Dire humanitarian situation in Myanmar

Ongoing communal violence in Rakhine and conflict in Kachin has displaced over 190,000 people as of 26 November. The situation was further compounded by the second wave of violence in Rakhine in late October and an earthquake of magnitude 6.8 on the Richter scale in northern Myanmar on 11 November.

In support of the Government’s relief interventions, partners are stepping up their efforts distributing available stocks and dispatching additional supplies to the affected areas. Addressing additional funding gaps, access constraints in Kachin, misperception towards humanitarian workers in Rakhine, and streamlining bureaucratic processes for travel authorization and visas are crucial to ensure that partners can provide emergency relief assistance to all those in need.

Resurgence of communal violence in Rakhine

Inter-communal violence re-emerged in Kyaukpyu, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Mebon, Pauktaw, Ramree and Rathedaung Townships in Rakhine State in late October. As of 26 November, the estimated number of IDPs across Rakhine reached some 115,000 people, including over 36,000 newly displaced from the October unrest. The President’s Office on 31 October announced that 89 people were killed, 136 injured and over 5,300 private, public and religious buildings were burned or destroyed during the recent clashes.

Authorities stepped up security measures and deployed additional security forces. The curfew remains in place from 19h00 to 05h00 in Minbya and Mrauk-U and from 22h00 to 04h00 in Buthidaung, Kyaukpyu, Kyauktaw Maundaw, Sittwe, and Ramree. The Government stated that it will continue to take actions against individuals and organizations, that are responsible for the conflict to prevent further violence, and requested humanitarian assistance from the international community.

Government pledges to resolve issues in Rakhine

On 16 November, President U Thein Sein sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General and reiterated his government’s commitment to address the needs of all affected people in Rakhine. In the letter, according to the UN spokesperson, the President also noted that “once emotions subside on all sides,” his Government was prepared to “address contentious political dimensions, ranging from resettlement of displaced populations to granting of citizenship,” as well as to look at “issues of birth registration, work permits and permits for movement across the country for all, in line with a uniform national practice across the country ensuring that they are in keeping with accepted international norms.”

Separately, the President met on 16 November with senior Buddhist monks and representatives of the Muslim community, calling for a mutual understanding of each community’s grievances as a means to bring about tolerance and harmony in the State.
**Assessments underscore pressing needs in newly affected locations**

Immediately after the upsurge of violence, an inter-agency rapid needs assessment was carried out in 18 locations in seven townships (Mibya, Mrauk-U, Mye bon, Pauktaw, Kyauktaw, Kyaukpyu and Rathedaung), targeting over 36,000 IDPs to assess the extent of needs and provide available emergency relief supplies including food and plastic sheets (*Please see Rakhine Response Plan for details*). The findings of the assessments indicate that urgent needs remain in food, health, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sectors in the assessed locations.

At the time of assessment, about 85 per cent of the newly displaced (29,300 IDPs) were relying on food aid while 98 per cent (34,000 IDPs) did not have access to markets. Health assistance and nutrition were a major concern as 65 per cent (23,500 IDPs) did not have access to health facilities in their locations of displacement. Poor sanitation, shelter, clean water availability also compounded health issues. Although some 1,400 tents have been distributed, about 26 per cent (9,000 IDPs) of the assessed IDPs were in the open areas close-by their burned villages, and about 47 per cent (16,000 IDPs) were hosted by family and friends. Approximately 60 per cent (20,000 IDPs) were staying without sufficient drinking water and 70 per cent (24,000 IDPs) did not have access to functioning latrines.

**Ongoing instability displaces up to 75,000 people in Kachin and northern Shan States**

The security situation remains volatile with reports of ongoing skirmishes, particularly in Kamaing, Chipwe, Pang War, Momauk, Lwegel and Hpakan, which has resulted in civilian casualties. The estimated number of IDPs in Kachin and northern Shan States reached some 75,000 people. In Hpakan, some IDPs reportedly returned to their places of origin as the skirmishes moved outside of the town. Partners indicated that approximately 2,400 IDPs remain in 11 locations in Hpakan in November. However, the figure is continuously fluctuating due to ongoing fighting in the region. Some 130 people from Kamaing Town also fled to nearby camps due to intense fighting. Urgent needs are food, health care, shelter and WASH in all affected locations.

On 30 October, the Union-level peace-making group led by Minister of President Office U Aung Min met the representatives from KIO in Ruili (China) and reportedly discussed cooperation in providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs, among others. No further detail on the discussion is available at this stage.

**Access constraints persist in Kachin and Rakhine**

Humanitarian partners are continuing their efforts to respond to both Kachin and Rakhine emergencies with limited resources available. Unhindered and sustained access to all locations is crucial to provide much needed assistance to all IDPs in Kachin and Rakhine, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence.

In Rakhine State, access to IDP locations is possible. However, misperception against humanitarian partners continues with reports of calls for termination of relief operations of some agencies. A conducive environment for humanitarian workers is needed to provide much needed assistance to all IDPs across Rakhine. In November, both the President and the Minister of Border Affairs on different occasions reiterated the Government’s commitment to address humanitarian issues in Rakhine, in compliance with international standards and pledged their continued support for the expansion of humanitarian operations across the State. Since late September, UNHCR, WFP and a few NGOs have gradually resumed some activities in northern townships, which were disrupted since June 2012; however, resumption of all regular projects of partners across Rakhine is yet to be achieved.
In Kachin and northern Shan States, access and delivery of aid to hard to reach areas continues to be an issue as travel permission is yet to be granted. The UN-led convoy operations are on a standstill since July 2012. Local partners who previously had access to most locations in hard to reach areas are facing more difficulties to operate as well. Meanwhile, assistance to IDP locations serviced by the Government continues except in Hpakan where non-state actors could not guarantee a safe passage for UN staff.

Funding requirements for Rakhine and Kachin emergencies

The Humanitarian Response Plans call for a total of US$103 million to provide live-saving assistance in Rakhine and Kachin emergencies. As of 26 November, only $56.5 million has been received or pledged.

On 21 November, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) Mr. Ashok Nigam, together with Union Minister of Border Affairs, Lieutenant General Thein Htay launched the Revised Rakhine Response Plan to provide life-saving assistance for up to 115,000 IDPs for a period of one year (July 2012- June 2013), amounting to some $67.6 million. The launch was held simultaneously in Geneva with some Member States and international humanitarian partners present. As of 30 November, an additional $38 million is needed.

The July Kachin Response Plan called for $35.8 million to meet humanitarian needs for up to 85,000 people from March 2012 to February 2013. As of 26 November, some $26.5 million has been received or pledged. An additional $9.3 million is still needed.

Earthquake jolts upper Myanmar

On 11 November, an earthquake of magnitude 6.8 on the Richter scale struck northern Myanmar - approximately 50 kilometers north of Shwebo Township in Sagaing Region. Several aftershocks, ranging from 5.0 to 5.8 on the Richter scale, were recorded. The earthquake was felt across a wide region including Myanmar, Yunnan region in China, Lao PDR and Thailand.

The Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD) reports that at least 17 people were killed and 114 injured, with over 10,000 people affected to varying degrees in 24 locations across Sagaing and Mandalay Regions. Some 1,600 houses, 186 schools, 21 hospitals and 480 religious buildings were also damaged. Government sources indicate that Singu and Thabeikkyin Townships in Mandalay and Kyaukmyaung sub- township in Sagaing were the most affected areas.

The Government continues to collect information about losses and damages across the affected locations in Sagaing and Mandalay. An inter-agency rapid assessment team composed of CARE, Save the Children, UNICEF and the Myanmar Nurses and Midwife Association conducted assessments in four townships, including Singu, Shwebo, Kyaukmyaung and Thabeikkyin. Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) also deployed three emergency response teams for assessments in the affected villages in Singu Township. A delegation from ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) visited the affected locations in both regions to observe the destruction and needs. Preliminary needs identified include temporary schools, and shelters and non-food items (NFIs) for the families whose houses were destroyed in the earthquake.
The Government, local residents, civil society, MRCS and national and international NGOs has been providing assistance, including food, shelters/NFIs and medical care. In an effort to step up the relief efforts, the Government has invited donations and requested assistance from the humanitarian community, well-wishers and civil societies to renovate damaged schools, hospitals, houses and public buildings. On 21 November, the Government of Japan announced that emergency relief supplies, including blankets, sleeping bags, plastic sheets and generators will be provided through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in response to the Government’s request.

 Sagaing/Mandalay Sectoral Needs and Response

HEALTH

RRD reports that 21 hospitals were destroyed due to the earthquake in Sagaing/Mandalay. MRCS is providing emergency services, including first aid and health referral in seven townships in Mandalay and Sagaing. Military mobile clinics were also established in the affected locations including Singu and Thabeikkyin townships in Mandalay to provide immediate medical care to those affected. In an effort to strengthen the existing medical services, UNICEF provided nine Inter-agency Emergency Health Kits (IEHK) and nine first aid kits to township health offices in Shwebo, Thabeikkyin and Singu Townships in Mandalay.

SHELTER and NFIs

RRD reports that over 1,600 houses were damaged by the earthquake. MRCS distributed relief supplies, including shelter kits, family kits, kitchen sets and hygiene kits for 100 families in Thabeikkyin Township and tarpaulins for 100 families in Mandalay city. CARE has been distributing 200 NFI kits, 200 tarpaulin sheets and 50 shelter tool kits in Kyaukmyaung sub-township in Sagaing. In Shwebo, Thabeikkyin and Singu, UNICEF provided 320 family kits and 30 tarpaulin sheets to the affected families. JICA will dispatch its emergency supplies in the coming days, including plastic sheets, 800 blankets, 600 sleeping bags, and 40 generators to Mandalay and Sagaing regions. On 27 November, ASEAN/AHA Centre donated 70 rolls of tarpaulins and 250 family tents for the affected families.

Rakhine sectoral needs and response

EDUCATION

Since the beginning of the conflict, all school-age children have been severely affected across Rakhine, particularly in Sittwe Township, with varying degrees of impact on education services. Although 80 to 90 per cent of schools in the affected townships have re-opened, the major challenges remain in schools being used as camps in some areas, lack of adequate teachers and resources as well as fears for safety and security.

In northern Rakhine State, the majority of schools have now reopened but attendance rates are lower than those prior to the emergency. Although structures and supplies remain in place in three northern townships where UNICEFs regular activities were implemented, ongoing tensions remain the major obstruction for regular resumption of schooling. In some areas, community teachers are working to sustain educational activities in the absence of formal teachers. However, these activities are likely to cease unless arrangements are made to provide financial and technical support to the community teachers. On the other hand, parents are still reluctant to send their children to schools, a
factor which is beyond the control of education activities and requires broader advocacy, peace-building and recovery programmes alongside. In Sittwe, lack of education facilities in camps and restrictions of movement for IDPs continue to hamper access to education. School buildings in the vicinity of Sittwe are still being used as camps and other buildings or spaces that currently exist are not suitable for education activities. With the disruption of education for over five months, most of the displaced children are likely to lose the entire school year, which will end in February 2013. An in-depth assessment will be carried out in early December to capture the extent of needs and formulate an appropriate response.

**FOOD**

Since the beginning of the violence, WFP and partners have distributed over 5,400 metric ton (MT) of food to the affected people. Immediately after the surge of violence in October, WFP distributed 550 MT of food to the newly displaced in all affected townships, except Ramree where the Government is providing food assistance. Logistical capacity is being geared up with deployment of a senior logistics officer and additional assets to the area. In collaboration with Save the Children and CDN, food distribution in other townships including Sittwe, Maungdaw and Kyauktaw, continues with the provision of over 1,100 MT of food to some 70,000 IDPs. MRCS, with support from Indonesia Red Cross, distributed some 100 MT of rice in Sittwe. In view of the need for a longer-term intervention across all affected townships, WFP is finding additional partners to support food distributions and strengthen the existing capacity.

**HEALTH**

The findings of the inter-agency rapid assessments highlight the urgent need for resumption of health services in the newly affected locations. The main health concerns of the affected communities are diarrhoea and malaria. Other reported health concerns include common cold and gastritis. In an effort to ensure immediate health care, UNICEF supported the State Health Department with 25 IEHK to be used in newly affected areas. Under the leadership of the State Health Department, plans are underway to cover the remaining locations, including the mobile medical teams from MSF and Malteser, which were deployed to provide health assistance in Pauktaw and Myebo.

In Sittwe, UNICEF continues to support the mobile clinics with essential medical supplies, including for the treatment of 380 malaria patients and 290 diarrohoea patients in October. Myanmar Health Assistants Association (MHAA), with support from UNICEF, organized health awareness sessions for over 8,000 IDPs in affected locations. In Rathedaung and Sittwe Townships, UNFPA continues to support maternal and reproductive health care services. In October, Myanmar Medical Association (MMA) mobile and static clinics reached over 1,300 people.

**NUTRITION**

Close monitoring of nutritional status among the children in Rakhine State reaffirms the severity of the situation. Partners estimated that around 2,900 acutely malnourished IDP children are estimated to be facing high risk of mortality. In response, over 1,000 children (413 severely acute malnourished children and 649 moderately malnourished children) out of 4,066 examined under mild-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening method have been provided with relevant feeding scheme. Micronutrient supplementation programmes by partners were delivered to 3,700 children and 1,650 pregnant and lactating women.

In Maungdaw, ACF resumed its therapeutic feeding activities. Save the Children is carrying out infant and young-child feeding activities in seven camps in Sittwe, covering 1,150 pregnant and lactating IDP women, and 1,990 IDP children under five. Mother’s groups and breastfeeding spaces are planned to be established in Sittwe to encourage breast feeding practices.
**SHELTER and NFIs**

Following the October violence, which triggered displacement of over 36,000 people across Rakhine, shelter needs have significantly increased, particularly in newly affected locations. The inter-agency assessment indicates that about 26 per cent or 9,000 of the assessed IDPs were in the open areas close-by their burned villages, and that about 47 per cent or over 16,000 IDPs were hosted by family and friends. The Government has distributed over 1,400 tents in Kyaukpyu, Minbya, Myebon, Pauktaw and Mrauk-U Townships. Over 3,600 tarpaulins from UNHCR and UNICEF were distributed in the newly affected locations to set up temporary shelters. In Sittwe, UNHCR completed the construction of 165 long shelters. In Maungdaw, some 80 shelters will be constructed through Bridge Asia Japan. Some 2,346 individuals received NFI kits in Maungdaw.

**PROTECTION**

UNHCR reports that the vulnerable populations in northern Maungdaw continue to face serious protection concerns, including forced labour, arbitrary arrest and detention, extortion and charges under false accusations. In October, some 367 people reportedly fled from Maungdaw due to fear of persecutions. Several thousand people also fled from their places of origin by sea and some arrived in Sittwe during the violence in late October. Provision of basic needs and services are urgently required in all affected locations to deter multiple displacements.

**WATER, SANITATION and HYGIENE**

The preliminarily findings of the inter-agency needs assessments, targeting over 36,000 IDPs highlight a huge gap in WASH sector in the newly affected locations. Approximately 60 per cent or 20,000 IDPs were without sufficient safe water and 70 per cent, about 24,000 IDPs did not have access to functioning latrines. WASH partners are stepping up their efforts to extend their interventions in newly affected locations.

In October, UNICEF, through a local partner, constructed 28 latrines and 20 bathing places in Sittwe. Some 18 water storage tanks were also constructed in three IDP locations in Sittwe. In an effort to increase hygiene awareness among the communities, MHAA conducted hygiene promotion sessions in nine IDP camps in Sittwe.

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**WASH Needs in Baw Du Pha Camp, Rakhine**

Baw Du Pha Camp is located about thirty minutes from the centre of Sittwe and is temporarily hosting some 10,000 displaced people. Hygiene promotion and provision of hygiene kits are critical in view of the limited knowledge of hygiene practices prior to the displacement.

The Revised Rakhine Response Plan has been developed to meet the needs of those displaced by the June and October violence. Meeting the WASH needs during this humanitarian crisis has a direct impact on the health of the most vulnerable. Support needed for WASH interventions to meet the needs of the 115,000 displaced is almost US$10 million. With about $4 million received to date, an additional $6 million is required. Significant gaps in basic services such as WASH will continue to persist until additional support is provided.

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Report compiled by UNOCHA with Humanitarian Country Team partners’ contribution.

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Kachin sectoral needs and response

**FOOD**

In October, WFP-supported assistance to IDPs in Kachin and northern Shan reached 29,800 beneficiaries with 442 MT of food. Over 20,000 IDPs from 31 camps in Bhamo, Myitkyina and northern Shan State were supported with food (217 MT of rice, 13 MT of oil) and/or cash assistance by Trocaire and KMSS. Some 8,000 IDPs from Sadung, Myitkyina and Waingmaw Townships also received food and cash assistance from KBC, World Concern and Shalom. The prevailing access difficulties, however, continue to hamper food distribution in hard to reach areas. This poses concerns over the deterioration of the food security and nutrition conditions of IDPs.

**SHELTER and NFIs**

Shelter continues to be a major concern in view of new displacement, particularly in hard to reach areas. UNHCR and partners constructed 135 barrack-style shelter units in Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Momauk and Bhamo Townships. An additional 20 units will be built in Zion camp in Myitkyina and over 150 units in Lwegel. In Chipwe, some 68 households were provided with NFIs kits. Similar support is needed in other affected locations. Nevertheless, the ongoing conflict and logistical difficulties remain major challenges to carry out assessments and provide shelters and NFIs in hard to reach areas. Concern remains as winter is approaching and replenishment of NFIs and shelter interventions are critical.

**PROTECTION**

Partners reported that protection incidents are increasing over the past weeks due to increased fighting across Kachin, with reports of civilian casualties during the conflict and mine explosions, forced return, portering, detentions and tortures, particularly in newly affected locations. In order to increase protection awareness among agencies and community, UNHCR and a local law firm organized legal awareness sessions for UN agencies, NGOs, FBOs and CBOs in Bhamo and Myitkyina.

**WATER, SANITATION and HYGIENE**

WASH situation continues to be a concern, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, with reports of open defecation, inadequate WASH facilities and lack of access to safe water. As the rain has stopped in most locations, the situation is likely to deteriorate in the coming months with potential water scarcity in the dry seasons.

UNICEF and partners distributed hygiene kits for some 1,040 IDP families in Bhamo. Hygiene promotion sessions were also organized in Bhamo and northern Shan State, benefitting over 4,100 IDPs. In Myitkyina, WASH partners installed two water storage tanks for 644 IDPs and distributed 1,900 buckets to approximately 8,400 IDPs. Some 450 bottles of water purification solution were distributed in Myitkyina and northern Shan.