



Lives on Hold

Making sure no child is left behind in Myanmar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Women and children at a market near the Sin Tet Maw camp for internally displaced persons in Rakhine State, Myanmar.

— 6 April 2017

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An unprecedented period of change and opportunity is under way in Myanmar. But too many children have yet to feel the benefits.

Ending the long-running conflicts and intercommunal violence that have plagued the country for decades – and tackling the issues of self-governance, resource-sharing and ethnic identity that have perpetuated them – is a key stated ambition of the Government of the National League for Democracy that took office just over a year ago.

Political, social and economic reforms initiated in 2010 are starting to impact on the lives of the children who make up approximately 34 per cent of the country's estimated 53 million population.¹ Social sector reforms are beginning to translate into critical investments in the systems that boost children's health, education and protection.

Even so, and in spite of this progress, the challenges are huge: as many as 150 children die daily before reaching their fifth birthday;² nearly 30 per cent of all children under five suffer from moderate or severe malnutrition,³ and one in five children is born without registration.⁴

For an estimated 2.2 million children, the promise of peace remains unfulfilled,⁵ leaving their hopes for a better future blighted by poverty, lack of opportunity and the ever-present fear of violence.

This Child Alert focuses on the situation of children whose lives and prospects are effectively on hold. Children such as:

- Saw Ba Sun, aged 9, who lives with memories of the explosion that injured him and killed two friends as they played near his village;
- Myo Thein, aged 10, whose dreams of becoming a doctor depend on finding a new school to attend in tension-racked Rakhine State;
- Taung Mi Mi, aged 14, who tends vegetables in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) to help her family make ends meet.

Some of these children, especially those living in remote border areas, continue to suffer the consequences of protracted crises, intercommunal conflicts and discrimination. In too many cases, they are exposed to violence and exploitation – in violation of their rights.

A range of complex issues – including displacement, chronic poverty, vulnerability to natural disasters, statelessness, trafficking, and lack of access to health and education services – all contribute to the daily challenges that confront them.

In [Kachin State](#), near the border with China, an estimated 67,000 women and children are living in 142 camps and sites,⁶ amid ongoing tensions between the Myanmar Armed Forces (officially known as the Tatmadaw) and various Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). The situation for children in neighbouring [Shan State](#) is equally fragile.

In [Kayin State](#), and in [the South-East](#) of Myanmar more broadly, an entrenched history of conflict has affected the lives of civilians, especially in more remote areas close to the border with Thailand. Although the major EAOs in the area have signed a National Ceasefire Agreement, about 2.5 million people live in townships affected by conflict.⁷

And in [Rakhine State](#), 120,000 internally displaced people continue to live in camps following the outbreak of intercommunal conflict between ethnic Rakhine and Muslims in 2012, which displaced them from their homes.⁸ In the northern part of Rakhine State, the situation escalated dangerously in October 2016 after coordinated attacks on a number of border guard posts. The counter-insurgency campaign launched by the Tatmadaw in response sparked international concern over alleged serious human rights violations against the Muslim Rohingya community.

UNICEF and its partners are working with the Government of Myanmar to help children in all parts of the country begin to benefit from the rapid economic development that is transforming much of the country.

Through investments that protect children against violence, marginalization and other risks, and which provide them with opportunities to learn, alongside basic services such as clean water, sanitation and health care, a stronger, more harmonious society can emerge that will support Myanmar's progress and stability.

But there is an urgent need to address the deeper challenges facing children in Myanmar. Without this push for action, children will miss out on the chance to contribute to a better, more peaceful and prosperous future for their country.



This Child Alert calls for renewed efforts to achieve peace and social cohesion so that all children can be provided with uninterrupted access to quality basic services and opportunities in life. It also calls for intensified efforts to protect children from violence and abuse.

In conflict-affected areas such as Kachin State, Shan State and the South-East, this Alert calls on all parties to the conflict to immediately allow humanitarian assistance to reach children affected by ongoing violence, and for an end to grave violations against children. The laying of landmines by all parties to the conflicts must end, and mine clearance work should start wherever possible.

In Rakhine State, the Alert calls for urgent measures to protect children against violence, and to ensure that the humanitarian needs of children in IDP camps are met. Rohingya and other ethnic minority children need protection and help.

It also urges rapid implementation of the interim findings of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State led by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Commission's recommendations for investments in education and health care and the roll-out of a comprehensive birth registration campaign have already been broadly welcomed by the Government of Myanmar. These investments will be a first step towards improving the quality and coverage of basic social services for all children in Rakhine.

“Maths is my favourite subject. When I grow up I want to be a doctor, so I can help people.”

Myo Thein, 10

Myo Thein works on his homework at the Sin Tet Maw camp for internally displaced persons in Rakhine State, Myanmar.

— 6 April 2017



Rakhine State

Gaps in education threaten the futures of all children

SinTet Maw camp, Pauktaw, Rakhine State: It's barely eight in the morning but already the rickety wooden classroom is shaking to the sound of young, rhythmic voices within.

"I love the monkey, I love the flower!" chant the children inside. "How are you? Fine, thank YOU!"

If the grasp of English pleasantries still needs some practice, there is no disputing the enthusiasm of the 30 or so pupils who sit on rough wooden benches inside the building. Outside, a green painted sign proclaims it to be the Basic Education Primary Level Teaching School Temporary No. 2.

Leading the class is head teacher, Kyaw Swe, a tall man in a red baseball cap who exudes as much energy as the boys and girls in his charge.

"This is a temporary learning centre but we still follow the government curriculum," Mr Swe explains. "Our aim is to raise the educational standard of the children in the camp because they cannot attend normal government schools."

In all, 518 Muslim children living in the camp attend the school.ⁱ Their families have lived in SinTet Maw since 2012, when their coastal community south of the state capital, Sittwe, was caught up in intercommunal violence between Muslims and Buddhists.

MyoThein was only 6 when his family fled their former home. Now 10, he is used to life in the camp and eager to complete his education. He follows classes in Myanmar language, English, science and maths.

"Maths is my favourite subject," says MyoThein. "When I grow up I want to be a doctor, so I can help people."

But there's a problem: once he finishes primary school next year, he will not be able to transfer to the nearby middle school for ethnic Rakhine children, due to the segregation between the two communities. It's a dilemma his teacher Mr Swe is uncomfortably aware of.

"We need a middle school so that the older (Muslim) children can continue their education. When they have access to secondary school, they will be able to realize their dreams."

"The gaps in education affect all communities in Rakhine State, and demonstrate how lack of investment in basic services is holding all children back"

In the Buddhist community near Sittwe on the opposite bank of the Kaladan River, worries about the limited school options for older children from poor families find an echo.

MaYaTu, aged 11, comes from a troubled background, raised by an aunt who couldn't afford to send her niece to school, and instead took her to help sell fish in the market.

But last year, the opening of a non-formal primary school in the area (as part of a non-formal education programme supported by UNICEF in partnership with Myanmar Literacy and Resource Centre) allowed MaYaTu to make a belated start to her education. Today, she is enjoying school and making good progress.

But, like MyoThein, after Grade 4, MaYaTu will have no government middle school in the area to attend, and she may have to abandon her education.

"I don't miss the days when I couldn't go to school," says MaYaTu. "Being in school is better because I learn stuff and I make friends."

Finding solutions that will allow children like MyoThein and MaYaTu to stay in school is a challenge being addressed by UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, the European Union, Denmark and other agencies.

"The gaps in education affect all communities in Rakhine State, and demonstrate how lack of investment in basic services is holding all children back," says UNICEF Chief of Sittwe field office Mandie Alexander. "We and our partners are working with the Government to provide post-primary opportunities for Muslim and Buddhist children alike."

i. UNICEF supports 55 Temporary Learning Spaces in Myanmar, in which 9,528 children aged 5–11 follow the state school curriculum as far as Grade 4.

POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONTEXT

The political changes initiated in Myanmar in 2010 set in motion a rapid and complex transformation of the country in three broad areas: from military conflict to peace; from autocratic to democratic government; and from a closed to an open economy.

Optimism was further fuelled by the signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement of 2015 and general elections held the same year, which resulted in the National League for Democracy taking office under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The new government set several key objectives. First and foremost, it committed itself to achieving national reconciliation, and to seeking a peaceful resolution to the various conflicts that have plagued Myanmar almost since it became an independent country. Transforming the country's governance to a democratic federal union and raising living standards for the general population were the new government's other overarching aims.

To support the achievement of these goals, a 12-point economic policy was announced in July 2016, and a national conference brought together signatories and non-signatories of the National Ceasefire Agreement with the hope of initiating political dialogue for lasting peace.

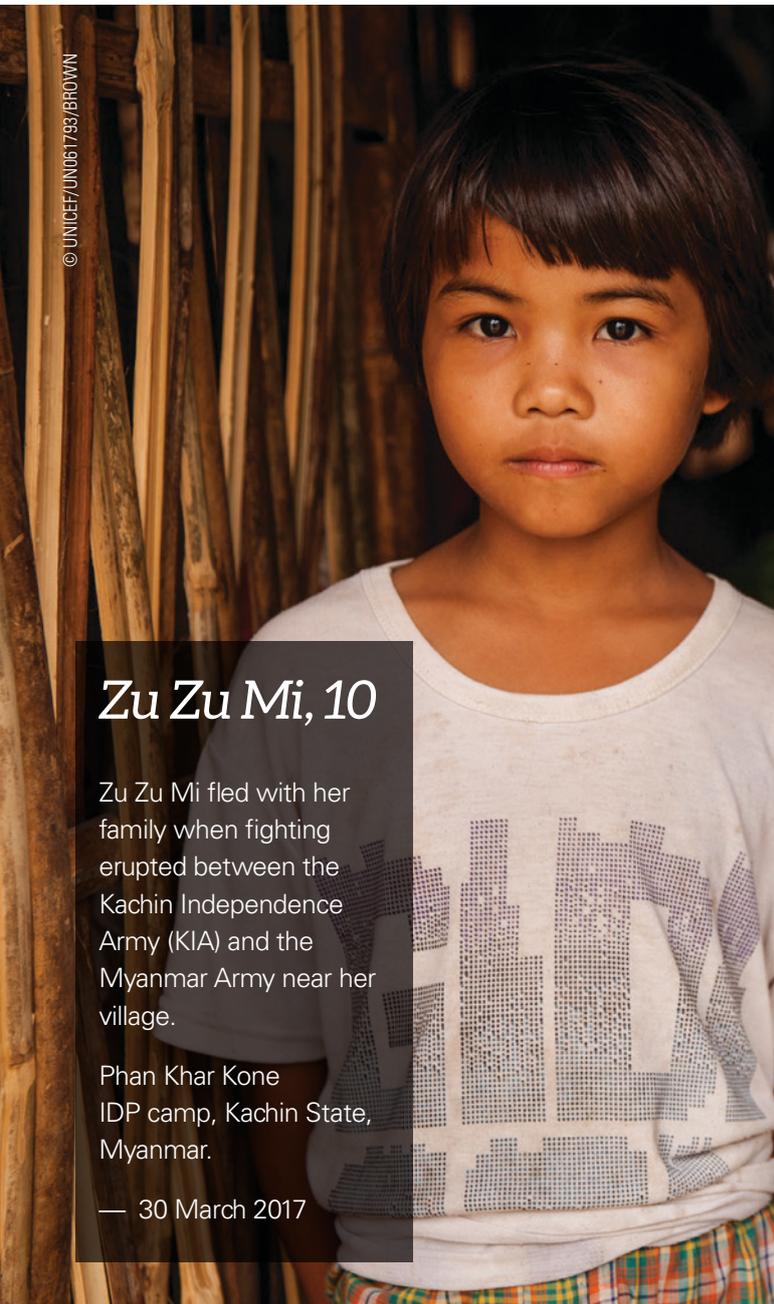
However, the optimism of 2015 and early 2016 has been tempered by slower-than-expected progress on economic and policy reforms. Even more worrisome is the escalation of several key conflicts in the country's more remote border areas.

In Kachin and Shan States, fighting between government and non-government forces has surged anew, resulting in the displacement of civilians caught between the opposing forces. For some, this is the second or third displacement – with their vulnerability increasing at each round.

All but one of Myanmar's six self-administered areas are found in Kachin and Shan States; they have also suffered the highest incidence of conflict, accounting for 95 per cent of the 1,350 recorded clashes involving the army and EAOs in 2015 and 2016.⁹ The situation in the two states is further complicated by the fact that they are richly endowed with natural resources, and are also hubs for large-scale opium, heroin and amphetamine production.

Myanmar's remote and mountainous South-East – a vast territory which comprises Kayin and Mon States and the Tanintharyi Region – is also greatly influenced by economic migration, mainly to Thailand. According to data reported by the International Organization for Migration, Mon and Kayin States and the Tanintharyi Region together receive nearly 70 per cent of annual worker remittances;¹⁰ in Mon State, nearly 1 in 10 children aged 6–10 lives away from a biological parent.¹¹

Meanwhile, in the northern part of Rakhine State, attacks on border guard police outposts in October 2016 prompted a large-scale security operation by the Government of Myanmar. Subsequent allegations of violations of human rights, including summary executions, rapes, torture, and burning of villages, sparked an outcry. Tens of thousands of Rohingya have been displaced and some have taken shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh.¹²



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Zu Zu Mi, 10

Zu Zu Mi fled with her family when fighting erupted between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Myanmar Army near her village.

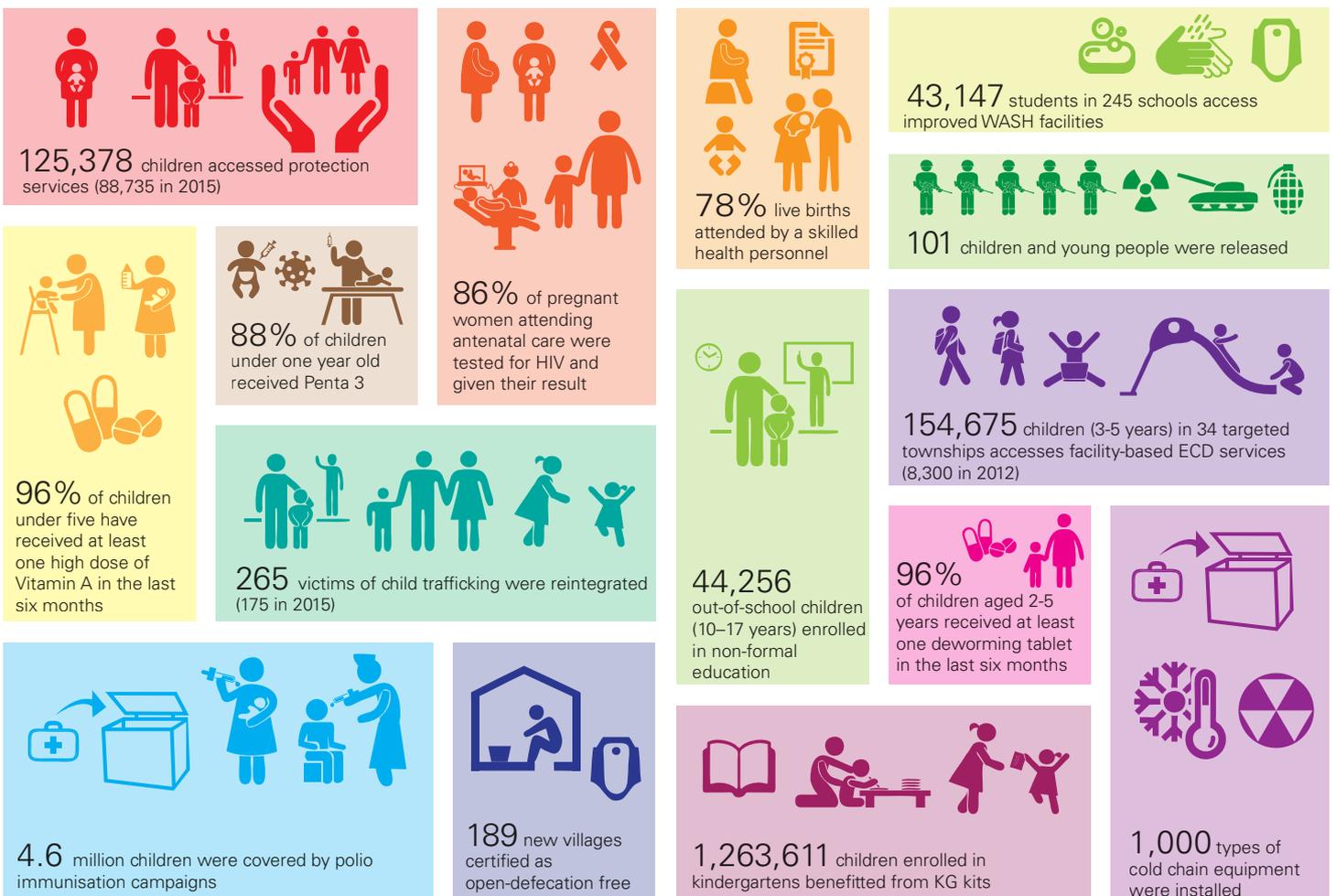
Phan Khar Kone
IDP camp, Kachin State,
Myanmar.

— 30 March 2017

Children of Myanmar: Fast Facts

- Children represent 34 per cent of Myanmar’s population of 53 million people.
- More than half of these children live in poverty.
- One in five children is born without registration.
- Every day, up to 150 children die before reaching their fifth birthday.
- Approximately one third of children under 5 are stunted.
- Half of Myanmar’s children reach adulthood with an incomplete education.
- A UNICEF-supported analysis revealed that two out of three children with disabilities do not attend school and 90 per cent do not visit the doctor.
- An estimated 2.2 million children still need peace: restrictions on freedom of movement and the discrimination they face prevent thousands of children in Rakhine State from accessing adequate health care, good nutrition and education.
- Nine out of the county’s 14 states and regions are contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war. Over the past two years, there has been a new victim of landmines, on average, every three days. One out of every three victims is a child.
- Eight parties to the different conflicts in Myanmar are listed by the United Nations Secretary-General for their relentless recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

UNICEF Results 2016: Improving the lives of children in their communities



Kayin State and South-East Myanmar

Unresolved conflict blights children's futures

Ann Ka Law village, Kayin State, Myanmar: The little boy looked nervously at the metallic object in his hand. It didn't look like a toy, but the friends he was playing with were yelling at him to throw it at the bamboo patch a few metres away.

"It felt heavy – and the metal was hot," recalled Saw Ba Sun, aged 9. "Somehow, I knew it was dangerous."

As Saw Ba hesitated, another boy, So Aung Myo Win, snatched the metal thing out of his hand. As he raised his throwing arm, the device exploded, killing him instantly and injuring four others, including Saw Ba Sun.

More than two years on, memories of the accident are still fresh in this poor and remote corner of South-East Myanmar. Locals point out the unmarked spot, no more than 200 metres from the school, where they found the body of So Aung, and another injured child, Aung Min, aged 7, who died shortly after reaching the local hospital.

When Saw Ba Sun's father, Tar Leu, heard the explosion, his first thought was that Kayin's long-running armed conflict had once more descended on the village. His next fearful thought was for his wife and two sons.

Mr Leu, 43, is the pastor at the village church. He and his family returned to Myanmar in 2012, after spending years living in a refugee camp across the nearby border with

of Kayin State. Each time, terrified families hide in crude shelters that they have dug under their wooden houses.

The unexploded grenade that led to the accident was probably left from clashes that had erupted weeks earlier.

Reconciliation efforts yet to bear fruit

Conflict has long shaped the lives of people living in this area. Recurrent fighting between government forces and a range of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) has repeatedly displaced the civilian population.

The major EAOs in Mon and Kayin States and Tanintharyi Region are signatories to the 2015 National Ceasefire Agreement, but skirmishes have persisted.

"This troubled history has had tragic implications for the lives of around 2 million children living in the South-East of Myanmar," says Anne Cecile Vialle, who heads UNICEF's Mawlamyine Field Office.

"Apart from suffering the direct consequences of violence, children in disputed territories often cannot access basic services."

In such areas, almost a third of school-aged children (aged 6–17) are not attending school and one in three families does not have access to adequate toilets.ⁱ

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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