



The Rohingya crisis

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

EU humanitarian aid*:

Myanmar/Burma

2010-2016:

€ 70 million

Bangladesh

2007-2015:

€ 30.87 million

Thailand and Indonesia:

Since 2013:

€ 625 000

Total funding

€ 101.5 million

* The figures refer to European Commission humanitarian aid only, and do not include contributions by EU Member States.

*For further information please contact ECHO's Regional Office in Bangkok
Tel.: (+66 2) 305 2600*

*Pierre Prakash, Regional Information Officer - e-mail:
pierre.prakash@echofield.eu*

Website :

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



* All the latest ECHO
Factsheets:
bit.ly/echo-fs



Primary health care consultation (MSF) in Maungdaw township, Rakhine state, Myanmar/Burma.
©Mathias Eick, EU/ECHO

Key messages

- The Rohingya crisis is a human rights crisis with serious humanitarian consequences. In Myanmar/Burma, the Rohingya have **very limited access to basic services and viable livelihood opportunities due to strict movement restrictions**. The legal status and the discrimination that these stateless people face must be addressed.
- **The Government** must prioritise **inter-communal dialogue and conflict resolution** in Rakhine State, where tensions between ethnic communities are widespread and continued community segregation is institutionalised.
- While international organisations help meet **emergency humanitarian needs**, it is crucial that both the Union (national) and Rakhine State (regional) governments address the basic needs of the affected population while promoting durable solutions, in line with international standards, and stimulate State-wide development for all.
- **Safe and unhindered access** to populations in need should be granted to humanitarian aid organisations, not only in Myanmar/Burma, but in all countries of Asia where the Rohingya people are seeking asylum and protection.
- The crisis has a **wider regional dimension**, with record numbers of Rohingya fleeing to neighbouring countries on precarious boat journeys. According to the UNHCR some 94 000 people (many of which Rohingya) departed irregularly from the Bangladesh-Myanmar border over the course of 2014 and 2015.

Humanitarian situation and needs

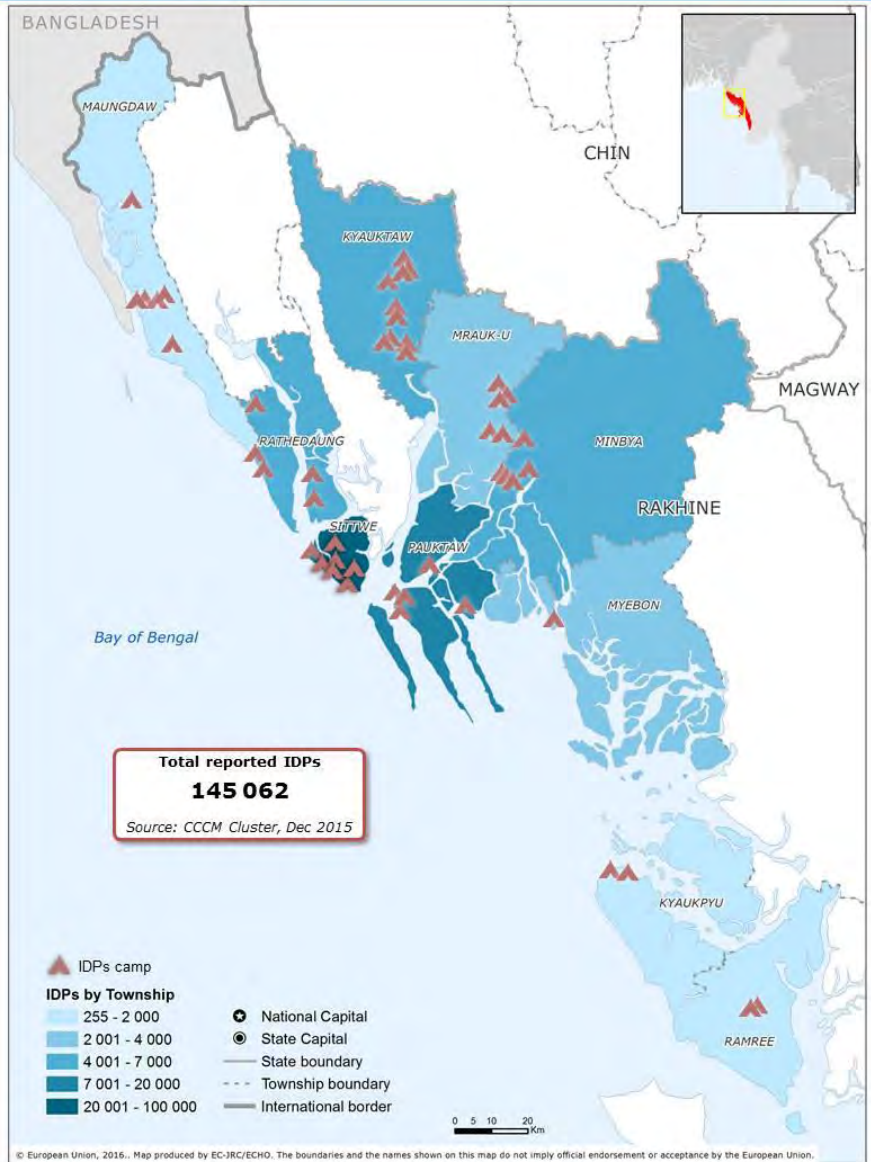
The Muslim minority living in **western Myanmar/Burma's Rakhine State** – at least 800 000 people – identify themselves as Rohingya. For decades they have suffered legal and social discrimination. While there are historical economic relations with the Buddhist Rakhine community there are also long-standing tensions between the two communities. The Rohingyas have been denied the right to citizenship and even the right to self-identify, and were stripped of their voting rights in the last national and local elections. They are also subject to many restrictions in day to day life: banned from travelling without authorization and prohibited from working outside their villages, they cannot even get married without permission from the authorities, and, because of movement restrictions, they lack sufficient access to livelihood opportunities, medical care and education. The number of children per couple is theoretically restricted to two but, because it cannot be enforced, there are thousands of children without any administrative existence.

In 2012, widespread violence in Rakhine left 140 000 people, mostly Rohingya, displaced. While the authorities have initiated a limited return process in some areas, over 100 000 people remain displaced some four years after the events, living in squalid camps with only limited access to health care, education and livelihood opportunities. As for those who have returned, the movement restriction they are subjected to implies they are still aid dependent. Tensions between the two communities continue.

Rakhine extremists erroneously perceive that humanitarian aid, which is allocated strictly according to needs, is distributed unevenly and benefits only the Rohingya. In March 2014, this triggered organized attacks targeting international community offices, residences and warehouses, which resulted in millions of euros of losses. The flood and cyclone relief interventions which supported both communities in 2015 allowed to somewhat mitigate this perception, but it remains prevalent in the extremists' rhetoric. Access to the IDP camps around Sittwe remains highly regulated preventing sufficient assistance delivery.

Displacement of Rohingya communities in Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma

Rohingyas - Myanmar



Due to their deplorable living conditions, tens of thousands of people – including many women and children – have escaped on precarious boat journeys to neighbouring countries. Many do not survive these journeys, and others fall prey to human trafficking or end up exploited as forced labour.

Over the last few years, **Thailand** has become a major transit point for refugees and migrants trying to reach Malaysia: since 2013, Thai authorities have arrested and detained some 3 000 Rohingya in Immigration Detention Centres, police stations or social welfare facilities. However, a crackdown on human traffickers in 2015 seems to have reduced the flow of refugees transiting through the country. In early 2016, there were a little over 400 Rohingya and 115 Bangladeshi in detention throughout Thailand according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Approximately 850 Rohingyas and Bangladeshi migrants were also still detained in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The initial influx of Rohingyas to **Bangladesh** dates back to 1978, with a large arrival in 1991-1992. Presently 32 713 are living in two official camps managed by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR source) in Nayapara and Kutupalong. While these are recognized by the Government of Bangladesh as refugees, the others are labelled "Undocumented Myanmar nationals" and thus have no legal status in Bangladesh. National authorities' refusal to register Rohingya at birth or provide marriage certificates and other civil documentation makes it difficult to assess the scale of the humanitarian needs of these people in Bangladesh, many of whom live in difficult conditions with inadequate food intake and diet diversification, or access to health care. Without legal status they are also unable to pursue education and formal employment opportunities, and remain vulnerable to exploitation and serious protection risks.

Conditions in the official refugee camps are better than those of the estimated 200 000 Rohingya living in the Kutupalong makeshift camp, Leda site and the surrounding areas. In 2014, the Government of Bangladesh recognized the humanitarian needs of people living in these sites by launching a National Strategy for Undocumented Myanmar Nationals - a broad roadmap outlining the authorities' general approach to the crisis. Sections of this Strategy are being rolled out by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which has been mandated by the Government to coordinate its implementation. With the Strategy, services to undocumented refugees have somewhat improved, but serious concerns over their safety and security remain as the process so far has failed to provide the



unregistered refugees with any kind of legal status, nor have they been informed of the Strategy, its process and its potential implications. Many households are female headed, which increases exposure to exploitation and gender based violence. The situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is defined as a "forgotten crisis" by ECHO.

The European Union's humanitarian response

The European Commission, through its Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), has been funding relief programmes in **Rakhine State of Myanmar/Burma** and in **Cox Bazar District, Bangladesh** since 1994. Additional support is also being provided in **Thailand** since 2013. ECHO established an office in Dhaka (Bangladesh) in 2002 and another one in Yangon (Myanmar/Burma) in 2005 to facilitate the delivery of EU humanitarian assistance.

Since 2010, the European Commission provided some € 70 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Rakhine state, including to the more isolated northern areas.

In 2016, the European Commission is funding projects throughout Rakhine State to address some of the most urgent needs among the Rohingya in the northern townships, including food and nutrition (especially for severely malnourished children under five), basic health services and supply of other basic household items, and to support the population displaced since 2012. EU funds were also made available in 2015 to address humanitarian needs following massive floods, which were particularly destructive in Rakhine State. Together with its humanitarian partner organisations, ECHO is committed to continue to contribute to the provision of basic services. In order to deliver this vital assistance, the security of aid workers and appropriate access to the beneficiaries must be ensured.

The European Commission has also been providing significant funding for life-saving assistance to the unrecognised Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh through international NGOs and the UN. Since 2007, over €30 million have been allocated for basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition and protection. Apart from this life-saving aid, ECHO will also continue to advocate for better communication with the Rohingyas and a more protection oriented support system.

The European Commission has allocated € 325 000 to the IOM since 2013, to provide food, basic household items, health care and protection to some 3 000 Rohingya men, women and children detained in Thailand, some of which under poor conditions, after they were arrested after allegedly entering the country illegally to travel to Malaysia. A further € 300 000 were made available to IOM in 2015 to support humanitarian needs of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi migrants at the regional level, in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The European Commission acts on the basis of the international humanitarian principles which are integral part of the [European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid](#)*. This means that ECHO provides humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable communities, irrespective of ethnic or religious background. EU humanitarian assistance is based solely on needs.



- 1) In Myanmar/Burma's Rakhine State, ECHO has been providing basic services in the IDP camps created in the aftermath of inter-ethnic violence in 2012, such as access to clean water and sanitation facilities. (Photo Credit: EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)
- 2) In Bangladesh, basic healthcare and nutritional support is provided to both the unregistered refugees and the host communities (Photo Credit: EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash)

