

The impact of monsoon floods and COVID-19 on Internally Displaced People in Kachin State, Myanmar

Durable Peace Programme – Photo Stories

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PROGRAMME





Heavy rainfall caused flash flooding of the Nmai Hka River that flows past the Chihpwi camps for internally displaced people (IDP). There are two IDP camps – one in the Kachin Baptist Church compound and another one at the Lhaovo Baptist Church compound. There are more than 200 IDP families in these camps. Every year flash floods occur here, however its intensity was worse this year as it damaged some of the toilets and sties amid COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown, thus affecting mobility of the IDPs, their infrastructures and livestock.

The Durable Peace Programme (DPP) aims to facilitate durable peace and equitable development in Myanmar, particularly in Kachin and northern Shan. Through our Photo Story series, we seek to raise awareness and shed light on particular issues that affect the lives of Internally Displaced People and other conflict affected communities in the geographical coverage of the programme.

For more information on the DPP, you can visit: www.durablepeaceprogramme.com



Strong winds caused damage to about 65 temporary shelters in Woichyai IDP Camp. These shelters are usually made of bamboo and roofed with corrugated metal sheets. An estimated population of around 6,600 persons from 1,240 households are living in the Woichyai Camp. These partially damaged shelters offer little protection and/or privacy and could put IDPs at an increased risk, particularly children and the elderly who are more vulnerable.

Some displaced communities lost not only infrastructure, but also their belongings. The strong winds ripped apart shelters, followed by heavy rains and floods that either swept away or soaked what was left, making it even more difficult for the IDPs to live in these bare shelters. The windstorm destroyed 19 makeshift kitchens, as pictured here. The ongoing monsoon season worsened the existing situation of inadequate food, utilities and other services, and poses more obstacles in the efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.





The four toilets in Pakahtawng Camp, near Maija Yang, which are used by IDPs from Block 9, collapsed as a result of flooding.

There are approximately 2,350 IDPs (around 590 families) living in Pakahtawng IDP Camp. Damaged toilets and the subsequent dispersal of human waste by floodwaters is a serious setback and can exacerbate water, sanitation and hygiene risks during monsoon season, coupled with the health impacts of COVID-19.

IDPs from Maga Yang Camp usually go to the bazaar at Hka Shang Village in China for food and other domestic supplies. This is not possible at the moment.

The border passage that IDPs frequently cross has been closed in an effort to help contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Ongoing heavy rain compounds this situation, further restricting the mobility of IDPs and reducing their access to food supplies. The monsoon season combined with the health and economic impacts of the pandemic have hit displaced communities living in these remote, hard-to-reach areas especially hard.





Every year, Chinese traders buy watermelons from Waimaw Township and export them to China via Kampaiti on the Myanmar-China border.

This year, the government's travel bans, aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19, have blocked export businesses and logistics channels to and from China. Watermelon farmers have been hit the hardest, as almost the entire harvest is usually China-bound. Farmers who are managing to sell, are getting less money than they usually would, meaning many growers cannot even regain their investments.

Many farms have been left abandoned, with literally tons of watermelons rotting away.

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The photos on the cover page and on page 2 are credited to Yawna, from Chihpwi IDP Camp

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