GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION
Myanmar

Evidence from the Field

Gender Analysis Snapshot – Rakhine State

Key gender findings and priority actions from a locally conducted Rapid Gender Analysis.

March 2026

About this analysis

This snapshot draws on a Rapid Gender Analysis conducted by local member organisations of the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group and funded by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. The analysis covered multiple locations in Central Rakhine State using participatory methods including focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and community mapping with over 300 respondents. It aimed to identify gender roles, vulnerabilities, and priority needs to inform gender-responsive humanitarian programming. Key findings and practical priorities are highlighted to support humanitarian actors in translating field-based evidence into action.

Context

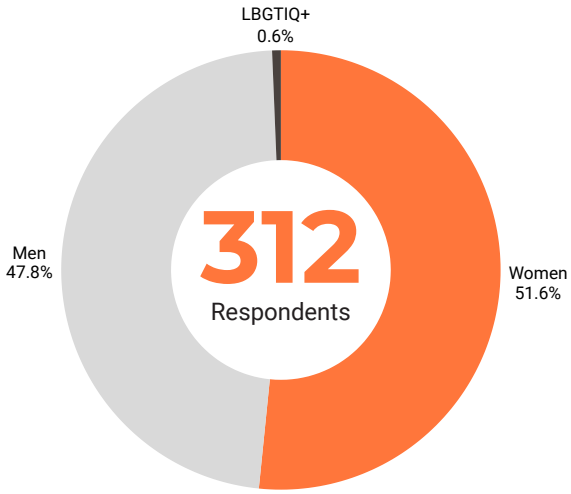
- Fighting intensified across Myanmar from late 2023, driving widespread displacement, insecurity, and reduced access to basic services and livelihoods.
- In Rakhine State, movement restrictions and ongoing conflict, including airstrikes, have disrupted services and markets, reduced humanitarian access and increased protection risks.
- Food insecurity has sharply worsened; WFP estimates that 57% of families in central Rakhine cannot afford basic food needs (up from 33% in Dec 2024).
- Restrictive gender norms continue to limit women's access to resources, mobility, and participation in decision-making.
- Women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people face intersecting risks including gender-based violence, economic vulnerability, and exclusion from decision-making.

Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) – Myanmar

The GiHA Working Group is a coordination platform co-led by UN Women and UNFPA, bringing together local women-led organisations and humanitarian actors to ensure gender equality is integrated across Myanmar's crisis response.

Products such as this analysis highlight field-based evidence shared by GiHA members to inform more inclusive, accountable humanitarian action.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



3 Townships in Rakhine State

29 Key Informant Interviews

3 Community mapping exercises

27 Focus group discussions

Townships in Rakhine where the rapid gender analysis was conducted.

Key Gender Insights

Participation and decision-making

Women's participation remains limited across both household and community decision-making processes, reflecting structural barriers to influence rather than lack of engagement or interest.

Household decision-making
Decision-making within households is typically dominated by men, with women expected to support rather than directly make decisions.

Community participation
Women's participation in community meetings is often informal or conditional, and their contributions may be overlooked or undervalued.

Leadership representation
Limited representation of women in leadership roles reduces their influence over collective decisions and access to resources.

Women face increased pressure without increased power

Entrenched gender norms and unequal control over resources continue to shape decision-making and influence, with men's control of over resources reinforcing inequality and limiting women's agency and leadership opportunities.

- ↑ Increased responsibilities and caregiving burdens for women
- ↑ Increased protection and economic risks
- ≠ No corresponding increase in decision-making power or agency

Livelihoods and economic impacts

Conflict-related disruption and movement restrictions have reduced livelihood opportunities and deepened economic vulnerability, with gender norms shaping access to income and resources.

Constrained economic participation

Women face additional barriers to income generation due to mobility restrictions, caregiving responsibilities, and social expectations.

Economic coping pressures: Reduced livelihood options increase reliance on small-scale and survival strategies.

Unequal resource control: Men's greater control over assets and income limits women's financial autonomy and influence over household decisions.

Livelihood priorities differ across groups

Livelihood priorities reflect gender roles, age, and social expectations within the current crisis context.

Women & girls	Cash for daily needs and reinvestment
Men & boys	Employment opportunities and tools
Older adults	Small-scale husbandry
LGBTQI+ individuals	Small business support

Protection risks and safety

Escalating insecurity and movement restrictions have heightened protection risks, particularly for women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people, while limited safe spaces and support mechanisms restrict access to protection.

GBV risks

Women reported multiple forms of gender-based violence, including:

- domestic violence
- sexual exploitation and abuse
- harassment during movement
- trafficking
- early or forced marriage

Mobility risks

Movement outside the home presents increased safety risks, including harassment and violence during travel.

Safe space gaps

Limited trusted spaces and low representation of women in leadership reduce opportunities for women to safely report concerns or shape protection responses.

Priority Actions

Strengthen women's participation and leadership

- Create structured opportunities for women's meaningful participation in community decision-making and response planning.
- Support pathways for women's leadership within local structures and humanitarian coordination.

Design protection responses around mobility and safety risks

- Expand access to safe and trusted spaces for women and girls.
- Ensure gender-sensitive referral and reporting mechanisms that reflect local trust dynamics.

Tailor livelihood support to differentiated priorities

- Provide flexible livelihood programming that reflects diverse priorities across women, men, older adults, and LGBTQI+ individuals.
- Support small-scale and locally accessible income opportunities that account for mobility constraints and caregiving roles.

Partner with local women-led organisations

- Strengthen collaboration with local GiHA members and women-led organisations to ensure locally grounded response design and implementation.

This analysis was supported by the Complex Risk Analytics Fund (CRAF'd), a multi-partner initiative supporting improved use of data and analytics to anticipate, prevent and respond to complex risks. The research was conducted by a GiHA member organisation supported by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

About the Myanmar Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group

The Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group aims to ensure gender is integrated across all areas of humanitarian response and coordination in Myanmar.

It brings together women-led and women's rights organisations, community groups, NGOs, UN agencies, donor gender focal points (as observers), and cluster leads.

The group is co-led by UN Women and UNFPA.

For more information

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Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund