

# **Cyclone (Burma): Rakhine Minorities Report Food, Shelter Crisis as Aid Fails to Arrive**

Tuesday 13 June 2023, by [NORA \(The Irrawaddy\)](#) (Date first published: 7 June 2023).

**Ethnic-minority communities in remote and impoverished areas of northern Rakhine State said they need humanitarian assistance for rehabilitation after Cyclone Mocha devastated their communities last month.**

Inhabited predominantly by ethnic Rakhine people, Myanmar's westernmost state is also home to ethnic minorities like the Mro, Khamee, That, Maramagyi, Daingnet (Chakma), and Kaman (Kamein).

Ethnic minority villagers bore the brunt of destruction when Cyclone Mocha, the second-most powerful storm ever recorded in Myanmar after 2008's Cyclone Nargis, wreaked havoc in northern Rakhine townships on May 14.

U Shwe Maung from the Mro ethnic group lives in Ma Kyar Se, a poor agrarian village in Mrauk-U Township.

He reported that some families in his village were still unable to rebuild their destroyed homes as they had received no aid.

"We haven't received any help yet. We have to cut down trees in the jungle to repair our houses," he said.

Around 130 houses in Ma Kyar Se village, including a school and clinic, were either destroyed or badly damaged by the storm.

U Shwe Maung said children and adults in the village are also suffering diarrhea and skin infections, ailments associated with a lack of clean water.

Mrauk-U Township is also home to the small village of Maung Nha Ma, where the Khamee ethnic community is now struggling with a serious food shortage.

"We don't have enough food in our village. We are having to ask the local monastery to share their rice with us," a resident said.

Most of the houses in the village, built with bamboo sticks and palm leaves, were destroyed by the storm.

Mro, Khamee and Daingnet communities in northern Rakhine state are geographically and socially isolated from the majority Rakhine ethnic population.

A volunteer from Mrauk-U Township said there is not enough local aid to distribute to remote villages as the storm had cut a huge swath of destruction.

"Even some poor communities near Mrauk-U town have not received help yet. So, it is hard to reach

out to the minority communities that live in remote areas,” he explained.

Another local volunteer from Myitta Yaungchi Foundation said transport difficulties and a communication breakdown were also hampering efforts to deliver urgently needed aid to Mro and Khamee communities in storm-hit areas.

However, the volunteer group did manage to deliver food supplies to two ethnic villages on Myay Ngu Island, in the Bay of Bengal, on Monday.

A resident from Myay Ngu traveled to Sittwe town and asked for urgent help as the communication is down where he lives,” the volunteer said.

The group faced an arduous journey, starting with an hour-long trip by motorboat to reach the island. However, their difficulties had only just begun. After landing at Soe Me Kyi village pier on the east side of the island, the group carried their aid supplies for another two hours on foot, traversing nine peaks to get to Santawshin village.

The village is located at the foot of Santawshin Pagoda, one of the most sacred structures in Rakhine State. The island is crowded with pilgrims and visitors every year in mid-December when the pagoda festival is held.

Homes in the Mro and Khamee villages surrounding Santawshin Pagoda were badly damaged in the cyclone and in need of urgent repair, according to the group.

“We handed tarpaulin sheets and food supplies to the residents of two villages that needed urgent help. We could not afford to provide aid to all villages on the island,” a volunteer said.

Of the 19 villages on Myay Ngu, those located in the south and west of the island suffered the worst storm damage.

“Ethnic minorities in rural areas are poor and isolated. They don’t even know how to ask for help. It will be very difficult for them to recover on their own,” a volunteer said.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said in a statement on June 2 that it had delivered food aid for 266,500 people in Rakhine. UNOCHA was waiting for approval from the junta to distribute more relief assistance in storm-hit areas, the statement added.

## **NORA**

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• The Irrawaddy. 7 June 2023:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rakhine-minorities-report-food-shelter-crisis-as-aid-fails-to-arrive.html>