

**Report on Findings and Recommendations  
by Inter-Agency Mission to Thandwe Township in Rakhine State  
4 to 6 October, 2013**



**House burnt in Me Kyun village. Credit: UNOCHA**

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## Background

Inter-communal violence that occurred in Rakhine State in June 2012 and October 2012 has resulted in the displacement of approximately 140,000 people, and the destruction of properties and livelihoods. An additional 36,000 people have been living in isolated areas with poor access to basic services and livelihoods. The Government-led response, supported by humanitarian organizations continues to respond to essential and emergency needs of the affected population in Rakhine State.

On 29 September, internal-communal violence broke out in Thandwe Township, in the south west of Rakhine State. A dispute between a Kaman shop owner and Rakhine motorcycle taxi driver triggered violent incidents in Thandwe town and nearby villages between 29 September and 2 October. A total of 480 people have been displaced from seven villages where 110 houses and two mosques were burned. Most people are housed with friends and relatives in their villages of origin, while some 14 Rakhine households took refuge in a monastery. The State Government has imposed a curfew in Thandwe from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am and additional security forces have been deployed. Relief works began on 3 October as the situation was brought under control. The Government has provided assistance (food, non food items, tents) together with the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS).

## Inter-agency mission to Thandwe from 4-6 October

Upon the request of the Rakhine State Government for assistance to IDPs in the area, an inter-agency assessment mission was dispatched on 4 October to Thandwe, where it remained until 6 October. The purpose of the mission was to assess the needs of affected communities, to verify reported fatalities and damages, to identify possible gaps in the Government-led response and to determine whether international support was required.

The inter-agency mission included participants from UN agencies and INGOs, including MSF-Holland, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP, UNOCHA, UNDSS, and WHO proceeding from Sittwe and Yangon. The mission visited the four hardest-hit villages: Me Kyun, Pauk Taw, Shwe Hlay, and Tha Byu Chaing which are located 6 to 21 miles (9 to 33 kilometers) north of Thandwe. The team did not visit the wards of Thandwe affected by the violence because of limited time. The team utilized the Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA) methodology and also carried out focus group discussions with affected people from all communities. The mission, upon arrival, met with local authorities, including Rakhine State Government representatives, and the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) to coordinate relief and recovery plans and to share findings and recommendations.

## Findings of needs assessment conducted in affected villages

The mission assessed the needs for food, livelihood, education, shelter, health, non-food items and protection in all affected villages. Despite efforts to collect disaggregated data on population, most of the affected communities could not provide details. Summary of findings are outlined below:

### **Education**

All community members urged the immediate reopening of the 36 schools which have remained closed since the onset of the violence. Both communities are however still wary of sending their children to school across each other's neighbourhoods.

Since all books and stationery were lost during the violence, an immediate replacement of these items for affected students is recommended. Information available after the mission was concluded indicates that the Ministry of Education is going to respond to this request with its own resources.



**Food stocks destroyed at a burnt house in Shwe Hlay village. Credit: UNOCHA**

### ***Food Aid***

Some remaining food stored from the last year's harvest including rice, beans, and vegetables were lost in the fires. The MRCS delivered a two-week supply of food to all affected communities. The rice harvest is due in a few weeks and food supply is still needed for the next two to three months, until the harvest is complete. It should be noted that the success of harvesting is contingent upon security guarantees for the affected population to be able to go back to their normal fieldwork.

### ***Health***

The affected population in three villages (Shwe Hlay, Pauk Taw, and Tha Byu Chaing) has access to healthcare services at the 16-bed Shwe Hlay station hospital. A medical doctor was temporarily deployed to the station hospital and a mobile clinic was sent to Tha Byu Chaing village after the incidents. An ambulance is available at the station hospital for emergency referrals to Thandwe hospital. The fourth affected village (Me Kyun) was visited by a medical team, led by the district medical doctor, to attend to emergency health care needs.

The assessment team did not find any major health issues among the affected population. Health staff, health facilities and referral systems are well organized and capable of responding to emergency needs. Shwe Hlay station hospital has adequate basic trauma supplies and a team of eight medical staff, including one doctor on temporary assignment and two nurses. It is recommended to sustain the current status of health services. It is also recommended to keep an adequate reserve of medical supplies and, when the situation is stabilized, to resume the immunisation trips to the affected villages which have been interrupted by the violence.

### ***Early Recovery***

Over 90% of affected families are farmers who are unable to participate in the rice harvest which would be due in the next few weeks as they feel unsafe. They have also lost their farming tools and equipment along with their houses during the violence. Less than 10% of affected families depend on small business and casual labor for livelihood for which they totally lost during the violence.

Participation of the affected families on the November-December 2013 harvest and 2014 cropping season are critical to augment the income they receive and jumpstart their local economy. In order for the affected families to fully participate, security should be assured and farm and harvesting tools should be provided.



Loans taken by the affected farmers from the government for the current cropping season is recommended to be written off.

Early Recovery should be integrated into the overall township development plan, under the leadership of the Relief and Resettlement Committee. It is also recommended that an early recovery assessment be undertaken jointly by the early recovery sector and local authorities, as soon as possible.

### ***Shelter & Non-Food Items (NFIs)***

Out of 110 households who lost their homes, 14 are from the Rakhine community and the rest are from the Kaman community. Most of the affected households were rescued by host families in the same or nearby villages. Rakhine affected households in Tha Byu Chaing village have been sheltered at a monastery in the same village.

The Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD) of Rakhine State Government have distributed 150 tents as temporary shelter for the affected population. Government interlocutors indicated that that the Government will support the rebuild of permanent houses in affected villages.



**Affected Rakhine families sheltered at Tha Byu Chaing monastery. Credit: UNOCHA**

The Government has not imposed any restrictions on the affected population in returning to their places of origin. Most of the affected population prefer returning to their original plots once security is restored and tensions have subsided. However, the Rakhine community in Tha Byu Chaing has asked the authorities to be relocated to another part of their village amid safety concerns. A decision in this regard is yet to be taken.

The assessment team recommended ensuring that the affected population be allowed to stay with host families and/or under temporary shelters until security is fully restored.

It was also recommended that the Rakhine State Government and Shelter Cluster develop a minimum standard for permanent housing in Rakhine State, which could become a basis for national standard.

The MRCS distributed Non-Food Items (NFIs) to the affected population.

### ***Protection***

Protection concerns are largely related to general insecurity which has affected the freedom of movement. All villagers felt afraid to move outside their villages since the violence occurred. While there were no reports of gender-based violence before and during the violence, women and girls from the

affected villages now fear attacks when travelling outside their communities. There were no reports of unaccompanied or children separated from their families.

For travel in-between townships, Kaman residents need to request a special permission as most residents only hold white temporary registration cards and not Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSCs). The majority of villagers whose houses have been burnt down have lost their civil identity documents. New documents should be issued as soon as possible.

Security should be provided in the affected villages to prevent the recurrence of violence. It is also important to ensure that those responsible of these incidents are held accountable and the rule of law is enforced. Priority should also be given to initiate reconciliation activities between communities in order to restore an atmosphere where communities can once again coexist.

## Conclusion

From 4 to 6 October, an inter-agency needs assessment mission visited the villages affected by the recent inter-communal violence in Thandwe Township. A total of five casualties were verified by affected communities and local authorities at the time of the assessment. Some 110 houses were destroyed and 480 people were displaced. Affected Rakhine villagers are sheltering at a monastery and affected Kaman villagers are staying with host families close-by their place of origin. The assistance which has been provided by local authority and the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) will cover needs and the mission did not find any substantial gaps in the government efforts for the international supports to complement. Many of the current constraints will be minimized once security is restored and situation returns to normalcy.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Government List of Ward/Village Tract, Burnt house/Household and population - 4 October

No	Ward/ Village Tract	Village	Losses/Burnt				Population Affected				Remarks
			House	Hut	Mosque	Total	HH	Male	Female	Total	
1	Shwe Hlay	Pauk Taw	36	-	-	36	36	72	83	155	
2	Shwe Hlay	Shwe Hlay	8	-	-	8	8	12	20	32	
3	Nat Mauk	The Byu Chaing	53	-	1	54	52	114	118	232	
4	Me Kyun	Me Kyun	10	-	-	10	10	14	24	38	
5	An Taw	An Taw	1	-	-	1	2	3	3	6	
6	Kyauk Kyi	Kyauk Kyi	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	Mosque
7	Kyee Kan Ye	Kyee kan Ye	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	Mosque
8	Ward 3		1	-	-	1	1	7	5	12	
9	Ward 5		1	-	-	1	1	3	2	5	
10	Ward 6		-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	Hut
<b>Total</b>			<b>110</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>480</b>	

## Annex 2: Areas and Communities Affected by Inter-Communal Violence in Thandwe Township

