



# CFE-DMHA

## Humanitarian Information Paper

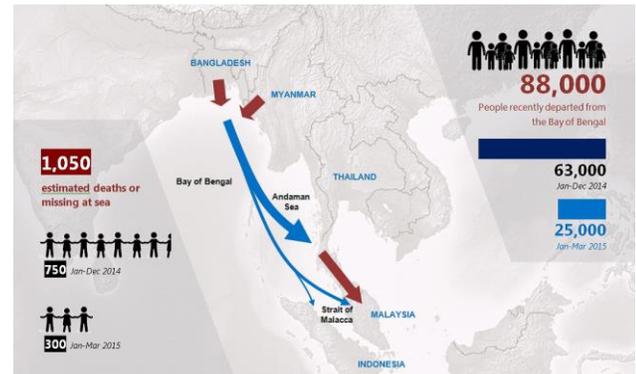
### Rohingya Migrant Update, 22 June, 2015 CHIP No. 2

#### BLUF – Potential Implications to PACOM

- As of the latest reports, some 4,800 Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants have arrived in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand while around 2,000-3,000 others are still thought to be at sea, with some having been adrift for months. They are in severe need of food, water and other basic supplies. (OCHA, AFP, UNHCR, HRW, ACAPS, Malaysian Star)
- Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand have intensified search and rescue operations for the migrants, while the United States has deployed military aircraft to assist in surveillance efforts in close collaboration with Malaysia and Thailand. Recent rescue efforts have not resulted in the location of more boats, according to the UN. (GOT, OCHA)
- Humanitarian needs include: continuing to strengthen SAR operations; ensuring an agreed upon effective disembarkation strategy and appropriate reception arrangements; ensuring access for the UN and INGOs to address basic needs, including shelter and WASH facilities; and identifying and providing assistance to those with specific protection needs. (UNHCR)

## Key Concerns & Trends

- UNHCR says 88,000 people, comprised of Rohingya and Bangladeshi refugees, stateless people and economic migrants, have journeyed across the Bay of Bengal since the beginning of 2014. An estimated 25,000 made the journey in the first quarter of 2015. The scale of the movement has tripled since 2012. UNHCR estimates about 1,050 people have died or gone missing during this period.
- In late May, following mounting international pressure, two boats carrying more than 900 people were intercepted by the Myanmar Navy and brought to Rakhine state. In June, 187 confirmed Bangladeshi citizens were repatriated by the Government of Myanmar (GoM) in coordination with Bangladeshi officials. The rest are being held in border camps while Bangladesh and Myanmar decide their original nationality. (WFP, Malaysian Star, Irrawaddy).
- Myanmar authorities have collected about 400,000 temporary identification cards, known as white cards, from displaced and stateless Rohingyas in western Myanmar as part of the process of applying for citizenship. The GoM has started issuing green cards to Muslims in 13 townships in Rakhine to help verify they live in Myanmar. However, holders need to apply for and be verified for citizenship eligibility. (Radio Free Asia)



Source: UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, 29 May 2015

- On 29 May 2015, representatives from 17 countries, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Thailand, attended the “**Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean**,” organized by the Royal Thai Government in Bangkok. Representatives of Japan, Switzerland, and the U.S. attended as observers. (GOT)
- Representatives of the most affected countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand) briefed the meeting on the efforts and measures each country was undertaking. Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to continue to provide humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter to some 7,000 irregular migrants still at sea provided that the resettlement and repatriation process will be done in one year by the international community. (GOT)
- The meeting identified intensifying search and rescue operations, and an agreed, predictable disembarkation plan as being among the priorities for the immediate response. Longer term needs include facilitating solutions for people in need of international protection. (UNHCR, GoT)
- Although there appears to be a lull in people-smuggling boats making the journey across the Bay of Bengal due to the onset of the monsoon, humanitarians warn that when seas become calmer in October, there may be more ships and people attempting to make the journey. (VOA, UN)

#### **Rohingya Population**

Over 1.3 million Rohingyas live in Myanmar, mainly in Rakhine state, while hundreds of thousands live elsewhere across Asia, mostly in Bangladesh. There are roughly 146,400 Rohingya IDPs in camps mostly near Rakhine’s capital, Sittwe, and in surrounding towns. According to OCHA, around 416,000 people there remain in need of assistance 3 years after communal violence hit Rakhine in 2012, leaving at least 200 people dead. (BBC, Solidarities International, OCHA, UNHCR)

## Affected States

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**Bangladesh:** In early June, 150 migrants found adrift in a boat off Myanmar's coast in late May, returned to Bangladesh. The migrants came from a first boat that was found containing 208 people. On June 19, another 37 were deported to Bangladesh, according to Myanmar officials. (AFP, WFP, Irrawaddy)

**Indonesia:** Hundreds of Rohingya migrants were rescued off the coast of Aceh province in May and are staying in different areas of Aceh where they are receiving shelter and food. UNHCR has reported more than 1,000 new Rohingya arrivals have been registered, although according to IRIN, Acehnese fishermen say they rescued almost 2,000 people. Among the camps where the rescued are sheltering, a camp at Kuala Langsa shelters 425 Bangladeshi migrants and 231 Rohingya refugees, while another camp, Bayeun, shelters 340 Rohingya and 92 Bangladeshis. (AFP, IRIN, UN News Service)

**Malaysia:** Hundreds of Rohingya migrants are sheltering in modern facilities at the Belantik detention camp in Bandar Muadzam Shah, Kedah. A local NGO, Forces of Love (FOL), has been providing basic education programs to some 404 children at the camp. (Malay Mail)

**Myanmar:** 187 migrants found on a first boat intercepted by the Myanmar Navy in late May were determined by officials to be Bangladeshi and have been deported back to Bangladesh. Burmese officials have found that 200 people out of 208 on board had originated in Bangladesh. The remaining people are in Taung Pyo Let Wai village in Arakan's State's Maungdaw Township. Migrants from a second boat found by the Myanmar Navy on May 29 in the Bay of Bengal, contained 733 people. The second boat was towed to Maungdaw, where migrants were transferred to border holding facilities. Local officials told the Irrawaddy that 546 were found to be Bangladeshi and will be deported soon. The remaining 187 were found to be from Myanmar. On June 14, around 500 Buddhist hardliners protested in Rakhine state against help being offered to the migrants being found stranded in the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar police say they have arrested more than 90 people for human trafficking arrests this year, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar. (AFP, Irrawaddy)

**Thailand:** The Royal Thai Government (GoT) recently set up a special taskforce to respond to the situation and provide assistance to migrants found at sea. Two Royal Thai Navy vessels have been deployed to provide assistance and medical help. Aircraft from both the Royal Thai Navy and the Royal Thai Air Force have also been deployed to patrol and assist. The GoT began an operation to shut down trafficking operations along its border with Myanmar in April, leading smugglers to abandon people at sea. (GOT, Reuters, ACAPS)

## International Humanitarian Community

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**Humanitarian Funding:** On June 20, **Japan's** Foreign Ministry announced that it has extended US\$3.5 million through agencies such as UNHCR to help the Rohingya migrants. The money will be used to provide food and shelter as well as to fund data analysis of their maritime movements. The **United States** has pledged US\$3 million towards IOM's appeal; **Australia** has pledged an additional AUD 5 million in humanitarian assistance to Rakhine State and Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. (GOT, AFP, USAID)

**Arakan Project**, which tracks boat movements from Rakhine state in Myanmar and southern Bangladesh, said that over 300 boats were boarded in May, down from 5,000 in April and an average of 7,000-8,000 per month in the period from last November to March this year. The NGO says that during the last two months, many of the boats never made the journey due to the regional crackdown on human smuggling and many migrants were taken back. (Reuters)

**International Organization for Migration (IOM)**: IOM is appealing for US\$26 million to assist migrants from Bangladesh and Burma. IOM is also providing humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter support at all points of disembarkation in Indonesia and Thailand. IOM has also provided health assistance to disembarking migrants in Bangladesh, and remains open and ready to provide humanitarian assistance in Malaysia and Myanmar. In addition, IOM Thailand continues to assist arrivals. (IOM)

The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** has launched a supplementary appeal for US\$13 million to help with the protection needs of new boat arrivals in Southeast Asia. The appeal is aimed at beefing up UNHCR's work to do with protection for the nearly 4,800 people who have disembarked across the region in the last month. UNHCR will also seek to reinforce its information base on boat movements through the acquisition of geospatial images. These can be shared with States, NGOs and other parties who contribute to rescue efforts. UNHCR is also examining the feasibility of supporting rescue vessels to complement these efforts. (UNHCR)

**World Food Program (WFP)**: The WFP has provided food rations in Myanmar, and has assisted the GoM which handles the daily food distributions. WFP is working closely with IOM, UNHCR and other actors on the ground. (WFP)

In its **“Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea: Proposals for Action”** report, the IOM, UNHCR, and UNODC recommend 10 steps for action by the international community. They are organized into actions which address: (I) the sea journey and disembarkation; (II) reception, treatment upon arrival and regional responsibility-sharing; and (III) the root causes: To view the document:

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/55682d3b6.pdf>

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