

Coping with water scarcity: Solidarités International's intervention in Pauktaw camps in 2024

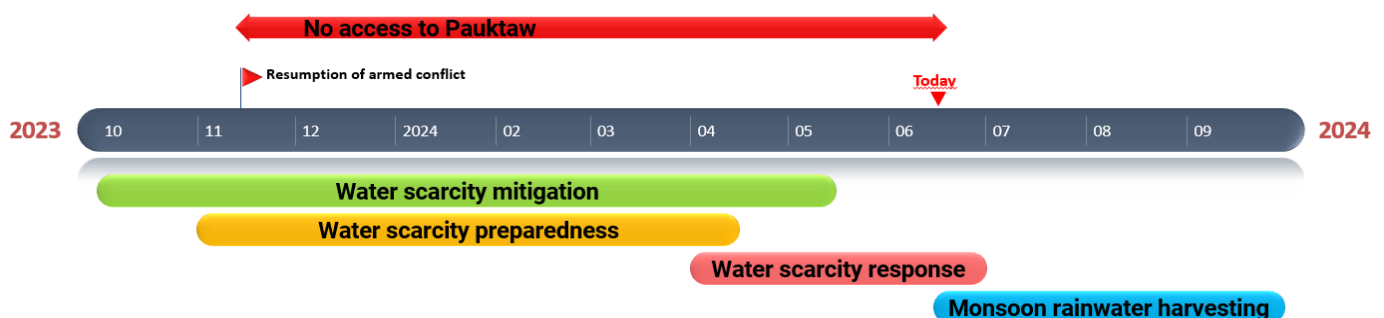
LETTER #2 - JUNE 2024

While access challenges kept impeding SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL (SI) and community's initiatives for water scarcity mitigation and preparedness this year, coordinated efforts eventually allowed SI to reach on time more than 26,000 vulnerable individuals at risk with safe water in Pauktaw Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.

Continued blockade of Sittwe-Pauktaw waterways and the lack of Travel Authorization (TA) issued by the authorities still hampered access to the 5 Pauktaw IDP sites where SI is providing comprehensive WASH assistance. Since November 2023, critical materials required for the water scarcity mitigation could indeed no longer be transported from Sittwe, bringing related activities to a standstill. Most of the planned ponds' improvements had to be postponed until after the monsoon season. Facing growing concerns related to water scarcity, Camp Management Committees (CMC) and communities agreed to reduce the quantity of water treated and distributed per person, allowing to extend the sufficiency period and thus delaying the water scarcity response itself. In May 2024, thanks to close coordination efforts with the WASH cluster and UNICEF, SI secured alternative solutions for some materials and waterboating was finally underway. As of June 15, 18,512 individuals are benefiting from water in camps, delivered to them as part of SI's water scarcity response. Further joint efforts will be needed in the coming months however, to find alternative ways of procuring supplies.



Picture 1: KNP beneficiaries fetching treated water from tapstands



Activities planned as part of SI response to water scarcity	Current status
1 Water scarcity mitigation	
Pond cover	Heavily impacted due to lack of access to Pauktaw - 2 ponds cover done (out of 7) - No pond digging done - No geomembrane installed.
Pond digging	
Geomembrane installation	
2 Water scarcity preparedness	
Predicting the onset of water scarcity through weekly monitoring of water levels in each pond	Implemented with success despite limited communication channels with Pauktaw.
Preparation of all the equipment for water pumping in the 5 sites and temporary storage	Implemented with issues, materials availability remains a concern and allocation done on a priority needs-basis.
Coordination with the Camp Management Agency, Camp Management Committee and the community as well as between SI, UNICEF, and the WASH cluster.	Implemented with success to allow reduction of water consumption and fetching in order for the available resource to last longer. Coordination also allowed the use of alternative routes for materials delivery.
Coordination with UNICEF and the boat owner for the preparation of water delivery.	Implemented with success, with the boat supplier finally able to deliver the water in selected camps.
Communication/awareness-raising through dissemination of messages to the camp population on how to save water.	Implemented with success - 1084 awareness sessions done in the five locations between January and May 2024 - Upon request from the communities, reduction in KNP to 5 litres per person per day from 22 Feb to 21 May 2024 and likewise in ANY-C, reduction to 5 litres per person per day from 22 Feb to 28 March and to 3 litres per person per day till 23 May.
Preparation of a 3-day contingency stock of materials and water in ANYC and KNP.	Ongoing - 2,5 days contingency stock for ANY-C and ANY-V - No contingency stock needed for KNP as there will be enough water through the water scarcity season.



Continuous Management of AWD outbreak

Although water analysis could not be performed directly by SI due to access constraints, close coordination efforts with MSF teams allow to monitor AWD cases, and refrain their increase in ANYC and KNP in May. Consequently, SI started **disinfecting WASH infrastructures with chlorine solutions**, while encouraging populations to **use in priority treated water from tap stands and intensify environmental cleaning**.

3 Water scarcity response: planned response finally implemented

Cumulative efforts by humanitarian partners, camp management committees and, above all, impacted communities, allowed the 2024 water scarcity response to start later than last year.

- **How could the water scarcity starting date be pushed back ?**

Firstly, between 2023 and 2024, an **average of 6% increase in the storage capacity of 9 ponds** was achieved, providing an additional 17,028 cubic metres. By early 2024, concerns started to be raised about the available quantity of water during the dry season and SI's uncertainty to launch the response with its access still denied, and missing materials in the camps. Awareness campaigns and consultations sessions were thus initiated with Camp Management Committees (CMC), community leaders and individuals to promote a reduced use of the available water provided by SI's water treatment units. **Instead of the previous 7.5 liters per person per day in both KNP and ANY camps**, it was jointly agreed to **reduce this safe water allocation down to 5 liters**, and further down to 3 liters, allowing to **extend the sufficiency period** from 4.5 to 6 additional weeks while water for domestic purpose was still available in ponds.

In preparation of its water scarcity response, SI continuously monitored the water level of 38 camp ponds used as source of drinking water for 26,206 individuals. While doing so, it was noted that more quantity of water was available in all camps' ponds compared to last year, an encouraging outcome attributed to both mitigation activities implemented in 2023 and above-mentioned efforts from communities. ANY-V, KNP, NC1 and NC2 had thus respectively 37%, 150%, 258% and 13% more water in comparison to the end of April 2023. **In ANY camp alone, 4,363 cubic meters of water were available in ponds by the end of April 2024, while in 2023 ponds were already dried before 21 April.**

Arrzarmar Hartu, a 25 year old woman, lives in ANY-C since 11 years with her five family members, where she earns daily 6,000 MMK as a market vendor. mentioning apprehensions as to this year's water availability, she admits:

"I'm always getting water from ponds for domestic use and drinking water from the tap stands provided by SI through water boating every year during summer. I think that I can't stay here if SI cannot access to provide water this year, I had therefore planned to fetch water from Sin Tat Maw (Muslim part) and planned to move to another place (Kyein Ni Pyin)"

As shown the table below, the water scarcity response could therefore be started at a later date this year.

Location	Population (ind)	Response starting date 2023	Response starting date 2024	Modality
ANY C	5,489	20 April 2023	21 May 2024	Water boating using water from a pond near Minbya town
ANY V	2,600	4 May 2023	9 June 2024	Access to a tapstand with chlorinated water in ANY-C (from water boating in ANY-C)
KNP	7,694	20 April 2023	<i>Still relying on available water</i>	No intervention planned
NC1	5,089	2 May 2023	1 June 2024	Remote pumping from external pond at 1.5 km outside the camp
NC2	5,234	2 May 2023	12 May 2024	Remote pumping from external pond at 2.7 km outside the camp
TOTAL	26,206			<i>As of 15 June 2024</i>

- **How the water scarcity response is now possible ?**

Weekly liaising with the Rakhine water scarcity working group, UNICEF and community-based organisations, **SI kept exploring options for providing water and essential supplies to the camps**. The contracted water boat supplier was able to secure a route and carry water from Minbya to the targeted camps in Pauktaw. Similarly, SI was able to obtain some of the water supply equipment and tools such as water pumps, water pipes, tarpaulins and fittings from Kyawktaw Township. Thanks to these coordinated efforts, the water shortage response was made possible in ANY-C, ANY-V, NC1 and NC2 camps.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO CONTINUE A RESPONSE?



Picture 2: Waterboating to ANY-C, May 2024

Overall, this year's response has been partially successful. While mitigation activities could only be implemented to a certain extent and SI's response was potentially threatened by the lack of access to Pauktaw camps, their respective populations have courageously agreed on preparedness measures. Thanks to the latter and to alternative coordinated measures for waterboating, the water shortage response could finally take place, and at a later date than in 2023. **For next year, populations will have to be further supported with combined mitigation and preparedness phases. SI and associated stakeholders will also continue to explore ways to adapt mitigation activities implementation to an ever evolving operational context.**

This document aligns with ongoing advocacy efforts led by OCHA and the WASH Cluster to alert on the life-threatening risks for more than 26,000 individuals, with a highly likely potential increase of the human-flow linked to the ongoing clashes in the area. SI and the Water Scarcity working group also remain concerned about other populations across Rakhine state which are affected by both the water scarcity and response reach.

Alongside OCHA and the WASH cluster, **SI urges for:**

- **Humanitarian corridor / access to deliver material to the Pauktaw camps by the end of June 2024 - Some alternative were successfully secured but not for all materials.**
- **Identification of alternative commercial channels for humanitarian actors, to source and deliver the required qualitative materials to supported sites and communities directly.**

To implement its 2024-2025 plan, SI needs the support of all stakeholders:

- ➔ **Communities:** to continue supporting SI's team ponds improvement activities.
- ➔ **OCHA:** to advocate for continuous access to the camps with minimal disruption and delays.
- ➔ **Donors:** to maintain commitment for SI to overcome context challenges and ensure humanitarian assistance is efficiently delivered, and to invest in long-term solutions.



SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE thanks its donors for the continuous support since 2019 while urging for continuous flexibility and advocacy to ensure humanitarian access and assistance

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