

# MYANMAR

## Impact of 1 February coup

### CRISIS OVERVIEW

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military staged a coup and ordered a year-long state of emergency under sections 417 and 418(a) of the 2008 constitution, promising that new elections would be held one year after what they labelled 'fraudulent elections' in November 2020 (Myanmar Times 02/02/2021; Reuters 16/02/2021 and 01/02/2021). This coup transferred all legislative, executive, and judicial powers of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Commander in Chief of the Defence Services (Reuters 01/02/2021). In response, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) was immediately formed as a parliament, primarily by democratically elected members of the 2020 general election. CRPH recognises itself as the only legitimate government (CRPH 20/02/2021). By mid-April, a National Unity Government was established (CRPH 16/04/2021). This move, coupled with the formation and growth of a civil disobedience movement (CDM) and associated protests, has severely constrained the military junta's ability to consolidate power and rule of law (01/02/2021).

Countrywide protests are ongoing, with the military junta using systemic and arbitrary violence against anti-coup protesters. The use of live ammunition, raids, strip searches, beatings, and detention has been reported (Myanmar Now

22/03/2021; The Irrawaddy 15/04/2021; Frontier Myanmar 21/02/2021). Since 1 February, prices of essential goods have surged across the country, the kyat (MMK) has depreciated, banks have closed, and supply chains have been disrupted (The New Humanitarian 02/03/2021; WFP accessed 12/04/2021). The World Bank forecasts a 10% economic contraction and increased poverty rates in 2021 (World Bank 21/04/2021). There has been a notable rise in humanitarian needs, as well as a shift in locations requiring humanitarian assistance. Peri-urban areas, such as Hlaing Tharyar and Myingyan townships, are at the centre of mass crackdowns. Although conflict has been ongoing for years in Shan, Kachin, and Kayin states and the Bago region, hostilities have intensified since 1 February, displacing thousands of people – in some instances, for the second or third time (OCHA 25/02/2021; Kachin News 12/03/2021; BNI 12/04/2021; The Irrawaddy 29/03/2021; The Diplomat 19/04/2021). In these areas, free movement is constrained – worsened by the violent crackdown by the military junta – and access to basic services, livelihood activities, and food has been threatened. Humanitarian operations have had to adapt their response quickly and establish support networks in new locations (OCHA 25/03/2021; The New Humanitarian 02/03/2021; LIFT 10/03/2021).

### ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Access to information across Myanmar has been severely constrained by an internet blackout (Netblocks 24/03/2021; Telenor 15/02/2021). This constraint impacts people's ability to stay updated on the national situation, keep in touch with friends and family, and learn of a potential crackdown. This lack of access to information also prevents civil society organisations (CSOs) and local aid groups, as well as local, national, and international organisations, from verifying and quickly responding to emergencies and determining where humanitarian response is needed.

In locations where conflict is active, villagers and IDPs are surrounded by fighting and unable to access livelihood activities, medicine, food, and WASH services.



## KEY CONCERNS

### 1M people

IN NEED PRIOR  
TO THE COUP

### A surge in the price

OF BASIC GOODS  
INCLUDING FUEL  
AND FOOD

### Continued displacement

AND PARTICULAR  
DIFFICULTY WITH  
SOURCING INFORMATION  
ON THE ONGOING RATES  
OF DISPLACEMENT

### Upcoming cyclone & monsoon seasons

AND THE SUBSEQUENT  
INCREASED RISK  
OF DISPLACEMENT  
AND HEIGHTENED  
HUMANITARIAN NEEDS



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

**Aim:** To provide an overview of the situation unfolding in Myanmar. This report does not account for all events countrywide. It provides a broad understanding of the situation, highlighting significant developments and the associated needs and access constraints, as well as how humanitarian operations have adapted, particularly in regions with pre-existing needs.

**Methodology:** Secondary data review combined with recent interviews. This report considers access constraints as instances where the affected population is unable to access information, services, goods, and assistance. These access constraints may be caused by either refusal to acknowledge humanitarian needs or overall restriction or obstruction of access to services. This report also covers humanitarian access constraints, including the inability to reach affected populations as a result of movement restrictions (caused by active conflict, landmines, or other restrictions) and the physical environment (ACAPS 07/2020).

**Limitations:** Access to information; the ability to verify the number of people arrested, tortured, or killed as a result of the military junta's crackdown; access to reliable figures on the number of people displaced; and the ability to verify the affected populations' locations.

**Terminology:** 'Military junta' refers to the individuals and associates who staged a coup on 1 February.

## SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1 FEBRUARY

### Political shifts

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military staged a coup and ordered a year-long state of emergency under sections 417 and 418(a) of the 2008 constitution (Reuters 01/02/2021; Nikkei 13/11/2020). The State Administrative Council (SAC) was established as a means to legitimise the coup, and new elections were promised within one year (Reuters 01/02/2021; Al Jazeera 07/04/2021; Nikkei 13/11/2020).

In response, members and associates of the National League for Democracy (NLD) established the CRPH as a parliament. Most of its members were democratically elected in the 2020 general election (CRPH accessed 31/03/2021; The Diplomat 01/03/2021). The CRPH established itself as the only legitimate government, forming a National Unity Government and a charter for federal democracy in Myanmar. Members have called for the abolishment of the 2008 constitution and the end of military rule (CRPH 16/04/2021; The Diplomat 01/04/2021; CRPH 16/03/2021; General Strike Committee of Nationalities 18/02/2021). The military junta outlawed the Committee on 21 March, increasing the risk of potential repercussions (The Irrawaddy 22/03/2021).

A CDM was also formed in response to the actions of the military junta, and protesters took to the streets in Yangon, Mandalay, and the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, along with other cities. Bankers, municipal councils, teachers, health workers, transport workers, and religious groups have joined the movement (Reuters 16/02/2021). On 15 March, the State Sangha Mahā Nāyaka Committee, a government-appointed committee of monks, announced it was halting all its activities. This will have a significant impact on public support to the military junta, as monks have a history of exhibiting strong influence in the country, most notably during the 2007 Saffron Revolution (CASS 18/03/2021; Reuters 17/03/2021). Protests continue nationwide, with no indication that they will subside.

### Changes in freedom of assembly and speech

To limit the growth of the CDM and related protests and consolidate power, the SAC made a series of sweeping changes to the legal and judicial systems (HRW 02/03/2021). These changes have had a notable impact on freedom of assembly and speech, with severe repercussions for CSOs, journalists, protesters, CDM participants, and humanitarian organisations. The SAC has also implemented severe limitations on access to information, including overnight internet blackouts between 01:00–09:00, cessation of mobile internet (directed to all mobile operators), suspension of public Wi-Fi, and removal of satellite dishes (Netblocks 24/03/2021; The Irrawaddy 09/04/2021). As at 18 March, the five remaining licences of independent news outlets in the country had been revoked, and no independent newspapers were circulating (Committee to Protect Journalists 09/03/2021; Myanmar Now 18/03/2021). Underground newsletters emerged in mid-March, with physical copies being circulated in areas with information blackouts (Eleven Myanmar 11/04/2021). A more in-depth ACAPS report on the internet blackout in Rakhine and Chin state highlights the specific humanitarian implications of limitations on information-sharing.

### Mass crackdown

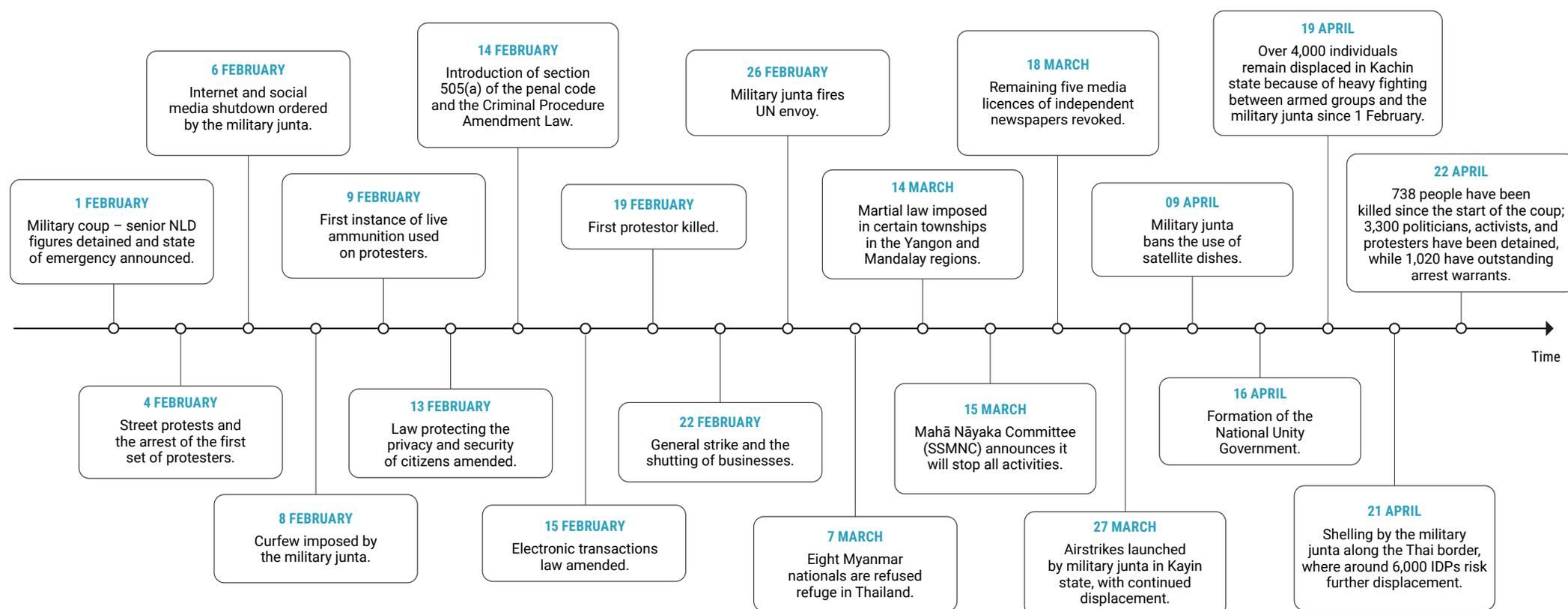
The passing of these laws puts CSOs, journalists, and activists at risk. Unconfirmed reports suggest that up to 1,000 individuals have fled to areas controlled by ethnic armed groups for protection, including Karen, Mon, and Shan states (The Irrawaddy 23/03/2021 and 22/03/2021; Human Rights Watch 12/03/2021). Since the start of the coup, at least 60 journalists have been arrested, and approximately 39 are still in detention – most of them facing severe sentencing under article 505(a) of the penal code. In the past, convicted journalists have been jailed for up to one year under this article (Myanmar Now 25/04/2021; BBC News 22/03/2021; Frontier Myanmar 17/03/2021; CIVICUS 07/2020; VOA 08/04/2021). CSO members and humanitarian activists have also been arrested and detained (Open Society Foundations 17/03/2021; The Irrawaddy 21/03/2021). The use of torture has been reported (The Guardian 15/03/2021). In mid-April, banks holding accounts for four NGOs were asked to undertake a financial audit and hand over the details to the military junta in an attempt to build a narrative of foreign interference in internal affairs (Nikkei Asia 17/03/2021).

The police and military junta have occupied close to 60 schools and university campuses across 13 states and regions, using them as barracks and bases (UNICEF 19/03/2021). The military junta has also occupied hospitals and temple compounds, employing rubber bullets and tear gas when met with resistance (Myanmar Now 08/03/2021; Physician for Human Rights 07/03/2021). These sites provide the military junta with large compounds and prevent the CDM and protesters from organising in these locations (ICG 01/04/2021).

Between 1 February–20 April, 3,300 politicians, activists, and protesters were detained, and an additional 1,020 have outstanding arrest warrants. Over 738 people have been killed – a stark difference compared to the 258 reported by the military junta – as a result of accidents, natural causes, or retaliation to violence (Assistance for Political Prisoners 20/04/2021; Frontier Myanmar 11/04/2021; Reuters 19/04/2021). On 27 March, over 114 people were killed in a

single day – as at 25 April, this was the highest fatality count since the start of the coup (Myanmar Now 27/03/2021). The military junta has begun charging MMK 120,000 (USD 85) for the retrieval of dead bodies (Radio Free Asia 12/04/2021; CNN 12/04/2021). On 8 April, 19 people were sentenced to death for their alleged role in the death of an army officer's associate (Eleven Myanmar 10/04/2021). While the death penalty has been widely used in Myanmar for centuries, information gaps persist on how many sentences were carried out prior to the coup and whether the 19 death sentences will be carried out (Frontier Myanmar 12/01/2021). As the protests continue countrywide, these figures are expected to rise.

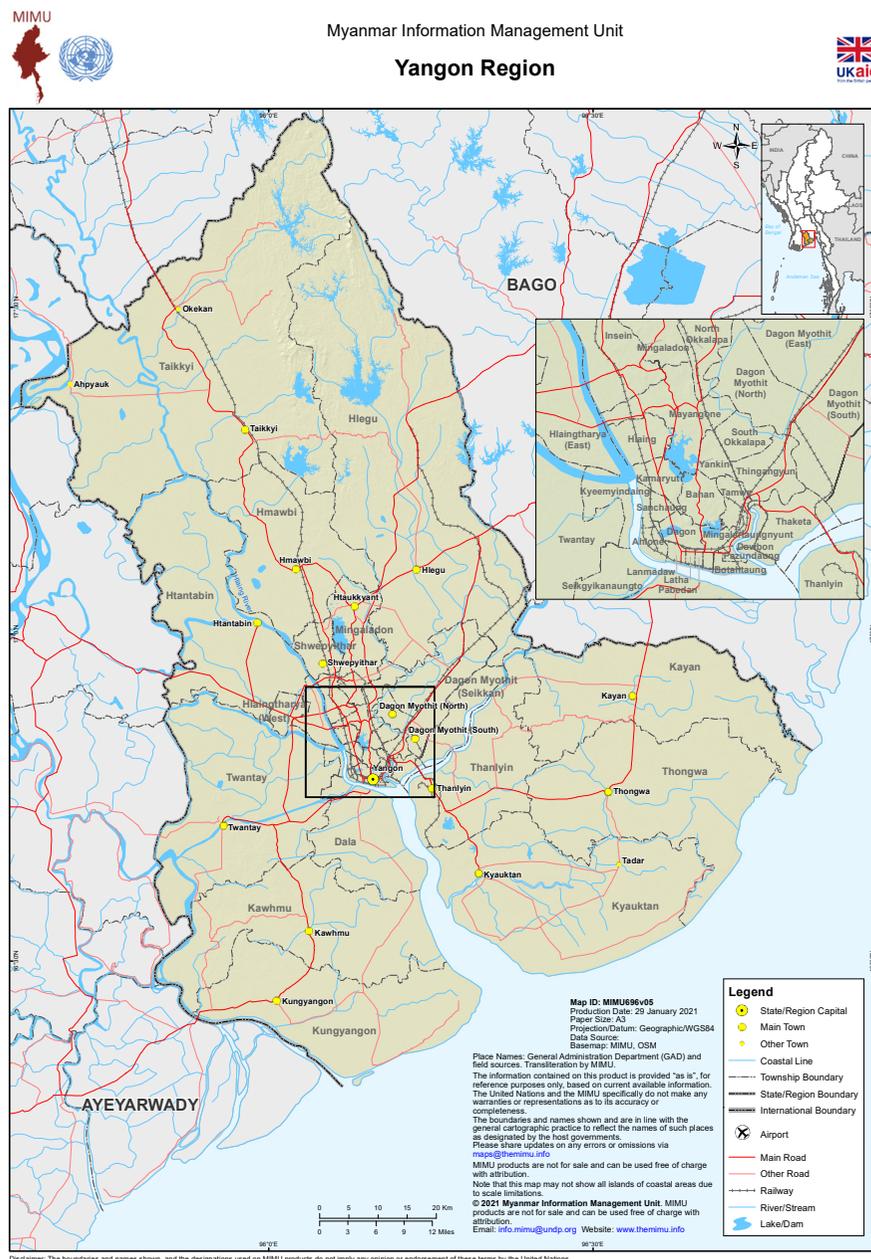
## TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN 2021



May–October – monsoon season, heightened risk of increased needs and displacement

## IN-COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS AND HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES

### Yangon region



Source: MIMU

Yangon has remained at the centre of CDM operations, protests, and the military crackdown. On 14 March, at least 59 people were killed and 129 were injured in a single day of violence in Yangon's suburban and industrial townships (Myanmar Now 15/03/2021). Since then, martial law has been imposed in nine townships across the region. This transfers executive and judicial power to the regional military commander, with judicial hearings being carried out behind closed doors and appeals for convictions, sentences, and trials being denied (Myanmar Now 22/03/2021; HRW 16/03/2021).

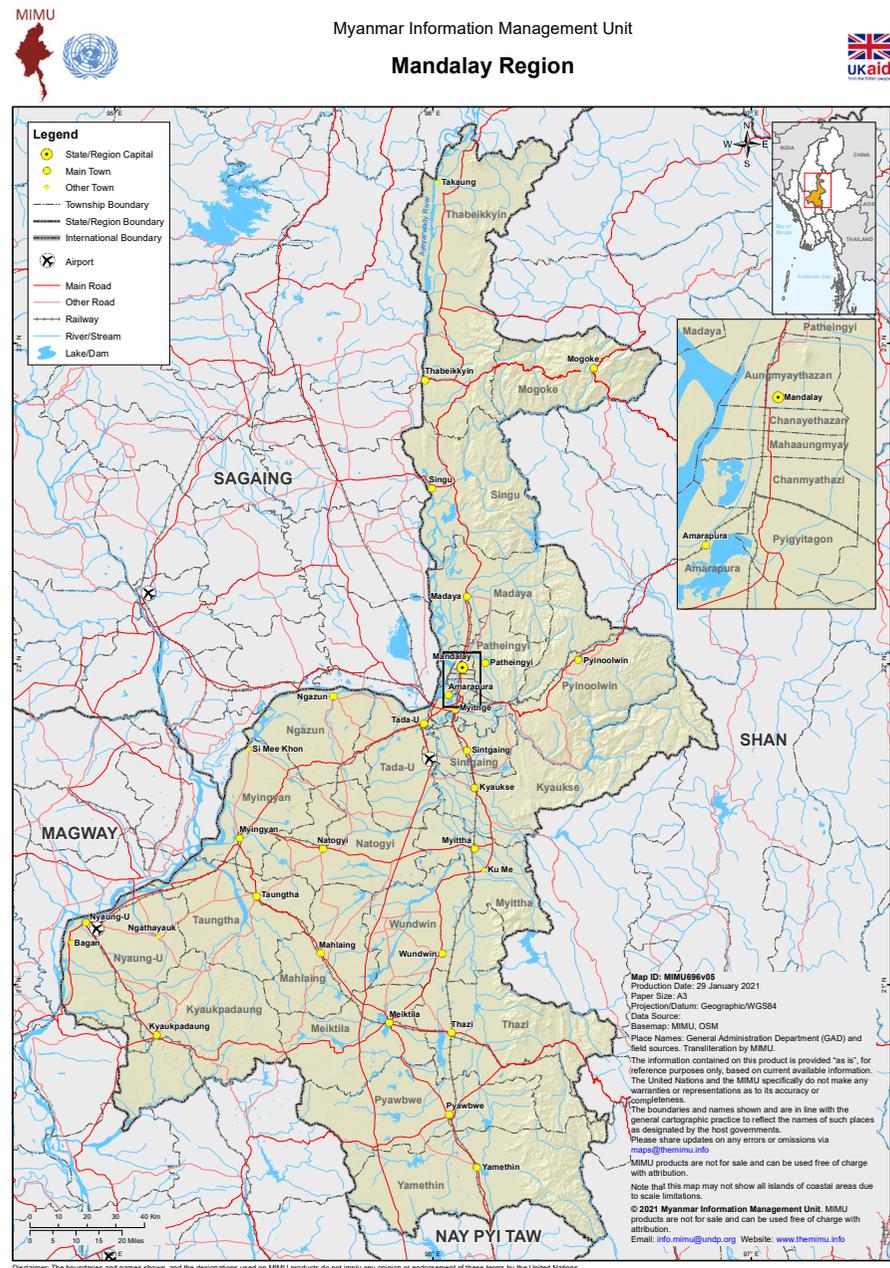
The military junta has targeted areas where civil servants are on strike in support of the CDM, threatening them with forced eviction at gunpoint (UN HRC 18/03/2021). The number of people now homeless as a result of these evictions is unknown. These people need food, shelter, access to healthcare, and general support. The reintroduction of the overnight guest registration of the Civil Ward Administration Act, which was abolished in 2016, requires citizens to report overnight guests to the authorities (The Irrawaddy 20/09/2016). This requirement increases the risk of reprisals and heightens the feeling of insecurity, particularly for individuals helping those targeted by the military junta (Myanmar Now 23/03/2021).

### Access constraints

Food shortages have been reported, particularly in areas under martial law, as a result of limited service provision, disruptions in supply chains, market closures, and loss of livelihood opportunities (WFP 21/04/2021). These shortages will likely impact the rates of food security and acute malnutrition among vulnerable groups (LIFT 19/04/2021 and 26/03/2021). This is particularly true for migrant workers in the Yangon region, who have reported limited access to livelihood opportunities and wages caused by loss of work but who are unable to return to their place of origin given the transportation costs (DMG 17/03/2021; Myanmar Now 17/03/2021 and 22/03/2021). In 2014, 9.9 million people – 20% of the country's population – migrated internally. High migration rates were reported between states, particularly to Yangon, where migrants account for 53% of all formal sector labour in the region (IOM accessed 15/04/2021; ILO 21/12/2015; LIFT 2014). Those who have been able to return to their place of origin likely face insecurity and a lack of livelihood opportunities (The Washington Post 15/04/2021). Of the internal migrants in Yangon, 78.8% remitted, and the loss of remittances because of loss of work will likely affect households' overall purchasing power (DMG 20/03/2021; Frontier Myanmar 08/04/2021; LIFT 2014).

For humanitarian organisations and CSOs providing operational support, access constraints persist in peri-urban areas as a result of the crackdowns, with responders being targeted (Insecurity Insight 20/04/2021; Al Jazeera 03/03/2021). A shift in locations where humanitarian support is traditionally needed has increased the risk for those operating in these areas.

# Mandalay region



In the Mandalay region, protesters are being met with extreme violence. Martial law across several townships has severely limited free movement, and civil servants supporting the CDM are facing eviction (The Irrawaddy 23/03/2021). This includes a number of railway workers in Mandalay city who must vacate their state-owned housing after the military junta issued a statement that they must return to work or face eviction. Between 10–23 March, over 2,100 railway workers continued their support for the movement and are now homeless. They do not know where to seek assistance or find support relevant to their needs (The Irrawaddy 23/03/2021). There is a lack of detailed information on specific needs in Mandalay. Crackdowns against anti-coup protesters are ongoing across the region, including in Myingyan township and in Maha Aungmyay township, where a mosque was raided (Myanmar Now 20/04/2021 and 15/04/2021; Al Jazeera 15/04/2021).

Source: MIMU

## Rakhine state



Since the start of the coup, protests in Rakhine have been limited. Small-scale protests took place in townships considered to be NLD strongholds, including Gwa, Thandwe, Taungup, Manaung, and Ann. A strong Arakan Army (AA) presence and disillusionment with the NLD government in northern Rakhine and among war-torn communities may partly explain the lack of protests (Frontier Myanmar 13/02/2021; Myanmar Now 18/02/2021). The AA was removed from the Unlawful Associations Act of the military junta on 11 March, and the CRPH declassified the AA as a terrorist organisation shortly after (BNI 17/03/2021; CRPH 17/03/2021).

Immediately following the coup, the regional military commander of Rakhine met with Rohingya community leaders throughout the state to discuss repatriation from Bangladesh and the easing of movement restrictions (Dhaka Tribune 05/02/2021). Following the events of 2017 – when UN investigators found indications that the Myanmar military had demonstrated ‘genocidal intent’ towards the Rohingya community – these developments must be monitored carefully, particularly in light of repatriation talks and continued insecurity (OCHCR 12/09/2018; Reuters 27/08/2018). A series of provisional measures, including a ban on the destruction of evidence, and measures to prevent further escalations have been imposed. The International Court of Justice has requested the Myanmar Government to submit regular reports to verify whether such measures have been implemented (ICJ 23/01/2020).

The military junta is pressuring displaced groups to return to their villages of origin. Many IDPs have been displaced since 2018. On 17 March, 2,565 people were displaced from the Tein Nyo displacement site following a fire caused by a candle. Food and blankets have been provided, and reconstruction is underway. There have also been discussions between the military junta and camp officials concerning the return of IDPs to their villages of origin (BNI 20/04/2021; DMG 18/03/2021).

Injuries and casualties resulting from unexploded ordnance continue to be reported. Demining activities are necessary in rural areas where the concentration of these devices prevents IDPs from returning to their villages (DMG 09/04/2021). IDPs in Sittwe, Rathedaung, and Myebon townships are reluctant to return home because of the presence of landmines and troops near their villages (DMG 22/03/2021). Since mid-February, demining activities carried out by the military junta have been observed along the Sittwe-Yangon highway in Rakhine, as well as on other main roads (Narinjara 03/03/2021).

A history of active conflict and movement constraints have limited farmers’ ability to harvest crops (DMG 22/04/2021). The Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank recently issued an announcement demanding the repayment of loans by 15 April (BNI 07/04/2021). Farmers have reported being incapable of repaying these loans because of their inability to harvest as a result of the conflict. In 2019, 50,000 acres of farmland across the state were left unploughed. Purchasing power has also been reduced following a surge in prices. This is especially true for Rakhine, where the price of cooking oil, for example, has increased by 20% since January (WFP accessed 22/02/2021).

## Access constraints

Rakhine has historically experienced high humanitarian access constraints, and the approval of travel authorisations by chief ministers provides sporadic and unpredictable levels of humanitarian access (ACAPS 12/2020). With the development of the new SAC, travel authorisations are expected to be delayed, and additional conditions imposed on the delivery of aid are likely (OCHA 25/03/2021).

Since the start of the coup, cash shortages have impacted humanitarian operations and supply chains by limiting people's access to services, including healthcare, adequate shelter equipment, WASH facilities, and food (Mercy Corps 23/04/2021; DMG 21/04/2021; OCHA 25/03/2021). IDPs in the Thae Chaung displacement camp in Sittwe rely on monthly allowances to support their families; these allowances have been temporarily halted because of cash shortages. The camp hosts over 12,000 people in need of food delivery and support (DMG 23/03/2021; Global Shelter Cluster 18/08/2020). OCHA has reported an estimated total of 22,500 people across 52 displacement sites in Rakhine and an additional 3,000 people in 16 host communities who cannot be reached because of a range of restrictions, including travel authorisation, conflict, and obstacles linked to the environment (OCHA 25/03/2021; ACAPS 12/2020).

## Chin state



Source: MIMU

Over 200 people have been arrested since 1 February (BNI 06/04/2021). While over 70% of government staff have joined the CDM, including staff from health and education departments, many are reluctant to join because of the potential loss of livelihoods (BNI 12/03/2021).

Chin state has a history of active conflict between the AA and the Myanmar military, particularly in Paletwa township, which the AA uses as a military base. Years before the coup, the military implemented a 'four-cut' strategy, which involves cutting food, funds, intelligence, and recruits. This strategy has disproportionately affected access to food and information for villagers and IDPs (BNI 18/07/2019). Intensified fighting in Rakhine state since January 2019 has had repercussions for Paletwa township (ACLEDD 12/02/2021). More than 7,000 people are currently displaced in the township, and heavy winds on 11 April damaged roughly 400 shelters (BNI 07/04/2021). The affected groups require durable shelter materials and safe spaces while they rebuild the damaged structures.

### Access constraints

Since the start of the coup, unclear access constraints and increased transport costs have led to higher prices of oil, rice, and pulses across the state (WFP accessed 12/04/2021). In Paletwa township however, transport has improved, and the cost of salt was reduced by 33% between February–March as a result of reduced transport costs (WFP accessed 12/04/2021). Pre-coup access constraints linked to the four-cut strategy and troop presence may have been alleviated given the nationwide situation and the overall reduction in conflict in Rakhine state since November 2020.

Shelters made of bamboo in IDP camps in Paletwa township are slowly decaying. The upcoming monsoon season will increase access constraints linked to the environment, and the needs of IDPs in displacement sites will likely increase (BNI 20/04/2021). Prior to the coup, logistical constraints concerning physical access to areas in need prevented more than half of the population in Chin from accessing housing materials, education, and WASH facilities and from participating in livelihood activities. As a result, six in ten people in Chin are considered poor (OCHA HNO accessed 27/01/2021).

## Shan state



Source: MIMU

Protesters in townships across Shan state – including the state capital Taunggyi – have been met with extreme violence, tear gas, rubber and live ammunition, and strip searches (Shan News 15/03/2021). On 15 March, 1,500 villagers from three villages in Pekon township fled for fear of retribution after the deaths of four military junta soldiers (The Irrawaddy 21/03/2021). In Depayin township, thousands more fled following the deaths of two policemen and increased military junta troop presence in the area. The number of IDPs, their location, and their exact needs following this incident are unclear (The Irrawaddy 19/03/2021). Several violent events, including the use of grenades, have since been recorded. Increased troop presence around the Shwe Gas Pipeline near Hsipaw has also been reported (Shan News 09/04/2021).

Conflict across the state is ongoing, particularly in northern Shan. In February, 2,290 people were displaced in northern Shan following armed conflict between the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) against the Shan State Progress Party (OCHA 25/02/2021). Over 9,600 registered IDPs had been recorded as being in protracted displacement as at the end of February. Since the end of March, an additional 1,000 people have been displaced after further shelling and the burning of homes (Shan News 09/04/2021). These IDPs are residing in 15 displacement sites in Kyaukme, Namtu, and Hsipaw townships. Their immediate needs include food, warm clothing, blankets, and medicine (Shan News 19/02/2021 and 05/04/2021; BNI 23/02/2021 and 20/04/2021; OCHA accessed 22/02/2021). Fighting between the military junta and the Kachin Independence Army along the northern Shan/Kachin state border has caused the displacement of some 20,000 people from 50 villages in northern Shan (Shan News 21/04/2021). Reports claim that they are running out of food in Namtu township and are reliant on host villages for support (Shan News 05/04/2021). The total number of people still displaced is unclear, given the constantly changing situation (OCHA 26/04/2021).

Conflict escalation between the military junta and members of the Three Brotherhood Alliance – which includes the AA, the Kokang Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and the TNLA – might cause further displacement. An announcement made by the Alliance on 30 March re-evaluated a ceasefire agreed with the military on 1 January. On 10 April, eight police officers were killed, although it remains unclear who carried out the attack (BNI 01/01/2021; Shan News 13/04/2021). These developments risk increased insecurity and further displacement, as this incident alone caused 300 displacements.

Over 6,000 IDPs in five camps along the Thai border in the southern Shan state are at risk of further displacement after the military junta shelled the nearby bases of the RCSS and Shan State Army on 21 April (BNI 21/04/2021; Myanmar Now 05/04/2021; Shan State Refugee Committee 02/04/2021). While the direct impact of this shelling on civilians and IDPs in the area is unclear, IDPs have built makeshift bunkers for fear of an attack (Shan State Refugee Committee 02/04/2021). Both armed groups have extended their support for the CDM. Escalation of conflict heightens the risk of displacement, particularly across the Thai border.

## Access constraints

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Because of ongoing fighting, travel between Namtu, Hsipaw, and Kyaukme townships is particularly challenging (Shan News 09/04/2021). Given that the majority of IDPs are staying in these areas and have no access to health services or food, humanitarian needs are expected to increase (OCHA 25/03/2021). Civilians continue to face high levels of insecurity and are trapped by the fighting, and it is unclear how many are able or willing to return home (Shan News 24/03/2021). Humanitarian access constraints are high in areas controlled by armed opposition groups as a result of the intense conflict.

## Kachin state



Myanmar Information Management Unit

### Kachin State



More than 94,000 refugees were registered in Kachin state at the end of February, including 56,000 in government-controlled areas. The remaining refugees are residing in areas controlled by armed groups or contested areas (OCHA 28/02/2021). While very little fighting has occurred in Kachin state since August 2018 – despite a ceasefire collapse in 2011 – a 30% increase in attacks has been reported since the start of the coup (The Irrawaddy 12/04/2021; Free Ranger Burma 05/04/2021).

On 8 March, a peaceful protester was shot in the state capital, Myitkyina. On 11 March, intense fighting broke out between the Kachin Independence Organization and the military junta (Kachin News 12/03/2021; Myanmar Now 18/03/2021; Al Jazeera 19/03/2021). Active fighting has been reported in at least ten townships. Fighting intensity is expected to increase in urban areas, including in Hpakant township where IDPs reportedly already lack shelter (The Irrawaddy 12/04/2021; CASS accessed 25/03/2021; BNI 21/04/2021). In Hpakant – a jade mining district – the use of gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades is destroying houses, leaving unexploded ordnance in the streets and severely limiting freedom of movement (Al Jazeera 19/03/2021). Of the 5,000 people who have been displaced since 1 February, 4,000 remained displaced as at 19 April (OCHA accessed 20/04/2021). This includes 2,000 villagers who fled Momauk township after a potential escalation of fighting in and around the township (Kachin News 22/04/2021; The Irrawaddy 19/04/2021; The Kachin Alliance accessed 16/04/2021).

### Access constraints

Humanitarian response capacity in the area is restricted, given the limited number of operational CSOs and local aid groups, the information blackout, and intense conflict (Radio Free Asia 12/04/2021; CASS accessed 25/03/2021). Meeting the needs of IDPs will be difficult, as needs are heightened in areas where humanitarian operations have not been traditionally carried out (Radio Free Asia 12/04/2021). In rural Kachin, for example, patients are struggling to access health services, and IDPs are receiving support from pre-existing networks established with local, national, and international staff (MoHS accessed 31/03/2021; CASS accessed 25/03/2021). Access to and for those in need may also be denied or constrained. On 15 March, the military junta prevented approximately 200 villagers who were attempting to escape violence in Myitsone township from entering a displacement camp. The blockage lasted nearly 12 hours (Myanmar Now 16/03/2021).

As fighting intensifies and the countrywide situation worsens, meeting the needs of IDPs may become increasingly challenging. Higher transport costs led to a 20–35% increase in the price of rice between mid-January and mid-February in Bhamo and Putao townships (WFP accessed 12/04/2021). A general increase in the price of other basic goods has also been reported. Higher prices, compounded by limited livelihood opportunities, severely affect access to food, particularly in areas of active conflict (OCHA 25/03/2021).

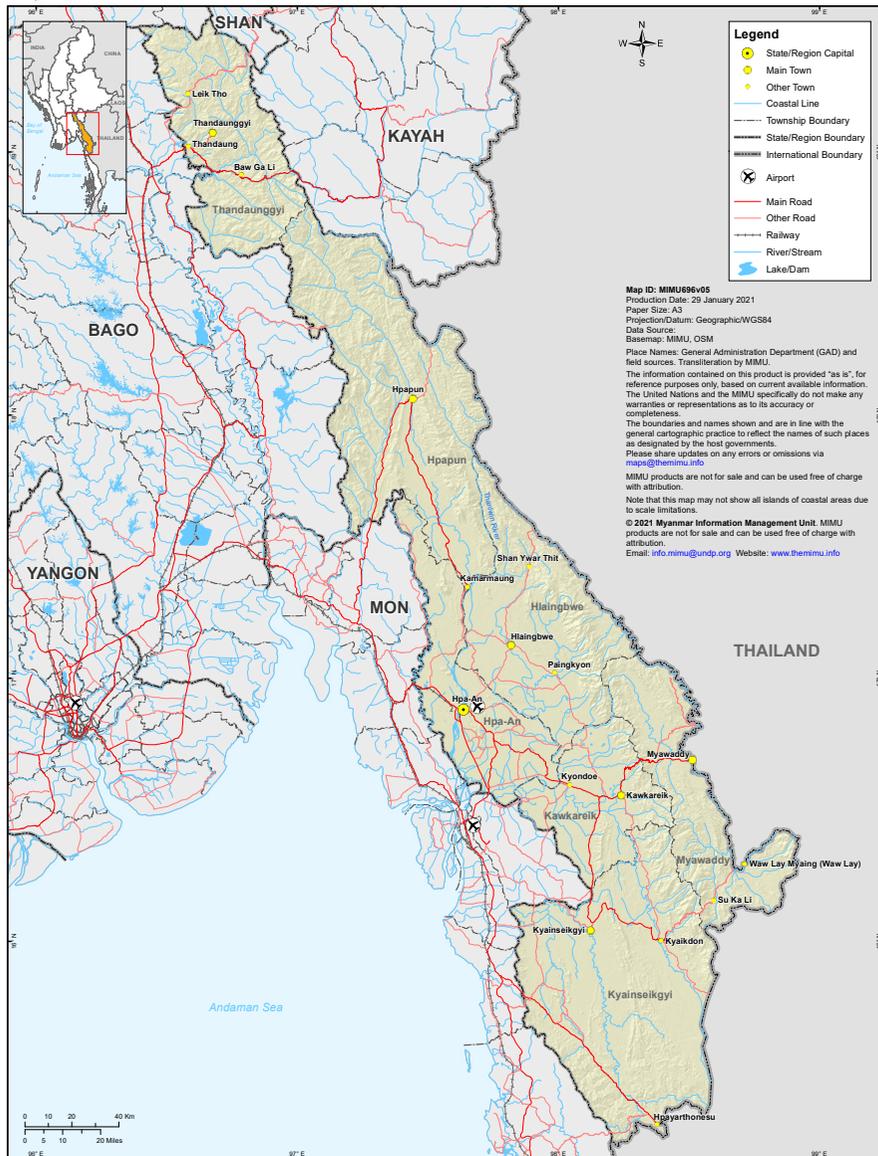
# Kayin state<sup>1</sup> and the Bago region

MIMU



Myanmar Information Management Unit

## Kayin State



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Source: MIMU

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## Bago Region



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Source: MIMU

1 Also known as Karen state; the title was officially changed in 1989.

In Kayin state and the Bago region, armed conflict between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the military junta is active, with over 200 clashes recorded since 1 February (BNI 12/04/2021). The KNU promised to support the CDM and provide security for those engaged in the movement (Frontier Myanmar 25/03/2021; Al Jazeera 19/03/2021). This triggered a reaction from the military junta. On 26 February, the junta attempted to arrest citizens involved in the CDM in Dooplaya district, a KNU-controlled area. They have since stationed troops within the territory. This has resulted in heightened insecurity, and men and boys are hiding for fear of being arrested and forced to serve as 'porters'<sup>2</sup> (Karen Human Rights Group 19/03/2021; Kachin News 16/04/2021).

On 10 April, the military junta killed over 80 people in Bago city (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners 10/04/2021; The Irrawaddy 11/04/2021). Over 250 military personnel reportedly attacked four residential wards using live ammunition and grenades. Troops were still operating in the area as at 11 April (The Irrawaddy 11/04/2021; Radio Free Asia 12/04/2021). Over 100,000 people fled Bago city after these crackdowns and are residing in nearby villages. It remains unclear if these people are still displaced, and their needs are unknown (Radio Free Asia 12/04/2021).

Conflict, troop movement, and high levels of insecurity continue to cause displacement, impact livelihood opportunities, and prevent people from meeting their basic needs. Prior to the coup, 131,000 people were living in protracted displacement in Kayin state and the Bago region, with many people displaced for a second or third time (OCHA HNO accessed 27/01/2021). Between December 2020–25 March 2021, increased conflict and insecurity resulted in 7,120 newly displaced individuals. Many of these IDPs were hiding in the jungle of Hpa-pun township and unable to return home (OCHA 25/03/2021). They were in need of food, shelter, security, and healthcare (Associated Press 22/03/2021).

### Access constraints

On 27 March, the military junta issued airstrikes in Kayin state, displacing approximately 13,000 people in and around the Papun district (The Irrawaddy 29/03/2021). The exact number of people internally displaced by the event is unclear, given the changing situation, lack of access to information, and reliability of the source. Of the 13,000 reported IDPs, 10,000 fled to neighbouring forests. The remaining 3,000 attempted to cross into Thailand, and many were refused entry at the border (Karen Human Rights Group 30/03/2021; Reuters 27/03/2021; Radio Free Asia 30/03/2021; The Irrawaddy 23/03/2021). Displaced people are unable to tend to their land and cannot access their crops or livestock. As a result, they cannot cultivate food and must survive on emergency rations (Free Ranger Burma 05/04/2021).

## IMPACT ON HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

International humanitarian and development organisations initially suspended operations while determining the implications of the coup (International Rescue Committee 01/02/2021; Malteser International 01/02/2021). Several international organisations, including Oxfam, CARE, and Action Aid, as well as the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, have since reaffirmed their commitment to continuing humanitarian assistance and protection (Mercy Corps 02/04/2021; OCHA 25/02/2021). While operational CSOs in Myanmar have continued to provide services to those in need, the coup has impacted humanitarian operations in several ways.

- **Cash shortages and supply chains:** The banking sector has come to a standstill. Despite pressure to reopen from the military junta, banks have remained closed (Myanmar Now 18/03/2021). As at 30 March, regular customers were able to withdraw MMK 200,000 (USD 140) per day from ATMs (KBZ Bank 22/04/2021). The reduced number of operating banks has impacted service provision and resulted in delayed cash transfers and emerging concerns around cash availability (Nikkei Asia 17/03/2021). The Cash Working Group has reported that organisations are using mobile currency to pay staff and run operations, despite the difficulty posed by the internet blackout (OCHA 25/03/2021). Certain humanitarian aid providers have reported having only a few weeks of cash left available, and transferring money into and out of the country is becoming increasingly difficult (The New Humanitarian 02/03/2021). Without cash, humanitarian aid providers will be unable to access services, including shipments of food, goods, medical supplies, and construction materials (Mercy Corps 12/03/2021). Labour shortages have also affected humanitarian supply chains, and additional reports have revealed increased lead times for ordering goods (OCHA 25/03/2021; WFP accessed 12/04/2021). Following the coup, relief flights between Kuala Lumpur and Yangon have been reduced from every week to the second Sunday of every month. This change has interrupted overall supply chains and service provision (OCHA 25/03/2021).
- **Price increase:** Prices of staples, such as rice, oil, and gas, have increased by 8.5%, 25%, and 22% respectively (ECHO 22/02/2021; WFP 16/03/2021 and 21/04/2021; LIFT 10/03/2021). Since the beginning of February, the cost of fuel has increased by 23–30%, and fuel shortages remain a concern (WFP accessed 12/04/2021). The cost of shipping between states has also increased by 50% since the start of the coup, causing repercussions for the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic goods (Mercy Corps 12/03/2021). Humanitarian aid providers have had to adapt quickly to these increased prices and change where they source their goods.

<sup>2</sup> Porters in Myanmar are used to carry heavy loads with minimal rest, food, and water. They are also used as human shields during active conflict and to test areas heavily contaminated with landmines. They are arbitrarily executed if they fail to carry out these commands (Karen Human Rights Group 13/07/2011).

- Lack of information: Since the start of the coup, situation reports have been limited. This lack of information has substantially affected understanding of humanitarian needs and how they are evolving. There is also limited information on people's ability to access basic services and cope with increased prices and other impacts of the coup. Internet and telephone blackouts have increased information gaps and hindered response or slowed response times. IDPs are unable to access information, and humanitarian responders are finding it increasingly difficult to provide assistance and track response (Frontier Myanmar 10/04/2021).

## RELEVANT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

### Regional Displacement

More than 300 Myanmar nationals, mostly police officers, have fled to Mizoram state in northeastern India for fear of retribution after not carrying out orders from the military junta (Frontier Myanmar 17/03/2021 and 05/03/2021; Associated Press 19/03/2021). On 26 March, several Myanmar nationals fleeing to Manipur state were refused entry at the border. The order has since been reversed, and refugees are now allowed to enter (The Irrawaddy 30/03/2021; The New Indian Express 29/03/2021).

Along the Thai-Myanmar border, temporary camps that can accommodate 43,000 people have been set up to support potential cross-border displacement (Thai PBS 08/03/2021; Reuters 18/03/2021). On 7 March, eight Myanmar nationals were refused entry at the Thai border, raising questions on how populations affected by violence will access these camps (HRW 10/03/2021). An additional 3,000 Myanmar nationals were refused entry after airstrikes in Kayin state on 27 March (Radio Free Asia 30/03/2021).

## AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Monsoon and cyclone seasons

The cyclone season (April–May and October–November) and the monsoon season (May–October) are likely to increase the rates of displacement. Humanitarian aid providers must consider how additional needs resulting from the cyclone and monsoon seasons will be met (OCHA HNO accessed 27/01/2021).

### Lack of healthcare and the potential rise in COVID-19 cases

Since the start of the coup, the Myanmar public healthcare system has come to a standstill. Healthcare workers have declared their support for the CDM, decreasing the number of available staff, and the military junta has occupied several hospitals (UNICEF accessed 31/03/2021; The New Humanitarian 25/03/2021). Healthcare workers have since adapted their approach to providing healthcare and lifesaving assistance outside the confines of state-run hospitals (IFRC 01/04/2021; The Lancet 19/02/2021). While medical treatment and healthcare are still available through CSOs, private health groups, and community networks, the healthcare system faces extreme constraints. This includes how and where healthcare workers can provide support – in light of reports that they are being targeted by the military junta – as well as limited access to and availability of health services and medicine, considering the level of violence the junta is displaying (Insecurity Insight 27/04/2021; The New Humanitarian 25/03/2021; The Irrawaddy 04/03/2021; Eleven Myanmar 15/04/2021). Because of a surge in the number of people injured and killed, health services will likely continue to be overwhelmed. Prolonged limited access to health assistance may contribute to long-term physical and psychosocial trauma for affected populations.

Since 1 February, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has dropped dramatically following the collapse of the public healthcare system and the subsequent inability to conduct tests (WHO accessed 31/03/2021). A national COVID-19 vaccination campaign was rolled out at the end of January but has since stopped because of the coup (Myanmar Times 05/02/2021). There is limited information on when the campaign will resume and the intended recipients of the vaccine. Regular national programmes, including HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis programmes, have also stopped, which will likely result in a rise in the number of active cases of these life-threatening diseases (The New Humanitarian 25/03/2021).