

“You have an overwhelming impression of people suffering”, says one UNICEF staff. “Six years on, people in the camps are starting to lose hope that their lives will ever return to normal. For younger children, confinement is the only reality they have ever known.”

The Government of Myanmar is developing plans to close the IDP camps in line with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The UN has offered technical support to ensure adherence to international guidelines and standards, including facilitating camp inhabitants' return to their places of origin or choice.

Despite the challenging circumstances in Rakhine, the work of UNICEF and its partners from both government and civil society has continued and even broadened. In northern Rakhine, child protection, health and nutrition activities are ongoing, along with additional WASH and education construction and rehabilitation projects.

The May 2018 visit by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, reinvigorated the work of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, set up to gather information on violations committed against children, with parties to the conflict reaffirming their commitment and engagement. A request has been made by both the SRSG and the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting for greater access to conflict-affected areas, including northern Rakhine, to provide more balanced information and evidence in relation to the events

that took place a year ago.

In central Rakhine, UNICEF continues to support the provision of basic services for many inhabitants of IDP camps, including those in the hard-to-reach areas of Pauktaw, Myebon and Kyauk Taw.

“Given that we are now seeing increased access for our staff as well as those of other UN agencies and INGO partners, there are opportunities for UNICEF to step up its assistance throughout Rakhine State, addressing both humanitarian and development needs,” says Mandie Alexander, who heads UNICEF's Rakhine Field Office. “We need sustained access to all children who are out of reach and unprotected in northern Rakhine – and any child across the state who requires assistance.”

UNICEF's work provides immediate support but unless durable solutions allow for a permanent end to intercommunal tensions and violence in Rakhine State, communities will continue to remain vulnerable and require assistance.

“UNICEF stands ready to support the government to implement the recommendations made by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State,” says UNICEF Myanmar Representative, June Kunugi. “In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children must be protected from all forms of violence and given access to basic services and support. Working with and for children is the key to increasing social stability and cohesion over time.”



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Students at an informal learning centre in an IDP camp in central Rakhine State