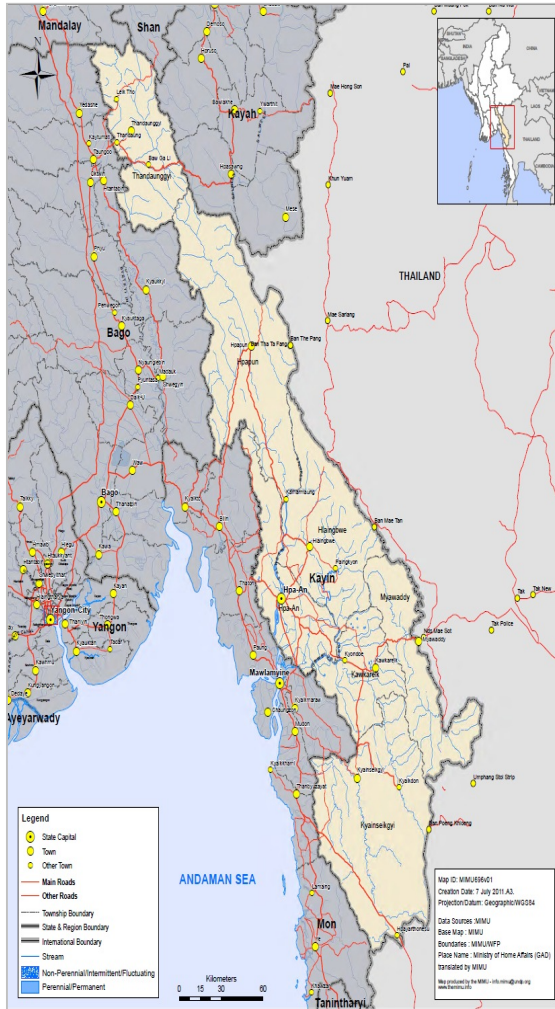


# KAYIN STATE PROFILE

UPDATED: JUNE 2014<sup>1</sup>



Map: Myanmar Information Management Unit

<b>State</b>	<b>Kayin</b>	
Flag		
Previous Name	Karen	
State Capital	Hpa-An	
Number of Districts	4	
Number of Townships	7	
Ward and Village Tracts	458	
Total Population (Est. 2012)	1,733,281	
	IDPs	89,150
	Refugees	52,276
Area	11,731 sq. miles / 30,383 sq. km	
Border	North: Mandalay Division and Shan State	
	East: Kayah State and Thailand	
	West: Mon State and Bago Division	
Latitude	15° 12'N and 19° 28'N	
Longitude	96° 23'E and 98° 56'E	
Ethnicities	Sgaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Bwe Karen, Paku Karen, Shan, Pao, Myanmar, Mon	

## Background

Located in southeastern Myanmar, Kayin State is bounded by Mandalay Region and Shan State to the north, Kayah State to the northeast, Mon State and Bago Region to the West, and Thailand to the East. Previously known as Karen State, the territory is inhabited primarily by the Karen people, a broad umbrella identity that includes a multiplicity of ethnic groups such as the Sgaw, Pwo and Pao, many with unique cultures and mutually unintelligible languages. While the vast majority of Kayin State is comprised of Karen people, some sources suggest the majority of Karen may live outside Kayin State, including elsewhere in southeastern Myanmar and the central Delta region until 2012 when a bilateral ceasefire was signed. The Karen National Union (KNU) had waged an armed conflict against the Myanmar government since 1949, resulting in decades of instability and hundreds of thousands of displaced people, the impacts of which have been most widespread in Kayin State.

The origin of Karen nationalism is commonly believed to date back to the 1880s, when the Karen National Association (KNA) was formed in Taungoo with the stated objective of promoting Karen identity and culture,

<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: These state profiles were printed in June 2014, and will be updated periodically by the UNHCR South-East Myanmar Information Management Unit to reflect new developments, additions and corrections.



and working to bring social and economic opportunities to the Karen people. Heavily influenced in the early years by American Baptist missionaries who introduced a new religion and helped develop the Karen writing script, the KNA evolved in subsequent decades into an ethnic political organization led primarily by charismatic members of the Sgaw ethnic group. The first official call for self-determination followed in 1928, and by 1948 the KNA had joined forces with three other Karen nationalist organizations to form the KNU.<sup>2</sup>

After fighting with the British and against the Burma Independence Army in World War II, the Karen people not only distanced themselves from much of the country, but also anticipated that sovereignty for the Karen people would be forthcoming. While the KNU did declare in 1948 the formation of the Karen Free State, known in local language as *Kawthoolei*, the unilateral action was unsuccessful, despite a provision in the 1947 Constitution that allowed for secession. In subsequent decades of armed struggle, the KNU's objective evolved as calls for ethnic nationalism were replaced by demands for federalism.

While the KNU continued to be the dominant non-state armed actor in Kayin State, internal divisions began to disunite the organization as early as the late 1950s, as some among the majority Karen Buddhist population felt the Sgaw Christian-led KNU failed to equally represent the interest of all Karen people. Likewise, the various ceasefire and peace negotiations that began and failed over the years caused friction between soft and hardliners and contributed to the splintering of brigades and factions. For decades starting in the 1950s, the KNU operated as a *de facto* government in large parts of the South-East, including areas that extend into neighbouring East Bago, Mon and Tanintharyi.

The current displacement within and from Kayin State dates back primarily to the 1980s and 1990s, when a series of major clashes between the Myanmar army (Tatmadaw) and KNU led to a significant reduction in the NSA's territorial control. The first 10,000 refugees are reported to have arrived in Thailand in 1984, and by 1998 there were seven temporary settlements housing approximately 120,000 individuals. Formal splits within the KNU further weakened the KNU's power, most notably the emergence of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army in 1994, later renamed the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). Comprised of Karen Buddhist defectors from within the KNU ranks, the DKBA seized the KNU Headquarters a year later in 1995 and has primarily aligned itself with the Tatmadaw since its inception. The KNU continued its armed conflict against both the Tatmadaw and the DKBA through the 2000s, before signing a ceasefire agreement in 2012 and taking a prominent role in subsequent nationwide ceasefire negotiations.

As is the case throughout South-East Myanmar, reliable information about population figures and social indicators have been elusive in recent years, with no reliable census data since 1983. This is particularly challenging in Kayin State, where much of the territory has remained outside government control for decades. The available primary data and secondary sources suggest that Kayin State faces an extensive array of socio-economic challenges as it embarks on a new era of peacebuilding, including limited infrastructure, a fractured economy, and rudimentary and disconnected social services, owing not only to decades of conflict and displacement, but the division of territory between the government and several NSAs, primarily the KNU and DKBA.

## Population Profile

At the time of the 1983 census, the population of Kayin State was 1,057,505, and 2012 estimates suggest that Kayin State is now comprised of approximately 1.7 million people. Estimates also submit that the total population of Karen people throughout the country, not only in Kayin State, could range from 2 to 5 million

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<sup>2</sup> The three organizations that joined the KNA in establishing the KNU were the Karen Central Organization (KCO), Karen Youth Organization, and the BKNA, a Buddhist wing of the KNA that had formed in 1939.



people, a total Karen nationalists assert is greater than 7 million. The national census conducted in March 2014 may provide more exact figures in the near future.

As noted above, the Karen population group includes several ethnicities, including the Sgaw Kayin, Pwo Kayin, Bwe Kayin and Paku Kayin, each of which has a distinct language, while non-Karens such as the Shan, Burman, Mon and Pao ethnic groups are also present in Kayin State. Most estimates suggest that between two-thirds to fourth-fifths (67-80%) of Karen in Kayin State are Buddhists, although the Christian minority (15-30%) has had a disproportionately large impact on the history of Karen identity. Small minorities of animists and Muslims can also be found in Kayin State, as well as among the refugee population in Thailand.

As a result of conflict between the Tatmadaw, the KNU and various other non-state armed groups, thousands of refugees have fled into Thailand in successive waves since 1984. The majority of the registered refugee population in Thailand is from Kayin State, with approximately two-thirds originating from Kayin. A similar proportion of the unregistered caseload of around 50,000 is believed to be of Kayin-origin as well.<sup>3</sup>

The figures on internal displacement are less exact, although there is unquestionably a lengthy history of forced displacement within Kayin State. As of 2012, the Border Consortium (TBC) estimated that approximately 105,000 IDPs remain in Kayin State, of a total of approximately 240,000 in South-East Myanmar. While UNHCR's field monitoring suggests these numbers may be declining, access to the areas most affected by displacement has only very recently begun to open up for international organizations based inside Myanmar.

Township	District	Refugees (2013) <sup>4</sup>	IDPs (2012)
Hpa-An	Hpa-An	7914	0
Hlaingbwe	Hpa-An	16,841	5,000
Hpapun	Hpa-An	12,955	41,000
Thandaunggyi	Hpa-An	743	16,000
Myawaddy	Myawaddy	927	4,150
Kawkareik	Kawkareik	8107	2,300
Kyainseikgyi	Kawkareik	4760	20,700
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>52,276</b>	<b>89,150</b>

## Administrative Divisions

There are seven townships in Kayin State, spread across four districts, Hpa-An, Myawaddy, Hpa-pun and Kawkareik. According to the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU), there are place codes for over 2000 villages in the state. There are 11 ministries working under the supervision of the Chief Minister, who was appointed by the President on 30 March 2011. All of the Division and State Ministers of Security and Border Affairs are military personnel nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The state capital Hpa-An, with a population of approximately 50,000 individuals, is located roughly a one hour drive from Mawlamyine, the state capital of Mon State and the largest city in South-East Myanmar.

The KNU has long maintained separate administrative divisions for Kayin state and the surrounding area, having designed a map of seven districts in their Karen free state of Kawthoolei, each controlled by a separate Brigade, which operate semi-autonomously from central leadership. Although the seven districts include village tracts,

<sup>3</sup> The Royal Thai government suspended registration in 2006. All refugee arrivals since 2006 are unregistered, though still provided with the same protection and assistance as the registered population. Approximately 50,000 refugees from the South-East are unregistered.

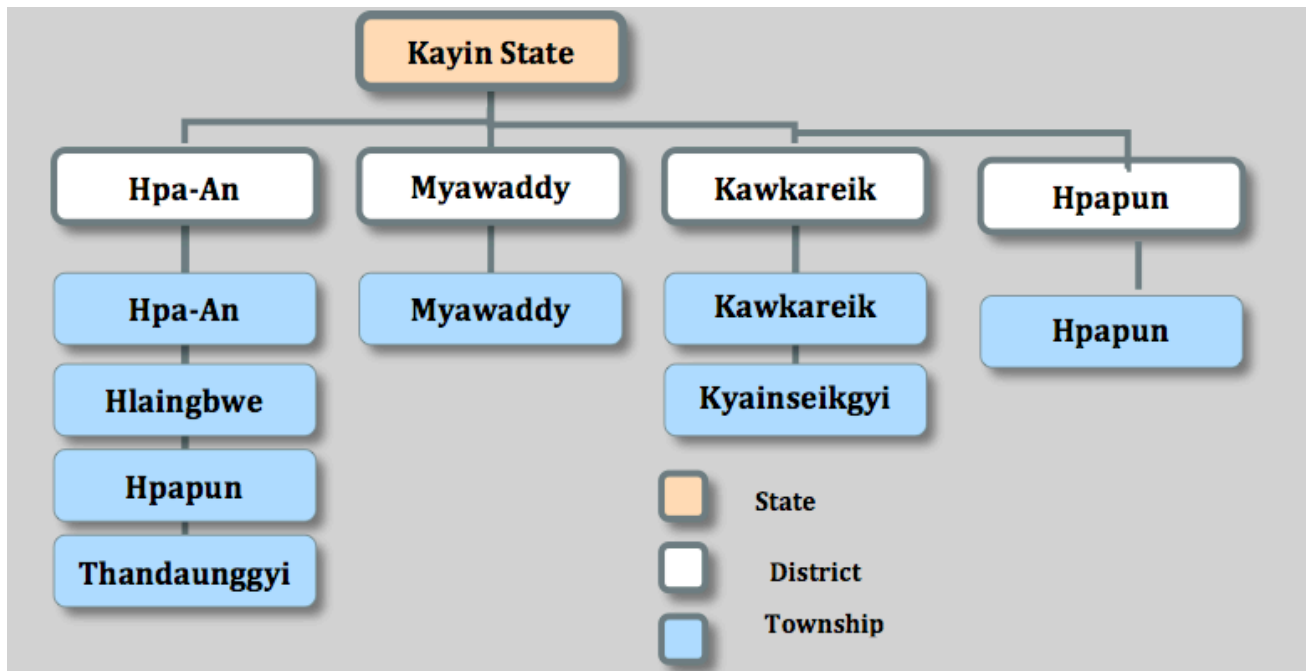
<sup>4</sup> Refugee figures are registered totals according to UNHCR ProGres database, and do not include the unregistered caseload. IDP totals are from TBC.



the KNU’s administrative divisions are not consistent with the government divisions outlined in the chart below. Not only do the boundaries of the districts not correspond to official districts and townships, but the KNU map crosses the boundaries into Kayin State’s neighbouring states and regions.<sup>5</sup>

### Name of Ministers and Ministries in Kayin State

Name	Ministry	Party
U Zaw Min	Chief Minister	USDP
U Aung Lwin	Ministry of Security and Border Affairs	Military-appointed
Saw Htein	Ministry of Finance and Revenue	USDP
Saw Christopher	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Breeding	KPP
Saw Hsa Law La	Ministry of Forestry and Mines	USDP
Min Soe Thein aka Naing Min Soe Thein	Ministry of Planning and Economics	AMRDP
U Khin Maung Myint	Ministry of Transport	PSDP
U Kyi Lin	Ministry of Electric Power and Industry	PSDP
U Than Daing	Ministry of Development Affairs	USDP
U Chit Hlaing	Ministry of Social Affairs	KSDDP
Khun Than Myint	Ministry of National Races Affairs (Pao)	Independent
U Khin Kyuu	Ministry of National Races Affairs (Bamar)	USDP
Naing Chit Oo	Ministry of National Races Affairs (Mon)	AMRDP



### Non-State Actors

The KNU has been the dominant NSA in Kayin State since 1949, and one of the most prominent NSAs in Myanmar for the last half-century, both through its political action and the activities of its military wing the

<sup>5</sup> For more detail on the KNU’s administrative divisions, including its map of Kawthoolei, please see Ashley South’s *Burma’s Longest War: Anatomy of the Karen Conflict*, noted under References.



Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). With its intellectual origins in the late 1800s, and a lengthy history of international support from Christian missionaries, foreign governments and Karen people outside Myanmar, the KNU’s objectives have involved since being founded in 1948, as earlier calls for sovereignty were replaced by compromises for federalism. The KNU’s territorial control, if not its standing as the sole representative of Karen people, has declined since the 1980s owing to a confluence of factors, including internal divisions, the emergence of splinter groups, Tatmadaw offensives and broader geo-political shifts such as the end of the Cold War.

The internal divisions in the KNU have also spawned three additional NSAs, most notably the DKBA, which emerged in 1994 and has since carved out its own areas of territorial control. Led primarily by disaffected Karen Buddhists who abandoned the Christian-led and hard-line KNU to form a separate armed opposition group, the DKBA quickly established itself as a ceasefire group with support from the government. Similar to the KNU, the DKBA has military and administrative control over its pockets of territory in southern Kayin State, although researchers suggest the relationship between the DKBA and KNU, as well as the DKBA and the local population, tends to vary by Brigade and territory. There have been several high-profile clashes between the DKBA and KNU, including in January 2005 and June 2009, both of which resulted in refugee outflows into Thailand.

Both the Karen Peace Force (KPF) and KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC) emerged when members of KNU Brigades defected to form their own NSAs. The KPF was established in February 1997, when members of Brigade 6 broke away from the KNU. In 2010, the KPF agreed to be incorporated into the government’s Border Guard Force (BGF), a state security force that was already affiliated with the DKBA. The KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC) emerged in 2007 as a splinter group led by the long-time commander of KNU Brigade 7, and quickly signed a government ceasefire which was renewed in 2012. For the moment, the KPC has refused to transform itself into the BGF, and therefore remains an active NSA with small territorial control.

### Ceasefire Updates

	<b>Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)</b>
<b>Opposition Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DKBA formed its political wing KKO (Klohtoobaw Karen Organization) on 1 April 2012.</li> <li>DKBA changed its name Democratic Karen Buddhist Army to Democratic Karen Benevolent Army on 4 April 2012.</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Former headquarters in Myaing Gyi Ngyu, in Hlaingbwe Township, southern Kayin State.</li> <li>Headquarters of DKBA’s Klo Htoo Baw’s (also known as Brigade 5) at Soneseemyaing area in Myawaddy District.</li> </ul>
<b>Cease-fires</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signed a ceasefire agreement with government since 1994.</li> <li>Brigade 5 signed a ceasefire agreement with the government on 3 November 2011.</li> <li>On 23 February 2012, DKBA announce that the ceasefire agreement has been broken as the BGF seized their weapons. The weapons were returned on 25 February 2012.</li> </ul>
<b>Situation Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DKBA, with the exception of Brigade 5, agreed to join the BGF on 21 August 2010. Government troops nonetheless reportedly began withdrawing from Brigade 5 areas.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brigade 5 had armed conflicts with the Tatmadaw along the Thai- Myanmar border areas after the general election on 8 November 2010, which caused some Kayin villagers to flee to Thailand. Possible tensions between Brigade 5 and the Tatmadaw have been reported since as well.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DKBA has participated in nationwide ceasefire talks throughout 2013 and 2014.</li> </ul>

<b>Opposition Group</b>	<b>Karen National Union (KNU)</b>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headquarters at Manerplaw, Hlaingbwe Township in Kayin State near Thai border.</li> </ul>
<b>Cease-fire Negotiations and Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government negotiation team met with KNU on Thai-Burmese border town of Mae Sot on 19 December 2011 for initial ceasefire talk.</li> <li>Signed ceasefire agreement with the government on 12 January 2012. KNU will hold weapons for self-protection.</li> <li>Several armed clashes between KNLA Brigade 5 and Myanmar army reported in March 2012.</li> <li>Padoh Mahn Nyein Maung, one of the KNU leaders was released from the prison on 19 March 2012.</li> <li>The Karen National Union and the Myanmar Government delegations achieved 13 common positions in formalizing an initial historic ceasefire agreement between the two sides at their 'peace talks' held on 6 April 2012 at the Sedona Hotel in Yangon.</li> <li>The Karen National Union's peace talk delegates held an informal two-hour closed-door meeting with Burma's President, U Thein Sein, in Naypyidaw on 7 April 2012.</li> <li>KNU delegates met with 24 leaders of the country's ethnic and democratic political parties on 7 April 2012.</li> <li>The Karen National Union (KNU) opened liaison offices in KyaukKyai, Dawei, Three Pagoda Pass, Myawaddy, Hpa-An and Thaton throughout 2012 and 2013.</li> <li>17 September 2012, the government released 514 prisoners under Article 401(1) of the Criminal Code, including 19 Karen political prisoners.</li> </ul>
<b>Current Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KNU ceasefire has held. KNU has taken a leadership role in nationwide ceasefire talks throughout 2013 and 2014, including hosting a summit of country-wide NSAs in Hpa-An in January 2014 as a precursor to the second round of negotiations with the government.</li> </ul>

<b>Opposition Group</b>	<b>KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KPC)</b> <b>[splinter group that broke from KNU in 2007]</b>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headquarter is located in Hto Kawkoo village in Kawkareik Township in Kayin State.</li> </ul>
<b>Cease-fires</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signed ceasefire agreement with the government in February 2007. On 7 February 2012, the</li> </ul>



	KNU/KNLA Peace Council renewed this ceasefire agreement with the government.
<b>Situation Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2010, the KNU/KNLA Peace Council refused to transform into BGF. The KNU/KNLA Peace Council will hold their weapons.</li> </ul>
<b>Opposition Group</b>	<b>Karen Peace Force (KPF)</b> [splinter group that broke from KNU in February 1997]
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headquarters in Kayin State.</li> </ul>
<b>Cease-fires</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surrendered, signed ceasefire and allied with the Tatmadaw in February 1997.</li> </ul>
<b>Situation Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2010 transformed into Border Guard Forces (BGF) and based in Kyainseikgyi, Kyaikdon and at Three Pagodas Pass on the Thai-Myanmar border.</li> </ul>

<b>Opposition Group</b>	<b>All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF)</b>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several bases throughout northern, western and southern border areas of Myanmar.</li> </ul>
<b>Cease-fires agreements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-level ceasefire agreement signed in Yangon on 5 August 2013.</li> </ul>
<b>Situation Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government sent its letter offering 'peace talks' to the ABSDF on 10 January 2012. Subsequent meetings were held on 9 February 2012, 7 March 2012, and several informal discussions over the next year.</li> <li>State-level ceasefire agreement reached between ABSDF and union government in Yangon on 10 August 2013, after two official and three informal meetings. The 13-point agreement calls for continued political dialogue, formation of independent monitoring committee, the opening of liaison offices and nationwide ceasefire discussions.</li> <li>ABSDF announced it planned to open a liaison office in Myawaddy. Date of opening unknown.</li> <li>ABSDF held a meeting, 8 February 2014, in Loikaw, Kayah State, to commemorate its dead.</li> </ul>

## Economy and Livelihoods

The people of Kayin State have traditionally relied extensively on agriculture for their livelihoods, with major crops being rice, rubber, sugarcane, coffee, cardamom, and seasonal fruits and vegetables. The government and KNU have both confirmed in third-party reports that agriculture and animal husbandry represent the main source of income for the vast majority of Kayin civilians. As elsewhere in South-East Myanmar, local subsistence farming has been historically undermined by insecurity and conflict, particularly the predatory and extractive practices of both the government and the NSAs that control the territories.

The topography of Kayin State does not allow for an equitable distribution of agricultural potential across all townships, as the mountainous Hpapun and Thandaunggyi townships have far less flat arable land than



southern Kayin State, although coffee and cardamom are viable cash crops in the north.

Vast plantations of rubber and sugarcane are under cultivation, with a PeaceNexus Foundation report in late 2013 asserting the total currently stands at 200,000 and 8,000 acres, respectively. The decline of conflict-related challenges and the concomitant expanded freedom of movement are expected to increase productivity and incomes in the agricultural sector.

With the improved stability in a state with vast untapped economic potential, there is now a rush of interest in commercial and investment opportunities in Kayin State. Perhaps the most pivotal catalyst for the state's development will be the construction of the Asia Highway, which is part of the Asian Development Bank's Greater Mekong Sub-region Initiative, and is expected to revolutionize transportation and unlock manufacturing as a major industry in Kayin State. Along with government subsidies for agricultural plantations and cash crops, non-governmental organizations are also launching and expanding livelihood programs, although the number of such projects remains modest to date.

Although less frequently reported than further north in Kayah and Shan States, some illicit economic activities have been reported in Kayin State, particularly in the territories of smaller NSAs. For example, one small splinter group known as the Kloh Htto Baw group, committed in its 2011 ceasefire agreement to combatting the illicit drug trade. Other groups such as the KPC have been linked in the past to illegal cross-border trade and logging, as foreign businesses exploit the porous borders to extract resources from these areas.

## Services and Infrastructure

As elsewhere in the South-East, the public services available in Kayin State are under-developed, and reliable indicators are scarce. Public schools are established throughout the state, and Hpa-An is the location of four universities, however the quality and accessibility of educational opportunities are more limited in rural areas. Perhaps more than elsewhere in South-East Myanmar, non-state and non-governmental alternatives are present in Kayin. For decades, the KNU sought to administer its vast territory as a quasi-government actor, establishing departments of health, education, law and forestry, which provided local populations with social services in Karen language. For example, the KNU's department of education loosely networks several hundred Karen-language schools throughout Kayin State. However, with the KNU's decline in territorial control and available revenues in the early 1990s, the role of this non-state public sector dwindled, while non-governmental organizations proliferated to fill the gaps.

Community-based organizations such as the Karen Development Committee (KDC), established in June 1994, have since emerged to provide social services to many communities. The Karen Development Network was established in 2004 to coordinate the network of civil society organizations active in Kayin State. Most of these organizations have been faith-based and maintain a low profile, with some more independent of the NSAs than others. Both Buddhist monks and Christian churches have been active as well, both in support of these faith-based organizations and in their own direct provision of assistance and support. There is also a long history of cross-border aid from Thailand, although the presence of such organizations has declined in recent years.

Both the social services accessible to local populations, as well as their economic and livelihood opportunities, have been historically constrained by extremely poor infrastructure throughout Kayin State. Although the Asia Highway provides hope for improved transportation in the future, the existing infrastructure remains completely inadequate. Most notably, the link from Hpa-An to Myawaddy, the main border crossing with Thailand, is a one-way road on which the direction of traffic alternates one day to the next. Myanmar's rail system is only connected to Kayin State through hubs in Mon State, while no commercial airlines fly to the airport in Hpa-An. In the absence of reliable overland transportation, Kayin State's network of rivers serves as a major mode of travel, not only for local populations in their everyday lives but humanitarian and development organizations as well.





Similar to Kayah State, electricity in Kayin State is in extremely short supply outside of Hpa-An, however planned upgrades of a power facility in Thaton and a natural gas turbine plant in Mawlamyine, both in Mon State, provide reason for optimism. Likewise, telecommunications services are extremely limited, even by Myanmar standards, with scarce mobile reception outside the state's few urban areas. While the recent contracts with Telenor and Ooredoo will help improve this sector throughout the country, Kayin State's rural areas are unlikely to among the first to benefit.

## Protection and Durable Solutions

As elsewhere in South-East Myanmar, decades of armed conflict has profoundly impacted the protection environment in Kayin State, although recent diplomatic progress and a reduction in active fighting has led to a gradual improvement in the security situation for many communities. Most research suggest that the protection environment has historically varied within Kayin State, depending on the dynamics of the conflict as well as the state and non-state actors in control of specific territories. Although UNHCR believes the overall protection environment is improving, monitoring continues for recurring protection issues, including arbitrary taxation and land confiscation.

The issue of landmines is particularly serious in Kayin State, as a long history of use primarily by NSAs has resulted in widespread contamination in all townships. While UNHCR periodically receives information about victims, and follows up through the Myanmar Red Cross Society to provide support, it is anticipated that the both the risk and reporting of incidents will increase as freedom of movement and access expands for civilians and humanitarian organizations alike. As of early 2014, there has yet to be any official landmine clearance in Kayin State, and the space for other forms of humanitarian mine action such as mine risk education (MRE) and surveying is still very limited.

Another protection challenge foreseen in Kayin State going forward is the scramble for land and resources, particularly as investors and commercial developers move into South-East Myanmar as the relatively untapped region opens up after decades of conflict. The potential for forced displacement and labour, and land grabbing and confiscation, have already been raised as challenges to sustainable development and peace-building, particularly as large plantations proliferate throughout the region. This issue is especially concerning in regards to possible IDP and returnees, who will already face challenges reclaiming their old land or finding plots on which to establish themselves anew, especially as the rush of investment may outpace the voluntary return of displaced people.

Finally, based on UNHCR's field work in both Myanmar and Thailand, there appears to be cautious optimism among refugee communities regarding the possibility of return in the coming months and years, however the early results of return monitoring in Kayin State suggest the number of permanent refugee returns has so far been modest. Rather, UNHCR and partners have noted an increased number of extended informal visits whereby members of a refugee household return for weeks or months at a time for the purpose of surveying the situation and assessing whether the time is right for return. The situation of IDPs and IDP returnees is more ambiguous, as the internally displaced population in Kayin State has been less accessible to UNHCR than elsewhere in South-East Myanmar, although reports suggest that several thousand IDPs are gradually establishing lives and livelihood activities back in their home village as restrictions on freedom of movement are relaxed.

With more than two-thirds of the refugee population originating from Kayin State, along with a population of IDPs that may be even larger in number, the modalities of how to facilitate and support future large-scale returns remains a topic of considerable discussion. The state government's original plan to designate and develop sub-townships to absorb refugee and IDP returns now appears to be receiving less emphasis than



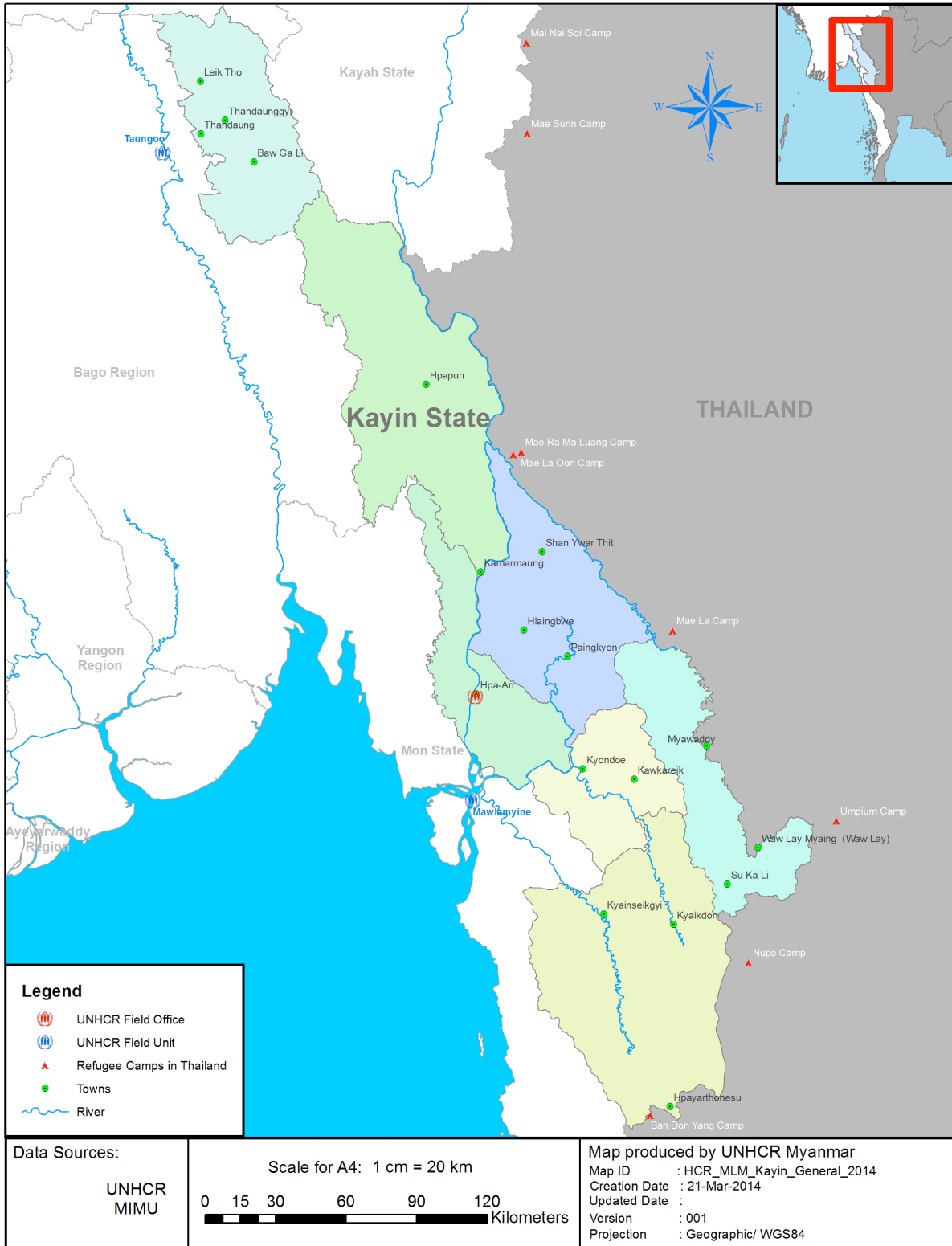
previous and discussions have taken place on a series of planned pilot projects, with possible NSA collaboration in some cases. However, the timeframe for most of these pilot projects remains unclear, and priority in many cases may be given to IDPs rather than refugees. In addition to the various top-down initiatives, UNHCR has also received indications that locally-negotiated arrangements involving community and religious leaders, but without direct government or NSA involvement, are also emerging in some areas. Considering the evolving context of Kayin State, which includes a patchwork history of government, NSA and civil society service provision, UNHCR believes it is probable and certainly desirable that voluntary return draws upon the self-sufficient coping mechanisms of refugees, IDPs and the communities absorbing them.



### Annex 1: Map



## Kayin State



Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNHCR



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