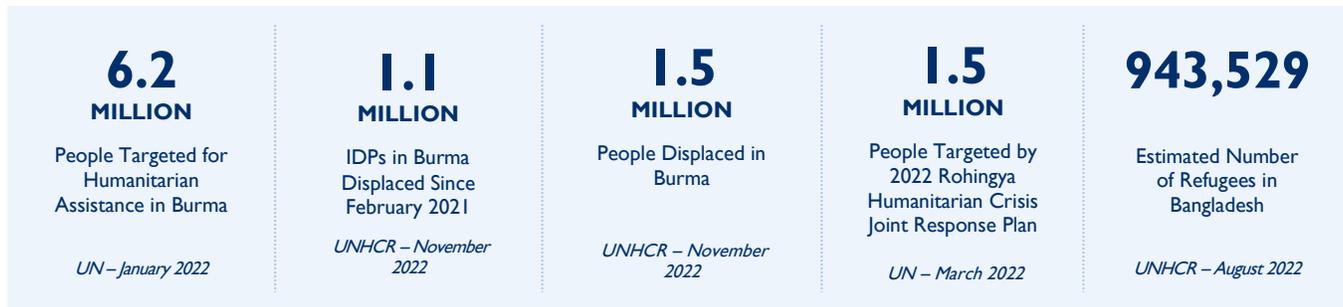


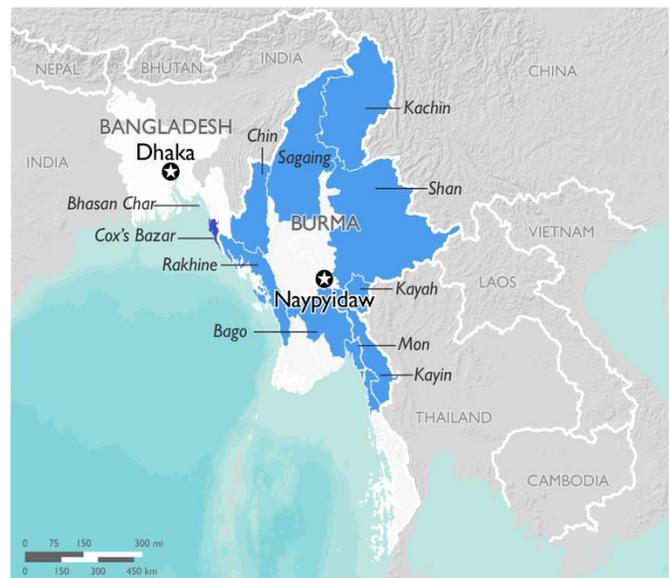
# Burma and Bangladesh – Regional Crisis Response

November 22, 2022

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- Heightened AA–MAF hostilities continue in Burma’s Rakhine and southern Chin states with an estimated 16,700 individuals remaining displaced as of November, the UN reports. Humanitarian access to Rakhine and Chin remains restricted amid curfews, military checkpoints, road closures, and violence.
- A MAF air strike results in the deaths of an estimated 80 people, including civilians, in Kachin State’s Hpakant township on October 23, representing the largest recorded mass casualty incidence since the 2021 coup d’état.
- Tropical Cyclone Sitrang damages more than 650 shelters and displaces more than 250 individuals in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar District in late October, relief actors report.



<sup>1</sup> FY 2023 funding for the Burma and Bangladesh Regional Crisis Response will be included in future products when committed/obligated. For information on the U.S. Government's funding toward the response in FY 2022, refer to Burma and Bangladesh Regional Crisis Response Fact Sheet #6 released on September 29, 2022, available on the USAID website at <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work>.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### **AA–MAF Violence Continues to Escalate, Prompting Displacement and Restricting Humanitarian Access in Chin and Rakhine**

Fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and Arakan Army (AA) in southern Chin and Rakhine states has continued to escalate and impede humanitarian access since an initial outbreak of clashes in June with an estimated 16,700 individuals remaining displaced as of early November due to violence since early August, the UN reports. As of early November, more than 90,000 people remained displaced in Chin and Rakhine due to AA–MAF hostilities from 2018 to 2020 and renewed insecurity in recent months, in addition to the approximately 150,000 Rohingya individuals displaced due to intermittent violence since 2012. Between October 12 and 23 alone, AA–MAF violence—including heavy shelling and the use of improvised explosive devices—across Rakhine’s Buthidaung, Kyauktaw, Maungdaw, Minbya, and Myebon townships displaced hundreds of people and exposed civilians to significant protection risks. Meanwhile, both the MAF and AA have closed roads and waterways, increased scrutiny at existing or new checkpoints, and enforced curfews in internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Rakhine, hampering humanitarian operations.

In addition, the MAF continues to restrict humanitarian access and delay the approval of travel authorizations required for humanitarian staff present in the region, the UN reports. Since September 15, the MAF has continuously blocked relief actors from accessing seven violence-affected townships in Chin and Rakhine, where IDPs report insufficient access to adequate food, health care, safe drinking water, sanitary items, and shelter. In response, humanitarian organizations continue to advocate the MAF to allow access to all conflict-affected townships and expedite humanitarian travel through checkpoints in the area, and relief actors—including U.S. Government (USG) partner organizations—continue to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced and other violence-affected people, as feasible. For example, State/PRM partner the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recently provided shelter assistance to 4,700 IDPs and distributed emergency relief items—including buckets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, and tarpaulins—to 700 additional IDPs, while USAID/BHA partner the UN World Food Program (WFP) provided emergency food assistance to tens of thousands of individuals, in the area.

### **Nearly 1.5 Million People Remain Displaced Across Burma Amid Continued Insecurity, Including MAF Airstrike Resulting in 80 Deaths in Kachin**

Since the military’s February 2021 coup d’état against the Government of Burma, MAF violence against civilians and clashes between ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and people’s defense forces (PDFs) have resulted in significant displacement and humanitarian needs countrywide. As of November 14, nearly 1.5 million people were displaced across Burma, including more than 1.1 million people displaced by violence since the coup d’état, according to UNHCR. From early January to mid-November alone, the number of IDPs in Burma increased more than threefold, driven by escalating violence in northwestern Burma—comprising Magway and Sagaing regions and Chin—and southeastern Burma—comprising Kayah, Kayin, and Mon states; areas of southern Shan state; and eastern Bago and Tanintharyi regions. In October, MAF–PDF clashes in northwestern Burma displaced an estimated 3,900 people across Sagaing’s Banmawk and Indaw townships, the UN reports. In addition, in southeastern Burma, deteriorating security conditions and heightened clashes in Bago and Tanintharyi displaced at least 13,900 people from November 7 to 14, according to UNHCR.

Meanwhile, renewed clashes between the MAF against the Kachin Independence Army and local PDFs have persisted in Kachin State in recent weeks, displacing approximately 4,000 individuals in Hpakant and

Shwegu townships as of late October, according to the UN. On October 23, a MAF air strike on a Kachin Independence Organization event in Hpakant resulted in the deaths of an estimated 80 individuals, including civilians, and injured at least 100 additional people, local media report. The airstrike represents the largest mass casualty incident affecting civilians in Burma since the coup d'état. Following the strike, the UN issued a statement condemning indiscriminate attacks affecting civilians in Burma.

### **NGO Registration Law, International Financial Regulations Further Hamper Relief Actors Operating in Burma**

Military authorities in Burma enacted a new non-governmental organization (NGO) registration law on October 28, imposing requirements for and restrictions upon the operations of international and local NGOs providing humanitarian assistance in Burma. Per the new law, all NGO staff operating in Burma can face up to five years in jail or fines for contacting or supporting organizations that the MAF considers opposed to its authority. The law will likely further hinder humanitarian organizations operating in the country, as relief actors face a total ban on activities if military authorities deem their registration under the new law unsuccessful. Additionally, the Financial Action Task Force—an international organization that creates standards to prevent global financial crimes—blacklisted Burma on October 21, citing deficiencies in the country's capacity to counter money laundering and terrorism financing. As a result, financial transfers into and out of Burma are now subject to increased monitoring and restrictions, which may inhibit the flow of cash into the country and subsequently delay the delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, USAID/BHA partners report. The USG continues to closely monitor operating conditions for relief actors in Burma and advocate for the unimpeded flow of life-saving assistance to conflict-affected populations.

### **Tropical Cyclone Sitrang Displaces More Than 250 Refugees in Cox's Bazar**

Tropical Cyclone Sitrang—which made landfall over Bangladesh's Barisal Division October 24 with wind speeds of up to 52 miles per hour—adversely affected nearly 5,000 refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar District, damaging approximately 650 refugee shelters and displacing more than 250 people, relief actors report. On Bhasan Char Island, a silt island in the Bay of Bengal where approximately 28,500 Rohingya refugees reside as of October, authorities reported minimal damage to facilities and only one injury associated with the cyclone. Prior to the storm's landfall, relief actors and district authorities mobilized early warning and response systems to mitigate the effects of the storm on vulnerable populations residing in and around Bhasan Char and Cox's Bazar. In response to humanitarian needs generated by the storm, State/PRM partners, including UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, IFRC, and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), provided critical support in Cox's Bazar.

### **Inflation Continues to Reduce Refugees' Purchasing Power in Cox's Bazar**

Increasing food prices continue to reduce the purchasing power of Rohingya refugees residing in Cox's Bazar, exacerbating food insecurity in the district, according to WFP. In Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya sub-district, the cost of a typical food basket increased by 5 percent between July and August 2022 and by 23 percent between August 2021 and 2022, as the Government of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine continued to affect global fertilizer, food, and fuel prices. Simultaneously, the purchasing power generated by a daily wage for typical labor in Ukhiya decreased by 7 percent between July and August 2022 and 14 percent between August 2021 and 2022, WFP reports. In response, U.S. Government (USG) partners—including WFP—continue to provide critical food assistance to refugees and host community members in Cox's Bazar to mitigate the effects of rising food prices and diminished purchasing power.

## KEY FIGURES



**\$140.4  
Million**

In dedicated USAID/BHA  
FY 2022 support for  
food security activities



**12**

USG partners  
implementing stand-  
alone protection  
interventions in FY 2022



**70,000**

Households received tie-  
down kits from USG  
partners for cyclone and  
monsoon prevention



**13**

USG partners  
implementing critical  
WASH programming in  
FY 2022

## U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

USAID/BHA supports WFP to provide emergency food assistance—including cash transfers for food; food vouchers; and in-kind food assistance through local, regional, and international procurement (LRIP)—to populations in Burma and Bangladesh. In addition, USAID/BHA supports coordination and capacity-building activities among other food security actors in the two countries to strengthen response efforts. Meanwhile, State/PRM supports the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, UNHCR, and NGO partners to deliver complementary livelihood and nutrition services to refugees and other vulnerable individuals in Bangladesh.

### PROTECTION

USAID/BHA and State/PRM support 12 humanitarian partners to address protection concerns among displaced and violence-affected populations throughout Burma; host communities and Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar; and Rohingya refugees residing across Southeast Asia. USG-supported protection activities in Burma and Bangladesh focus on increasing access to protection services—including gender-based violence prevention and response, creating and maintaining child-friendly spaces, delivering community-based mental health and psychosocial support, and providing legal assistance. USG partners also work with the broader humanitarian community in Burma to advocate for access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and promote the delivery of protection services in areas with significant humanitarian access constraints.

### SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

USAID/BHA works with partners in Bangladesh to enhance community resilience to cyclones and other natural disasters by conducting disaster risk reduction activities, as well as infrastructure rehabilitation in host communities in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts. State/PRM-supported shelter assistance in Bangladesh includes emergency shelter repairs and distribution of shelter materials, such as plastic sheeting to prevent roof leaks, complemented by site coordination capacity-building activities. USG partners also provide cash assistance for host community members and refugees to purchase local shelter materials to improve the resilience of their living spaces to natural disasters. Elsewhere, in Burma, UNHCR implements protection-sensitive shelter reconstruction in Rakhine by considering IDPs' specific needs in coordination with local actors.

### WASH

The USG supports water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programming in Cox's Bazar and across Burma to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, prevent communicable disease outbreaks, and mitigate the risk of wasting—the deadliest form of malnutrition—in children ages five

years and younger and pregnant and lactating women. With State/PRM funding, BRAC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), IOM, Terre des Hommes Foundation, UNHCR, and UNICEF address critical WASH needs in Cox's Bazar by improving drainage and waste removal systems, installing handwashing stations and latrines, providing hygiene supplies and safe drinking water, and strengthening community awareness of proper WASH practices to reduce the spread of disease.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- On February 1, 2021, Burma's military staged a coup d'état against the civilian government during which soldiers detained senior civilian government officials, including State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and announced a one-year state of emergency. In August 2021, military authorities extended the initial one-year state of emergency to August 2023. Since February 2021, clashes between the MAF, EAOs, and other local non-state armed groups across Burma have persisted, resulting in continuous displacement and humanitarian needs, particularly in southeastern and northwestern Burma, as well as in Kachin and Shan. Coup-related instability has also resulted in access challenges, restricted banking operations, and limited cash availability, challenging the provision of assistance by relief actors at a time of significant humanitarian need.
- Burma's military forces launched large-scale and indiscriminate military operations—which the USG has since characterized as genocide—in Rakhine's Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung townships following Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacks on northern Rakhine checkpoints and police posts in October 2016 and August 2017. More than 943,000 refugees—all of whom rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs—had fled Burma since August 2017 into neighboring Bangladesh and taken shelter in Cox's Bazar's 34 refugee camps as of August 2022, UNHCR reports. Meanwhile Government of Bangladesh policies limit refugees' access to basic education services, capacity to engage in income-earning activities, and freedom of movement. Refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar are also vulnerable to natural hazards, such as cyclones and flooding. Additionally, the Government of Bangladesh had relocated nearly 28,500 refugees from Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char between November 2020 and October 2022.
- As of January 2021, an estimated 600,000 ethnic Rohingya—a minority group not recognized by Burma's military forces and denied rights to citizenship, freedom of movement, and public services—remained in Rakhine. Many IDPs in Rakhine are Rohingya, including approximately 126,000 people affected by the 2012 clashes who remained displaced as of May 2022. In addition, approximately 78,000 civilians, mostly ethnic Rakhine, remained displaced in Rakhine and Chin states as mid-March 2022 due to clashes between the Arakan Army and the MAF that erupted in 2018. Displaced populations, as well as other vulnerable individuals, continue to lack access to basic services and livelihood opportunities due to persistent violence and associated movement restrictions.
- On November 3, 2022, U.S. Ambassador Peter D. Haas issued a declaration of humanitarian need (DHN) for Bangladesh in response to ongoing humanitarian needs among Rohingya refugees host communities. Additionally, on December 28, 2021, U.S. Ambassador Thomas L. Vajda re-issued a DHN/disaster declaration for Burma due to the ongoing complex emergency.

## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)