

HIGHLIGHTS

- Thousands of vulnerable people are at risk in areas beyond Government control in Kachin as cross-line missions remain stalled
- Mines continue to pose serious risks to civilians, including children, in Kachin and northern Shan states
- Displaced women and girls in northern Shan are exposed to violence and trafficking
- IDPs and isolated communities in Rakhine need safe access to fuel and energy

Key FIGURES

People displaced in Rakhine State	139,000
People displaced in Kachin and northern Shan States	98,000
People displaced in Meiktila, Mandalay region	3,300

FUNDING

192 million
requested (US\$)

51% funded

Source: UNHCR, OCHA, CCCM, Mandalay Regional Government



Children in Market 3 camp, Laiza, Kachin, Feb 2014 Credit: OCHA

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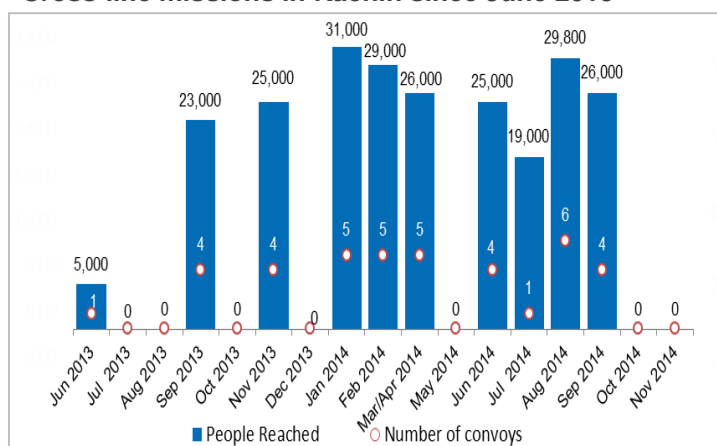
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Cross-line convoys stalled in Kachin

Ahead of the winter season, humanitarian organizations are continuing to provide essential assistance to more than 98,000 displaced people in Kachin and northern Shan states. While local NGOs continue to work in both Government and non-Government areas, cross-line missions for international humanitarian organizations to areas beyond Government control have not taken place since September. This is mainly due to the volatile security situation and bureaucratic delays in getting Government authorizations. Limited access has resulted in some 27,500 displaced people in camps around Laiza and east of Bhamo not receiving important items such as blankets and warm clothes from UNICEF and UNHCR ahead of the winter months. This includes over 12,000 children who are considered by humanitarian organizations to be particularly vulnerable.

Local NGOs and other organizations are working to meet the most urgent gaps in food assistance for displaced people caused by the stalled cross-line missions. None of the food distributions planned by the World Food Programme and its partners were able to take place in non-Government areas in October and November. Monitoring and technical support for construction of new shelters and maintenance and repairs of existing shelters has also been delayed.

Cross-line missions in Kachin since June 2013



UN calls for sustained access to conflict-affected people in Kachin

More than three years after the resumption of armed conflict between the Government of Myanmar Army and the Kachin Independence Army, some 50,000 people remain displaced in areas beyond Government control. The UN and international NGOs support and supplement the activities of local NGOs, who have more regular access, by providing assistance via cross-line convoys. This includes food, clothing, blankets, mats, household items and hygiene kits, as well as services and technical expertise, such as healthcare, protection, shelter, and water and sanitation. The United Nations and its partners continue to call for regular and sustained humanitarian access to all displaced people and other communities affected by the conflict.

Landmines put civilians at risk in Kachin and northern Shan

More than 25 per cent of landmine victims knew the area was dangerous before entering it; however, none had attended any mine risk training programmes

Landmines continue to pose a serious threat to civilians, including children, in several states in Myanmar. This year, in Kachin only, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), has documented at least 13 civilian landmine victims, including two children, in Mansi, Momauk and Waingmaw townships. A further 33 incidents were reported in Kayin and Bago East, according to NPA. NPA's reporting does not provide a complete overview, as verifiable data on mine incidents is difficult to gather.

Increased risk for displaced people and lack of awareness

A recent assessment of mine risks conducted in 30 camps for displaced people across Kachin and northern Shan states by UNICEF and Danish Church Aid (DCA) confirmed that mines continue to pose a serious risk to civilians and that there is still a low level of awareness of the risks and how to manage them. About 83 per cent of the respondents surveyed said they had heard of explosive devices in or around their places of origin. The assessment also found that myths and wrong beliefs about mine risks persist. For example, one out of four respondents said they believed that burning is a safe way to get rid of landmines and other explosive devices. The assessment was carried out within the framework of the Kachin State Working Group on Mine Risk Education, which is led by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), UNICEF, the Danish Refugee Council/ Danish Demining Group (DRC/DDG) and local NGOs.

To help address the risk of landmines to civilians in Kachin, DRC/DDG, with support from UNICEF, is providing mine risk education and support to landmine victims in some camps for displaced people. While conducting this, the teams also collect data that will assist them in identifying vulnerable groups that are at increased risk from landmines.

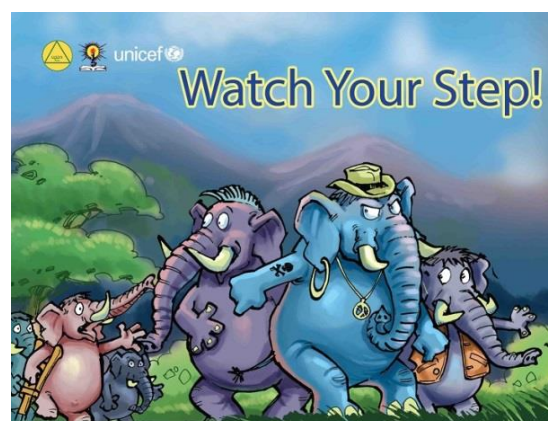
According to the information collected by DRC/DDG, the majority of reported landmine victims over the last six months were male farmers, and 56 per cent of those affected were displaced people. Most of the accidents registered happened while people were travelling on foot along roads, footpaths and in the forest to areas they visit often, such as agricultural fields. More than 25 per cent of the landmine victims knew the area was dangerous before entering it; however, none had attended any mine risk training programmes.

Increasing access to mine risk education

The UNICEF/DCA assessment and data collected by DRC/DDG shows a clear need for more mine risk education for civilians, in particular for vulnerable groups, including children and displaced people, in areas where mines pose a risk.

To address this, UNICEF, DRC/DDG and local NGOs have initiated education on mine risk in 30 schools and 12 camps for displaced people in Kachin. The sessions involve two story books for children and young people entitled "Watch Your Step" and "Now I know", along with orientation about mine risk for teachers and youths.

During a two-day workshop from 22 to 23 October to review the findings of the assessment, more than 40 participants from the government, UN, national and international NGOs and local faith-based organizations developed messages on mine safety, and identified relevant information sharing channels on mine risk education.



Mine risk education book by UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Pyinnya Tazaung Association.
Credit: UNICEF

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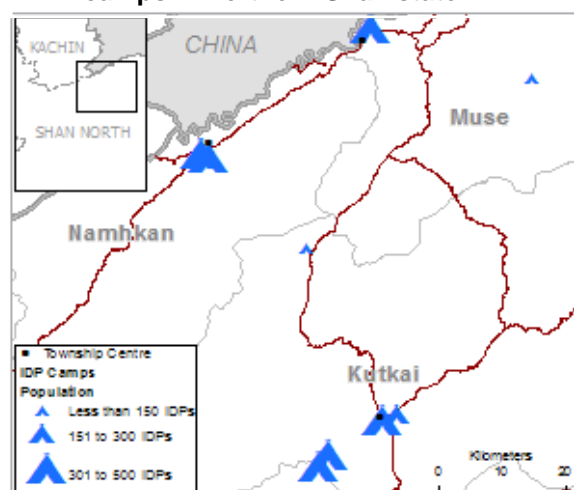
Displaced women in northern Shan exposed to violence and trafficking

The main concern identified by most of the displaced women was limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities in the camps

Displaced women and adolescent girls are highly vulnerable to a number of threats including domestic violence, trafficking and lack of involvement in decision-making structures, according to an assessment recently conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Kachin Women's Association (KWA). The study was conducted across a number of camps for recently displaced people in northern Shan State.

The main concern identified by most of the displaced women who took part in focus group discussions or in individual interviews was limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities in the camps. Displaced women are often the primary caretaker for their families, having had to assume the role of breadwinners for the family as a result of displacement, according to UNFPA, DRC and KWA. Some women also reported feeling unsafe due to the uncertainty and lack of information about plans for resettlement or return.

IDP camps in northern Shan state



According to discussions with displaced women, domestic violence is prevalent in the camps. Negative coping mechanisms such as drug consumption among displaced men, were identified by the women as a contributing factor to this. In addition, the women raised the lack of privacy in shelters – that typically consist of one room with several family members living together in crowded conditions – as a concern. In addition, the assessment found that the proximity of the armed groups to the camps and the entry of soldiers into the camps increases the sense of fear and insecurity that women in the camps experience.

Adolescent girls at risk of trafficking and early marriage

Adolescent girls are exposed to particular protection risks, according to the assessment findings. Cross-border trafficking for the purposes of domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and forced marriage was identified as a major protection concern by the women, according to UNFPA, DRC and KWA. The proximity to the border and lack of personal documentation are contributing factors which increase the risk. Early marriage of adolescent girls was also mentioned as a concern by the women.

Need for more support services for vulnerable women and girls in camps

While the local Ta'aung Women's Organization (TWO) manage most of the response and prevention work for gender based violence (GBV) in the region, they are not operational in the IDP camps in which the assessment was conducted. In the areas in which they are active, they provide case management, awareness training, and sessions for women and youth, and run two "safe houses" for survivors of violence.



Psychosocial support session for IDP women, Je Yang and Hpun Lum Yang camps, Kachin. March 2014. Credit: UNFPA

The assessment found that for women and girls exposed to gender based violence, there are no response services in the IDP camps in northern Shan

The assessment found that there are no GBV response services for displaced women and girls in the IDP camps. This is exacerbated by a requirement that women and girls must have a letter certifying their status as displaced before being able to access lifesaving medical assistance. This can serve to delay or even deter access to services for survivors. The assessment also found that there is very limited understanding among displaced people about what human trafficking is and how to prevent it.

DRC and KWA are currently running an anti-trafficking prevention programme through local women's groups in Kutkai and Mandung. UNFPA and InterSOS are also planning to start comprehensive and multi-sectoral GBV response and prevention programmes by building the capacity of local organizations and enhancing community-based protection mechanisms to respond to the needs of survivors of violence.

Displaced people in camps in Rakhine have inadequate access to cooking fuel

Displaced people and vulnerable communities in Rakhine have limited access to cooking fuel and energy. The situation is particularly difficult for over 80,000 displaced people who have been living in camps in Sittwe Township for over two years. Many households in isolated villages and in areas surrounding camps also face challenges in accessing sufficient fuel, according to a recent study by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Limited financial means due to lack of livelihood opportunities and restrictions on movement affect the ability of many people to purchase fuel or collect firewood.

Households in camps and isolated villages rely on a number of negative coping strategies due to a lack of access to cooking fuel. These include the use of shelter materials as fuel, the use of other unsustainable and hazardous fuels, the exchange of food rations for fuel, and over-exploitation of surrounding forests and woodlands. Women and children are often tasked with the collection of fuel, spending up to five hours per day on this activity, which takes time away from productive activities. It also increases their exposure to danger, including harassment, violence and rape, according to FAO. The over-exploitation of forests and woodlands surrounding the camps is also contributing to rapid environmental degradation.



Rice husks and cow dung used for cooking fuel in Ohn Taw Gyi camp, Rakhine, Oct 2013. Credit: OCHA

Efforts to ensure that IDPs have safe access to fuel and energy

An initiative known as SAFE ("Safe Access to Fuel and Energy") is being used to ensure that IDPs and other crisis-affected people have safe access to fuel and energy for cooking, heating, lighting, and power. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has already been undertaking programmes to provide fuel sticks made out of rice husks to three IDPs camps. In 2015 ICRC will extend its cooking fuel activities to cover households in IDP camps in Pauktaw and in Myebon townships. ICRC will look for opportunities to establish small-scale production of fuel sticks in Pauktaw and other townships. Rice husks are widely available in many townships in Rakhine and assessments carried out by ICRC and FAO indicate that the use of the fuel sticks has high acceptability among displaced people, who have few other fuel options and in some cases have traditionally used rice husk-based fuels. In 2015, FAO and other humanitarian organizations plan launch SAFE activities in camps in Sittwe and potentially in Rathedaung Township. Activities will include the provision of fuel sticks made from rice husks and fuel-efficient cook stoves, as well as looking for opportunities to establish small-scale local production of fuel sticks made from rice husks.

Limited financial means due to lack of livelihood opportunities and restrictions on movement limit the ability of many IDPs to purchase fuel or collect firewood

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