

## **This week's topic is AID IN ARAKAN**

### ***Historical context:***

Animosity between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine state erupted in deadly clashes in 2012, leaving almost 200 people dead and more than 140,000 people displaced. Many who had had their homes destroyed in the communal riots were moved to IDP camps where conditions are said to be very bad. Those in the camps rely on aid agencies for their basic needs. Most of the displaced are from a Muslim minority who identify themselves as “Rohingya”, of whom there are said to be 800,000 in Rakhine state. The Government refers to the minority as “Bengalis” and does not allow them legal citizenship. Most fear discrimination from government-run hospitals, and have become dependent on international aid groups for care. This situation has given rise to accusations of bias from the Buddhist community in Rakhine state and International relief groups have come under huge pressure. In March 2014 violent mobs attacked the offices of international aid groups and UN agencies and more than 170 aid workers fled. Although most have now returned, Myanmar's current monsoon season is exacerbating already poor conditions and the need for medical care in the region.

### ***Facts & figures:***

- In Myanmar, the UN's appeal for 2014 is for \$192 million to help 421,000 people in need of emergency aid.
- At least 96% of humanitarian workers are nationals of the countries they work in.
- In Rakhine state, two bouts of communal violence in 2012 killed at least 192 people and uprooted some 146,000 people from their homes.
- More than 140,000 people in Rakhine state now live in IDP camps, and are dependent on international aid for survival.

- A curfew imposed on Sittway and Kyaukphyu townships in Rakhine State in October 2012 was extended for another two months on August 11

### ***Points of view:***

“I call people in Rakhine state to cooperate with government and aid groups in order to bring peace and development.”  
(President Thein Sein)

“We believe it is critical that the Government allows humanitarian aid agencies to have unfettered access to ensure people can receive medical care. We understand that this is a sensitive environment, particularly with regard to inter-communal tensions. This makes it all the more important that independent international organisations can play their role in treating those most vulnerable.”  
(Marcel Langenbach, Director of Operations for MSF in Amsterdam)

“[International aid agencies] promise us again and again to serve for our welfare. But in practice they don't live up to their promise. It is mere propaganda. The township residents don't know what they are doing here in the region.’ (MP, U Aung Mya Kyaw)

“We are providing our support based on needs, not based on ethnicity [or] religion. Needs are not the same across all communities. Needs are different. If you've been part of a family who's been displaced, who's living in a camp, of course your environment is much more fragile, and you become much more vulnerable.” (Bertrand Bainvel, UNICEF Myanmar)

### ***Information links:***

[www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org)  
[www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)  
[www.solidarites.org](http://www.solidarites.org)  
[www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org](http://www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org)  
[www.dvb.no](http://www.dvb.no)