



Gender Based Violence in Myanmar

Gender-based violence (GBV) which includes sexual violence, intimate partner violence, trafficking, forced and early marriage and exploitation is widespread in Myanmar including in the conflict affected areas of Rakhine and Kachin. Despite numerous publications highlighting the prevalence and gravity of GBV in areas that have been or continue to be affected by conflict, there are very few recorded cases of survivors reporting their cases to authorities. Like any state affected by conflict, the rule of law is either absent or scant. Survivors therefore have no one to report their incident to and if they do, they risk further harm either to themselves or their families. The general absence of available services means that survivors have nowhere to seek assistance and their incident goes unrecorded. For this reason, GBV is a prevalent, pervasive and silent crime.

Women and girls in Myanmar are enduring the effects of GBV committed during conflict, their flight and in their current place of refuge. During the conflict in Kachin, for example, women identified "rape by soldiers" as the key reason for leaving their homes.¹ The same women and girls now residing in camps, report an increase in violence in their home and higher levels of exploitation by men. Trafficking is also identified as a primary risk for adolescent girls. This is not unique to Kachin. Focus group discussions conducted by UNFPA in Sittwe, among both Rakhine and Rohingya populations, demonstrated similar findings. Women and girls identified rape as being prevalent during conflict. They also reported a significant increase in intimate partner violence since settling in camps. It is clear that women and girls are living with both the fear of GBV and the effects of past incidents of GBV every day. Leaving women and girls untreated and unsupported is unacceptable.

*"If she tells anyone of the rape, her family will beat her because she has taken dignity away from them." **
- Adult woman living in Rakhine

Breaking the Silence

The work of UNFPA in Myanmar has built upon work already initiated by local organisations. UNFPA brings a wealth of international and institutional expertise to provide organisations to shift from awareness raising to service provision. The survivor centred approach adopted by UNFPA means that our programmes focus on the choices survivors want to make to deal with the impact of the violence they have been subjected to. The focus on increasing service provision to support survivors also reduces the sensitivity surrounding GBV response and prevention activities. This in turn, empowers women and girls to actively participate in the life of their community. In Myanmar, empowering women and girls at the community level also supports them in leading local peace building activities.

To date, GBV programming has been negligible compared to the demand, particularly with respect to the provision of response services, including emotional support, safe referrals, and appropriate health care. However, with dedicated funding, significant progress has been made. With the support of the global GBV Area of Responsibility, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Department for International Development, United Kingdom, and the Australia Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, dedicated GBV coordinators are now in place in Yangon, Sittwe (Rakhine) and Myitkyina (Kachin) to lead GBV coordination, and to provide technical guidance and assistance to service providers, including partners of UNFPA, to establish GBV programmes, identify geographical and programmatic gaps and ensure the implementation of practices consistent with international standards.

¹ UNFPA, Focal Group Discussions January 2014.

* Quotes featured were not provided by the individuals in these photos ** Women featured in this publication gave their consent to having their pictures taken

Funding of the GBV response has also been provided by UNFPA to implementing partners including Metta Development Foundation, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Kachin Women's Association to establish several Women and Girl's Centres (WGCs) in both Rakhine and Kachin.



Staff from a women and girls centre in Laiza practice survivor-centred case management

Since January 2014 the GBV programme has achieved the following:

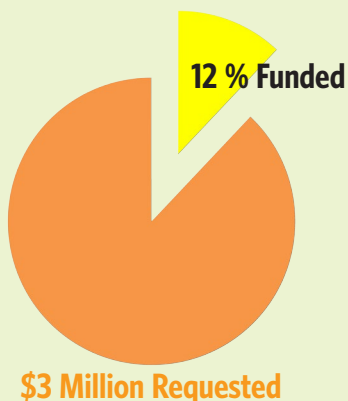
- GBV technical specialists are now posted in Yangon, Sittwe (Rakhine) and Myitkyina (Kachin)
- A GBV sub-sector has been established at the Yangon level, and there are GBV working groups in both Rakhine and Kachin
- 6 WGCs camps have been built around Sittwe (Rakhine)
- 8 WGCs in the Government and non-government controlled areas of Kachin have been established
- Since the opening of WGCs in Kachin in January 2014:
 - ☑ The number of women and girls accessing the WGCs doubled between February and March, and quadrupled between March and April.
 - ☑ In the second month of operation there was a 10-fold increase in the number of GBV presenting cases. This case load again doubled during the third and fourth months of service provision.
 - ☑ In total, over 2,000 women and girls have accessed support through the WGCs and outreach activities since the programme began in January 2014.

Recommendations for Action

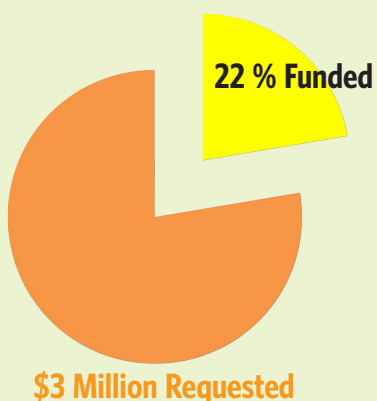
The international community must prioritise their response to GBV in areas that have been or continue to be affected by conflict. Women and girls are not only at constant risk of GBV in their everyday activities but also have extremely restricted access to safe, comprehensive and appropriate care and support. The following actions are strongly recommended:

- **Increase the provision of survivor-centred, life-saving health and emotional support response services:** Increase access to life-saving health care (including the provision of post-rape treatment kits) and psychosocial services (as primary and secondary priorities).
- **Target prevention activities to address the acute and immediate risks faced by women and girls:** Identify the acute risks faced by women and girls and employ strategies to reduce these risks immediately in areas which have been or continue to be affected by conflict.
- **Safe and ethical collection and sharing of data and information:** Roll out information management systems (GBV IMS) to capture critical and relevant information to support targeted and effective programming without compromising the safety or confidentiality of survivors.
- **Build the capacity of police and service providers to ensure more responsive services for survivors:** Advocate with community members and leaders, service providers and the security sector about the importance of supporting survivors to access life-saving health and emotional responses immediately and appropriately.
- **Justice Response:** Support the security sector (police, military, armed groups, justice sector) to respond appropriately and effectively to cases of GBV to encourage an end to impunity.
- **Peace building dialogues:** Increase the provision of women's empowerment activities in the Women and Girl's Centres to encourage women and girls to lead and participate in local peace building initiatives.

GBV Funding Received - Kachin



GBV Funding Received - Rakhine



For further information please visit UNFPA Myanmar's website:

myanmar.unfpa.org