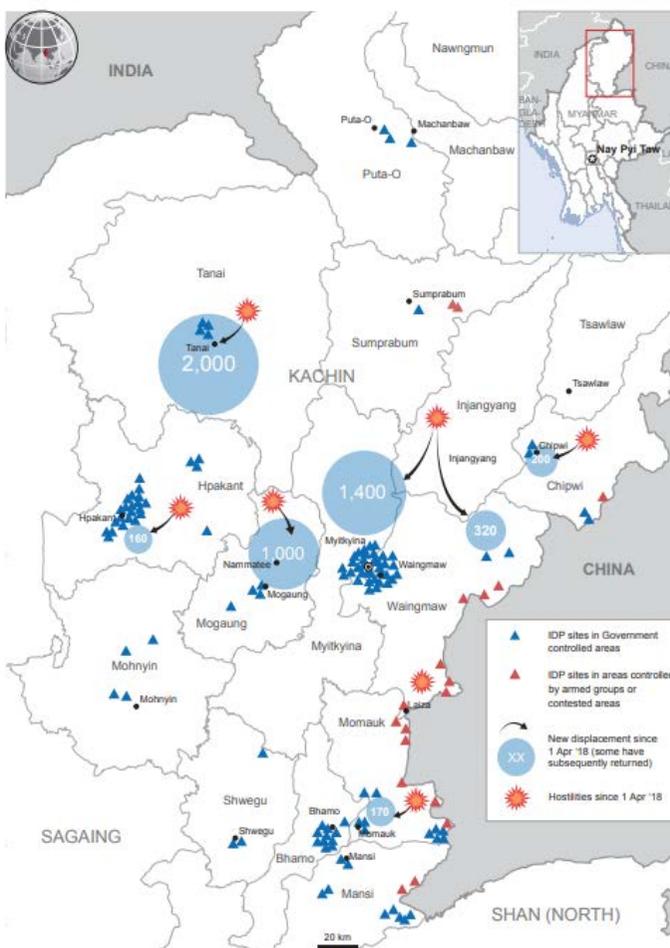


Displacement in Kachin

Briefing note – 4 May 2018

Escalation of conflict in Kachin state between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Myanmar Army has resulted in over 5,000 people being internally displaced since the beginning of April. High levels of cross-sectoral needs are reported among those newly displaced and protection of the civilian population in conflict-affected areas is of major concern, due to ongoing violence and reports of indiscriminate shelling. Over 2,000 IDPs are stranded in the forest, unable to access assistance.

Myanmar: New displacement in Kachin (1 April - 29 April 2018) OCHA



Sources: OCHA

Anticipated scope and scale

Conflict in Kachin has been ongoing since 2011 and is **likely to continue**. The high level of **access constraints** is preventing an adequate response from humanitarian actors, which is likely to lead to a further **deterioration of conditions** for the affected population. **The monsoon**, which runs from May to October, is likely to exacerbate shelter, health and WASH needs.

Key priorities



Indiscriminate shelling
+2,000 IDPs stranded in conflict zone



+5,000 people displaced
within a month



Food shortages
among the newly displaced

Humanitarian Constraints



Overall, access in Kachin is extremely limited for international NGOs and UN agencies, especially in non-government controlled-areas. The army is systematically preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching the affected population.

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Limitations

The limited access in many parts of Kachin results in significant information gaps on the needs of affected populations as well as on the latest security developments.

Crisis impact

Over 5,000 people have been newly displaced in Kachin since a sharp escalation in fighting between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Myanmar Army that started in early April (ECHO 02/05/2018; GCR2P 02/05/2018). Fighting broke in at least 7 of 18 townships across the state with Tanai, Hpakant, Injangyang and Mogaung townships among the most affected. The highest number of newly displaced are located in Tanai, Myitkyina and Mogaung townships (see map) (Mizzima 01/05/2018; OCHA 29/04/2018). High levels of cross-sectoral needs are reported among the displaced population (HARP 29/04/2018; UN 25/04/2018; GCR2P 02/05/2018).

Almost half of the newly displaced population remain stranded in dangerous conflict-affected areas out of reach of humanitarian assistance (HARP 29/04/2018; UN 25/04/2018; GCR2P 02/05/2018).

The monsoon, which runs from May to October, is likely to exacerbate shelter, health and WASH needs, particularly if IDPs remain stranded in makeshift and/or inadequate sites (DVB 02/05/2018; Go-Myanmar 2018).

Protection concerns are high for the civilians in conflict-affected areas (UN 25/04/2018). The Myanmar Army has been conducting operations, including aerial bombing and artillery fire on populated areas (GCR2P 02/05/2018; The Guardian 01/05/2018). At least 10 civilian fatalities were reported in April (ECHO 02/05/2018; OHCHR 01/05/2018). Over 2,000 IDPs, mainly located in Tanai, are stranded in the conflict zone, meaning the risk of further casualties is high. Rather than allowing IDP camps to be opened in Tanai town, the army has prevented civilians from moving for over three weeks, forcing them to remain in the forest (DVB 02/05/2018; OCHA 30/04/2018; ECHO 27/04/2018; DVB 27/04/2018). In addition, the army is blocking humanitarian assistance from reaching the affected population (GCR2P 02/05/2018; OHCHR 01/05/2018).

Shelter: Almost all of the 5,000 newly displaced are living in makeshift shelters in the forest or in churches. An estimated 3,500 people, including some 2,000 located in Tanai, are living in the forest without access to adequate shelter. In addition, over 1,000 are sheltering in churches in Tanhpri village, Myitkyina township. The town has no prior experience of hosting such large numbers of IDPs (DVB 02/05/2018). The remaining displaced population is living in formal displacement sites or staying with host families (OCHA 30/04/2018).

Health: Due to precarious living conditions and a lack of access to essential services such as basic health care, shelter, food and WASH infrastructures, the newly displaced population is in urgent need of health assistance (OHCHR 01/05/2018; UN 25/04/2018). Access to healthcare is particularly limited in non-government controlled areas (UNFPA 26/04/2018).

The risk of rapid spread of diseases such as dengue and malaria is high with the monsoon season due to start in May (DVB 02/05/2018).

Food: The newly displaced population is in urgent need of food assistance (UN 25/04/2018; Myanmar Times 20/04/2018). The food security situation of over 2,000 IDPs stranded in fighting areas in Tanai and Hpakant townships is particularly worrying with food shortages reported (OHCHR 01/05/2018; RFA 30/04/2018; ECHO 27/04/2018). The Myanmar Army prevented a food convoy from reaching the population in Man Wai village, Hpakant township (OHCHR 01/05/2018).

WASH: Water and sanitation facilities in the IDP sites are not equipped to host such high numbers of people. The poor sanitation situation in which IDPs are living increasing the risk of diseases spreading (DVB 02/05/2018; UN 25/04/2018).

Livelihoods have been completely disrupted. The displaced population have had to fields, livestock and other assets behind (DVB 02/05/2018).

NFIs: In addition, many of the displaced did not have the time or opportunity to gather belongings and are in need of basic NFIs such as clothes (DVB 02/05/2018).

Vulnerable groups affected

Elderly, children, disabled people and pregnant women are among the displaced population (DVB 02/05/2018). No precise demographic breakdown is available but media reports have interviewed IDPs from multiple age groups (OHCHR 01/05/2018; DVB 02/05/2018).

Some 90,000 IDPs, 76% of whom are women and children, were already living in Kachin prior to the escalation of conflict in early April. They are located in over 130 sites across the state in camps and host families (UNFPA 26/04/2018; OCHA 06/03/2018). Some of the recent conflict zones are located nearby displacement sites, raising protection concerns for IDPs and resulting in secondary and third displacements (Gov. of Australia 04/05/2018).

Humanitarian and operational constraints

The army is systematically preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching affected population. Convoys have been blocked, including a convoy from the Myanmar Red Cross that was prevented to reach its destination of Man Wai village, Hpakant township, on 23 April. However, the army has denied such practices. There are no clear indications the army is likely to cooperate with humanitarian relief actors in the short-term (GCR2P 02/05/2018; OHCHR 01/05/2018; VOA 26/04/2018).

Overall, access in Kachin is extremely limited for international NGOs and UN agencies, especially in non-government controlled-area. International aid actors tend to work through local NGOs to conduct relief activities. However, these local partners have also

reported increasing movement restrictions in the past few months (USAID 22/03/2018; Refugees International 10/12/2017).

Aggravating factors

Seasonal information

Monsoon rains are due to start in May and last until October (DVB 02/05/2018; Go-Myanmar 2018). Heavy rains are likely to further increase the urgent needs for adequate shelter, worsen the already poor sanitation conditions and increase the risks of spread of diseases such as dengue and malaria (DVB 02/05/2018). The monsoon pattern in Myanmar is highly variable, with the possibility of rain anytime and continuing on and off for days (Frontier Myanmar 23/07/2016).

Response to protests

In late April, thousands of protesters gathered in Kachin state's capital city, Myitkyina, to ask the army to put a halt to indiscriminate shelling and for the rescue of population trapped in conflict-affected areas. Protesters were arrested by the police but indicated that they were not going to stop staging protests until the situation of the affected population had improved (DVB 02/05/2018; RFA 30/04/2018).

Contextual information

Drivers of the current conflict

Conflict between the KIA and the Myanmar Army is longstanding. However, according to some sources, the current spike in the conflict may be partly driven by a tactic of the Myanmar Army to make military gains in Kachin and Shan states while international attention is diverted to the Rakhine crisis, where concerns for the Rohingya population are high. Another argument is that impunity for the atrocities committed against the Rohingya population in Rakhine may have emboldened the Myanmar Army to use excessive force in other parts of the country to achieve their military aims (GCR2P 02/05/2018; OHCHR 01/05/2018).

History of conflict and relevant stakeholders

The Kachin independence Army (KIA) is the armed wing of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) formed in 1961 in response to a military coup led by General Ne Win. KIA signed a ceasefire agreement with the government in 1994, but the conflict resumed

after 17 years, when government forces launched a major military offensive against KIA in June 2011 (Myanmar Peace Monitor 2016).

Fighting intensified in the beginning of 2017, when the army launched operations in the mining region of Tanai as an attempt to cut the resource stream of the KIA who imposes a 5% tax on mine activities in areas under its control (ACLEDD 05/04/2018),

International and neighbouring countries' relationship to the conflict

China has twice tried to control parts of Myanmar territory along its border with Kachin state (in the late 1930s and early 1950s). The Chinese view Myanmar border areas as both a strategic buffer and an important supply corridor to the Indian Ocean (Stratfor 18/01/2013).

Past conflict and displacement

Since the conflict broke in 2011 some 90,000 people have been internally displaced across Kachin. Those IDPs are located in over 130 sites. The townships where most of the displaced are located are Waingmaw (25,100), Momauk (24,600), Mansi (13,400), Bhamo (8,300) and Myitkyina (7,500) (see table) (ECHO 02/05/2018; OCHA 31/01/2018).

Key characteristics

- **Demographic profile:** Myanmar's population is estimated at 55 million people, including some 1.7 million in Kachin state. In Kachin, 64% of the population (about 1 million) live in rural context and the population density is 19 persons per square kilometres (UNFPA 05/2015: CIA 01/05/2018).
- **WASH:** Almost 125,000 people are estimated to face difficulties accessing clean water and adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities in Kachin (OCHA 08/12/2018).
- **Health:** Life expectancy in Kachin is 69 years, compared to 67 years nationwide. The mortality rate of children under-five is of 61 out of 1,000 in Kachin while the national average is of 72 per 1,000 (UNFPA 05/2015).
- **Food insecurity:** Environmental hazards and long-standing conflict are negatively impacting the stability and availability of food supply in the state. Over 105,000 people are in of food assistance in Kachin (FAO 08/02/2018; OCHA 08/12/2018).
- **Literacy levels:** 91% in Kachin, slightly over the national average of 89%. Literacy rates are higher for men (94%) than for women (89%) (UNFPA 05/2015).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

The displaced population who have managed to escape the conflict zones has been receiving initial humanitarian assistance by local authorities, local NGOs and church communities (OCHA 30/04/2018; ECHO 27/04/2018).

International response capacity

International NGOs, UN agencies and foreign government are responding to the crisis, but face access challenges. At the end of February, 64 out of 219 organisations present in the country were reporting activities in Kachin. Of those, 38 were international NGOs and 12 were UN agencies or other international organisations (MIMU 28/02/2018). However, the high level of humanitarian constraints including serious access restrictions limits the capacity of international actors to respond to the needs of the affected population (UN 25/04/2018).

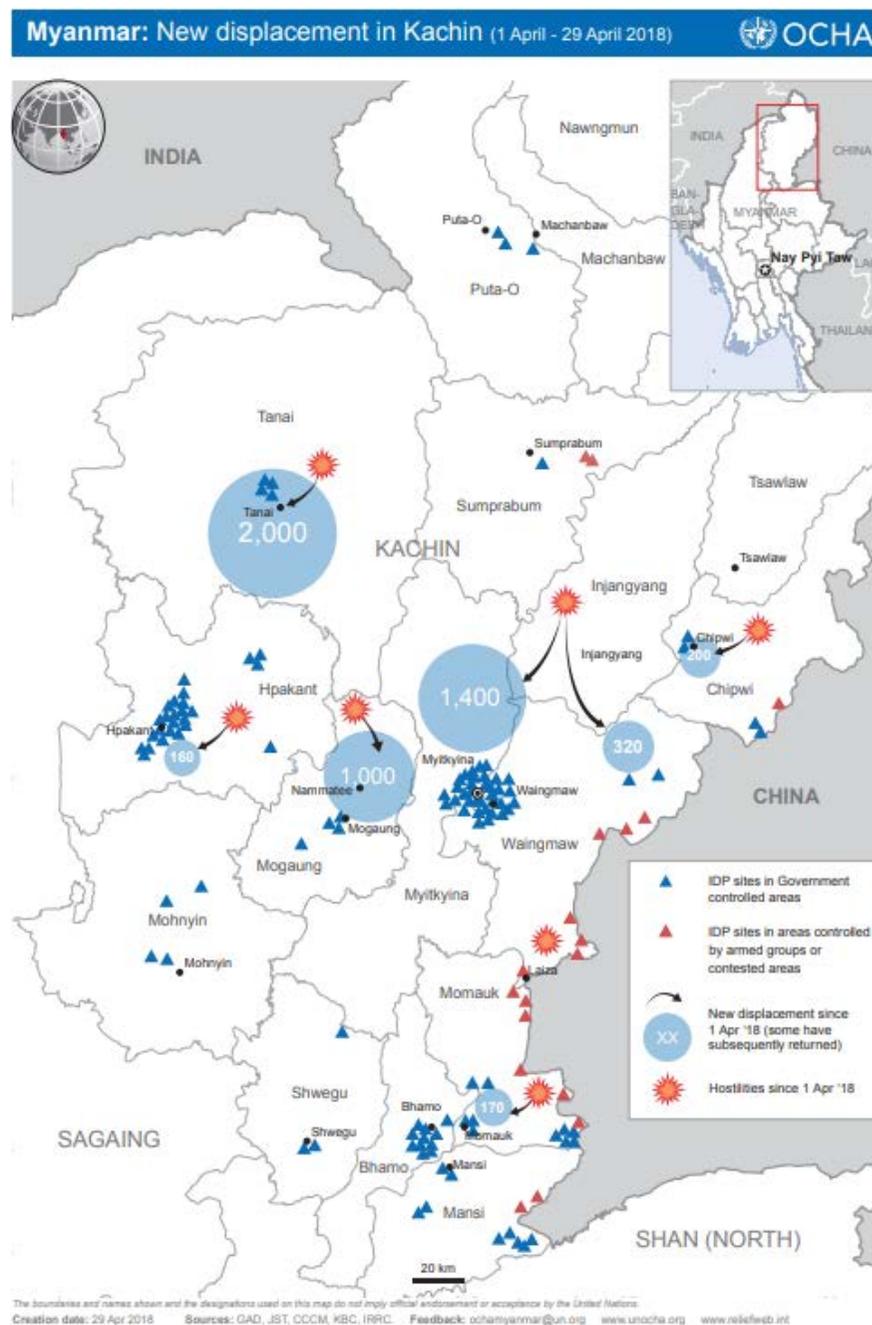
Information gaps and needs

The limited access in many parts of Kachin, particularly in non-governmental results is significant information gaps on the needs of affected populations as well as on the latest security developments.

IDPs figure in Kachin, January 2018 (pre-escalation)

Township	Number of IDPs
Bhamo	8,298
Chipwi	2,620
Hpakant	3,554
Mansi	13,365
Mogaung	349
Mohnyin	349
Momauk	24,593
Myitkyina	7,503
Putao	412
Shwegu	2,196
Sumprabum	764
Tanai	887
Waingmaw	25,145
TOTAL	90.035

Source: OCHA 31/01/2018



Source: OCHA 29/04/2018