

  
KEY FIGURES70  
DEATHS  
AS AT 16 MAY45,000  
PEOPLE  
DISPLACED  
AS AT 12 MAYHigh risk  
OF FURTHER  
DISPLACEMENTFUNDING AND RESPONSE  
CAPACITY

local administrations

local NGOs (Humanitarian  
Aid International)National Institute of  
Mental Health and  
Neuro-Sciences

## CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

- On 3 May 2023, the Kuki tribal group held an organised protest march in the northeastern Indian state of Manipur against the majority Meitei community being recognised as a Scheduled Tribe. The march resulted in violent clashes with the Meitei non-tribal group (Reuters 11/05/2023; Al Jazeera 07/05/2023 and 06/05/2023). As at 16 May, the Imphal and Churachandpur district hospital morgues had reported at least 70 deaths. Various sources indicate that an estimated 30,000–45,000 people have been forced to flee (The Guardian 16/05/2023; HAI 12/05/2023; Reuters 11/05/2023; CNN 09/05/2023 and 08/05/2023; Al Jazeera 07/05/2023). Authorities sent thousands of federal Rapid Action Force soldiers to Manipur on 4 May to contain the violence and restore order (Al Jazeera 04/05/2023). The violence was concentrated in the state capital of Imphal and in Churachandpur, a district capital in the southwest of the state (Reuters 11/05/2023).
- As at 16 May, the volatile situation had caused at least 7,900 people to flee to the two northeastern states of Mizoram and Assam and more than 300 people to cross the border to Myanmar (HT 16/05/2023; HAI 12/05/2023). There have also been reports of people fleeing to Meghalaya and Nagaland states (CNN 08/05/2023). As at 12 May, over 14,700 people (around 4,025 families) needed humanitarian assistance across 101 relief camps in Manipur and Assam (HAI 12/05/2023).
- The main needs of people in need are access to food, shelter, WASH, psychosocial support, and protection (The Guardian 16/05/2023; HAI 12/05/2023). Manipur state had been experiencing water shortages before the violence, and residents had been highly dependent on private suppliers, who had taken advantage of the situation by selling water at inflated prices (IFP 12/05/2023; NewsOnAIR 17/03/2023).

## Anticipated scope and scale

- Manipur borders Myanmar states Chin and Sagaing. Increased violence in Myanmar, especially in Sagaing, could lead to more cross-border displacement to Manipur, which is likely to worsen the state's pre-existing ethnic tensions (UNHCR 10/03/2023; Al Jazeera 12/04/2023).
- Food, water, and medicine shortages are becoming acute, increasing the humanitarian needs of IDPs (Outlook 16/05/2023; The Guardian 16/05/2023).
- Violence will likely interrupt the academic year, and over 4,000 children will likely be unable to return to their schools in the affected areas (Outlook 16/05/2023; The Guardian 16/05/2023).
- As tensions between Kuki and Meitei communities increase, there is fear of the further marginalisation and displacement of minority ethnic tribes, including Kuki communities (The Guardian 16/05/2023).

## Humanitarian constraints

- Manipur authorities imposed a five-day internet and mobile blackout on 3 May, affecting people's access to information and communication (Al Jazeera 06/05/2023 and 07/05/2023). As at 16 May, it was unclear whether disruptions to the internet and mobile services remained.
- As at 7 May, insecurity and violence had restricted access to Churachandpur district, which is one of the main conflict-affected areas and is mainly populated by the Kuki tribe (Al Jazeera 07/05/2023). Up-to-date information on access remained scarce as at 16 May.
- Authorities imposed a curfew on 3 May in nine of Manipur's 16 districts (Al Jazeera 07/05/2023). On 7 May, the curfew had been lifted between 07:00–10:00 in Churachandpur district. The curfew situation in the other eight states was unclear as at 16 May.
- On 12 May, the Indian Meteorological Department issued an orange alert in Manipur because of cyclone Mocha, which had caused heavy rains in the region. Predictions indicated that the rainfall and strong winds would affect communications and access as they did in Bangladesh (The Weather Channel 12/05/2023; ECHO 12/05/2023).



## CRISIS IMPACTS

### Shelter and displacement

As at 12 May, fires had ruined at least 1,700 houses, and more than 45,000 people had been displaced (HAI 12/05/2023; Al Jazeera 06/05/2023). 101 relief camps in Bishnupur, Churachandpur, and Jibiram districts in Manipur and Cachar district in Assam were hosting at least 14,758 of the displaced (HAI 12/05/2023). As at 8 May, displaced populations were sheltering in around seven army camps in Imphal (CNN 08/05/2023).

As the rainy season is likely to begin in June, addressing the shelter needs of the affected population is critical in mitigating further health impacts for people exposed to harsh weather.

As at 12 May, reports indicated that 45,000 people were displaced or had evacuated their homes in violence-affected districts, and government premises, army camps, and nearby states were sheltering most of these people (HAI 12/05/2023; The Guardian 16/05/2023; Al Jazeera 04/05/2023 and 07/05/2023). The number of displaced people varies between sources, with some media sources reporting 30,000–35,000 people displaced as at 16 May (The Guardian 16/05/2023). Among the displaced population are members of the Meitei community living in the hills, where they are a minority, and members of the Kuki and Naga tribes living in the valley and urban areas, where they are the minority (Al Jazeera 07/05/2023). According to media, as at 15 May, the volatile situation had led at least 6,520 IDPs from Manipur to take shelter in nearby Mizoram state, around 1,400 had fled to Assam state, and more than 300 had crossed the border to Myanmar (HT 16/05/2023; HAI 12/05/2023). There have also been accounts of displacement to Meghalaya and Nagaland, but the number of displaced people was unclear as at 16 May.

### Protection

The violence has resulted in the torching of cars, shops, and houses (Al Jazeera 06/05/2023 and 04/05/2023). As at 4 May, the Manipur governor had given “shoot-at-sight” orders to contain unrest in “extreme cases whereby all forms of persuasion, warning, reasonable force, etc. had been exhausted” (Al Jazeera 04/05/2023; CNN 08/05/2023). The army has significantly enhanced its surveillance across affected areas in Manipur, including the capital of Imphal Valley, using drones and military helicopters (Al Jazeera 07/05/2023). Although a state government runs Manipur, the central Indian Government has invoked an article of the constitution that enables it to take control and exercise special powers since the start of the clashes. The Kuki communities do not feel that the state protects them and have reported that police have

been complicit in violent acts (The Guardian 16/05/2023). The state and central Governments’ measures will likely affect other marginalised communities, particularly those in hilly areas.

### WASH

People in Manipur have been facing water scarcity over the past months. In March 2023, the unavailability of water in rivers, dams, and other water sources meant there was no tap water in Manipur (NewsOnAIR 17/03/2023). Residents in Imphal and surrounding areas depended on private water tankers to meet their daily water needs. Taking advantage of the water shortages and ethnic clashes, private water suppliers have started selling water at inflated prices. In early May, a 1,300-litre water tanker load in Imphal cost between INR 800 (USD 9.71) and INR 1,200 (USD 14.56), compared to INR 250 (USD 3) in April (IFP 12/05/2023).

## DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

### Intercommunal and ethnic violence

Manipur is a hilly state bordering Myanmar, which hosts ethnically diverse groups of Sino-Tibetan communities with unique languages, religions, and cultures. The Indian Government incorporated Manipur state in 1949, which created dissatisfaction among its residents, who felt the change was rushed and did not include proper consensus (CNN 08/05/2023). This move has resulted in a history of insurgencies and deep-rooted ethnic tensions in the state, particularly between those who live in the hilly areas and those living in the valley, with religious differences sometimes aggravating an already tense relationship (CNN 08/05/2023; Al Jazeera 07/05/2023).

The largely Hindu Meitei community form between 50–60% of Manipur’s over 3.1 million population, and they are based in the state capital of Imphal Valley (Al Jazeera 07/05/2023; CNN 08/05/2023). They have been campaigning for years for a Scheduled Tribe status. The Government designates groups of people considered to be among the most socioeconomically disadvantaged groups in India as Scheduled Tribes and Schedule Castes, recognising them as people who have experienced protracted issues in accessing employment, education, and healthcare, among other essential services (CNN 08/05/2023). Scheduled Tribes are constitutionally recognised, and the recognition comes with specific protection mechanisms and rights for designated communities to maintain the representation of marginalised communities in the social structure. Seven of India’s eight northeastern states had more than 30% of their population earmarked as Scheduled Tribes, according to India’s 2011 census (Reuters 11/05/2023).



The Kuki and Naga tribes, forming around 30–40% of Manipur's population, are mostly Christian and reside in the hilly and forest areas of Chandel, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Ukhrul districts. Their Scheduled Tribe status grants them land-owning rights in this area (Al Jazeera 07/05/2023; The Print 15/03/2023).

The violence began when the All Tribal Students' Union Manipur, which includes around 50,000 members of the Kuki tribe, and other members of the Naga tribe in Churachandpur and adjoining hill districts protested the Meitei community's demands to be given the Scheduled Tribe designation (Al Jazeera 04/05/2023; CNN 08/05/2023; The Economic Times 06/05/2023 b). A Scheduled Tribe status would give the Meitei community access to low-cost bank loans, specific health and education facilities, and a specific quota of government jobs. According to the Kuki and Naga tribes, the Meiteis have historically been the dominant community in Manipur, play a significant role in state politics, and experience more economic and infrastructural development than other communities. They argue that granting the Meitei community a Scheduled Tribe status would further marginalise the Kuki, Naga, and other smaller ethnic tribes in the state and leave them vulnerable to exploitation (CNN 08/05/2023). Tribes residing in the forest and hilly areas are also concerned about their land access and resources becoming limited should the Meitei community be allowed to own land in the hills.

## COMPOUNDING AND AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Manipur baseline information

% POPULATION (estimated using the 2011 population census)	Meitei	Kuki	Naga	Total
	60% (1.86 million people)	25% (775,000 people)	15% (465,000 people)	3.1 million
% OF THE POPULATION living below the national poverty percentage	37% (1.147 million people)			
UNEMPLOYMENT	10% (310,000 people) Manipur has the highest unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above; over double the national unemployment rate of 4.1%.			
LITERACY RATE (2011 CENSUS)	77% (2.387 million people)			
GENDER EQUALITY according to the Sustainable Development Goals Index	41/100			

Source: Census india accessed 17/05/2023; Indiaexpress 10/05/2023; Knoema accessed 16/05/2023; SDGs India Index accessed 16/05/2023; Economic Times 09/05/2023.

## Climate hazards

The typical monsoon rainy season in Manipur is between June–September, and overflowing rivers and floods are recurrent. The most affected districts tend to be Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West, and Thoubal, but hill districts such as Noney also report landslides and other ramifications (Floodlist 01/07/2022, 25/05/2016, and 06/08/2015). In June 2022, several days of heavy rain triggered a large landslide that hit a railway construction camp and 107 Territorial Army camps in a remote area of Noney district, killing around 61 people (HT 24/07/2022; Floodlist 01/07/2022). Since 12 May, Manipur has also been exposed to heavy rainfall from Cyclone Mocha. The Indian Meteorological Department has issued an orange alert and yellow heavy rain warnings for Manipur and Mizoram states, which neighbour Myanmar, where the impact of Cyclone Mocha has been most felt (ECHO 12/05/2023; The Weather Channel 12/05/2023). The main needs during the rainy season and floods are shelter, drinking water, food, basic medicine, and NFIs.

## Refugees from Myanmar

As at 30 June 2022, India hosted roughly 60,380 refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar, some of whom resided in Manipur state (UNHCR accessed 16/05/2023). As at 30 March 2023, around 5,000 refugees from Myanmar had fled to Manipur state following the February 2021 military coup (The Economic Times 30/03/2023). Different sources estimate the number of refugees in Manipur as 5,000–10,000 (The Diplomat 26/08/2022).

The presence of refugees from Myanmar has reignited ethnic tensions in Manipur (CNN 08/05/2023). Many of the refugees from Myanmar belong to the Kuki-Chin-Zomi-Mizo tribe, the same as those communities living in the Manipur hills. Members of the Meitei community and Naga tribes have referred to the refugees as “illegal immigrants” and alleged that the “immigration” had marginalised the “indigenous people of Manipur” (The Print 15/03/2023; The Diplomat 26/08/2022).

In March 2023, the Manipur government made plans to shelter 5,000 refugees from Myanmar in detention centres called ‘shelter homes’ in Chandel, Churachandpur, and Tengnoupal districts along the Myanmar border. They would not allow the refugees to leave the premises (NDTV 31/03/2023; The Economic Times 28/03/2023; East Mojo 02/04/2023). In a crackdown against the movement and presence of refugees in the state, the Manipur government arrested 85 refugees from Myanmar between June–August 2022. These refugees had arrived in Churachandpur district, Manipur, from neighbouring Mizoram state, where other refugees from Myanmar had taken shelter. 20 of those arrested were children (The Diplomat 26/08/2022).



## Tensions over land use

In March 2023, there were protests and some clashes between the Kuki Students Organisation, the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum representing the hill tribes, and the security forces in Kangpokpi district. These clashes followed the Government's order for communities to evict Kuki villages in February 2023. The evictions were based on allegations of illegal settlement in reserved forests and wildlife sanctuaries, sparking protests and unrest in the area (The Economic Times 06/05/2023 a; The Print 15/03/2023; India Today NE 10/03/2023). In March 2023, the state government also announced its withdrawal from the Suspension of Operation agreement with two Kuki rebel groups, the Kuki National Army and the Zomi Revolutionary Army, which was over ten years old. The Government argued that the leadership of these rebel groups comes from outside the state or even the country (Journals of India 14/03/2023).

Despite allegations of collaboration between Meitei communities and the Government, there are tensions between the authorities and the local Meitei community in Laktok, including fishers and homestay owners and operators. The tension results from a longstanding government order to demolish homes in Laktok freshwater lake because of alleged impacts on biodiversity. Since 2019, different projects have sought to transform the lake from primarily being a fishing commons to a high-end tourist site. In 2022, people were forced to sign an agreement that affected the sustainable livelihoods of the Meitei indigenous communities around Laktok Lake (Al Jazeera 07/12/2022; East Mojo 10/08/2022).

## FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

There have been very few assessments, and most information comes from media outlets. As at 12 May, government and local organisations had responded and provided shelter support to the communities (HAI 12/05/2023). As at 8 May, other Indian state governments had been arranging special flights to airlift their residents out of Manipur (CNN 08/05/2023).

There is a lack of information on funding and on the governmental and humanitarian responders.

## Manipur location



Source: The Guardian (16/05/2023)