

of the United Nations now require security clearances to travel more than five kilometres beyond the urban areas of Bhamo and Myitkyina townships. Several security incidents were reported, killing three local administrators, while grenade and IED attacks against telecommunications towers and a State-run local bank were also reported.

**FOOD AND CASH DISTRIBUTIONS FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE:** After two months of temporary suspension due to various challenges, including banking issues, humanitarian access, insecurity and COVID-19 restrictions, WFP and partners have resumed monthly distributions of food and cash in Chin, Kachin, Rakhine and northern Shan states in September. At the same time, WFP has expanded the geographical coverage of its large-scale urban response in Mandalay and Yangon regions.

WFP's cash distributions have reached 16,000 (35 per cent) of 45,000 IDPs in Kachin with a three-month ration (July to September) and 135,600 (73 per cent) of 184,700 people in central Rakhine with a two-month ration (July and August). In northern Shan, the resumption of food distributions to some 8,300 people in Konkyan Township has resumed, while cash distributions for 7,000 IDPs in Kutkai, Namhkan, Namtu and Mansi townships are currently ongoing. Distributions have also taken place to some 105,000 people in northern Rakhine and to some 9,450 IDPs in southern Chin in September.

For the urban response, WFP has started the first round of rice distributions for 145,000 people in Dala Township in the Yangon Region and has started the second round of rice distribution for approximately 7,500 people in Mandalay Region. In addition, WFP has reached 21,100 children between 6 and 59 months old under its Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme (BSFP) in Dala, Insein and Hlaing Tharyar townships in Yangon Region.

## HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

**HUMANITARIAN NEEDS MOUNTING DUE TO LIMITED ACCESS:** Access to the vulnerable people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection services remains significantly restricted due to escalating armed clashes, overall insecurity and COVID-related restrictions across the country. National and international humanitarian organisations are facing the presence of checkpoints, road blockages and a cumbersome TA system. In addition, COVID-19 related restrictions in particular have left thousands of people in the IDP camps and displacement sites with inadequate food and limited access to livelihoods and health care. This situation has been exacerbated by challenges related to transport, logistics, a cash crisis and shortages of supplies. On a more positive note, 8 out of 16 displacement sites in Buthidaung, Ponnagyun and Rathedaung townships, housing people affected by the armed conflict between the MAF and the AA, and 13 displacement sites in Minbya, Mrauk-U and Myebon townships have been reclassified by the de facto authorities as "accessible". Partners are encouraged to include these reclassified sites in their monthly TA applications to provide multi-sectoral humanitarian support to these vulnerable families.

Since 1 February, disrupted banking services and limited availability of cash have negatively impacted the delivery of humanitarian activities, including distribution of cash assistance and procurement processes, resulting in a large-scale suspension of many cash-related interventions. Partners managed to resume cash distributions to more than 100 IDP camps in a dozen of townships in Kachin State since the end of August, which benefitted 45,000 people. However, in some areas in the control of EAOs, their efforts are met with challenges due to mounting commission fees, safety and COVID-19 prevention measures.

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** The number of reported COVID-19 cases and fatalities which had been on the rise since June, declined in September. Between 1 and 29 September, a total of 63,326 cases and 2,293 deaths were reported countrywide. This is a significant decrease in cases confirmed countrywide compared to previous months, with over 100,000 cases and 6,000 deaths reported in August alone. The number of tests remains extremely limited however, suggesting that the reported numbers provide an incomplete picture but may still be indicative of trends. Extensive vaccinations for various groups, including citizens aged above 55, people with disabilities, members of EAOs and people at displacement sites and camps, reportedly started on 14 September. Countrywide, more than 7.8 million people reportedly received one vaccine and 3.8 million people received had received two doses as of 28 September.

"Stay-at-home" restrictions were lifted in six townships in Ayeyarwady, Bago and Sagaing regions, while more than 100 townships across the country remain under such restrictions. Public holidays, which had been effective starting from 17 July, ended on 12 September. However, schools continue to be closed until 24 October. Partners are supporting people to receive COVID-care 19 and other essential health services, while sustaining lifesaving humanitarian operations (see below).