

# MYANMAR

## Flooding in Mrauk-U Township, Rakhine State

Heavy rainfall during Myanmar's monsoon season resulted in the Laymyo River overflowing at the beginning of July. By 14 July, all of the more than 3,400 people living in the IDP camp of Sin Baw Kaing village, Mrauk-U Township, were affected, and had to be relocated.

The camp residents, displaced by fighting in Rakhine between the Myanmar Army and the Arakan Army group, were already in poor conditions and are in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly shelter and NFIs.

### NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



### IMPACT



Mrauk-U Township Map Section, MIMU 2019



### Anticipated scope and scale

Monsoon season in Myanmar is in its early stages, and Laymyo River is known to overflow frequently, affecting residents in Mrauk-U as well as damaging farmland.

On 14 July, the **water level of Laymyo River had risen further** above danger level, and was expected to continue for the next two days.

There are more than 180,000 residents in Mrauk-U Township, and an increase in flooding has the **potential of affecting a higher number of people across the Township**, including other IDP camps in the area.

Last year, some 12,000 people were displaced across Rakhine because of raining and overflowing of Laymyo River.

### Key priorities



**+3,400**  
IDPs severely affected by flooding



**+100**  
shelters damaged



**Food needs**  
highly likely to increase

### Humanitarian constraints



Due to active conflict, a night-time curfew is in place since April 2019 in Mrauk-U, limiting movement and access to services, particularly to healthcare. Internet access remains shut down since 21 June, and aid organisations have reported disruption to their activities. State authorities restrict humanitarian access to parts of Mrauk-U, particularly to rural areas.

#### Limitations

Disaggregated data with regards to the affected IDP population is not available except to the very small number of organisations working in central Rakhine

## Crisis impact

Seasonal rainfall that began in the middle of June caused the Laymyo River to burst its banks and overflow by 5 July. Approximately 3,400 internally displaced people (IDPs) living in the camp of Sin Baw Kaing village, in Rakhine State's Mrauk-U township, were affected. (Irrawaddy 05/07/2019, RFA 05/07/2019).

**Shelter/NFI:** On 5 July, camp authorities reported that approximately half of the 451 shelters in the camp had been flooded, and at least 100 would have to be rebuilt (Irrawaddy 05/07/2019, RFA 05/07/2019, BNI 03/07/2019, DMG 05/07/2019.) By 13 July the entire camp had been flooded, and local media reported that about 3,000 IDPs were evacuated to higher land, while others were sheltering in monasteries. (EM 13/07/2019, MDN 13/07/2019) Urgent needs for shelter material are reported, mostly for bamboo and tarpaulin sheets (Irrawaddy 05/07/2019, RFA 05/07/2019). However, a comprehensive response would also need a distribution of NFIs such as rope or Tie-Down Kits (Shelter Sector 03/2018).

**Food security:** While detailed information is not available, IDPs across Rakhine are generally known to live in extremely poor conditions. Events such as conflict and displacement have led to a negative effect on the livelihood of local populations, undermining their capacity to produce and access sufficient and diversified food. (OCHA 2019) A sudden negative event such as flooding, which has caused secondary displacement, is highly likely to have compounded the humanitarian needs of the IDPs, including for food assistance.

**Nutrition:** Malnutrition rates in Rakhine are poor, and particularly so for IDPs. In December 2018 it was found that global acute malnutrition levels in Rakhine were ranging between 27.5% (for urban IDPs in Sittwe) to 42.1% (for rural IDPs in Sittwe) (OCHA 2019) Moreover, WFP's nutrition interventions at some of its Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) treatment centres in Mrauk-U were suspended in March due to the ongoing armed conflict (WFP 04/2019, BNI 12/2018). It is very probable that the IDPs in Sin Baw Kaing are in need of urgent nutrition assistance.

**Health:** The exposure of the IDPs to rain and floods is likely to deteriorate health, cause injuries or drowning, as well as increasing the risk of contracting waterborne diseases, including malaria, which is transmitted by mosquitoes breeding in stagnant or slowly streaming water. Rakhine State has been one of the highest-risk areas for malaria in Myanmar, contributing about 20-25% of total malaria cases in Myanmar each year (WHO 2001, DMG 05/07/2019, Mizzima 10/07/2019, US AID 2019, Thai MPH 2017).

**WASH:** People affected by flooding are highly likely to have limited access to clean potable water. Tube wells will have been contaminated by the flood waters, making the

delivery of water purification tablets and/or bottled water crucial. Damaged or overflowing latrines will pose a serious health risk to residents (ACAPS 03/2019).

**Livelihoods:** Locals report that their agricultural and wood gathering activities have been disrupted by the flooding, meaning that camp residents that were already living in precarious conditions are now even more vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity (Irrawaddy 05/07/2019, RFA 05/07/2019 Eleven Myanmar 05/07/2019)

**Education:** According to camp residents, educational activities in the camps have been disrupted because of the flooding (Irrawaddy 05/07/2019).

## Vulnerable groups affected

While the composition of the IDPs with regards to age, sex and disability is not known, it is the case that people with mobility difficulties – disabled and/or old people, pregnant women and new mothers – are among the vulnerable groups most affected by flooding (UNDP 03/2019 UNDP 01/2019). People with disabilities for instance, have additional difficulties in reaching higher, safe locations. They also have difficulties moving through the flood water, and are highly dependent on others. Their voices in the community tend to be marginalised, and they are frequently isolated (PA 2017).

Moreover, according to a UNICEF report of April 2019, the current pattern of displacement due to conflict in Rakhine indicates that primarily women and children are moving to ad-hoc settlements, while men stay to protect households and assets (UNICEF 23/04/2019).

## Humanitarian and operational constraints

Humanitarian access has decreased in Myanmar overall. In Rakhine, the government has imposed severe travel restrictions on aid workers. Restrictions on freedom of movement causes limited access to health facilities for Rohingya and other Muslims, including internally displaced people, in central Rakhine. The Myanmar Army has been accused of blocking relief supplies to people displaced in Rakhine (ACAPS 05/2019). In March, WFP suspended some of its activities in Mrauk-U because of active fighting (WFP 04/2019).

Beginning 1 April, the Myanmar Army imposed a night-time (9 pm to 5 am) curfew in five townships, including Mrauk-U. The curfew has been extended until the end of July 2019. People are not allowed to access roads, streets, lanes, parks or other public areas during the curfew time (RFA 02/04/2019, BNI 05/06/2019). This has limited access to healthcare, and lines of communication have occasionally become obstructed (BNI 05/06/2019).

On 21 June 2019 the government of Myanmar ordered telecommunication companies to shut down internet services in eight townships in Rakhine, including Mrauk-U. The disruption to internet services has increased difficulties for humanitarian agencies and

human rights groups to assist people in need. Social media networks, particularly WhatsApp, are widely used by aid staff to coordinate. (HRW 27/06/2019 AI 07/06/2019).

## Aggravating factors

### Chronic poverty

Rakhine remains the second poorest area of Myanmar, with a poverty rate of 41.6% compared to the country average of 24.8%, and opportunities for employment and income generation are lacking. Moreover, Rakhine has a weak infrastructure, and is vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters. As such, the capacity of the local authorities to react to humanitarian needs is limited, and the capacity of the local population to react to shocks is weakened (IOM 2018, World Bank 2017).

### Conflict

Ongoing conflict in Rakhine conflict between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Army is further obstructing the capacity of humanitarian actors to implement relief operations. Between January-May 2019, some 9,936 people were displaced by fighting in Mrauk-U Township (OCHA 26/05/2019).

### Limited availability of information

The lack of information shared by organisations on the ground contributes to the lack of knowledge with regards to the crisis. What little information exists is not detailed and outdated.

### Location and type of housing/infrastructure

Shelters in temporary IDP camps are built out of very light material, predominantly bamboo and tarpaulin, and cannot offer any kind of meaningful protection from the elements, in case of strong storms or flash floods. The hazardous location of the Sin Baw Kaing camp, that was organised too close to the banks of the Laymyo river, has exacerbated the effects of the river overflowing on the shelters (Irrawaddy 05/07/2019).

### Upcoming weather conditions

On 9 July, Myanmar's Meteorology and Hydrology Department issued a warning due to the rising water level of Laymyo River. On 10 July, the Department announced that the water level of the River had again risen above its critical level and would continue to rise over the next two days. The weather forecast on 11 July expected rainfall to continue to increase in Rakhine (Moezala 11/07/2019, Mizzima 10/07/2019 Moezala 09/07/2019).

## Consequences of recurring disasters

Mrauk-U is included among the townships considered most disaster prone in Rakhine because it is a low-lying and chronically flooded area. Recurrent disruption due to flooding is likely to give residents little time to recover from previous shocks (UNHCR 06/2017).

Laymyo River frequently bursts its banks during monsoon season. In 2016, thousands of acres of Mrauk-U farmland were flooded (BNI 06/2016). In June 2018, some 12,000 people were displaced in townships across Rakhine, including Mrauk-U (Irrawaddy 15/06/2019). In July 2018, Laymyo River again caused flooding in Rakhine, affecting more than 2,500 people from 10 villages in Mrauk-U (MOI 07/2018).

## Key characteristics

**Demographic profile:** Mrauk-U township: pop: 189,630. At Mrauk-U District level, 53.7% female/46.3% male (Myanmar Population and Housing Census 2014)

**Food security:** 322,000 people in central Rakhine are food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 2019)

**Nutrition levels:** At national level, 29% of children under 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition (stunting); 7% of children under 5 suffer from acute malnutrition (wasting). In central Rakhine, some 82,111 people are in need of nutrition support, or which 67% are children (OCHA 2019, National Census 2014).

**Health statistics:** National infant mortality rate is 62/1,000. National under-five mortality rate is 72/1,000.

**WASH statistics:** In 2016, the use of surface water was 6.4% at national level.

## Response capacity

Myanmar authorities have restricted the operations of humanitarian organisations in conflict areas in Rakhine, including in Mrauk-U. After new episodes of fighting in February 2019, WFP and ICRC were among the few actors known to have access in those areas (WFP 05/2019, WFP 02/2019). OCHA reported it was working together with partners and national authorities, providing support for assessments and resource mobilization. The Myanmar Red Cross Society, civil society organizations and private donors were reported to be responding to the immediate needs of those affected or displaced by floods (OCHA 13/07/2019).

At a national level, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement of Myanmar is coordinating responses to natural disasters, including to flooding, through the Department of Disaster Management (MMR Government 2019). In June 2019, the DDM announced it was providing food and NFI assistance to IDPs in several camps in Mrauk-U township (MOI 19/06/2019). It hasn't been established if the Department will respond to the current emergency.

## Information gaps and needs

- There is limited shared information by aid organisations about the living conditions and needs of the IDPs.
- There is little to no information about the levels of food insecurity of IDPs in Rakhine.
- Information is lacking about the disaggregation of the IDPs by age, sex or disability, thus making it hard to tailor the response.
- There is very limited public information about ongoing response to this particular emergency.

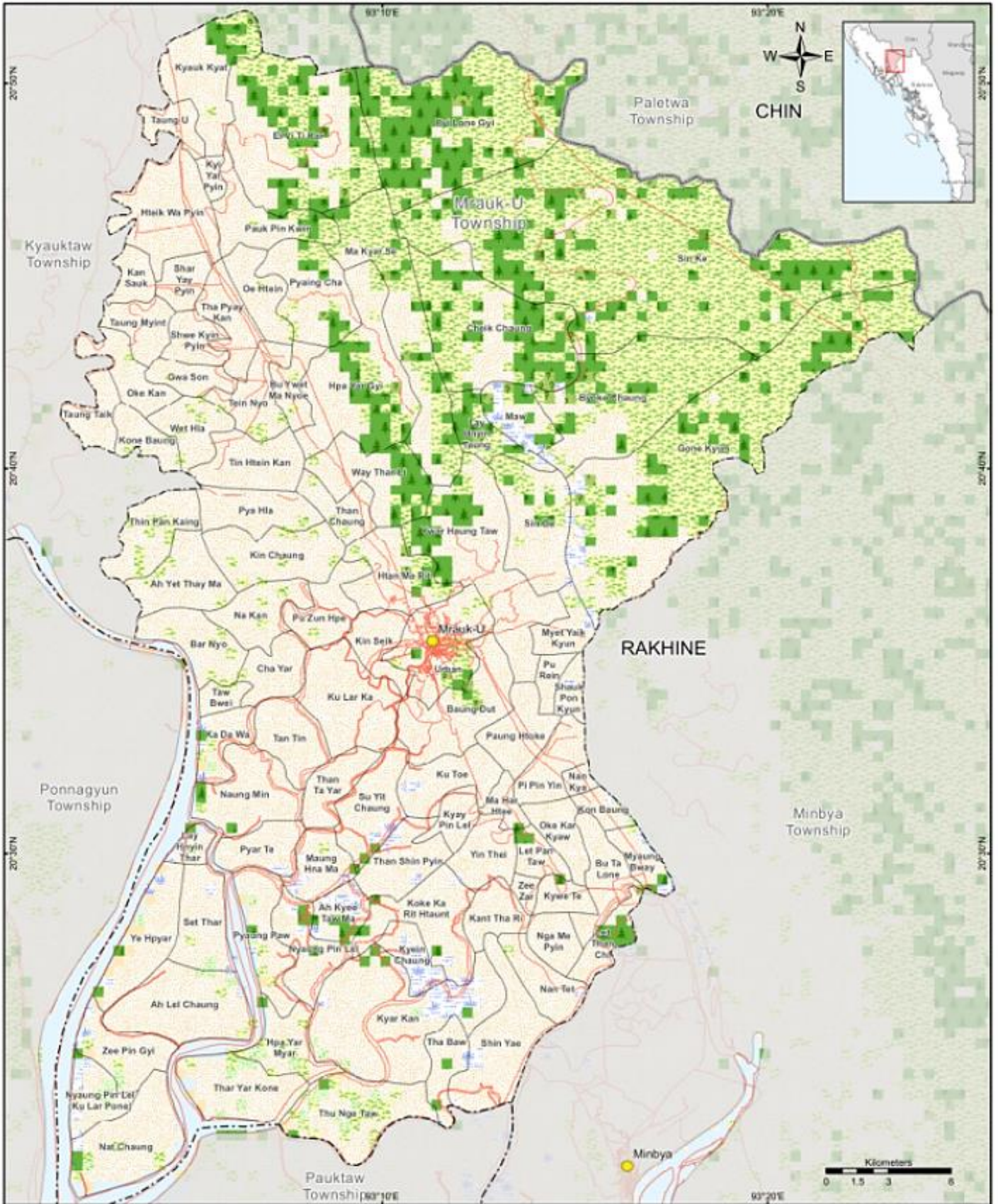
## Lessons learned
















During the first phase of flooding response operations, the focus should be on emergency assistance, such as providing emergency relief such as purified water, food, household items and shelter materials, as well as evacuations. The second phase will focus on longer-term recovery, such as livelihood activities, cleaning of contaminated ponds and wells, and infrastructure rehabilitation (IFRC 01/2017).

In Myanmar, the wet season will continue through mid-October, with compounded risks of flooding, landslides, and strong winds possible during October and November, when cyclones most often hit Myanmar (UNICEF 2015).

Previous interventions in Rakhine state confirmed that a conflict sensitivity approach in relief operations is critical (IFRC/ICRC 2018).

**Village Tract Map of Mrauk-U Township**  
**RAKHINE STATE**



<p>Map ID: MIMU224v02          Creation Date: 4 April 2017 A3          Projection/Datum: Geographic/WGS84</p>	<p> Main Town</p> <p> Road</p> <p> Township Boundary</p> <p> District Boundary</p> <p> State/Region Boundary</p> <p> Village Tract Boundary</p>	<p><b>Landcover</b></p> <p> Crop and Vegetation</p> <p> Forest</p> <p> Mixed Forest</p> <p> Grassland</p> <p> Shrubland</p> <p> Snow Ice</p> <p> Bare Land</p> <p> Wetland</p> <p> Water</p>	<p>Map produced by the MIMU - <a href="http://info.mimu@unip.org">info.mimu@unip.org</a>  <a href="http://www.themisu.info">www.themisu.info</a></p> <p>Copyright © Myanmar Information Management Unit          2017. May be used free of charge with attribution.</p>
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