

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 400,000 flee their homes in northern Rakhine
- Humanitarian operations severely disrupted in central Rakhine
- Rakhine Advisory Commission issues final report
- Civilians in Kachin and Shan bear the brunt of armed conflict
- Monsoon season floods temporarily displaced over 300,000

FIGURES

IDPs in Kachin	89,000
IDPs in Shan	9,000
IDPs in Rakhine since 2012	121,000
Refugee arrivals in Bangladesh (Oct 2016-Jul 2017)	87,000
Refugee arrivals in Bangladesh (Aug-Sept 2017)	429,000
New IDPs in Rakhine (Confirmed by Govt as at 12 Sept)	21,000

FUNDING 2017

150 million
requested (US\$)

76.4 million
received (US\$)

50%
Funded



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Over 400,000 people flee their homes in northern Rakhine

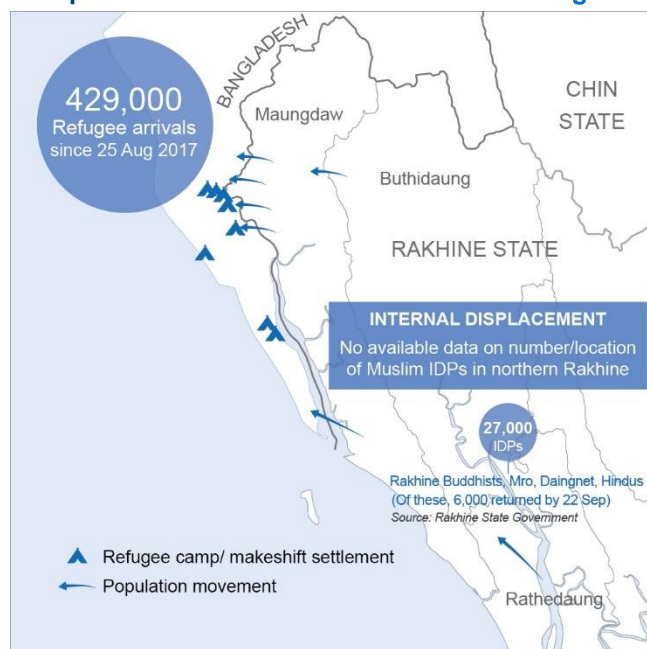
429,000 refugees arrive in Bangladesh, while others are internally displaced in Rakhine

Following a series of attacks on police and military posts in northern Rakhine on 25 August by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and subsequent security operations by the Myanmar Military, a humanitarian catastrophe has been unfolding. Entire areas have been depopulated as terrified civilians have been fleeing their homes en masse, with village after village being burned to the ground, making it more difficult for people to return. This follows a similar pattern of events in 2016, when armed attacks on police personnel led to a major security crackdown which resulted in an estimated 87,000 people fleeing to Bangladesh.

Although total numbers of people displaced by the conflict are not yet known, it appears that about 94 per cent of those confirmed as displaced so far are Muslims, the rest being Rakhine Buddhists, and other groups such as Mro and Daingnet, and Hindus.

According to the UN-led Inter-Sector Coordination Group in Bangladesh, an estimated 429,000 refugees fled across the border from Rakhine into Bangladesh in the period between 25 August and 20 September. This is the largest mass refugee movement in the region in decades. Apart from these people, an unknown number remain stranded, internally displaced or on the move in different parts of the three northern townships of Rakhine. The Government has not provided information on the number of internally displaced Muslim people, and due to the ongoing security situation and lack of access it has not been possible for the UN to verify numbers.

Displacement in Rakhine State since 25 Aug 2017



Key UN and INGO Statements on Rakhine

UN Secretary-General's Address to the General Assembly, 19 Sept. 2017

Press Conference by Secretary-General António Guterres at United Nations Headquarters, 13 Sept 2017

Darker and more dangerous: High Commissioner updates the Human Rights Council on human rights issues in 40 countries, 11 Sept 2017

Myanmar: ICRC scales up aid for people fleeing violence, 8 Sept 2017

Children's lives at stake in Myanmar, says World Vision, 8 Sept 2017

CERF allocates US\$7 million to assist tens of thousands of people fleeing violence in Myanmar, 7 Sept 2017

"Imperative that aid agencies can freely access Rakhine State", Statement from the NRC Secretary General Jan Egeland on Myanmar, 6 Sept 2017

Statement by Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, on children affected by the violence in Rakhine, Myanmar, 5 Sept 2017

Statement by Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides on the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, 5 Sept 2017

In addition to the displaced Muslim population, 26,700 non-Muslims fled their homes or were evacuated by the Government to other parts of Rakhine, according to Myanmar Government reports. Of these, the Government reports that approximately 6,000 people had returned to their homes by 12

September, leaving approximately 21,000 still displaced. Those who remain displaced are staying at monasteries, schools and other sites, and some are staying with relatives or host families.

Most of the Muslims who fled their homes crossed over into Bangladesh. The majority crossed the border in the northern part of Maungdaw Township. For many people this involved a long and dangerous journey on foot over difficult terrain. The refugees arrived in Bangladesh exhausted, hungry and traumatized by their weeks-long ordeal. Women and men arrived carrying newborn babies and young children. The crossing was particularly perilous for people with disabilities and the elderly. Many were carried for days by distraught relatives. Some arrived with injuries caused by gunshots, fire and landmines. In the southern part of Maungdaw Township, thousands paid extortionate fees to make risky crossings from the coast in small boats. There were a number of instances of over-crowded boats capsizing in rough waters and dozens of refugees are reported to have drowned. Media reports have shown pictures of bodies being washed up on the shores in different places.

Vast swathes of Rakhine State are now emptied of all Muslim residents. According to the latest reports from the Myanmar Government, 176 Muslim villages are now completely empty. In Rathedaung Township, Government figures show three quarters of the Muslim population has fled in fear, with most Muslim villages and all three of the former Rathedaung IDP camps now burnt to the ground. There are just five isolated Muslim communities left in all of Rathedaung Township and their situation remains extremely precarious. Following continuous threats from local Rakhine people to leave, many of these vulnerable people



A Red Cross Volunteer assisting during the evacuation of displaced people from Maungdaw to Sittwe. 2 Sept 2017. Credit: MRCS



A refugee family from Myanmar that crossed the border into Bangladesh is waiting to be transported to the nearby Balukhali makeshift settlement in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh. 6 Sept 2017. Credit: UNICEF/Patrick Brown

Key UN and INGO Statements on Rakhine

Secretary-General Voices Concern Over Reported Myanmar Security Excesses, Urges Calm, Restraint, 1 Sept 2017

Myanmar: Worsening cycle of violence in Rakhine must be broken urgently, UN expert warns, 31 Aug 2017

Statement of INGO's in Myanmar, 31 Aug 2017

UN Migration Agency (IOM) Calls for Restraint, More Aid for Civilians Fleeing Myanmar, 30 Aug 2017

Alarming deterioration in northern Rakhine was preventable, Zeid says, urging restraint, 29 Aug 2017

UNHCR urges open borders for people fleeing violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State, 29 Aug 2017

Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Myanmar, 28 Aug 2017

Statement of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Myanmar Renata Lok-Dessallien on attacks in Rakhine State, 25 Aug 2017

Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on attacks in Rakhine State, Myanmar, 25 Aug 2017

are so terrified that they calling the Government, the UN and others asking for additional measures to protect them or for help to be relocated to a safer place.

Villages burned and civilians killed in the violence

There have been widespread allegations of attacks on civilians, of threats and violence being used to drive people out of their homes, and of serious human rights violations including the killing of civilians and large-scale burnings of villages in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships. The Myanmar Government said on 13 September that “45 areas within the Maungdaw region have been torched and destroyed.” On 19 September, Human Rights Watch released an analysis based on satellite imagery, cross-referenced with first person testimonies, identifying 214 sites where there has been near total destruction of buildings. Fires and looting continue to be reported in the affected area. The Fact Finding Mission created by the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2017 “to establish the facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations by military and security forces, and abuses, in Myanmar, in particular in Rakhine State” has not been allowed



The remains of Zay Di Pyin village, Rathedaung, 9 Sept 2017

access to the affected areas. The Myanmar

Government has stated that it believes that “instituting such a mission is not a helpful course of action” in solving the many complex challenges of Rakhine State.

Calls from the UN to end the violence, uphold the rule of law and allow humanitarian access

The UN has been advocating strongly at every level for the protection of all civilians in Rakhine and for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, has condemned the attacks by ARSA. In a statement on 25 August he reiterated “the importance of addressing the root causes of violence, in particular issues related to identity and citizenship, and reducing inter-communal tensions” and he stressed the importance of ensuring the protection of civilians at all times. In a statement on 1 September, he expressed deep concerns about the “reports of excesses during the security operations conducted by Myanmar's security forces in Rakhine State” and urged “restraint and calm to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.” He underlined “the responsibility of the Government of Myanmar to provide security and assistance to all those in need and to enable the UN and its partners to extend the humanitarian support they are ready to provide.” He also urged the Government of Myanmar “to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine”. In a statement to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 11 September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said the situation “seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.”

In his speech to the UN General Assembly on 19 September, the Secretary-General once again called on the authorities in Myanmar to “end the military operations, allow

unhindered humanitarian access and recognize the right of refugees to return in safety and dignity". He also called on them to "address the grievances of the Rohingya, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long".

Humanitarian access constraints

The UN and its humanitarian partners have been offering their support to the Government to meet the needs of all those affected by the violence. However, despite strong advocacy by the UN for humanitarian access for its own staff and for other humanitarian organizations, the Government has said that staff from the UN and international non-government organizations (INGOs) will not be granted access in these areas for the time being. Instead, the Government announced that in the area of ongoing security operations it would be working with the Red Cross Movement to deliver humanitarian assistance. The Myanmar Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on 11 September saying that "a Government-led mechanism established in cooperation with the Red Cross Movement has already started its humanitarian assistance activities" and that "humanitarian assistance will be provided to all displaced inhabitants without discrimination".

Read: The full report on Government assistance from the Relief and Resettlement Department

On 19 September, the Government's Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD) reported that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Rakhine State Government and donors had provided MMK 528 million (US\$391,000) in cash assistance and MMK 61 million (US\$45,000) in in-kind support to displaced people between 27 August and 15 September. In addition, RRD reported that humanitarian assistance provided by the Red Cross Movement in the period from 26 August to 15 September reached 19,000 people in Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Sittwe, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Toungup, and Thandwe.

Meanwhile, almost all of the humanitarian activities that were previously being carried out by UN agencies and INGOs in northern Rakhine have either been suspended or severely interrupted. Reports indicate that a number of the clinics and other facilities previously used for humanitarian activities have been burned or looted. Without access to these areas, the UN does not know how many of the people who were previously



A young child is screened for malnutrition at an ACF centre in Maungdaw, northern Rakhine State, 2016 Credit: Action Contre la Faim

accessing these critical services have fled and how many remain in the area.

Humanitarian and development needs were already very high in this part of the Rakhine State prior to the most recent outbreak of violence. As the Rakhine Advisory Commission pointed out in its final report of August 2017, "protracted statelessness and profound discrimination have made the Muslim community particularly vulnerable to human rights violations". Access to healthcare, education and livelihoods was severely constrained for the Muslim community as a result of movement restrictions and malnutrition rates in northern Rakhine were already above WHO emergency thresholds and higher than anywhere else in the country.

Humanitarian and development needs were already very high in the northern part of Rakhine State prior to the most recent outbreak of violence

Prior to the 25 August attacks, there was a widespread campaign in the local media and on social media discrediting the UN and INGOs in Rakhine and accusing them of supporting terrorists. This began when the State Counsellor Office Information Committee published pictures of a box of WFP high energy biscuits that was reportedly found in an alleged abandoned “terrorist training camp”. This led to well organized protests across 13 townships across Rakhine State on 13 August calling for the Government to take action to combat terrorism and calling for the UN and INGOs to be expelled from Rakhine State. Furthermore, on 27 August the State Counsellor Office Information Committee stated publically that authorities were investigating reports “[that some INGO staff had participated while extremist terrorists besieged Taungbazar village.](#)” In a statement on 29 August, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein warned all sides against further fueling the violence and called on “[the political leadership to condemn the inflammatory rhetoric and incitement to hatred that was proliferating, including on social media](#)”.

Humanitarian operations severely disrupted in central Rakhine

Disruptions to aid operations affect 120,000 IDPs and other vulnerable people

Humanitarian activities in Rakhine have been facing constraints for several months as a result of new bureaucratic procedures introduced by the authorities, delays in obtaining approvals for projects and assessments, as well as the non-issuance of travel authorizations for staff. Most INGOs and some UN agencies no longer have valid travel authorizations and as a result their international staff can no longer visit even the main IDP camps just outside the state capital, Sittwe.

Following the attacks on 25 August and the subsequent security operations, tensions increased throughout Rakhine and most humanitarian activities across central Rakhine were either suspended or severely interrupted. All WFP food deliveries to the IDP camps were suspended for more than two weeks, because local transport contractors were afraid to take food to the camps. This left

approximately 50,000 people without their August food rations. Distributions resumed on 12 September with Government trucks and police escorts. People in these camps depend heavily on external assistance as they are subject to severe movement restrictions that limit their ability to engage in livelihoods activities.



Displaced people in Ah Nauk Ye camp in central Rakhine, Sept 2017.
Credit: OCHA/Pierre Peron

Most humanitarian services to 120,000 displaced people in camps and other vulnerable communities in central Rakhine have been severely disrupted since 25 August

The operating environment in central Rakhine State remains very challenging

The operating environment remains very challenging, with international staff being discouraged by the Government from resuming normal operations. Many national staff are coming under intense pressure from local communities and many of them are not willing to resume their work in the IDP camps and villages under the current conditions. Most healthcare services supported international organizations were suspended in the days following 25 August, although some of these have since resumed. Thet Kae Pyin Sub-Rural Health Clinic resumed medical consultation services on 7 September. In other locations, basic care is being provided by community health workers. Health workers are being encouraged to resume their healthcare services, but fear among national health workers remains a major challenge and it is not possible for most international staff to accompany them to the field due to their lack of travel authorizations. After initial disruptions, most emergency referrals are functioning, although some health workers are still reporting problems. In the case of water and sanitation, some technical activities, which international INGO staff would normally carry out, are still not possible because of the lack of travel authorizations. Disruptions to sanitation services in the camps pose serious public health risks.



Displaced people in Ohn Daw Gyi South camp following Cyclone Mora, June 2017. Credit: OCHA/Aye Thiri Kyaw

In Mrauk-U and Minbya townships, pressure has been placed on landlords and contractors by some ethnic-Rakhine groups not to do business with international organizations and not to rent houses or offices to them. This resulted in all INGO international staff who were working in these townships having to leave the area and most humanitarian activities there have been suspended since 25 August.

“If adopted and implemented in the spirit in which they were conceived, I firmly believe that these recommendations, along with those of our interim report, can trace a path to lasting peace in Rakhine State.” Kofi Annan at the launch of the Rakhine Advisory Commission report

Implementation of recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission

Report recommends urgent and sustained action to prevent violence, maintain peace, foster reconciliation and offer a sense of hope for people in Rakhine

After one year of consultations held across Rakhine State and in other parts of the country and the region, the Government-appointed Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, [submitted its final report to national authorities](#) on 23 August, two days before the recent violence erupted in northern Rakhine. The final report of the Advisory Commission, entitled *Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine*, puts forward a series of recommendations “to surmount the political, socio-economic and humanitarian challenges that currently face Rakhine State”.

The Myanmar government has said it is “serious in finding a way forward for Rakhine” and that it plans to implement the recommendations from the Commission’s final report “[within the shortest timeframe possible, in line with the situation on the ground.](#)” Following-on from the final reports of the Rakhine Advisory Commission and the Maungdaw Investigation Commission, the Government has formed a [Committee for Implementing Recommendations on Rakhine State](#). The Committee is chaired by the Union Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and co-chaired by the Chief Minister of the Rakhine State Government. In the final report, the Advisory Commission warns that “unless current challenges are addressed promptly, further radicalization within both communities is a real risk.” The most recent outbreak of violence in Rakhine further underscores the urgent need to tackle a wide range of issues contributing to the root causes of the ongoing crisis in Rakhine. [In a speech to the nation on 19 September](#), State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi reiterated the Government’s commitment to implement the recommendations, noting that “every single recommendation that will benefit peace, harmony and development in Rakhine State will be implemented within the shortest time possible.”

Civilians bear the brunt of ongoing armed conflict in Kachin and Shan

Protracted displacement and new humanitarian needs

June 2017 marked six years since armed conflict re-erupted between the Myanmar military, the Kachin Independence Army and other armed groups in Kachin and northern Shan. Prolonged displacement is taking its toll on some 98,000 people driven out of their homes by the fighting. Many people have been displaced multiple times, stretching their coping mechanisms to the limit. In both Kachin and Shan



Displaced family in Man Wing Gyi village, Mansi Township, Kachin State, May 2017. Credit: OCHA/Htet Htet Oo

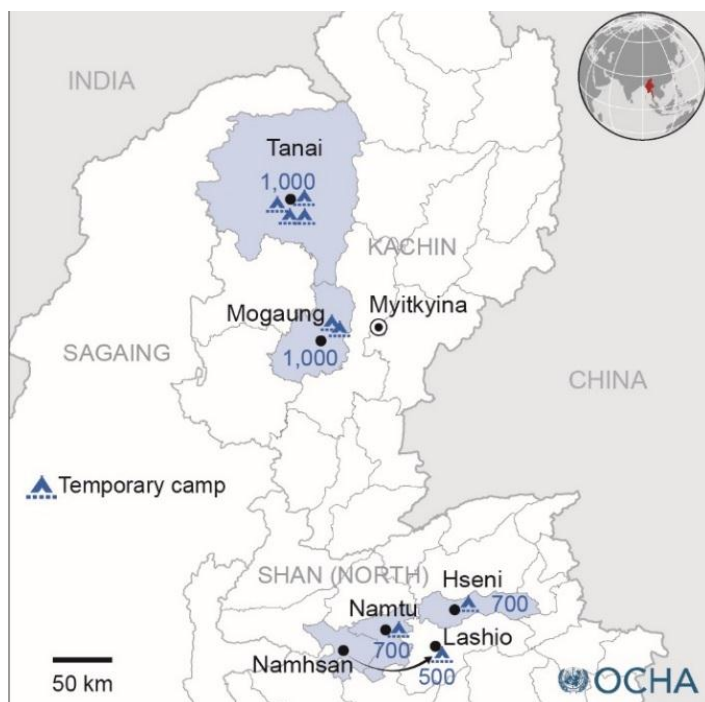
states, displaced people are living in crowded shelters that were never designed for long-term accommodation. Most people have limited access to jobs or other income generating opportunities. There is an urgent need to find durable solutions for these displaced people whose lives and livelihoods have been on hold for six years.

Civilians – of whom about 80 per cent are women, children and elderly people – continue to bear the brunt of the ongoing armed conflict. Fighting regularly occurs in close proximity to civilian areas including displacement camps, leading to serious protection concerns. Landmines are an ever-present threat. Reports continue to be received of alleged human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law in both Kachin and Shan states. Recent fighting in Kachin is a case in point. In early June, thousands of people were displaced by fighting in the Tanai area, following clashes in local mining areas. Over a thousand of these displaced people remain in four church sites

Six years on, civilians continue to bear the brunt of the ongoing armed conflict in Kachin and Shan

in Tanai Town. Ever since the fighting began, humanitarian access to Tanai town and the displacement sites has been severely restricted and most assistance has been provided by local organizations. According to local NGOs, serious protection incidents have been reported, including alleged killings, arrests, disappearances, civilians injured by shelling, forced portering, as well as intimidation and harassment. Over 1,000 people were also temporarily displaced from Kasung village in Moegaung Township to Namti Town in northern Shan State in August.

Conflict induced displacement in Kachin and northern Shan states, June – August 2017



Most UN and INGOs have not had access to areas beyond the Government's control in Kachin and Shan states since May 2016

According to local NGOs who are part of the Joint Strategy Team, the fighting resulted in civilian casualties and reports of some villagers temporarily detained. These people have since returned home.

Humanitarian access constraints

Humanitarian organizations are no longer being permitted by the Government to have access to IDP camps and other vulnerable communities in Kachin and Shan states in the same way as before. Until May 2016, the UN and other international humanitarian organizations were being granted access to assist IDPs and other conflict-affected people in both Government-controlled areas and in areas beyond Government control. This is no longer the case.

In the case of non-Government controlled areas, until May 2016 the UN was organizing regular cross-line convoys, with the full consent of the Government and the Myanmar military. That stopped in May 2016. Although there are about 40,000 IDPs in camps in areas beyond Government control, for over 15 months the Government has not permitted the UN to deliver any assistance to people in these areas. Meanwhile, national NGOs and community based organizations continue to provide humanitarian support through their own networks and the UN continues to monitor closely the situation of displaced and vulnerable people in these areas.



A cross-line mission convoy brings assistance to IDPs in Laiza, Kachin State, Feb 2014. Credit: OCHA/Eva Modvig

In the case of Government-controlled areas, the Government has also been introducing severe new restrictions on the movements and work of UN agencies and INGOs. International staff of many organizations are no longer being permitted to travel to IDP sites outside urban areas and there are long processing times for Travel Authorizations. Although local organizations continue to have access to most areas, these groups are also facing increasing difficulties working in this part of the country. These restrictions on humanitarian access are affecting the quantity and quality of assistance being delivered. Without improved humanitarian access, many vulnerable people, including women, children and elderly people, will not get the assistance and protection they need.

Life on hold for displaced women in Kachin

Displaced Kachin women describe life on the run

A report published by Trocaire and Oxfam in June 2017 focuses on the specific experiences, needs and views of displaced women in Kachin State. The report 'Life on Hold' brings together the voices and memories of over 100 women in 12 IDP camps in Kachin State in both Government controlled and non-Government controlled areas.

The report paints a dismal picture of the lives of displaced people in Kachin. Most women interviewed for the report shared stories of sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces present in Kachin and most women had either directly experienced physical violence, sexual violence or forced labour, or had witnessed instances of this against someone else. Many women reported giving birth under difficult and dangerous circumstances while on the run. Women also expressed high levels of sorrow about past experiences and noted that children also often displayed signs of mental illness. They highlighted needs in the IDP sites, including access to better sanitation, water, healthcare and concerns about education for their children. The women asked to be more involved in discussions related to the peace process and said that they would like to create networks with other internally displaced women to raise their voices collectively.

"When we were living in the village, we were always afraid as the situation was not good. We were worrying all the time when we would have to flee from the conflict again."
Displaced woman interviewed for the "Life on hold" report



Displaced woman, Kachin State, June 2016
Credit: Dustin Barter/Oxfam

Web links to new OCHA resources:

Myanmar Humanitarian News Digest, Aug 2017

HCT Myanmar – Interagency Response Preparedness Plan, June 2017

Myanmar: IDP sites in Kachin and northern Shan States, June 2017

Saving livelihoods saves lives, Lieya Ketali secures future with new planting

Myanmar Humanitarian Fund: 2017 mid-year update

Myanmar 2017 Humanitarian Funding, as of 15 Aug

Myanmar: Humanitarian Update No. 1, 2 & 3 on Monsoon Season Floods, 3 Aug 2017

Myanmar: IDP sites in Rakhine State, as of May 2017

Falling through the cracks, Residents of Informal Settlements Struggle in the aftermath of Cyclone Mora, June 2017

Displaced people in Myanmar: Another year away from home, June 2017

July-September monsoon floods: over 300,000 displaced

Government assists people temporarily displaced by monsoon floods

Monsoon rains and over-flowing rivers caused seasonal floods in Myanmar in July and August. Flooding affected 13 of the country's 14 states and regions. Magway, Ayeyarwady, Sagaing, Bago and Mandalay were the most affected regions with tens of thousands of people displaced or evacuated. According to the Government of Myanmar's Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD) in Nay Pyi Taw, the cumulative number of people who were temporarily displaced/evacuated in flood-affected states and regions between 1 July and 12 September was over 320,000. This number also includes people who have been displaced a second time in mid-August, particularly in Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magway and Sagaing regions. At least eight people are reported to be killed due to flooding. A total of 500 temporary evacuation centres were opened across flood-affected areas, however as of 12 September only ten centres remained open in Bago and Magway, with 1,074 still displaced in these sites. RRD, state and regional governments, the Myanmar Military and the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), as well as local and international non-governmental organizations, assisted in the humanitarian response to the floods, providing food, drinking water, shelter materials, hygiene kits and other relief items to displaced and affected people. RRD piloted the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for assessing the situation in flood affected parts of Magway Region during the last week of July



Government officials piloting the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in Minbu Township, Magway Region, July. Credit: MSWRR

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