

GENDERED INSIGHTS FROM THE MYANMAR 2024 MULTI-SECTORAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

March 2025



Photo: UNFPA Myanmar

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, the Myanmar Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), conducted under Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) guidance, provides critical data to inform the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), ensuring aid reaches those most in need.

To strengthen the humanitarian response amid ongoing conflict and crisis, the Myanmar Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group has conducted a gender analysis of the 2024 Myanmar MSNA. As the MSNA is undertaken at household level, the analysis examines female-headed versus male-headed households, highlighting gender disparities in access to aid, economic stability, security risks, and essential services such as health and education.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Female-headed households are disproportionately affected:** They comprise around 20% of all households, with higher concentrations among displaced groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. Many women who are the heads of households are widowed and older compared to male heads of households. This limits their ability to find work and access services.
- **Economic insecurity:** Female-headed households rely on unstable income sources such as casual labor and informal work, making them highly

vulnerable to financial shocks.

- **Limited access to basic services:** Many female-headed households struggle to afford food, healthcare, and essential resources, with displacement further exacerbating these challenges.
- **Heightened exposure to violence:** Female-headed households face discrimination and violence in the community, insecurity in their communities, and movement restrictions due to conflict.
- **Legal and administrative barriers:** Female-headed households are more likely to face difficulties obtaining documentation, restricting their ability to access aid, legal protections, and public services.
- **Psychological distress:** The stress of displacement, economic hardship, and insecurity contributes to high levels of psychological distress, particularly among female-headed households whose members are non-displaced stateless people (NDSP).
- **Gender norms and education barriers:** Social norms and discrimination limit women and girls' access to education and economic opportunities, reinforcing poverty and inequality.

These findings are based on quantitative household-level data collected through 8,704 surveys conducted across Myanmar, covering internally displaced persons (IDPs), IDP returnees, NDSPs, and other crisis-affected populations (OCAPs). The data was collected through a combination of face-to-face (71%) and remote phone-based interviews (29%). However, as the

MSNA did not include a dedicated gender component or gender-disaggregated weighting, the analysis presents indicative trends rather than statistically precise conclusions.

Female-headed households face severe vulnerabilities across economic, social, and security dimensions, with limited access to income, services, and protection. Addressing these disparities through targeted, gender-responsive interventions is essential to ensuring an inclusive and effective humanitarian response.

INTRODUCTION

Myanmar's humanitarian crisis continues to worsen due to conflict, displacement, and economic instability, leaving 19.9 million people in need of assistance in 2025. The Myanmar Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), conducted under Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) guidance, provides essential data to inform humanitarian response efforts. Its findings help shape the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), ensuring aid is targeted where it is needed most.

To strengthen this response, the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group—a coalition of UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and local civil society groups—has conducted a gender analysis of the 2024 Myanmar MSNA.

By examining female-headed versus male-headed households, the analysis highlights key gender disparities in access to aid, security risks, economic stability, and access to essential services like health and education. These insights are critical for making humanitarian aid more effective and inclusive.

METHODOLOGY

MSNA DATA COLLECTION AND WEIGHTING

The 2024 Myanmar MSNA, collected quantitative household-level data to assess humanitarian needs across all Myanmar states and regions, as well as the subregions of Bago East, Bago West, Shan East, Shan North, and Shan South.

A total of 8,704 household surveys were conducted between 28 May and 17 July 2024, covering four key population groups:

- Internally displaced people (IDP);
- IDP returnees;
- Non-displaced stateless people (NDSP) in Rakhine State; and
- Other crisis affected people (OCAP), including those in informal settlements (ISETs) in Yangon.

The surveys were conducted through a combination of face-to-face interviews (comprising 71% of the surveys) and remote phone-based interviews (29%) in areas without in-person access. All states, regions, and sub-regions were covered.

To account for sampling imbalances, two sets of weights were applied:

- 1. Correction weight** – Adjusting for over- and under-sampling at the township level and by population group (applicable only to in-person surveys).
- 2. Strata weight** – Adjusting at the state/region level and by population group,

ensuring a distribution closer to the actual demographic composition (applied to both in-person and remote surveys).

LIMITATIONS OF THE MSNA DATASET FOR GENDER ANALYSIS

The Myanmar 2024 MSNA, as originally did not include a dedicated gender component. As a result, the weights applied to the dataset were not disaggregated by gender, limiting the precision of gender-specific findings in this analysis.

Due to this lack of gender-specific weighting, the gender disparities presented in this report should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically precise.

Additionally, the MSNA was designed as a household-level assessment, which poses challenges for individual-level gender analysis. Many gender inequalities occur within households, rather than between different household types, making it difficult to accurately translate household-level data into individual-level gender disparities.

In conducting the gender analysis, the same weighting methodology was used as in the original MSNA. However, since gender disaggregation was not included in the original weighting process, the gender indicators in this report serve only as a basis for tentative comparisons rather than definitive conclusions.

Further limitations arise in the use of the Washington Group Short Set (WGSS¹)

¹ Washington Group Short Set of questions, the questions reflect advances in the conceptualization of disability and use

of disability-related questions. These questions were only included in in-person interviews, affecting the margin of error and representativeness of disability-related gender findings.

Despite these limitations, the gender analysis provides valuable insights into gender disparities in Myanmar's humanitarian context. While findings should be interpreted with caution, they offer strong indicative evidence that can inform future gender-responsive humanitarian programming.

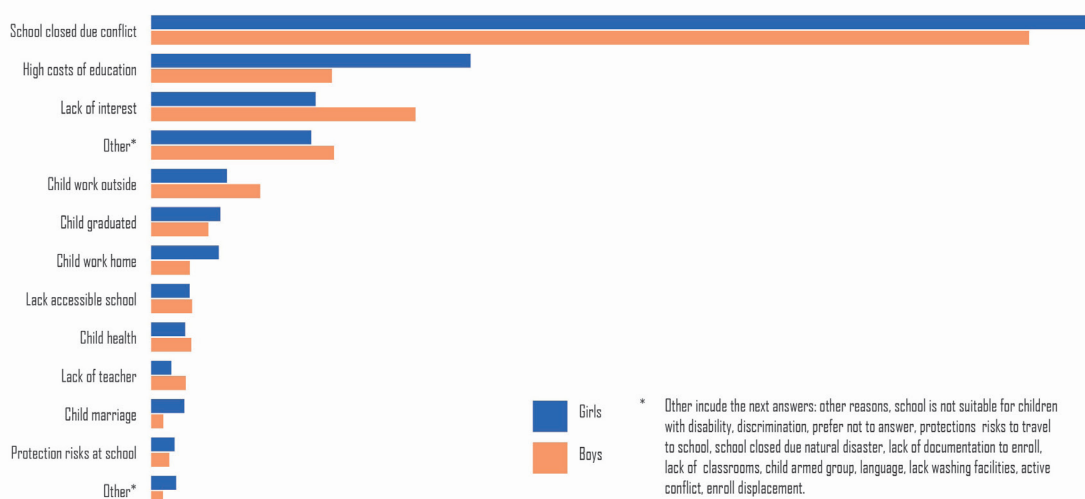
the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) as a conceptual framework. <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss>

EDUCATION

Ongoing conflict in Myanmar has left a significant number of children without access to education. Girls face greater barriers, including child marriage, domestic responsibilities, and high education costs, while boys are more likely to miss out on school because of external labor demands and declining interest in school. Displacement and economic hardship further exacerbate these issues, with girls experiencing nearly twice the impact of boys.

- Many children are unable to attend school due to conflict-related closures, the high cost of education, lack of interest, and work responsibilities inside and outside the home.
- Girls face significantly higher barriers than boys, with child marriage, domestic responsibilities, and financial constraints preventing them from continuing their education.
- Boys are more likely to drop out due to external labor demands and lack of interest in pursuing education.

2023-2024 school year: Top reasons children did not attend school



During the 2023-2024 school year around **30,000 girls** did not access any school because of child marriage comparing with approximately **11,000 boys**



Photo: UN Myanmar

HEALTH

Women, particularly those who are internally displaced persons (IDPs) or non-displaced stateless people (NDSPs), face significant challenges in accessing healthcare.

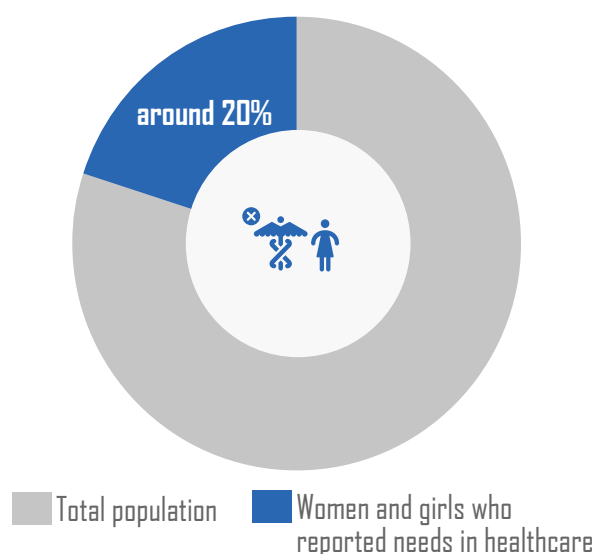
Financial barriers are a major barrier for both men and women, with approximately one in five people unable to afford treatment. However, women face additional challenges at a higher rate than men, including limited availability of healthcare facilities and difficulties traveling to these facilities.

KEY CHALLENGES:

- 60% of all people in need of healthcare in Myanmar are women or girls.
- Around 11,000,000 women and girls in Myanmar need healthcare. Almost 20% of the total population.
- One in three NDSP women and girls cannot afford medical treatment and one in five cannot afford consultations. In comparison, only about 20% of NDSP men cannot afford medical consultations, and around 10% report being unable to afford treatment.
- Among OCAPs and returnees, both men

and women face financial limitations, with one in five unable to afford treatment.

- One in five IDP women and girls cite cost, lack of facilities, and travel distance as key barriers. While cost is a similarly significant barrier for men, only one in ten men identify lack of facilities and travel distance as barriers. One possible explanation is that, on average, women are older and might be less able to travel long distances for healthcare services, but also more gendered factors such as social norms, safety concerns and lack of access to transport.



Around **6,000,000** women and girls struggle to afford the healthcare services



More than **300,000** women need childbirth delivery services



More than **2.2 million** women and girls need consultations for chronic disease and/or acute medical conditions



More than **1.1 million** women and girls need specialized health services

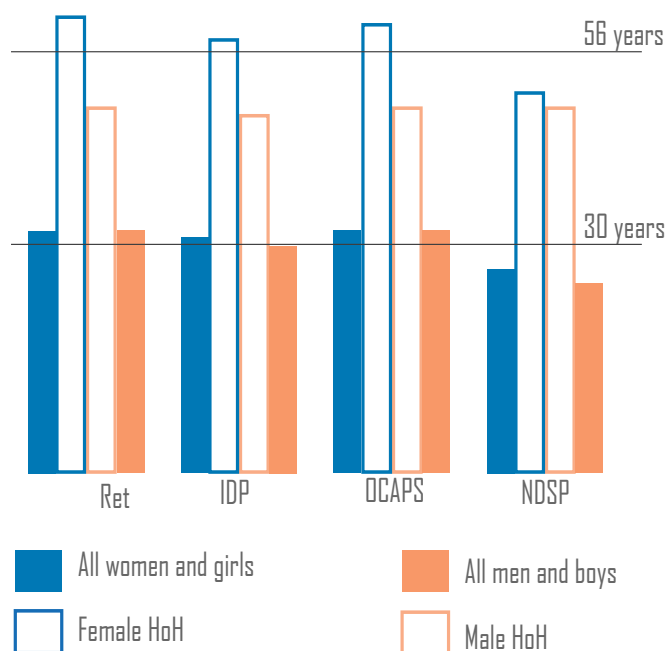


Photo: UNFPA Myanmar

HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS

Female-headed households in Myanmar face unique demographic challenges. Many women who are heads of their households are widows and, on average, are older than men who head households. They are notably more prevalent among IDP returnees (around 20%) and IDPs

Average age of household members vs. head of household (HoH) by population group and gender



(almost 25%), highlighting their increased vulnerability.

KEY CHALLENGES:

- One in five households is headed by a women.
- Four in five women who head households are widows, averaging 56 years of age compared to 48 for men.

Proportion of female-headed vs. male-headed households by population group

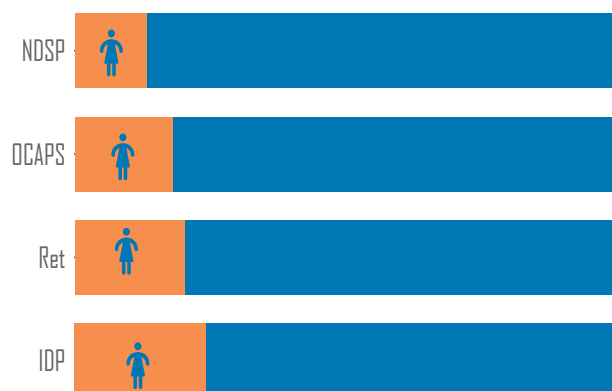


Photo: UNFPA Myanmar

LIVELIHOODS

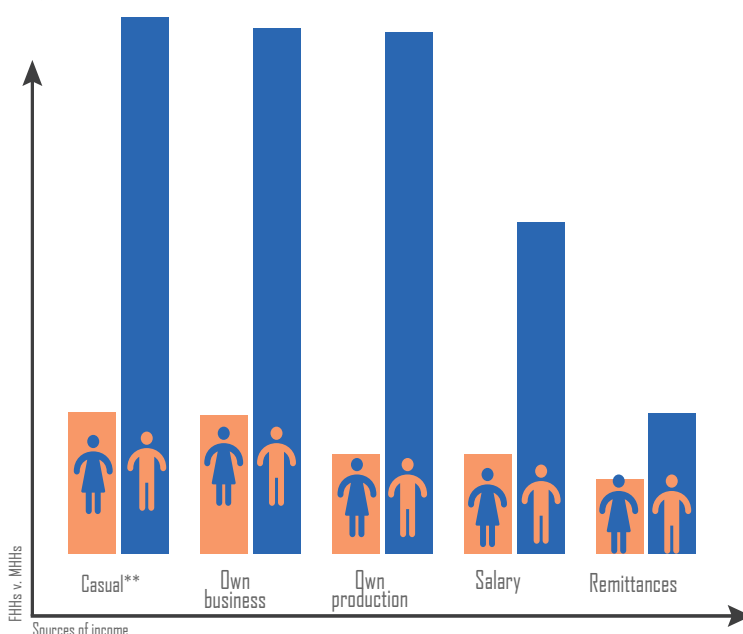
Female-headed household primarily rely on casual work, self-employment, and personal production for income. These informal and unstable sources of livelihood leave them highly vulnerable to economic shocks. While some female-headed households earn salaries, formal employment is far less common than informal work.

Female-headed households face significant challenges in accessing employment opportunities, securing sufficient food, and ensuring safety. These challenges

are compounded by various protection risks, including violence, feeling unsafe in their communities, and exposure to armed conflict.

Access to energy is another major concern, directly affecting their ability to sustain livelihoods and care for their families. Addressing these economic and protection challenges is essential to improving the resilience and security of female-headed households in crisis-affected areas.

Most common sources of income for heads of households by gender*



* The graph shows the top five most common sources of income for female-headed households vs. male-headed households, among other such as: receiving support from friends, pension, social benefits, selling assets, donations or absence of income. However, all of them not exceed 2%. The responders could choose several options simultaneously.

** Irregular employment, temporary, or without a formal contract, that often lacks the stability and benefits associated with full-time jobs.

The most common income sources vs. key challenges for women heads of households



Casual work
Personal production
Salaries



Limited employment support
Food insecurity
Safety concerns
Lack of access to energy

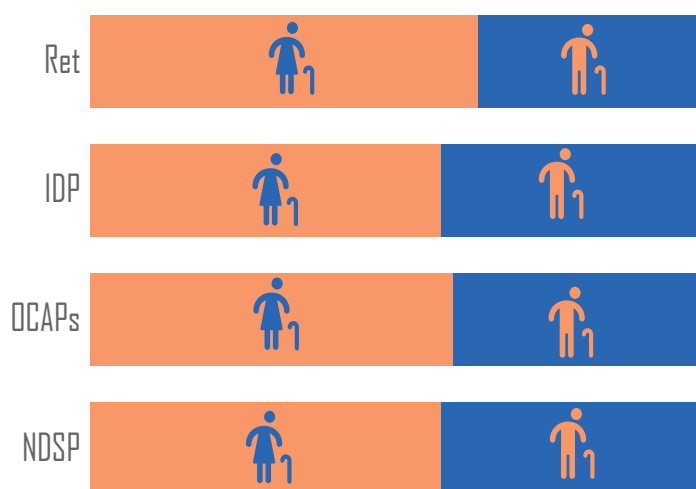
DISABILITY

Among all population groups, women and girls represent a disproportionate number of those with at least one disability..

Overall, women and girls make up 60% of all people with disabilities in Myanmar.

More than 60% of returnee women and girls have at least one disability—the highest proportion among female populations.

People with at least one disability



Around **6 million** women have at least **one disability**



Photo: UNFPA Myanmar

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

Women and girls, particularly those in conflict and displacement settings, face significant barriers to menstrual hygiene management. The high cost and limited availability of essential hygiene products disproportionately affect internally displaced women and girls and non-displaced stateless women and girls, worsening gender-specific vulnerabilities. Ensuring better access to affordable hygiene products is essential to supporting

the health and dignity of women and girls in these vulnerable groups.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Half of all female IDPs and NDSPs report that menstrual hygiene products are too expensive, while one in three OCAP females and two in five female returnees face the same issue.
- More than one in ten NDSP females struggle to access menstrual hygiene products due to markets being too far away.



The most common challenges in accessing menstrual hygiene products are high prices and long distances to markets



⇒ for **30,000** women and girls markets are too far
⇒ for almost **9 million** women and girls prices are too high



Photo: UNFPA Myanmar

SHELTER

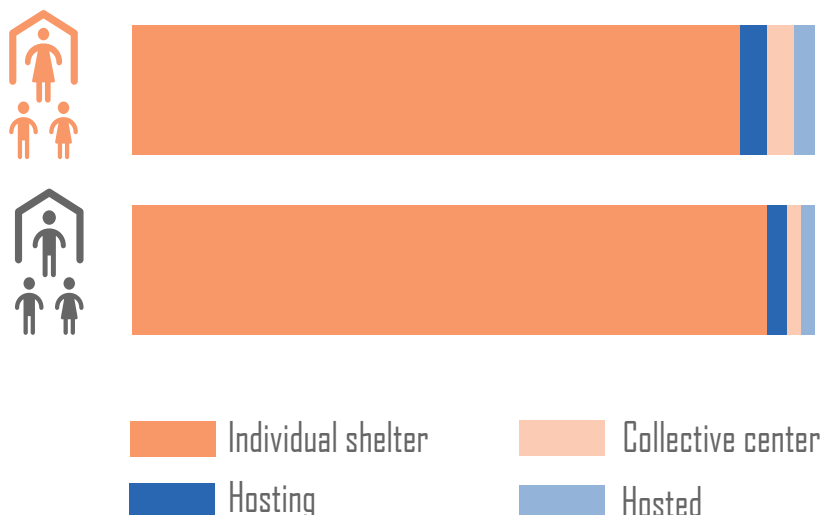
Female-headed households experience greater housing insecurity compared to male-headed households, with a higher proportion living in collective centers rather than individual shelters. This suggests limited access to private accommodation and highlights the need for targeted support to improve living conditions for women and girls, particularly among internally displaced persons.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Two in five female-headed IDP households live in collective centers compared to one in four male-headed households.
- Almost 90% of all female-headed households live in temporary shelters



Living Conditions of Female- vs. Male-Headed Households



Around **10 million** members of female-headed HHs live in the temporary shelters



Photo: UNHCR/Fabien Faivre

PROTECTION

Women and girls, particularly those in female-headed households in crisis-affected areas, face significant safety, security and discrimination challenges. Many feel unsafe in their communities, experience high rates of violence, and encounter barriers to essential services. These risks are exacerbated by ongoing conflict and displacement.

More than **500,000** internally displaced women and girls feel unsafe walking in their communities



Around **100,000** women and girls from NDSP felt unsafe at least once over three months

KEY CHALLENGES

Safety and security concerns

- Every second woman or girl from NDSP felt unsafe at least once walking in the community compared with one in five from the other population groups.
- One in four women and girls from NDSP have had to avoid markets, water points or other community spaces due to

security concerns.

- One in ten women or girls from NDSP had to repeatedly avoid community areas over the last three months because of security concerns.

Psychological distress

- Conflict-affected households report higher rates of psychological distress than those not affected by conflict.
- Nine out of ten female-headed households from NDSP reported that at least one household member experiences psychological distress, compared to three out of ten among OCAP female-headed households.

Movement restrictions



Approximately **3 million** women and girls faced discrimination, impacting their access to basic services due to reasons like nationality, ethnicity, or gender at least once or twice over the last three months

- Female-headed households face movement restrictions due to checkpoints, mine contamination, and armed conflict blockades.



Nearly **40,000** women and girls regularly experience persecution and discrimination, impacting their access to basic services due to reasons like nationality, ethnicity, or gender

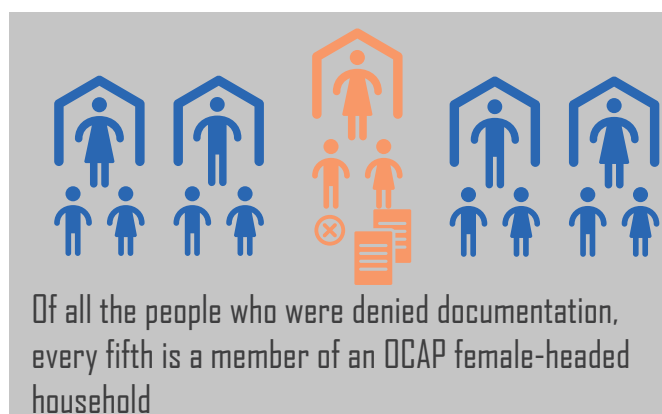


Every fifth woman or girl reported experiencing any sort of violence and harassment, including physical, verbal and sexual violence in their lifetime

- Female-headed IDP and returnee households face armed conflict-related movement restrictions twice as often as male-headed households in the same population groups.
- Two in five female-headed NDSP households experience movement restrictions due to checkpoints.
- Around 80% of OCAP female-headed households have been impacted by explosive ordnance in the past year.
- One in three female-headed households cite checkpoints and armed conflict blockades as key safety concerns.
- One in five female-headed households report safety risks due to mine contamination.

government offices to renew them.. Only the 20% of IDPs report not needing documentation.

- NDSP face barriers due to lack of money, denial of application, and uncertainty after the application.
- For OCAPs report no major difficulty in obtaining legal documents.
- Returnees primarily struggle with the lack of nearby offices to submit applications.



Challenges obtaining legal documents

The main difficulties in accessing legitimate documents vary by population group:

- IDPs struggle with lost or damaged documents and lack access to



Photo: UNFPA Myanmar

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This gender analysis highlights that female-headed households in Myanmar face heightened risks and vulnerabilities, particularly in conflict-affected and displacement settings. Their limited access to stable employment, essential services, and legal documentation leaves them economically insecure and more susceptible to violence and discrimination. Structural barriers, such as social norms and gender stereotypes, further restrict their ability to access education and economic opportunities.

To address these challenges and enhance the resilience of female-headed households, targeted interventions are needed to improve access to healthcare, food security, protection, and economic stability.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Improve access to essential services: Expand healthcare, food assistance, and protection measures, prioritizing displaced women.
2. Enhance economic stability: Provide vocational training, financial support, and livelihood programs for women and girls.
3. Strengthen legal support: Improve access to legal aid, including support obtaining legal documents.
4. Address gender-based violence (GBV): Develop community-based GBV prevention programs and strengthen survivor support.

5. Promote women's leadership: Increase women's participation in decision-making and crisis response planning.
6. Ensure targeted humanitarian action: Conduct regular gender assessments to ensure aid efforts target gender-specific needs.

Addressing these challenges is critical to strengthening the resilience and wellbeing of women and girls in Myanmar. By improving access to economic opportunities, legal assistance, safety, and healthcare, humanitarian efforts can ensure that women and girls are not left behind in crisis response and recovery efforts.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

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This publication was developed by the Myanmar Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group

GiHA WG aims to promote integration of gender considerations and gendered technical expertise in humanitarian action across the humanitarian response areas of operation and foster greater coordination and consideration of gender through humanitarian action mechanisms. It is composed of civil society organisations, women led and women's rights organizations, community-based women's organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, donor gender focal points (as observers) and cluster leads/focal points. The GiHA WG is co-led by UN Women and UNFPA.