

1 July 2014

## MYANMAR

# Comprehensive solutions needed for recent and long-term IDPs alike

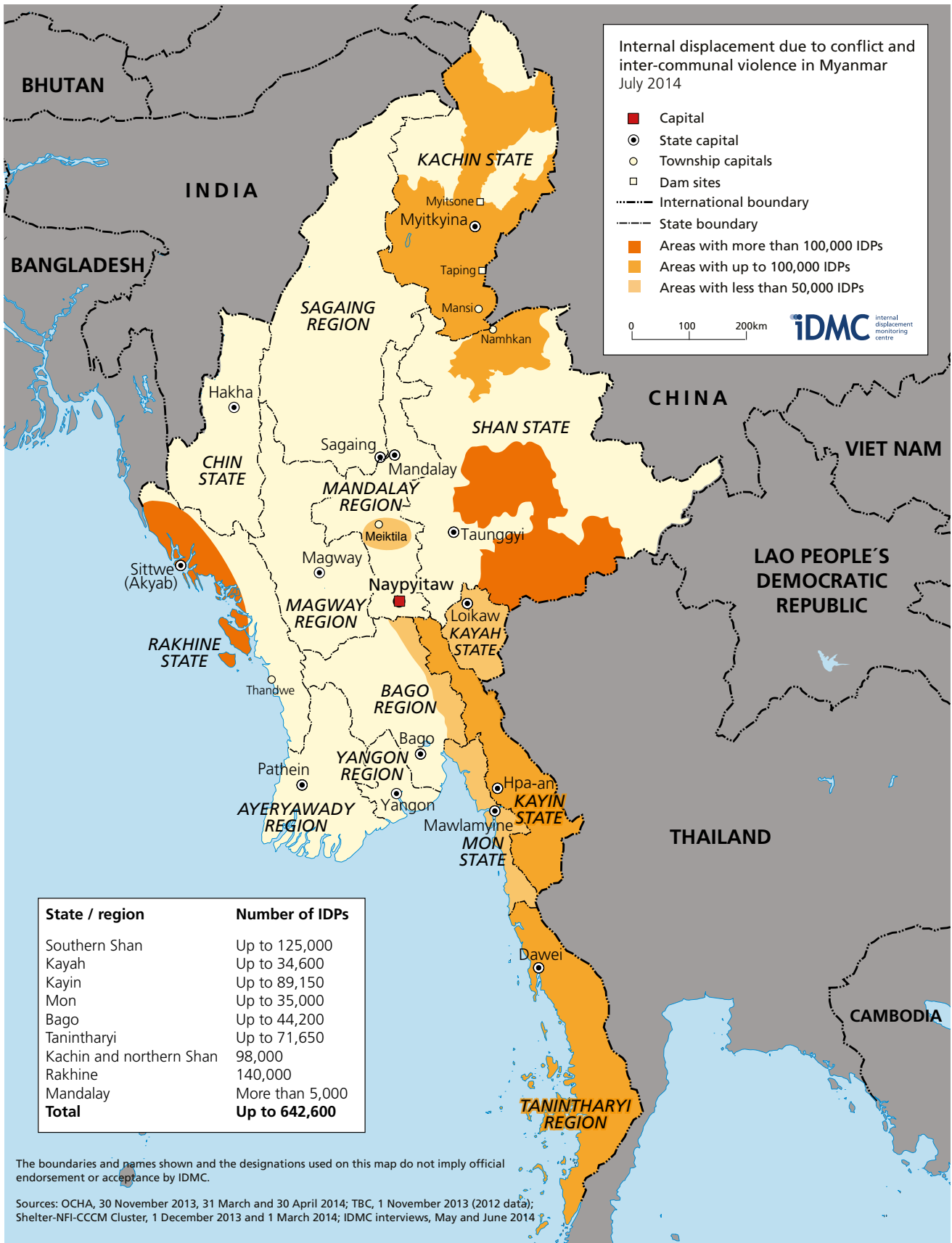
IDMC estimates that there are up to 642,600 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Myanmar, forced to flee their homes by armed conflict and inter-communal violence. The figure includes up to 400,000 people living in protracted displacement as a result of conflict in the south-east of the country – in southern Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states and Bago and Tanintharyi regions - and 98,000 displaced by conflict in Kachin and northern Shan states since 2011. It also includes around 140,000 people displaced by inter-communal violence in Rakhine state since 2012, and more than 5,000 who fled their homes in Mandalay region in 2013. Disasters brought on by natural hazards and forced evictions linked to land grabs and the exploitation of natural resources have caused further displacement, including in areas where people have already fled conflict and violence.



Two children look to the camera at an IDP camp in Myanmar's northern Kachin State. Photo: Steve Sandford/IRIN, December 2013

Landmines and unexploded ordnance constitute a significant obstacle to IDPs' return in Kachin, northern Shan and the south-east. Internally displaced women and girls in Kachin and northern Shan face the threat of sexual violence. Muslim IDPs in Rakhine are confined to camps, where they have little or no access to health care, education or livelihoods, and shelters are in need of maintenance in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan. In the south-east, on the other hand, many IDPs are thought to be well on their way to achieving durable solutions through return or local integration, but estimating their number and gauging their outstanding needs is a challenge.

Myanmar has no policy or legislation on internal displacement, and the government's response has varied from region to region. Following the signing of ceasefire agreements, IDPs in the south-east should be better consulted and should be enabled to participate more in peace negotiations to ensure that their needs and aspirations in terms of durable solutions are addressed. UN mechanisms such as clusters and sectors coordinate the international response in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan, but generally humanitarian access is difficult in Rakhine, and in areas of Kachin and northern Shan not under government control.



Map by: IDMC

More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org/search?Type=Map](http://www.internal-displacement.org/search?Type=Map)

## Background and causes of displacement

### *Internal armed conflict and displacement from the 1960s until 2011*

Myanmar's armed forces have been engaged in internal armed conflict with ethnic non-state armed groups (NSAGs) fighting for independence or autonomy since the country emerged from under British rule in 1948 ([UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.1).

A military coup in 1962 ended a period of democratic government, and NSAGs based in the eastern and south-eastern border states of Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon, and the Bago and Tanintharyi regions, began to take up arms against the regime ([MPSI](#), March 2014, p.12). These areas are home to ethnic minorities who make up around 30 per cent of Myanmar's population ([TNI-BCN](#), 8 May 2013, p.1). They are also rich in natural resources including minerals, timber and hydropower, which the various parties to the conflict have fought to control ([TNI-BCN](#), 19 February 2013, pp.17-20; [PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, p.11). Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, both internally and to other countries including Thailand ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, p.3; [TBC](#), IDP reports, various years).

In the 1960s, the Myanmar armed forces, referred to officially as *Tatmadaw*, introduced a "four cuts" counter-insurgency strategy, which consisted of severing NSAGs' access to food, money, information and recruits ([Chatham House](#), September 2010, p.21; [UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.2). Since the late 1990s, the strategy has been combined with a "self-reliance" policy, under which *Tatmadaw* units are obliged to find ways to meet their operational needs and supplement their low salaries and meagre rations. This they have done by confiscating food and agricultural land, and by requisitioning civilian labour ([UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.45; [TNI-BCN](#), 28 March 2011, p.12; [UN GA](#), 15 September 2010, p.12; [Chatham House](#), September 2010, p.43).

During the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the *Tatmadaw* forcibly relocated civilians from ethnic minority groups in the eastern and south-eastern border states and regions. They moved them from "black" areas controlled by NSAGs to contested "brown" or "grey" areas and eventually to relocation sites in "white" areas under government control, creating large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the process. The *Tatmadaw's* relocation orders were usually given at short notice, preventing many from taking their belongings with them before their homes were burned down. The depopulated villages were declared "free-fire zones", and people staying on beyond the relocation deadline faced serious protection risks ([Chatham House](#), September 2010, pp.21-22). In an effort to avoid relocation and forced labour, some people fled into forests in black and brown areas, where many of them were displaced again numerous times over the years as fighting continued ([UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.4).

The NSAGs portrayed themselves as protectors of ethnic minority groups, and relied on the civilian population in their areas of operation as a source of food, information and recruits. Goods and services were provided either voluntarily or under pressure. Some groups, such as the Karen National Union (KNU), provided a degree of social and welfare services in areas they controlled ([Chatham House](#), September 2010, p.48).

Between 1989 and 2007, ceasefires agreed between the government and most NSAGs allowed the groups to control territory and pursue economic activities. The relative stability that ensued reduced the threat of repeated displacement and allowed some IDPs to return home (Myanmar Peace Monitor, [Armed Ethnic Groups](#), last checked 30 June 2014; [UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.2). Some NSAGs reportedly exploited natural resources in their areas heavily, but with little or no benefit to local communities ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, p.19; [CPCS](#), June 2010, pp.99-100, 147, 270-271).

In April 2009 the government ordered all NSAGs that had agreed to ceasefires to transform into *Tatmadaw*-led “border guard forces”, a de facto prerequisite for their political wings to contest national elections in November 2010. Most of the main NSAGs concerned refused, however, prompting the government to declare the ceasefires over ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, p.6; [TNI and BCN](#), 26 May 2011, p.7). Renewed tensions and fighting followed, pitting these groups against *Tatmadaw* and NSAGs allied to the government, while those such as KNU, which had not signed a ceasefire agreement in the first place, continued their armed opposition. Both sides were supported by ethnic militias they had created ([IRIN](#), 29 November 2010; [TNI and BCN](#), 26 May 2011, pp.6-7; [CPCS](#), June 2010, p.69; [TNI and BCN](#), 14 February 2011, pp.5, 10; [KHRG](#), 31 August 2010, pp.83-87). The government withdrew its order for NSAGs to transform into border guard forces in September 2011 ([PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, p.10).

#### *New ceasefires, conflict and displacement since 2011*

The November 2010 elections ushered in a new government under President Thein Sein, which took office in March 2011 ([The World Post](#), 30 March 2011). During 2011 and 2012, it reached new ceasefire agreements with many of the main NSAGs, including KNU, the National Democratic Alliance Army/Eastern Shan State Special Region-4 (NDAA-ESS), the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the Shan State Army North-Shan State Progress Party (SSA-N/SSPP), the Shan State Army South/Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the United Wa State Army/Party (UWSA/P). The Kachin Independence Army/Organisation (KIA/O), the Ta’ang (Palaung) National Liberation Army (TNLA), and the Arakan Army (AA) are currently the only groups at arms ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, p.8; Myanmar Peace Monitor, [Armed Ethnic Groups](#); ICG Crisis Watch, 1 September 2013).

As a consequence, fighting in southern Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states and Bago and Tanintharyi regions has died down since 2011.

There have also been fewer human rights abuses, including forced labour and the confiscation of food and land, as *Tatmadaw* units have significantly reduced their predatory taxation under their self-reliance policy. Some NSAGs have done likewise, KNU-Brigade 4 in Tanintharyi region being a case in point (IDMC interview, May 2014).

In Kachin and northern Shan, however, fighting between KIA/O and the Myanmar armed forces resumed in June 2011, ending a ceasefire that had held for 17 years. Following KIA/O’s refusal to transform into a border guard force, the government declared the 1994 ceasefire over, and refused to register the Kachin State Progressive Party and the Northern Shan State Progressive Party for the November 2010 elections because of their links with the group ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, pp.6-8).

The renewed fighting is also linked to KIA/O’s opposition to foreign investment and its control over natural resources in Kachin and northern Shan, including the Myitsone hydropower dam – construction of which Thein Sein suspended in September 2011 - and the Taping hydropower dam, located in the area where fighting broke out in June 2011 ([TNI-BCN](#), 19 February 2013, p.21). In northern Shan, TNLA, which like KIA/O has no ceasefire agreement with the government, and two other groups - SSA-S/RCSS and SSA-N/SSPP – have also clashed with the *Tatmadaw* ([ICG](#), 22 April 2014, p.11; [DVB](#), 26 February 2014).

KIA/O and the government have been in negotiations amid the fighting. In May 2013 the two sides reached a seven-point preliminary agreement, which includes a provision to “undertake relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of internally displaced persons” ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, p.18). Further agreement was reached in October 2013, but it did not prevent clashes the same month, in November and in April 2014 ([OCHA](#), 30 November 2013, p.1; [OCHA](#), 30 April 2014, p.1).

Since February 2013 the government and the NSAGs, both those with and without individual agreements, have been working toward a nationwide ceasefire that would be followed by peace talks ([ICG](#), 12 June 2013, p.13). Since November 2013, the nationwide ceasefire coordination team (NCCT) has represented the NSAGs in the negotiations. After repeated delays, the government and NCCT agreed a second draft in May 2014 and aim to sign a final agreement by 1 August ([MPSI](#), March 2014, p.14; [Myanmar Times](#), 23 June 2014; [DVB](#), 24 May 2014; [RFA](#), 23 May 2014).

#### *Political reforms since 2011*

Since taking office in March 2011, the government has implemented significant political and economic reforms. In response, other countries have sent high-level visitors, renewed diplomatic ties and lifted some economic sanctions, though arms embargoes remain in place.

For example, the government has released hundreds of political prisoners in several waves, and in September 2011 it set up the National Human Rights Commission, with former government officials and diplomats and representatives of ethnic and religious minorities as commissioners ([ICG](#), Conflict alert, 1 October 2011). A new labour law that embraces a degree of freedom of association came into force in October 2011 ([ICG](#), Conflict alert, 1 November 2011), and in December 2011 new legislation allowing peaceful protests was enacted. Tentative steps have also been taken toward loosening media censorship ([ICG Crisis Watch](#), 2 January 2012; [BBC](#), 29 January 2013).

In April 2012 the previously banned opposition party, the National League of Democracy (NLD), won 43 out of 45 seats in parliamentary byelections, and its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, became chair of the parliamentary committee on the rule of law ([BBC](#), 1 April 2012; [DVB](#), 8 August 2012).

A ban on public gatherings was lifted in early 2013, and two opposition politicians were named

as deputy ministers later in the year. A committee was set up to review the 2008 constitution in March 2013, and it reported to parliament in January 2014. The Constitutional Amendment Implementation Committee now has until six months before the next national elections, which are scheduled to take place in November 2015 at the latest, to draft its amendments ([BBC](#), 29 January 2013; [ICG Crisis Watch](#), 1 March 2014).

With the lifting of some economic sanctions, foreign investment has increased, mainly in the extraction of natural resources, and the government has made preparations to apply for membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) ([EITI](#), 31 March 2014). The country convened the first Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum and hosted the World Economic Forum for East Asia in 2013, and holds the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2014.

In early April 2014, the government carried out a national census, the first since 1983, with support from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and donors. Observers including the International Crisis Group (ICG) criticised the questionnaire for its references to ethnicity, and some called for the census to be postponed for fear it could trigger further ethnic or inter-communal violence ([ICG](#), 15 May 2014, p.1; [Burma Campaign UK](#), February 2014, p.1; [TNI](#), 24 February 2014). In the end it went ahead, but Muslims in Rakhine state who identify themselves as Rohingya (see section below) were not counted, and neither were people living in areas of Kachin not under government control. A recount is envisaged for those areas, but it is unlikely to happen ([UNFPA](#), 11 April 2014; [Myanmar Times](#), 2 June 2014).

#### *Inter-communal violence and displacement*

Rakhine state in western Myanmar is home to around three million people, two-thirds of whom are Rakhine Buddhists and a third Muslims. The state is one of the most deprived in the coun-



try, and although the government recognises its Buddhists as one of Myanmar's 135 ethnic groups, it has historically neglected them in terms of political representation and economic resources. The government does not recognise most of the state's Muslims as belonging to one of the country's ethnic groups, although they have lived in the area that is now Rakhine state for generations. It considers them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and refers to them as Bengalis, emphasising the fact that they do not hold Myanmar citizenship. The people themselves, an increasing number of whom identify as Rohingya and as such indigenous to Rakhine, do not accept the government's classification, and Bangladesh does not recognise them as citizens either. As a result, they are stateless. There are a small number of Muslims in Rakhine who do not identify themselves as Rohingya and are recognized as Myanmar citizens (HRC, 12 March 2014, p.12; IDMC interviews, May 2014).

Tensions between Rakhine's Buddhist and Muslim communities have been simmering for years. The central government has imposed restrictions on stateless Muslims, including their freedom of movement, which has made them increasingly dependent on aid. At the same time, it has no policies to address the marginalisation of the state's Buddhists. Rakhine state has received international assistance since 1994, but to the Buddhists' dissatisfaction it has overwhelmingly targeted the Muslim population, including former refugees who returned from Bangladesh (UNHCR, 23 July 2007).

Rakhine Buddhists feel that the growth of the state's Muslim population has marginalised them even further, and in the absence of a programme to tackle the deprivation suffered by all Rakhine's inhabitants, this has made tensions between the two communities worse. Before the 2010 national elections, the government issued temporary voter ID cards to stateless Rohingyas, in an effort to split the Rakhine vote, which the local

Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) was expected to win ahead of the pro-central government Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). This only served to fuel tensions further, on the one hand raising Muslims' hopes of citizenship and on the other heightening resentment among the Buddhist community (ICG, 12 November 2012, p.4). RNDP eventually won a majority in the Rakhine state parliament, but USDP candidates filled the roles of chief minister and other key legislators (Myanmar Times, 17 June 2013; Irrawaddy, 25 June 2014).

With armed rebellion in the state on the wane, Rakhine Buddhists have targeted their frustrations less against the central government and more against Muslims (DVB, 9 April 2010; IDMC interview, May 2014). In June and October 2012, these grievances escalated into inter-communal violence, following an incident in May of the same year in which Muslim men allegedly raped and killed a Buddhist woman (ICG, 12 November 2012, p.1). More than 200 people were killed and about 140,000 displaced, most of them Muslims (RFA, 13 March 2014; RI, 17 March 2014). Tens of thousands of Muslims, mostly stateless but also some Myanmar citizens, have fled the country since 2012 (UNHCR, 10 June 2014).

Increasing anti-Muslim rhetoric from the 969 Movement, a nationalist Buddhist organisation, laid the ground for inter-communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims in other parts of the country in 2013. In the most prominent incident, nearly 12,900 people were forced to flee their homes in the town of Meiktila in Mandalay region (OCHA, 31 March 2013, p.1). Other incidents took place near Yangon, in Kachin and Shan states, and in Bago and Sagaing regions (WSWS, 5 June 2013; RFA, 27 March 2013; Irrawaddy, 30 August 2013; ICG, 1 October 2013, p.15).

*Displacement due to natural hazard-induced disasters*  
Myanmar is prone to natural hazards including floods, landslides, cyclones, storm surges, earth-

quakes, forest fires and drought, and 2.6 million people live in areas at risk of such events ([Reuters](#), 15 April 2014). "The likelihood for medium to large-scale disasters to occur every couple of years is high, according to historical data" ([OCHA](#), Myanmar: A country prone to a range of natural disasters, 30 September 2013).

Flooding regularly affects large parts of the country, the result of monsoon rains from mid-May to October in both mountainous and delta areas, river erosion, poor drainage systems in cities and dam bursts in rural areas. The country's coastline along the Bay of Bengal is highly vulnerable to cyclones in April, May and October, and to tropical storms in the preceding and following months. Six major cyclones have hit Myanmar since the 1960s, of which Nargis in May 2008 was the most devastating ([Government of Myanmar and ADPC](#), 2009, pp.4, 6).

The country is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, and there is a lack of capacity and funding for disaster preparedness programmes ([Reuters](#), 15 April 2014). That said, some progress has been made since cyclone Nargis in improving early warning systems, particularly in terms of forecasting and the sharing of information ([IRIN](#), 5 May 2014).

Natural hazard-induced disasters often cause displacement in areas where people have already fled their homes for other reasons. Floods and storms cause displacement in Rakhine state, which also hosts IDPs displaced by inter-communal violence. Similarly, displacement in the south-eastern states of Kayin, Mon and Shan, and Bago and Tanintharyi regions, has been caused by floods, conflict and land grabs ([OCHA](#), Myanmar: A country prone to a range of natural disasters, 30 September 2013).

#### *Land grabbing and development-induced displacement*

As foreign investment has increased in recent years, land grabs - understood as the illicit acquisition of land by government entities including

the *Tatmadaw*, NSAGs and private companies - have already taken place in some areas. As new ceasefires with NSAGs open up areas rich in natural resources, the phenomenon is expected to spread. This includes hydropower projects and the establishment of special economic zones ([DS](#), 2 June 2013, p.20; [DS](#), February 2014, p.9; [PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, pp.14, 26; [TNI](#), 8 May 2013; [KHRG](#), 5 March 2013; [SHIFT](#), April 2013).

The inhabitants of several villages, for example, are to be relocated to make room for the Dawei deep seaport and special economic zone. The villagers concerned say they have not received enough information about the proposed relocation site, nor about how they would be compensated for lost land, property and livelihoods. If the relocation goes ahead in such circumstances, it would constitute forced eviction ([PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, p.14).

Myanmar's current legislative framework on land, including the Farmland Law and the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Law, came into force in 2012. It is said to facilitate land grabs by large-scale agribusinesses rather than protecting small farmers, on the basis that it only recognises formal land rights and not customary tenure, despite the fact that the latter predominates in the uplands of south-eastern Myanmar ([UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.47; [DS](#), October 2012; [TNI-BCN](#), 8 May 2013; [PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, p.27).

Existing reports on land grabs for commercial gain tend to focus on how the current legal framework facilitates such acquisitions, and the displacement risk that people living on or working the land in question face as a result ([HURFOM](#), 9 October 2013, pp.21-23; see also section on durable solutions below). There is, however, little quantitative information from which to glean the number of people affected, their places of origin or their places of refuge, let alone their assistance and protection needs. Given that land grabs are an emerging issue of concern, better monitoring of this type of displacement is needed.

## Displacement figures and patterns

### *Displacement caused by conflict and violence*

Renewed fighting in Kachin and northern Shan since June 2011 has displaced around 98,000 people, many of them several times. Around two-thirds are thought to be living in areas beyond government control. The total includes 13,000 IDPs outside camps in both government and NSAG-controlled areas (Shelter-NFI-CCCM cluster, [Kachin and Northern Shan Cluster Analysis Report](#), 1 March 2014; [OCHA](#), 30 April 2014, p.1; IDMC interview, June 2014).

Fighting near Hpakant township in Kachin displaced 6,000 people in August 2012, and thousands more fled their homes in December 2012 and January 2013 when, in a rare use of airstrikes, the *Tatmadaw* attacked areas close to KIA/O's headquarters in the town of Laiza (ICG, Conflict alert, 1 September 2012; [ICG](#), 12 June 2013, pp.8-10; ICG, Crisis Watch, 1 February 2013).

The *Tatmadaw* and KIA/O clashed again in Kachin in November and December 2013, displacing at least 4,000 people within Mansi township, from Nam Lim Pa to NSAG-controlled areas including Lagat Yang near the Chinese border. The IDPs included people who had already been displaced before, and more than half of them were children ([HRC](#), 12 March 2014, p.9; [OCHA](#), 31 December 2013, p.4). Around 2,700 people were forced to flee again when the *Tatmadaw* shelled an area close to the Lagat Yang displacement camp in April 2014. Those affected sought shelter in Man Win Gyi, Kachin state and Namkhan, Shan state ([OCHA](#), 30 April 2014, p.1; [The Irrawaddy](#), 10 April 2014; [DVB](#), 14 April 2014).

In Rakhine there are currently around 140,000 IDPs (Shelter/NFI/CCCM cluster, [Rakhine cluster analysis report](#), 1 March 2014; [Rakhine cluster analysis report](#), 1 December 2013; IDMC interview, June 2014). Following the inter-communal violence that displaced them in June and October 2012,

most settled in camps outside Sittwe, the state capital. Others took refuge with host communities in villages outside Sittwe and elsewhere in the state ([ICG](#), 1 October 2013, p.7; [HRW](#), 1 August 2012, pp.18-19). The majority of the Muslim population of Sittwe, or nearly 94,000 people, has been displaced and lives in camps north of the town. Of the city's Muslim neighbourhoods, only the Aung Mingalar quarter is still inhabited (IDMC interview, March 2014).

Tensions in Rakhine state between the Buddhist and Muslim communities, including clashes that have caused displacement, have been ongoing since. Muslims clashed with security forces near Sittwe in August 2013 ([Reuters](#), 12 August 2013), and violence in Thandwe township triggered by a dispute in a shop displaced 480 people in late September and early October 2013 ([OCHA](#), 6 October 2013).

Another dispute in a shop, this time in Meiktila in Mandalay region in March 2013, led to three days of violence between Buddhists and Muslims, in which at least 44 people were killed and nearly 12,900 displaced ([OCHA](#), 31 March 2013, p.1). More than 5,000 people are still living in displacement in the region ([OCHA](#), 30 November 2014, p.4; [OCHA](#), 31 March 2014, p.1; IDMC interviews, May and June 2014). Other incidents in 2013 took place near Yangon, in Kachin and Shan states and in Bago and Sagaing regions, with 1,200 and nearly 300 people displaced in Shan and Sagaing respectively ([WSWS](#), 5 June 2013; [RFA](#), 27 March 2013; [Irrawaddy](#), 30 August 2013; [ICG](#), 1 October 2013, p.15).

In southern Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states and Bago and Tanintharyi regions, people have been living in displacement for a number of years, and it has become increasingly difficult to estimate the number of IDPs who have fled conflict. No comprehensive profiling or durable solutions assessment has been undertaken, and there is only very limited information on those who have



Table: Displacement caused by armed conflict and inter-communal violence

State/region	Cause	Current number of IDPs	Source/date
Southern Shan state	Armed conflict	Up to 125,000	<a href="#">TBC</a> , 1 November 2013 (2012 data)
Kayah state	Armed conflict	Up to 34,600	<a href="#">TBC</a> , 1 November 2013 (2012 data)
Kayin state	Armed conflict	Up to 89,150	<a href="#">TBC</a> , 1 November 2013 (2012 data)
Mon state	Armed conflict	Up to 35,000	<a href="#">TBC</a> , 1 November 2013 (2012 data)
Bago region	Armed conflict	Up to 44,200	<a href="#">TBC</a> , 1 November 2013 (2012 data)
Tanintharyi region	Armed conflict	Up to 71,650	<a href="#">TBC</a> , 1 November 2013 (2012 data)
Kachin and northern Shan states	Armed conflict	98,000 (85,000 in camps and 13,000 in host communities)	Shelter-NFI-CCCM cluster, <a href="#">Kachin and Northern Shan Cluster Analysis Report</a> , 1 March 2014; <a href="#">OCHA</a> , 30 April 2014, p.1; IDMC interview, June 2014
Rakhine state	Inter-communal violence	Around 140,000 (146,000 people currently live in camps in Rakhine, of whom around 140,000 are IDPs displaced by inter-communal violence. The remainder are people from surrounding areas who moved into the camps, but are not necessarily IDPs)	Shelter-NFI-CCCM cluster, <a href="#">Rakhine Cluster Analysis Report</a> , 1 March 2014; <a href="#">Rakhine Cluster Analysis Report</a> , 1 December 2013; IDMC interview, June 2014
Mandalay region	Inter-communal violence	More than 5,000 from Meiktila town (of whom more than 4,000 are in five camps in Meiktila town and more than 1,000 with host families and in one camp in Yin Daw town)	<a href="#">OCHA</a> , 30 November 2013, p.4; <a href="#">OCHA</a> , 31 March 2014, p.1; IDMC interviews, May and June 2014
<b>Estimated total</b>		<b>Up to 642,600</b>	

**Note on data availability and sources**

Available data covers people displaced within their own states and regions, but not those who have fled to other parts of the country, including peri-urban and urban areas. There is also little information on the number of IDPs who have returned or tried to integrate locally.

The shelter/non-food item (NFI)/camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster provides the data that is available on IDPs in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine, based on camp profiling and household surveys conducted in camps, as well as information reported by camp management committees, camp managers, focal people and cluster partners. Little is known about IDPs outside camps in these areas. In the south-east, the overwhelming majority of IDPs live outside camps, and survey data collected by TBC, a consortium of international NGOs based in Thailand, through its partner organisations on the ground forms the basis for estimates of their number. There is no government or inter-agency body monitoring IDPs in the south-east.

returned or integrated locally. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many are in the process of achieving durable solutions, given that they no longer seem to face protection issues related to their displacement (IDMC interviews, May 2014).

According to the Border Consortium (TBC)'s annual survey published in late 2012, 400,000 people were living in protracted displacement caused by conflict in south-eastern Myanmar, a figure that was not updated in 2013 (TBC, 31 October 2012, p.2; TBC, 1 November 2013, p.1). From January to March 2014, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) collected information from local partner organisations on the number of IDPs in Kayah, Kayin, Mon and Tanintharyi, but excluding southern Shan and Bago. Its estimate of 108,240 was less than half that of TBC's 2012 figure of 230,400 for the same areas. This may in part be because the situation has become more stable since the 2011 and 2012 ceasefire agreements, allowing many IDPs to achieve durable solutions (UNHCR synthesis report Jan-March 2014, on file with IDMC).

It is also true to say, however, that not all organisations operating in the south-east use the term IDP as defined by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Some consider anyone who has been displaced at some point in their lives an IDP, whether or not they have since achieved a durable solution. Some do not distinguish between IDPs and other people affected by conflict, or between IDPs and the general population. Neither do all organisations collect data disaggregated by cause of displacement, whether it be armed conflict, natural hazards or development projects. Access to areas controlled by NSAGs remains difficult and complicates information gathering still further (UNHCR synthesis report Jan-March 2014, on file with IDMC; IDMC interviews, May 2014).

All things considered, IDMC estimates that there are up to 400,000 IDPs in south-eastern Myanmar, but recognises that the true figure may be lower. There are also 119,700 refugees, including 10,000

Muslims, living in camps on the Thai side of the border (TBC, 31 December 2013; UNHCR, March 2014, pp.53-54).

#### *Displacement caused by natural hazard-induced disasters*

Figures for people fleeing disasters are only available for the year in which their displacement took place. There is no information about their fate beyond their initial flight. In 2008, cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar's Ayeryawady delta. It affected 2.4 million people, displaced up to 800,000 and left 140,000 dead or missing (OCHA, 10 July 2008, p.5; OCHA, Myanmar: A country prone to a range of natural disasters, 30 September 2013). Cyclone Giri displaced 100,000 people in 2010, and 120,000 were evacuated in advance of cyclone Mahasen in 2013, including Muslim IDPs who had fled inter-communal violence the year before (OCHA, Myanmar: A country prone to a range of natural disasters, 30 September 2013; OCHA, 16 May 2013).

Floods have also forced tens of thousands of people from their homes across the country in recent years. In 2013, they displaced 38,000 people in Rakhine, Kayin and Mon states and Tanintharyi and Ayeryawady regions in July; 48,000 in Kayin, Mon and Shan states, and Bago, Sagaing and Yangon regions in August; 22,000 in Kachin, Kayin and Shan states and Ayeryawady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing regions in September; and 50,000 in Bago region in late October and early November (OCHA, 31 July 2013, p.1; OCHA, 31 August 2013, p.5; OCHA, 30 September 2013, p.6; OCHA, 30 November 2013, p.4).

Most people were able to return home within days or weeks, but often remained in need of assistance because the floods had destroyed crops, food stocks and infrastructure (OCHA, 31 July 2013, p.1; OCHA, 31 August 2013, p.5; OCHA, 30 September 2013, p.6; OCHA, 30 November 2013, p.4). Returnees in Kayin state and Bago region in particular needed food assistance because their

fields were still flooded. In some areas, schools remained closed for some time after the floods ([OCHA](#), 31 July 2013, p.2; [OCHA](#), 30 November 2013, p.4).

## Assistance needs and protection concerns

### *Threats to physical security*

Life for protracted IDPs in the south-east has improved in terms of security and day-to-day activities as a result of the ceasefires agreed between the government and individual NSAGs in 2011 and 2012 ([PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, p.6; IDMC interviews, May 2014). IDPs in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan, however, face significant threats to their physical security.

Ongoing tensions in Rakhine have led to the death of some IDPs. The security forces killed three displaced Muslim women at a camp in Mrauk-U in June 2013, during a protest against a planned relocation ([VOA](#), 5 June 2013). Later the same month, two more IDPs were killed and six injured when the security forces intervened at another Muslim displacement camp (ICG Crisis Watch, 1 July 2013; [Mizzima News](#), 5 July 2013).

In Kachin and northern Shan, both the *Tatmadaw* and KIA/O are alleged to have committed serious human rights violations. These include attacks by *Tatmadaw* soldiers on villages during which they forced people to leave, destroyed their homes and looted their belongings ([HRW](#), 20 May 2012, p.7). In May 2012, IDPs said the *Tatmadaw* had forced them to work as porters, and even to walk through areas suspected to be mined in order to set off landmines before its troops would pass through ([Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor](#), last updated 30 October 2013). Anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) are generally a threat to IDPs' and others' security in Kachin and northern Shan, as are ongoing fighting, human trafficking, forced recruitment and sexual

violence ([OCHA](#), 31 December 2013, pp.4, 5; [WLB](#), January 2014, p.1).

### *Freedom of movement*

Muslim IDPs in Rakhine are confined to camps or villages in areas separate from those where Rakhine Buddhists live. They are not allowed to leave except for medical emergencies ([RI](#), 17 March 2014; IDMC interview, June 2014). Many had previously worked in Buddhist or mixed areas, but the violence and displacement of June and October 2012 and their subsequent confinement cut them off from markets and other opportunities to make a living ([OCHA](#), 30 September 2013, p.2; [OCHA](#), 31 December 2013, p.1; IDMC interview, March 2014).

Fighting between the *Tatmadaw* and NSAGs in Kachin and northern Shan has reportedly prevented IDPs and others from fleeing to government-controlled territory, forcing them instead to seek refuge in more remote NSAG-held areas, where they have little or no access to assistance (IDMC interviews, May 2014).

### *Vulnerable groups*

The majority of IDPs living in camps in Kachin and northern Shan are women and children. The presence of armed men in displacement areas, including KIA fighters visiting their displaced families, has been cited as a concern, and women and girls are exposed to sexual violence because shelters and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities do not cater for their privacy (IDMC interviews, May 2014; [UNCT](#), 28 May 2013, pp.9-10, 22). Members of the *Tatmadaw* have been accused of raping women ([WLB](#), January 2014) and of "arbitrary detention and torture during interrogation of young Kachin men" suspected of being members of armed groups ([HRC](#), 12 March 2014, p.9).

A 2013 report by the UN Secretary General on children and armed conflict in Myanmar mentioned allegations that KIA had forcibly recruited IDPs, including children, in camps in Kachin in

December 2012. The allegations could not be confirmed, because access to the areas in question was restricted (UN SC, S/2013/258, 1 May 2013, p.6).

Many displaced children in Kachin and northern Shan have become separated from their families. In some camps other families accommodate them under informal care arrangements (OCHA, 31 December 2013, p.4; [The Irrawaddy](#), 19 March 2014). Schools in KIA-controlled areas lack funding and are overcrowded. Conflict has forced some to close, leaving those still open struggling to cope with the education needs of both local and displaced children. When fighting erupted again in June 2011, the central government stopped recognising exams taken at schools in KIA-controlled areas (IRIN, 23 April 2013).

Displaced Muslim children and youth in Rakhine have little or no access to formal education, given that they are not allowed to leave their camps. Only seven per cent of those of secondary school age were in education (OCHA, 30 September 2013, p.3; OCHA, 31 December 2013, p.3).

#### *Basic needs*

Many IDPs in Kachin and northern Shan have had limited access to livelihoods, health care or psychosocial support since they were first displaced (OCHA, 30 September 2013, p.6; OCHA, 31 December 2013, p.5). Shelter is a major concern for up to 25,000 IDPs living in areas under NSAG control. Many dwellings were built more than two years ago and are in need of repair, and overcrowding is also an issue (OCHA, 13 March 2014).

Muslim IDPs in Rakhine have little or no access to healthcare - only two of the state's six hospitals treat Muslim patients - education or places of worship (HRC, 12 March 2014, p.12).

## **Durable solutions**

### *The south-east*

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some IDPs have already achieved durable solutions by integrating locally or returning to their places of origin, and that many more are in the process of doing so. According to some sources, poverty is widespread in the region and affects IDPs and the general population to a similar degree, at least in government-controlled areas. That said, political reform, increased investment and greater freedom of movement in the wake of recent ceasefires have opened up new employment opportunities for people living in the area, including work on plantations and in construction. More specialised jobs are being created too, but most IDPs lack the skills required to apply for them. Many families also receive remittances from relatives who have migrated to Thailand to work (PDSG, 22 April 2013, pp.10, 13, 14, 37; IDMC interviews, May 2014).

As ceasefire agreements have been reached and counter-insurgency operations wound down, both IDPs and local populations have been given greater freedom of movement, making it easier for them to farm and sell their produce on local markets. In contested areas, however, the number of *Tatmadaw* soldiers has increased (TBC, 1 November 2013, pp.4, 10, 18).

The April 2012 ceasefire agreement reached by the government and KNU includes references to IDPs, such as a focus on returnees' livelihoods (article 3) and land, including the recognition of titles issued by KNU (article 10). It also contains provisions that apply to civilians in general, including IDPs. Article 2 focuses on livelihoods and security, article 4 on demining and article 12 on the monitoring of the peace process (UNHCR, March 2014, p.54). There is as yet no mechanism in place to monitor implementation of the ceasefire.

Anti-personnel landmines laid not only by the *Tatmadaw* and NSAGs, but also by civilians in an

effort to protect their communities and land from combatants, will likely prevent many IDPs and refugees from returning for a number of years. Fewer landmines are said to have been laid in recent years, but clearance operations will only start in earnest once the peace process has advanced enough for all parties to have renounced their use ([PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, pp.13, 28; [IRIN](#), 22 October 2012; [IRIN](#), 3 April 2013; [Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor](#), 30 October 2013; [The Economist](#), 13 July 2013; [HRC](#), 12 March 2014, p.16).

#### *Kachin and northern Shan states*

As fighting continues in Kachin and northern Shan, IDPs have been forced to flee repeatedly and are far from achieving durable solutions. Given the limited humanitarian assistance they receive, some have returned prematurely to insecure areas to tend to their land and livestock, or to pick up their belongings. Many, however, found that the *Tatmadaw* had destroyed or confiscated their property and possessions ([HRW](#), 20 March 2012, pp.10, 16). In some areas the *Tatmadaw* has also given IDPs' land to agribusinesses. Many IDPs do not have documentary proof of their ownership or tenancy rights, meaning they have little chance of recovering it or obtaining compensation (IDMC interviews, May 2014).

The presence of landmines and UXO is also an obstacle to durable solutions ([OCHA](#), 31 December 2014, p.4; [The Economist](#), 13 July 2013; [Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor](#), last updated 30 October 2013).

#### *Rakhine state*

Muslims displaced from Sittwe by inter-communal violence in 2012 have been unable to return, and their destroyed homes have not been rebuilt. They remain confined in closed camps and are not allowed to leave. A process of reconciliation between the Muslim and Buddhist communities, supported by efforts to combat poverty and address the needs of all of the state's inhabitants, is needed to facilitate durable solutions and pre-

vent further tensions, violence and displacement (IDMC interview, March 2014).

#### *Mandalay region*

More than 5,000 of the nearly 12,900 people forced to flee their homes in Meiktila town in March 2013 remain displaced, most of them Muslims. More than 4,000 among them are registered and living in five camps in the town. The remainder are unregistered and living with host families and in a camp in Yin Daw town ([OCHA](#), 29 March 2013; [OCHA](#), 31 March 2014, p.1; [OCHA](#), 30 November 2014, p.4; IDMC interview, June 2014). The regional government has reportedly made efforts to clarify the ownership of the displaced families' homes and land, and private donors and local NGOs are helping more than 400 families who hold deeds to rebuild their houses. The government plans to relocate the remaining registered IDPs to another area of town, where individual houses are being built for them ([IRIN](#), 20 March 2014; IDMC interviews, May and June 2014).

## National response

#### *Displacement caused by conflict and violence*

The Ministry of Immigration and Population is responsible for the government's response to internal displacement caused by conflict and violence, but Myanmar has no policy or legislation on IDPs' protection and assistance. National and local authorities have only begun using the term IDP in recent years, and no consistent definition has been established. The national response varies between regions and groups of IDPs based on local dynamics and politics, rather than on the needs of those concerned (IDMC interviews, May 2014).

In the south-east, IDPs and local civil society and community-based organisations need to be better consulted and participate more in the peace process if peace is to be sustainable. A nationwide ceasefire agreement, once concluded, will need to



be followed by a political process to ensure long-term peace and prevent new displacement.

Several generations of IDPs, many of them displaced a number of times, and refugees plan to return to the same areas, and a comprehensive framework to address conflicting claims on land and prevent land grabs is needed ([TNI-BCN](#), 8 May 2013, p. 2; [LCG](#), November 2012, p.16, 22-23; [DS](#), February 2014, p.17). There are reports that the government plans to set up new sub-townships to relocate IDPs and house refugees who are yet to be repatriated from Thailand. Local stakeholders, however, have not been consulted, and have expressed concern about the possible expropriation of their land to establish them ([UNHCR](#), March 2014, p.55).

In July 2013 the government published the final report of the Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State, which highlighted the need to improve humanitarian assistance to Muslim IDPs and ensure a transparent way of addressing their citizenship claims (ICG Crisis Watch, 1 May 2013; [Republic of the Union of Myanmar](#), 8 July 2013, pp.86-108).

#### *Displacement caused by natural hazard-induced disasters*

Myanmar has endorsed the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) on disaster risk reduction (DRR). As a member of ASEAN, it also has recourse to regional cooperation under the organisation's disaster management and emergency response agreement ([Government of Myanmar and ADPC](#), 2009). The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Myanmar's focal point for disaster management, has developed a DRR action plan for 2009 to 2015 in order to implement both frameworks ([Government of Myanmar](#), August 2009; [Government of Myanmar](#), May 2011).

A national committee on disaster preparedness was established in May 2013 to coordinate responses, and in July 2013 a new disaster man-

agement law was enacted ([Xinhua](#), 1 May 2014; [Oxfam](#), December 2013). The country's draft construction code also includes criteria for building safety to mitigate the impact of hazards ([Reuters](#), 15 April 2014).

## International response

UN and other agencies and international NGOs coordinate their response in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan through clusters and sectors, including the shelter/NFI/CCCM, education, food, health, and nutrition clusters and the protection working group. They focus mainly on IDPs in camps, but also assist those outside camps and their host communities. Restricted humanitarian access in Rakhine, and in areas of Kachin and northern Shan not under government control, is a challenge.

Rakhine Buddhists have become increasingly resentful of the international response in the state, and have accused organisations of being biased towards Muslims in the provision of aid. Since the start of the 2012 violence, some organisations have had to suspend their programmes and leave. Members of the Rakhine Buddhist population have refused to rent office space or accommodation to humanitarian workers following pressure from extremist groups, and locals have harassed and intimidated them and blocked their access to displacement camps ([HRC](#), 12 March 2014, p.12; [OCHA](#), 30 September 2013, p.1; [OCHA](#), 31 December 2013, p.2; [IRIN](#), 16 April 2013).

In late March 2014, the hostility culminated in 400 protesters attacking the premises of the UN and other international humanitarian organisations in Sittwe and destroying their property. The organisations affected withdrew their staff and suspended operations. They are currently renegotiating their access in the state, and about 60 per cent of staff have returned. Accommodation and office space is still a challenge, however, because they

are only allowed to set up and house their staff in one Sittwe neighbourhood, where space is at a premium ([Reuters](#), 11 April 2014; IDMC interviews, May 2014; [OCHA](#), 31 May 2014, p.1).

In Kachin and northern Shan, international organisations have a presence in government-controlled areas, including the Kachin state capital of Myitkyina, but local and national faith-based organisations shoulder the burden of the response in NSAG-held areas ([OCHA](#), 13 March 2014). That said, international organisations have carried out a number of cross-line missions, and the government has granted such access more regularly in the past 12 months. Significant gaps in the humanitarian response remain, however, and better access for international organisations is needed if they are to support their local counterparts in delivering assistance to all those who need it ([OCHA](#), 30 September 2013; [OCHA](#), 13 March 2014; IDMC interview, June 2014).

In the south-east, where most if not all IDPs live outside camps, a variety of local, national and international organisations have been involved in the response in both government and NSAG-controlled areas. Some are based in Myanmar and others on the Thai side of the border, and some have been assisting people affected by conflict for many years. However, programmes tend to target all those affected by conflict, or people in need generally, rather than focusing specifically on IDPs, and there is no comprehensive mechanism to coordinate the response ([PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, p.40; IDMC interviews, May 2014). Access has improved as a result of the recent ceasefire agreements, but remains a challenge ([PDSG](#), 22 April 2013, pp.6, 23).

## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement. For the millions of people worldwide displaced within their own country, IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC was established in 1998 at the request of the Interagency Standing Committee on humanitarian assistance. Since then, IDMC's unique global function has been recognised and reiterated in annual UN General Assembly resolutions.

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