



OXFAM

VOICES RISING:

**ROHINGYA PRIORITIES FOR AN END
TO THEIR DISPLACEMENT IN MYANMAR**

October 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Oxfam would like to express our deep gratitude to the Rohingya and Kaman women and men who bravely shared their experiences, priorities and recommendations with us. After more than eight years in confinement, they continue to hope for and advocate for equal rights, an end to their displacement and opportunities to create a better future.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
Approach	4
Myanmar Policy Commitments	4
Rakhine Advisory Commission	4
The National Strategy on Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP camps	5
Closing the IDP camps and the implementation of the National Strategy	6
Limitations and Opportunities for decision-making	7
Reflections on life before displacement	9
What is needed:	12
Alignment of IDP priorities with policy commitments	12
Voluntariness and Meaningful Consultation	13
Return, Resettlement, and Housing Land and Property Rights	16
Freedom of Movement	19
Peace-Building and Social Cohesion	22
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations	24
References	26
Appendixes	27



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In central Rakhine State, Myanmar, 130,000 displaced Rohingya and Kaman people have been confined to camps for *more than eight years*. Without access to basics such as adequate education and health care services and largely unable to leave the camps, these communities urgently need real solutions that will support their rights and dignity. The Myanmar government has also recognized the importance of bringing an end to these camps and has taken some preliminary steps in this direction. This includes building more permanent housing on sites directly adjacent to existing camp sites and in 2019, finalizing a national strategy on the closure of these and other displacement camps. However, as shared by displaced Rohingya and Kaman people with Oxfam through discussions, consultations and interviews conducted over the past year, these communities fear the government's current approach will simply further entrench their segregation and continue their confinement.

This report explores the current policy commitments made by the Government of Myanmar in relation to durable solutions for displaced Rohingya in Rakhine State, such as those outlined in the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (RAC)'s final report and the government's *'National*

Strategy on the Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Closure of IDP Camps'. It then focuses on findings from extensive discussions with displaced Rohingya people, particularly women, regarding their priorities for an end to their displacement and opportunities for a better future.

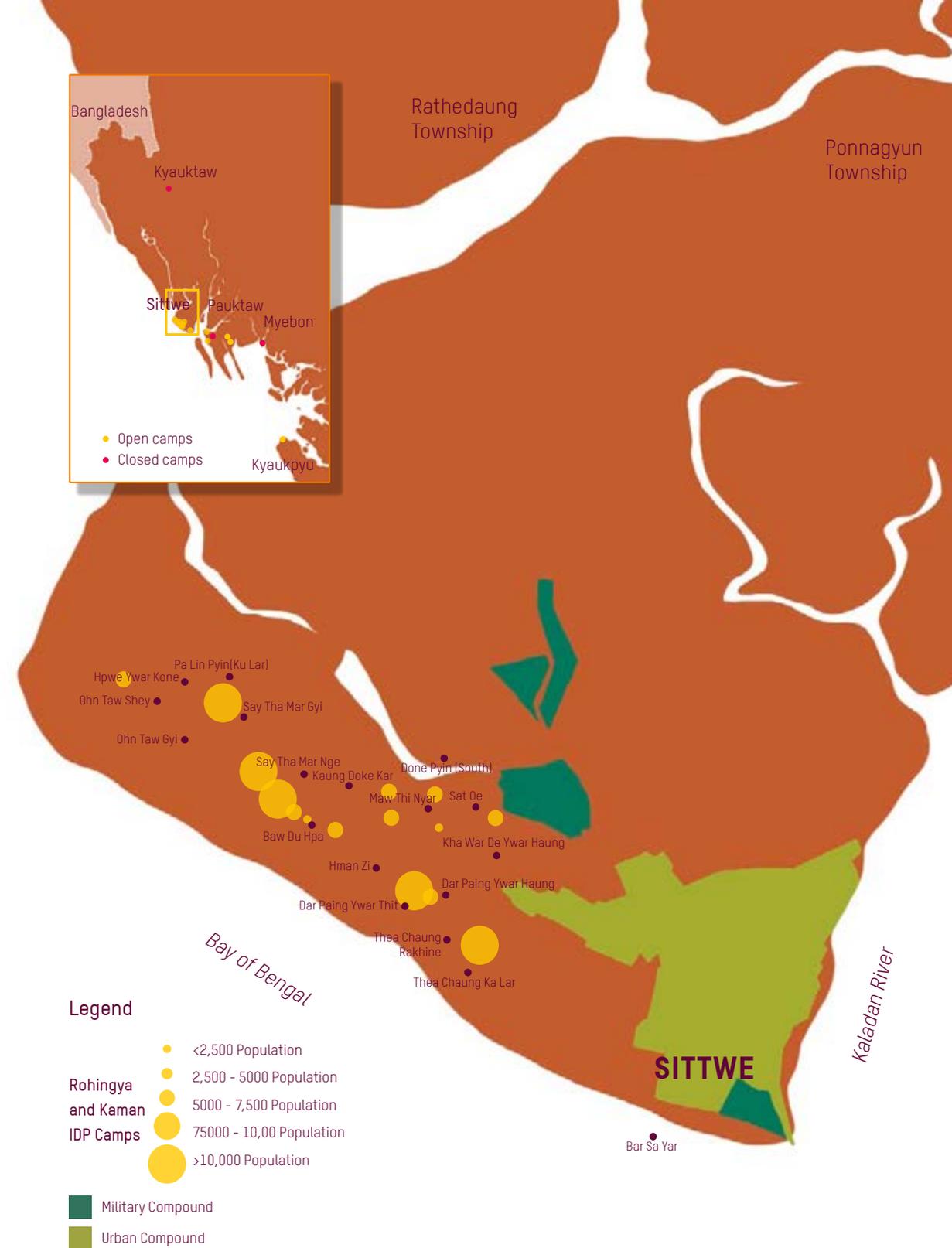
Without access to basics such as adequate education and health care services and largely unable to leave the camps, these communities urgently need real solutions that will support their rights and dignity.

As outlined in the report, IDPs consistently pointed to the importance of being consulted and engaged as part of any process aimed at closing the camps. They also emphasized the criticality of having their rights recognized, particularly in relation to freedom of movement, and of being afforded choice in terms of possible return to their places of origin or another place of their choosing. What is also clear

from this engagement is that Rohingya and Kaman communities in the camps want to participate in finding and shaping the solutions that will bring meaningful change. Without such fundamentals in place, these communities see their displacement and exclusion as set to continue.

Based on the priorities of those living in the camps, the report shares targeted recommendations for governments and the humanitarian community to support the realization of truly durable solutions and shared development, grounded in the agency of Rohingya and Kaman people themselves. These recommendations include (please see the Recommendations section of the report for the complete set):

- Halt the implementation of IDP camp closures in Rakhine in light of the lack of consultation and choice regarding return and resettlement offered to date.
- Lay the foundations for truly durable solutions by prioritizing consultation, choice and underlying human rights considerations, particularly in relation to freedom of movement for all communities regardless of citizenship status, and access to unsegregated services and livelihoods opportunities.
- Ensure that any relocation that may be carried out is done in accordance with international standards and does not confine IDPs to substandard areas without adequate access to basic services or livelihoods, or to areas where safety and security cannot be ensured.
- Create opportunities where broad constituencies of displaced Rohingya and Kaman people, going well beyond Camp Management Committee members, are consulted and included in return, resettlement and reintegration processes and decision-making.
- Prioritize the inclusion of diverse women, older people, youth and people with disabilities in the planning and management of their return, relocation, or local integration, in recognition of the additional barriers they face to participation. This can be supported through collaboration with UN agencies, NGOs and those engaging with already established community groups within the confined camps.
- In line with the RAC recommendations, take steps to address the lack of trust and support peacebuilding in Rakhine, including through consistent dialogue and engagement between communities and all levels of government, through policies and practices that protect the rights of all communities and through efforts to actively combat hate speech and promote social cohesion.



INTRODUCTION

August 2020 marked a grim milestone for the Rohingya community. It was three years since the start of a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar which resulted in thousands of deaths, widespread sexual and gender based violence and an **estimated 700,000** people fleeing across the border into Bangladesh in a matter of only a few months.¹ For **127,000** out of the 600,000 Rohingya who currently remain in Myanmar,² this past June marks a different grim milestone, with *eight years* having passed since the forced displacement of Rohingya and Kaman³ communities to confined camps in central Rakhine State.

These and other episodes of displacement experienced by Rohingya reflect past and ongoing discrimination, conflict and human rights deficits in Myanmar. While these situations of forced displacement are becoming increasingly protracted,⁴ durable solutions have never been more urgently needed. The displacement of Rohingya to Bangladesh in 2017, the displacement of Rohingya and Kaman to camps in Rakhine in 2012 and the many other episodes of displacement Rohingya experienced prior to this are in fact ongoing, with little to no discernable possibilities for lasting solutions realized during this time. Not only has the forced displacement of

Rohingya on both sides of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border become protracted crises, it is also increasingly clear that durable solutions for displaced Rohingya on both sides of the border are inextricably linked. While the refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, remains the more visible aspect of the continued displacement of Rohingya, solutions are also urgently needed to end the displacement crisis in Rakhine State, Myanmar.

In central Rakhine State, the Myanmar government has recognized the need to find solutions to the ongoing displacement of the **130,000**, predominantly Rohingya *Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)* confined to squalid camps. These steps include building more permanent housing on sites directly adjacent to existing camp sites, reclassifying some camps as 'closed,' and finalizing its national camp closure strategy in late 2019. However, to-date Rohingya and Kaman IDPs have not been meaningfully consulted and included in these processes, and the denial of their most basic rights continues, which risks undermining the potential for durable solutions to be achieved.

This report explores the current policy commitments made by the Government of Myanmar in relation to durable solutions for

displaced Rohingya in Rakhine State and then focuses on findings from extensive discussions with Rohingya IDPs regarding their priorities for a truly lasting end to their displacement. The ultimate aim of the report is *to elevate the voices and perspectives of displaced Rohingya in ongoing policy discussions and ensure their priorities are forming the basis for durable solutions*. The report draws on discussions throughout 2019 and early 2020 with internally displaced Rohingya, particularly Rohingya women, living in confined camps

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in Rakhine State. It shares the perspectives of displaced Rohingya concerning the government's camp closure process, what they believe is needed to have a better future and to ensure their safe, voluntary and dignified return, resettlement and

reintegration in Rakhine State and how these wishes are upheld by Myanmar's policy commitments.

Through our engagement with Rohingya and Kaman IDPs, we hope to support *"the urgent need for a broad consultations process with affected communities"*⁵ as part of the search for durable solutions to their displacement. We focused our in-depth listening and engagement efforts with displaced Rohingya women in particular as they face additional barriers to meaningful participation in decision making and 'political' discussions impacting their lives. We hope the report spurs further reflection on the experiences of displaced Rohingya in Myanmar and presents a clearer understanding of how durable solutions, grounded in the priorities and agency of Rohingya people themselves can start to be realized.

APPROACH

Oxfam is regularly engaging with Rohingya and Kaman IDPs as part of our ongoing community-based humanitarian work. Operational in the confined camps in Rakhine State since 2013, Oxfam has developed a network of trusting relationships with a range of community members, volunteers and camp-based staff. As part of our ongoing humanitarian programming, we've recognized the importance of going beyond asking IDPs about the services they need or the daily challenges they face and also asking about their longer-term priorities, hopes for the future and what they need for truly durable solutions to be achieved. These listening exercises and discussions inform our programme design and delivery as well as our advocacy efforts.

For this report, we have drawn on qualitative and quantitative data collected through discussions, listening exercises and surveys with Rohingya and Kaman IDPs in 2019 and early 2020. We held several rounds of in-depth interviews with 40 IDPs between December 2019 and February 2020. Starting in 2019, we trained eight camp-based facilitators to carry-out regular interviews and consultations with IDPs living in the confined camps, ultimately reaching a total of 184 IDPs, of whom 75% were women. These consultations were conducted across six IDP camps located in rural area just outside Sittwe. A wide variety of topics were covered in these discussions including their daily experiences and challenges in the camps, priorities for a better future and perspectives on how durable solutions, including through the government's

national strategy on camp closures, can be ultimately achieved. Questions related to IDPs' concerns, hopes and priorities were also integrated into two surveys conducted in the camps by Oxfam's Water Sanitation and Hygiene Services (WASH) humanitarian programme. One survey, which reached 672 respondents, focused on attitudes and norms while the other reached 1816 respondents and focused on priority needs.

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Ultimately, we hope the perspectives gathered from these discussions, consultations and surveys provide insights into the priorities of Rohingya IDPs; priorities which ultimately must form the basis for the realization of truly lasting solutions to their displacement.

MYANMAR POLICY COMMITMENTS

RAKHINE ADVISORY COMMISSION

The Myanmar government has committed itself to supporting durable solutions for displaced Rohingya IDPs through its endorsement of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (referred to as the Rakhine Advisory Commission or RAC) report⁶ and its own development of a 'National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP Camps'.⁷ Following on from episodes of violence and displacement targeting Rohingya communities in Rakhine, including with respect to the violence and displacement that resulted in **130,000** predominantly Rohingya people forcibly relocated to confined camps in 2012, the Myanmar government established the Rakhine Advisory Commission in 2016. The Commission was led by *former UN Secretary General Dr. Kofi Annan* and consisted of international, Myanmar and specifically Rakhine commissioners. Their mission was to speak with all communities within Rakhine State and analyze the political, economic and social context to propose practical actions that, if implemented, would help address the many challenges affecting all communities in the state, including Rohingya.

The Commission also provided recommendations to the Myanmar government that pertain specifically to the Rohingya IDPs living in camps, both in terms of ways to improve conditions in the camps as well as durable solutions to their displacement. Their report acknowledges the Myanmar government's past experience facilitating the return and relocation for



displaced Kaman and Rakhine communities, shortcomings with these processes and opportunities to strengthen them, including through ensuring the rights of the displaced are respected and upheld. In its report, the Commission further notes that the Myanmar government's previous actions to facilitate return or resettlement was implemented with "mixed results"⁸ and wrote "it demonstrated the urgent need for a comprehensive strategy – as well as the need for a broad consultations process with affected communities." The report then outlines the following recommendations:

24. The Commission reiterates that the Government of Myanmar should prepare a comprehensive strategy towards closing all IDP camps. The strategy should be developed through a consultation process with affected communities, and contain clear timelines. It should also contain plans for the provision of security and livelihood opportunities at the site of return/relocation.
25. The Government should cooperate with international partners to ensure that return/relocation is carried out in accordance with international standards, including:
- All returns or relocations must be voluntary, safe and take place in a dignified manner.
 - The aim should be to facilitate returns to places of origin as a matter of priority, or otherwise respect the choices of the displaced.
 - Insure that IDPs participate actively in the planning and management of their return, relocation, or local integration.
 - Relocation/local integration should not confine IDPs to substandard areas without adequate access to basic services or livelihood – or to areas where the safety and security of the IDPs cannot be ensured.
 - The choice to relocate must not be regarded as a renunciation of the right to return in safety and with dignity to the original place of residence, should that choice become feasible later.
 - IDPs and host communities must be consulted in a thorough and meaningful manner.⁹

The RAC recommendations 24-26 reassert international human rights and humanitarian law in relation to forcibly displaced people as compiled in *the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*¹⁰ and the UN's *Pinheiro Principles*,¹¹ which provide more specific guidance on housing and property restitution for forcibly displaced persons. The recommendations also propose steps forward in bringing a meaningful end to the displacement of Rohingya IDPs.

THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON RESETTLEMENT OF IDPS AND CLOSURE OF IDP CAMPS

The Rakhine Advisory Commission recommended both the development of a comprehensive strategy for the closure of IDP camps and - in the interim -for the government to ensure dignified living conditions for those still in the camps. Since 2017 and in response to the RAC's recommendation No. 24, the Myanmar government have taken initial steps to

declare as 'closed' several IDP camps in central Rakhine. In 2019 the government also finalized its National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP camps (henceforth referred to as the "National Strategy").¹²

Throughout late 2018 and into 2019, the government engaged with the international

community in different forums to discuss the development of this national strategy for the closure of displacement camps in Rakhine, Kachin, Shan and Kayin states, with a stated view to create durable solutions that would benefit all of these communities. These discussions provided insight into the government's plans, as well as an opportunity to discuss key standards and needs. However, various humanitarian and human rights stakeholders had concerns as the government's plans did not explain how the voluntariness and safety of IDPs would be protected and what measures would be put in place to ensure they could exercise their fundamental human rights. Of equal concern, hundreds of civil society groups raised the alarm that the government's process of developing the National Strategy and related plans had not included displaced people as recommended by the Rakhine Advisory Commission.¹³ Regardless of these criticisms, the finalization of the National Strategy was announced in November 2019.

The National Strategy and the wording used throughout the document is reason for both assurance and concern. Although the National Strategy is not publicly available, copies of the strategy in both Myanmar and English languages circulated among the humanitarian, development and diplomatic communities.¹⁴ Positively, in the document the Myanmar government affirms its adherence to some international human rights principles such as those relating to the three durable solutions to mass displacement: local integration, voluntary return and resettlement. In the National Strategy's introductory paragraph, the Myanmar government states, "*recognizing the desire of IDPs in the camps, there is a need to implement strategies to close the IDP camps that facilitate the voluntary and sustainable return, resettlement or local reintegration of IDPs.*" It sets forth the aim

of the strategy as to create sustainable solutions to end IDPs' displacement by "*helping them rebuild their lives in safety and dignity and without dependency.*" Actions that contribute to these aims are urgently needed and should be applauded.

The government's plans did not explain how the voluntariness and safety of IDPs would be protected and what measures would be put in place to ensure they could exercise their fundamental human rights.

The Myanmar government also states that the National Strategy is a framework for finding solutions to end displacement that are "*consistent with existing laws and policies in Myanmar, applicable international standards, the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and the Social Sector Agreement which was adopted in the 2nd Session of Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong on May 29, 2017.*" Given the Myanmar government's existing laws and policies, such as *the 1982 Citizenship Law*¹⁵, *2015 Race and Religion Protection Laws*¹⁶, and *the 2012 Vacant and Fallow Law*—and its *2018 amendments*¹⁷ are discriminatory towards the Rohingya and do not offer adequate protection for other ethnic and religious minority groups, reference to those laws without reform is concerning. However, if the Myanmar government upholds these principles stated in the introduction of the National Strategy and follows the RAC recommendations, durable solutions can be achieved to end the displacement of Rohingya IDPs.

CLOSING THE IDP CAMPS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

The Myanmar government and its approach to close the IDP camps since 2014, continues unchanged despite commitments made to implement such actions in accordance with RAC recommendations and the fundamental principles of durable solutions reiterated within the National Strategy. Prior to the creation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission in 2016, the Myanmar government had already begun to take steps to address the displacement of Rohingya and Kaman communities in the confined camps around the city of Sittwe. In 2014, the Thein Sein government developed the Rakhine State Action Plan and included a section on the “Permanent Resettlement”

of the approximately 130,000 Rohingya and Kaman IDPs. According to the RAC, the Action Plan was implemented to a limited extent.¹⁸ In its interim report released in March 2017, the RAC recommended that the government move ahead with the return and reintegration process for three specific displaced communities: *ethnic Rakhine IDPs from Ka Nyin Taw, Rohingya households from Min That Phar village and Kaman households in Ramree*. The Myanmar government acted on these recommendations with mixed results. The government successfully returned ethnic Rakhine IDPs, opted to resettle Kaman Muslim IDPs in Yangon rather than follow the RAC recommendation to prioritize return to their place of origin and did not take any action to address the displacement of Rohingya from Min That Phar village.

In 2017, the Myanmar government declared three camps in Rakhine as “closed”: *Nidin (Kyauktaw Township)*¹⁹, *Kyein Ni Pyin (Pauktaw Township)* and *Taung Paw (Myebon Township)*. In doing so, the Myanmar government focused on housing upgrades in the camps or in new sites directly adjacent to the existing camps without meaningfully consulting with affected communities, lifting movement restrictions, creating a pathway towards citizenship or offering the option for displaced communities to return to their place of origin or another area suitable for resettlement²⁰ —as

recommended in the RAC final report. Rohingya and Kaman IDPs in these so-called ‘closed camps’ were not adequately informed of the government’s ‘camp closure’ process and the process itself undermined the rights of the displaced.²¹ With their temporary shelters falling apart after approximately six years of use, IDPs were given no other option than to move to new single shelters build adjacent to the existing camps without realizing they would be given no option to return to their original places nor another area of their choosing. Two years later, movement restrictions are still in place and these communities are still not able to leave these sites, effectively remaining encamped, unable to access livelihood opportunities and services in the surrounding areas, and sustaining their dependency on humanitarian services.

After declaring Nidin, Kyein Ni Pyin and Taung Paw camps in 2017 as ‘closed’, or perhaps more accurately it can be referred to as an exercise in ‘reclassifying’ these camps,²² the Myanmar government launched its National Strategy to close the IDP camps in late 2019 and organized workshops in the cities of Naypyidaw, Myitkyina, and Sittwe in December 2019 to present its strategy. Despite the Myanmar government’s commitments on paper in its National Strategy and RAC recommendations to voluntary return, resettlement and reintegration, the government has continued to take action to close the camps using the same approach that was used in Nidin, Kyein Ni Pyin, and Taung Paw camps. This was before the strategy was finalized and without the prioritization of return to place of origin, recognition of the rights of IDPs (including with respect to freedom of movement) nor the inclusion, choice or voluntariness of IDPs themselves.

On 22 January 2020, the *Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM)*, the state-run news agency, announced in an opinion piece that steps were being undertaken by the government to close Kyauk Ta Lone camp in Rakhine, as per the National Strategy.²³ The article called for cooperation among all those involved to implement the camp closure process “to enable the people to return to their place of origin and live peacefully and move on. It is important for everyone to keep in mind that ultimately, they will return to their places of origin and create a stable and development-oriented environment.” A couple days later, on the 24th of January, the newspaper shared the Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye confirmed this announcement, stating that Kyauk Ta Lone IDP camp (KTL) will be closed in line with the National Strategy.²⁴



In April 2020, plans and construction to close the Kyauk Ta Lone camp began against the wishes of IDPs themselves. IDPs organized themselves, held a virtual press conference, signed petitions, and sent their petition along with a letter to

the State Counsellor's Office in which they stated their opposition to the flood-prone resettlement site and called to be returned to their places of origin. In response to IDPs' opposition, both the Protection Sector and Burma Human Rights Network reported that local authorities threatened IDPs if they did not comply with the government's plans.²⁵ As of *October 2020*, the Myanmar government has not changed its course of action with *Kyauk Ta Lone* camp. Similar to other camps declared closed, governmental efforts are focused on building infrastructure without steps being put in place to ensure voluntariness, freedom of movement or equal and non-segregated access to essential services. Like with other declared camp 'closures' to date, the current relocation plan for *Kyauk Ta Lone* camp, if implemented, will have a high risk of cementing the segregation of the Muslim communities permanently.

Despite the opinion piece published in *The Global New Light of Myanmar* stating that '*ultimately IDPs will return to their places of origin*', the Myanmar government has not supported IDPs to return nor has the government upheld its responsibility to implement its plans in accordance with international standards, the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations

Governmental efforts are focused on building infrastructure without steps being put in place to ensure voluntariness, freedom of movement or equal and non segregated access to essential services.

or its own National Strategy. The RAC recommendations, *the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Pinheiro Principles*, state that the Myanmar government has an obligation to ensure that all returns or relocations are voluntary, safe and are implemented in a dignified manner. Furthermore this process needs to be informed and guided by meaningful consultation with IDPs which uphold the rights of the displaced such that "*internally displaced persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country.*"²⁶

Without a clear commitment to consultation, voluntariness and human rights, these so-called camp "closures"/camp reclassifications will only further entrench segregation and limit opportunities for more equitable development among all communities throughout Rakhine State. To start, the government must overcome the existing barriers that prevent Rohingya and Kaman IDPs from participating in decision-making processes, by engaging them in meaningful consultations and providing opportunities for them to lead the voluntary return, resettlement and reintegration process.

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECISION-MAKING

“

We haven't met any person who would be concerned and interested in our voices and perspective on challenges, or our needs in the camps, only the Almighty hears us.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Although there are 'leaders' designated to represent the Rohingya and Kaman IDP communities, IDPs do not trust these members to represent their best interests.

Over the years the Myanmar government has barred Rohingya across the country from forming associations, attending university, becoming lawyers, teachers or government officials.²⁷ The opportunities for civic participation are even more limited for Rohingya IDPs²⁸, particularly women, in the confined camps in Sittwe, Rakhine State.

Formal decision-making power rests with camp leaders, known as Camp Management Committee (CMC) members, who make up

less than 0.3% of the displaced population and are predominantly male (80%).²⁹ CMC members are often elite members of the Rohingya and Kaman community who were appointed by the government and wield a great deal of power within the camps. They act as the focal points between the government and the displaced population in formal discussions, and their permission or involvement is often required to implement all construction and humanitarian projects and to hold events and workshops in the camps. While 20% of CMC members are women, they are not meaningfully included and have little power within the camp leadership system. One Rohingya woman told Oxfam how she became a CMC member despite the efforts of male CMC members to exclude her and other women:

“**In January I was elected to CMC. CMC didn't inform all the women in the camps that there was going to be an election. Instead I saw a large group of people walking to the other side of the camp, so I stopped some men and asked what was going on. They said a donor had arrived and then I thought that seemed strange as donors come all the time, so then I walked with them and when I arrived, I saw there was an election so I went up and asked to register.**”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Although CMCs are 'leaders' designated to represent the Rohingya and Kaman IDP communities, IDPs do not trust these members to represent their best interests, and several IDPs disclosed that CMC members

are often involved in corruption and regularly extort and harass the IDP community they have the role to serve and represent.

“**CMC are organised by the government. So they force them to sign documents that they want. They are supposed to act on behalf of IDPs. But really it is for show, [for the government] to show the international community they have spoken to the Muslim community. All people can't go to consultations. So people are not happy with the CMC as they do not represent us.**”

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar



“

The CMC are managing the camp and are supposed to represent people here, but they are giving more trouble to the IDPs. They are destroying everything here: the values of the people and the respect of the people. They do this because they don't care about humanity they only care about money. People who can pay some money to CMC can have a shop and save some money. Everyone is fearful of the CMCs.”

Displaced Kaman woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Opportunities for more informal leadership and decision-making are also limited and are similarly inaccessible for women. Humanitarian agencies employ and rely upon Rohingya and Kaman IDPs as cap-based staff to support the delivery of aid and services, yet positions with greater power over decision-making are more often held by men.³⁰

While inclusion should be actively sought in decision-making concerning the delivery of humanitarian aid and services, it is even more important that Rohingya and Kaman IDPs, especially women, are included in decision-making that will impact them and their community for generations to come.

It is also up to the government, local NGOs and humanitarian actors to create such opportunities, particularly in relation to finding durable solutions to IDPs' displacement.

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE BEFORE DISPLACEMENT

“

I want people who see this information to imagine what it is like to have no rights, no business, children have no education; it is like a prison. Except this is the next level prison, because we do not know how many years we have to stay here. At least in prison you know your sentence. We were people before, and we were used to surviving without international support. We can survive on our own, but we need freedom of movement and true rights. We used to have rights and vote, we had Rohingya who worked for the government. As a result of the violence, I see we have the same life now as someone spending their life in prison, we have no access to education, no healthcare and not enough food.”



Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

All Rohingya and Kaman IDPs interviewed want to resume the lives they had prior to their displacement where they had lived free from dependency, with access to services and with more of their rights respected. When reflecting on life before their displacement in 2012, Rohingya IDPs spoke to us about how they were self-reliant and independent before they were forcibly displaced to the confined camps in 2012:



“**Before 2012 violence, at that time I was 15 or 16. I attended school and I didn’t work. I remember at that time my parents could take good care of me, to send me to school. After the violence, after losing our properties and my parents are jobless, so they cannot support me to go to school.**”

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“**Life was enjoyable, it was really nice, because I had a small business selling clothes, and my husband had his shop, so if we are in need of something, we can**

have it, because we had money. Even as ordinary people, we could make it happen to fulfil our needs.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Although living in Rakhine State, one of the most impoverished regions in Myanmar along with Chin State,³¹ all Rohingya and Kaman IDPs reported that they were able to earn a living and provide for their families prior to their displacement. Rohingya IDPs had jobs as business owners, shop keepers, construction workers and in fishing markets. They could travel within their townships freely, visiting other villages, markets and downtown Sittwe when they wanted and without having to pay for permission or for a police security escort as they are required to do now.

Spending eight years in the camps have been more than destabilizing, as Rohingya and Kaman communities have lost everything that once belonged to them. Their lives were completely uprooted amidst the violence in 2012 and then made worse once they were placed in camps surrounded

by police checkpoints and barbed wire, cutting them off from healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities that would have enabled them to rebuild their lives. In their confinement, Rohingya IDPs have become increasingly reliant on food distributions and the entire aid system, while remembering life before aid featuring so prominently in their lives.

“**In my home before I became displaced, I could work and make an income and financially support my family. Here there is no work. Life only depends on WFP distributions.”**

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Aside from their livelihoods, Rohingya IDPs also told us about the land and homes they owned before displacement. Previously, property and land ownership had been a source of empowerment and offered privacy and safety, which is now impossible for them to obtain living in overcrowded shelters in the camps.

Spending eight years in the camps have been more than destabilizing, as Rohingya and Kaman communities have lost everything that once belonged to them.

“**I used to have my own home and property. Here we are living in a small room and I don’t know who it belongs to, who owns it... The way we lived in our old house in Sittwe, this was our own, my own. I can sleep however and whenever I want. I can do whatever I want to, you know? ... The way we live in the camps, only one room, which doesn’t belong to me. And, I am not living separately from other families, it’s all inside a shelter - I mean there are 8 rooms and 8 families under one roof.”**

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

While the community of displaced people living in the camps is largely ethnically and religiously homogenous, with 98% of IDPs identifying as Rohingya Muslims, many of the Rohingya and Kaman IDPs shared that they also missed living among their diverse neighbors prior to their displacement. Most Rohingya and Kaman IDPs reflected on having amicable interactions and relations with their Rakhine communities.

“**Before we were all living together. Rohingya, Rakhine, I even had military friends. Even now I buy small gifts to send to my Rakhine friend’s mother. We also played together when we were growing up. And when there was a Buddhist new year festival we also played together.”**

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“We had a small tea house and we ran it well. When we were making a lot of sales, we were happy. And in our tea house, every diverse community, people would come and take tea and coffee there every day. There were nearly 100 people. Most were Rakhine, maybe around 10 would be Rohingya. They would often come to watch football. People choose which team they support. People have a choice. Rakhine like Man U, some Muslims like Man U. Muslims like Chelsea and some Rakhine like Chelsea. This is people’s choice. They support the team they like.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“**Before 2012, I studied in Sittwe University and completed my studies in 2008 with a geography major. Then, I started teaching the students at school as a tutor. We were not given the chance to teach at government schools. At that time also, there was some discrimination as we were not allowed to join spoken English classes.”**

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“There are many English grammar schools, but I could not attend the school I want to because the teacher discriminated. How can I explain? When they issued announcements for the classes during the 3 months summer term, they highlighted in writing, “If you are kalar (commonly used derogatory term in Myanmar to refer to Rohingya), you cannot join. We only accept Rakhine people.”

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Although life certainly was not easy for Rohingya and Kaman people prior to 2012, they lived with some level of safety and dignity at least compared to how they are living now, after being forcibly displaced and confined to camps.

When IDPs shared their experiences of discrimination, the majority of them stated that they all occurred within state institutions, particularly the governmental education system, and expressed that discrimination³² was noticeably worse in the cities compared to more rural areas.



WHAT IS NEEDED: ALIGNMENT OF IDP PRIORITIES WITH POLICY COMMITMENTS

Achieving durable solutions for the Rohingya is possible, although a voluntary return, resettlement and reintegration process requires more than declaring IDP camps as closed and building new infrastructure for what is effectively only a new camp. As found in an Oxfam survey completed in 2019, the vast majority, 87% of the 672 of the Rohingya and Kaman IDP respondents, stated they would like to leave the camps if given the opportunity. However, Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are well aware that ending their displacement and leaving the camps is no simple or straightforward task. When speaking

about the Myanmar government's National Strategy, one Rohingya woman shared:

“
If it is true and the camps close, then the government needs to take many action steps.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya IDPs want the ability to create a life for themselves outside of the camps and see equal rights as foundational for any solution to end their displacement. When asked what needed to be included in a strategy to close the camps, 75% of Rohingya and Kaman IDP survey respondents clearly stated that having equal rights was essential. During focus group discussions and interviews, Rohingya IDPs went into more details about what equal rights means to them. For the displaced Rohingya community, having equal rights means accessing the same opportunities as other ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar without discrimination. For them, having equal rights is the ability to move freely without restrictions and security requirements to access livelihood opportunities in order to support their families' survival. It is the ability to rebuild their lives and live among other ethnic communities where they can send their children to good schools, the same schools as their Rakhine neighbours, and can attend university. It is having access to the same hospitals and other public facilities and where they will be recognized as ethnically Rohingya and legally belonging to Myanmar.³³

IDPs said this equality was essential and that at a minimum the Myanmar government must address the following concerns prior to closing the camps: their priorities for meaningful consultation and inclusion, housing, land and property rights, freedom of movement and social cohesion with the Rakhine community. The following sections

Rohingya IDPs want the ability to create a life for themselves outside of the camps and see equal rights as foundational for any solution to end their displacement.

take a more detailed look at what Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are calling for in order for durable solutions to their displacement to be realized, and to what extent the Myanmar government has committed itself to support their demands.

87%

* of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said they would like to leave the camps if given the opportunity

75%

* of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said provisions to guarantee equal rights must be included in the government's strategy to close the IDP camps

VOLUNTARINESS AND MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs have been waiting for more than eight years for the Myanmar government to discuss with them potential options for a dignified return or resettlement. Within the past few years, the Myanmar government has committed to upholding international human rights standards on inclusion and voluntariness within its National Strategy and the RAC recommendations.

In the introduction to the National Strategy, the Myanmar government declares it is a framework for finding “solutions consistent with recommendations made by Advisory Commission of Rakhine State.”³⁴ The Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendation 25 pronounces that, “the Government should cooperate with international partners to ensure that return/relocation is carried out in accordance with international standards”³⁵ and refers to these explicitly by reiterating those rights such that, “all returns, or relocations must be voluntary, safe and take place in a dignified manner.” The RAC also states that the Myanmar government has a responsibility to “ensure that IDPs participate actively in the planning and management of their return, relocation, or local integration.” Consistent with the RAC recommendations, the National Strategy states that “there is a need to implement strategies to close the IDP camps that facilitate the voluntary and sustainable return, relocation or local reintegration of IDPs.”³⁶

The National Strategy provides the regional and state level committees with the responsibility to create and implement Action Plans, which include the plans and timelines for return, resettlement and reintegration as well as outlining a process for consultations with affected IDPs. Section 16 (c), (d) and (e) pertain specifically to the inclusion of IDPs and host communities:

- 16 (c) Take into account the interests of IDPs as well as of the communities receiving them.
- 16 (d) Take into account vulnerable groups including women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and those who need special care in their activities and give priority to participation on those groups.
- 16 (e) Put emphasis on consultation with IDPs in implementation of resettlement. In particular abstain from compelling them to return or relocate to an area highly prone by disasters.

While the Action Plans, which should outline the process for inclusion and consultations with IDPs, have not been shared with IDPs nor international partners, it is clear from our discussions with Rohingya and Kaman IDPs that to date, such engagement has simply not been happening and displaced communities continue to be left in the dark.

Of the 184 IDPs with whom Oxfam spoke, none had been given any official information about the camp closure process, neither had they been consulted by Myanmar government staff. Some Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said CMC members are likely the only individuals who have access to this information from the government.

“

I want to share my concerns with everyone about camp closures and say we need this and that. But that will only happen if they come to us and listen to our voice.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“I think the information, it is only the CMC who will know, as we are IDPs we do not have access to that information.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

*of the more than 200 IDPs whom Oxfam spoke,

NONE

had been given any official information about the camp closure process and none had been consulted by Myanmar government staff.

Only one Rohingya man that Oxfam talked with was somewhat well informed of the Myanmar government's strategy to close the camps, and when reflecting over the proposed actions in 2018 he said:

"The government just choose this because they want to show the international community that they are following [RAC] recommendations and call CMC, or "invite" them and then tell them they will provide these single housing structures. All CMC reject this because they don't want the program of closing camps without being granted single rights. Or else the system remains the same. So, this is not what we can accept. We must have freedom of movement, education, healthcare. The government has to accept these for our wellbeing."

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Consultations and discussions on return, resettlement and reintegration to date have seemingly been limited to CMCs, yet IDPs reported that even when CMCs shared their priorities with the government, it is unclear how their interests and concerns are taken into account as the government commits to in point 16 (c) in the National Strategy.

“Women don't hear any information either inside or outside the camps about camp closures. No one thinks to share information with us.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“I want the government to come here and show us their preparations, and the sites of the relocation. Not only sharing this information through CMCs that they will close the camps and relocate us from here to there. This is not what we want. We want the government to call every one of us living here in the camps and tell us their plan.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

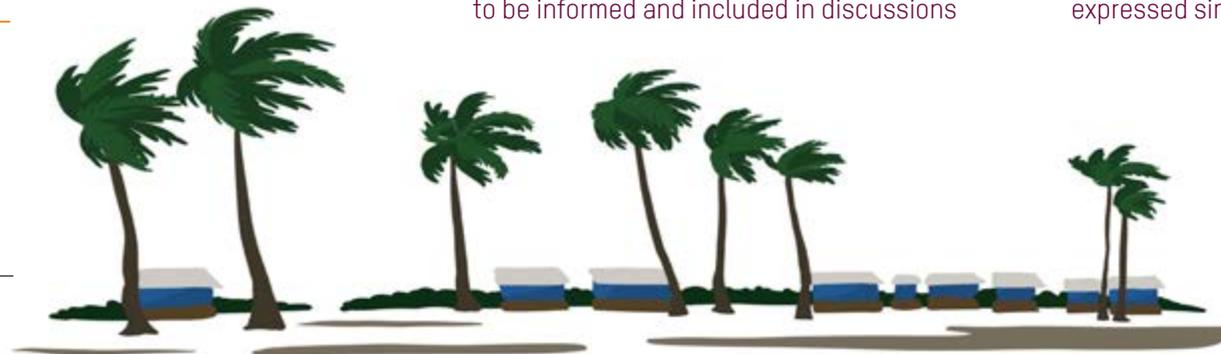
Rohingya and Kaman IDPs told us it is important that the Myanmar government ensures that all IDPs, including women and people with disabilities, have the opportunity to access relevant information regarding the camp closure process and to influence its implementation, particularly given the communities lack of trust in CMC members. Rohingya and Kaman IDPs want to be informed and included in discussions

concerning durable solutions seeking to end their displacement and are calling for the Myanmar government to make more of an effort to ensure that meaningful consultation and inclusion is realized.

"The government needs to allow us to access the strategy they have created. I would like to be involved in the strategy and cooperate with the government and represent our community. I don't know where or whether I can be involved or not. Once we have it and have read all of the information there and can see how the government is planning to relocate us, we can give them advice on what is missing."

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Without receiving information about the Myanmar government's National Strategy and actions taken to-date, rumours cause Rohingya and Kaman IDPs to experience heightened stress and anxiety about the government's next course of action. Many IDPs fear their lives will become much worse if steps are taken to relocate them and close the camps. Two Rohingya women IDPs expressed similar fears and stated that:



“
Camp closures and relocation would be a death sentence. The government displaced us here in 2012 and our situation has become this. If the government closes the camp again, our life would become like that again [2012 displacement].

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“I have heard some information about camp closures. Some people say the camp will be closed and we might return to our original places and others say there will be single houses provided to us here in the camps or very close to the camps and this camp will be closed. I heard this from people, but I consider this information only as rumours since the government has not officially announced their plan with us. We will only accept this information if it from a verified source like an official statement.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“
If the government closes the camp and relocates us to another place, I see a lot of people will die in this process and give up on their life.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

To cope with the uncertainty and the lack of information provided on the camp closure process, Rohingya and Kaman IDPs told us they do not take these rumours seriously and are waiting for a more formal and official notice from the Myanmar government.

IDPs also view the Myanmar government as responsible for their safety and security. As long-term residents and formerly recognized citizens of Myanmar, they expect their government to, at the very least, inform them about the political decisions impacting their lives. IDPs want this to change and they know it is within the government’s power to lead an inclusive process and find solutions to end their displacement:

“If the government wants to they can, they have all the contacts for everyone including the Muslim community leaders. If the government want to solve this problem and give freedom of movement to the Muslim community, they can do it in seconds or minutes. The Rakhine problem is a big problem that will not be solved easily. It cannot be solved only with a government statement or closing the checkpoints. The Rakhine community and government do not like the Muslims here. The government should work with the Muslim and Rohingya leaders to create solutions. The problem will take 2-3 years maybe, but it should be solved through everyone’s participation.”

Displaced Kaman woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

As the RAC and National Strategy stipulates, return, resettlement and reintegration must be voluntary. While neither the RAC recommendations nor the National Strategy outline what voluntariness means in practice, international standards such as *the Guiding Principles*³⁷ and *the Pinheiro Principles*³⁸ do. It states that for voluntariness to be achieved, IDPs must be given full information on return areas including the services and livelihood opportunities available to them and what assistance will be provided by the government and other organizations. This information ideally should be offered through go and see visits, which will enable IDPs to give their free and informed consent prior to any return, relocation and resettlement process taking place. This practice is also supported by IDPs themselves which can be seen in the below statements.

“
If they want to close the camp, we want the Myanmar government to have good preparations that we can see with our eyes to see what they have chosen and to communicate well where we will stay after camp closures.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“The government should also inform us and let us know where they will relocate us. It should be a very clear statement from the government’s side. They should also take steps and preparations before they close the camps. Preparations that people can see before they are relocated. The preparations should be ready first before they close the camps. Otherwise without telling anything to us and speaking with us. How will we know where we will stay.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are simply not receiving information from CMCs and they want their inclusion to be broadened, so that all IDPs, particularly women and vulnerable groups, can influence sustainable solutions to end their displacement taking their needs into account. In order for *voluntary and sustainable return, relocation or local reintegration of IDPs* to be achieved, they must be able to give free, informed and prior consent and have access to all relevant information before making

their decision. It is the responsibility of the Myanmar government to actively seek the perspectives of IDPs, provide accurate and up-to-date information, extend opportunities for IDPs to voice their concerns as well as proposing and implementing solutions to end the displacement. Not only will such actions support sustainable solutions to return, resettlement, and reintegrate, but they will also create opportunities for trust building between IDPs, the Myanmar government and other affected communities.

RETURN, RESETTLEMENT, AND HOUSING LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs overwhelmingly want to return to their places of origin, and to have their housing, land and property rights upheld. The Myanmar government has agreed to support these wishes at least on paper. In its National Strategy, the Myanmar government includes the “*return of IDPs to and reintegration in their places of origin*” in its definition of resettlement and asserts all plans to find durable solutions must be consistent with the RAC recommendations. RAC recommendation 25 affirms the aim that such plans “*should be to facilitate returns to places of origin as a matter of priority, or otherwise respect the choices of the displaced.*”³⁹

In open-ended conversations led by Oxfam staff with 184 IDPs, 87% said the option of returning to their place of origin should be included in any government strategy to close the IDP camps.

“I want to be relocated to our original places. The government displaced us here in the camps in 2012 if the government is willing to relocate us again after they close the camp it should be in the original places. I want to see this from the government.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar



Rohingya and Kaman IDPs did not leave their homes behind willingly and many told us they have held onto their land documents and tax slips. After more than eight years of being displaced, they are still hoping that one day they will be able to return to their places of origin located only a few kilometres away from the confined camps. Rohingya and Kaman IDPs shared that returning to their places of origin would give them and their families a better chance of rebuilding their lives free of dependency, which is a specific goal of the National Strategy.



I would like to go back to our place of origin. I can do my job back at the shop and I don't have to worry about people. Here this is not my village and these are not my people. Here I have nothing to belong to."

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar



If the camp is closed, I want to go to my original home. We have nothing we can do and nothing is ours here. We have everything back where we are from and we can make a life there."

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs desire to return home where they had their land, houses and property before. In their places of origin, Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are familiar with the area as they know the land, resources and what education is available. They also know what kind of services they can expect and what livelihood opportunities they can pursue once again, giving them the confidence to rebuild their lives once again.

At least on paper, the Myanmar government has supported the prioritization of returning IDPs to their places of origin, as can be read in the RAC recommendation 25. Despite this ambition the National Strategy provides few details of how the government will ensure these commitments are actually realized.

Rather than supporting processes for IDPs to return to their places of origin, the National Strategy stipulates that IDPs land, housing and property be given after IDPs have resettled in a new relocation site. Section 16 (f) of the strategy tasks relevant actors to *"ensure security of land, housing, and property originally owned by IDPs with sufficient proof of ownership in accordance with the law once they are resettled in an appropriate safe place."* Without including and prioritizing support for IDPs return to places of origin, the National Strategy clearly contradicts its stated aims and commitments to the RAC and the rights of the displaced to return to their places of origin.

Although many IDPs indicate that return was the only option they would accept, other Rohingya and Kaman IDPs revealed more nuanced views about where they could live if the IDP camps close and acknowledged that they sadly may not be able to return to their place of origin. Since becoming forcibly displaced, IDPs face significant challenges retaining their claims to land and property in their places of origin. One woman explains:

"I know they [the government] will never give us our original places because some people in the city and around the city have sold the land belonging to the Rohingya people already to the Rakhine people because they were interested. They [those that sold the land] have already informed the Muslim people."

Displaced Kaman woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs told us that after they were forcibly displaced and relocated to the confined camps in 2012, people moved into and now occupy their former homes. Some IDPs reported instances where people have legally claimed IDPs' land and property as their own and sold it to a third party making it more difficult for them to prove ownership and approach the Land Records Department to correct these claims as government offices are located outside the camps to which IDPs are confined. Others disclosed that the occupants contacted IDPs and offered to pay them for their land and property, but at a value well below the market rate. Many Rohingya and Kaman IDPs felt pressured to accept the reduced value in order to survive in the camps and have enough money to pay off their debt and pay for food, ineffective medicine at pharmacies, basic education for their children and for more specialized medical treatments in Sittwe General Hospital and the police security escorts leaving the camps requires. Given these



75%

***of Rohingya and Kaman IDP respondents said housing, land and property rights must be guaranteed as part of any government strategy to close the IDP camps**

issues, Rohingya and Kaman IDPs who did not think they would be given the option to return to their places of origin, their first choice, acknowledged they may have to accept a less desirable option and move to a new resettlement location.

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs told us it is paramount that they own both the houses and land in any new relocation site. When asked what was needed to be included in a strategy to close the camps, 75% of the 184 IDPs interviewed stated that housing, land and property rights must be guaranteed. Several IDPs also emphasized that the construction of new shelters and the creation of new camps is unacceptable and said they would not consider it a suitable option for resettlement.

“The biggest priority that will change our lives is having our original places. If we can go there we know how to create a better life. We know how to create it because we have experience doing this before. This is our highest priority to change our lives. If we cannot go there, nothing will help us have a better life. The second priority that would change our lives is, if the government refuses to give us our original places when they close the camps, would be to give us a single house that allows us to have businesses and livelihoods. Closing the camps and relocating us to a good place with land and livelihoods and single houses should be provided by the government. There we can have our livelihoods and be allowed to run our businesses.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar



“ I want to see single houses with land given to each family in a relocation process. We are tired of living here in the IDP camps and we don't want to stay here any longer. If the government closes the camps, we don't want to be relocated to another camp from one to another. We want them to close the camps and provide us single houses because I know they will never provide our original homes.”

Displaced Kaman woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

According to Rohingya and Kaman IDPs, the Myanmar government has the information it needs to support IDPs to return to their places of origin and to compensate them for their lost land and property. The government keeps extensive records of the Rohingya population year after year from land records that include the size of the land and what materials their houses were made of, household lists that are verified and updated regularly, and the number

of livestock each household owns. The National Strategy tasks the Regional and State level Committee on Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP Camps with managing these records. If returning to their places of origin is not possible, the government also has the necessary information to ensure they are compensated appropriately, a right recognized by RAC recommendation 2, point 16 (f) of the National Strategy, and Standard 29 of the Guiding Principles to Internal Displacement. As one Rohingya woman explained:

“ I want the government to give us everything we used to have, like our property. The government collected a survey after we became displaced and people from the government collected information on what property we lost and how much it was. They have the information detailing what and how much each family has lost. This is what I want the government to give us.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are fearful of what closing the camps could mean for their family's safety and futures. They fear they will not have access to medical care, education, livelihood opportunities and that the area chosen for resettlement could be flood or disaster-prone. Arguably, their greatest concern is that the Myanmar government will forcibly relocate them, as has been done in the other 'closed' camps', and continue to confine them to unsuitable areas despite this course of action going against their rights and wishes and without offering other options.

"There are some people here in the camps who are making profits and work with government, for example contractors. If the government starts resettlement, contractors will benefit. People will be pressured to accept the situation [single housing] like what happened to people in Myebon [in Taung Paw 'closed' camp], and now they're still in the same situation. Contractors have bought all the land around Thet Kae Pyin and Ohn Taw Gyi camps for potential resettlement. They work with local Rakhine people. It is really mastermind planning – they [contractors] will then build houses on their own land. Then after building the houses – IDPs will be forced to move there. That is the horrible thing here. If IDPs are moved again to a camp, IDPs will protest because it's a camp setting and the same."

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

RAC recommendation 25 states that *"relocation/local integration should not confine IDPs to substandard areas without adequate access to basic services or livelihood, or to areas where the safety and security of the IDPs cannot be ensured"* and the Myanmar government has endorsed this together with other RAC recommendations. However, actions taken by the Myanmar government to 'close' camps in other areas have not given IDPs much assurance that their situation will change in any meaningful way. IDPs in the already 'closed' camps of Nidin, Taung Paw and Kyein Ni Pyin still have their movement restricted, are unable to access services outside of the camps and still rely on humanitarian aid for survival.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Rohingya IDPs have been denied the ability to leave the confined camps for more than eight years, leading to and creating an entrenched system of segregation. These restrictions include barbed wire fencing surrounding the camps and military and police checkpoints with security personnel guarding all movement into and outside of the camps. It is just the Kaman IDPs who are allowed to leave the camps, while the Rohingya are only permitted to leave if they have a referral for a medical emergency, and even then, they must pay for a police escort, transportation and for any food or medicine they receive at the Sittwe General Hospital. When Rohingya do attempt to leave the IDP camps, they are regularly arrested and imprisoned for travelling without required documents and/or permissions.⁴⁰



“Before 2012 we could go and walk anywhere we like around the city [Sittwe]. Now if we go we have to pass a lot of security checkpoints that keep us blocked inside IDP camps. We are treated like criminals in our own country. We know that we have to keep going, and to manage all those things, in the hope that – you know, we have hope, to the Almighty, that the Almighty God will solve all these issues.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs told us that in order for them to be free from dependency and have truly sustainable solutions to their displacement, movement restrictions must be lifted prior to or in-tandem with a return, resettlement and reintegration process. Rohingya IDPs told us these restrictions are the key obstacles preventing them from accessing opportunities to improve their lives.



We have not heard of 'camp closures.' We have heard of new "single housing" but we have yet to see it. I have heard about it from my neighbours they are talking. But the first thing we need instead is freedom of movement as humans, we need this for a good life."

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

"The freedom of movement should be changed at first, because when people have freedom of movement these people actually know how they can make a life - they can run a small business, they can go somewhere and bring something from them and sell it locally. The people actually know. Freedom of movement actually making all of these things - like education difficulties, food difficulties. This is actually because of the freedom of movement, when people freely move it is fine for them, this needs to be changed first."

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

According to the IDPs, there are several concrete actions the Myanmar government can take to lift the restrictions. They can clearly and publicly communicate to all communities in Rakhine State that the Rohingya have the ability to leave the camps, they need to close the security checkpoints and they need to hold perpetrators to account for any violence and/or abuse committed against the Rohingya and Kaman communities.

Unanimously, Rohingya IDPs want to see the Myanmar government issue an official statement as they said it would help protect them in case they are stopped by police or the Rakhine community, and that a



statement would help prepare the Rakhine community to the possibility of seeing and interacting with Rohingya people again.

"The government should free these people and allow them to leave the camps. Especially, they should warn the Rakhine community and tell them not to do anything bad to these people, not to hurt these people...the government should have an official statement saying "from today's date, Muslim people are allowed to go from here to there and the government will be watching if something bad happens to them."

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Some Rohingya IDPs shared they may still fear for their personal safety if they leave the camps and explained that:



It is not only the fear that prevents us. The fear we can manage ourselves. The government has said nothing yet to allow us to go. The government needs to say officially that all Muslims can go to the city before we can go."

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Positively, the government acknowledges the restrictions in place and the need to restore what has been lost by stating in point 16(i) of the National Strategy that all relevant stakeholders shall *"work towards and promote restoration of freedom of movement for everyone."* However, the government simultaneously denies such acknowledgements when setting out a plan to improve freedom of movement through communication in point 17 (g)(5), which only necessitates enhancing freedom of movement by *"informing IDPs that freedom of movement is not restricted and can be exercised in accordance with the law."*⁴¹

It is not enough for only IDPs to receive clarification on that freedom of movement is not restricted when they physically cannot exit the camps and those who do manage to leave can be arrested and

detained when trying to exercise this right. As called for by IDPs, and in accordance with RAC recommendation 19, any process to lift movement restrictions “should be accompanied by well-developed and conflict-sensitive communications strategies to prepare all communities prior to initiation.” The Myanmar government must inform law enforcement, government administrators and the public at large when movement restrictions are lifted. Clear communication to all those living in Rakhine state would provide a greater degree of protection for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs when leaving the camps or traveling in their area of return or resettlement and would deter others from policing their movement when exercising their right.

Rohingya IDPs also called for the Myanmar government to remove the checkpoints and security requirements to improve freedom of movement in the immediate and implement peace building initiatives with the ethnic Rakhine community to improve freedom of movement over the long-term. As one IDP demanded:

“

Free the people, by allowing people to leave from one place to another. Because we cannot go anywhere without security [a police escort]. The security checkpoints should be closed.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar



When Rohingya and Kaman IDPs do leave the camps they also call for greater security to be provided, not in the sense of police presence, but by strengthening rule of law by punishing perpetrators of violence. As explained by one Rohingya woman IDP:

“The government should announce officially, and they should...follow up to make sure people are living well together there. The government should take responsibility for whatever might potentially happen. I don’t mean that I am safer with the police around because I feel very uncomfortable with the police around. What I mean the government should be responsible for anything that happens. If any incidents happen between Rakhine and Muslims, the government should give justice to the victims and give sentences to perpetrators. Then this can be used as an example to prevent other incidents from happening.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

The Rakhine Advisory Commission’s recommendations 18-23 support the priorities of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs to improve freedom of movement and their suggestions of how to do so. Even though the National Strategy commits to the same aims⁴², it does unfortunately fall short in the details outlined within the concrete Action Plans. The National Strategy frames the issue of freedom of movement as one of security, whereas the RAC proposes freedom of movement through enhanced rule of law.

The RAC states that “police should uphold the rule-of-law and ensure that anyone who obstructs movement – for instance by using violence or threats of violence as a means of preventing movement – is held accountable in accordance with the law.”⁴³ In recommendation 20, it also declares that all people who participate in the obstruction of movement through the enforcement of informal restrictions “should be prosecuted in accordance with the law.”⁴⁴

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs have made their concerns and their recommendations clear of how the Myanmar government can support them to both gain and exercise their right to freedom of movement and the RAC recommendations are aligned and support IDPs’ wishes. In order for durable solutions to be achieved for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs with safety and dignity, the Myanmar government must implement its National Strategy in ways “consistent with recommendations made by Advisory Commission of Rakhine State.”⁴⁵ If the Myanmar government is sincere about its commitments, it must improve freedom of movement through the solutions outlined by the RAC and called for by IDPs themselves.

PEACE-BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs previously lived among different ethnic and religious communities in Rakhine State and they want to live that way again. In order to accomplish this, they believe it is vital that the Myanmar government implements peace building initiatives as part of a solution to end their displacement. When asked what needs should be included in a strategy or plan to close the IDP camps, a staggering 77% of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said peace building initiatives must be included. Due to the movement restrictions in place, Muslim communities, and particularly Rohingya in central Rakhine have been segregated from their Rakhine neighbours for more than eight years, which has created negative social and economic impacts. One example of this is that Rohingya and Kaman children who are displaced in the camps have lost both the possibility and ability to learn and speak both Rakhine and Myanmar languages.

“Before the violence in 2012, the schools in the city they had Rakhine teachers so when someone completed primary school they had a lot of knowledge. Here there are no Rakhine teachers, no diversity, and because there are only Muslim teachers who teach in only Muslim language the students don’t have enough knowledge.”

Displaced Rohingya woman, central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

For adults and families, segregation has resulted in lost livelihoods and economic opportunities. Many Rohingya and Kaman IDPs previously worked in Sittwe and/or the surrounding areas as traders and living among different communities provided them with economic opportunities no longer available in the camps.

“I used to have my small business, selling stones and business supplies in downtown Rakhine, we all lived together and traded with the Rakhine, Hindus, Rohingya, but now all here are Muslims, we are the only ones segregated.”

Displaced Rohingya woman, central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Eight years of segregation has meant that Muslim and Buddhist communities are no longer accustomed to living with each other. They no longer shop or work in the same markets, visit the same clinics or send their children to the same schools. With the Rohingya unable to leave the camps, Rakhine people and Rohingya IDPs currently have separate schools, clinics and live in entirely separate worlds despite the two communities residing only a few kilometres away from each other. Rohingya and Kaman IDPs understand creating peace between different ethnic and religious communities will not be achieved overnight, which is why they told us that peacebuilding initiatives needed to be implemented by the government in-tandem with improvements to freedom of movement.



* of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said peace-building initiatives must be included in the government’s strategy to close the IDP camps



“**If the government is really trying to help us, I want them to prove it by giving us freedom of movement and both Rakhine and Muslim communities can live together and work together like before the violence and make friendships with both communities. I want the government to prove to us and to make us peace again and give us freedom of movement. They should allow us [Rohingya] to work for the government and the country... otherwise we will not believe that they are trying to help us with ‘camp closures’.**”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“The government should give people freedom of movement. They should free these people and allow them to leave the IDP camps to move to the city. Free the people, allowing people to leave from one place to another because right now we cannot go anywhere without paying for a security escort. The security checkpoints should be closed. Even though people will still have fear in their minds, the government should try to solve the problem first by starting a peace process between Rakhine and Muslims so people can happily stay together as they did before in Sittwe and in Rakhine.”

Displaced Rohingya woman,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs believe not enough has been done to build trust between Buddhist and Muslim communities over the past eight years of living in the confined camps. Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are calling for the Myanmar government to take a leading role at all levels to create platforms for dialogues and opportunities for social cohesion and reintegration. As told to us during a focus group discussion with Rohingya IDPs:

“**The only level that can change these policies is the highest level... Although we want justice and peace-- we demand these things justice and peace - they are not doing anything at their level.**”

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

“When we work as a team, we can make change. My advice for the government is they say that they want to solve the Rakhine problem but how they are solving the issues, they are going about it in the wrong way. In conflict we need to know what peace is, how we can bring peace. We are not being shown that. To solve the Rakhine issue, it can't be done in the wrong way. It needs to be high level conversation, to include government, international human rights groups, and victims and perpetrators. What we want is dialogue.”

Displaced Rohingya man,
central Rakhine camps, Myanmar

While both the RAC and the National Strategy include provisions to address peace building and social cohesion between Rakhine, Rohingya, Kaman and other ethnic communities, the RAC more fully encompasses the demands made by IDPs. The National Strategy sets forth its commitment to peacebuilding and social cohesion in objective 3 to “enable former residents in IDP camps to live in a peaceful, free and socially cohesive society while being entitled to full enjoyment of their basic rights.”⁴⁶ However, the proceeding Action Plans falls short of what is needed. 16 (h) tasks relevant stakeholders and committees to “prioritize social cohesion



in implementing public services and infrastructure for resettlements” and [17 (h)] to “mobilize expertise and seek cooperation that fosters social cohesion; facilitating and supporting for cooperation including community-based dialogues and women-led initiatives; and cooperating with the Sub-committee of Information on preventing the spread of rumours.”⁴⁷ In all of these actions, relevant ministries and government staff are tasked with playing a supporting role, when what is needed is for the government to take a visible and leading role.

RAC recommendations 60-64 place the responsibility and leadership on the Myanmar government as called for by the IDPs themselves and outlines several actions the Myanmar government should take to facilitate these processes. Recommendation 60 calls for the Myanmar government to *“hold dialogues across all levels of society– including township, state and union levels – and conducted in a systematic manner with a clearly stated purpose. The dialogue process should ensure grassroots participation, and include women, youth, minorities and civil society. Dialogue within communities should also be facilitated.”* The RAC also states that the Myanmar government should empower township administrators and provide training to Rakhine and Muslim leaders on dialogue and mediation techniques ⁴⁸ , initiate activities promoting opportunities for interaction and social cohesion,⁴⁹ and should actively combat hate speech as the guarantor of civic peace.⁵⁰

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs want to leave the camps and to return safely and with dignity to their places of origin or an alternative place of their choosing. To achieve this, they want to see the government support them in building trust that will allow them to live among Rakhine, Mro, Dagnet and other communities again. Any such peacebuilding plans should be grounded in ongoing consultations and engagement with communities and any related strategies clearly communicated with and involving the active participation of IDPs and communities throughout Rakhine.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

130,000 Rohingya and Kaman people have been confined to IDP camps for more than eight years. Two years ago, hundreds of civil society groups raised the alarm that displaced communities had not been included in discussions to plan and create solutions seeking to end their displacement. Since then and as of September 2020, several workshops have been held, a final strategy has been produced and camps have been reclassified as ‘closed’. Despite these steps, the situation for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs remains unchanged, the voices of displaced communities remain absent from these processes and durable solutions are still far from being realized.

Through our discussions with displaced Rohingya and Kaman people, it is clear that the lack of IDPs’ involvement is not due to IDPs having little to say, but more because the authorities and decision-makers have not created opportunities for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs to share their concerns and to be involved in decision-making that impacts their lives. The process of moving displaced people to individual houses in existing or adjacent camp sites, which has been completed or is underway in a number of places in Rakhine, should not be considered as the model for future efforts to ‘close’ camps. This approach does not meet the criteria set out by the Rakhine Advisory Commission, the National Strategy, nor does it uphold international standards, the rights of the displaced or deliver what is called for by displaced Rohingya and Kaman people themselves. A camp

‘closure’ process that is focused on infrastructure and shelter changes alone, without addressing the Rakhine Advisory Commission’s recommendations on freedom of movement, human rights, citizenship status, and access to livelihoods and services, will not offer dignified and sustainable solutions to displaced people. Without taking a holistic approach to ending Rohingya and Kaman IDPs’ displacement, IDPs said nothing would change and the camp closure process risks creating a permanent system of segregation that would leave the Rohingya community without rights and without the ability to access healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities. It is also evident that peacebuilding and social cohesion between ethnic Rakhine and Rohingya communities and between Buddhist and Muslim communities cannot meaningfully move forward when these systems of exclusion, discrimination and segregation remain.

The situation for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs remains unchanged, the voices of displaced communities remain absent from these processes and durable solutions are still far from being realized.

Rohingya and Kaman IDPs are clear in their priorities that if met would facilitate durable solutions to their displacement and enable them to live in safety, dignity and free from dependency. These

priorities include: meaningful consultation and inclusion, security of housing land and property rights, improving freedom of movement and the implementation of peace building initiatives with the broader Rakhine community. These priorities in theory are supported by the Myanmar government through its stated objectives in the National Strategy and its endorsements of the Rakhine Advisory Commission's final report and recommendations. However, these commitments have yet to be demonstrated and acted upon.

The following recommendations reflect the priorities raised by hundreds of IDPs clearly and repeatedly with Oxfam over the past year and a half. They are all critical in terms of laying the foundations for the realization of truly durable solutions and must urgently be taken into account by political and humanitarian decision-makers.

The Government of Myanmar:

- Halt the implementation of IDP camp closures in Rakhine, particularly in Kyauk Taw Lone, under the National Strategy in light of the lack of consultation and choice regarding return and resettlement offered to date.
- Lay the foundations for truly durable solutions by prioritizing consultation, choice and underlying human rights considerations, particularly in relation to freedom of movement for all communities regardless of citizenship status and access to unsegregated services and livelihoods opportunities.
- Create opportunities where broad constituencies of displaced Rohingya and Kaman people, going well beyond CMC members, are consulted and included in return, resettlement and reintegration processes and decision-making.
- Prioritize the inclusion of diverse women, older people, youth and people with disabilities in the planning and management of their return, relocation, or local integration, in recognition of the additional barriers they face to participation (RAC recommendation 25; National Strategy on Camp Closure, 16 (c)). This can be supported through collaboration with UN agencies, NGOs and those engaging with already established community groups within the confined camps.
- In line with the RAC recommendations, take steps to address the lack of trust and support peacebuilding in Rakhine, including through consistent dialogue and engagement between communities and all levels of government, through policies and practices that protect the rights of all communities and through efforts to actively combat hate speech and promote social cohesion.

Humanitarian Community:

- Reiterate humanitarian organizations' readiness to offer technical support to the Rakhine State Government to find durable solutions for internally displaced Rohingya and Kaman communities (RAC Recommendation 25).

- Work to ensure that women's participation and leadership is built into the design and implementation of all humanitarian response efforts as well as discussions and planning with regards to durable solutions and can occur separately from discussions held with male leaders or heads of household (National Strategy on Camp Closure 16(d)).
- Maintain clear principles and advocacy in terms of considering that the relocation of IDPs to a new camp site with improved housing does not represent an actual camp closure or dignified solution to displacement as people will remain encamped and without the ability to exercise their freedom of movement or access to livelihoods and non-segregated services (education, health, etc.) (RAC Recommendation 18).
- Call on the Myanmar government to ensure the aim of closing an IDP camp is to facilitate return to places of origin as a matter of priority, or otherwise respect the choices of the displaced. Seek assurances from the government that IDPs' "choice" to move into individual houses in or near the place of displacement does not amount to a renunciation of their right to return in safety and with dignity to their original place of residence, should that option become feasible in the future (RAC Recommendation 25).
- Monitor and advocate that relocation is carried out in accordance with international standards and does not confine IDPs to substandard areas without adequate access to basic services or livelihood, or to areas where the safety and security cannot be ensured. (RAC Recommendation 25, National Strategy on camp Closure 16 (e)).

ASEAN and UN Member States

- Actively engage and advocate with and support the Government of Myanmar to find truly durable solutions, grounded in rights and dignity, for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs in central Rakhine State as an urgent priority that will help build the necessary trust for longer term peacebuilding efforts as well as potential future repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh.
- Provide technical support with ongoing consultations, dialogue and trust building with Rohingya IDPs in Myanmar as well as Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, with a focus on the inclusion of diverse women. Ensure that this dialogue directly shapes durable solution processes and plans. Assist the Government of Myanmar to establish an independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations and offer to manage such an initiative with clear baseline data against which to measure progress, measurable indicators and benchmarks as well as an established reporting schedule.
- Provide technical assistance and advice to the Government of Myanmar in implementing priority Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations, particularly in terms of cross-cutting recommendations related to inclusion, equality and rights.

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² Of the 130,000 IDPs confined to camps outside of Sittwe, Rakhine State, 98% are Rohingya and the remaining 2% are Kaman. See UNHCR and CCCM/Shelter/NFI Cluster Partners (2020) CCCM/ SHELTER/ NFI Cluster Analysis Report (CAR) – Central Rakhine and Chin, Myanmar, January- June 2020. https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/shelter-nfi-cccm_rakhine_cluster_analysis_report_30_june_2020.pdf

³ Rohingya and Kaman are two ethnic groups, comprised of predominantly Muslim people. Kaman people are recognized within the Myanmar government's discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law as one of the 135 officially recognized ethnic groups of Myanmar while the Rohingya are not one of the 135 recognized groups. Rohingya people have lived for generations in the area that has since become part of Myanmar. Rohingya people were previously recognized by the Myanmar government as Rohingya and were granted with the same rights as other communities. Over the last few decades the Myanmar government has implemented a series of legal and policy changes that have stripped Rohingya people of their rights and denied their very existence. Through the action of the Myanmar government, the Rohingya people have been rendered stateless and today are the largest stateless population in the world.

⁴ The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) defines protracted displacement as: *A situation in which refugees and/or IDPs have been in exile for three years or more, and where the process for finding durable solutions, such as repatriation, absorption in host communities or settlement in third locations, has stalled. This definition includes refugees and IDPs forced to leave their homes to avoid armed conflict, violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters. It also includes those living in camps or dispersed among host populations. See www.odi.org/hpg/protracteddisplacement.*

⁵ Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (RAC) (2017) *Towards a Fair, Peaceful and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine*, p. 35. <http://www.rakhinecommission.org/the-final-report/>

⁶ RAC (2017) *Ibid.*

⁷ The Global New Light of Myanmar first reported the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement launched the national strategy on the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and closure of IDP camps Strategy on December 27th, 2019. See the Global New Light of Myanmar (2018) *Ministry unveils national strategy on resettlement of IDPs, camp closures*. https://www.gnlm.com.mm/ministry-unveils-national-strategy-on-resettlement-of-idps-camp-closure-s/?fbclid=IwAR1IE2c6xHkmT2hc2l4GXR7RrRfYCA53UPBY0pHx2Aj_FcxtJFmDxQC1yQ

⁸ RAC (2017) *Ibid.* p. 35.

⁹ RAC (2017) *Ibid.* p. 35-37.

¹⁰ OCHA (2001) *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/199808-training-OCHA-guiding-principles-Eng2.pdf>

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¹⁴ The National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP camps (2019), unofficial translation. See Annex 1.

¹⁵ Burma Rohingya Organisations UK (2014) *Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law and Rohingya*. <https://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/media/Myanmar%E2%80%99s-1982-Citizenship-Law-and-Rohingya.pdf>

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¹⁸ RAC (2017) *Ibid.* p. 35.

¹⁹ The Myanmar Times (2018) *Govt closes first refugee camp in restive Rakhine State*. <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-closes-first-refugee-camp-restive-rakhine.html>; see also The Global New Light of Myanmar (2018), Ni Din IDP camp in Kyauktaw closed. <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/ni-din-idp-camp-in-kyauktaw-closed/>

²⁰ Frontier Myanmar (2018) *As camps close in Rakhine, humanitarians fear complicity in permanent segregation*. <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/as-camps-close-in-rakhine-humanitarians-fear-complicity-in-permanent-segregation/>

²¹ The Protection Sector produced a series of reports (2018-2019) monitoring the 'camp closure process' and stated the Myanmar government had implemented these plans without

consulting with affected communities, proceeded to construct new 'housing' against the wishes of the displaced, and in the case of IDPs from the Min Thar Hpa community, Kyein Ni Pyin Camp, Pauktaw Township, threatened to withdraw food assistance unless IDPs complied. The protection sector notes evidence that in all 'camp closure' processes to date, IDPs were not given the option to return to their places of origin, IDPs opposed the plan presented by the government, yet they were given no other option by the government, were pressured to accept the new shelters, and were pressured to work as casual laborers to support construction of the relocation sites given the lack of livelihood opportunities available. In all camps, the IDPs still face movement restrictions continuing their reliance of humanitarian support two years on from the camps' "closures."

²² As documented by the Protection Sector the communities in these 'closed camps' still have their movement restricted, do not have access to adequate services, and continue to rely on humanitarian aid. Therefore, these camps cannot be considered closed. Rather than creating durable solutions this approach entrenches segregation, creating a permanent system of apartheid.

²³ The Global New Light of Myanmar (2020) *Make return of IDPs a success through cooperation*. <https://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/make-return-of-idps-a-success-through-cooperation/>

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²⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2019) *DFAT Country Information Report Myanmar*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/country-information-report-myanmar.pdf>.

²⁸ In a survey completed by Oxfam in 2019, 47% of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said they have no freedom to make important decisions that affect their lives, with women reporting even less freedom than men.

²⁹ Based on figures shared by Camp Management Agencies in late 2019.

³⁰ As a result of unequal gender norms, women are pulled out of school at an earlier age, making them less likely to learn and to speak Rakhine, Myanmar and English languages, which are often requirements for higher ranking positions. See Oxfam (2020), *Voices rising: Rohingya women's priorities and leadership in Myanmar and Bangladesh*. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/voices-rising>, and also Care (2020), *CARE rapid gender Analysis Myanmar – Rakhine State*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Myanmar%20Rakhine%20RGA_CARE_4Aug2020.pdf

³¹ Council on Foreign Relations (2020) *The Rohingya crisis*.

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>

³² After 2012, all Rohingya both IDPs and those in villages are barred from attending University. See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2019) *Ibid.*

³³ Rohingya IDPs also see citizenship as critical for the realization of other rights and protections that would enable them to live safely and with dignity in Myanmar. Lack of citizen has been used to justify denying Rohingya the ability to move freely, access higher education, form associations, vote, be civil servants as educators, lawyers and police. As called for by RAC recommendation 35, there is an urgent need to de-link citizenship from inalienable rights of Rohingya people—such as their rights to freedom of movement, and access to healthcare, livelihoods and education.

³⁴ The National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP camps (2019), unofficial translation. *Ibid.*

³⁵ RAC (2017) *Ibid.* p. 35.

³⁶ The National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP camps (2019), unofficial translation. *Ibid.*

³⁷ Principle 7. See OCHA (2001) *Ibid.*

³⁸ Principle 10. See OHCHR (2007) *Ibid.*

³⁹ RAC (2017) *Ibid.* p. 36.

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⁴¹ The National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP camps (2019), unofficial translation. *Ibid.* 16 (i) states "all relevant actors and stakeholders when implementing Action Plans shall "work towards and promote restoration of freedom of movement for everyone."

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⁴⁴ RAC (2017) *Ibid.* p. 34.

⁴⁵ The National Strategy (2019). *Ibid.* p. 3.

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⁴⁸ RAC (2017) Recommendation 61. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ RAC (2017) Recommendation 62. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ RAC (2017) Recommendation 63. *Ibid.*

APPENDIXES

INFOGRAPHIC NUMBERS

700,000 Rohingya fleeing across the border into Bangladesh

127,000 Rohingya have been confined to camps in central Rakhine State

600,000 Rohingya currently remain in Myanmar

75% of Rohingya and Kaman IDP respondents said housing, land and property rights must be guaranteed as part of any government strategy to close the IDP camps

80% of Camp Management Committee (CMC) members are male

87% of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said they want to leave the camps and that the option of returning to their place of origin should be included in the government's strategy

75% of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said provisions to guarantee equal rights must be included in the government's strategy to close the IDP camps

77% of Rohingya and Kaman IDPs said peace-building initiatives must be included in the government's strategy to close the IDP camps

TIMELINE

2012

Jun

Forced displacement of Rohingya and Kaman people to camps following violence in central Rakhine

2014

The government under Thein Sein developed the Rakhine State Action Plan, which included settlement for Rohingya and Kaman IDPs. Little to no action was taken to implement that plan

2016

The Myanmar government established the **Rakhine Advisory Commission (RAC)** led by former UN Secretary General **Kofi Anan**, which proposed practical solutions to address the political, economic and social issues of Rakhine State

2017

Mar

RAC interim report advised the Myanmar government to return and resettle communities from *Ka Nyin Taw*, *Min That Phar* and *Ramree*. Only the ethnic Rakhine IDPs from *Ka Nyin Taw* were successfully resettled

2017

The Myanmar government declared *three camps 'closed'* despite displaced communities continuing to live in a confined camp-like setting and continuing to rely on humanitarian aid

2019

Dec

The Myanmar government finalized the National Strategy and organized workshops in Naypyidaw, Myitkyina, and Sittwe

2020

Jan

The **Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM)** announced the government to close Kyauk Ta Lone camp in Rakhine, as per the National Strategy.

2020

Apr

Plans and construction began to close *Kyauk Ta Lone* IDP camp despite protests and opposition from the Kaman IDPs

2020

Oct

The Myanmar government has not changed its course of action to close *Kyauk Ta Lone* IDP camp

This paper is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

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VOICES RISING:
ROHINGYA IDPS' PRIORITIES FOR ACHIEVING
DURABLE SOLUTIONS

