



UNPROTECTED: Chin IDPs in Chin and Rakhine States, Myanmar/Burma

September 2020

Report of Chin Association of Maryland



UPROTECTED: Chin IDPs in Chin and Rakhine States, Myanmar/Burma

© September 2020

For permission regarding the distribution and use of this report please contact:

Chin Association of Maryland

7405 Slipknot Alley
Elkridge, Maryland 21075
(443) 936-8616
info@chinmd.org
www.chinmd.org



I. Acknowledgement

Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) is grateful to Chin churches in the United States for their financial support for the writing and publishing of *Unprotected: Chin IDPs in Chin and Rakhine States in Myanmar/Burma*. Without their support, this would not have been possible. We are indebted to Chin community members in Chin State and Rakhine State who conducted the in-depth assessment on the ground. We thank you to Jenny Siegel, a Ph.D student, who is a CAM Consultant for this report. She compiled and edited the report, including background information and also assessment information. CAM is also grateful to Steven Ruben who selected photos for the report, and to Matthew Wilch who provided advice to Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director, CAM.

The names of people in photos or who provided personal accounts used in the report and the names of people interviewed have not been included to protect their privacy and security.

We have tried our best to describe and analyze in good faith the situations of Chins Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Paletwa and Sami in Chin State and Chin IDPs in Rakhine State. However, if we have inadvertently made any errors in this report, they are our own.

Zo Tum Hmung
Executive Director
Chin Association of Maryland, Inc

About Chin Association of Maryland, Inc.

Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Maryland. CAM provides support services and empowers the Chin communities in Maryland to be successfully integrated into American society. It also advocates for institutional change and durable solutions for Chins and other refugees and internally displaced persons through collaboration with Chin community organizations, faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

For information, contact: info@chinmd.org | www.chinmd.org

II. Executive Summary

This report comes from the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc (CAM) and is financially sponsored by Chin churches in the United States. The Chin community in the United States are deeply concerned about ensuring safety, security, and wellbeing for internally displaced Chin families in Myanmar/Burma.¹ Based on the facts and analysis in this report we urge the U.S. Administration, Members of Congress, the Myanmar/Burma government, UN agencies, and non-governmental humanitarian organizations to consider the protection and humanitarian needs of the Chin Christian ethnic nationality that suffers displacement in Chin State and Rakhine State due to ongoing violence, gross human rights violations, religious persecution, and lack of access to basic needs and humanitarian assistance.

The ongoing violence in Chin and Rakhine States has brought international attention. In April 2020, outgoing UN Special Rapporteur, Yanghee Lee, called for an investigation into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Rakhine and Chin States by the Tatmadaw, the Myanmar/Burma military.² The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted an investigation and cited many atrocities affecting civilians in Chin and Rakhine States. The report confirmed, "...since 2019, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army in Rakhine and Chin States has intensified in scale and ferocity, resulting in deaths and injuries, and destruction of civilian property and other civilian objects, including schools and places of worship, and has forced tens of thousands of people into internal displacement."³ As recently as July 2020, Thomas A. Andrews, current UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar/Burma called attention to the progress made in Myanmar/Burma for IDPs, but also deplored ongoing human rights violations.⁴ Furthermore, UNHCR has expressed concern over the humanitarian injustice and displacement of ethnic nationals in Myanmar/Burma.⁵ The United States has also acknowledged the humanitarian crisis and has responded to the needs of civilians in Myanmar/Burma by providing over \$2 million in humanitarian funding from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and USAID.⁶ In coordination with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent. This assistance helps support vital health infrastructure, including access to clean water and safe hygiene practices.

Since the conflict began in 2015, approximately 17,627 Chin have been displaced from their homes and are now living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Chin and Rakhine States.⁷ Further, reports from community sources indicate that approximately 58 Chin have been killed from the violence. Since October

1 The Union of Burma is the original English name for the country. In 1989, the government adopted the name Myanmar. The United States, Great Britain, other countries, and many resettled refugees continue to use the name "Burma", while the EU uses the name "Myanmar/Burma." For this report we use the name "Myanmar/Burma" out of respect for thousands of refugees and to acknowledge the current government.

2 Yanghee Lee, UN Special Rapporteur, Myanmar: *"Possible war crimes and crimes against humanity ongoing in Rakhine and Chin States"*, UN High Commission for Human Rights, April 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25838&LangID=E> (accessed September 16, 2020).

3 UNHCHR, (October 4, 2020), Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 14 September–2 October 2020, p. 2-3, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_45_5_AEV.pdf (accessed September 16, 2020)

4 Statement by Thomas H. Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, Switzerland, 13 July 2020 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26095&LangID=E> (accessed September 19, 2020)

5 UNHCR, (February 8, 2019), *UNHCR concerned about the humanitarian impact of continuing violence in southern Chin State and Rakhine State in Myanmar, and stands ready to offer support*, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/2/5c5d4e754/unhcr-concerned-humanitarian-impact-continuing-violence-southern-chin-state.html>, accessed September 14, 2020

6 USAID, Burma and Bangladesh Regional Crisis Response: Fact Sheet #4, Fiscal Year 2020, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/06.23.20_USAID-DCHA_Burma_and_Bangladesh_Fact_Sheet_4.pdf (accessed September 14, 2020)

7 Reports on the numbers of Chin IDPs were obtained from local community sources in Myanmar/Burma.

2019, due to increased violent clashes between Tatmadaw and Arakan Army, reports indicate 47 Chin have been injured and 33 Chin have been abducted by the Arakan Army.⁸ In recent airstrikes in September 2020, four villagers were killed, including two children, and wounding ten others in Myebon Township in northern Rakhine State.⁹

Despite the response from the Myanmar/Burma government and the international and humanitarian response, the security situation and poor humanitarian conditions remain a threat to the lives of Chin IDPs and other Myanmar/Burma civilians in Chin and Rakhine States. COVID-19 has exacerbated the Chin experiences. Chin IDPs are in urgent and serious need of protection and humanitarian assistance for survival.

This report outlines the context of persecution against Chins in southern Chin State and Rakhine State in Myanmar/Burma. It especially focuses on the threats to their security and poor humanitarian conditions resulting from the ongoing violence in Chin and Rakhine States. It also describes how they have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The detailed information was obtained by local community members and leaders in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-Township in Chin State and Rakhine State in Myanmar/Burma,¹⁰ who conducted in-depth field assessments in each of the IDP camps they were granted access. The local community sources gathered data related to Chin security and protection needs and barriers to improved conditions including safety, material conditions, medical access, education. It also focuses on how the Chins are coping in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Shelters for Chin IDPs in Stadium IDP camp in Paletwa

8 Reports on the number of Chins killed, injured, and abducted have been maintained by local community sources in Myanmar/Burma.

9 Nyein Nyein (September 10, 2020), Children Killed by Artillery Strike Spark International Charity Calls to End War in Western Myanmar, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/children-killed-artillery-strike-spark-international-charity-calls-end-war-western-myanmar.html> (accessed September 16, 2020)

10 For protection of the Chin community sources, their identity is not made public in the report, but CAM can make it confidentially available to U.S. or UN policy makers on request.

Recommendations

For the U.S. Government

1. Increase engagement with Myanmar/Burma urging them to grant UN agencies, international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) safe, unhindered access to the IDPs to deliver humanitarian assistance.
2. Increase financial assistance (our focus is particularly on the needs of Chin IDPs in Chin State and Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma).
3. Provide improved internet services in the two states, especially to enable safe, humanitarian operations to the IDPs areas in the time of COVID-19.
4. Increase engagement of U.S. operational partners with the IDPs Communities.
5. Provide health materials such as masks and COVID-19 related education such as the importance of social distancing and good hygiene to the IDPs camps.
6. Engage the government of Myanmar/Burma to stop the Tatmadaw's offensive against the civilians.
7. Increase engagement with the government of Myanmar/Burma and with the ethnic armed organizations, especially those that have not signed the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to urge them to sign a sustainable NCA and join the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong.

For the Myanmar/Burma Government

1. End the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities.
2. Sign a sustainable NCA with all ethnic armed organizations and include them all in the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong.
3. Secure justice and peace as well as adequate humanitarian conditions in Chin State and Rakhine State to enable the safe return of displaced Chin to their villages and homes; and include displaced Chin in the political dialogue.
4. Pursue ongoing federal, democratic systemic reform inside Myanmar/Burma.

For the International and Local Non-Governmental Organizations providing Humanitarian Support

1. Provide emergency protection and financial and health assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic including improved access to testing and treatment, public health information and education, and cash and other assistance to meet basic needs.
2. Continue advocacy with the Myanmar/Burma government for improved security conditions and livelihoods for displaced Chins in Chin and Rakhine States, including access to education opportunities, health care, job and income opportunities, and protection against gender-based violence and human trafficking of children.
3. Continue to work with the Myanmar/Burma government to advocate for improved access and communication in and out of the camps in Chin and Rakhine states, including lifting internet and mobile communication restrictions.
4. Deepen the coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among all stakeholders.

Map of Myanmar/Burma with States, Regions, and Districts

Myanmar/Burma has a population of approximately 51,486,253 people. The country is divided into seven regions and seven states.¹



States/Regions

 Kachin State	 Mon State
 Kayah State	 Rakhine State
 Kayin State	 Yangon Region
 Chin State	 Shan State
 Sagaing Region	 Ayeyawady Region
 Tanintharyi Region	 Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory
 Bago Region	 State/Region boundary
 Magway Region	 District boundary
 Mandalay Region	

¹ The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, Census Atlas Myanmar, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MyanmarCensusAtlas_lowres.pdf, (accessed September 9, 2020)

III. Background and Current Chin Displacement Context

Chinland was an independent territory until the British annexation in 1896 and the British ruled the territory with the Chin Hill Regulations together with other territories including Kachin Hills, Shan States, and Burma.¹¹ Each were separately invaded, occupied, and governed by British colonists under separate constitutions: the Kachin Hill Tribes Regulation in 1895, the Chin Hills Regulation in 1896, the Shan States Act in 1888 (later became the Federated Shan States Act of 1922), and the Burma Act of 1935 for Burma and territories under its rule.¹² On February 12, 1947 Chin leaders signed the Panglong Agreement in Shan State, Myanmar/Burma with Burma, Kachin, Karen and Shan to gain independence from Britain speedily and form a Union based upon equal rights and equal standing.¹³ Thus, the Union of Myanmar/Burma came into being on February 1, 1948 after independence from Britain.

The Chins, who are over 85 percent Christian¹⁴, are an ethnic nationality in Myanmar/Burma that has suffered from religious and ethnic persecution dating back to the mid-20th Century. It began with a 1962 military coup led by General Ne Win. Following the coup were years of violence, armed conflict, and totalitarian rule in Myanmar/Burma.¹⁵ In 1988 a briefly successful pro-democratic uprising in Myanmar/Burma ultimately resulted in hundreds of deaths and ended in a military coup that marked an increased militarization in the country, including in Chin State.¹⁶ For over half a century, ethnic groups have fought for self-determination and federal democracy in Myanmar/Burma and for over three decades the National League for Democracy (NLD) has fought for federal democratic rule, which has been continuously met by resistance from successive military regimes in power in Myanmar/Burma.¹⁷

A seminal report conducted by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) in 2010 documented the experiences of people in Chin State under military rule. Rampant human rights abuses and religious freedom violations ensued at the hands of the Tatmadaw, including torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, and significant restrictions on religious freedom, political expression, and movement for many ethnic and religious minorities during this time.¹⁸ Over 91% of respondents in the study experienced forced labor.¹⁹ Furthermore, approximately 90% of households in the study reported cases of arbitrary arrest, abduction, forced conscription, or religious or ethnic persecution.²⁰ In 2011, another report, *Seeking Refuge: The Chin People in Mizoram, India* was produced which provided additional information about the human rights and religious persecution suffered by the Chins.²¹

11 Panglong Agreement: Defining Panglong Agreement, Panglong Promises, and Panglong Spirit, http://burmese.burmaenac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20180920_Panglong-Handbook_Combined-BE.pdf (accessed September 22, 2020)

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Myanmar/Burma Department of Population, (May 2015), *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census*, http://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/census_main_report_union_-_english_2.pdf (accessed September 16, 2020)

15 Human Rights Watch, (January 2009), *"We Are Like Forgotten People": The Chin People of Burma: Unsafe in Burma, Unprotected in India*, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/01/27/we-are-forgotten-people/chin-people-Myanmar/Burma-unsafe-Myanmar/Burma-unprotected-india> (accessed August 28, 2020)

16 Ibid.

17 Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, (2019), *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/burma/> (accessed August 28, 2020)

18 Richard Sollom, Chris Beyrer, Adam Richards, Vit Suwanvanichkij, Parveen Parmar, Luke Mullany, and John Bradshaw, *Life Under the Junta: Evidence of Crimes Against Humanity in Burma's Chin State*, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 26-35, available at PHR, <https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/life-under-the-junta-burma-chin-state.pdf> (accessed August 28, 2020)

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Matthew Wilch, Zo Tum Hmung, Jenny Yang (December 2011), *Seeking Refuge: The Chin People in Mizoram, India*, <http://media.virbcdn.com/files/b3/FileItem-222256-SeekingRefugeTheChinPeopleinMizoramStateIndia1211.pdf22912.pdf> (accessed August 28, 2020)

In November 2015, it appeared that the long nightmare was finally ending. Aung San Suu Kyi, human rights icon, led the NLD party to a landslide election victory. This brought great hope for the peace process, for true reform towards a federal democracy, and for movement toward a resolution of the protracted refugee situation.²²

With hope still in the air, in June of 2018, UNHCR initially concluded that Chin refugees from Myanmar/Burma no longer were in need of international protection and that the social, political, and security situation in the Sagaing Region and Chin State of Myanmar/Burma had improved such that the Chin people could safely return.²³ UNHCR continued to monitor the situation in the region²⁴ and later reversed their decision given the worsening security context and continued reports of violence and displacement against the Chin and other minority groups in Myanmar/Burma. In March 2019, UNHCR reaffirmed that Chins still need international refugee protection.²⁵

Indeed, despite NLD's efforts to amend the nation's 2008 constitution, the Myanmar/Burma military maintains significant political control and human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar/Burma continue with impunity.²⁶ Particularly disturbing has been a rise in the kind of religious and ethnic persecution by the military that Chins and others have suffered for years. The military forced over 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to Bangladesh and over 100,000 Kachin Christians remain forcibly displaced in their home state.²⁷ Meanwhile, the fighting has intensified between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw in southern Chin State and Rakhine State, displacing many Chins.

Furthermore, nine ethnic armed organizations (EOs) have yet to sign the NCA. The members of the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC) were not in attendance at the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong-- which took place from August 19 through August 21, 2020.²⁸ Continued dialogue will likely not resume until after the Myanmar/Burma elections on November 8, 2020.

Much work is needed in Myanmar/Burma to enable a genuine federal democracy system to prevail.²⁹ The NLD has attempted to amend the constitution to reduce military representation and power in parliament through two different proposals, but so far neither has been adopted.³⁰ One approach would be to gradually reduce the proportion of seats in Parliament reserved for the military, with the military's share of seats going from 25 to 15 percent after the 2020 election, from 15 to 10 percent after 2025, and from 10 to 5 percent after 2030. The second approach would be to remove the military's effective veto over any proposed amendment to the constitution by changing the requirement for approving a charter amendment from more than 75 percent of Parliament to just two-thirds of elected representatives, excluding the

22 USCCB, (July 2016), *Moment of Decision: Seeking Durable Solutions in Southeast Asia*, <https://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/fact-finding-mission-reports/upload/Moment-of-Decision.pdf> (accessed August 28, 2020)

23 Rashvinjeet S. Bedi, (June 2018), *UNHCR: Chin refugees no longer need UN protection as Myanmar's Chin State now stable*, <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/06/29/unhcr-chin-refugees-no-longer-need-un-protection-as-myanmars-chin-state-now-stable> (Accessed August 28, 2020)

24 As part of UNHCR further deliberation, Richard Towle, UNHCR Representative for Malaysia, met with the Independent Chin Community (ICC), an alliance of all Chin refugee communities in Malaysia, and with Mr. Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director of CAM, who traveled to Malaysia to help share Chins' continued protection concerns.

25 UNHCR, *UNHCR Says Ethnic Chin Refugees Require Continued International Protection*, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2019/3/5c8a31984/unhcr-says-ethnic-chin-refugees-require-continued-international-protection.html>

26 Department of State, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma*

27 USCIRF, (2020), United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2020, p 12-13, https://www.uscirtf.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF%202020%20Annual%20Report_Final_42920.pdf (accessed August 28, 2020)

28 Zaw Min Naing, (August 14, 2020), *FPNCC members will not attend upcoming peace conference*, <https://e11evenmyanmar.com/news/fpncc-members-will-not-attend-upcoming-peace-conference> (accessed August 28, 2020).

29 USCCB, (July 2016), *Moment of Decision: Seeking Durable Solutions in Southeast Asia*

30 San Yamin Aung, (February 14, 2020), "How Does the NLD's Push to Amend Myanmar's Constitution Differ From the US-DP's?", <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/how-does-the-nlds-push-to-amend-myanmars-constitution-differ-from-the-usdps.html>

military appointees.³¹

Further, the NLD has not produced tangible progress in the peace process. The Arakan Army was not invited to this fourth round of the Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong which ended on August 21, 2020.³² As a result, their alliance, the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), led by the United Wa State Army (UWSA) also did not attend.³³ In addition, the Karenni National Progressive Party has not signed the NCA. It is one of nine EAO's that still have not signed the NCA.

During the recently completed fourth round of the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong, participants agreed to Union Accord Part III, which is a positive step for peace in Myanmar/Burma and has been approved by parliament.³⁴ It articulates various principles needed for peace. These include the implementation of the NCA among all EAOs and to implement it in a step-by-step process. It also includes the fundamental principle that the Union must be based on a federal democratic system.³⁵

Nonetheless, without a ceasefire and peace agreement that includes all parties there is no immediate end to the dangerous security conditions in Myanmar/Burma that have often been the cause of forced displacement of ethnic nationals. In the current day, human rights violations and instability persist in Myanmar/Burma. The U.S. State Department's Bureau on Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor recent 2019 report on conditions in Myanmar/Burma cited arbitrary killings, disappearances, and detention by security forces, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary detention and life-threatening prison conditions, forced labor, and economic suppression.³⁶

Religious persecution and severe restrictions to religious freedom continue to be a significant threat to the lives of Chins, Kachins and other Christians in Burma³⁷ and other religious minorities, including the Rohingya Muslims.³⁸ The 2008 constitution recognizes Buddhism as the de facto religion in Myanmar/Burma. Even though it also acknowledges Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Animism, ethnic and religious minorities have continued to face persecution.³⁹ Over the years such persecution has led many Chin and other ethnic nationals to flee the country due to religious and ethnic persecution, including the Chin, Karen, Karenni, Kachin, Shan, and Mon.⁴⁰ As noted above, Rohingya Muslims also have been a major target for atrocities in recent years.

The Tatmadaw has continued to operate with impunity and has inflicted suffering on Chin in Chin and Rakhine States that has led to the displacement of thousands of Chins.⁴¹ Due to the violent clash between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw, Chin civilians have fallen victim to gun fire, air strikes, malnutrition, and abductions.⁴² Even women and children have not been spared in the conflict.⁴³ Since the conflict be-

31 National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, (August 27, 2020), "Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves Union Accord Part III" webpage <http://www.nrpc.gov.mm/en/node/471?fbclid=IwAR2MXYZaqZg3y9h5edY6YC2WLJVwOu9DtrLTrlev5iADyIJCvNflofvfZHI> (accessed August 30, 2020)

32 Zaw Min Naing, (August 14, 2020), *FPNCC members will not attend upcoming peace conference*

33 Ibid.

34 National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, (August 27, 2020), "Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves Union Accord Part III" webpage <http://www.nrpc.gov.mm/en/node/471?fbclid=IwAR2MXYZaqZg3y9h5edY6YC2WLJVwOu9DtrLTrlev5iADyIJCvNflofvfZHI> (accessed August 30, 2020)

35 National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, "Union Accord Part III" webpage <http://www.nrpc.gov.mm/en/index.php/node/470> (accessed August 30, 2020)

36 Department of State, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, p 1-2, 13-15.

37 Rachel Fleming, *The Hidden Plight of Christian Minorities in Burma*, USCIRF, 2016, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Hidden%20Plight.%20Christian%20Minorities%20in%20Burma.pdf>

38 USCIRF, *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2020*, p 12-13, https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF%202020%20Annual%20Report_Final_42920.pdf (accessed August 28, 2020), p 12-13

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Yanghee Lee, UN Special Rapporteur, Myanmar: "Possible war crimes and crimes against humanity ongoing in Rakhine and Chin States", UN High Commission for Human Rights, April 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25838&LangID=E> (accessed September 16, 2020).

42 Ibid.

43 Recent air strikes are believed to cause the death of two children and two adults in Myebon Township in northern Ra-

gan in 2015, approximately 17,627 Chin have been displaced from their homes now living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Chin and Rakhine States.⁴⁴ Furthermore, 33 households of 134 people from Paletwa Township fled to Yangon Township. There are now 10 IDP camps with 8,470 Chin in Paletwa, Sami, Miza, Tilkir, and Mawibi in Chin State. Additionally, reports indicate there are 15 IDP camps with 9,157 Chin in Buthitaung, Pumngagua, Min Pya, Ann, Kyauk Taw, and Mrauk-U in Rakhine State (more detailed information about the numbers of Chin in IDP camps can be found in the tables in Section IV of this report).⁴⁵

The following sections of this report detail the Chin IDP context and protection issues. It is another effort for advocacy for the protection of Chin in Myanmar/Burma. It outlines serious protection and humanitarian concerns of Chin in Chin and Rakhine State, making a strong case for urgent humanitarian assistance and peace in the region.

Report Methodology

The information detailed in the following sections of the report were obtained by Chin community leaders and members in Chin and Rakhine States in Myanmar/Burma. They conducted in-depth field assessments of displaced Chins in IDP camps including information regarding livelihood, humanitarian conditions, safety and security, education, health, and how they are coping in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chin community sources obtained information through interviews with Chin IDPs and IDP community sources. Additionally, CAM worked closely with the local community sources to clarify the information and provided guidance in collecting the information. All information was produced from the in-depth field assessments unless otherwise cited in the footnotes.

In Chin State, the Chin community sources conducted assessments in each of the Chin IDP camps in Paletwa Township as well as Sami Camp, Seinsin Camp, and Tinlattwa Camp. The community sources were not able to access Miza Camp due to the security situation there.

In Rakhine State, the community sources were restricted from visiting all of the IDP camps; however, they were able to conduct assessments in Minpya Township, Kyauktaw Township, Pataung Township, and Mrouk-U Township including in the following IDP camps: Tuthetkung Camp, Ann Camp 1, 2, and 3, Taungminkalam Camp, COC Camp, Malar Camp, and Lemro Camp. Information was obtained in July and August of 2020. Community sources also did the assessment in Yangon Township.

IV. The Chin IDP Context and Protection Issues

Paletwa and Sami of Chin State

The Chin are an ethnic nationality in Myanmar/Burma that are made up of many different tribes who speak several related dialects and share cultural traditions. Even though the Chin are one of the founding groups of the Union of Myanmar/Burma in 1947, yet they are one of the most persecuted minority groups in the country. The population of Chin State, Myanmar/Burma is 478,801.⁴⁶ However, there are estimated 800,000 living outside of Chin State in various other parts of the country, including 200,000 Chin in Rakhine State; 280,000 Chin in Sagaing Region; 200,000 Chin in Magwe Region; and 120,000 Chin

khine State. See Nyein Nyein (September 10, 2020), *Children Killed by Artillery Strike Spark International Charity Calls to End War in Western Myanmar*, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/children-killed-artillery-strike-spark-international-charity-calls-end-war-western-myanmar.html> (accessed September 14, 2020)

⁴⁴ Reports on the numbers of Chin IDPs were obtained from CAM local community sources in Myanmar/Burma

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Myanmar/Burma Department of Population, (May 2015), *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census*, http://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/census_main_report_union_-_english_2.pdf (accessed September 16, 2020)

in Irrawaddy, Yangon, Mandalay, Peku, and Kachin. Thus, the total population of Chins living throughout Myanmar/Burma is approximately 1,178,801.



Paletwa Township and Sami sub-township are at the southernmost part of Chin State and within the Matupi District. It includes the towns of Paletwa and Sami, with Paletwa being the administrative center for the township. Paletwa Township borders Minbya Township and Mrauk-U township of Rakhine state to the south. The total population of Paletwa Township, including Sami is 108,482.⁴⁸ There are approximately 16,655 Rakhine people. The town of Paletwa’s population is approximately 6,590, including 3,500 Rakhine people. The town of Sami’s population is approximately 2,918, including 1,500 Rakhine people – more than half of the town’s population.

The geographic importance of Paletwa and Sami is due to their proximity to the Kaladan River and the economic potential of this main waterway. The Kaladan River flows from Mizoram State, India, runs through Paletwa Township, Chin State, and connects to the Sittwe Seaport of Rakhine State, which is at the mouth of the Kaladan River on the Bay of Bengal. The Kaladan River is well-known for the Kaladan Multi-Model Transit Transport Project, with an estimated cost of US \$480 million. This project is part of India’s Act East

47 Map from the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015, p 27, <https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Chin%20State%20Census%20Report%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2020)

48 This number reflects an updated number from community sources. The Myanmar/Burma 2014 Census indicated the population of Paletwa Township and Sami sub-Township was 97,083, http://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/census_main_report_union_-_english_2.pdf (accessed September 16, 2020).

Policy and China also expresses interest in the project. It is anticipated to have a substantial economic benefit for Myanmar/Burma.⁴⁹

Paletwa and Sami became the epicenter of the conflict between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army due to its strategic geography and economic potential. The Arakan Army has a heavy military presence in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-township. As such the Tatmadaw have strategically located themselves in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-township and aligned its use of force to gain military power over Paletwa Township, with its great potential for economic growth.

Paletwa New Town Plan



Paletwa Township Map



49 Henry Khojol, (January 23, 2020), *Prod to Centre on Kaladan*, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/prod-to-centre-on-kaladan-multi-modal-transit-transport-project-between-mizoram-and-myanmar/cid/1739082> (accessed September 18, 2020)



Chin IDPs at the IDP camp in Sami

Military Presence in Chin State

The Tatmadaw has substantial military presence in Paletwa Township, Chin State, with thousands of soldiers.

Tatmadaw Military Presence in Chin State		
Type of Military Base	Location	Number of Bases
Light Infantry Division	Eastern of Paletwa	11
	Seinsin Villages, Paletwa Township	22
	Miwa, East of Kaladon River, Paletwa Township	55
	Trom Aing Villages, Paletwa Township	77
Tactical Command	Sami, Paletwa Township	1
	Khaway Villages, Paletwa Township	2
	East of Nubu Villages, Paletwa Township	3
	Dochaungwa Villages, Paletwa Township	4
	Shinletwa Villages, Paletwa Township	5
Light Infantry Battalion	Sami and Seinsin	4
	Miwa Seinsin	2
	Mount of Paletwa	4
	Paletwa and Khaway	2
	Mount Khankha, western of Kalandon River	4
	Kuletschuang, North-West Paletwa Township	2
	Northern part of Paletwa Township	2

It is estimated the Arakan Army has approximately 1,000 soldiers in Chin State located in more than two bases and mobile bases.

Arakan Army Presence in Chin State		
Type of Military Base	Location	Number of Bases
Tactical Command	Miwa the West part of Kalandon, Kyuak Taw and Paletwa Township	1
	A Tet Pyin, Northwest part of Paletwa Township	1

Chin Lives At-Risk Due to Conflict

As a result of the violence, Chin have suffered brutal acts of physical and sexual violence, have fallen victim to targeted and generalized artillery strikes, death, abductions, child trafficking, and starvation.⁵⁰ The armed conflict has caused significant destruction in over 30 villages causing the displacement of approximately 17,627 Chin to IDP camps in Chin and Rakhine States. Some Chin from Paletwa have even been displaced as far as Yangon Township in Yangon Region, including 33 Chin households made up of 134 individuals. Chin IDPs have been forced to leave their villages and homes, farm fields and possessions, and livelihoods as their villages have been subject to airstrikes and attacks on the ground, and in many cases set fire.

Since October 2019, due to increased violent clashes between Tatmadaw and Arakan Army, reports indicate 47 Chin have been injured and 33 Chin have been abducted by the Arakan Army. In the beginning of September 2020, artillery shells fell on Myebon Township in northern Rakhine State, killing four villagers, including two children, and wounding ten others.⁵¹ The age of Chin killed has ranged from 2-years to 73-years. Deaths and injuries have resulted from air strikes, gun shots, and landmines. A detailed account of the number of Chin affected by the conflict, including deaths, injuries, and cause of deaths is listed in the tables below. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2015, approximately 58 Chin have been killed.

A detailed account of the number of Chin affected by the conflict, including deaths, injuries, and cause of deaths is listed in the tables below.

Number of Chin Directly Affected by the Ongoing Conflict ⁵²	
Direct Impact of Conflict on Chin	Number of Chin Affected
Killed due to conflict	58
Missing	25
Wounded	47
Abducted	33
Displaced and in IDP camps	17,627

50 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Council, forty-fifth session, 14 September – 2 October 2020, Advanced Edited Edition, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_45_5_AEV.pdf (accessed September 17, 2020)

51 Nyein Nyein (September 10, 2020), *Children Killed by Artillery Strike Spark International Charity Calls to End War in Western Myanmar*, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/children-killed-artillery-strike-spark-international-charity-calls-end-war-western-myanmar.html> (accessed September 16, 2020)

52 Numbers obtained from local community sources in Myanmar/Burma

Account of Chin Deaths and Injuries from Conflict		
Cause of Death or Injury	Death	Injury
Landmine	6	2
Gunshot	5	2
Rocket Propelled Grenade	8	12
Tormented by Arakan Army	0	7
Airstrike by Tatmadaw	30	19
By other means by Tatmadaw or Arakan Army	9	5
Total	58	47

In March of 2020, the government of Myanmar/Burma formally designated the Arakan Army as a terrorist group, which led to an increase in clashes between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw.⁵³ One violent clash took place in Chaetung Village, comprised of mostly ethnic Chins, which included an attack on a military training school by the Arakan Army and a resulting airstrike by the Myanmar/Burma military.⁵⁴ The airstrike hit Chaetung Village, Rakhine State, burning homes, killing and wounding some Chins, and displacing many other Chins.

Chin IDPs and IDP Camps in Chin and Rakhine States

Chin IDPs in IDP camps in Chin State.⁵⁵

Chin IDPs in Chin State										
Location of Camp	House holds	Individual	Under 3 years		4- 18 years		19 – 60 years		Above 60 years	
			male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Paletwa										
Stadium	319	1342	23	19	227	231	264	287	6	7
Gymnasium, Tasanya, USDP	62	284	18	7	73	87	125	139	1	2
Buddhist Temple	46	194	12	9	71	68	122	148	-	-
Anglican, RC	87	396	8	13	86	92	127	121	-	2
Seinsinwa,Tintlatt	94	428	17	16	126	132	147	182	3	1
Outside Camp	323	1547	28	33	257	264	281	272	17	20
Sami	797	3470	102	93	512	733	993	997	23	17
Miza	101	535	18	22	113	91	143	129	8	11
Tilkir	35	140	7	10	28	27	30	33	2	3
Mawibi	33	134	5	8	31	16	33	38	-	3
Total	1897	8470	238	230	1524	1741	2265	2346	60	66

53 Nyein Nyein (March 24, 2020), *Myanmar Govt Declares Arakan Army a Terrorist Group*, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-govt-declares-arakan-army-terrorist-group.html> (accessed September 16, 2020)

54 Ibid.

55 The data collected for these tables was done from July 15 – August 14, 2020 by local community sources.

Chin IDPs in IDP camps in Rakhine State⁵⁶

Chin IDPs in Rakhine State											
Townships	Camps	House holds	Individuals	Under 3-years		4-18 years		19-60 years		Above 60-years	
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Buthi-taung	Mayonna	86	416	21	24	104	108	70	69	8	12
	Kanmayee	131	709	24	20	160	172	166	160	2	5
	Block 4.	40	211	16	19	45	46	35	46	2	2
Pumnga gua	Myat Hle	151	732	25	28	173	178	145	160	13	10
	Banpui	21	96	5	3	27	30	15	12	3	1
	Tinbungtan	60	364	18	17	70	88	79	81	6	5
Min Pya	Tuthetkung	38	135	5	9	30	33	18	22	7	11
Ann	Ann Camp 1	129	647	30	31	180	190	9	100	8	9
	Ann Camp 2	230	991	27	33	171	194	146	280	11	19
	Ann Camp 3	505	2446	184	175	347	353	756	516	49	67
Kyauk Taw	Pataung	227	1216	25	18	274	230	310	342	10	7
	Taungminkala	96	532	21	23	87	90	131	135	11	24
	COC Camps	111	539	10	11	142	120	152	94	3	7
	Malar	12	48	2	4	5	13	9	10	3	2
Mrauk-U	Lemro Camp	19	75	4	1	15	15	16	20	1	3
Total		1865	9157	417	436	1830	1860	2247	2047	137	183

V. Humanitarian Conditions In IDP Camps In Chin and Rakhine States

Food

Relief efforts have been made to assist IDPs in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-Township, including assistance from UN agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF, UN agencies, ICRC (PRM's partner in Myanmar/Burma), and from other local NGOs, as well as efforts by the Chin State government. Meanwhile, the needs are increasing as the number of IDPs has continued to grow due to the ongoing conflict. The delivery of humanitarian assistance including food to the IDP camps in Paletwa Township has been further complicated due to the restricted access to the main thoroughfare into Paletwa Township. The WFP has been able to successfully deliver food and supplies to Chin IDPs as far as Sami, but supplies will only last for two months.⁵⁷ Consequently, Chin IDPs in Paletwa Township, Sami Sub-Township, and Rakhine State remain in urgent need of food aid.

⁵⁶ The data collected for these tables was done from July 15 – August 14, 2020 by local community sources.

⁵⁷ World Food Program, *WFP reaches displaced people in Paletwa Township, Chin State while many more remain cutoff and in need of urgent food assistance* (April 3, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/wfp-reaches-displaced-people-paletwa-township-chin-state-while-many-more-remain> (accessed September 14, 2020)

Rakhine State Map⁵⁸



Shelters

The Chin State government has been working diligently to respond to the needs of displaced Chins by constructing IDP camps and huts for shelter within the camps. Additionally, Chin churches and Chin communities abroad have also contributed to these efforts. Chins living in the IDP camps usually live with their families in temporary huts made of bamboo, originally built with the intention that the Chins would live in them for just one year. After several years of unrest in the region, Chins have remained displaced and in these huts for much longer than expected. There is also a significant shortage of shelters, not enough to meet the growing number of Chin IDP households in need of shelter. Thus, many Chin IDPs set up tents outside of the IDP camps. See the table below for the current number of huts and the unmet shelter needs in Chin and Rakhine States.

58 Map from the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, Rakhine State, May 2015, p ii, <https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Rakhine%20State%20Census%20Report%20-%20ENGLISH-3.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2020)

Shelter Provision and Needs in Chin State				
Location of Camp	House hold	Population	Huts	
			Provided	Need
Paletwa	931	8395	476	455
Sami	797	3470	584,	213
Miza	101	535	-	101
Tilkir	35	140	35	-
Mawibi	33	134	33	-
Total	1897	8470	1128	769

Shelter Provision and Needs in Rakhine State					
Township	Camps	Household	Population	Huts	
				Provided	Need
Buthi-taung	Mayonna	86	416	55	31
	Kanmayee	131	709	87	44
	Block 4.	40	211	40	-
Pumnga gua	Myat Hle	151	732	102	49
	Banpui	21	96	21	-
	Tinbungtan	60	364	50	10
Min Pya	Tuthetkung	38	135	38	-
Ann	Ann Camp 1	129	647	80	49
	Ann Camp 2	230	991	50	180
	Ann Camp 3	505	2446	321	184
Kyauk Taw	Pataung	227	1216	187	40
	Taungminkala	96	532	68	28
	COC Camps	111	539	90	21
	Malar	12	48	12	-
Mrauk-U	Lemro Camp	19	75	19	-
Total		1865	9157	1229	636



Shelters for Chin IDPs in Ann Town IDP Camp, Rakhine State. Multiple families share one solar power unit

Communication and Roadway Infrastructure

In June of 2019, the Myanmar/Burma government, citing the ongoing conflict between the Tatmadaw and Arakan Army, imposed internet sanctions on eight townships in the Rakhine State and in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-Township in Chin State, disproportionately affected civilians and IDPs in conflict zones. In August 2020, mobile communication service was resumed, but only on a 2G network. Human Rights Watch contends the restricted communication has exacerbated difficult humanitarian conditions for Chin IDPs in these regions.⁵⁹ Communications restrictions have delayed the promulgation of important public health information about the COVID-19 pandemic, severely hampered the coordination of humanitarian assistance and monitoring of abuses, and has isolated people in the region.⁶⁰

Commercial travel via the road and waterways has also been restricted by the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army, resulting in thousands of Chins facing ongoing food shortages, a limited supply of needed medications, the loss of education opportunities for young people, and loss of trade for agricultural products. Main thoroughfares, including roads and waterways between Paletwa and Kyauktaw have been shut down since February 2020. The road between Sami and Paletwa is also cut off for the transportation of goods; however, emergency travel is possible in limited circumstances with a prior approval from authorities. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting travel restrictions have further complicated the delivery of aid and basic supplies to Chin IDPs.

Education for School Age Children

School-age children in the IDP camps generally have access to schools run by the government, private institutions, and UN agencies. As of August 2020, there were a total of 2,529 Chin students enrolled in schools set up in Paletwa, Sami, Miza, and Mawi B in Chin State, which included just 159 teachers and head teachers. In Rakhine State, displaced school-aged Chin children are also able to access schools. There are ten schools in the IDP camps in Rakhine, comprised of 2,952 students. Students face various challenges in the schools that create barriers to learning. There are very few school buildings and limited resources for equipment, textbooks, and other materials for teachers to implement lessons. More recently, an education initiative by the government of Myanmar/Burma specifically targeted schools in Chin and Rakhine States and provided 252 schools with learning materials and resources, teacher training, and roofs for

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch (February 13, 2020), *Myanmar: Lift Internet Restrictions in Rakhine and Chin States*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/13/myanmar-lift-internet-restrictions-rakhine-and-chin-states> (accessed 9/14/2020)

⁶⁰ Ibid.

schools, including those in IDP camps.⁶¹ Due to the dangerous conditions in Paletwa Township and Rakhine States, many teachers transfer to schools in different states. Most recently, because of intensified security situation, children in the IDP camps in Paletwa Township have not been able to attend school at all.

Schools, students, and teachers in Chin IDP camps in Chin State.

Camp Name	Students							Teachers		
	Primary		Middle		High		Total	Teachers	Head	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female				
Paletwa										
Stadium	82	87	36	47	14	12	278	13	9	22
Gymnasium, Tasanya, USDP	24	29	18	21	6	5	103	7	5	12
Buddhist Temple	45	48	13	14	7	6	133	5	2	7
Anglican, RC	28	36	21	24	9	7	125	7	1	8
Seinsinwa, Tintlatt	34	41	32	42	13	11	173	11	3	14
Outside Camp	96	118	55	78	22	23	392	16	7	23
Sami	193	194	183	227	132	128	1057	46	7	53
Miza	49	42	46	48	1	17	214	14	2	16
Mawi Bi	19	10	13	6	1	5	54	-	-	
Total	570	605	414	507	205	214	2529	119	40	159

Schools, students, and teachers for Chin students in Chin IDP camps in Rakhine State

Camp Name	Students						
	Primary		Middle		High		Total
	male	female	male	female	male	female	
Mayonna	33	30	38	23	4	15	350
Myat Hleh	69	56	30	29	5	4	193
Tu Thet Kung	9	10	8	12	3	3	45
Ann Camp 1	85	65	34	44	7	9	244
Ann Camp 2	65	76	60	63	45	51	360
Ann Camp 3	128	146	96	87	23	35	515
Pataung	184	127	112	104	15	18	560
Taungminkala	45	34	18	24	9	12	142
COC camp	17	32	13	27	7	7	103
Malar	3	6	1	2		1	13
Lemro Camp	6	9	4	8	2	3	32
Total	644	593	414	423	120	758	2952

61 UNICEF, *Education initiative reaches over 300,000 disadvantaged children in Rakhine and Chin States*, <https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/press-releases/education-initiative-reaches-over-300000-disadvantaged-children-rakhine-and-chin> (accessed 9/14/2020)

Sanitation and Water

Sanitation facilities and services, including running water, latrines, and sewage are very limited for Chin IDPs in both Chin and Rakhine States. Poor sanitation conditions heighten health risks, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when individual hygiene practices are critical to reduce the spread of the virus. In Chin State there are five different towns that have IDP camps including Paletwa, Sami, Miza, Tilkir, and Mawibi. According to reports from community sources there are 1,897 households and 8,470 individual IDPs in the IDP camps in Chin state. Paletwa has the largest number of IDPs, 4,191, and has five different camp sites. In the camps in Chin state, there are only five public areas with running water, there are 229 latrines, no sewage, and only one medical checkpoint. The public nature of the sanitation services create significant challenges for women as they attempt to avoid public exposure.

In Rakhine State, sanitation facilities and services are also severely limited. There are fifteen different IDP camps in Buthitaung, Pumngagua, Min Pya, Ann, Kyauk Taw, and Mrauku-U. There are a total of 1,865 Chin households including 9,157 individual Chin IDPs in the Rakhine State camps. Among all the IDP camps there are only a total of ten public areas with running water, 141 latrines, and one medical checkpoint.

There is also a great need for safe drinking water for Chin IDPs. While township municipal officials supply drinking water, they are not able to meet the needs of the large and increasing number of IDPs in the IDP camps. Currently, IDPs depend on rainwater for drinking. When it is not rainy season, the need of water increases substantially. In any plans for the IDPs, a water supply program should be considered and pursued to help meet one of the most basic needs for the IDPs.



IDP Latrines in Ann Town, Rakhine State

Health Services

Health services are provided by government health assistants who are based in the IDP camp areas. In Paletwa, medical services are provided to IDPs and civilians twice a week. In Sami the Chin IDPs receive medical care through Community Care for Emergency and Rehabilitation (CCER). However, due to the closure of the main thoroughfares in and out of the Paletwa region, needed medicine and medical supplies are not easily accessible. For those IDPs in need of emergency healthcare for serious health issues or injuries related to conflict in the region, emergency response arrangements send individuals to nearby

Matupi, Mindat, Mandalay, or sometimes as far away as Yangon. Limited health services creates significant challenges for pregnant women in need of prenatal care.

COVID-19 Impact

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has taken decisive leadership with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar/Burma.⁶² As such the Myanmar/Burma government response to the virus has been regarded as timely and aggressive to control the spread of the virus. Initially, Myanmar/Burma appeared to have largely been spared from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting just under 400 cases in the beginning of August.⁶³ However, since then there has been a substantial increase in cases. As of September 20, 2020, Myanmar/Burma reported 5,263 cases and 89 COVID-19 related deaths.⁶⁴ In Chin State there are a reported 21 cases; 8 in Tedim Township, 7 in Tonzang Township, 4 in Mindat, 1 in Hakha, and 1 in Thantlang.⁶⁵ In Rakhine State there were a reported 955 COVID-19 cases; 539 in Sittwe, 124 in Kyaukpyu, 49 in Maungdaw, 45 in Pauktaw, 42 in Mrauk-U, 30 in Kyawktaw, 29 in Minbya, 27 in Mayebon, 27 in Buthidaung, 19 in Ponnagyun, 19 in Thandwe, 9 in Toungup, 4 in Ann, 2 in Rathedaung, 2 in Ramree, 1 in Gwe, and 1 in Munaung.⁶⁶ Due to the increase in cases, in early September the Myanmar/Burma government imposed its toughest measures yet to control the spread of COVID-19, including banning travel to and from Yangon, the commercial capital and transportation hub. They also grounded all domestic flights. The U.S. Center for Disease Control also imposed a Level 3 Warning and urged all to avoid non-essential travel.⁶⁷ On August 16, 2020 the Rakhine State government issued a “stay at home” order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Reports indicate that IDPs infected by the virus have been removed from the camps to quarantine, along with UN and other INGO personnel who have been infected.⁶⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for Chin IDPs in Chin and Rakhine States. Due to unsanitary conditions, limited healthcare, limited COVID-19 testing capacity, and restricted communication lines in the IDP camps, Chin IDPs are at risk for health complications related to COVID-19. Restricted communication and limited access in and out of the IDP camp areas has severely limited the information about the COVID-19 pandemic and in some cases the limited information available has not been accurate. Furthermore, there are no known efforts to provide widespread education regarding COVID-19 and preventable measures individuals can take to prevent the spread and contraction of COVID-19 within the IDP camps. Restricted internet access decreases the ability to prevent and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in Chin and Rakhine States, heightening the risk for Chin IDPs and civilians in the region.⁶⁹ Furthermore, severely limited sanitation and hygiene facilities in the camps make activities like handwashing to prevent the spread of the virus challenging. In addition, there are few supplies of personal protection equipment (PPE) in the IDP camps. Reports from community sources indicate there are no masks in the IDP camps in Paletwa Township.

Another unique challenge for IDPs related to the pandemic is the shortage of work in Myanmar/Burma. The pandemic has struck a serious blow to the economy in Myanmar/Burma, threatening the country’s

62 Myanmar/Burma State Counsellor Office, *State Counsellor Calls for Adherence to COVID-19 Guidelines to Avoid Pandemic Long-Term Guidelines*, <https://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/2981> (accessed September 17, 2020)

63 U.S. Embassy in Burma (September 11, 2020), COVID-19 Information Webpage, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/> (accessed September 11, 2020)

64 Ministry of Health and Sports, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Surveillance Dashboard (Myanmar) (as of 20-9-2020, 8:00 am), <https://mohs.gov.mm/Main/content/publication/2019-ncov> (accessed September 20, 2020)

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 CDC (August 3, 2020). COVID-19 in Burma (Myanmar), <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/coronavirus-burma> (accessed September 16, 2020)

68 OCHA, (September 1, 2020), Myanmar, Rakhine State: COVID-19 Situation Report No. 08, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA%20Myanmar%20-%20COVID-19%20Situation%20report%20No%208.pdf> (accessed September 16, 2020)

69 Nan Lwin Hnin Pwint, (August 25, 2020), *Myanmar Govt-Imposed Internet Restrictions in Rakhine Could Worsen State’s COVID-19 Outbreak, Critics Say*, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/myanmar-covid-19/myanmar-govt-imposed-internet-restrictions-rakhine-worsen-states-covid-19-outbreak-critics-say.html> (accessed September 14, 2020)

more recent progress in poverty reduction.⁷⁰ Because the conflict in the region has caused many Chin to lose their jobs and their ability to provide a livelihood for their families, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the financial wellbeing of Chin IDPs. In fact, on September 15 reports indicated that 41 Chins were arrested by the Tatmadaw for breaching the “stay at home” order by attempting to work to earn money and provide food for their families.⁷¹ With little food sources and no or limited income, Chin families find it difficult to meet even their most basic needs.

Stakeholders Providing Financial and Humanitarian Assistance

INGOs, NGOs, and churches that are donors and/or provide food and shelter to the Chin IDPs:

1. Chin State Government
2. World Food Program (WFP)
3. Catholic Relief Services
4. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
5. Triangle Generation Humanitarian (TGH)
6. Global Family
7. People Hope Community Development (PHCD)
8. Raiki Community Development Foundation (RCDF)
9. Gret, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS)
10. Community Care for Emergency Response and Rehabilitation (CCERR)
11. Sami Fellow and Chin Baptist Churches USA
12. Chin Baptist Convention
13. Paletwa Baptist Association
14. Lairawn Baptist Association
15. Local and International Chin Communities
16. International Chin Churches including the Chin Baptist Churches USA, Norway Chin Christian Federation (NCCF), Chin Christian Council in Australia (CCCA); Ottawa Chin Community (USA); Matu Christian Convention, USA
17. Others which we may not be aware of



World Food Program's transport truck for Chin IDPs at Paletwa Camp

70 Work Bank (June 25, 2020), *Myanmar's Economy Severely Impacted by COVID-19: Report*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/25/myanmars-economy-severely-impacted-by-covid-19-report> (accessed September 16, 2020)

71 Tatmadaw Information Team (September 15, 2020), http://dsinfo.org/node/418?fbclid=IwAR2zN6vCpP8VIWmC8mmtGF-gTs9aVvydZQny_Vp9akWL3q1rSxylN_K40J4 (accessed September 16, 2020)

Camp Management Committees

Camp management committees provide support to IDPs in the IDP camps in Chin and Rakhine States by delivering services and through coordination of services with the government, INGOs and local NGOs. Below is a list of the camp management committees in the IDP camps in Chin and Rakhine States.

1. Paletwa Township IDPs Relief Committee
2. Paletwa Christian Relief Committee
3. Seinsinwa Camp Management Committee
4. Administrative Committee in Sami IDPs
5. Property Supply Committee
6. Christian Relief Committees (Sami Baptist Relief Committee)



Cooking at Ann Camp, Rakhine State. Firewood is scarce and there is very little food for proper nutrition

VI. Conclusion

As detailed in the report, Chin IDPs are not able to return to their villages due to the ongoing violence between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw in Chin and Rakhine States. The Myanmar/Burma government, UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs should consider the complexities of the Chin IDP situation in Myanmar/Burma. As such, entities should collaborate to consider short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions for resolving the conflict and ensuring safety, security, and improved humanitarian conditions for Chin IDPs.



A community kitchen at Stadium, Paletwa



Shelters at Stadium, Paletwa



Chin Association of Maryland, Inc.

For information, contact: info@chinmd.org www.chinmd.org

UNPROTECTED: Chin IDPs in Chin and Rakhine States, Myanmar/Burma

© September 2020

Chin Association of Maryland

7405 Slipknot Alley
Elkridge, Maryland 21075
(443) 936-8616
info@chinmd.org
www.chinmd.org

