

Burma – Complex Emergency

DECEMBER 21, 2023

SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- Since late October, clashes between EAOs, PDFs, and MAF forces have escalated across the country, displacing more than 660,000 individuals and increasing humanitarian needs.
- An estimated 200 relief organizations reached approximately 2.5 million people in Burma with humanitarian assistance between January 1 and September 30.
- The 2024 UN HNRP requests \$994 million in funding to reach approximately 5.3 million people in Burma with life-saving assistance.
- USG partners continue to support populations in need in Burma through the provision of multi-sector assistance.



¹ FY 2024 funding for the Burma Complex Emergency will be included in future products when committed/obligated. For information on the U.S. Government (USG)'s funding toward the response in FY 2023, refer to Burma and Bangladesh Regional Crisis Fact Sheet #6 released on September 30, 2023, available on the USAID website at <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work>.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Escalated Hostilities Displace More Than 660,000 People Across Burma Since Late October, Exacerbating Humanitarian Needs

Intensified hostilities in Burma between ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), People's Defense Forces, and the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF)—including airstrikes and artillery shelling—resulted in at least 378 civilian deaths, injury to more than 500 people, and the displacement of more than 660,000 individuals across northwestern and southeastern regions of the country between late October and mid-December, the UN reports. The recent displacement represents more than one-quarter of all internally displaced persons (IDPs)—approximately 2.6 million individuals—across Burma as of December 15, according to the UN. On October 27, the Three Brotherhood Alliance—comprising three EAOs—launched a series of attacks against the MAF in northern Shan State, prompting additional EAO attacks during November and December across the country, resulting in significant displacement in Burma's Chin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, and northern and southern Shan states, as well as eastern Bago, Mandalay, Sagaing, and Tanintharyi regions, according to relief actors. Widespread displacement and ongoing violence have intensified humanitarian needs among host communities, newly displaced people, and IDPs experiencing protracted displacement across the country. The most urgent humanitarian needs across violence-affected areas are emergency relief commodities, food, health, hygiene kits, protection, and shelter assistance. Sagaing hosts nearly 1.1 million IDPs—the largest number of displaced people in the country—as of mid-December, the UN reports. Clashes have also blocked key transportation routes, resulting in shortages of food and essential household items in violence-affected areas and leaving vulnerable communities and IDPs in urgent need of food, health, protection, and shelter assistance. Additionally, pervasive insecurity has forced some IDPs to relocate multiple times in search of safety, while IDPs in areas such as northern Shan are reluctant to depart displacement sites due to the risk of forced recruitment into armed groups.

In response to the recent, widespread displacement, UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths granted provisional approval on December 1 for a \$7 million rapid response allocation from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund—a pooled humanitarian fund established and managed by the UN to support sudden-onset and underfunded emergencies—to bolster humanitarian response efforts in Burma.

An Estimated 18.6 Million People in Burma Require Humanitarian Assistance in 2024

The 2024 UN Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) released in mid-December estimates that 18.6 million people in Burma—or nearly one-third of the country's population of 56.6 million people—will require humanitarian assistance in 2024. Approximately 2.6 million people were displaced as of December 15, compared to 1.5 million in December 2022, including the more than 660,000 people alone displaced due to escalating hostilities since October 26.

Systematic violence by the MAF against civilians has resulted in more than 4,000 deaths and tens of thousands of arbitrary arrests since February 2021, continuing to drive severe protection needs, the UN reports. Protection concerns from human rights violations, institutionalized discrimination, and violence are pervasive for the civilian population. The crisis in Burma has also disproportionately affected women, perpetuating gender disparities in employment and increasing vulnerability to trafficking and forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the Burma Protection Cluster—the coordinating body for humanitarian protection activities, comprising UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders—reports that insecurity,

increased checkpoints and roadblocks, infrastructure damage, and temporary travel restrictions by parties to the hostilities continue to limit populations' freedom of movement and access to services, as well as impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Notably, the cluster identified indiscriminate attacks against civilians and critical infrastructure, particularly hospitals, as the most prevalent protection violation during 2023, with the most-affected areas in northeastern, northwestern, and southeastern Burma.

Burma also remains highly vulnerable to natural hazards and climatic shocks, including flooding and tropical cyclones. In May 2023, Tropical Cyclone Mocha made landfall near the Burma—Bangladesh border and affected more than 3 million people in Burma. A lack of timely humanitarian access to those affected exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and increased dependency on assistance, which will continue to contribute to needs in 2024. Additionally, at least 28 million people reside in districts at high risk of flood exposure, according to the UN. Landmine and explosive remnants of war contamination across agricultural areas and civilian areas remains a significant concern for communities, with severe impacts on livelihood activities such as farming and animal husbandry. Since 2021, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported landmine contamination and related casualties in all states and regions of Burma except for the cities of Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon.

In response to these escalating needs countrywide, the 2024 HNRP requests \$994 million in funding to reach 5.3 million people prioritized for life-saving assistance, with a focus on support to displaced populations and hard-to-reach areas with severe needs. Under the plan, humanitarian organizations aim to reach 3 million people with protection assistance; 2.7 million people with health services; 2.3 million people with food assistance; 1.7 million people with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, and 1.3 million people with shelter assistance and relief commodities.

Humanitarian Assistance Reaches 2.5 Million People Between January and September

More than 200 relief organizations—including USG partners—reached an estimated 2.5 million people in Burma between January 1 and September 30, representing more than 50 percent of the 2023 UN target, the UN reports. Of those reached with assistance, nearly 1.7 million people received emergency food assistance, as well as agricultural and livelihood support through the Food Security Cluster, the coordinating body for humanitarian food activities, comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders. In addition, approximately 1.5 million people received protection services. Organizations in the WASH Cluster—the coordinating body for humanitarian WASH activities, comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders—provided hygiene promotion activities, safe drinking water, and sanitation services for 855,000 people between January and September. More than 697,000 individuals received health services during the reporting period. Significant challenges persist in Burma as access and funding constraints disrupt relief efforts, underscoring the volatile humanitarian operational environment in the face of widespread needs, according to the UN. The 2023 UN Humanitarian Response Plan identified 17.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance during the year, and of this total, targeted 5 million people, including those adversely affected by Tropical Cyclone Mocha, to receive multi-sector humanitarian assistance.

State/PRM Partners Respond to Rohingya Refugees in Indonesia: U.S.

Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM) partners the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released an emergency joint appeal in December in response to the surge of Rohingya refugees arriving in northwestern Indonesia. Between mid-November and mid-December, more than

1,500 Rohingya refugees arrived in Indonesia and urgently required health, protection, and WASH assistance, according to the UN. Approximately 1,000 Rohingya refugees remain in temporary shelters as of mid-December.

KEY FIGURES



\$48 Million

In dedicated USAID/BHA
FY 2023 support for
food assistance



\$6.5 Million

In dedicated USAID/BHA
FY 2023 support for
health care programming



11

USG partners
implementing standalone
protection interventions



9

USG partners supporting
WASH activities

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) provides funding to the UN World Food Program (WFP) to deliver emergency food assistance—including cash transfers for food; food vouchers; and in-kind food assistance through local, regional, and international procurement—to communities in Burma. USAID/BHA also supports complementary nutrition services, as well as coordination and capacity-building activities among other food security actors in the country to strengthen response efforts to food needs.

HEALTH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM support IOM and three implementing partners to provide life-saving health care for violence-affected people in Burma. USAID/BHA partners provide health assistance, including health awareness trainings, maternal health assistance, and medical consultations to IDPs and vulnerable communities across Chin, Kayah, Kayin, Magway, Rakhine, and Sagaing.

PROTECTION

USAID/BHA and State/PRM supports 11 humanitarian partners to address protection concerns among displaced and violence-affected populations throughout Burma. Ongoing USG-supported protection activities in Burma focus on increasing access to protection services such as GBV prevention and response and community-based mental health and psychosocial support. USG partners also work with the broader humanitarian community in Burma to advocate for access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and promote the delivery of protection services in areas with significant humanitarian access constraints.

WASH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM support WASH programming throughout the country to prevent waterborne disease outbreaks and promote access to safe drinking water. USAID/BHA supports nine partners to implement critical WASH activities, including conducting hygiene awareness sessions, rehabilitating water systems and latrines, and providing safe drinking water to violence-affected people.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- On February 1, 2021, Burma's military staged a coup d'état against the civilian government during which soldiers detained senior civilian government officials, including State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and announced a one-year state of emergency. In August 2021, military authorities extended the initial one-year state of emergency to August 2022, followed by a secondary extension to February 2023 which further delayed elections. Since February 2021, clashes between EAOs, MAF, and other local non-state armed groups across Burma have persisted, resulting in continuous displacement and humanitarian needs. Coup-related instability has also resulted in access challenges, limited cash availability, and restricted banking operations, challenging the provision of assistance by relief actors at a time of significant humanitarian need.
- The coup d'état exacerbated the already complex issues in Burma. The MAF launched large-scale and indiscriminate military operations—which the USG has since characterized as genocide—in Rakhine's Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung townships following Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacks on northern Rakhine checkpoints and police posts in October 2016 and August 2017. As of June 2023, more than 1.1 million refugees fled to neighboring countries, such as Bangladesh, India, and Thailand. As of January 2021, an estimated 600,000 ethnic Rohingya—a minority group not recognized by Burma's military forces and denied rights to citizenship, freedom of movement, and public services—remained in Rakhine. Many IDPs in Rakhine are Rohingya, including approximately 147,000 people affected by the 2012 clashes who remained displaced as of July 2023. In addition, approximately 78,000 civilians, mostly ethnic Rakhine, remained displaced in Rakhine and Chin states as of mid-March 2022 due to clashes between the Arakan Army and the MAF that erupted in 2018. Displaced populations, as well as other vulnerable individuals, continue to lack access to basic services and livelihood opportunities due to persistent violence and associated movement restrictions.
- On November 17, 2023, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Susan N. Stevenson re-issued a declaration of humanitarian need in FY 2024 for Burma due to the ongoing complex emergency. USG partners are continuing to support affected populations in Burma with emergency food, health, nutrition, protection, shelter, and WASH assistance, as well as other critical relief commodities.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed, often in the affected region; reduce the burden on scarce resources, such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space; can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

