order to prevent further violence, with the possibility that displaced persons could be in camps for several months pending verification of their places of origin.

### Humanitarian Needs

#### Immediate needs

The Government has asked UNHCR and partners to support the reconstruction of some 444 housing units in the Maungdaw area and to support the provision of temporary shelters in and around Sittwe.

UNHCR has made an urgent appeal for US\$ 3 million for shelter and emergency relief items to meet the immediate needs of the displaced population in Maungdaw and Sittwe.

The immediate response undertaken by UNHCR has consumed all emergency stocks available to UNHCR in Myanmar and it needs to be urgently replenished.

#### Preliminary inter-agency needs assessment

**NFIs:** Up to 10,000 basic and extended NFI kits are required, including kitchen sets, blankets, mats, tarpaulins and mosquito nets (basic NFI kits) as well as floor mats, clothes, hygiene items and undergarment (complementary kits).

**Shelter:** Up to 10,000 family shelters in addition to camp management support. Although the number of houses burned in the violence is still being assessed, it is becoming clear that fear of

renewed violence will keep many of the displaced from returning to their homes.

**Special assistance:** Some 3,600 extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI), such as people with disabilities, chronically ill, unaccompanied minors and unaccompanied elderly, female and child headed households, pregnant and lactating women may require additional material support during these difficult times. EVIs will also need special assistance when accessing services and relief items distributions.

The additional needs for the NFI, Shelter, CCCM and EVI sectors for 60,000 persons generated by the humanitarian emergency in Rakhine State could exceed US\$ 10 million.

The regular annual budget for UNHCR's operation in Myanmar for 2012 has the following requirements:

	2012 UNHCR Budget for Myanmar	Contributions to Myanmar as at 6 July 2012	Remaining Needs
USD	26,382,558.42	4,991,368	<b>21,391,190.42</b>

#### Response

- UNHCR has shipped a total of 6,000 NFI sets to affected areas in Rakhine State consisting of plastic tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, clothing and hygiene items. Of these, some 3,500 NFI sets have been distributed to displaced families in relief camps while the remaining 2,500 NFI sets will be distributed in a matter of days.
- The Rakhine State authorities are currently in discussions with UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations to mobilize international support for IDP shelter construction in Sittwe,

Maungdaw and surrounding areas. UNHCR has provided 500 tents to support the immediate shelter needs of displaced families in Maungdaw, while their houses destroyed by fire are being reconstructed. UNHCR is ready to provide support for the construction of some 222 shelters in the same area.

- UNHCR is working on a coexistence and peace building programme to foster a reconciliation dialogue between the communities.
- UNHCR has initiated a working group to develop key messages and a strategy to counter the prevalent perception in Rakhine and in other parts of the country that the UN and NGOs are partial in their assistance.
- The Ministers of Border Affairs and Social Welfare, accompanied by the Minister of Defense, organized a three day inter-agency and donor mission to Rakhine State (Sittwe and Maungdaw) 27-29 June. The mission was joined by senior representatives from all departments of the Rakhine State Government, and Directors from several Union level departments during visits to the affected locations.
- A similar interagency mission led by the Minister of Border Affairs arrived in Sittwe on 16 July and traveled to Maungdaw on 18 July. The mission seeks to review the assistance provided by UN agencies so far, to obtain commitments from international organizations on additional shelter and other assistance, as well as to address the anti-UN and NGO sentiments hampering the response.
- Private donors in Myanmar have provided the equivalent of over US\$3 million in cash and in-kind donations, such as food and NFIs, as part of the Government's relief efforts.

## BANGLADESH

### Situation overview

- The Government of Bangladesh maintains a closed border for new arrivals from Myanmar. The authorities have acknowledged that the situation in Rakhine State remains fluid and they have indicated their increased vigilance in this regard.
- UNHCR received reports of incidents of refoulement involving 847 persons as of 11 July including the return of boats arriving from Myanmar by Bangladesh border authorities.
- Reportedly Muslims from Rakhine State continue to flee Myanmar and enter Bangladesh through other border crossings. Those intercepted are held for questioning before being deported.
- Following the visit of the Deputy Foreign Minister of Myanmar, Maung Myint, to Dhaka, the media reported that Myanmar reiterated its decision to take back its citizens staying both in and outside the two official refugee camps in Cox's Bazar District and also in prisons. Press reports from Myanmar suggest that the Government of Myanmar will only accept return after verification that require proof of residency before the year of 1824.
- The situation in Nayapara and Kutupalong camps remains calm. Nevertheless, refugees are extremely concerned for the relatives who remain in Myanmar. Refugees reported to UNHCR that children in camp are not attending school outside of camp for fear of arrest and intimidation.
- A high level meeting between UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh agreed upon earlier is being scheduled.

### Operations

- Existing stocks of NFIs from UNHCR's warehouse in Teknaf in Cox's Bazar District for up to 5,000 people will be transported to Rakhine State pending authorization from both governments. An initial shipment of 2,000 plastic sheets as well as other NFIs are being obtained to assist the Myanmar operation in addressing urgent the shelter needs in Rakhine State.
- A working draft of a contingency plan agreed with humanitarian partners to address new refugee arrivals is underway. The plan will be summarized into modules of scenarios including 10-, 25- and 50,000 persons based on needs for a period of three months.
- NGOs working in Cox's Bazar District have been told not to conduct activities out of their mandate and that any new arrivals from Rakhine State approaching them for assistance should be reported to the authorities. International NGOs were advised not to work in the border areas.

# Myanmar - Rakhine State

As of July 2012



**FIGSS**  
Field Information and  
Coordination Support Section

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