



Myanmar

Protection Analysis Update

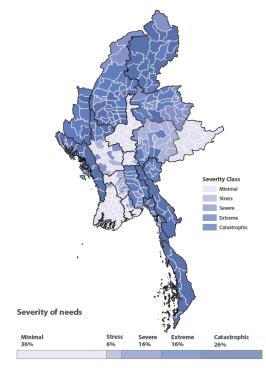
Update on Protections Trends, Risks and Protection Situation
JANUARY - DECEMBER 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conflict in Myanmar has displaced approximately 3.5 million people and left around 19.9 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance amidst unprecedented suffering and pervasive human rights abuses. Ongoing fighting and armed clashes are intensifying across the country. Since the 2021 coup, people have continued to face diverse, widespread, and acute protection risks, driven by escalating conflict, systematic human rights violations, and a total disregard of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). All of which are collectively are contributing to the deepening of the humanitarian crisis. Additionally, the effects of climate change and typhoon Yagi resulted in the deaths of approximately 433 people and impacted nearly 900,000 individuals with half of them living in IDP hosting locations.

People trapped in conflict zones are experiencing unprecedented levels of violence and deprivation, including a lack of access to food, clean water, healthcare, shelter, and the collapse of essential services. The situation is further exacerbated by bureaucratic obstacles, military blockades, infrastructure destruction, socio-economic collapse, and a highly restricted humanitarian environment. Children and women face severe threats including violence, displacement, and exploitation, while the widespread presence of landmines further exacerbates their vulnerability, causing injury, death, and hindering their access to essential services.



Following the increased hostilities, the Rohingya in Rakhine are facing renewed threats, including displacement due to attacks and arson of their villages, and forced recruitement, including recruitment of children. Some 247,783 stateless persons mostly Rohingya, have been forced to flee their homes including an estimated 97,600 newly displaced in 2024, many of whom have been forced to seek refuge in overcrowded, under-resourced camps with limited access to services. This exposes them to heightened risks of malnutrition, disease, and psychological trauma. The surge in violence has further led to a renewed wave of displacement of an estimated 18,000-20,000 fleeing across the border into Bangladesh.

The protection risks requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

- 1. Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, arbitrary or unlawful arrest/detention.
- 2. Discrimination, denial of humanitarian access, unlawful impediments or restriction of movement, siege and forced displacement.
- 3. Children's physical and psychological safety and well-being threatened by compounding risks
- 4. Gender based Violence (GBV) including child marriage
- 5. Serious maiming and killing due to explosive Hazards

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

Immediate action from the international community and parties to the conflict is vital to halt severe human rights violations, end attack on civilians, lift punitive restrictions, and lessen the devastating effects of the conflict. Urgent measures must be taken to address the human cost of the conflict and the worsening humanitarian situation, while preventing and reducing the adoption of harmful coping mechanisms in affected communities. The following measures are of the utmost importance:

- International actors, including ASEAN, are urged to leverage their diplomatic influence to facilitate dialogue, urge conflict parties to cease human rights violations and support international mechanisms for investigating serious crimes.
- Lift the restrictions which amount to collective punishment including freedom of movement and guarantee unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to reach affected communities, especially in conflict zones.
- To restore dignity and access to essential and social services for civilians including health, water, shelter, education and access to livelihoods and communications.



CONTEXT

PEOPLE IN NEED (PIN) PROTECTION

PEOPLE REACHED AS OF Q4

NUMBER OF IDPs

12.2 M

2.3 M

3.5 M

Myanmar has continued to spiral into political turmoil and a deepening humanitarian crisis, triggered by the 2021 military coup with various Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs) fighting in multiple fronts and now controlling nearly half of the country. After the coup, lawmakers from the former democratically elected government united to form the National Unity Government (NUG), fighting under the banner of People Defense Forces (PDFs). The PDFs are fighting alongside other various EAGs who sometimes operate autonomously although some coalitions between various groups have been forged to strengthen cohesion and consolidating territoorial gains.

As of October 2023, the conflict reached a pivotal moment with the launch of "Operation 1027" by the Three Brotherhood Alliance, comprising of three different EAGsⁱ. This coordinated offensive marked a significant escalation in fighting with the current military authorities, known as the State Administrative Council (SAC). The operation led to the capture of several key towns, notably in northern Shan State, challenging the SAC's control and signaling a shift in the conflict dynamics. The success of the Three Brotherhood Alliance triggered a series of other related rebel offensives across Myanmar, with emboldened EAs conducting incursions in regions such as Sagaing, Magway, Kachin, Chin, Rakhine, and Kayah. The unrest further expanded to several southern states and regions, such as Kayin, Mon, Bago, and Tanintharyi. These coordinated actions reflect a significant escalation in the conflict, with various ethnic armed groups and resistance forces expanding their efforts to challenge the military control across multiple regions. The ongoing offensive and counteroffensive actions, including the heavy reliance on airstrikes and artillery by the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF), have intensified the ongoing violence and instability, displacing some 3.5 million people and deepening humanitarian situation for some 19.9 million people.

INTENSIFICATION OF CONFLICT ACROSS MYANMAR

In the North-East Mynamar, the primary factors contributing to displacement are armed clashes, airstrikes and heavy artillery used against civilian populations by the MAF. Increasing use of landmines, drones, arbitrary arrests, forced recruitment, and widespread fear of harm to physical well-being continued to be reported. Fighting continues to intensify between MAF and different ethnic armed groups in Kachin and Shan North with over 278,600 IDPs as of the end of 2024 of which 187,000 are newly displaced since the escalation of conflict in Feb 2021.

In Kachin State, intensified offensive by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and its allies against MAF around areas of Momauk, Bhamo, Waingmaw, Mansi and Hpakant contined to trigger displaement. While in Shan North the resumption of the recond phase of the operation 1027 by the brotherhood alliance saw a resurgence of fighting in Nawnghkio, Lashio, Hsipaw, Kyaukme and Mongnit. The capture of Lashio city in August 2024, including the towns of Hsenwi, Namtu, and Kutkai in northern Shan, triggered the large-scale displacement of around 60,000 people and led to the withdrawal of humanitarian workers from the area. Likewise, the urban warfare which erupted in Bhamo town since December 2024 also resulted displacement of residents and protracted IDPs, and relocation of humanitarian agencies.

In the South-East, including South Shan, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Bago and Tanintharyi, conflict intensified in various fronts with significant military engagements and territorial shifts. The number of IDPs sharply increased from 690,000 last year to 1,023,700 by the end of December 2024. Anti Junta forces continue to launch coordinated attacks with the MAF responding with military reinforcements, airstrikes, artillery shelling and arson on villages displacing thousands of civilians. Intense conflict between the military and resistance forced led to intense destruction of towns and villages in Kayah after resistance forces launched operations aiming to capture the state capital, Loikaw.



The North-West region has seen the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar, totaling 1,690,700. Sagaing alone accounts for approximately 1,258,300 IDPs, making up 36% of the country's total displaced population. Fighting continues to take place between MAF PDFs and various EAGs who have seized various towns including Kawlin and Tamu. The military has responded with airstrikes, armed clashes, drone attacks, indiscriminate shelling, arson of homes, arrests and detention, and landmine incidents which have become the leading cause of civilian casualties, triggering multiple displacement across the North-West. To demonstrate the impact of such attacks, over 30 civilians were killed in Let Htoke Taw village, Myinmu township, Sagaing Region, during a military raid. Several other horrific incidents have also been reported across the region involving airstrikes and raid on villages which led to killing of civilians.

In Rakhine Arakan Army, now controls some 14 out of 17 townships across Rakhine marking a major shift in the region's power dynamics. The Conflict has displaced some 528,800 people including some 247,783 Rohingya some of whom have been already disaplced since 2022. Fighting has shifted to southern Rakhine with ongoing fighting reported now reported to have expanded through the neighbouring Ayeyawardy region. On 8 December, AA seized Maungdaw's last MAF outpost after months of siege thereby consolidating AA's control over all of northern Rakhine and the border with Bangladesh. There have been reports of serious violations and atrocities committed particularly in Rakhine more so against the Rohingya who have been targeted by both the MAF and affiliated armed groups and AA. Due to escalating conflict, many humanitarian partners were forced to withdraw from Maungdaw and northern Rakhine by mid-2024. This led to severe disruptions in essential and collapse of services, particularly health and education system.

Airstrikes and artillery shelling by MAF have continued to be reported in several townships under AA, causing civilian casualties, displacement, and damage to civilian property. Additionally, the planting of landmines and blocking of roads connecting Gwa in Rakhine State to Yegyi Township in the Ayeyarwady Region, further exacerbating mobility challenges and humanitarian access.

Widespread movement restrictions and supply route blockages across Rakhine State have continued to obstruct both local and international humanitarian efforts. These obstacles include blocked travel and transportation routes, denial to issue travel authorizations, limited phone/internet communication, resulting in severe shortages of essential materials, commodities, including food and medical supplies in local markets. Access to essential services remains constrained, further aggravated by monsoon rains and flooding. These restrictive measures are intensifying vulnerabilities, preventing people from seeking safety and accessing critical humanitarian assistance, including essential services like healthcare.

WORSENING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, IMPUNITY AND HARDSHIPS

The protection needs severity mapping conducted by the protection cluster which looked a combination of various data sets (MSNA, displacement data, protection assistance, rainfall, and ACLED) across **330 townships** nationwide, **83** were experiencing sectoral collapse, while **54 faced sectoral deprivations**. An additional **54 townships** were encountering elevated sectoral deprivations, **21** were in a state of borderline or stressed deprivations, and only 118 townships, or 35.7%, reported no or minor deprivations. Vulnerable groups, include ethnic minorities, women, children, elderly persons and persons with disabilities often face significant barriers to access essential services.

Displacement has become one of the most significant consequences of the conflict on civilians, especially as hundreds of thousands of people have now been displaced multiple times. The pattern of displacement has shifted dramatically. In the past, people fleeing violence and conflict would typically move from rural villages to urban centers, hoping to find safety in cities. This trend has changed as urban areas are increasingly targeted by airstrikes, forced recruitment, raids, roadblocks and arbitrary arrests, forcing many civilians to abandon their homes and seek refuge in more remote areas with less access to services. In response to their loss of territorial control, the military has increasingly resorted to brutal tactics, including aerial bombings and indiscriminate shelling of entire townships. According to data available on ACLED, as many as 38,914 people were killed between November 2023 and November 2024, the majority of whom are civilians. Since the military coup in 2021, the death toll has reached approximately 73,839 people. Alarmingly, the data shows a rising trend in violence highlighting an increasingly dire and troubling situation.

The protection situation has continued to deteriorate sharply due to severe restrictions on movement, limited access to conflict-affected areas, and a persistent blockade hindering the transportation of essential goods and movement of people. This includes limitations on access to ports, roads, and waterways. This has resulted in economic collapse, a dramatic decline in living conditions within conflict-affected areas. Impacted communities now struggle even more to access basic necessities like medicine and food,



maintain farming activities and pursue livelihood opportunities. In order to fulfill their needs, negative coping strategies are increasing among the conflict affected population in the form of additional protection risks, including the use of credit/borrowing cash, generalised criminality, trafficking, substance use, child labor, child marriage and irregular movement.

The prospects for the return for thousands of IDPs in the medium- and long term remains limited and despite these ongoing risks and uncertainty from the conflict, the SAC have been actively enforcing the 2019 policy of camp closures. Many of these closures, particularly in the Northeast and Northwest, are announced unilaterally and implemented without sufficient notice or consultation with the affected communities, disregarding concerns related to safety, access to livelihoods, and other essential services. The forced closure of camps results in the loss of assistance, while some of the new areas are unsuitable for maintaining a dignified life due to threats of flooding and landmine risks, along with a lack of essential facilities such as shelter, livelihoods, water, sanitation, health, and education.

Myanmar is also highly susceptible to climate shocks and natural disasters which often result in flooding and food insecurity. Seasonal monsoons have affected both displaced and non-displaced communities across various parts of the country, further exacerbating access constraints and increasing the vulnerability of conflict-affected populations. Up to 900,000 people were displaced by floods caused by typhoon Yagi, with efforts to assist those impacted in Southeast and Southwestern Myanmar, as well as parts of Northeast Myanmar, affecting approximately 300,000 people living in townships hosting IDPs.

SITUATION OF THE ROHINGYA IN RAKHINE.

The resumption and intensification of hostilities between AA and MAF in November 2023, along with AA eventual seizure of predominantly Rohingya towns such as Maungdaw, Rathedaung, and Buthidaung, has introduced new threats and challenges for the Rohingya, who are already enduring severe violence, displacement, and years of systemic discrimination. The confrontations have sparked renewed attacks and repression of the Rohingya, with widespread reports of arson, home destruction, extrajudicial killings, looting, extortion, forced recruitment, asset confiscation, and forced labor, reportedly carried out by both parties to the conflict. Some 247,783 statesless persons mostly Rohingya have been forced to flee their homes including 97,600 newly displaced in 2024. The surge in violence has further led to a renewed wave of displacement across the border into Bangladesh with an estimated 18,000-20,000 crossing the border. Due to their lack of formal legal status, they remain subject to unclear or inconsistent birth registration processes and undue restrictions and severe lack of services and vulnerability to human rights violations.

The Rohingya continue to endure significant hardships as ethnic tensions escalate, fueled by the alliance between Rohingya armed groups such as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) and the MAF. In response, the Arakan Army (AA) has employed brutal tactics, including burning villages, imposing strict curfews and movement restrictions, and carrying out arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and widespread arson. Numerous Rohingya villages in Buthidaung and Maungdaw were set ablaze as a result of these actions resulting in mass displacement of the populations in these areas. This situation complicates any efforts to address the plight of the Rohingya who must now navigate the complex and often hostile dynamics that define the region. Several incidents occurred in which boats carrying people fleeing, including women and children, capsized in the Naf River between Myanmar and Bangladesh, leading to casualties. On 5 August 2024, a series of drone strikes targeted civilians in Maungdaw who were fleeing active combat in Maungdaw Town and waiting to cross the river into Bangladesh resulting in approximately 180 fatalities, and more than 200 injured. Rohingya communities in ULA/AA-controlled areas are increasingly resorting to irregular movement due to difficult living conditions, lack fo documentation to move elsewhere in Myanmar and a lack of alternative options to seek safety and security. From January to December 2024, UNHCR monitored 3,037 Rohingya departures from Myanmar, including 2,514 by boat, 433 by land, and 90 by mixed means, while 1,000 were arrested within the country.

In Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine, MAF has increased its presence in Rohingya IDP camps and villages, strictly enforcing the curfews and engaging in extortion and forced labour. Rohingya youths including children have also been coerced into joining military services, with threats to confiscate ration cards and lock their shelters. This has further complicated the situation, as the military seeks to exploit ethnic tensions to justify its actions against both the AA and the Rohingya. Since the start of the conflict, women and girls have been subjected to a heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV), including conflict related sexual violence (CRSV). Reports have emerged of rape of women and girls during detention, highlighting the urgent need for medical and psychosocial support for survivors.



PROTECTION RISKS

RISK 1 Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings

Indiscriminate attacks on civilians through airstrikes, artillery, drones and raiding and burning of villages, continue to be widespread and defining features of the conflict in Myanmar. The recent report by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar documented a range of attacks on civilians and particuraly highlighted the following disturbing patterns of violence including: (a) indiscriminate or intentional artillery and aerial attacks against civilians or civilian objects; (b) the killing of civilians during military operations, including extrajudicial executions that violate international humanitarian law; and (c) the deliberate burning of civilian dwellings and other buildings. The report sighted the ongoing and frequent use of air-to-surface bombs, which have inflicted substantial civilian casualties in areas where no apparent military targets were present, further exacerbating the harm to noncombatants and contributing to the widespread destruction in conflict zonesⁱⁱⁱ. All these tactics are designed to terrorize communities and forcibly displace populations.

Protection partners, using the Protection Incident Monitoring System (PIMS), documented approximately 7,533 human rights violations impacting 240,211 individuals throughout Myanmar between January and December 2024. The majority of these violations were carried out by the Myanmar military, responsible for about 68% of the incidents. Non-state armed groups accounted for roughly 16% of the incidents, unknown armed actors for 9%, and community members for the remaining 7%. About 65% of victims of these attacks were local residents, 19% affected internally displaced persons (IDPs), 9% stateless population, 2% impacted IDP returnees, and 5% involved other groups. In terms of locations, 47% of the incidents occurred in villages or rural areas, 23% took place in homes, 14% happened in towns or urban areas, 10% were perpetrated on roads, and 6% occurred in IDP camps. The victims of these incidents included 42% females and 58% males of which 37% were children^{iv}.

Airstrikes are predominantly deployed in conflict zones including frontline towns and villages, as well as in areas under the control of EAGs and anti-junta resistance forces, with the most significant impact felt in Kachin, Kayah, Sagaing, Rakhine, and Kayin States, where various EAGs and local defense forces are active. These Airstrikes are frequently employed in an indiscriminate manner, typically following attacks by rebel forces or in regions controlled by armed groups and often involve the use of heavy artillery, including 500-pound bombs, which cause widespread destruction. The impact is devastating, particularly on civilian infrastructure such as schools, monasteries, hospitals, and other essential facilities.

Civilian areas, including monastries, churches, schools and hospitals as well as civilian infrastructure like roads and markets are frequently attacked. Civilians trying to flee conflict zones are often blocked and used as human shields, putting them at greater risk of shelling, airstrikes, and crossfire. These violations of international humanitarian law cause widespread displacement, loss of life, and the destruction of essential services, worsening the suffering of affected populations.

According to the Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations verified 154 attacks on schools (117) and hospitals (37) in 2023, which showed an increase by 50% from the caseload in 2022. Additionally, the United Nations verified the military use of schools (82) and hospitals (10) in 2023. In 2024, incidents of attacks on and military use of schools and hospitals are reported to take place in Myanmar. This, compounded by floods, has contributed to increased and widespread family separation. Many children are separated and many left unaccompanied. The MSNA 2024 revealed that at least 1% of households have at least one child under 18 no longer living in the household, with a higher percentage amongst IDPs and Returnees at 5%. The case management trends analysis indicates that children without primary caregivers remains one of the major concerns. The impact on children is dire with many children ending up in informal institutional care arrangements rather than family based care. In addition to causing emotional distress, separation may create significant barriers to accessing humanitarian services.

The use of brutal tactics, including arbitrary detention, torture, extortion, and the destruction of villages through burning and looting, especially in areas controlled by opposition groups is commonly being used. At least some 26,993 individuals have been detained by the military and its affiliated armed elements ncluding 5,556 women and 547 children, taken into custody since February 2021. Moreover, 1,853 individuals have been confirmed dead while in military custody, and more than 759 have been killed extrajudicially. In Sittwe and several towns across Southeast, Northeast, and Northwest Myanmar, MAF regularly conducts house searches, night raids, and operations in various towns, villages, and IDP camps, resulting in arbitrary arrests, detentions, and rampant torture of civilians. Checkpoints and night raids have become tools of extortion, harassment and unlawful arrests of civilians. Humanitarian workers, including UN staff, have also become targets of these raids, forcing many humanitarian staff in



Sittwe to relocate to offices, creating overcrowded living conditions and hindering their ability to perform their duties in an increasingly unstable environment.

Throughout 2024, reports have emerged of villages being completely burned and destroyed in frontline or opposition-controlled areas, particularly in Chin State, Kayah, and Rakhine State. Since February, 2021, at least 183 medical facilities have been damaged or destroyed, 73 occupied by military forces, and 168 health professionals killed. Additionally, 239 incidents have affected educational facilities, with at least 73 educators killed^{vii}.

These attacks have led to widespread displacement and significant civilian casualties, often carried out by the MAF as retaliatory measures and collective punishment against communities believed to support or be affiliated with armed groups. During these raids, reports have documented violent tactics such as rounding up villagers, accusing them of supporting resistance fighters, summary executions, torture, and sexual violence, including rape. The scale and brutality of these operations have caused deep trauma in affected communities, increasing fear and mistrust among civilians.

In Rakhine, the intensifying conflict between the AA and the MAF has led to widespread violence and destruction of Rohingya villages particularly in Buthidaung and Maungdaw. On August 5, 2024, drone strikes and shelling targeted civilians fleeing combat in Maungdaw, resulting in around 180 fatalities and over 200 injuries. As living conditions worsen, Rohingya communities in AA-controlled areas are increasingly resorting to irregular movement with mover 12,000 estimate to have crossed to Bangladesh, while overcrowded IDP camps lack basic services. The AA has also restricted movement, making it difficult for displaced individuals to find shelter. In Sittwe, MAF presence in Rohingya camps has escalated, with harsh curfews, extortion, forced labor, and threats of landmines and recruitment. The military's actions as well as the involvement of armed Rohingya groups such as ARSA and RSO are exacerbating ethnic tensions, while civilians, especially women and children, face forced recruitment and gender-based violence, including reports of rape by the MAF. The Myanmar military has abducted and forcibly recruited more than 1,000 Rohingya Muslim men and boys from across Rakhine State.

The situation remains dire, with urgent needs for protection, medical, and psychosocial support.

RISK 2 Siege and unlawful impediments to movements

Conflict zones in Myanmar have been subjected to **systematic blockades** through road and sea closures, severe movement restrictions and bureaucratic hurdles strictly enforced by the de facto authorities. Administrative barriers, including the selective application of travel authorizations, effectively prevent humanitarian assistance from reaching those in need¹generating delays to the point that it becomes insufficient, arriving too late to address the urgent needs of affected communities. These measures effectively imposed collective punishment on towns and villages in conflict-affected regions, obstructing humanitarian access and crippling the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance to need. The blockade further poses severe risks to civilians exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and deepening the vulnerability of affected populations by limiting access to essential resources, exposes civilians to violence, and disrupts communities and livelihoods, all of which hinder efforts to achieve peace and recovery.

The work of humanitarian organizations has been severely hindered by the NGO Registration Law, which mandates that organizations register with various SAC ministries and disclose their sources of funding. This law, coupled with an increasing number of reporting requirements, has created a highly restrictive operating environment for humanitarian actors. In response, many local NGOs have been forced to operate discreetly, as they can no longer function openly without risking SAC scrutiny or retaliation. This has significantly undermined the capacity for effective coordination and the ability to reach affected populations in a timely and transparent manner, as many organizations are now limited to working in the shadows, which complicates both aid delivery and protection efforts.

The MAF have imposed nationwide movement restrictions, blocking essential goods like food and medicine. This has led to cash shortages, financial institution closures, and high inflation, forcing negative coping mechanisms such as increased borrowing, crime, trafficking, child labor, and distress migration. Consequently, populations face heightened risks of malnutrition, disease, and lack of medical care. Additionally, the MAF's placement of landmines around towns and roads to hinder opposition forces has caused casualties and economic hardships. For example, landmines near Sittwe's coastline have prevented fishing, leading to widespread

¹ Among the items restricted from transportation are sanitary pads, as they are considered "non-medical items." Limited access to sanitary pads poses risks to women and girls of reproductive age in terms of their dignity, health, and mobility.



hunger. A recent UNDP report highlighted that restrictions on goods entering Rakhine, combined with income loss, hyperinflation, reduced food production, and lack of essential services, have pushed an already vulnerable population to the brink of collapse.

Individuals attempting to flee face numerous risks, including transportation accidents, various forms of abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and detention by authorities such as the Military Affiliated Border Guard Police. Unaccompanied youth, both girls and boys, are particularly vulnerable to these risks. These challenges are exacerbated when returning to areas plagued by ongoing conflict and displacement. Invariably, this correlates to more cases of trafficking being anecdotally reported. Furthermore, the enforcement of the Military Service Law (conscription law) has led to an increase of irregular movement by youth to escape conscription. In remote communities, civil documentation is problematic, therefore children do not have any proof of age and easily treated as over 18 and recruited. Data shows that 60-75% of Rohingya migrants are girls/women. There have also been reports of children detained trying to flee across borders and returning from abroad without proper documentation, this detention is often without trial. The abovementioned conscription law has contributed to other child protection risks in Rakhine, the most notable being unsafe migration. Irregular migration has increased, noting that three boats were recently identified, carrying 400 individuals, of which more than half were children. Furthermore, reports confirm that persons identified as migrating, both internally within Myanmar and cross-border, are being arrested and detained. Where adults are in hiding, MAF are detaining children. This concern is enhanced by the reality that physical abuse is common in detention.

Communication blackouts and internet shutdowns in conflict areas, to control information and suppress dissident, have significantly disrupted the Protection Cluster and humanitarian organizations ability to coordinate, communicate effectively and share critical information.

The resulting **restriction of movement** is gravely severe on civilians, particularly those living in conflict zones or under military control. Curfews, checkpoints, travel bans and household composition verification or household inspections to verify residency status are routinely enforced by administrative officials, often accompanied by the military. These checks are largely used to monitor people's movements and are often accompanied by coercion, threats, extortion, and even violence, generating widespread fear—particularly in ethnic minority areas such as Rakhine, Kachin, Shan, and Karen States.

In Chin and Rakhine State, Sagaing, Kachin, Shan, Eastern Bago, Kayin Kayah and Tanintharyi, civilians are prevented from fleeing areas of active conflict. Displaced persons are trapped in hazardous conditions and cannot access safer areas. There are reports of civilians being shot and killed while fleeing. Individuals passing through checkpoints often face intimidation, harassment, extortion, and denial of passage, including for those seeking lifesaving health services. Community members are taking routes sometimes spanning days. Civilians' access to essential services such as medical care, food, humanitarian aid, and markets is severely hindered. Communities are unable to meet their basic needs, increasing vulnerability to malnutrition, disease, and lack of medical treatment.

For the Rohingya, systemic discrimination and lack of citizenship hinder their regular movement and ability to move to safe areas, access to livelihoods and basic services. It additionally leaves them isolated from critical support networks, being trapped in camps and conflict areas with no possibility to build a stable future. Rohingya must obtain a temporary travel document (Form 4) to travel beyond their township, valid for 15 days within their state and 45 days outside. Only holders of a National Verification Card (NVC) or Identity Card for National Verification (ICNV) are eligible to apply. Authorities rarely renew these forms and often use them for bribery and extortion. Consequently, many Rohingya attempt perilous sea journeys to neighboring countries, driven by limited humanitarian aid, ongoing conflict, cyclones, and worsening conditions of confinement and segregation.

RISK 3

Children's psychological and physical well-being threatened by compounding risks

The impact of the conflict and floods in Myanmar has a disproportionate impact on children and caregivers. Protection risks directly affecting them include the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups, attacks on education that disrupt children's access to learning, and widespread psychosocial trauma caused by conflict, displacement, and rights violations. Boys and girls under 18 are facing risks of killing and maiming, extortion and forced rectuitement. According to PIMS January to December 2024, children represent 24% of reported incidents, with the top risks affecting children including: Forced labour or slavery, Indiscriminate attacks on civilians; destruction/damage of property; killing; extortion; maiming or physical injury and killing. Recognizing the flow on impacts of these dire incidents is extremely concerning for the future generation of Myanmar.



The nature and scope of protection risks affecting children and caregivers is extensive. In addition to the critical protection risks outlined across all this analysis, children's phsycological and physical wellbeing is directly threatened by the enormous amount of grave violations reported, including recruitment, increasing violence and maltreatment and child labour, including the worst forms of child labour to negatively cope with the harshening conditions.

The Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict reported that the United Nations verified 2,799 grave violations against 2,093 children(1,694 boys, 385 girls, 14 sex unknown) in 2023; recruitment and use of 1,171 children, killing and maiming of 861 children, rape of 3 children, 154 attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction of 192 children, 418 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access.

In 2024, the number of grave violations against children has continued to be high, especially in the areas where there was escalation and expansion of fighting such as Shan, Kayin, Bago, Chin, Rakhine, Sagaing, Kayah, Magway and Mandalay states and regions. The killing and maiming of children increased by almost 50 % compared to 2023 across the country. The killing and maiming of children shared more than half of all reported grave violations, followed by the recruitment and use of children. A high number of other grave violations -denial of humanitarian access, attack against schools and hospitals, abduction of children and sexual violence against children - were also reported to affect children in armed conflict.

One of the most concerning trends affecting children in Myanmar, is the high number of cases where children are recruited by armed groups and armed forces. Whilst 2024 data is yet to be released, at the end of 2023, recruitment and use of children increased significantly by 398% compared to 2022. Over 90% were committed by MAF including related forces and affiliated militias^x. Risks of children being recruited and used in both combat/non-combat purposes are heightened, especially after the 1027 Operation. In 2024, MRM continues to receive reports of recruitment and use of children. Furthermore, with the enforcement of the Military Service Law (conscription law), trends have shown an increase in children joining armed groups where familiar affiliations lie to avoid conscription at the age of 18^{xi} . Due to underreporting, the number of incidents is severely underestimating the extent of the problem. According to partner reports, recruitment of children is a particular concern in Rakhine where the majority of Rohingya children are lacking in civil documentation to confirm their age, therefore making it difficult to both identify child recruitment and for boys and girls under 18 to be exempt due to their age. Recent reports demonstrate that recruitment of children in scaling up in Rakhine state in recent month. The MAF has announced that under the conscription law, they are recruiting 4,000 people from Rakhine for military training. This has already started in some of the villages at the time of writing this report. This announcement is affecting children directly. Whilst we do not have the age breakdown for all individuals, out of the first 476 recruited, at least 29 of these are children. Many adults are in hiding to avoid conscription, where this is the case, reports demonstrate that MAF is taking children in lieu of the adults. The situation is compounded as most Rohingya do not have documentation, therefore unable to prove age.

Households and families capacities are at their lowest, further exacerbating the worst consequences of threats they face. Many families are living in overcrowded living conditions, have lost homes, livelihoods and exist in a state of fear and uncertainty which leads to a range of negative coping mechanisms. One of these is an increase in violence in the home. Case Management trends analysis for 2024 indicates a high rate of physical abuse/violence in Myanmar^{xii}. Moreover, maiming and physical injury was reported as the highest concern facing children according to PIMs^{xiii}. Neglect is also prevalent in Myanmar, especially for younger children^{xiv}

Available data reveals extremely concerning rates of child labor, including the worst forms of child labor in Myanmar. The MSNA 2024 showed that 50 % of IDPs, 72% of NDSP, 42 % of Returnees and 32 % of other crisis affected persons recognized that child labor was prominent in their community^{xv}, including the worst forms of child labor (WFCL)^{xvi}. As more and more people in Myanmar from all population groups live below the poverty line, and food security and livelihoods are impacted by the ongoing humanitarian situation, negative coping strategies are increasingly employed, including children contributing to the household income. In 2024, a study showed a higher share of households with borderline or poor food consumption reported that they relied on children under 15 working to contribute to household income as a livelihood coping strategy in the past 30 days compared to households with an acceptable food consumption reported.



RISK 4 Gender Based Violence (including Child Marriage)

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Myanmar is exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, climate shocks, displacement, and socio-economic issues. Conflicts involving killings, forced displacement, and physical injuries, heightens risks of all types of GBV, including conflict related sexual violence.

The 2024 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) findings show that nearly 50% of women and girls felt unsafe walking in their community. About 35% of respondents reported child marriage against girls and boys as a concern in their community. About 37% of the respondents identified violence and harassment including physical, verbal and sexual violence as one of the major safety and security concerns. Subnational level consultations, conducted in Rakhine, Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast, indicated that the most common type of GBV in their community is physical violence and is mainly perpetrated in the context of Intimate Partner relationships. Consultation participants also identified sexual violence (rape), early marriage, trafficking, conflict-related sexual violence, and psychological abuse as common GBV concerns affecting women and girls in Myanmar. The main contributing factors identified were the financial situation of families that is causing stress and tension in the household, drug and substance abuse, continued conflict-related displacement, and overcrowded and unsafe shelters. Various reports and assessments indicate an increase in substance abuse, with drugs being readily available and cheap, and negative coping mechanisms such as gambling and transactional sex. Data on IPV and domestic violence against women is scarce due to survivors fearing social isolation, retaliation, judgment by others and further maltreatment from the abuser. Post-takeover conflict dynamics have further complicated efforts to document GBV, including conflict-related sexual violence, inhibiting prospects for justice and accountability.

The existing gender norms and inequalities, which are deeply rooted in Myanmar society, combined with the current security and economic situation limiting people's movement and driving high unemployment and job losses, increased substance abuse, poverty and food insecurity, creating conditions that aggravate tensions at home and are likely to result in an increase in GBV, and in particular intimate partner violence (IPV).

This situation is further exacerbated in emergencies when GBV is known to increase for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the breakdown of social structures/protective mechanisms, the weakening of norms regulating social behavior and traditional social systems, separation from family members, lack of opportunity for women's and children's voices/opinions to be heard by decision makers and failure of decision makers to consider the safety and security concerns of women and children in emergencies.

In areas with large-scale displacement, the need for shelter and relief items is reportedly high, while access is very limited to provide comprehensive site services. More than half of IDPs note they are living in unsafe shelter types. Across IDP settings, there is a heightened risk of early marriage, GBV, exploitation, and abuse. The increase in displacement nationwide and repeated displacement in conflict areas, along with the general deterioration in living standards, is creating a situation where women and girls face heightened risks of GBV. Many safety audits highlight poor living conditions where women and girls do not have private spaces, lighting is poor, and sanitation facilities are not separated for women and girls in displacement sites. This has resulted in distress and insecurity for women and girls, further aggravated for those with disabilities.

Adolescent girls are uniquely at risk of GBV because of an intersection of factors related to their age and gender. As noted above, (sexual) violence, harassment and early marriage are the key safety concerns for girls in Myanmar according to the MSNA 2024. The FGD participants in all states and regions indicated that early marriage is on the rise in their community due to the economic situation. For Rohingya communities in Rakhine, it is common practice to request a dowry when a girl gets married. However, most families are not able to afford this and for this reason, girls, sometimes as young as 13, are sent to Malaysia to get married there since providing a dowry is not practiced by Rohingya communities in that country.

Service provision and support for GBV survivors such as availability of multi-sectoral GBV response services, case management and safe houses is still not sufficient. The provision of GBV response services under the low-profile approach is also making it difficult for survivors to access services timely. Women lack access to legal recourse when suffering GBV due to the failing justice system. Health-care services, including clinical management of rape and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), at the community-level remain a dire need in the crisis-affected areas as doctors and medical personell have have evacuated and abandoned these areas.



RISK 5 Serious maiming and killing due to explosive Hazards

The proliferation of landmines and explosive ordnance in Myanmar has reached a critical level, with incidents reported across all states and regions by mid-2024. Landmine casualties and contamination have been documented for the first time in all 14 Myanmar states and regions, affecting about 60 percent of the country's townships^{xviii}.

The incident numbers continue to rise, further confirming the pressing situation faced by affected communites. In the first nine months of 2024 alone, a staggering 889 casualties were reported nationwide - already 85% of the total casualties recorded in 2023, which stood at 1,052. Particularly troubling is that children constitute 28% of all casualties, highlighting the disproportionate impact on Myanmar's most vulnerable populations.

With the Landmine Monitor Report for 2024 now available, the global context reinforces the gravity of Myanmar's situation. In 2023, Myanmar reported the highest number of landmine and explosive ordnance casualties worldwide, surpassing Syria (933), Afghanistan (651), and Ukraine (580). This devastating statistic underscores Myanmar's position as the most severely affected country globally and calls for an urgent and robust response.

In multiple key and contested towns, the MAF have extensively deployed landmines around key areas, including towns, roads, access routes, and even along the beaches.. While the primary intention behind this widespread mine-laying is to impede the perceived advance of the Arakan Army (AA), the impact on the civilian population has been catastrophic. The presence of landmines creates a persistent and deadly hazard that has forced local communities to live under constant fear and uncertainty. It severely restricts their ability to move freely, access essential resources, and engage in vital activities like farming, thereby depriving them of their primary means of livelihood. Consequently, civilians are unable to engage in for agricultural activities and fishing which has exacerbated the already dire ecomomic conditions. This not only prevents communities from rebuilding their lives but also deepens the cycle of hardship, isolation, and vulnerability that many families are struggling to survive.

The prevention of mine-clearance activities as part of Humanitarian Mine Action is having a significant and detrimental impact on civilians, particularly those living in conflict-affected areas and exacerbates the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. The risk is especially high in rural areas where people depend on the land for their livelihood. Further contamination by mines makes it unsafe for displaced populations to return to their homes leading to prolonged displacement due to the risk of encountering mines. As a result, displaced people are forced to live in camps or other temporary shelters, which can have limited access to resources and basic services



RESPONSE

PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION

In 2024, protection partners successfully reached 2.3 million individuals out of 3 million people in need of assistance. Some 113 reporting partners worked together despite funding constraints, with a total of \$ 62 million received—only 39% of the \$161 million required. More than 800k individuals, including more than 300k adults and 400k children, including 1,034 people with disabilities received child protection support in line with CP AoR strategy and socioecological model. A number of working groups are established on: gender sensitivity, disability inclusiveness, enhanced community level child protection activities, case management, GBV and CP collaboration, and a designated working group dedicated to enhance localization. More than 200k individuals received different GBV interventions, including response, prevention, community engagement and capacity building. A multi-sectoral, survivor-centered approach combining response, prevention, and risk mitigation across key sectors, with dignity kits and safety audits playing a critical role in identifying and addressing risks in displacement settings. EORE efforts reached over 400k people, supported by a network of trained volunteers, including local leaders and teachers. Digital outreach expanded impact, while victim assistance programs offered vital medical, psychological, and rehabilitation services, particularly in remote areas, alongside advocacy strengthen mine action and demining efforts.

Localization and integration of local NGOs into key decision making processes have been a primary objective for the Protection cluster and AoRs, through updated Localization Dashboards, capacity building and training, a dedicated <u>localization working group</u> through the CP AoR and more than 79 local/national partners (70% of protection partners). Partners are involved both in SAG and cluster coordination leadership at subnational levels with an MOU in the final stages with three local based in the Northeast, Southeast, and Northwest regions.

ACCESS-RELATED CHALLENGES AND ACTION

The ability to deliver life-saving assistance is severely restricted by a combination of factors that include ongoing conflict, security risks, and regulatory barriers. As of 30th November 2024, humanitarian partners reported 1,221 incidents across 14 states and regions in Myanmar. As presented in this analysis, active conflict, military operations, and UXO hazards have severely restricted humanitarian access, isolating vulnerable populations and forcing delays due to blocked roads, insecurity and disrupted transportation, compounded by severe bureaucratic barriers, including travel authorization delays, customs restrictions and movement limitations. Aid workers are frequently denied passage at checkpoints controlled by the **Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF)** and **Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs)/People's Defence Forces**. Restrictions are most severe in **military-controlled areas**, with unjustified denials and delays. Across states where conflict remains active, conflict parties have imposed blockades, cutting off communities from aid, causing acute shortages of essential supplies, exacerbating suffering as **denial of access is used as a tactic of war**. Violence against aid workers in **Myanmar**, including harassment, detention, and attacks, remains a major concern, with **32 detained** by MAF as of **end of 2024**. Targeting of staff and facilities has forced suspensions, disrupting aid and increased civilian vulnerability to human rights violations. Furthermore, limited access to information in **Myanmar** hampers humanitarian response, preventing needs assessments and monitoring of violations.

CRITICAL GAPS IN FUNDING AND POPULATION REACHED

By the end of 2024, protection partners received only \$62 million (39%) out of the \$161 million required. Insufficient funding severely hindered the ability to address critical protection needs, particularly in providing effective case management. As a result, individualized protection assistance was also drastically limited, reaching only 10% of the planned coverage and leaving a considerable gap in meeting the overall requirements. Mine victims, children, caregivers and community members were not able to be reached with more resource intensive, life-saving child protection interventions for a high number of children such as reunification of unaccompanied and separated children or reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups. Priority was to scale up less expensive activities such as awareness raising, while even less expensive activities such as MHPSS were forced to scale down, depriving children of essential services. Additionally, existing restrictions on mine removal severely limit the scope of preventive actions and leave affected communities exposed to continued danger.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the complex, long-standing conflict in Myanmar requires a multifaceted and collaborative efforts from International actors, conflict parties, donors and humanitarian actors prioretising on adressing widespread human rights violations and suffering including:

- The protection of civilians to cease all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, and places of worship, and protect children from grave violations by preventing attacks on educational and medical facilities and prohibiting their recruitment into armed groups or forces.
- Ensuring safe and unhindered humanitarian access by lifting movement restrictions, eliminating travel barriers, and guaranteeing the safety of humanitarian workers, leveraging diplomatic influence and engage relevant authorities to secure access for humanitarian actors at large and mine action actors to provide life-saving services.
- **Providing and enabling flexible, long-term and core funding** to humanitarian organizations, including **WLOs/WROs**, to enable rapid adaptation to evolving situations, address immediate and long-term needs and invest in capacities.
- Ensuring all NGOs have access to the humanitarian exchange facility and humanitarian financial corridors, minimizing transfer costs and securing insurance to reduce cash-handling liabilities.

RISK 1 Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings

PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT

- Respect the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution in attacks in compliance with IHL.
- Facilitate an inclusive peace process involving all parties, including SAC/MAF, armed groups, the civilian government (where possible), and other stakeholders, ensuring inclusion of affected communities, especially ethnic minorities.
- Prioritise the restoration of democratic governance, where civil rights are respected, the rule of law is upheld, and a fair, inclusive political system is established that includes representation from all ethnic groups.

HC and HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- **Strengthen Protection Programming** and ensure that protection activities, including community-based protection, psychosocial support, GBV response and child protection, are a central component of humanitarian responses.
- A credible, independent investigation into all allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity should be conducted, with perpetrators held accountable through both national and international legal mechanisms.

DONORS

• **Prioritize Protection Funding and** allocate funds specifically for protection programs, including community-based protection, protection monitoring, and case management support for rights violation survivors and those at risk.

RISK 2

Discrimination, denial of humanitarian access, unlawful impediments or restriction of movement, siege and forced displacement

PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT

- **Protect Freedom of Movement** and allow civilians to move freely within and across conflict-affected areas without fear of harm, arrest, or violence and lift curfews, blockades, or checkpoints, that unjustly impede civilian movement.
- **End Sieges** and avoid besieging civilian populations or denying essential goods, services, and humanitarian assistance. Starvation as a method of warfare is prohibited under international law.

HC and HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

• **Prioritize protection** and integrate protection as a cross-cutting priority in all humanitarian activities, ensuring a focus on addressing risks of forced displacement, access restrictions, and discrimination.



DONORS

- **Support local and inclusive responses** and fund and empower local humanitarian organizations, particularly those working with marginalized or at-risk groups, to ensure equitable assistance and protection.
- **Strengthen international support** for peace process and urge regional actors such as ASEAN, to play a more active role in brokering dialogue and promoting peace.

RISK 3

Children's Physical safety and phycological well-being threatened by compounding risks

DONORS

• Enable urgent and critical resources and support for the delivering life-saving case management and family tracing for unaccompanied and separated children, as well as reintegration support for those formerly associated with armed groups. The CP AoR is committed to building the necessary workforce to provide these critical services.

CHILD PROTECTION AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN RESPONDERS

- Increased joined up efforts to ensure that all humanitarian responders receive training on child protection mainstreaming and ensure that children are central to their activities.
- Enable and reinforce programming to provide critical MHPSS, awareness and community level child protection

RISK 4

Gender-Based Violence (including Child Marriage)

PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT

 Take actions for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, by, for example, setting up survivor-centered response and reporting mechanism based on international good practices.

DONORS

• Prioritize support and resoures to GBV prevention and response as well as protection/GBV mainstreaming in humanitarian action, given significant protection/GBV risks in the current crisis

HCT and HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Ensure that GBV mainstreaming is an integral part of the strategic documents and response plans of all clusters
- Allocate sufficient budget to local and national partners to address the specific needs of women and girls, including both for specialized GBV prevention and response and for GBV risk mitigation
- Integrate gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation strategies across all sectors to uphold the Centrality of Protection and the Do No Harm principle.

RISK 5

Serious maiming and injuries due to explosive Hazards

PARTIES TO CONFLICT

- Permit the demarcation of hazardous areas and prioritize demining, particularly in regions with high rates of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) returns.
- Facilitate the importation of essential equipment and materials necessary for the delivery of mine action activities.
- Support the development and enforcement of national mine action policies and frameworks.

DONORS

- Provide consistent resources, support and advocacy on global platforms for mine action activities to save lives and reduce the long-term impact of landmines and explosive ordnance.
- Support policy-level engagement to foster an enabling environment for mine action in Myanmar, particularly in relation to the adoption of international treaties and standards.
- Facilitate partnerships between international actors, local organizations, and governments to bring in additional resources, technical expertise, and influence.



HCT and HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Advocate and coordinate multi-sector responses: Elevate mine action as a critical component of humanitarian response plans and ensure it is integrated into broader humanitarian programming and key strategy documents, such as the Humanitarian Response Plan.
- Engage with donors and international stakeholders to secure support for mine action activities by highlighting their lifesaving and transformative impacts, and utilize the Humanitarian Country Team's platform to advocate for stronger commitments to mine action.
- **Support Capacity Building**: Encourage capacity-building initiatives for local actors, ensuring the development of sustainable mine action capabilities within Myanmar.



Endnotes

- [†] The Three Brotherhood Alliance comprises of Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA)
- ** Report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (A/HRC/57/18) [EN/AR/MY/RU/ZH]
- iii A report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, OHCHR
- lv Protection Incident Report , Jan Sept , 2024: Although the PIMs does not report all incidents due to access and communication barriers, these figures are indicative of the severity of incidents and its victims with particular attention to the high number of children impacted.
- ^v Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/384
- vi Situation of human rights in Myanmar, OHCR Sempember 2024: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/myanmar-factsheet.pdf
- vii *Ibid;*
- 🕬 Myanmar: Military Forcibly Recruiting Rohingya https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/10/myanmar-military-forcibly-recruiting-rohingya
- ix Rhakine: A Famine in the making, UNDP , November 2024
- * Secretary General Annual report on Children in Armed Conflict June 2024 A_78_84 2-S_2024 03 June 2024
- * Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar covering the period from 15 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.
- xii Case Management Trends Analysis Q3 2024
- xiii PIMS Q3
- xiv As captured in the 2024 Case Management trends analysis and as increased in Q3 of 2024 when compared to Q2.
- Emotional or psychological violence is similarly high in case management trends analysis and increased in Q3 of 2024 when compared to Q2
- ** Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar covering the period from 15 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.
- xvi See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182 for ILO C182 Worst Forms of Child Labor convention1999 (No. 182)
- xvii Food Security and Protection Brief 2024
- xviii Myanmar: Surging Landmine Use Claims Lives, Livelihoods: HRW
- xix Humanitarian Partners Confidential Report.





