

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 600,000 people flee Rakhine State since 25 August, while access for international organisations inside northern Rakhine remains restricted
- Restrictions on humanitarian access in central Rakhine
- Challenges in getting aid to displaced people in Kachin and Shan states
- Launch of 2017 Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Displaced people with disabilities tell their own stories

FIGURES

IDPs in Kachin	89,000
IDPs in Shan	9,000
IDPs in Rakhine since 2012	129,000
Refugee arrivals in Bangladesh (Oct 2016-Jul 2017)	87,000
Refugee arrivals in Bangladesh (Oct- 12 Nov 2017)	616,000
New IDPs in Rakhine (Confirmed by Govt as at 10 Nov)	2,400

FUNDING 2017

150 million
requested (US\$)

96.8 million
received (US\$)

64%
Funded



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Over 600,000 people flee Rakhine State: world's fastest growing refugee crisis

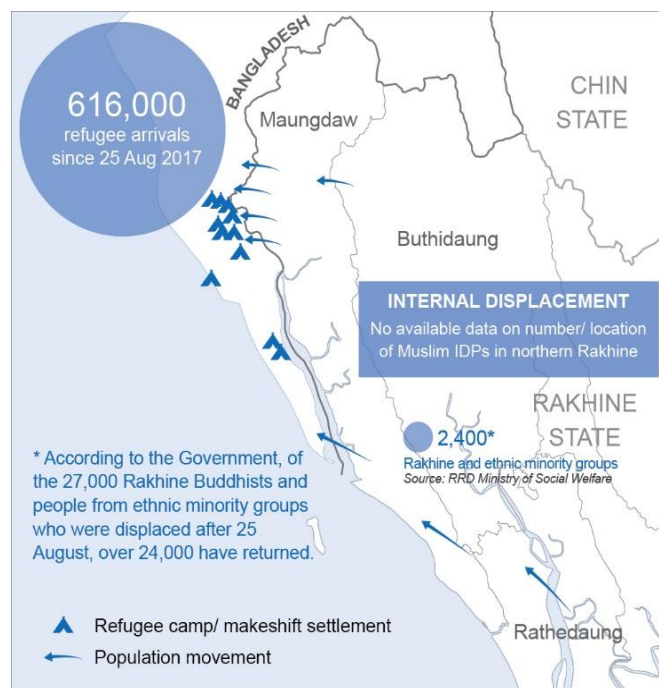
Refugees continue to arrive in Bangladesh while thousands more remain displaced inside Rakhine State

A humanitarian crisis continues to unfold on both sides of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. This follows a series of attacks on police posts in northern Rakhine on 25 August by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and subsequent security operations by the Myanmar Military that have resulted in the world's fastest growing refugee crisis in Bangladesh and new humanitarian needs amongst people remaining in Rakhine.

A total of 616,000 people have fled across the border from northern Rakhine into Bangladesh between 25 August and 12 November,

according to the United Nations team in Bangladesh. There have been widespread allegations of attacks on civilians, threats and violence used to drive people out of their homes and other serious human rights violations, including the killing of civilians and large-scale burnings of villages in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships. The vast majority of the vulnerable people who are on the move are stateless Muslims who self-identify as Rohingya. The exodus of people from northern Rakhine has slowed in recent weeks but departures continue amid ongoing reports of arson, looting, harassment, loss of livelihoods and limited access to food.

Displacement in Rakhine State since 25 Aug 2017



Key UN and INGO Statements on Rakhine

Security Council Presidential Statement calls on Myanmar to end excessive military force, intercommunal violence in Rakhine State, 6 Nov 2017

Myanmar: Law and order, community trust needed to overcome humanitarian crisis, ICRC 2 Nov 2017

UN Assistant High Commissioner calls for humanitarian access and safe, voluntary repatriation of refugees during Myanmar visit, 1 Nov 2017

Myanmar: UN Security Council must act on Rohingya crisis - UN expert, 26 Oct 2017

Donors pledge over \$344 million in response to Rohingya refugee crisis, 23 Oct 2017

USG for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock: Remarks at the Pledging Conference for the Rohingya Refugee Crisis, 23 Oct 2017

Myanmar/Rakhine: Red Cross reaches tens of thousands despite challenges, 18 Oct 2017

Statement by Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Ivan Simonovic, UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, on the situation in northern Rakhine state, Myanmar, 18 Oct 2017

Thousands of Muslim people also remain internally displaced or on the move inside northern Rakhine after their villages were burnt to the ground during the recent violence. The authorities have not provided figures on the number of Muslims who remain internally displaced in northern Rakhine and the UN has not been granted access to verify numbers and carry out a

comprehensive needs assessment. Reports indicate that there are still thousands of vulnerable, internally displaced people who are waiting along the coast to cross by sea to Bangladesh. Many of them, including women, young children and the elderly, have reportedly been waiting weeks to make the crossing. These people are living in dire conditions and are in poor health and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Reports also indicate that many people

are resorting to constructing their own makeshift rafts to try and make the crossing, rather than to continue to stay on the beach waiting for boats which reportedly are in limited supply and are becoming increasingly expensive. Some news outlets have also reported that some people are so desperate to leave that they are deciding to swim across the Naf River, clinging to plastic cooking oil containers as floatation devices, putting their lives at risk on these dangerous crossings. The Red Cross Movement is being granted access and is providing some humanitarian assistance, but reports continue to indicate that additional capacity is needed to address the full scope of humanitarian needs in northern Rakhine.

The United Nations Secretary-General [has called on the authorities in Myanmar](#) to end the violence, allow unhindered humanitarian access and recognize the right of refugees to voluntary return in safety and dignity. He has also called on them to “[address the grievances of the Rohingya, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long](#)”.

In addition to the affected Muslim population, the Government reported that as of 10 November, 2,420 Rakhine Buddhists and ethnic minority groups such as Mro, Daingnet and Hindu people remained internally displaced. This is down from 26,700 who were initially displaced according to Government figures, the rest having already returned. The Government has reported that it plans to close all the remaining evacuation sites for these people in November.

Humanitarian aid reaches people in northern Rakhine but more is needed

The Government continues to authorize humanitarian access for the Red Cross Movement in northern Rakhine. The Red Cross Movement [reported that as of 6 November it had distributed emergency items to more than 39,000 people and food to more than 72,000 people since the crisis began](#) and that cash, health and sanitation support is also being provided. [In its statement, a Red Cross official said that the Red Cross Movement is doing all that it can to assist people in need but said that it cannot do this alone](#), referring to the need for other humanitarian organizations to re-engage.



An aerial shot shows thousands of refugees crossing the border near Anjuman Para village, Palong Khali, Bangladesh, 16 October 2017. Credit: UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Key UN and INGO Statements on Rakhine

[Note to Correspondents: Visit of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to Myanmar](#), 18 Oct 2017

[Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock Remarks at Member States briefing following his mission to Bangladesh](#), 16 Oct 2017

[Joint Statement on the Rohingya Refugee Crisis](#), 16 Oct 2017

[Brutal attacks on Rohingya meant to make their return almost impossible – UN human rights report](#), 11 Oct 2017

[UN Migration Director General Warns of Increasing Reports of Violent Sexual Assaults Against Rohingya](#), 27 Sept 2017

[Statement of INGOs in Myanmar](#), 27 Sept 2017

[Myanmar: UN experts condemn ongoing persecution of Rohingya in Rakhine State](#), 27 Sept 2017

[UNHCR Chief calls for stepped-up support for Rohingya Refugees, thanks Bangladesh for keeping borders open](#), 25 Sept 2017

[South-East Asian Nations Should Intensify Action, Humanitarian Relief for Myanmar, Secretary-General Says, Pledging Support to Help Resolve Crisis in Rakhine State](#), 23 Sept 2017

The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) has also separately dispatched about 80 tonnes of relief items for displaced communities in Rakhine State through the Government's Relief and Resettlement Department.

Meanwhile, despite strong calls from the UN Secretary-General and other senior UN

officials for unhindered humanitarian access, the Government continues to impose restrictions on the movements of staff from the UN and INGOs in northern Rakhine. Although most UN and INGO staff have not yet been authorized to resume humanitarian activities in northern Rakhine, some agencies are being permitted to carry out specific activities. In Rathedaung township, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) has managed to deliver food assistance to vulnerable people in some areas, including the five remaining Muslim villages which have become isolated and remain vulnerable. In late October, WFP was granted permission to re-start food distributions in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships. In early November, WFP resumed distributions initially targeting 36,000 people. WFP coordinates with the government and Red Cross Movement to avoid overlaps with their own distributions. The UN World Health Organization (WHO) is providing some support, channeled through the Ministry of Health. Other UN staff based in northern Rakhine are still not being allowed to move outside of Maungdaw town. As a result of the overall limitations on access, it has not been possible for the UN to conduct an independent comprehensive needs assessment in northern Rakhine.

The Government continues to report on distribution of food and other relief supplies by Government authorities in northern Rakhine, but the UN does not have comprehensive information on this. With thousands of acres of rice paddies having been abandoned by farmers who fled their homes in the period after 25 August, the looming rice harvest is an issue of particular concern. The Government has reportedly started to harvest 45,000 acres of abandoned rice paddies in northern Rakhine. To make this possible, the Agricultural Mechanization Department has brought in harvesting machines and workers from other areas. The Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine [released a statement on 12 November saying that the harvest proceeds would be returned to their owners either as cash or in kind](#).

Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine

On 17 October, the Myanmar Government announced the establishment of a new "Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine". [According to the Government](#), the aim of the entity is to support cooperation between the Union Government, the people, private sector, local NGOs, CSOs, partner nations, UN agencies and INGOs in the implementation of projects across all sectors for the development of Rakhine state. The Union Enterprise will focus on provision of humanitarian aid, coordination of resettlement and rehabilitation efforts, regional development and efforts to achieve durable peace. According to the State Counsellor's



Refugees from northern Rakhine arrive near the village of Anjuman Para in Cox's Bazar district, south-east Bangladesh after spending four days stranded at the Myanmar border. 19 October 2017. Credit: UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Office, a total of 17 billion MMK (US\$13 million) has already been donated by the private sector.

Visit of the State Counsellor to northern Rakhine

On 2 November, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi visited Rakhine. During the day-long visit, which included visits to villages in northern Rakhine, she met with representatives of Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist communities, as well as minority ethnic groups. According to media reports, in her meetings, she stated that the Government will provide humanitarian assistance and support the rule of law for the benefit of all communities. [According to the Global New Light of Myanmar](#), the State Counsellor used the visit to urge people to cooperate in reconstruction and resettlement efforts. She stressed the need to provide aid and cash systematically, pledging that the government will also provide healthcare services and security. The Global New Light of Myanmar reported that her visit included an inspection of a camp site where returnees from Bangladesh would be temporarily accommodated. After visiting northern Rakhine, the State Counsellor, in her capacity as chair of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine Committee, held a meeting with authorities in Sittwe, urging them to solve the Rakhine issue through diplomatic efforts, reconstruction/development and a focus on security.

The final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State recommends the following: “The Government of Myanmar should ensure full and unimpeded humanitarian access – for both national and international staff – at all times and to all communities in Rakhine State”.

Agreements on refugee returns from Bangladesh

The governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh are involved in an ongoing bilateral dialogue to agree on the voluntary repatriation of the refugees. A joint working group will reportedly be formed by late November. UNHCR has not been asked to participate in the discussion at this stage. UNHCR’s involvement would help ensure the return of the refugees is conditioned to key international principles of voluntariness, safety and dignity being met.

On October 31, UNHCR held a workshop on voluntary repatriation jointly with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. The Minister of Social Welfare, Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population and various other senior

officials attended, including the Chair of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Relief and Development. The event took place to provide participants with a better understanding of the international standards guiding voluntary repatriation, as well as UNHCR’s role in the process.



The newly constructed Kutupalong extension site, as seen from the air, where new arrivals of refugees from Myanmar have been relocated, 30 October 2017. Credit: UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Continued humanitarian needs in IDP camps and villages in central Rakhine

More than 150 Sittwe-based national staff are still not able to resume their humanitarian work in camps and villages

Access constraints create public health and protection risks in IDP camps

In central Rakhine, humanitarian organizations have been facing numerous access constraints which have severely interrupted or stopped the delivery of life-saving services in both camps and villages. While the difficulties continue, there have recently been some improvements, particularly in the case of food distributions and delivery of health services. In October, for the first time since July, WFP reached 119,000 people with food, using Government logistics support. This included 24,000 pregnant or lactating women, adolescent girls and malnourished children under the age of five. The November cycle of WFP distributions in central Rakhine has also commenced. However, the overall approvals process for national and international humanitarian workers remains slow and unpredictable and is resulting in vulnerable people missing out on some vital support, including nutrition treatment and sanitation services.

Restrictions on humanitarian access are creating public health and protection risks, particularly in camps, where Muslim displaced people, who have been facing severe movement restrictions for the last five years, are heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival. As of 13 November, there were more than 150 Sittwe-based national staff not able to go to the camps or villages due to lack of permissions to work outside Sittwe town. In addition, 27 international staff no longer have the necessary authorizations to go to the camps and villages.

Increased isolation of villages in Minbya, Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw

As a result of increased inter-communal tensions since 25 August, Muslim people in townships such as Minbya, Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw in central Rakhine have been facing greater movement, labour and trade restrictions than ever before. These constraints are mostly informal, with local community leaders putting intense pressure on Rakhine people not to do business with Muslim communities. There have been threats of fines or other punishments for breaches of these instructions. The situation has been particularly serious in Minbya, where Muslim people are facing extreme difficulties in finding ways to work, fish, buy or sell items at local markets, or access other services. Muslims in Minbya report that they have been skipping meals and selling livestock and household items to overcome increasing indebtedness and food shortfalls. Recently, however, there have been indications that Muslims will be permitted to move around more and work during the upcoming rice harvest in November. Local communities here normally rely on Muslim labour during the rice harvest.

Muslims in villages in central Rakhine are facing increased movement, labour and trade restrictions



A Muslim woman with her children in Minbya Township, Rakhine, October 2017. Credit: OCHA/Htet Htet Oo

Restrictions on humanitarian access are affecting both the quantity and quality of assistance and protection services

The 2017 Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction lays out the Government's long-term vision for building disaster resilience by 2030

Resumption of the citizenship verification exercise

In early October, the authorities re-initiated their engagement with the Muslim community on the citizenship verification exercise. Communities have been informed that they will not be able to apply for or renew fishing licenses or engage in other business activities without receiving an Identity Card for National Verification, a document necessary for applying for citizenship. This decision affects some 5,000 Muslim fishermen and their families living in the rural areas around Sittwe and potentially a much larger number of Muslim people who rely on the fishing industry or trade.

Ongoing humanitarian needs in Kachin and Shan states

Humanitarian workers face increased access constraints

Over the last year, there has been a dramatic deterioration in the amount of access granted by the Government for humanitarian workers in Kachin and Shan states, despite the fact that there are about 100,000 internally displaced people in these areas as a result of the ongoing armed conflict. Most UN agencies and international NGO staff have not had access to areas beyond Government control – where about 40 per cent of displaced people are located – since May 2016. Even in Government-controlled areas, new restrictions on humanitarian access have been introduced, with humanitarian staff of many organizations still not being permitted to travel to IDP sites outside urban areas and with continued long processing times for international staff Travel Authorizations.

Although local organizations continue to have access to most areas and are providing assistance to displaced people, these organizations are also facing increasing difficulties in carrying out their work. The restrictions on humanitarian access are affecting both the quantity and quality of assistance and protection services to displaced and other vulnerable people.

Humanitarian staff have been facing difficulties doing monitoring and providing protection services and support, including to for people with special needs. Other areas of humanitarian response are also affected, including emergency education support for students, repairs and

maintenance of shelters and other camp infrastructure, such as water and sanitation facilities. Newly displaced families have been left without proper shelter or protection from harsh weather for extended periods of time. Delivery of items such as warm clothes and blankets to vulnerable people including children have often been delayed, and distributions of emergency shelter items, blankets, clothes and other non-food items have in some cases not been permitted in areas beyond Government control. Without improved humanitarian access, many vulnerable people, including women, children and elderly people, will not get the assistance and protection they need.



A displaced woman in a camp for displaced people in Muse Town, northern Shan, October 2017.
Credit: OCHA/Eva Modvig

Web links to new OCHA resources:

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 9 Nov 2017)

Myanmar Humanitarian News Digest, Oct 2017

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 19 Oct 2017)

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 5 Oct 2017)

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 1 Oct 2017)

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 28 Sept 2017)

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 26 Sept 2017)

Myanmar: Displacement from Rakhine after 25 August 2017 (as of 24 Sept 2017)

Myanmar: IDP Sites in Kachin and Northern Shan states, Sept 2017

Myanmar: IDP Sites in Rakhine State, Sept 2017

Myanmar: Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue 2, June-22 Sept 2017

Launch of 2017 Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction

Strengthening the resilience of communities

On 9 October, the Government launched its 2017 Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction. This lays out the Government's long-term vision for building disaster resilience by 2030. The five-year Action Plan covers natural hazards and human-made disasters, with an approach focusing on managing risk rather than disasters. The Plan requires strong cooperation and coordination among Government departments, development organizations, the private sector and communities to address risks in Myanmar, while also ensuring that the targets of the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) are met.

Recognizing the importance of strengthening disaster resilience, the Government of Myanmar, together with the UN, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, community based organizations and the private sector, are working to build resilient communities by sharing knowledge of disaster preparedness and management. Disaster Management Committees have been formed from the national to the community level to educate people about disaster risks, better prepare for disasters in order to save lives, and to mitigate the impacts of disasters.



Officials from RRD provide community-level disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness training in Mandalay Region, which is affected by floods every year. September 2017. Credit: RRD

Myanmar is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. It is vulnerable to different hazards including cyclones, earthquakes, floods, landslides, drought and forest fires. The 2018 Index for Risk Management (INFORM), which identifies the countries at a high risk of humanitarian crisis, ranks Myanmar at 12 out of 191 countries globally and the country is listed in the top four countries that are exposed to natural disasters. In recent years, Myanmar has been affected by severe cyclones, strong earthquakes and devastating floods. In 2015, almost 1.7 million people were temporarily displaced or evacuated due to floods and landslides, while almost half a million people had to leave their homes due to flooding in 2016, according to the Myanmar Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD). This year, RRD reported that 13 out of 14 states and regions were affected by floods, with more than 330,000 people temporarily displaced between July and the end of October.

Displaced people with disabilities tell their own stories

Persons with a disability are disproportionately affected in situations of risk and in humanitarian emergencies

UNHCR photo story project in Kachin aims to empower displaced people with disabilities

Persons with a disability are disproportionately affected in situations of risk and in humanitarian emergencies. They face multiple barriers in accessing protection and humanitarian assistance. They are also particularly exposed to targeted violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence. To increase awareness and understanding of the situation of displaced people with disability, in August this year, UNHCR worked with the Photo Doc Association to provide a 10-day professional training on photo story telling for a group of people with a physical and/or mental disability and their caregivers in Man Hkring and Shwe Zet IDP camps in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State.



Tun Lum, who is partially deaf and suffered from polio as a child, earns a small income by cutting or styling hair for members of the IDP community in the camp where he lives in Kachin. La San Nan/UNHCR

The project aimed to empower displaced people with disabilities by giving them the skills, confidence and opportunity to tell their own stories, using their own images and words, and to advocate for their own needs. The project also involved caregivers and frontline humanitarian workers to raise awareness of disability and the challenges associated with it. Stories include a young man, Tu Lum, who is partially deaf and has less mobility due to having polio as a child, talking about the comfortable life he had before he became displaced, his difficulties making a living in the camp and his hopes for the future. Another story is about of Bawk Seng, a 9-year-old girl suffering from a facial paralysis, who tells us about her life at school, her close relationship with her mother and her hopes of becoming a doctor.

For most of the participants, this was the first time they ever had an opportunity to receive training and, more importantly, they said this was the first time they felt their voice was “heard”. UNHCR plans to replicate this project in other IDP camps in Kachin. The aim is to continue raising awareness of the specific needs of people with a disability who are living in IDP camps, and of the potential of these people, particularly when they are given some support.

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