

INTER-AGENCY ASSESSMENT MISSION – PUTA-O REPORT

Durable Solutions and Recovery Needs

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I. Introduction

The situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region around Puta-O has been one of the least known to the humanitarian community in Kachin State. There were confusions on whether there were IDPs or not in Puta-O, in the presence of sometimes contradictory information received from various official sources. This remained the case until the International Committee of the Red-Cross (ICRC) and the Myanmar Red-Cross Society (MRCS) conducted an assessment and distribution of relief items in January 2014 that the situation of IDPs in Puta-O was brought to the attention of the humanitarian community in Myitkyina through a pre-assessment report sent by UNDP, on the sideline of the MRCS-ICRC economic security assessment.

The report suggested that around 47 households lacked the attention that was devoted to other communities in their situation, except for minimal assistance that was provided by the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC). The report also indicated that IDPs wished to settle in their current areas of displacement. It was decided to set up an inter-agency mission to conduct an assessment on possibilities for durable solutions and recovery needs of these populations, in the event they would wish to settle in Puta-O as a solution to their displacement. The inter-agency assessment mission was coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and included the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action (UN-OCHA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Specializations of the assessment teams included protection, Camp management and camp coordination, protection, livelihoods, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), coordination of humanitarian action and recovery program management.

II. Objectives of the assessment

The objectives of the inter-agency assessment mission included:

- To assess residual humanitarian needs;
- To explore possibilities for durable solutions and recovery needs of IDPs

Within these objectives, the assessment sought to determine needs for shelter, livelihoods, income generation, possibilities for self-reliance on food, etc. It particularly to understand whether the safety and security of IDPs was guaranteed in areas of displacement and that the choice of solutions to their displacement was done voluntarily and that they had access to relevant information prior to envisioning their choice of solution. It also aimed at determining whether there are protection mechanisms, including those providing gender based violence response and prevention.

The assessment also wished to understand whether there is a local government plan on IDPs in Puta-O, the existence of basic services and their accessibility as well as existing capacities and opportunities for recovery among IDPs. The last aspect on which the assessment focused was the social cohesion between IDPs and local communities.

III. The locale of the assessment

The initial targeted areas covered by the assessment included Machan Baw KBC camp, Naung Khaing KBC camp and the Duk Htan settlement in host community. Upon arrival in Puta-O, the assessment stumbled upon the situation of IDPs in N-Lwel Yang and decided to include it in the assessment. Not being able to visit physically N-Lwel Yang, the team decided to bring IDPs and the village administrator to the nearest accessible place where they met with the assessment team.

All areas covered by the assessment were accessible by land and within commutable distance from the center of Puta-O township center, with the exception of N-Lwel Yang, which is 25 minutes from Naung Khaing by boat. Naung Khaing is 25 minutes from the center of Puta-O Township by car.

IV. Methodology

Methods used during the assessment included:

- The Multi-Sectoral/Cluster Inter-Agency Rapid Assessments (MIRA): This tool was used to gather information on residual needs in targeted settlements;
- Durable solutions and recovery needs assessment: a set of guiding questions jointly developed by UNDP and UNHCR was the other tool that was used during the assessment. Participants were grouped by sex in a semi-structured group interview. This helped the team explore gender perspectives to durable solutions and recovery needs in the situation of IDPs in Puta-O. Individual interviews with youth in some locations also took place. The choice of individual interview with youth was motivated by a limited number of this category of population in various locations.
- The team also conducted observation in sites visited.

Respondents included IDPs, the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), representatives of the local community, particularly the village administrators and some village elders and District and Township Administrators. The Assistant Director of NaTaLa was not available in Puta-O (out of town) during the assessment mission.

V. Key Findings

1. IDP Populations

The assessment determined that 55 households were still displaced in all four locations covered by the assessment. The table provides the breakdown of IDP populations in Puta-O.

IDP Camp/Settlement	Total HH	Total Pop.		Under 18		Under 5		Under 2	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Machambaw KBC	08	21	16	13	06	07	02	03	01
Naung Khaing KBC	23	53	38	32	15	10	07	04	03
N-Lwel Yang	10	25	29	09	13	04	03	01	01
Duk Htan	14	31	33	13	16	03	02	00	01
Total	55	130	116	67	50	24	14	08	06

Table 1: Breakdown of IDP population in Puta-O

IDPs come from villages of N-HKa Gha, N-Phyi Gha, Hpakan Yang, Sinarwa, Kanar Yan and Ma Phyi Gha. It is to be noted that IDPs in all locations arrived in their current location of displacement in August 2013, with the exception of those in Duttan who arrived in 2011.

2. Durable solutions and recovery needs

In addition to residual humanitarian needs¹, the following were the key findings of the assessment, with respect to Durable Solutions and Recovery Needs for IDPs in Puta-O:

a) Solution to the displacement:

IDPs, in a large majority expressed their wish to settle in their current villages/wards they are currently displaced, in the absence of perspectives for return to their villages of origin. Almost all women were in favor of settling in villages/wards they are currently displaced. Although the majority of men also expressed the same wish, the lack of livelihoods opportunities led some of them to think about returning to their villages of origin. They said this is not possible in the absence of guarantees of security and safety. In addition to this, transportation is restricted to military personnel and supplies. Access to basic services equally motivated the choice of IDPs, particularly women.

b) Access to basic services

Schools and medical clinics are within reach of IDP settlements in Puta-O and Machan Baw. Displaced children are currently attending schools within their areas of displacement. It was also shared that the health department had assigned staff to cover IDPs in these locations. During the visit in Machan Baw, a woman delivered a baby girl in the camp. A mid-wife came within a short time to attend woman and her new born baby. Despite this, the mission could not determine with certitude that IDPs have adequate access to health services.

Access to sustainable sources of clean drinking water and sanitation system is urgently needed in almost all four locations (Machan Baw, Naung Khaing, Duk Htan and N-Lwel Yang). Latrines do not meet minimum standards in terms of quantity and on protection as well. They lack locks/latches and do not have specific areas/bucket/trash bin for women's sanitary pads, for example. Settlements do not have access to electricity. Despite this, no case of GBV was reported.

c) Livelihoods and Food Security

Most IDPs depend on assistance provided primarily by KBC, for settlements in Machan Baw and Naung Khaing, those in Duk Htan have had very minimal and sporadic assistance from KBC and other actors, including the local government and the Myanmar Red-Cross Society (MRCS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). IDPs in N-Lwel Yang and Duk Htan are reportedly surviving on assistance from generous extended family members and local community (including church members), who also are not economically secure.

¹ See MIRA report compiled by UNOCHA

There are currently no livelihoods programs targeting specifically IDPs in Puta-O. The lack of livelihoods opportunities has a serious bearing on sustainable solutions to displacement, since IDPs do not mean to sustain their recovery.

Access to land is critical for any durable solution to displacement. The local government facilitated access to land for the settlement of IDPs in Duk Htan where IDPs were able to construct their shelters. IDPs were to pay Ks60,000.00 to obtain titles to the land. The information gathered by the team suggests that IDPs have not been able to settle this amount. Access to farming land is still very difficult since IDPs' livelihoods prior to displacement came from agriculture and livestock. The GAD expressed the willingness to facilitate access to land for agriculture particularly in N-Lwel Yang and would look into possibilities to facilitate access in other areas, such as Duk Htan. It was suggested that the lack of livelihoods opportunities has caused some IDPs in Duk Htan to move to IDP camps in Myitkyina, making sustainable solutions to displacements elusive.

d) Capacities and opportunities for recovery

Most of the IDPs were lived from agriculture and livestock farming. These skills are fundamental to recovery and return to normalcy. Most IDPs, particularly men, expressed the need for opportunities to apply their skills. These opportunities can be seen in terms access to land, inputs for agriculture, learning opportunities for new technologies in environmentally sensitive agriculture. Women expressed the need to be provided with training opportunities to increase their participation in income generation activities, which will enhance their households' self-reliance and economic recovery. NaTaLa holds a training center in Puta-O. The training center offers vocational training opportunities to women for free, including boarding and meals for a period of 3 months. IDPs should be linked to this center.

e) IDP Registration and documentation

IDPs in N-Lwel Yang are not officially registered by authorities. Registration is paramount to being part of the reintegration program whether locally or elsewhere. Authorities agreed to register these IDPs in N-Lwel Yang addition to facilitating access to land for settlement and farming.

The assessment team also stumbled upon the lack of identity cards for some IDPs. Prior to displacement IDs were taken by the Immigration Department in a bid to replace them. Unfortunately, the Immigration Department has not been able to return them, reportedly due to lack of staffing in the department to process them. This led to the lack of proper documentation for some of the IDPs while in displacement. The General Administration Department (GAD) promised to follow up with the Immigration Department to ensure that all IDPs receive proper documentation. The GAD wishes to examine possibilities to replace existing IDs for those whose IDs are still in Immigration Department.

f) Social Cohesion

After discussing with IDPs, local communities and the local government, the team concluded that IDPs and host communities have peaceful coexistence in all four locations. It was also reported that host communities were the primary provider of assistance to IDPs at the time moment they arrived in current locations of displacement and continue to do so. They said they would help IDPs build houses in case they wished to settle in their communities. So far, no instances of strained relations between IDPs and host communities were reported. IDPs and local communities hope this will continue to be the same in the future.

g) Governance

The role of the government in creating an enabling environment for recovery programs to take place. The leadership of the government is paramount in managing and sustaining the recovery process. In Puta-O, the GAD has facilitated access to land plots for settlement, which is key to durable solutions. The willingness of the local government in creating conditions for sustainable solutions to displacements has also been expressed in terms of the support for access to farming land. It was also found that there was less to no coordination at all between KBC and local authorities. KBC is planning the relocation of IDPs from Machan Baw and Naung Khaing to Loon Zut Ward in Puta-O. This relocation appears to have not been coordinated between KBC and the GAD of Puta-O. It also seems that no plan for durable solutions for IDPs in Puta-O is on the table, so far.

VI. Limitations and challenges

In as much as IDPs expressed their wish to be settled and the express willingness of authorities in creating enabling conditions for durable solutions for displacement, access to land was identified by all stakeholders as the biggest challenge for sustainable solutions to displacements, whether for settlement and for livelihoods. No sustainable solution can be envisaged without access to land.

Other constraints include lack of livelihoods opportunities and recovery programs targeting IDPs, maintaining them in a situation of dependence on the meager assistance they receive mostly from community-based sources. Although February, March and April are seen as the period of construction and the proliferation building sites and an increase in the demand of labor, IDPs seem absent in this labor market. It is not clear why IDPs seem very far from this growing industry in a developing Puta-O district.

The distance between Puta-O and the rest of Kachin, coupled with the condition of the road makes Puta-O inaccessible and assistance very expensive, since the easiest way to get relief assistance to those in need is by air.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

In light of the above, the situation of IDPs in Puta-O has opportunities of finding sustainable solutions. IDPs expressed their wish to settle in areas where they are currently displaced. It appears that their choice of solutions to displacement is motivated by the perception that their security and safety were not guaranteed in their villages of origin. Access to basic services also played a role in this choice. Whether durable solutions can become a reality for IDPs in Puta-O depends largely on the government's plan to accompany them into sustainable local integration as this appears to be the choice of the majority of them.

On the basis of findings of the inter-agency assessment mission, following recommendations are formulated:

(a) For the government (township, district and state level)

- The local government needs to take all measures to support the choice of IDPs' choice of sustainable solutions to displacement in creating enabling conditions for recovery through:

- The development of a plan for sustainable local integration to help IDPs who have chosen to settle in Puta-O, areas where they have been displaced for a minimum of 6 months;
- The creation of opportunities targeting IDPs in support their local integration in areas of displacement, encouraging and facilitating IDPs' access to income generation opportunities like the construction industry and the seasonal agricultural market;
- Affording vocational training and skills development to increase IDPs' competitiveness in the job market or leading their business in a more productive manner (agriculture, livestock breeding, small business, etc.);
- Create awareness among IDPs and facilitate access to existing resources and opportunities within reach and available to them (NaTaLa training center, etc.);
- The government should provide adequate protection to IDPs within respective jurisdiction, this includes addressing basic needs of IDPs whether in camps or not and registering those not yet registered;
- Build the capacity of government staff and employees committed to the coordination and assistance of IDPs;
- The local government should coordinate efforts aimed at assisting IDPs in camps; this includes receiving and sharing information concerning IDPs with KBC and international humanitarian organizations (UN agencies and partners).

(b) For humanitarian and development actors:

- Humanitarian actors to cover IDPs in Puta-O and extend the same protection as those in other parts of Kachin state (addressing basic needs of IDPs and ensure that minimum standards in humanitarian assistance are met and that the dignity of IDPs is maintained);
- KBC to coordinate with local authorities and humanitarian actors in Mytkyina to ensure that minimum standards in humanitarian assistance is afforded to IDPs in Puta-O;
- Humanitarian and development actors to work closely, wherever possible, with the state and local governments to develop to reintegrate plan IDPs in Puta-O, those who consciously expressed the wish of reintegration in communities they are living with to ensure that guiding principles of durable solutions are upheld;
- Extend recovery programs (livelihoods, income generation activities, vocational training, etc.) to IDPs in Puta-O in support to durable solutions;
- Move the durable solutions for IDP from a framework to concrete programs. Puta-O can serve as pilot project that could be replicated to other areas if conditions are warranted.