



Myanmar Office

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1

Reporting Period: 1 February to 25 March 2021

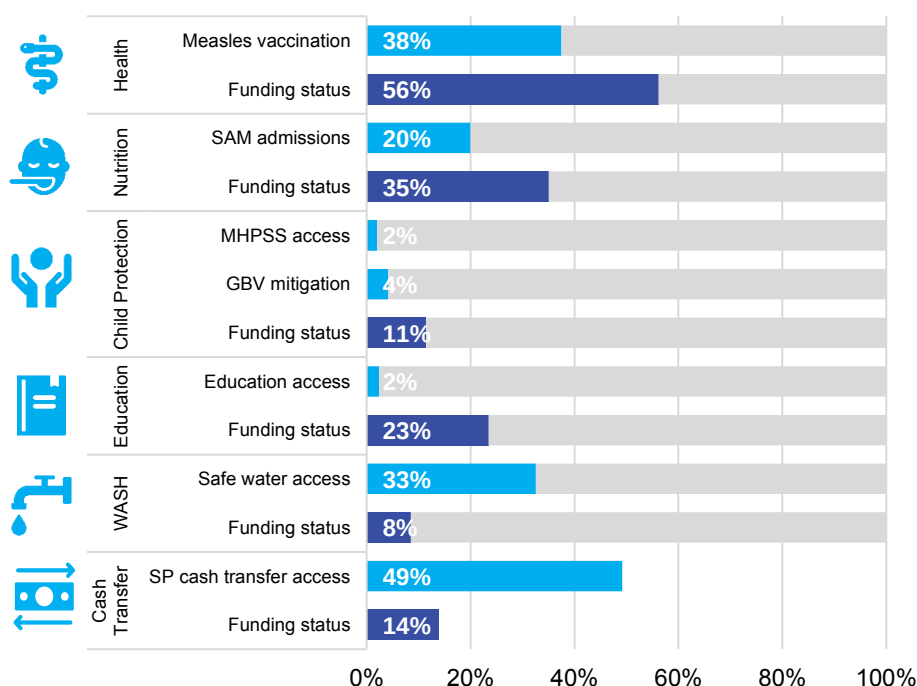
Highlights

- The crisis following the military takeover on 1 February is likely to have a severe impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of children and will exacerbate existing humanitarian needs of 450,000 children.
- Peaceful protests and a civil disobedience movement (CDM) against the military takeover continue across the country despite violent and arbitrary crackdowns by security forces. Military occupation of hospitals and universities has been reported in almost all states and regions, limiting access to critical life-saving services, with particularly serious implications for vulnerable populations.
- There are continued disruptions to communication, transportation and supply chains, and shortages of cash for operations due to limitations on banking services. Despite these challenges UNICEF continues to provide a package of interventions in Health, Nutrition, Child Protection, Education, WASH and Social Protection.
- The current situation calls for emergency assistance outside the current Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) locations.

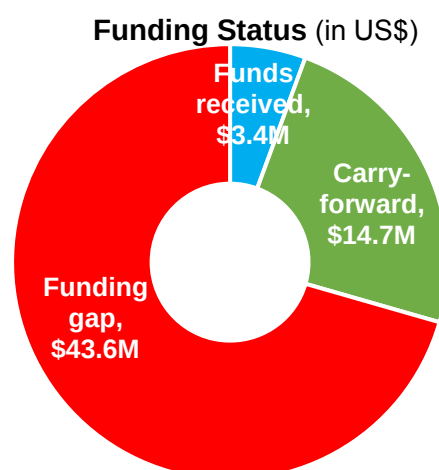
Situation in Numbers

-  **455,000** children in need of humanitarian assistance (UNICEF Jan 2021)
-  **1,000,000** people in need (OCHA Dec 2020)
-  **336,000** Internally displaced people (IDPs)
-  **275** people killed including **23 children** (As of 24 March 2021)

UNICEF's Response and Funding Status



UNICEF Myanmar Appeal 2021



Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF is currently appealing for US \$61.7 million to support 424,000 people, including 224,000 children, to access essential basic services in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition, health, education, child protection and social protection and improved hygiene practices to prevent COVID-19 infection. However, these reflect pre-February needs, given the increasingly deteriorating situation across the country with loss of access to basic services due to the protests and CDM, and agencies turning to costly alternatives in programme implementation outside national systems, we expect these needs to increase.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Humanitarian needs in Myanmar are driven by multiple factors including armed conflict, inter-communal violence, and vulnerability to natural hazards (HNO 2020). Even before 1 February 2021, nearly one million people in five states, including 336,000 IDPs, were in need of humanitarian assistance. Fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces and Arakan Army in 2020 had displaced 81,245 people to 185 informal settlements in Rakhine and 236 in Chin, adding to the needs of 130,000 people already displaced since 2012 and in deteriorating and overcrowded camps. UNICEF's appeal aligns with the sectoral needs of the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan in five states: Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Shan and Kayah.

The political situation has deteriorated in the country since 1 February 2021, with continuous demonstrations across most of the country and the imposition of martial law. As the crisis escalates, there is an urgent need to ensure the continuity and functionality of services and thereby enable a rapid scale up of emergency assistance outside current HRP locations. Challenges are being faced in the movement of humanitarian supplies sparking fears of potential supply shortages due to transportation and supply chains, and shortages of cash for operations due to limitations on banking services.

Children are being killed, wounded, detained, exposed to tear gas and stun grenades and are witnessing terrifying scenes of violence. The continuing use of force against children by security forces, including the use of live ammunition, is taking a devastating toll on children in Myanmar.

Since the crisis began on 1 February, at least 35 children have been killed and many more seriously injured. Arbitrary detentions of children are also continuing to occur – indeed almost half of all persons detained are children or young people. UNICEF estimate that almost 1,000 children and young people have been arbitrarily detained. And while many of those detained have subsequently been released, many are still being held without access to legal counsel, in violation of their human rights. In some areas, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, cutting off tens of thousands of children from their relatives, friends, communities and traditional means of support.

On 14 March, martial law was imposed in 11 townships across the country. The establishment of complete military control in those areas poses significant risk for children given the risk that standard legal safeguards provided for under the Child Rights Law (CRL) may be suspended. This is of concern since the military justice system, unlike the civilian justice system, does not include any special measures or considerations for children.

Life-saving humanitarian services such as maternal, newborn and child health, emergency care and emergency obstetrics and neo-natal care have been disrupted nationwide for a number of reasons, including the participation in the CDM by civil servants and other service providers. Disruption of provision of essential services such as communication, banking, logistics and transportation are observed.

Learning has been disrupted for almost 12 million children in Myanmar due to widespread school closures since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been further exacerbated by the lack of alternative learning programmes. This lost learning opportunity has affected not only school-aged children who would normally be enrolled in government formal schools, but also those children seeking continuous learning opportunities in non-formal education centres, which have been closed. Prolonged disruptions to learning not only keep children out of school but also serve to create more out-of-school children after schools eventually reopen.

As of 19 March, security forces have reportedly occupied more than 60 schools and university campuses in 13 states and regions. In at least one incident, security forces reportedly beat two teachers while entering premises, and left several others injured. Other public institutions including hospitals have also been occupied.

Since 1 February, COVID-19 testing has been very limited in Myanmar, with the result that the true burden of COVID-19 cases is not known. It is likely that the mass gatherings associated with demonstrations will have led to an increase in incidence. Prior to February 2021 an average of around 20,000 tests were being conducted on a daily basis. In February and March, the rate has dropped to fewer than 2,000 tests per day.

Prior to the military takeover, Myanmar had finalized a National Vaccine Deployment Plan (NVDP) for roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine to all adults over 18 years of age. The country received 3.5 million doses of the vaccine through

bilateral arrangements (1.5 million doses as donation and 2 million doses through bilateral procurement from the Serum Institute of India). Before February 2021, about 1,200 health care workers had been vaccinated with the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Since the takeover, vaccination has continued in Rakhine and some areas of Kachin, Shan and other state/regions, but this does not appear to have been carried out based on the prioritisation schedule set out in the NVDP.

The country is also experiencing a prolonged dry period and some IDP camps, including camps in Pauktaw which are experiencing water scarcity. In urban areas, there is potential for disruption of water supply services due to lower levels of water during the dry season.

The compounding impacts of the current crisis threaten to put the lives of millions of children at risk if they do not receive urgent help. The continued loss of access to key services, combined with economic contraction will push many more into poverty and risk creating an entire generation of children and young people who will suffer profound physical, psychological, educational and economic impacts from this crisis and be denied a healthy, prosperous future.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health

The provision of health services has been most severely disrupted in areas where CDM is most active (i.e. most of the country with the exception of some regions, including Rakhine State). Excessive mortality in emergency rooms is reported anecdotally as the result of the absence of health workers. In some cases, health workers have been attacked or threatened by security forces while providing care, exacerbating the situation and making health workers even more reluctant to deliver services.

Prior to the military takeover, routine immunization services were being delivered on a monthly basis by a cadre of 14,000 midwives, operating in all communities across the country. Most of the midwives as well as staff of the Central Expanded Program on Immunization have now either joined the CDM or resigned. As a result, routine immunization service provision has ground to a halt since the second week of February 2021. Services have been interrupted in most areas, except for Rakhine and some ethnic health organisation (EHO) areas of Kachin, Shan and Kayin.

UNICEF is expanding partnerships with NGOs and other partners to accelerate roll out of immunization in EHO areas and Rakhine state, with a focus on low performing areas where the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks is greatest. For programming on maternal, newborn and child health, UNICEF is working to expand the scope of NGO partnerships for immediate emergency care in Kayin and other areas. UNICEF is also exploring partnerships with NGO partners to ensure continuity of primary health care services and has already initiated the procurement of emergency first aid kits. UNICEF has also engaged with the Royal Society of Paediatricians in the UK for the development of an application to provide guidance to health practitioners at community level when dealing with trauma cases.

Nutrition

As per the HAC 2021, working in collaboration with partners, UNICEF reached 2,520 children under five and 1,620 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) with preventive services in Rakhine and Northern Shan. Similarly, 55 PLWs and 318 children with severe acute malnutrition were treated in Rakhine. Although activities in humanitarian intervention areas had been suspended from 1 February, during the second week of February Rakhine partners have resumed delivery of a minimal package of services including mid upper arm circumference screening, treatment for acute malnutrition, infant and young child feeding counselling, and micronutrient supplementation with support from community-based staff and through mobile clinics. Activities in non-government-controlled areas in Kachin and Northern Shan have been carried out with limited service interruptions due to armed conflicts and COVID-19 and security travel restrictions. A biannual Vitamin A supplementation campaign scheduled in February 2021 has been postponed due to instability and protests in country.

Child Protection

Intensifying use of excessive force by security forces to crackdown unarmed protestors has led many children and adolescents to be killed, seriously injured, arbitrarily detained without access to legal counsel or forced to flee their houses and communities. On top of the loss of innocent lives, the daily exposure to scenes of horrific violence will have long-lasting impacts on their mental and emotional well-being. Working with partners, UNICEF is in the process of establishing a nationwide toll-free justice hotline that aims to ensure children and young people having access to quality legal advice. UNICEF produced a “justice tip sheet” for children and young people to understand their rights when dealing with law enforcement and how to access free legal assistance. The document has been developed in both English and Myanmar languages and has been disseminated widely in collaboration with Child Protection Working Group members at national and sub-national level – reaching over 30,000 young people and adults in Myitkyina and

Waingmaw Townships in Kachin, for example. Since 1 February, UNICEF has supported 62 children and 176 young people in conflict with the law to access quality legal aid.

UNICEF also continued its support for a nationwide mental health and psychosocial support helpline in multiple ethnic languages. Callers included frontline workers, survivors of violence and emotional distress and some with severe mental disorders, who are then referred to expert mental health practitioners for individual counselling and therapy sessions.

There have been unconfirmed reports of a growing number of youths and children seeking to join ethnic armed groups for their protection. Tensions between the Tatmadaw and a number of Ethnic Armed Organizations appear to be on the rise, which may trigger children being recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups. UNICEF, with members of the Country Taskforce on Monitoring & Reporting Mechanism (CTFMR) on children and armed conflict (CAAC), continues to document grave violations on the ground.

Education

UNICEF is expanding partnerships with NGOs to scale up proven approaches to ensure continuity of learning. UNICEF is supporting young children's readiness for learning and language development by training civil society organization partners, including ethnic language teachers, and developing and printing storybooks in ethnic languages. UNICEF is working with national and international NGOs to provide alternative learning opportunities for 1 million primary and middle-school-age children. Support includes providing learning materials and assisting children with learning and language development, while also offering mental health and psychosocial support. UNICEF is also working with national and international NGOs to deliver non-formal education to 8,000 children who have been out of the formal education system even prior to the COVID pandemic. All the work is based on the consultation with the parents and community, ensuring conflict sensitivity and equity focus, with monitoring and further support.

WASH

Based on the HAC 2021, UNICEF is providing ongoing support to ensure continued delivery of needs-based lifesaving humanitarian WASH services for at-least 100,000 IDPs and conflict-affected communities in Rakhine, Kachin and Northern Shan. UNICEF currently has six active partnerships with INGO and NGOs and two contractors in Rakhine, three INGO/NGO partners in Kachin and three partners in Northern Shan. While continuing to deliver a humanitarian response, UNICEF is also working closely with partners and field staff to put in place a preparedness and response plan to swiftly provide support and respond in the event of additional disruption of services. Critical supplies are being procured for a target population of 116,000 people. These supplies will be prepositioned in Yangon and in field locations to ensure a swift response when needed.

Long term agreements and contracts are being established in order to deliver clean drinking water by truck, in order to meet needs that may arise in urban areas including townships of Yangon such as Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha, Dagon Myothit (South), Dagon Myothit (North), Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) and North Okkalapa which are under martial law. Efforts are being pursued to coordinate with partners and vendors to explore various modalities of delivery of WASH services to populations in need. Humanitarian access to townships under lockdown remains the biggest challenge for reaching vulnerable populations.

Social Protection

Prior to the military takeover, UNICEF had been supporting the Government of Myanmar to conceptualize, design and deliver flagship social protection programmes, including a Maternal and Child Cash-Transfer (MCCT) programme, which had been rolled out in seven states and regions. The MCCT has provided pregnant women and lactating mothers with subsidies of 45,000 Kyats (approximately US\$ 30), paid on a quarterly basis, to contribute to improving mothers' and children's nutritional outcomes.

The MCCT is now at risk of being interrupted or suspended indefinitely. Critically, the 20/21 financial year government's budget for MCCT is only sufficient for one payment (for the period October to December 2020), while the remaining payments were due to be made using funds from World Bank loans – an option that is no longer possible. As a result, a total of 126,000 mothers and children have missed the October-December 2020 entitlement and a total of 372,000 will miss the January-March payment, amounting to a total of US\$ 8.5m missed for the January-March 2021 payment.

UNICEF is working to conceptualize and operationalize a nationwide child cash grant, expanding coverage to households with 2-5 years old children, and children with disabilities.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

Following the military takeover on 1 February UNICEF has released statements calling for greater attention to protecting children's rights, condemning violence by security forces, resulting in casualties.

ED Fore on the continuing violence and deaths of children in Myanmar: <https://uni.cf/3sxge5U>

<https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/press-releases/unicef-calls-greater-protection-childrens-rights-myanmar>

<https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/unicef-condemns-violence-mandalay-reportedly-resulting-death-child>
<https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/unicef-condemns-killings-and-arbitrary-detentions-children-security-forces-during>
<https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/press-releases/occupation-schools-security-forces-myanmar-serious-violation-childrens-rights> <https://www.facebook.com/unicefmyanmar/posts/3988797487854413>
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/brutal-violence-security-forces-myanmar-leaves-dozens-dead-including-multiple>

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Whom to contact for further information : **June Kunugi**
Representative
Myanmar Country Office
Tel: (+95) 1 2305960
Email: yangon@unicef.org

Alessandra Dentice
Deputy Representative
Myanmar Country Office
Tel: (+95) 9405149612
Email : yangon@unicef.org

Gisele Rutayisire
Emergency Specialist
Myanmar Country Office
Tel: +250 788862552
Email: grutayisire@unicef.org