

# **INTER-AGENCY CHILD PROTECTION RAPID ASSESSMENT**

**A summary report on the  
protection risks for children as a result of the violence in  
Rakhine State, Myanmar**

**Sittwe Township, Rakhine State, October 2012**

## **CHILD PROTECTION RAPID ASSESSMENT – RAKHINE STATE**

### **Introduction**

Save the Children International and UNICEF, with the support of the Department of Social Welfare in Rakhine State, conducted a joint Child Protection Rapid Assessment in IDP camps in Sittwe township in October 2012. The objectives of the assessment were twofold: to provide a snapshot of the child protection situation in camps in Sittwe Township in Rakhine State, and to inform programming interventions to respond to child protection concerns identified.

### **Background and Context**

Rakhine State is one of the least developed parts of Myanmar and is characterised by high population density, malnutrition, low income, poverty and weak infrastructure compounded by storms and floods that are recurrent in the area. The population of Rakhine consists of a mixture of various ethnic and religious groups. The 2009-10 Integrated Household Living Condition Survey ranks Rakhine State in second worst position in terms of overall poverty, 43.5% compared to the national average of 25.6%. Regarding food poverty, the State ranks 10% against the national average of 4.8%. The State was affected in recent years by two major disasters: flood and mudslides in northern Rakhine in June 2010 and cyclone Giri in October 2010, affecting 29,000 and 260,000 people, respectively, and causing loss of lives and livelihoods. Inter-communal conflict across Rakhine State started in early June 2012 and resurfaced again in October 2012. As of early November 2012, the number of people displaced in Rakhine State stood at over 115,000 people, out of whom about 75,000 individuals were displaced in the first round of violence in June and over 36,000 people displaced in the second round of violence in October. Government sources indicated that in both incidents a total of 167 people were killed (78 in June and 89 in October); 223 injured (87 in June and 136 in October); 10,100 private, public and religious buildings were burned or destroyed (4,800 in June and 5,300 in October).

Following the June violence, which dramatically intensified within a few days, the Government imposed curfews and, on 10 June 2012, declared a state of emergency for six townships<sup>1</sup>. After a relatively quiet period, the violence resurfaced again in October 2012, in eight townships,<sup>2</sup> with curfew imposed in two additional townships, Minbya and Mrauk-U. Additional military personnel were dispatched to the area to control the situation.

It is in light of the first wave of violence in June that resulted in the displacement of 75,000 people into numerous IDP camps in and around Sittwe, that Save the Children and UNICEF decided to conduct a Child Protection Rapid Assessment in early October 2012. The data was collected before the second wave of violence resulted in further displacement.

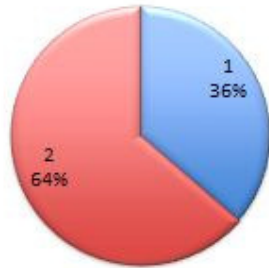
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<sup>1</sup> Buthidaung, Kyauktaw, Maungdaw, Ramree, Rathedaung and Sittwe. Curfew in Tandwe was imposed on 8 June and revoked on 10 October.

<sup>2</sup> Minbya and Mrauk-U in addition to the previous townships. As of early November, the curfew is in place from 19h00 to 05h00 in Minbya, Myebon and Mrauk-U and from 22h00 to 04h00 in Buthidaung, Kyaukpyu, Kyauktaw, Maungdaw, Rathedaung, Sittwe, Pauktaw and Ramree.

## Methodology

### Type of Assessed Population (%)



The assessment team used the CPWG Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit, and utilised key informant interviews, direct observation, and **site** reports for data collection. Purposive sampling was selected as the sampling technique. IDP sites were used as the unit of measurement, and therefore the findings reflect the perception of the respondents towards issues that exist within the IDP camp.

Twenty staff from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) were trained for 3 days on the data collection tools. The assessors were selected from the participants who attended this training, which was conducted by Save the Children and UNICEF; some participants were excluded from the research teams because of a risk of bias towards the population groups. The assessment consisted of three teams of 18 assessors who were tasked with the responsibility of carrying out data collection over a six day period. The 10 male and eight female assessors were from the Department of Social Welfare, UNICEF, Save the Children and Myanmar Red Cross Society in Sittwe.

During this time they visited a total of nine camps and conducted 65 Key Informant Interviews. A minimum of three Key Informant Interviews were conducted in each camp; in the larger camps, more Key Informant Interviews were conducted. Five “rural” (i.e. Muslim - Population Type 2) camps were assessed: Thea Chaung, Dar Pai, Baw Du Pha, Thet Kel Pyin, Kaung Doke Khar, and four “urban” (i.e. Rakhine- Population Type 1) camps were assessed: Mangan, Danyawaddy, Set Yone Su, and Done Tike Kwin.

## Challenges

Considerable challenges were faced in accessing the rural camps. Assessors expressed fear and concern about visiting these camps, and the assessment was carried out during a time when rumours of potential clashes between the two population groups were persistent, and tensions were high amongst the local Rakhine community. There were daily protests by the local Rakhine community against the establishment of an office by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Restrictions were imposed on the assessment team on access to the camps for purported “security reasons”; these restrictions included enforcing the time that could be spent in camps and requiring all assessment teams to travel together to one camp at a time, rather than different teams travelling to different camps as had been planned. These restrictions and the emphasis on the security situation caused considerable difficulty amongst the assessment team, and resulted in Save the Children and UNICEF having to conduct the assessment by themselves on some of the days when their counterparts refused to travel to the camps, even though security clearance was given.

The conditions imposed on the assessment team regarding access to camps, and the limited time that they could spend in the camps, meant that the Key Informant Interviews had to be quicker than would have been ideal, and also that there was not sufficient time to spend selecting appropriate Key Informants. Furthermore, the team leaders frequently

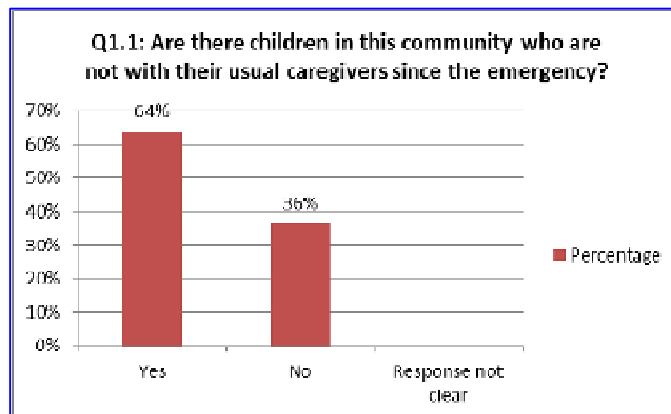
had to conduct the interviews themselves, rather than supervising the assessors who had refused to travel to the camps. These factors may have impacted on the quality of the information collected.

Despite the fact that a detailed logistics plan and timetable had been developed, it could not be used and the assessment team members had to constantly revise their plans; furthermore the plan to have five assessment teams had to be revised to three teams, partly because of the risk of bias mentioned above, but also because local staff were told it was not safe for them to visit the Muslim camps, and therefore they only visited the Rakhine camps.

## Key Findings

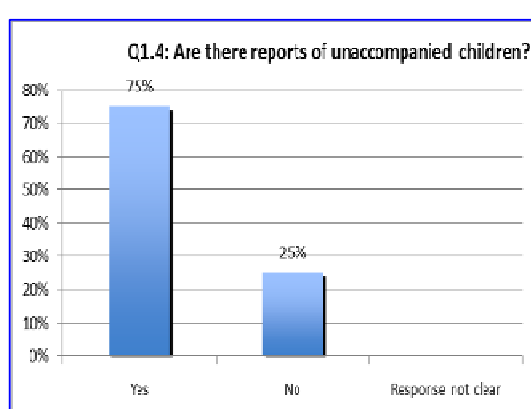
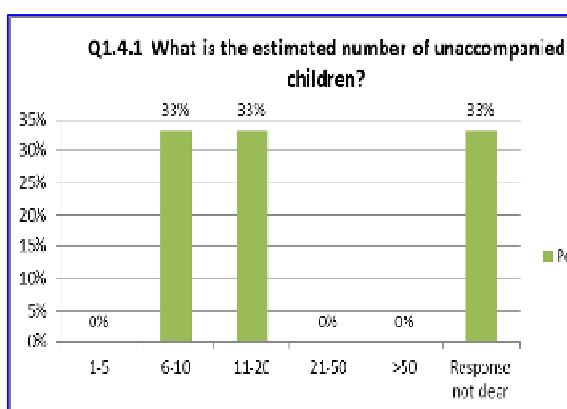
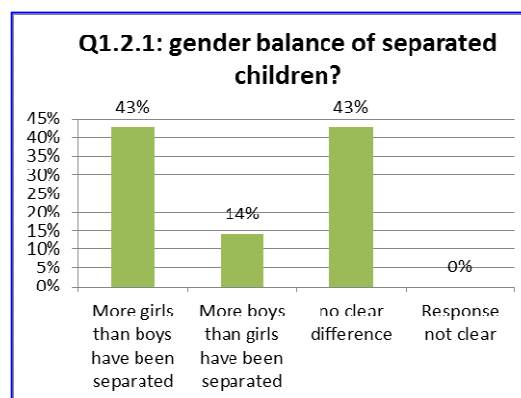
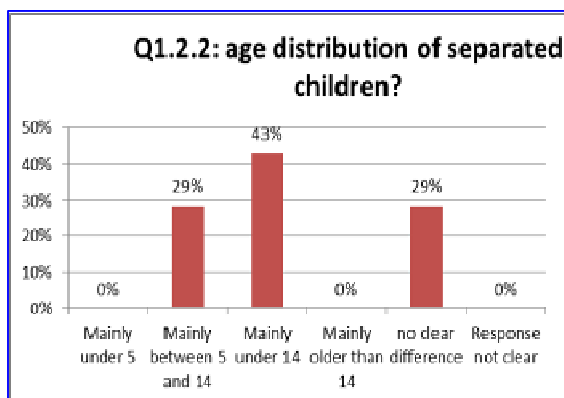
### Separated and unaccompanied children

- Sixty four per cent of respondents reported separation of children from their families in their camps
- Seventy five per cent of respondents reported that children in their camp were unaccompanied
- The two most frequently cited causes of separation were separation during population movement, and the continued disappearance of the caregivers
- Respondents believed that children between the ages of 5-14 were the most susceptible to being separated and unaccompanied.
- The majority of separated and unaccompanied children are informally fostered in the community
- All key informants responded that there are no child care institutions/homes/facilities in the camp area



The majority of respondents reported that separated and unaccompanied children were present in their camps; respondents estimated an average of 21-50 separated children and 6-20 unaccompanied children in each camp, with girls and boys equally represented. The majority of these children were under 14 years of age. The main cause of separation was reported to be dispersal as families fled their homes and villages during attacks (50%) with the disappearance of parents cited as the next major cause for separation (28%). Separated and unaccompanied children are informally fostered in the community (67%), whilst smaller percentages live on their own (11%) or on the street (22%). Most respondents said they would inform the camp management if they came across an unaccompanied child (45%), with a similar figure saying they would care for the child themselves (45%). A small percentage (10%) highlighted that they would take the child to an agency or NGO that works with children. Importantly, however, the vast majority of camps are without any lists of separated or unaccompanied children, or lists of parents

who have lost their children, making the identification, support, and family tracing process difficult.

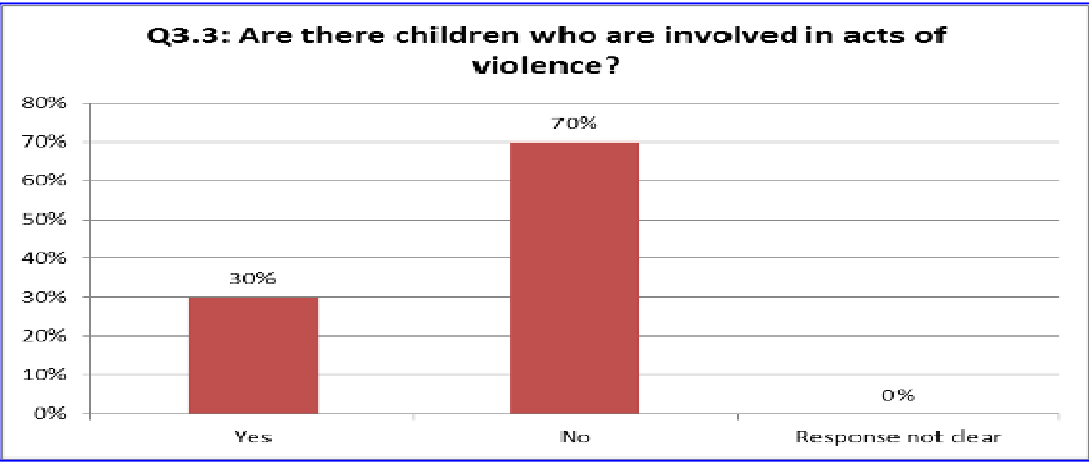
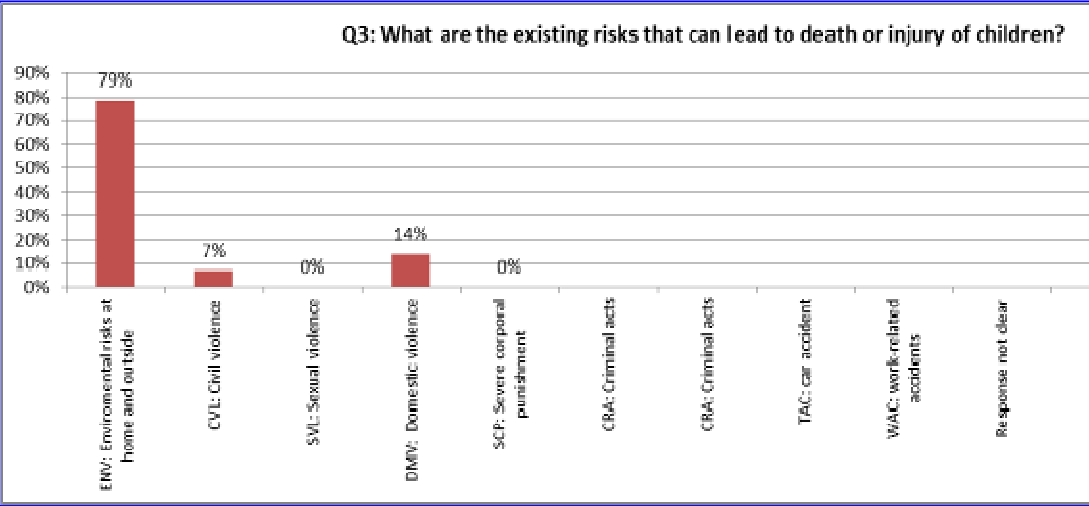


### Physical danger and violence against children

- The key risk that can lead to death or injury of children identified by respondents is environmental factors
- Situations that pose the highest risk of death or injury to children occur in the camp, and within the shelter/home
- Where children are reported to be involved in acts of violence, the acts involved civil violence and attacks on civilians

The greatest risk leading to the death or injury of children was reported to be environmental – specifically, areas with free standing water from heavy monsoon rains (highlighted as posing a risk to health and injury) and areas around latrines. Having to cook with open fires and the resultant smoke was also highlighted as both a health and environmental risk. These risks occurred in the camp – both inside and outside of the home. Domestic violence was reported by 14 per cent of respondents, and civil violence by 7 per cent. In 30 per cent of cases, respondents reported that children are involved in acts of violence, and listed civil violence (60 %) and attacks on civilians (40 %) as the most common acts that children are participating in. In one interview, a Key Informant

explained that children had played an active role in attacking another community; another Key Informant described how boys in some camps were forced to be part of an informal 'Community Defence Force' in which they received training to both defend and attack another community; according to the Key Informant, the boys are armed with wooden sticks.

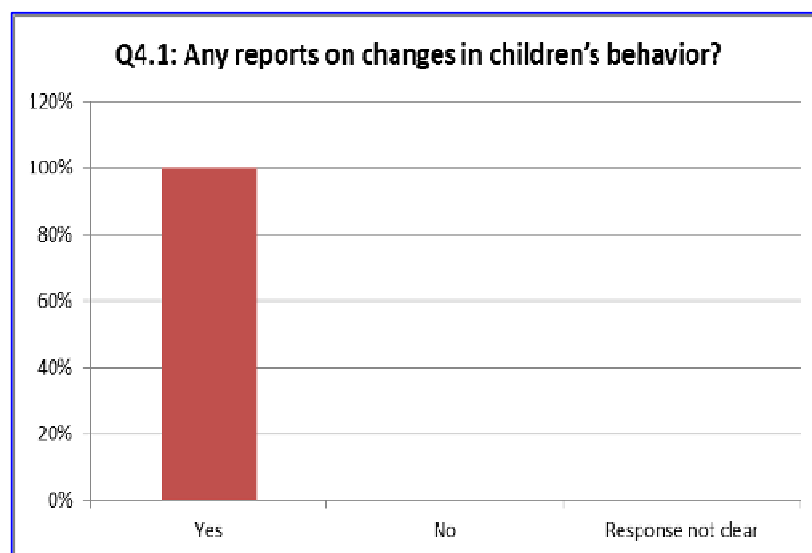


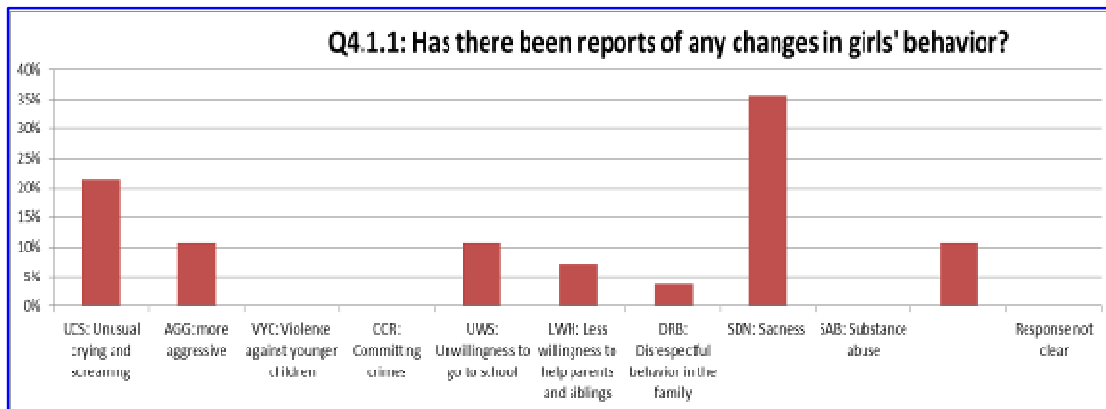
## Psychosocial Wellbeing and Community Support Mechanisms

- All respondents reported changes in both children's behaviour and caregiver's attitudes to children
- Similar causes of stress were identified for both boys and girls; for example, losing possessions in the displacement and a lack of privacy in camp settings
- Both boys and girls cope with stress in similar ways; both boys and girls highlighted spending time with their friends as the most common way of coping; however.
- Changes in children's behaviour were reported by all respondents; however, the changes in behaviour differed between girls and boys. The most common change for girls identified by respondents is sadness (36%), unusual crying or screaming (22%) followed by an unwillingness to go to school and having nightmares and not being able to sleep (11% each). Less willingness to help their parents and siblings (7%) and disrespectful behaviour to the family (4%) were also identified. Likewise, sadness was also identified as the most common change for boys (36%); however, in addition to the changes identified for girls, boys were identified as being more aggressive in their behaviour (27%), and substance abuse was recorded as a change in boys (5%). Nine per cent of boys were reported to have difficulty in sleeping and experiencing nightmares. Other causes of stress for boys and girls include losing their belongings (21% for boys and 13% for girls), lack of shelter (14% for boys and 23% for girls) and lack of food (7 % for boys and 18% for girls); and lack of shelter (14% for boys and 23% for girls).

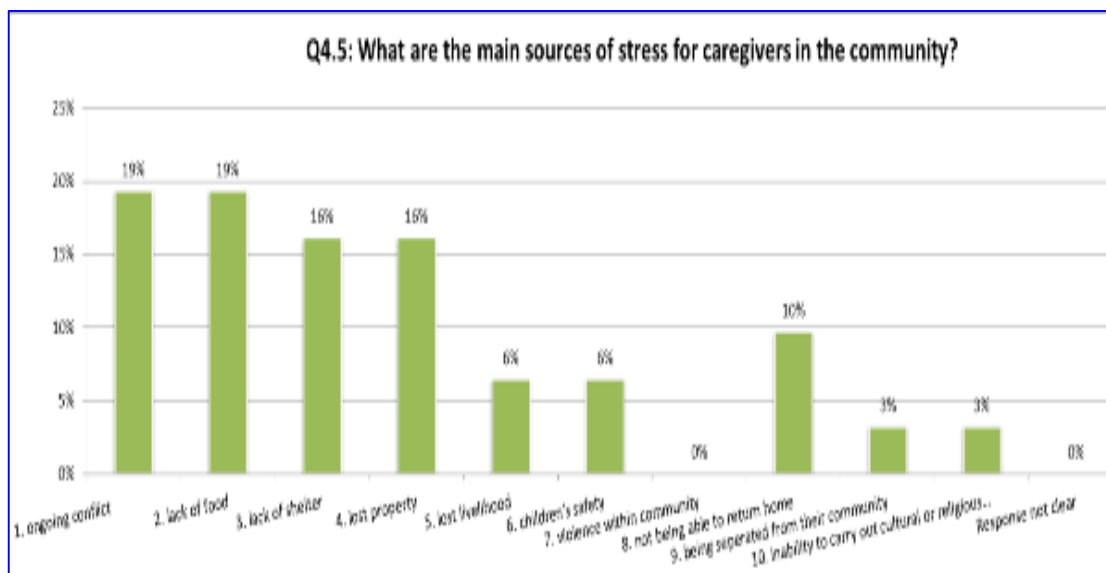
Boys and girls tend to seek support for the stress they experience in different ways, with boys tending to spend time with friends (50%), talk with family members and friends (36%), and hanging out in the streets (29%). Seventy-one per cent of girls, on the other hand, spent time with their family and friends as a coping mechanism with 14 per cent of girls reported to help their parents (with chores, etc.) as a means of coping with stress. According to key informants, 7 per cent of girls were reported to have gotten married.

Ninety per cent of respondents noticed changes in caregiver's attitudes to children, with an equal number saying that they both noticed caregiver's paying more attention to children (28%) and caregiver's paying less attention to children (28%). Similarly, respondents reported that





caregivers are more aggressive to children (14%) and contrarily, show more love and affection to children (14%). This highlights the different reactions that individuals have to the situation, and the importance of providing a range of community-support mechanisms to the affected populations. Only 36 per cent of respondents felt that there are people capable of organising recreational or educational activities for children in the camps; of these respondents, they identified the following skills as being present: teaching, and working/supporting children with disabilities (36% each); and organising collective activities for children (27%). These figures also highlight the need for recreational and psychosocial support activities for children and with the provision of technical support to identified “caregivers,” this could be provided to some measure.



### Access to information

- Respondents identified the radio, followed by the telephone, as the most common sources of information

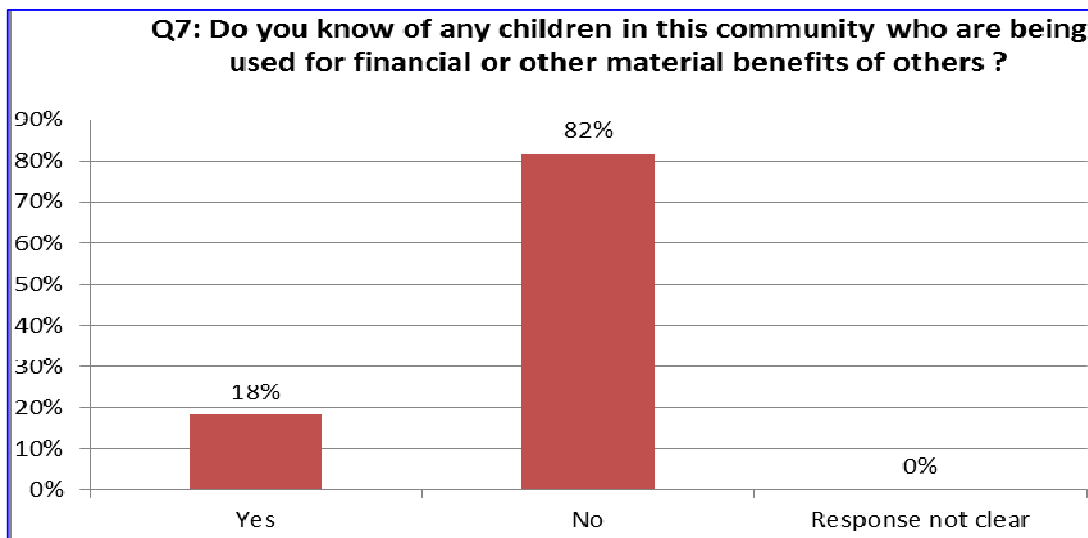
In order to access help or support for children, respondents were asked to identify where they would seek necessary information. The main sources identified were radio (41%)



and telephones (36%). Personal interaction was surprisingly not a common source of information, with community leaders, friends/family/neighbour, religious leaders, and aid workers each identified by only five per cent of respondents.

### Exploitation of children

- The majority of respondents were not aware of children being used for the financial or material benefits of others
- Domestic work and fishing were the two areas identified where children are potentially exploited



Eighteen per cent of respondents said that children are being exploited and identified domestic work (50%) and fishing (50%) as two areas where exploited children work.

### Children associated with armed forces and groups

- The majority of respondents said that children are not associated with armed forces and groups

Eighty-two per cent of respondents said children are not associated with armed forces and groups; the 18 per cent who said they are were not able to provide further information in response to questions asked on the nature of this association. However, 100 per cent of respondents said that the number of children associated with armed groups has not increased since the situation in Rakhine deteriorated in June 2012.

### Sexual and gender-based violence

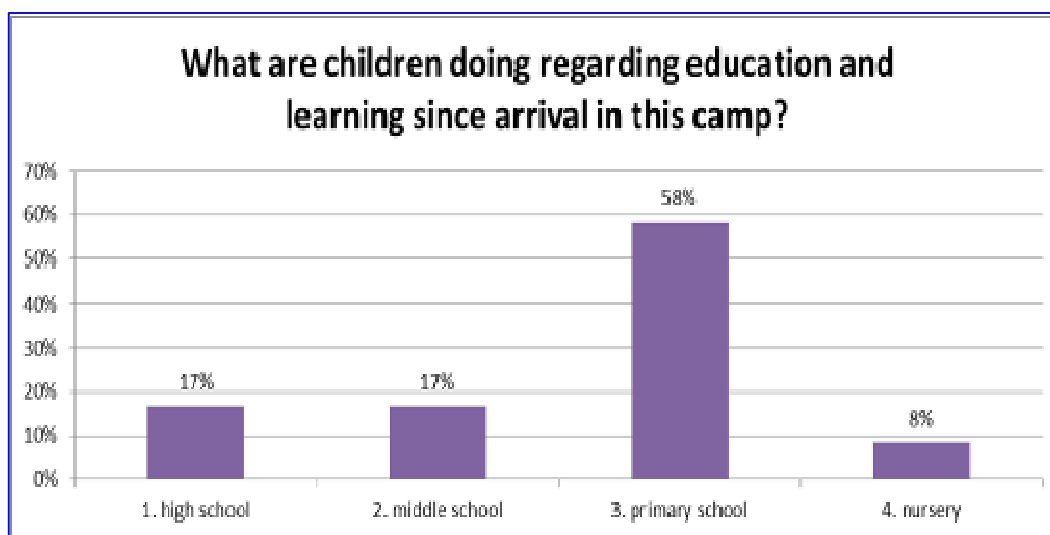
- In cases where sexual and gender-based violence occurs, respondents said that they would either do nothing, or take the children to a religious leader

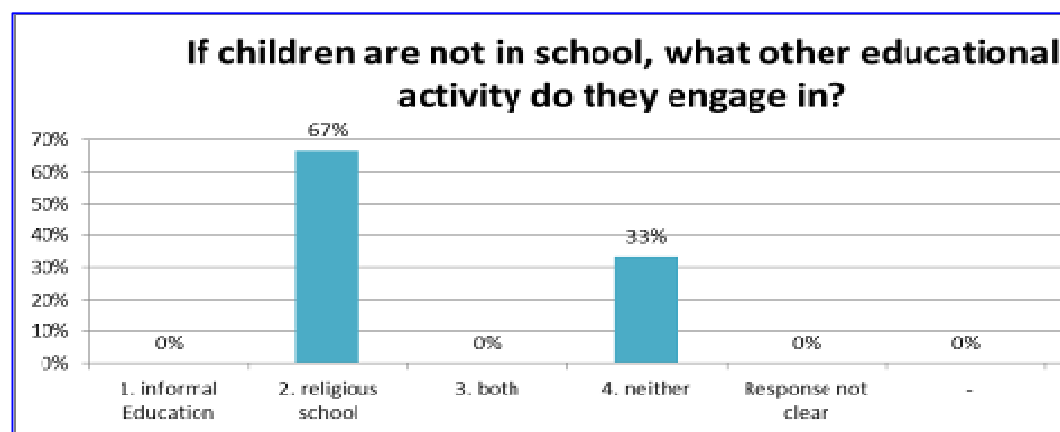
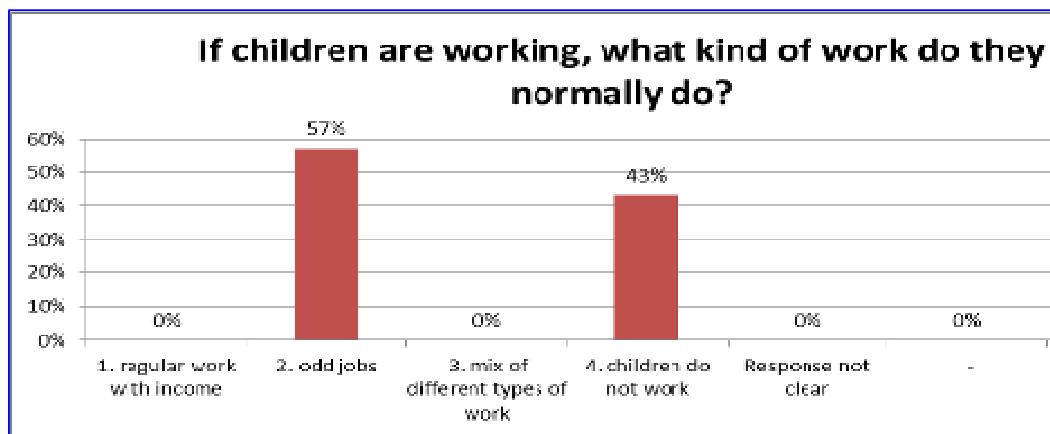
- In the majority of cases, respondents believe that a child who has experienced sexual or gender-based violence would not seek help
- Respondents are not aware of any services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence

Seventy-three per cent of respondents said that sexual and gender-based violence does not happen in their camps. If it was to occur, nine per cent of respondents said they would do nothing, and the same number said they would report the case to a religious leader (the response of an additional nine per cent was not clear). Nine per cent of all respondents said that there has been an increase in sexual and gender-based violence incidents since the unrest began; it was reported that this occurs whilst women and girls are out collecting water. It was reported that more girls than boys are targeted, and that there is no difference in the ages of girls who are targeted. Respondents were not able to identify who the survivors would turn to for assistance. Eight-two per cent of all respondents said that they did not know if sexual and gender-based violence services are available to the community; the same number said that children could not seek help there.

## Education

Save the Children and UNICEF conducted a separate Education Assessment in the Sittwe urban and rural camps during December 2012.





### Recommendations:

#### Separated and Unaccompanied Children

- Identify separated and unaccompanied children in all locations
- Provide support to separated and unaccompanied children
- Instigate family tracing and reunification process
- Ensure camp management, other camp leaders and community child protection groups and structures know how to report and seek assistance for separated and unaccompanied children

#### Physical danger and violence against children

- Investigate the causes of death and injury in more detail and seek measures to ensure the camp environment is safe and child-friendly. Establish safe spaces for children with oversight from adults and community volunteers
- Conduct awareness-raising around the prevention of domestic violence
- Advocate with community leaders, camp management, and local authorities to ensure that children are not involved in any acts of violence

- Ensure adequate recreational, educational and other activities are available for children as a means of adding structure to daily routines and engaging children in meaningful coping mechanisms

#### Psychosocial Wellbeing and Community Support Mechanisms

- Ensure that psychosocial support programmes are available to children in the camps and are age appropriate
- Strengthen existing community support mechanisms, and individual capacity, identified in the assessment to ensure support is provided to children
- Facilitate support to caregivers so that they have the proper skills and knowledge to allow them to provide appropriate and consistent care to children
- Establish child-friendly and safe spaces for children within the camp environment as a psychosocial and support coping mechanism

#### Access to information

- Utilise the radio as a means of sharing relevant child protection messages with community members
- Build capacity of community members so that they have greater knowledge and awareness on child protection issues, including response and referrals
- Seek to establish community forums for camp members as a means of disseminating accurate and timely information and to dispel rumours.

#### Exploitation of Children

- Further investigate allegations of exploitation of children to gain a better understanding as to the situation
- Raise awareness within the community to ensure that children are not exploited.
- Build the capacity of community support/protection mechanisms to monitor the situation of child exploitation
- Ensure access to educational, recreational and other activities for children, including facilitating access to formal education if possible, as a means of mitigating child exploitation

#### Children associated with armed forces and groups

- Continually monitor the situation of children associated with armed forces and groups to ensure that children are not recruited or used

#### Sexual and gender-based violence

- Raise awareness on sexual and gender-based violence and ensure that community support members understand the potential risk of sexual and gender-based violence in a humanitarian context.
- Develop referral systems to ensure that survivors of sexual and gender-based violence receive necessary medical and psychosocial support immediately

- Advocate with camp management to ensure increased protection and security for women and girls within camp settings

#### Education

- Advocate for all children to be able to resume their education immediately
- Provide temporary learning spaces for children to continue their education
- Support teachers within communities to provide education to children in the camps