

## Three years post-coup: recent developments and humanitarian situation

### OVERVIEW

On 1 February 2021, Myanmar's military seized power from the democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD) Government. In the three years following the coup, the military junta, known as the State Administrative Council (SAC), has violently suppressed anti-coup protests and repeatedly extended a declaration of emergency, most recently at the beginning of February 2024 (OCHA 15/01/2023; CFR accessed 16/02/2024; Crisis24 01/02/2024). In response to the coup, NLD politicians and activists have formed a parallel government known as the National Unity Government (NUG). In September 2021, the NUG declared a 'people's defensive war' and facilitated the creation of People's Defence Forces (PDFs) across Myanmar, many of which have formed anti-SAC coalitions with longstanding ethnic armed organisations (EAOs). For the past three years, EAOs, PDFs, and other local defence groups have carried out armed operations in most states and regions (OCHA 15/01/2023; ISDP 10/2015; TNH 05/02/2024).

In 2023, **two key developments** increased the scope and severity of humanitarian needs.

- Natural hazards, notably Cyclone Mocha in May and monsoon rains in June–November: in May 2023, Cyclone Mocha affected around 5.4 million people in western and northern Myanmar, including Chin, Kachin, Magway, Rakhine, and Sagaing states (OCHA 18/12/2023 and 12/01/2024; ECHO 17/05/2023). In total, the impact of the cyclone killed at least 145 people and injured 700, along with many unreported cases (BBC 19/05/2023). Up to 900,000 people had to evacuate (AHA Centre 30/05/2023). The cyclone also destroyed houses and IDP settlements, damaged WASH and health facilities, reduced potable water access, aggravated food security, and threatened livelihoods (OCHA 18/05/2023, 08/09/2023, and OCHA 17/10/2023). The impact was particularly severe on the Rohingya community in Rakhine, where around 15,000 IDPs and 37,000 people in cyclone-damaged shelters still required urgent shelter assistance as at October 2023 (OCHA 17/10/2023; UNHCR 19/09/2023).

In June 2023, monsoons affected large amounts of agricultural land in Kayin and Kayah states, aggravating livelihood, shelter, food security, and WASH needs (OCHA 17/10/2023). In October, monsoons had a particularly severe impact in Bago, Kayah, Mon, and southern Shan states and Mandalay and Yangon regions, and also affected northern Shan and Sagaing. Monsoons in November hit Rakhine state (OCHA 10/11/2023; UNICEF 15/11/2023; IFRC 22/10/2023).

- Significant conflict escalation following increased armed resistance from October 2023** has constituted the largest-scale, most geographically widespread armed resistance since the coup (UN 08/12/2023). On 27 October, a coalition of EAOs known as the Three Brotherhood Alliance launched Operation 1027 in northern Shan state (OCHA 09/11/2023). Other EAOs, PDFs, and other armed resistance groups subsequently mounted attacks on the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF), also referred to as the Tatmadaw, in central Myanmar, as well as the Northeast, the Northwest, Rakhine state, and the Southeast.<sup>1</sup> As at 8 December, armed clashes since October 2023 had been reported in 12 of Myanmar's 14 states and regions, and resistance forces had captured around 40 towns across the country. On 30 January 2024, the NUG was reported to have claimed that armed resistance groups controlled 60% of Myanmar's territory (OCHA 15/12/2023; The Guardian 30/01/2024; The Irrawaddy 16/01/2024; MPM 03/02/2024). The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar similarly observed that the MAF controlled less than half of the country as at January 2024 (AP 01/02/2024; VOA 02/02/2024). As at 25 December 2023, the escalation had displaced around 630,000 people, bringing the total number of IDPs in Myanmar to around 2.6 million (OCHA 12/01/2024; OCHA 21/11/2023; UNHCR 23/01/2024). Between 27 October 2023 and 30 January 2024, the fighting also caused around 555 verified civilian deaths (OHCHR 30/01/2024).

For more detailed information on these developments, see the following ACAPS reports: Myanmar: Humanitarian Impacts of Recent Clashes (November 2023) and Bangladesh and Myanmar: Impact of Cyclone Mocha (May 2023).

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this report .....	2
Key findings and figures.....	2
Major contextual trends and impact on needs in 2023 .....	3
Crisis impacts .....	7
Outlook for 2024.....	12
Humanitarian constraints and response capacity .....	12

<sup>1</sup> These regions are defined in the 'About this report' section below

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

### Aim

The report reviews the evolution of the humanitarian situation across Myanmar in 2023 and early 2024, focusing on key contextual developments and humanitarian trends. It also highlights the response capacity and constraints and provides an outlook for humanitarian developments throughout 2024. The report follows ACAPS' May 2023 [update on the post-coup humanitarian situation](#).

### Methodology and limitations

The report is based on a secondary data review of publicly available sources and input from several context experts. There are significant information gaps on conflict evolution, violent events, and the specific areas, sectors, and population groups affected, largely because of the constrained information landscape, the SAC's use of communication blackouts as a counterinsurgency strategy, and severe humanitarian access constraints, which have increased since the coup and again since October 2023. As a result, this report is more indicative than representative of the true distribution of needs across Myanmar.

### Terminologies

Myanmar is divided into seven states (Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan) and seven regions (Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi, and Yangon). Nay Pyi Taw, where the capital is located, is classified as a union territory ([MIMU accessed 31/01/2024](#)). In this report, sources cited commonly distinguish among eastern, northern, and southern Shan states and eastern and western Bago. Different sources also classify these states and regions into broader groups, such as the Northwest and Southeast. Where possible, this report uses specific state and region names rather than referring to these broader, source-specific categories. An exception is made for UN sources, which frequently refer to one of five OCHA coordination zones without distinguishing specific states and regions. These zones, referenced throughout the report, are the Northeast, encompassing northern Shan and Kachin states; the Northwest, encompassing Chin, Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing states; Rakhine state; the Southeast, encompassing Bago, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, eastern and southern Shan, and Tanintharyi states; and the national level, which includes Nay Pyi Taw territory and Ayeyarwady and Yangon regions ([OCHA 18/12/2023](#)).

## KEY FINDINGS AND FIGURES

- 2023 developments aggravated the pre-existing humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, leaving a projected 18.6 million people, or around one-third of the population, in need in 2024. Nearly two million people are expected to experience the highest level of needs (catastrophic) ([OCHA 18/12/2023](#)).
- The number of air and drone strikes in 2023 almost doubled to around 900 from the 465 reported in 2022, with a particular increase from October 2023 ([OCHA 18/12/2023](#)). Some attacks have been indiscriminate or directly targeted civilians, causing high casualties ([OHCHR 03/03/2023](#); [AI 31/05/2022](#)).
- A significant rise in the use of and casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in 2023 has increased protection, health, and livelihood needs.
- Rapid increases in the IDP population have strained the capacity and resources of both host communities and IDPs, many of whom have experienced repeat displacement since the 2021 coup (on average eight times in states and regions where there is available information) ([OCHA 18/12/2023](#)).
- The October escalation in fighting has increased protection concerns, including forced recruitment, killings, abductions, injuries, and arbitrary arrests and detentions ([Shelter Cluster et al. 25/01/2024](#)).
- As at December 2023, food insecurity affected around 12.9 million people or nearly one-quarter of the population ([OCHA 18/12/2023](#); [FAO 04/08/2023](#)).
- As at December 2023, over 30% of children were not enrolled in any form of learning, and around 4.5 million children required education support ([OCHA 18/12/2023](#); [UNICEF 11/12/2023](#)).



Table 1. Key figures from the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (December 2023) compared with the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (January 2023)

SECTOR/THEME	JANUARY 2023	DECEMBER 2023	% CHANGE
IDPs	1.5 million	2.6 million	73% increase
Total people in need of humanitarian assistance	17.6 million	18.6 million	5.7% increase
People in need of education assistance	3.8 million	4.5 million	18.4% increase
People experiencing food insecurity – Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse	15.2 million	12.9 million	15.1% decrease <sup>2</sup>
People with healthcare needs	10 million	12.1 million	21% increase
People in need of nutrition assistance	2.2 million	2.2 million	No change
People in need of protection	11.5 million	12.2 million	6% increase
People in need of shelter/NFIs/camp coordination and management assistance	3 million	4.3 million	43% increase
People with WASH needs	5.2 million	5.6 million	8% increase

Sources: (OCHA 25/01/2023 and 18/12/2023)

## MAJOR CONTEXTUAL TRENDS AND IMPACT ON NEEDS IN 2023

### Trend 1: increased aerial attacks and shelling heightening civilian casualties and needs

Since the coup, the MAF has increasingly resorted to air strikes and shelling as a comparative advantage during clashes with armed resistance groups. These groups threaten MAF ground operations but have previously lacked comparable air power and heavy weapons (OHCHR 03/03/2023; HRW 30/01/2024; AI 21/12/2023; KHRG 25/12/2023). The MAF's aerial attacks include the use of domestically produced cluster munitions in several parts of the country, including Chin, Kayah, Kayin, and Shan states (CMC/ICBL 31/08/2023; AI 21/12/2023). The number of air and drone strikes in Myanmar doubled from 465 in 2022 to 900 in 2023 (OCHA 18/12/2023).

Air strikes and shelling have particularly increased since October 2023. Armed resistance forces began to deploy their own explosive weapons against the MAF in April 2023 (OCHA 18/12/2023; CFR 30/11/2023; BBC 23/01/2024; Insecurity Insight 01/02/2024). Following the October escalation, shelling and air strikes became particularly intense in northern Shan, with unverified reports of 130 civilians killed and 210 injured as at 15 December. These figures represent around 35% of 378 reported civilian deaths and nearly 45% of reported civilian injuries across the country in the same period (UNICEF 10/01/2024). Magway and Bago (East) also saw notable increases in the last quarter of 2023, while air strikes and shelling in Kayah, Kayin, and Sagaing were relatively consistent from 2022–2023, with particularly high levels of attacks in Sagaing (ACLED accessed 02/02/2024; OCHA 15/12/2023). As at 15 December 2023, there had been frequent artillery fire in almost all Rakhine state townships since conflict in the state escalated in November (OCHA 15/12/2023).

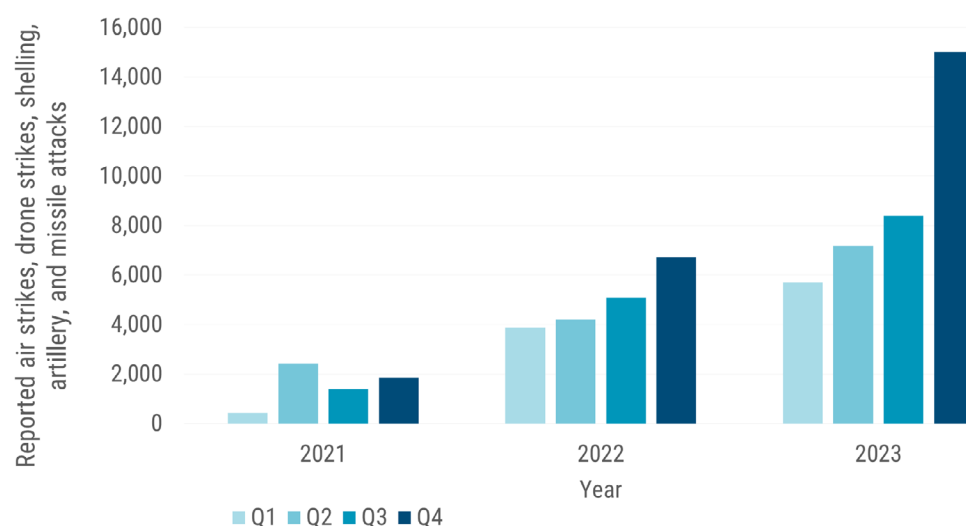
Increased aerial and shelling attacks cause extensive casualties among civilians (OHCHR 03/03/2023). The blockage of and damage to key transport routes since fighting escalated in October 2023 have prevented civilians from fleeing during aerial and shelling attacks, compounding casualties (OCHA 18/12/2023). People with disabilities and older people face particular restrictions on their ability to flee attacks (AI 21/12/2023; OHCHR 03/03/2023).

**UN and NGO investigations conclude that some reported attacks have been indiscriminate or directly targeted civilians** (OHCHR 03/03/2023; AI 31/05/2022). Human Rights Watch has investigated allegations of indiscriminate attacks in Sagaing in April 2023 (that killed over 160 people) and Kachin in October 2023 (that killed around 30 people) (HRW 09/05/2023, 17/10/2023, and 30/01/2024). Since 27 October 2023, Amnesty International has also documented further

<sup>2</sup> The reasons for the decrease in people experiencing food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) are not clear. The decrease is generally inconsistent with the findings that the other humanitarian conditions have been deteriorating.

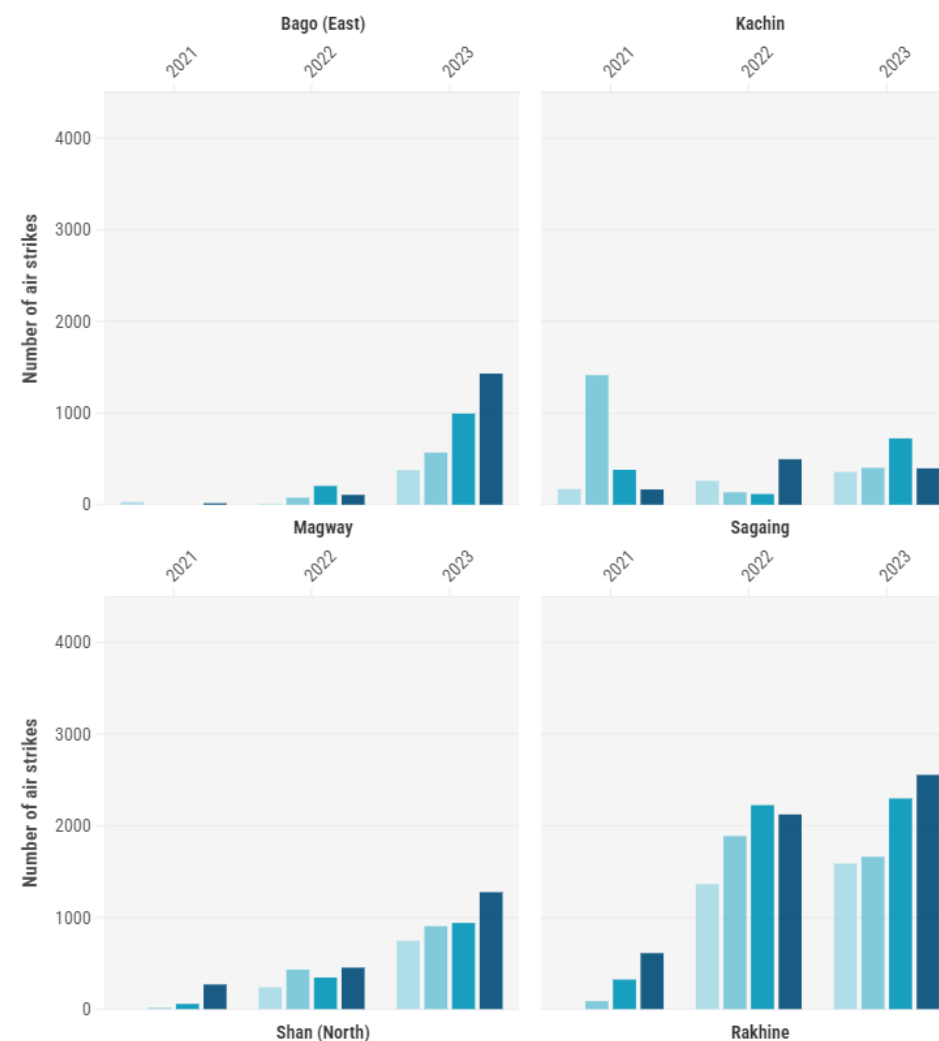
indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure attributed to the MAF, including the use of cluster munitions in northern Shan state in December (AI 21/12/2023). Recent aerial attacks on 5 February in Kayah state and 7 February in Sagaing hit a school and a church respectively, killing four children in the Kayah school and 17 people, including nine children, in the Sagaing church (ECHO 06/02/2024; UNICEF 07/02/2024; AI 08/02/2024). Indiscriminate attacks on civilians form part of the MAF's longstanding 'four cuts' strategy to deprive armed resistance groups of food, funds, recruits, and intelligence by targeting their potential civilian support base (OHCHR 03/03/2023; KHRG 25/12/2023; AI 31/05/2022).

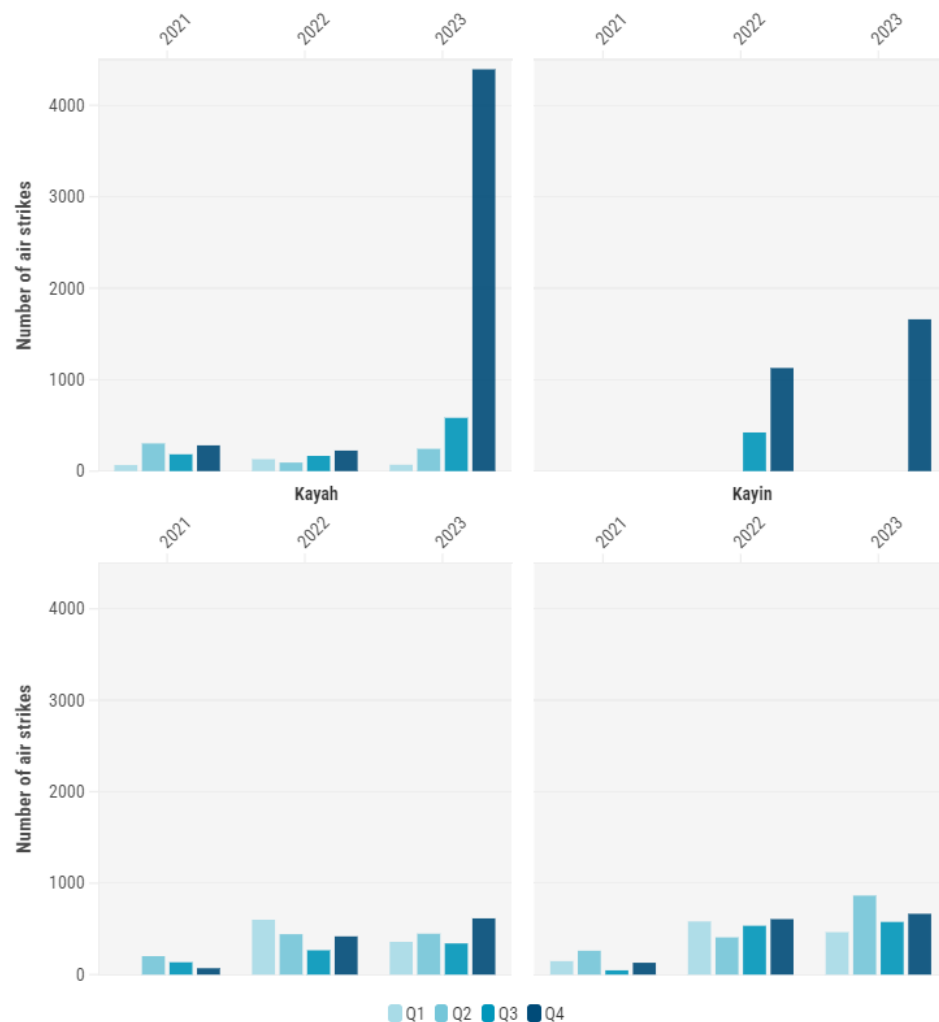
Figure 1. Air strikes, drone strikes, shelling, artillery, and missile attacks in Myanmar, February 2021 to December 2023



Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 01/02/2024)

Figure 2. States and regions that experienced high or escalating air strikes, drone strikes, shelling, artillery, and missile attacks, February 2021 to December 2023





Note: underreporting because of the remote location of many attacks, communication shutdowns in affected communities, and fear of retaliation for reporting affects the figures represented above (The Guardian 31/01/2023).

Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 01/02/2024)

## Trend 2: increased landmine and ERW use heightening civilian casualties and needs

There was an alarming rise in landmine use and victims during the last months of 2023, by which time over half of Myanmar's townships were thought to be contaminated with ERW or landmines. In the first nine months of 2023 alone, reported landmine casualties had increased by 220%, to around 860, from 390 in the entirety of 2022 (UNICEF 10/01/2024; OCHA 18/12/2023). 37% of the total reported casualties from January–September 2023 were in Sagaing state, followed by 12% in Shan state and 10% in Bago region (UNICEF 15/12/2023). In the 15 years between 2007–2022, Shan accounted for around 27% of the total reported casualties, followed by Kachin at 22% and Kayin at 18% (MIMU 08/09/2023). Landmine and ERW incidents are generally underreported because of access constraints preventing data gathering in remote areas and a lack of civilian knowledge of reporting procedures (KHRG 22/12/2023). Since the October escalation, increasing access constraints have also prevented mine risk education and other humanitarian response to ERW and mine use (KII 16/02/2024).

Both the MAF and armed resistance groups use landmines and leave ERW behind (The Monitor accessed 16/02/2024; KHRG 22/12/2023; HRW 20/11/2022; CMC-ICBL 17/11/2022). The MAF has been accused of deliberately targeting civilians with landmines as part of their 'four cuts' strategy or to prevent them from accessing certain areas, including MAF-occupied religious sites. Both the MAF and armed groups provide insufficient information to civilians about landmine locations (KHRG 22/12/2023; CMC-ICBL 17/11/2022).

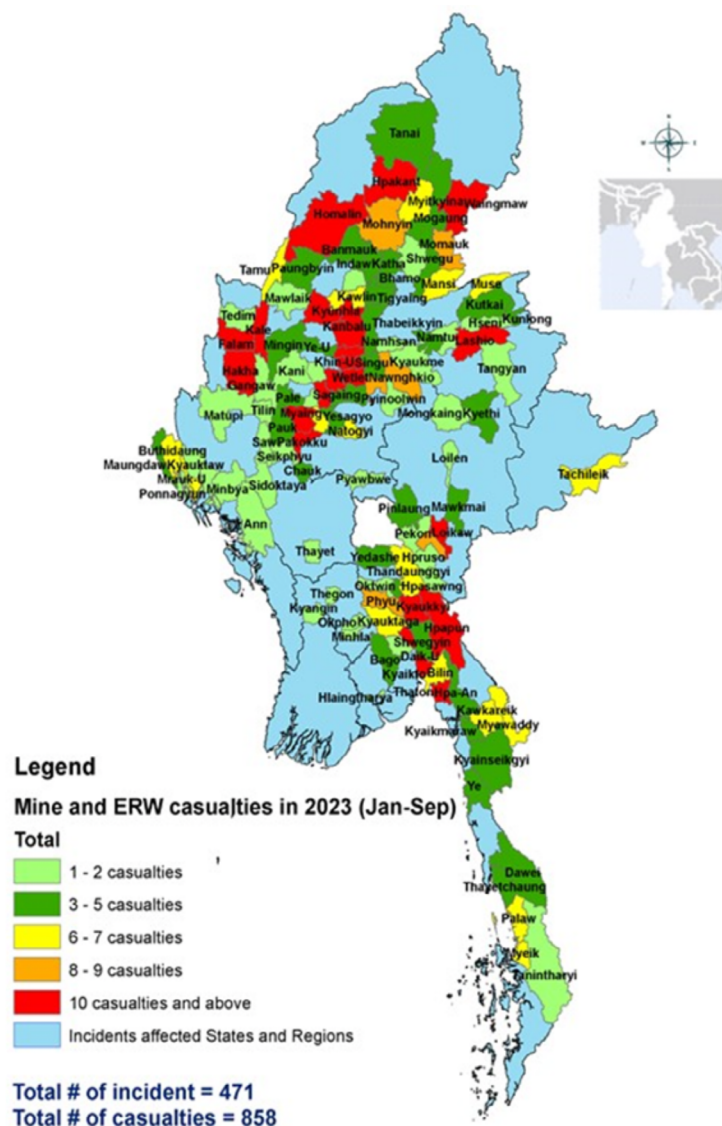
**People moving to new areas are more vulnerable** because they are generally unaware of ERW and mine locations, leading to higher incidents among IDPs and IDP returnees (KHRG 22/12/2023). Nearly half of IDP returnee respondents and one-quarter of IDP respondents surveyed for the 2023 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) reported that ERW or landmines affected one or more household members in the 12 months prior to data collection (OCHA 18/12/2023; KII 14/02/2024).<sup>3</sup> Further, Cyclone Mocha and heavy monsoons throughout

2023 may have also shifted and exposed ERW and mines in affected states, creating new risks for people unaware of mine locations (ICRC 25/10/2023; OCHA 10/11/2023; UNICEF 15/11/2023; IFRC 22/10/2023).

**Children are also highly vulnerable** to ERW and mine explosions because they are less likely to be aware of their dangers and locations. 22% (190) of the 860 landmine casualties in the first nine months of 2023 were children (UNICEF 10/01/2024).

<sup>3</sup> The survey size and date are not publicly available.

WMap 1. Landmine and ERW casualties across Myanmar, January–September 2023



Source: UNICEF (15/12/2023)

### Trend 3: changing number of IDPs and displacement patterns

Between December 2022 and December 2023, the number of IDPs in Myanmar increased by an estimated 1.1 million, from 1.5 to 2.6 million. Increased fighting from October 2023 onwards accounted for over half of this increase, displacing around 630,000 people as at December 2023 (OCHA 18/12/2023 and 12/01/2024; UNHCR 23/01/2024). The post-October 2023 fighting has displaced another 164,000 people who have since returned home, although some have experienced repeated displacement (UNHCR 26/01/2024). Numbers have likely increased further throughout January 2024; for example, fighting in southern Shan from 20–26 January displaced an estimated 100,000 people (ECHO 26/01/2024). Overall, the IDP situation has been increasingly fluid since October, as people experience both short-term cycles of displacement and longer-term displacement to informal sites that are not comprehensively monitored (KII 16/02/2024). These rapid and frequent changes in the IDP population have strained the capacity of host communities, which are experiencing similar levels of need as the people they host, potentially causing social tension (OCHA 15/01/2023).

Around 1.4 million of all IDPs are located in the Northwest (Chin, Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing states), close to the Myanmar–India border (OCHA 18/12/2023). Sagaing continues to host the most IDPs, with almost five times as many as Magway, which has the second-highest number. In 2023, the number of IDPs in Sagaing almost doubled to over one million, from around 600,000 in 2022 (UNHCR 23/01/2024; UNHCR 05/12/2022).

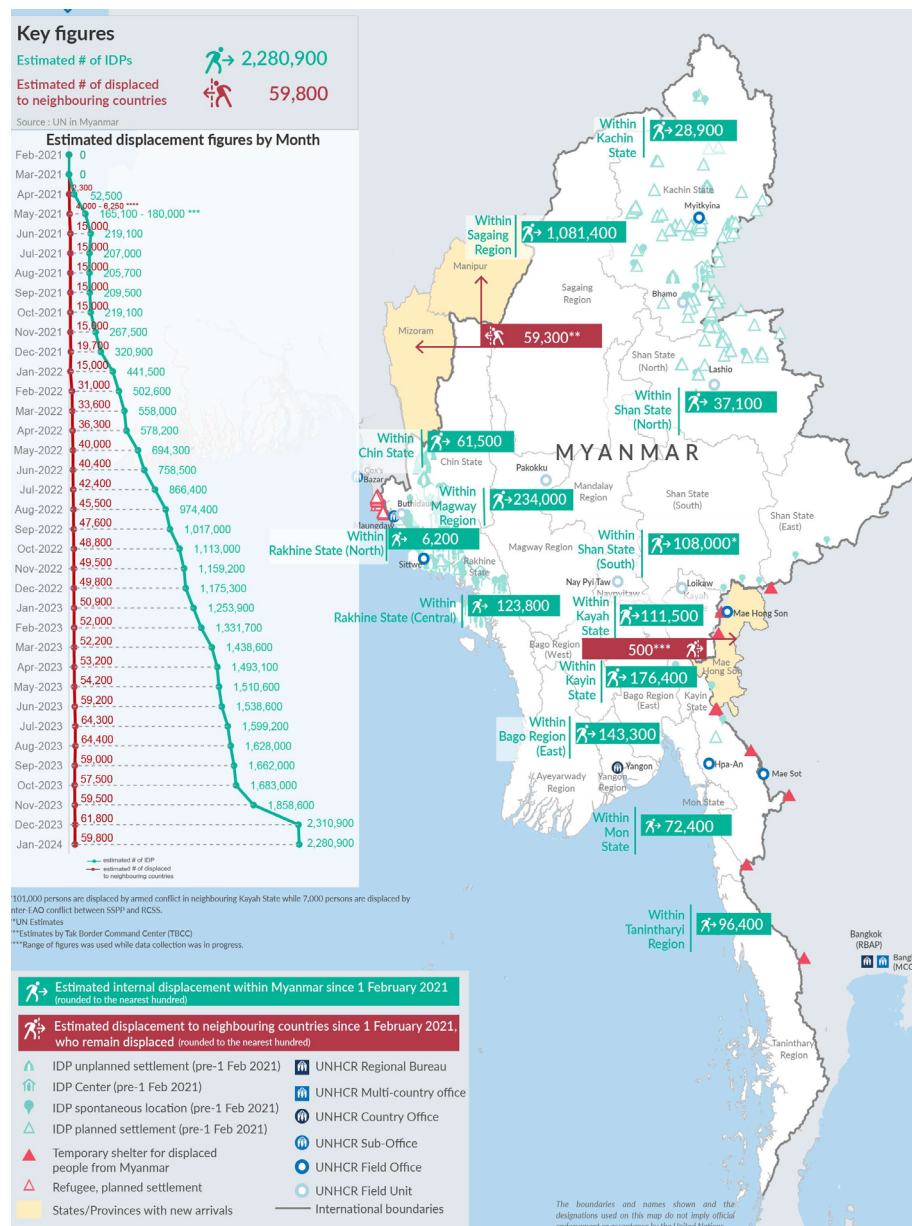
Other states that saw high increases in IDP numbers between December 2022 and December 2023 include:

- central Rakhine state, which experienced a notable increase in IDPs from around 17,300 to almost 124,000
- Mon, where the number of IDPs increased by 300% from approximately 18,000 to 72,000
- northern Shan, where the IDP population increased by over 400% from around 7,000 to around 37,000
- Tanintharyi, which saw an increase of around 250% from 27,000 to 96,000 (UNHCR 23/01/2024, 07/12/2022, 21/08/2023, and 08/03/2023).

Many of these IDPs have experienced multiple displacements since the 2021 coup, on average eight times in states and regions where there is available information (OCHA 18/12/2023). An estimated 306,000 IDPs (around 12% of the total) in Myanmar have been displaced since before the coup, in some cases for over a decade. Communities in situations of protracted displacement are mostly in Chin, Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan states (OCHA 18/12/2023; OCHA 12/01/2024). Both repeated and protracted displacement erode people's coping capacities and increase their likelihood of resorting to harmful coping strategies or becoming aid-dependent (OCHA 15/01/2023).



Map 2. IDPs and refugees in Myanmar, February 2021 to December 2023



Source: UNHCR (23/01/2024)

## CRISIS IMPACTS

## Protection incidents and specific groups at risk

As at December 2023, the most reported protection incidents in Myanmar were extortion, forced labour or slavery, forced displacement, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians (OCHA 18/12/2023). Civilians have also become victims of extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and gender-based violence (GBV) (OHCHR 03/03/2023). The October escalation of fighting has particularly increased the incidence of forced recruitment, killings, abductions, injuries, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and use as human shields. Increased checkpoints facilitate these violations by providing avenues for frequent civilian harassment, intimidation, extortion, and denial of passage (Shelter Cluster et al. 25/01/2024).

## Notable trends in 2023

**Increased extortion**, often at checkpoints and in IDP camps: this is a particularly significant concern in Rakhine, where a lack of documentation and citizenship leave stateless Rohingya vulnerable when travelling or seeking access to basic services (OCHA 18/12/2023, 15/01/2023, and 08/09/2023; OHCHR 03/03/2023). Further, there is a new risk of extortion of people attempting to evade conscription under a law the SAC activated on 10 February 2024 (KII 16/02/2024; The Irrawaddy 15/02/2024). This previously unenforced military conscription law obliges all men aged 18–35 and women aged 18–27 to serve in the MAF for up to two years, or up to five years in a state of emergency. ‘Specialist’ professionals, including healthcare workers, aged 18–45 (men) and 18–35 (women) can be conscripted for up to three years (The Irrawaddy 12/02/2024; Reuters 14/02/2024).

**Increased forced recruitment and forced labour**: there are reports that several armed resistance groups, including the Ta’ang National Liberation Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and the Shan State Progressive Party, have been engaging in increased forced recruitment since October 2023 (IISS 12/2023; HRW 21/12/2023). As at mid-December 2023, civilian recruitment had been reported in Kachin in particular (OCHA 15/12/2023). The MAF has also engaged in forced recruitment, partly in response to increasing desertions and defections (The Irrawaddy 16/01/2024; Frontier Myanmar 05/01/2024). Both the MAF and armed resistance groups target children; in 2022, the UN verified cases involving the recruitment and use of 235 children, over half of whom were recruited by the MAF and the Border Guard Forces, followed by the Kachin Independence Army (49 instances), PDFs (18 instances), and other armed resistance groups (UNGA/UNSC 05/06/2023).

Further, in October 2023, the ILO’s Commission of Inquiry on Myanmar found that the MAF had engaged in the “systematic and widespread” use of Myanmar residents for forced labour

in the context of military activities, including as human shields (ILO 04/10/2023). There is a risk that these practices will increase following activation of the military conscription law, as new conscripts with minimal training and experience may be used as human shields, minesweepers, or in other roles that pose protection risks (Radio Free Asia 14/02/2024; The Irrawaddy 15/02/2024).

**Increased arbitrary arrests and detentions**, particularly in Rakhine state, where close to 200 people were detained for alleged affiliation with armed groups between mid-November and the end of December 2023. Arbitrary arrests at checkpoints and during MAF operations have also been frequent in Sagaing, with around 110 people arrested in Kale and Monya townships in the first two weeks of December 2023 alone (UNICEF 10/01/2024; OCHA 15/12/2023). As at 26 January 2024, the SAC had arrested an estimated 26,000 people for political reasons since the coup, with around 20,000 still detained and vulnerable to cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment, including torture. Around 1,600 people held by the MAF since the coup have died in custody (OHCHR 30/01/2024 and 03/03/2023).

**Increased risk of human trafficking and smuggling, fuelled by rising displacement and the economic crisis.** As at August 2023, an estimated 120,000 Myanmar and foreign citizens, including children, had been trafficked into 'scam' compounds on the border between China and Kayah and Shan states, where there were allegations of forced labour, sexual exploitation, and organ harvesting (OCHA 18/12/2023; UN 29/08/2023). Low female workforce participation increases women's vulnerability to trafficking and informal and unsafe work (OCHA 18/12/2023).

**Increased GBV risk**, as the deteriorating political and humanitarian crisis compounds pre-existing gender inequality. Intimate partner violence is estimated to be the most common form of GBV, followed by conflict-related sexual violence. Women are increasingly vulnerable in overcrowded IDP camps and during military raids (OCHA 18/12/2023; OHCHR 03/03/2023; RFA 19/01/2024). There are also recent reports of sexual assault by armed resistance groups since the October escalation in fighting (The New Humanitarian 05/02/2024). The 2023 MSNA found that, among IDPs, IDP returnees, other conflict-affected populations, and non-displaced Rohingya, displaced girls and women were most likely to report concerns about sexual harassment and violence, at 23% and 20% of respondents respectively (KII 14/02/2024).

**Increased discrimination against Rohingya people**, who continue to be deprived of basic rights: as at December 2023, around 153,000 Rohingya were internally displaced, while around 450,000 others remained in their homes but were subject to movement restrictions and denied basic services (OCHA 18/12/2023). Recent months have seen increasing restrictions on the Rohingya's freedom of movement, as the SAC has instated new, expensive travel authorisation requirements. There are reports that Arakan Army members in northern and central Rakhine have also required the Rohingya to pay 'protection fees'. In response to these rights violations, along with dire socioeconomic conditions and insecurity, increasing

numbers of Rohingya are attempting to flee by sea, risking death, arrest, detention, and unfair legal proceedings on their return to Myanmar (OHCHR 03/03/2023). As at December 2023, there were approximately one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, mostly in Cox's Bazar district, where they experience severe humanitarian needs (OCHA 18/12/2023). SAC leader General Min Aung Hlaing recently questioned whether Rohingya refugees had the right to return to Myanmar (CFR accessed 16/02/2024).

**Increased civilian casualties resulting from the above-mentioned and other protection concerns:** the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported that, as at 31 January 2024, the SAC and 'pro-military groups' had killed around 4,500 people since the coup, with around 1,600 killed in 2023 alone (AAPP 01/02/2024; OHCHR 30/01/2024). These figures are understood to undercount deaths in more remote areas where armed conflict has proliferated (AP 01/02/2024; OCHA 18/12/2023). Armed resistance groups have also perpetrated civilian casualties (PRIO 12/06/2023).

## Housing and essential items

Conflict and natural hazards in 2023 have aggravated the shelter situation for both displaced and non-displaced populations. Increased aerial attacks and shelling cause extensive damage to housing and other civilian property, as does the systematic and widespread burning of homes by the MAF. Between the coup and February 2024, an estimated 86,000 civilian properties, including 78,000 houses across the country, were burnt (The Irrawaddy 06/02/2024). Nearly 39,000 homes were burnt between February 2022 and January 2023, around 65% of which were in Sagaing state (OHCHR 03/03/2023; AI 31/05/2022; Shelter Cluster et al. 25/01/2024). The arrival of Cyclone Mocha in May also worsened the shelter and WASH situation in western states, damaging around 135,500 houses and over 75,000 latrines (Health Cluster 09/01/2024).

These developments have contributed to an almost 45% increase in the number of people in need of shelter, NFIs, and camp coordination and management assistance between 2023–2024 (OCHA 25/01/2023; OCHA 18/12/2023). A 2023 MSNA found that in total, two-thirds of non-displaced households and half of displaced households in Myanmar reported shelter damage and inadequacy, including leaks and a lack of insulation. Most also lacked places to cook, storage space for food and water, and NFIs (OCHA 18/12/2023). The fighting since October 2023 has worsened housing needs, as nearly 650,000 new IDPs strain the resources of existing IDP and host communities (OCHA 15/12/2023).

Many new IDPs shelter in unsuitable conditions, often in the open air (OCHA 15/12/2023 and 18/12/2023). The shelter situation for IDPs is most severe in Kachin and Rakhine states, as well as in the Northwest (Chin, Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing states) and the Southeast



(eastern and western Bago, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, southern and eastern Shan, and Tanintharyi), where over 50% of IDPs live in inadequate shelters (OCHA 12/01/2024 and 18/12/2023). Increased fighting since October has left additional IDPs sheltering in the open air, construction sites, and other public sites, often with limited access to humanitarian assistance (Al Jazeera 14/12/2023; OCHA 15/12/2023 and 18/12/2023). In Sagaing, as at 15 December 2023, around 150,000 IDPs in Kawlin and Tigyain townships had no access to humanitarian assistance (OCHA 15/12/2023).

In formal camps, shelters are also inadequate, and significant overcrowding contributes to competition over resources and related violence, including GBV (OCHA 18/12/2023). In the Northeast, the Southeast, and Rakhine state, authorities have closed or threatened to close IDP camps without providing adequate alternative shelter. This 'IDP zero' policy has increased forced returns to unsafe locations, integration into host communities despite a lack of community capacity, or onward displacement, often to informal sites given the fear of formal site closure (OCHA 18/12/2023; UNHCR 03/05/2023; COAR 20/06/2023; Health Cluster 09/01/2024).

### Livelihoods and economic pressure

Conflict and natural hazards threaten the livelihoods of many people, with about 70% of the population depending on agriculture for income.

**Fighting, particularly aerial attacks, shelling, and mine and ERW use, has damaged farmland and markets, killed livestock, and limited livelihood access.** Since the escalation, increased displacement and movement restrictions have prevented people from accessing markets, fields, and other workplaces (Shelter Cluster et al. 25/01/2024). People displaced by recent clashes are concerned about crops rotting in unharvested fields (HRW 09/02/2024). Increased ERW and mine use, often in fields and forested areas, further restricts movement and harms civilians engaged in agricultural work and foraging, with resulting injury and disability preventing them from continuing work (The Monitor accessed 16/02/2024; KHRG 22/12/2023). Some farmers in areas affected by high levels of aerial attacks, shelling, and mines and ERW become unwilling to work in fields for fear of attack (KHRG 25/12/2023).

The October 2023 escalation in fighting also disrupted the October–December harvests of rice and maize, and continued violence will likely disrupt the planting and growing of rice, maize, and wheat until March (OCHA 15/12/2023; Al Jazeera 14/12/2023; ACAPS accessed 07/02/2024). Partly in response to these developments, around 25% of conflict-affected farmers had decreased their planting areas as at December 2023 (OCHA 18/12/2023).

In the second half of 2023, conflict and the depreciation of the Myanmar kyat caused inflation, already high, to rise further, **aggravating economic pressures** on households (OCHA 18/12/2023; WB 12/12/2023). As a result of these pressures, 25 million people, nearly half the population, were estimated to be living in poverty as at August 2023 (Health Cluster 09/01/2024). The recent escalation in fighting has also threatened cross-border trade to Bangladesh, China, and India, with a potentially significant impact on the country's economy, which has been in crisis since the coup (Crisis24 09/01/2024; OHCHR 03/03/2023; UNDP 01/12/2021; IISS 01/2024). As at December 2023, growth was expected at only 1% during the first quarter of 2024 (WB 12/12/2023).

### Food security and nutrition

**Limited livelihood opportunities, along with higher prices, have forced households to reduce food consumption as a coping strategy,** particularly in Chin and Kayah (OCHA 18/12/2023). Inflation and the depreciation of the kyat, low agricultural production, SAC limits on rice and fuel transportation, and domestic and global trade disruptions have contributed to staple food shortages and rising prices (OCHA 18/12/2023; UNICEF 10/01/2024). There are reports of the MAF preventing food access by using roadblocks, confiscating and destroying food stocks, and killing livestock (OHCHR 03/03/2023). As at mid-2023, conflict-related market disruptions and low 2022 production had contributed to record-high rice prices at MMK 1,400 (USD 0.67) per kilogramme, over double the mid-2021 price of MMK 600 (USD 0.29) per kilo (FAO 14/06/2023).

**As at December 2023, 19% of the population (around 10.75 million people) were experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity levels, and 4% (around 2.25 million) were experiencing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels.** Food insecurity was worst in Kayah, northern Magway, and Sagaing, partly attributable to the high IDP numbers in these states and Cyclone Mocha's impact on agriculture (OCHA 18/12/2023; FAO 04/08/2023). Displaced people, non-displaced Rohingya people, and women, especially female heads of household, are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. The proportion of affected IDPs is almost twice the proportion of non-displaced people (OCHA 18/12/2023). Families where at least one member has a disability are also more likely to experience extreme food insecurity levels, partly because of restricted access to livelihoods (KII 14/02/2024).

**While there are no formal malnutrition prevalence surveys in Myanmar, there is anecdotal evidence of increased malnutrition in the last months of 2023.** As at December 2023, the Nutrition Cluster estimated that 2.2 million people (nearly 4% of the population), including around 1.3 million children under five and 960,000 pregnant and lactating women, required nutrition assistance. The Northwest (Chin, Magway, and Sagaing) and Rakhine state faced the worst nutrition needs, followed by central Myanmar, the Northeast, and the Southeast

(OCHA 18/12/2023). Up to 75% of children 6–23 months of age did not consume a minimally acceptable diet (UNICEF 11/12/2023). Over 310,000 malnourished children who were not reached by humanitarian responders in 2023 are at risk of irreparable damage to their health, educational development, and lifelong productivity (OCHA 12/01/2024).

## Physical and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing

### Physical and mental health needs

**Increased aerial attacks, shelling, and landmine and ERW incidents have increased the number of people living with long-term disabilities and health complications**, who generally lack access to proper medical treatment, physical rehabilitation, and psychosocial support (KHRG 25/12/2023; INEW 30/04/2021). As at November 2021, rehabilitation centres covered an estimated 10% of needs in Myanmar. Coverage has likely worsened since, as insecurity and the economic crisis have caused a general health system collapse (The Monitor accessed 16/02/2024).

**Increased IDP numbers, particularly since the fighting escalated in October, along with Cyclone Mocha and monsoons, may increase the transmission of waterborne, vector-borne, and vaccine-preventable diseases**, particularly in overcrowded sites with poor WASH conditions. Growing access constraints prevent routine monitoring and surveillance of diseases, potentially leading to uncontrolled transmission (Insecurity Insight 15/02/2024). Dengue and malaria are endemic to Myanmar, usually increasing in late March or early April and peaking in June–September (Health Cluster 09/01/2024). While confirmed cases of vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, diphtheria, and polio, have decreased in recent years, there has been a concurrent decrease in routine immunisations, leading to a high risk of renewed outbreaks (Health Cluster 09/01/2024; OCHA 18/12/2023).

**Attacks, generalised insecurity, and humanitarian needs take a significant toll on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing**, with affected people reporting fear, anxiety, sleeplessness, and depression (AI 31/05/2022; Health Cluster 09/01/2024; OCHA 18/12/2023). Children have been experiencing heightened mental health and psychosocial support needs since the October conflict escalation, which has increased their risk of witnessing or experiencing violence and displacement (UNICEF 10/01/2024). Data from a 2016 global school-based health survey in Myanmar indicated high depression rates (around 27%) and suicidal ideation (9.4%) among adolescents aged 13–17 (Health Cluster 09/01/2024).

### Healthcare access

Myanmar's economic crisis and insecurity have reduced healthcare access across the country, with life-threatening consequences (Health Cluster 09/01/2024). As at December 2023, 70% of non-displaced Rohingya households, 40% of IDPs, 34% of IDP returnees, and 25% of other crisis-affected people faced restricted healthcare access. Restrictions were particularly significant in Kayah, Kayin, Kachin, and Rakhine states, while Kachin, Magway, and Sagaing were most in need of life-saving medical services (OCHA 18/12/2023).

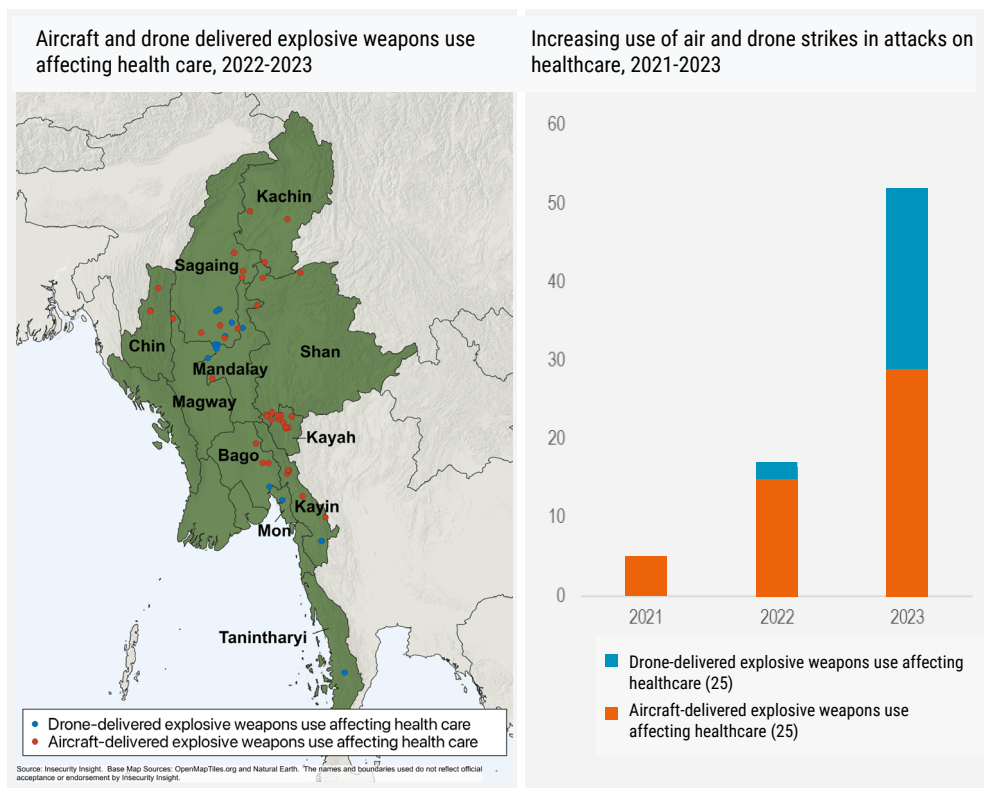
**Cost was the main barrier cited by all groups in the 2023 MSNA** (OCHA 18/12/2023). In recent months, increased fuel prices have been adding to the economic burden of healthcare, making even short trips to healthcare facilities prohibitively expensive (MSF 16/01/2024). Geography also restricts healthcare access, with highly limited medical services and medical supplies available to the nearly three million people living in townships that the Myanmar Information Management Unit defined as 'hard-to-reach' or 'hardest-to-reach' based on road accessibility. Cyclone Mocha had a significant impact on healthcare in western states, affecting 315 health facilities, 52 of which were located in IDP sites (Health Cluster 09/01/2024).

**Myanmar saw some of the highest attacks on healthcare in the world in 2023**, with up to around 400 verified reported attacks (Insecurity Insight accessed 16/02/2024). Estimates differ depending on the definition of attack and verification level used. OCHA reported at least 34 attacks on healthcare facilities, 14 health workers killed, and 21 others injured throughout 2023, while Insecurity Insight reported 140 facilities damaged, 36 health workers killed, and 26 health workers injured in the same period (OCHA 18/12/2023; Insecurity Insight accessed 16/02/2024). 2023, especially from October onwards, saw a particular increase in aerial attacks and shelling affecting hospitals, health clinics, and other health facilities, including in Chin, Kayah, Rakhine, northern Shan, and Sagaing (MSF 16/01/2024 and 18/11/2023; AI 21/12/2023; Insecurity Insight accessed 16/02/2024; RFA 30/11/2023; Insecurity Insight 21/01/2024).

Between February 2021 and February 2024, around 900 health workers were arrested, with many mistreated and tortured in detention, leading to five reported deaths (Insecurity Insight 01/02/2024; WHO accessed 05/02/2024; Myanmar Witness 03/01/2024). Limited to no access for many international responders means that community health workers have been providing the bulk of care to conflict-affected communities and are at the highest risk of attacks and violence (MSF 16/01/2024). Aerial attacks have had significant physical and mental health consequences for health workers, forcing some to stop working (Insecurity Insight 01/02/2024).

**Since October 2023, people seeking healthcare, including emergency care, have been stopped at roadblocks**, where they are subject to harassment, extortion, denial of passage, and other impediments (Shelter Cluster et al. 25/01/2024). The SAC continues to limit medication transport, while the MAF has confiscated and destroyed medical supplies (OCHA 18/12/2023; OHCHR 03/03/2023).

### Map 3. Air and drone strikes affecting healthcare, 2021 – 2023



Source: Insecurity Insight (01/02/2024)

### Education

**As at December 2023, over 30% of children in Myanmar were not enrolled in any form of learning.** School enrolment is particularly low among high school students, with the highest levels among female high school students and non-displaced stateless Rohingya (OCHA 18/12/2023; UNICEF 11/12/2023). Children with disabilities are also less likely to be enrolled in formal schooling because of disability-related barriers to access, such as physical accessibility of schools (KII 14/02/2024). General enrolment is lowest in the Northwest and the Southeast. Disrupted education increases the risk of child labour, trafficking, early marriage, and associated protection risks (OCHA 18/12/2023; UNICEF 11/12/2023).

The 2023 MSNA found that the most commonly reported reasons for school closures and lack of attendance were security risks (as reported by 55% of the respondents), school closure by authorities (45%), exposure to conflict (36%), and teacher shortages (36%) (OCHA 18/12/2023). Aerial attacks and shelling have hit increasing numbers of schools since the coup, with twice as many attacks reported in 2022 as in 2021 (OHCHR 03/03/2023). In 2023, Myanmar was among the three countries with the highest number of attacks on education, along with Burkina Faso and Ukraine (ECHO 06/02/2024). Further, a large number of educators are involved in the civil disobedience movement, heightening teacher shortages. In May 2023, Cyclone Mocha affected 1,452 schools, compounding the education situation in northern and western states (Health Cluster 09/01/2024).

Since the October clashes, parents have increasingly avoided sending their children to school for fear of insecurity and attacks (UNICEF 12/01/2024).

## OUTLOOK FOR 2024

- Continued or increased fighting, along with climate and natural hazards, are expected to increase **humanitarian needs** in 2024. OCHA projects that the number of displaced people is likely to increase from 2.6 million to around 3.6 million, aggravating needs among both IDPs and host communities (OCHA 18/12/2023).
- Conflict and violence are expected to escalate in 2024**, particularly as EAOs, PDFs, and other armed resistance groups have been increasing coordinated action against the MAF (OCHA 18/12/2023). While China mediated several rounds of ceasefire talks between the MAF and the Three Brotherhood Alliance in December and January, both ceasefires failed to hold, and neither applied to armed operations launched by other EAOs and PDFs (IISS 01/2024; RFA 17/01/2024; PBS 12/01/2024).
- As the conflict continues, **civilian casualties are likely to increase** for several reasons. The MAF is experiencing rising defections and desertions and struggling to defend key transport routes for troops and supplies. In response to this loss of manpower and territorial control, the MAF is increasingly resorting to aerial attacks and shelling, which have the potential to cause large-scale civilian casualties (CFR 30/11/2023; BBC 23/01/2024; The Guardian 29/01/2024; RFA 02/01/2024). The military has already carried out indiscriminate aerial and shelling attacks on villages captured by resistance groups (AP 07/01/2024). Continued losses may also encourage the MAF to lean more on its 'four cuts' strategy (AI Jazeera 14/12/2023; ABC 22/11/2023). An increasingly brutal MAF response may be encouraged by General Min Aung Hlaing, the SAC chairman and MAF commander-in-chief, who has faced growing criticism over MAF losses from political and military allies (BBC 23/01/2024).
- The first draft of 5,000 people under the SAC's recently announced conscription law is planned for April 2024, with 5,000 additional people recruited monthly (The Irrawaddy 12/02/2024; Reuters 14/02/2024). Efforts to evade this widespread conscription may lead to increased internal displacement, emigration, bribery, and extortion. Widespread conscription will also reduce availability of healthcare workers and local humanitarian responders who are forced to serve, potentially aggravating humanitarian needs (The Diplomat 12/02/2024; Radio Free Asia 14/02/2024; The Irrawaddy 15/02/2024).
- As at December 2023, the current **El Niño** event was predicted to continue until around April–June 2024, aggravating **food insecurity** across the country (NOAA 13/12/2023). El Niño commonly causes below-average rainfall and lower agricultural production in Myanmar (WB 02/04/2019). As at February 2024, seasonal forecasts indicated a 40–50% likelihood of below-average rainfall in Myanmar until April, with one source indicating the worst effects in the west and another in the north (ECMWF accessed 01/02/2024; IRI accessed 01/02/2024). This weather pattern, which occurs during the growing period for wheat, second growing period for rice, and sowing season for potatoes, aggravates food

insecurity across Myanmar by decreasing agricultural production, particularly among smallholder farmers. Lower agricultural production in 2024 is also expected because of increased fighting, the lingering impacts of Cyclone Mocha, and pest infestations (OCHA 18/12/2023; FAO 14/06/2023).

- Following September 2022 orders to **close formal IDP camps** across Myanmar under a National Strategy for Resettlement and Closure of IDP Camps, the SAC has forced IDPs to evacuate camps in Chin, Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan states (UNHCR 03/05/2023; COAR 20/06/2023; Health Cluster 09/01/2024). As at August 2023, the SAC had closed around 175 camps. Most IDPs have not returned to their villages of origin because of a lack of livelihood opportunities and security risks, including the threat of landmines and ERW explosions (Health Cluster 09/01/2024). The SAC is anticipated to continue closing formal sites in 2024, increasing the number of IDPs experiencing repeated displacement, inadequate shelter and access to services, and associated needs (OCHA 18/12/2023).

## HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

### Security constraints

Checkpoints and violence against humanitarian workers were two primary drivers of access impediments in 2023 (OCHA 12/01/2024). As at October 2023, 60% of around 1,130 reported access incidents (around 670 incidents) involved military operations and armed activity. 3% (around 40 incidents) involved violence or threats against humanitarian personnel, operations, assets, and facilities (OCHA 18/12/2023). Between January–November 2023, humanitarian responders reported that conflict parties arrested or detained around 145 aid workers (OCHA 12/01/2024). Additional checkpoints following October 2023, established by EAOs as well as the MAF, have also led to increased extortion of humanitarian workers seeking to enter affected communities (KII 16/02/2024).

Since the October 2023 conflict escalation, humanitarian workers have been caught up in particularly high arrests in Rakhine state (UNICEF 10/01/2024; OCHA 15/12/2023). There are also reports that some EAOs, including the Arakan Army in Rakhine state, have forcibly recruited humanitarian responders (Shelter Cluster et al. 25/01/2024). As at January 2024, humanitarian responders had been evacuated from Lashio town, northern Shan (Crisis24 09/01/2024; AI Jazeera 14/12/2023).

Local humanitarian responders and operations are most at risk of threats, detention, and violence (OCHA 18/12/2023). It is likely that the figures above significantly undercount violence and threats against humanitarian responders, particularly local responders, because of security, political, and logistical barriers to information-gathering and -sharing.



## Aid politicisation and bureaucratic constraints

Since the coup, the SAC and the NUG have politicised humanitarian aid and implemented varied administrative barriers to access, including the October 2022 Organisation Registration Law requiring all organisations present in Myanmar, excluding religious entities, to register their presence (OCHA 18/12/2023). The law also imposes fees, reporting, and approval requirements that hamper organisations' ability to carry out activities rapidly and effectively (OHCHR 03/03/2023). Similarly, the NUG has urged local and international NGOs and civil society organisations to apply for authorisation from the relevant ministries within the NUG before implementing humanitarian programmes in NUG-administered areas (TNH 24/03/2023). Responders have reported growing bureaucratic obstacles since October 2023 related to authorities more frequently denying permissions. Some responders are required to negotiate access with armed resistance groups controlling new territories, and face particular difficulty navigating areas that are characterised by mixed SAC and armed resistance control (KII 16/02/2024).

The SAC frequently denies travel authorisations, which was a primary driver of access constraints in 2023 (OCHA 12/01/2024). Failure to comply with the above registration law is increasingly becoming a common justification for denial (OCHA 08/09/2023). SAC restrictions on the import of specialist humanitarian supplies, such as those needed for the treatment of malnutrition, have also restricted response capacity (OCHA 18/12/2023).

## Physical and logistical constraints

**In most states and regions, roadblocks, infrastructure damage, and flooding during the monsoon season frequently impede the transport** of local aid supplies, compounding shortages generated by import restrictions (OCHA 18/12/2023). As at August 2023, an estimated 2.9 million people (around 5% of the population) lived in 49 townships that the Myanmar Information Management Unit defined as 'hard-to-reach' or 'hardest-to-reach' based on road accessibility throughout the year (Health Cluster 09/01/2024). Disruptions to key transport routes have increased since October 2023, with disruptions to major routes between states/regions including northern Shan and Mandalay; Yangon and Rakhine state; Chin and Sagaing; Chin and Magway; and Kachin and Mandalay (Crisis24 09/01/2024; OCHA 18/12/2023 and 15/12/2023). A lack of fuel because of high prices and SAC limits on fuel transport, particularly in Sagaing and Rakhine, also prevents the transport and delivery of humanitarian supplies (OCHA 18/12/2023; UNICEF 10/01/2024; Crisis24 09/01/2024). As at January 2024, all ground and river transport to Rakhine was cut off, and Kalamyo (Sagaing), Lashio (Sagaing), and Loikaw airports were closed indefinitely (Crisis24 09/01/2024).

**Supply chains are affected by security threats**, including roadblocks, checkpoints, and threats to personnel. Disrupted energy supplies threaten the longevity of medical supplies (Health Cluster 09/01/2024; OCHA 18/12/2023).

The SAC continues to impose widespread communication restrictions and shutdowns, which prevent the sharing of information on humanitarian needs and the response (OCHA 18/12/2023). As at 30 January 2024, partial or complete shutdowns affected communication services in 74 townships in most conflict-affected states, including most of Rakhine and Sagaing (OHCHR 30/01/2024; UNICEF 10/01/2024; OCHA 15/12/2023 and 17/10/2023).

**Market disruptions and bank withdrawal limits also undermine the response capacity** (OCHA 18/12/2023). While cash assistance has become increasingly central to the humanitarian response, banking restrictions may prevent some civilians from accessing cash in bank accounts. Inflation and the depreciation of the kyat have also reduced the effectiveness of cash assistance (OCHA 18/12/2023 and 15/12/2023; Al Jazeera 14/12/2023).

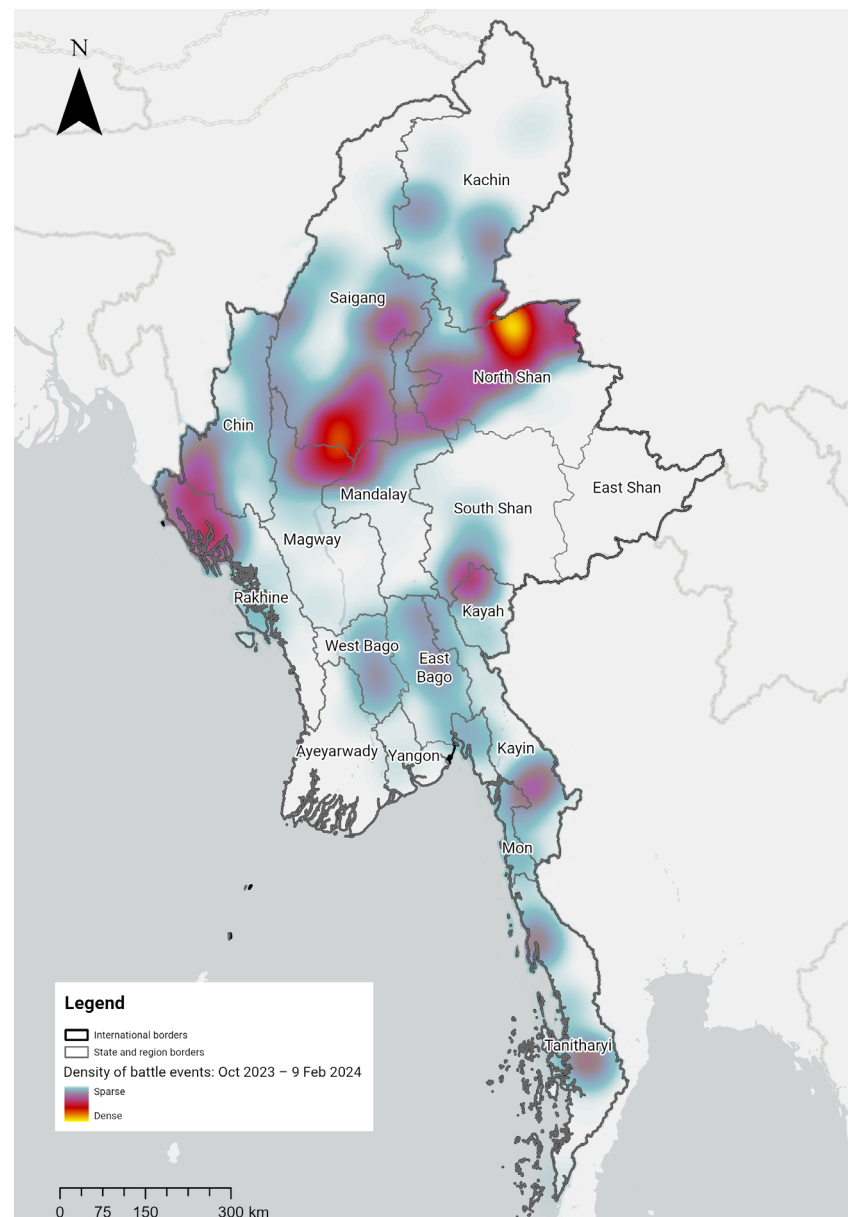
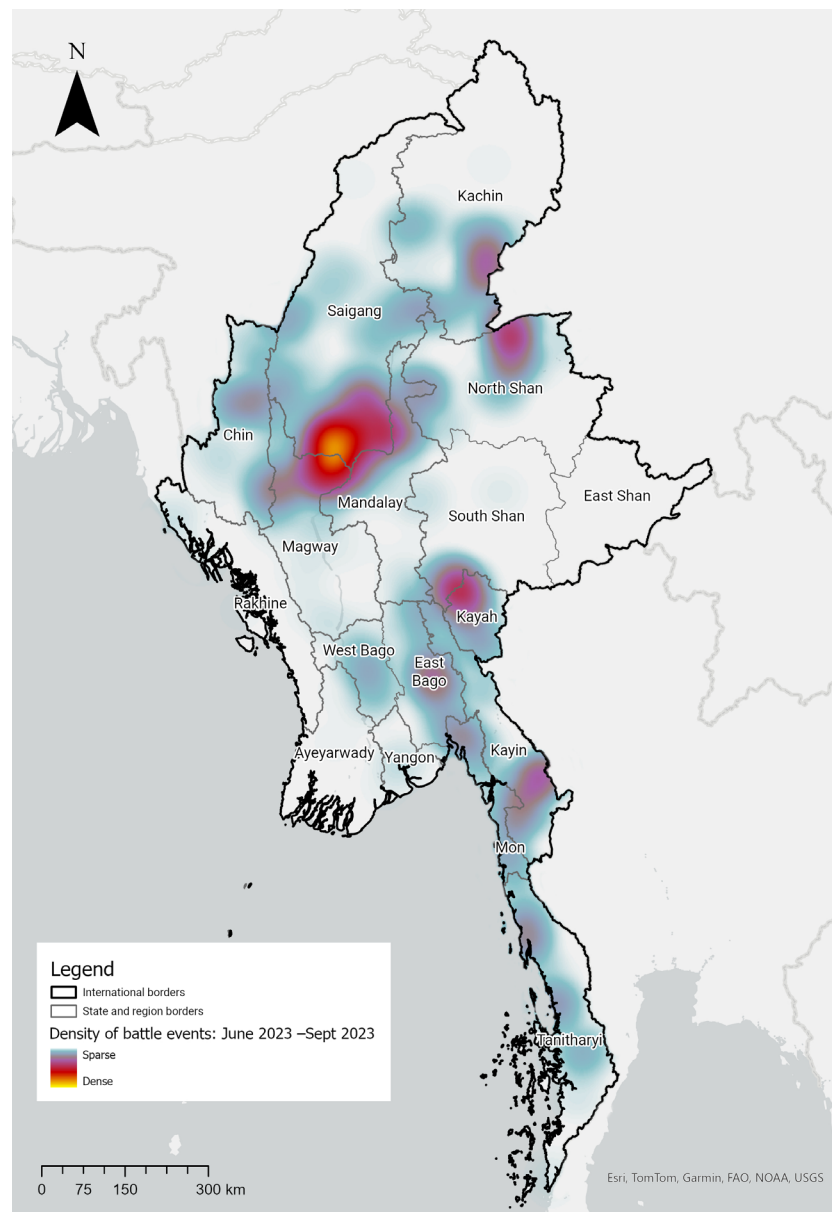
## Response capacity

Because of significant access constraints, local organisations provide the bulk of aid and assistance across Myanmar (OCHA 18/12/2023). Many of these actors have longstanding experience providing low-profile, localised assistance in the face of security risks and bureaucratic obstacles. International support, including through security assistance and flexible funding, facilitates continuation of this work, despite increased access constraints following October 2023 (KII 16/02/2024). International responders are also working to increase local responders' engagement with and trust in the cluster system (OCHA 18/12/2023).

Cross-border assistance, which was already occurring relatively frequently across the Myanmar–Thai border, is part of this local response. There is also potential for increased aid delivery across the India–Myanmar border (CSIS 29/11/2023; The Irrawaddy 29/11/2023). At the national level, the Government of Thailand recently announced a plan to deliver aid to around 20,000 people across the border in Myanmar, which some observers have criticised because it involves coordinating with the SAC (CSIS 29/11/2023; Radio Free Asia 09/02/2024; The Irrawaddy 09/02/2024).



## MAPS 4: COMPARISON OF DENSITY OF BATTLE EVENTS ACROSS MYANMAR IN JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2023 AND OCTOBER 2023 TO FEBRUARY 2024



Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 13/02/2024)