Intercommunal violence, armed conflict, and recurring natural disasters drive food insecurity in vulnerable communities across Burma. In addition, inadequate dietary diversity, household-level food insecurity, and poor access to health care services contribute to a high prevalence of undernutrition.

**SITUATION**

- Vulnerable communities in Burma lack access to sufficient nutritious food and livelihood opportunities due to poverty, conflict, natural disasters, and movement restrictions. Nearly 30 percent of children younger than five years of age suffer from stunting, a common indicator of chronic malnutrition. In addition, recurring extreme weather events—including cyclones, earthquakes, and floods—often lead to population displacement, destruction of crops, loss of livelihood opportunities, and restricted access to markets, the UN World Food Program (WFP) reports.

- In August 2017, clashes between armed actors and the Government of Burma military, as well as subsequent military operations in Burma’s Rakhine State, caused mass population displacement, including many individuals fleeing to Bangladesh. Clashes between the Government of Burma and the Arakan Army in Chin and Rakhine states since December 2018 have resulted in additional population displacement and access restrictions that continue to impede the ability of humanitarian actors to respond to the needs of vulnerable people.

- In Burma’s Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine, and Shan states, nearly 824,000 conflict-affected people are experiencing acute food insecurity and more than 180,000 children and women require life-saving nutrition services, the UN reports. Displaced communities lack access to livelihood opportunities and essential services due to movement restrictions and rely heavily on external assistance to meet their food needs. Lack of access to crisis-affected areas continues to hinder the provision of essential humanitarian assistance.

**RESPONSE**

- In FY 2019, USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (FFP) contributed more than $14 million to WFP to provide locally and regionally procured food assistance and cash transfers for food to approximately 278,000 food-insecure people in Kachin, Shan, and Rakhine; high-energy biscuits for nearly 290,000 students in approximately 4,000 schools across 11 states and regions in the country; and nutritional assistance to nearly 20,000 children younger than five years of age and approximately 8,800 pregnant and lactating women experiencing or at risk of moderate acute malnutrition.

- FFP also supported the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to provide nutrition assistance—including 140 metric tons of ready-to-use therapeutic food—to approximately 9,000 children younger than five years of age suffering from acute malnutrition in Rakhine and more than 1,000 children in poor, urban areas of Yangon Region’s Yangon city. UNICEF targets vulnerable populations—including displaced and crisis-affected women and children—for community-based malnutrition screening and treatment.

*PHOTO: USAID*