

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ferry sinking in Rakhine claims at least 69 lives; government and local organizations respond
- Strengthening women's participation in decision making in Rakhine IDP camps
- Fighting in Kachin and Shan states continues to cause displacement
- Cross-line convoys resume in Kachin
- Dry season water shortages affect thousands of displaced people
- Older IDPs in Kachin: needs and opportunities

Key FIGURES

People displaced in Rakhine State 139,000

People displaced in Kachin and northern Shan states 100,000

People displaced in Meiktila, Mandalay region 3,300

People from Kokang who transited through Lashio >13,000*

*Total numbers displaced by the Kokang conflict remain unconfirmed

FUNDING

\$190 million requested for the 2015 Response Plan



A boy in Sat Roe Kya IDP camp, Rakhine. June 2014 Credit: OCHA

In this issue

- Ferry sinking in Rakhine P. 1
- Giving IDP women a greater voice P. 1
- Displacement in Kachin and Shan states P. 2
- Cross-line missions resume in Kachin P. 3
- Dry season water shortages P. 3
- The needs of elderly IDPs in Kachin P. 4

Dozens die as ferry sinks off Rakhine coast

On the night of 13 March, a public ferry, the Aung Dagon 3, sank near Myebon town in Rakhine State. According to state media, the boat was carrying at least 225 passengers plus crew when it sank en route from Taungup to Sittwe. The most recent reports from state authorities indicate that 169 people were rescued and that at least 69 people died. The Myanmar Government has set up a commission to investigate the incident.

The Myanmar Navy, local authorities, local community members and the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) led the search and rescue operations for survivors. Local authorities and the local community in the areas close to where the incident happened mobilized quickly and provided assistance to rescued passengers. There were many reports of heroic efforts made by the local community to rescue passengers and provide emergency assistance.

The Myanmar Red Cross Society played a key role in delivering first aid, psychosocial support and transport back home. The UN and other national and international organizations also offered to support the rescue and response efforts that were led by the government, local authorities and the local community, and some were involved in the response. For example, the Myanmar Medical Association provided first aid to survivors and Relief International – an NGO working in Myebon, close to where the incident occurred – provided boats to support recovery efforts and other assistance to survivors and rescue workers.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator met with the Rakhine Chief Minister to express condolences to the people of Rakhine and to reiterate the offer of support. International organizations have been looking at ways of providing further support to strengthen local capacity to respond to emergencies such as this one.



An MRCS worker helps a young child after the ferry sinking near Myebon, March 2015. Credit: MRCS/ U Maung Myint

Giving women a greater voice in IDP camps

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been working actively to give women a greater voice in decision-making in the eleven IDP camps in Rakhine where it is working on camp coordination and camp management issues. Until now, there have been no women in the camp management committees appointed by the authorities.

Sex and age disaggregated data is available for approximately 60% of people displaced in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine

Rakhine IDP camps:

Women (>18)	13,000
Men (>18)	11,000
Elderly women (>60)	1,500
Elderly men (>60)	1,200
Girls (<18)	24,300
Boys (<18)	26,400

Kachin IDP camps:

Women (>18)	18,600
Men (>18)	15,700
Elderly women (>60)	2,900
Elderly men (>60)	2,000
Girls (<18)	19,200
Boys (<18)	19,300

LWF is helping to give women a greater voice in decision-making in IDP camps

To improve women’s participation in decision-making, LWF has been consulting with members of the camp management committees. Following extensive consultations and discussions, the committees have agreed that women may be appointed as invitee members on the camp management committees. In addition to the 138 men appointed by the authorities as camp management committee members, there are now 138 women, selected by the people in each camp as invitees, who provide input into

camp management discussions and decisions. LWF are also supporting the participation of representatives from the elderly, disabled and youth in these meetings.



A woman facilitating a meeting in Khaung Doke Khar camp, Rakhine Sept. 2014. Credit: LWF

Further training and support needed

LWF has organized orientations for the women on the roles and responsibilities of camp management committee members, as well as on meeting processes. To further encourage women’s participation in decision-making processes, LWF has set up women’s groups in most camps to strengthen women’s leadership skills. According to LWF, the camp management committee meetings are more representative due to the participation of women, who have raised issues including the need for bathing facilities that provide greater privacy for women, the need for livelihoods support and training for women, and the need for post-primary education for their children.

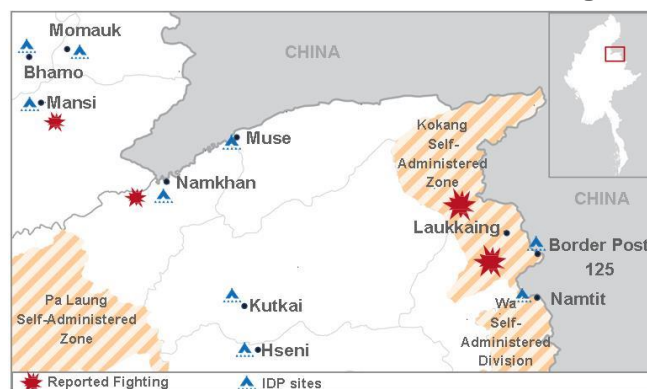
Fighting and displacement in Shan and Kachin

Thousands of vulnerable civilians affected by fighting in Kokang

Fighting in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone continued throughout the month of March. According to government figures, more than 13,000 migrant workers fled the area when the fighting started, transiting through Lashio to other parts of Myanmar, and authorities in Yunnan Province in China have reported that over 60,000 people crossed the border into China. It is not clear how many of these people remain in camps in China. The UN has not had access to these camps.

The UN and INGOs still do not have access to the Kokang Self-Administered Zone and information on the humanitarian situation there remains limited. There have been media reports of civilian killed or injured in the fighting but numbers are unconfirmed. According to the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR), at least five children have been killed and 13 injured as a result of the conflict.

Southern Kachin, northern Shan and Kokang



At least five children killed and 13 injured as a result of the conflict in Kokang

According to the Government’s Rehabilitation and Administrative Support Committee for the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, the government is providing some assistance to affected people inside the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, including food supplies. Around 4,000 people are reported to be staying at an IDP site at Border Post 125 on the Myanmar side of the border with China and are receiving some assistance from the government and local community-based organizations. Some 600 people remain displaced in Namtit in the Wa Self-Administered Division, where they are receiving

Outbreaks of fighting and insecurity continue to affect communities and displace people in other parts of northern Shan State

assistance from local authorities and community-based organizations. In April the World Food Programme (WFP) is providing a one month food ration to displaced people in Namtit.

Clashes in Kachin and northern Shan states temporarily displace 2,000 people

In other parts of northern Shan State, outbreaks of fighting and insecurity continue to affect communities and displace people. International humanitarian organizations have had to intermittently suspend their activities as a result of insecurity.

In late March, armed clashes in Kaung Waing village, Namhkan Township, between the Myanmar Army and the Ta'Ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) temporarily displaced close to 1,700 people. Local NGOs and WFP provided food supplies to people in need of assistance. Many of the newly displaced are reported to have returned to their villages within a few days. During March, some 200 people are also reported to have been newly displaced in Kutkai Township, where they are staying in an existing camp. Clashes between the Myanmar military and the Kachin Independence Army in Mansi Township, southern Kachin State, also temporarily displaced some 200 people from the outskirts of Mansi town. According to organizations in the area, most of these people had returned to their villages by the end of the month. Local NGOs, with the support of international organizations, continue to provide humanitarian assistance to newly displaced people, as well as to IDPs in other locations.

Cross-line missions resume in Kachin

In March, for the first time since September 2014, the UN received authorization from the Government of Myanmar for international staff from UN agencies and international NGOs to join cross-line convoys to some locations in areas beyond government control in Kachin State. However, there continued to be restrictions on access to Laiza.

The first such convoy travelled on 12 March 2015. The convoys deliver aid such as food, medicine, and winter kits to IDPs. They also provide opportunities for staff to conduct needs assessments, workshops, training, coordination meetings with local NGOs and camp committees, as well as monitoring of programmes and protection monitoring.

The UN continues to advocate for sustained access to all displaced people in both Government and non-Government areas. About half of all the IDPs in the non-Government areas are living in and around Laiza.



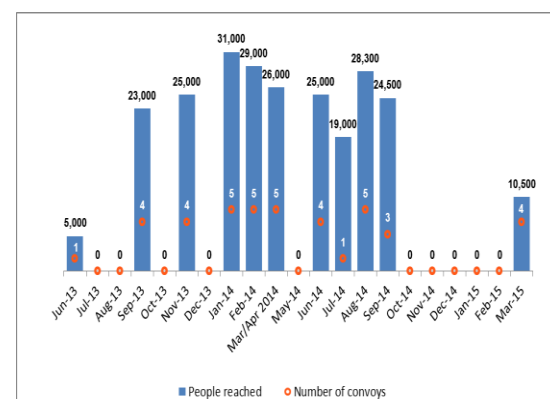
A woman in Bum Tsit Pa camp with winter items distributed by UNHCR and KMSS, March 2015. Credit: KMSS/ Bawk Naw

The UN continues to advocate for sustained access to all IDPs in Government and non-Government areas in Kachin

Lack of access resulting in gaps in the quality and quantity of assistance

Local NGOs have been, and will continue to be, central to the humanitarian response in Kachin and northern Shan States. Limited access for international organizations has resulted in gaps in the quality and quantity of the humanitarian response. Restricted access has also had an impact on the ability of technical experts to do shelter and water and sanitation monitoring, maintenance and upgrades, and to provide national NGOs with the technical support and capacity building required.

Cross-line missions June 2013 – March 2015



Responding to dry season water shortages

Humanitarian organizations in Kachin have been working with communities to ensure that camps that are prone to water scarcity are better prepared to deal with this

From mid-March until May it is the peak of the dry season and this poses serious challenges. Lack of access to enough safe water affects the health, hygiene and sanitation of displaced people and hampers essential activities like cooking meals. Water shortages affect women and children disproportionately, since they are often tasked with collecting water. The more time they have to spend on getting water, the less time women have for income-generating activities and children for studying. Every person needs at least 15 litres of clean water a day.

Assessing enough clean water in camps in Kachin

Since August 2014, international and national humanitarian organizations have monitored water infrastructure in 91 IDP sites in Kachin. Assessments take into consideration water sources, the quality of water, the number of people living in each site, the surface area of the site, and the location and landscape to ensure that water infrastructure is tailored to the specific requirements of each site. Many IDP camps are situated on the compounds of religious properties with limited space for additional infrastructure.

People in more than one third of the camps have been found to be at risk of water shortages during the dry season. Through the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster in Kachin, humanitarian organizations have been working with communities, camp leaders and land owners to make sure that camps that are prone to water scarcity are better prepared to deal with this. Activities include upgrading water sources, or finding alternative sources when necessary, helping camps devise water safety plans to manage seasonal and environmental risks, and informing people of how to cope with water issues.



Girls collect water from a well dug by aid agencies in a Kachin IDP camp. Feb 2014. Credit: OCHA

Dry-season water shortages in camps in Rakhine

The availability of fresh drinking water during the dry season in Rakhine is heavily dependent on the nature of the preceding rainy season. In many locations, fresh groundwater is either not available or not accessible, and people therefore rely on rainwater collection ponds to store water from the rainy season. In camps where no other water sources are available, humanitarian organizations provide emergency water supply during this period either through pumping from distant sources, or transporting water by boat from other locations. Alternative measures have been attempted, including rain water collection from each shelter unit and river damming to create larger ponds, but these initiatives have not fully resolved the issue.

The rainy season in 2014 was shorter and lighter than in previous years in Rakhine, increasing the demand for emergency water supply during the 2015 dry season. Water boating has already commenced in one camp in Pauktaw Township since mid-March, and pumping from distant sources has started in five camps in Pauktaw and Myebon townships. Furthermore, the piping system for urban camps in Sittwe Township is degraded and leaking. Oxfam has provided the necessary materials to the Department of Rural Development to upgrade this system. The WASH Cluster estimates that over 19,000 people in camps depend on emergency water supply provision during the height of the dry-season.

Over 19,000 people in camps in Rakhine will depend on emergency water supply at the peak of the dry season

Specific needs of older people in IDP camps

Giving older people in IDP camps more opportunities and access to healthcare can help improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their families

Need for more attention to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of older people

There has been insufficient attention to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of older people in IDP sites, affecting their quality of life and having an impact on their families, according to a recent study by HelpAge International, commissioned by UNHCR. Based on visits to nine IDP camps in Myitkyina and Bhamo, Kachin State, the report concludes that most camps do not cater to the specific needs of elderly people.



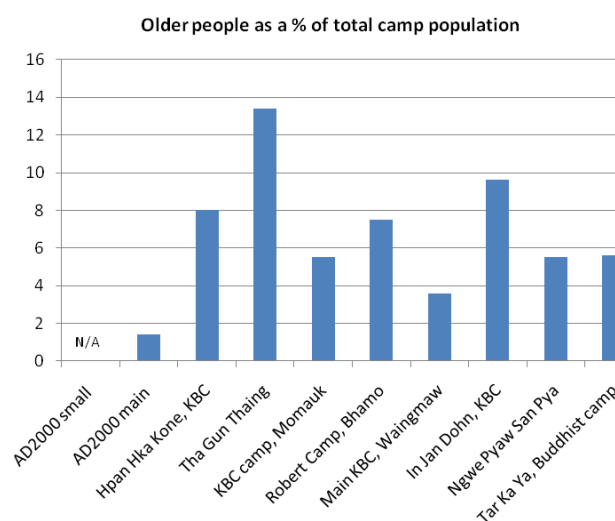
Older people often take care of grandchildren while parents are away earning income for the family. Nov. 2013, Kachin. Credit: UNHCR/ S. Kelly

Older people in camps often have to walk long distances to access sanitation facilities, thus risking falling and breaking frail bones. In the absence of regular health checkups for people in camps, older people's illnesses often reach advanced stages before they are diagnosed, according to the report. Also, many older displaced people suffer from vision or hearing impairments. The vision impairments that affect almost 40 per cent of the residents could be easily treated with cataract surgery or glasses.

Older people's contribution significant and can be further increased

Older people are crucial for the well-being of many families in the camps. More than 70 per cent of older women care for grand-children while the parents are away earning income.

According to HelpAge International, there are many low-cost ways to allow older people play an even greater role in their families and communities. The report recommends that elderly IDPs are allowed to grow food, raise pigs and poultry on the camp premises. Older people often have the knowledge and skills to weave baskets and knit clothes. Giving older people more opportunities and access to healthcare can help boost their self-esteem, and improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their families.



Credit: HelpAge International

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