



Humanitarian Needs Assessment Report

Karenni State, Myanmar

Assessment Period: 3–10 November 2024

Published: March 2026

Coordination Team for Emergency Relief (Karenni)

8 townships · 60 IDP camps · 93 respondents.



KEY FINDING AT A GLANCE

72%

Rank food security as
extremely important

88%

Need Non-Food Items
For Daily survival

68%

Lack reliable access
to food

84%

Rely on food aid as
primary nutrition

66%

Cite inadequate
Medicine supplies

80%

Identify children as most
vulnerable

50%+

Feel unsafe in current
shelters

45%

Face non-functional
Water points

About this Assessment: CTER conducted a humanitarian needs assessment across 8 townships in Karenni state from 3-10 November 2024. A total of 93 respondents participated (53 female, 32 male, 8 other non-specified) across 60 IDP camps. Respondents included 47 from the general public, 34 camp management committee members, 9 teachers, 4 health workers, 2 from women and youth groups, and 1 religious leader. This report presents field-based findings to guide prioritization by international organizations, donors, and humanitarian actors.

I. Introduction

The humanitarian needs assessment conducted in Karenni is a critical step for understanding the evolving situation of crisis-affected populations and for ensuring that limited resources are directed to the most urgent and life-saving priorities. In contexts of protracted conflict and displacement, regular assessments provide updated information on living conditions, access to basic services, and emerging risks faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. Such assessments also support evidence-based planning, helping governing bodies and humanitarian actors design timely, relevant, and coordinated responses.

Coordination Team for Emergency Relief conducted a humanitarian needs assessment in eight townships within Karenni State, namely Loikaw, Pekhon, Demoso, Hpruso, Bawlake, Shadaw, Hpa-Saung, and Mese. A total of 93 respondents participated in this assessment (53 female, 32 male, and 8 other non-specified). The majority of respondents were from the general public (47 individuals), with others representing different groups (34 from camp management committees, 9 teachers, 4 health workers, 2 social workers, 2 from women and youth groups, and 1 religious leader). Some respondents held multiple roles, such as being both a teacher and a camp committee member. The assessment covered a total of 60 camps, including residents of host villages.

Most displaced individuals are originally from within Karenni State, with a few from nearby Shan State. Many displaced individuals reported experiencing repeated displacement, with most having relocated multiple times and some moving frequently. At present, the majority are living in IDP camps, while others are staying with relatives or in self-arranged, spontaneous displacement settings. Field observations also absorbed that some households are living in other forms of settlement, such as staying at religious buildings, areas beside roads, paddy fields, or under the shadow of mountains due to the risk of artillery and airstrikes. Majority of the displaced individuals' shelters are temporary tents, covered with tarpaulin and number of tents are Nipa Hut made of bamboo and the thatched roof.

The primary purpose of this assessment was to generate an updated picture of the humanitarian situation, identify the most urgent basic needs of Karenni IDPs, and understand gaps in existing assistance. It gathered first-hand information on the living conditions and priority needs of affected communities, particularly internally displaced households. The findings are intended to guide prioritization by governing bodies and supporting agencies, enabling them to plan more effective, targeted, and coordinated interventions. By providing reliable, field-based evidence, this assessment aims to strengthen collective decision-making and improve the overall effectiveness of humanitarian response efforts in Karenni State.



Temporary tarpaulin shelter used by internally displaced persons in Karenni State.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Shelter & NFIs	88% of respondents reported an urgent need for Non-Food Items. Tarpaulins (60%), medicine (43%), and kitchen utilities (33%) are the most urgently needed items.
Food Security	68% lack reliable food sources. While 84% depend on food aid, distribution is irregular — only 20% receive assistance monthly. Main barriers include military transportation blocks and high logistics costs.
Healthcare	66% cite inadequate medicine supplies, 56% report difficulty accessing healthcare facilities, and 46% note disease outbreaks. Common illnesses include fever and cough.
Education	70% report insufficient learning facilities. 50% cite inadequate school buildings. School closures due to ongoing conflict leave thousands of children without a safe place to learn.
Communication	Over 50% have access to information via radio and internet. However, around 40% still face barriers due to high internet costs, poor connectivity, and security risks.
Protection & Safety	More than 50% feel unsafe due to airstrikes, military conflict, and landmines. ~40% have experienced direct attacks. Over 50% report lack of proper protection measures or referral systems.
WASH	45% face non-functional water points; 45% report sources are too distant; 42% indicate water is contaminated. 70% lack mosquito nets. Overcrowded and damaged latrines compound public health risks.
Livelihoods	67% engage in agriculture but 76% lack financial capital. Top recovery needs: quality seeds (84%), cash support (70%), and vocational training — especially tailoring (71%).

Priority Actions: Immediate needs for food security, clean water, and medical supplies. Short-term: tarpaulins, NFIs, clean water access. Long-term: education facilities, community protection strategies, livelihood support, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation frameworks.



Temporary bamboo and tarpaulin shelter constructed by displaced families in Karenni State.



Figure: Displaced community members collecting water from shared tanks in Karenni State.

3. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

This humanitarian needs assessment employed a cross-sectional, field-based survey approach to collect primary data from affected communities in Karenni State. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information on key thematic areas, including health, education, livelihoods, food security, shelter, protection and security, and access to basic services. The survey targeted internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected households, and data was collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by trained enumerators.

Some survey questions allowed respondents to select multiple responses. For these multiple-response questions, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with results presented as the percentage of respondents selecting each response option rather than as mutually exclusive categories. This approach allowed the assessment to capture the complexity and diversity of livelihood conditions faced by selected households.

Quality control measures included daily field supervision, validation of completed questionnaires, and joint data review sessions to ensure consistency, accuracy, and reliability of the data collected.

4. Priority Sectors for IDPs

Using the multi-response survey approach, respondents were asked to assess the importance of key humanitarian sectors based on their current living conditions and needs. The analysis reveals that food security is the most critical sector, with 72% of respondents identifying it as "extremely important." This was followed by health (54%), education (48%), security and protection (42%), water and sanitation (35%), and livelihoods (33%).

Transportation and Temporary Shelter were perceived as relatively lower priorities. Transportation was rated as "extremely important" by 32% of respondents while Basic Temporary Shelter was considered "extremely important" by 25% of respondents.

Sector	Rated "Extremely Important"
Food Security	72%
Health	54%
Education	48%
Security & Protection	42%
Water & Sanitation	35%
Livelihoods	33%
Transportation	32%
Basic Temporary Shelter	25%

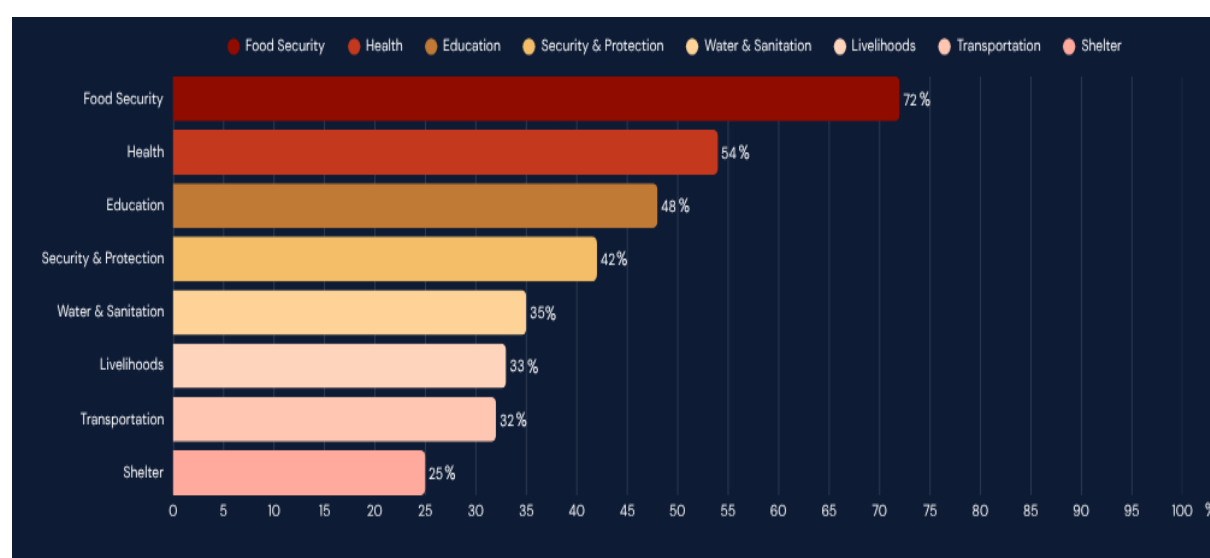


Figure : Respondents Identified % of Sector Importance

5. Access to and Priority Needs for Non-Foods Items (NFIs)

In the context of Emergency Basic Needs, the findings indicate a substantial unmet need. 88% of respondents reported that NFIs are essential for their daily survival, highlighting persistent gaps in basic household supplies among displaced populations. Similarly, the need for emergency shelter support remains high. 84% of participants stated that shelter is still required, while only 10% indicated that shelter assistance was not needed at the time of the survey.



Children receiving blankets during NFI distribution

Among respondents who expressed the need for NFIs, the following priority items were consistently identified:

- Tarpaulins (60%) — most urgently required item for reinforcing or creating temporary shelter
- Medicine (43%) — reflecting ongoing health-related vulnerabilities within displacement sites
- Kitchen utilities (33%) — essential for daily household Survival
- Shelter support (30%)
- Toilets and water storage tanks (28%)
- Agricultural equipment (20%) — some households aim to restore livelihoods



A temporary shelter reinforced with tarpaulins in a displacement site

6. KEY FINDINGS BY SECTOR

6.1 Food Security and Nutrition



The assessment findings indicate that food security remains a significant concern among surveyed households, with a clear majority reporting challenges in meeting their basic food needs. In this humanitarian setting, 84% of respondents identified food aid as their primary source of nutrition, but they noted that this aid is not regular, with only 20% receiving food assistance on a monthly basis. Following this, 52% rely on agricultural and petty livestock activities, while 26% depend on casual work.

Source of Food	% of Respondents
Food Aid	84%
Agricultural and Petty Livestock	52%
Casual Work	26%
Remittances / Small Income from Grocery Stores	6%
Petty Trade / Small-Scale Income-Generating Activities	4%

Among the aid sources, around 30% is provided by civil society organizations (CSOs), 15% by religious-based organizations, and around 10% from other unspecified sources. Additionally, 6% of aid comes from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and 3% each from individual donors and village or tract administrators.

The main types of aid items received include emergency food such as rice, oil, and salt (88%), other unspecified food items (36%), various kinds of beans or peas (22%), dry food like dried fish and cultivated meat (12%), and readymade food (6%). Aid is distributed through two main approaches: about 70% is provided through individual-based distribution, while 30% is delivered using a family- or household-based approach.

Main challenges in aid distribution include:

- High transportation costs which impede effective delivery
- Communication barriers that complicate coordination efforts
- Military-imposed transportation blocks restricting access to essential items
- Irregular and insufficient distribution of aid
- Scattering of displaced populations making it challenging to reach all affected individuals
- Ongoing security concerns further complicating the distribution process

6.2 Livelihoods



Displaced farmers working in fields during monsoon season, carrying agricultural tools

67% of respondents engage in agricultural activities for their livelihood, while 40% rely on small livestock. However, 20% indicated they are unable to participate in any income-generating activities. Additionally, 15% operate small businesses including grocery stores, petty trade, tailoring, handicrafts, and workshops for motorbike or car repairs.

Barriers to livelihood activities:

- Lack of financial capital (76%)
- Security and military issues (33%)
- Lack of job opportunities or mismatched experience (30%)
- Multiple displacements creating economic barriers (14%)
- Lack of skills or experience (7%)
- Other: climate irregularities, low crop yields, poor seeds, transportation difficulties

Agricultural Activities: 72% of respondents primarily cultivate rice. Approximately 50% grow vegetables, 37% cultivate corn, 33% grow various types of beans, and 24% produce sesame. Most agricultural products are intended for family or household consumption while around 30% make sales to generate income. 74% use upland cultivation techniques, relying mainly on seasonal rainfall. Around 50% practice home gardening and lowland cultivation, and 12% utilize irrigated farming.

Agricultural Support Needed	% of Respondents
Provision of quality seeds 84%	84%
Cash support for agricultural activities	70%
Agricultural equipment and natural fertilizers	45%
Access to cultivation land/field	35%
Agricultural technical assistance	30%
Chemical fertilizer for higher yield	19%
Sufficient water distribution/irrigation system	11%

Livestock: Over 50% of respondents reported raising pigs, while some raised chickens. Challenges include outbreaks of animal fever, the high cost of feed, multiple displacements, limited financial capital, restricted space, and lack of technical skills for systematic livestock management.

Vocational Training Recommendations:

Type of Vocational or Small Craft Training	% of Respondents
Tailoring Training	71%
Mechanical Repairing Workshop (motorbike, generator, etc.)	48%
Technical Skills in Livestock Farming	34%
Technical Skills in Agriculture Activities	33%
Traditional Weaving and Stitching Training	29%
Computer Training, Food Processing, Natural Fertilizers, Bamboo Products	20%
Electrical Repair Training	5%

6.3 Protection and Safety



Feel unsafe in
current shelters



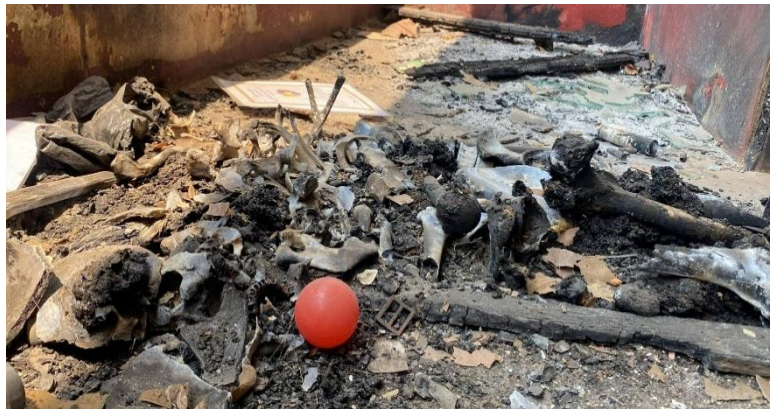
Experience direct
attacks



Suffer emotional
trauma & anxiety

Over half of the respondents reported feeling unsafe in their current shelters, primarily due to airstrikes conducted by the SAC, ongoing military conflicts, and artillery shelling. Approximately 40% of respondents have experienced airstrikes and attacks with heavy weapons and have significant loss and damage including the loss of family members, property, homes, livestock, farmland, public buildings, and personal belongings.

Regarding landmines, 16% of respondents mentioned personal losses, including physical injuries and the death of animals such as pigs, buffaloes, and cows. Beyond airstrikes and ongoing military conflict, around 40% of respondents indicated health issues related to infectious diseases, as well as problems caused by natural disasters including water scarcity, wildfires, landslides, and flooding.



A child's toy among the ashes of IDPs killed by airstrikes



Homes and community infrastructure destroyed by fire and airstrikes

Vulnerable Groups Identified by Respondents:

- Children – 80%
- Person with disability (PwD) – 74 %
- elderly individuals – 73 %
- pregnant women – 57%
- Women – 29 %
- Students, orphans, displaced individuals and youth – 21 %, 15%, and 12 % respectively.

Regarding the referral mechanism: Over half of the respondents indicated that there are no proper protection measures or referral systems in place. However, 44% reported that some protection measures and referral mechanisms exist. In terms of individual security measures, 16% stated they do not have any security preparations. Others have taken steps such as digging bomb shelters and raising awareness about emergency preparedness.

Urgent Security Needs Expressed by Respondents:

- Strengthening bomb shelters to withstand airstrikes
- Increasing awareness of emergency preparedness and landmine risks
- Enhancing alarm and communication systems for security alerts
- Stationing security personnel at each camp/village entrance

6.4 Communication

Regarding accessibility to information, over 50% of respondents reported that they have access to essential information. However, around 40% indicated that they do not have access to the information they need. The majority of respondents obtain information through different channels, including radio and the internet, while some receive updates during meetings organized by the camp management committee. Additionally, few respondents mentioned accessing information from religious leaders. In terms of security alarm systems, over 60% of respondents reported that they do not have such systems in place at their community, camps, or villages.

Key communication challenges faced by respondents:

- High cost of internet services, particularly Starlink Wi-Fi
- Unstable internet connections
- Absence of phone line connectivity
- Distance from internet access points
- Transportation difficulties and security challenges along the way
- High fuel costs for motorbikes further complicating travel to internet access locations

7. Challenges and Needs Across Thematic Areas

7.1 Education

70%

Report insufficient learning & teaching facilities

50%+

Cite limited teachers

50%

Concerned about inadequate school buildings

Respondents identified three critical education problems. First, around 70% reported insufficient learning and teaching facilities and supplies. Second, over 50% cited limited teachers. Third, around 50% expressed concerns about inadequate school buildings. Additionally, respondents mentioned issues such as insecurity due to airstrikes, school closures amid the complex military situation, unaffordable education fees, insufficient teacher stipends or salaries, the need for a systematic curriculum, lack of internet access, and limitations in teacher qualifications.



Children learning in a makeshift bamboo classroom

Priority education support needed (% of respondents):

- Providing children with uniforms, books, and supplies — 70%+
- Helping cover school running costs — 50%+
- Construction of new school buildings — 50%+
- Implementing security measures at every school
- Improving internet access for teaching and learning
- Capacity-building programs for teachers
- Providing safe transportation for children to and from school

7.3 Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

45%

Water points non-functional or dried up

42%

Water contaminated, not safe for drinking

31%

Insufficient water for household needs

70%

Lack mosquito nets

The three most critical issues affecting access to clean water are: non-functional water points (45%), water sources too distant (45%), and contaminated water (42%). Additionally, 31% noted that available water is insufficient for all household needs such as cooking, washing, and cleaning. Other concerns include water shortages in summer, lack of water storage tanks and pipelines, insufficient water for livestock, high water transportation costs, and security issues related to water access.

Recommended WASH interventions by respondents:

- Installation of reliable water points — 47%
- Distribution of jerry cans — 45%
- Water purification tablets or systems — 39%
- Distribution of clean water — 30%

Critical sanitation problems:

- Lack of mosquito nets — 70%+
- Dirty and overcrowded latrines — 45%
- Damaged toilets — 45%
- Accumulation of garbage — 44%
- Unsafe, insecure latrines lacking privacy — 40%

Sanitation solutions recommended:

- Repairing toilets and latrines — 60%
- Building new toilets — 50%
- Regular garbage collection — 43%



Community members working together to install water pipelines

7.4 Natural Disaster

Water scarcity is reported by the highest percentage of respondents as a current challenge. Approximately 40% indicate they have previously faced heavy rain, flooding, landslides, and strong winds. Additionally, some respondents noted issues related to extreme temperatures, wildfires, and drought.

In terms of damage or loss due to natural disasters, around 60% of respondents reported experiencing significant impacts including destruction of rice fields, collapse of bridges, damage to homes, shortages of clean water, and loss of livestock.

Disaster Preparedness: 61% of respondents indicated they do not have any preparedness plans, while 39% reported having some level of preparedness. The preparedness measures mentioned include alarm systems, access to necessary information, awareness-raising activities, avoidance of living in hazardous areas, and connections with emergency response teams.

7.5 Personal Trauma and Loss



Over 50% of respondents reported experiencing emotional trauma, fear, and anxiety due to conflict displacement, while over 30% indicated the loss of property. Approximately 30% expressed concerns related to the fear of airstrikes. Some respondents also noted difficulties in communicating with family members or relatives.

To address these issues, over 80% of respondents expressed a desire for counseling services to cope with conflict-related trauma, fear, and anxiety, while more than 50% sought additional support services.

8. OBSERVATION FROM FIELD DATA COLLECTORS

8.1 Psychosocial Problems

Elderly individuals in the surveyed communities are facing significant challenges, both mentally and physically. Many are experiencing increased psychological distress, marked by feelings of hopelessness, a deep longing to return to their homes, and anxiety over meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. In addition to these emotional hardships, they are also suffering from various health issues, particularly due to exposure to harsh weather conditions — including strong winds, rain, and cold temperatures in mountainous areas like western Demawso and Hpruso. These difficulties are further intensified by the lack of access to heating or firewood, leaving elderly people especially vulnerable in already fragile living conditions.

The survey also revealed growing anxiety among displaced individuals regarding their ability to meet basic needs. This persistent insecurity is contributing to emotional stress and a sense of instability in daily life. Compounding this is a strong and urgent desire among many to return to their places of origin. Respondents expressed increasing impatience and frustration with prolonged displacement, highlighting a deep emotional attachment to their home communities and a longing for normalcy and stability.

Another notable and concerning finding is the potential for communal conflict between host communities and displaced populations. This tension is particularly evident in the education sector, where disagreements have arisen over teacher recruitment processes. While local individuals, many of whom lack adequate teaching experience, are being favored for these roles, experienced CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) teachers are often overlooked or not welcomed. This situation has created friction, with displaced communities feeling excluded and undervalued, potentially leading to deeper social tensions if left unaddressed.

Widespread fear of heavy weapons and airstrikes remains a significant concern among local communities. The constant threat of violence, particularly aerial attacks, has instilled a deep sense of insecurity and fear, affecting daily life and limiting freedom of movement. This pervasive anxiety not only impacts the physical safety of civilians but also contributes to long-term psychological distress and social instability within already vulnerable populations.

8.2 Logistical Observes

The majority of field data collectors reported traveling primarily on rocky roads, followed by muddy roads, while very few used concrete roads to reach the study camps or villages. Regarding electricity usage, the majority of data collectors stated that the community does not have access to electricity; some reported that community members rely on solar power or candles for lighting.

During the survey, the data collectors also assessed the sanitation conditions around the study camps and villages. Most noted that there are enough toilets, but they are unhealthy, insecure, and in need of repair or upgrades. In terms of access to clean water, over 30% of data collectors indicated that there was no access to clean water where they conducted the survey. Meanwhile, 27% noted that the community had some access to clean water, but it was only sufficient during the rainy season.

9. Recommendation

Given the ongoing conflict and the urgent humanitarian needs identified across multiple sectors, this report prioritizes short-term, life-saving interventions. These recommendations are designed to address the most immediate gaps in food security, health, WASH, protection, and education. The fragile security environment limits the feasibility of long-term infrastructure development or system reform; therefore, the proposed actions focus on rapid response, flexible delivery mechanisms, and community-level support that can be implemented even in volatile conditions.

SHORT-TERM LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTIONS

Strengthen Emergency Food Assistance	Urgently scale up food distribution efforts and explore sustainable solutions such as community food banks or agricultural inputs to address widespread food insecurity affecting 68% of respondents.
Rehabilitate Water Infrastructure	Install functional water points and distribute clean drinking water to communities where nearly half of respondents face issues with access and contamination.
Scale Up Health and Medical Support	Prioritize the delivery of essential medicines and deploy mobile clinics or community health workers to reach areas with supply shortages and poor health service accessibility.
Improve Sanitation and Hygiene	Construct or repair latrines and provide mosquito nets and hygiene kits to mitigate health risks linked to poor sanitation reported by 70% of the population.
Support Access to Education	Provide learning materials, repair school facilities, and introduce temporary learning spaces or remote learning alternatives in areas affected by conflict-related school closures.
Enhance Protection for Vulnerable Groups	Establish protection programs targeting children, women, elderly, and persons with disabilities, including safe spaces, community watch groups, and GBV referral pathways.

LONG-TERM RESILIENCE BUILDING

Promote Livelihood Recovery	Deliver cash assistance or in-kind support (e.g., seeds, tools, livestock) for agriculture and small businesses to help restore income sources for the 67% relying on farming.
Psychosocial and Mental Health Support	Integrate mental health services into primary healthcare and train community-based counselors to address trauma and stress among displaced and conflict-affected populations.
Invest in Transport and Communication	Improve road access and communication channels (e.g., radio, community alert systems) to enable timely access to services and reliable flow of information.
Community-Based Protection Strategies	Engage local actors in designing protection systems that strengthen community resilience and early warning mechanisms in conflict zones.
Strengthen Coordination Mechanisms	Enhance collaboration between local and state institutions, international organizations, and other relevant entities, and develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the effectiveness of interventions.

10. CONCLUSION

This humanitarian needs assessment provides a clear and compelling picture of the severe challenges faced by displaced and conflict-affected communities in Karenni State. With widespread displacement, repeated relocation, and precarious living conditions, households continue to rely heavily on temporary shelters, limited livelihood options, and irregular humanitarian assistance. The findings show that the crisis is still very serious and affects many areas of life, including access to food, water, health care, protection, safe shelter, education, and communication. The scope and scale of these needs underline the importance of sustained and coordinated humanitarian support.

Across all sectors, the assessment highlights persistent vulnerability and heightened risk. Food insecurity remains one of the most critical concerns, driven by unstable access to aid, disrupted livelihoods, and ongoing conflict. Basic health services are constrained by insufficient medical supplies, limited facility access, and disease outbreaks. Similarly, WASH conditions remain inadequate, with water contamination, long distances to water points, and damaged sanitation facilities posing serious public health risks. Education is disrupted by insecurity, poor infrastructure, and shortages of essential learning materials. Protection issues such as fear of airstrikes, landmines, and direct attacks continue to undermine community safety, especially among women, children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.

Despite these challenges, communities demonstrate resilience, relying on local networks, informal support systems, and coping strategies to navigate daily life. Continued collaboration between local governing bodies, community-based actors, humanitarian agencies, and donors will be essential to ensure an effective and inclusive response. Strengthening coordination will also help prevent service gaps, avoid duplication, and ensure assistance reaches the most underserved communities.

Overall, this assessment underscores the urgent need for sustained, flexible, and well-coordinated humanitarian support in Karenni State. The insights gathered through field data, community voices, and direct observations offer a strong evidence base to guide both immediate interventions and future planning. As the crisis continues to evolve, regular monitoring and updated assessments will be essential to ensure that humanitarian assistance remains responsive, relevant, and grounded in the lived realities of displaced communities.

"Addressing these priority needs is crucial for improving the safety, dignity, and well-being of displaced individuals in Karenni State. The findings and recommendations presented in this report aim to support more effective decision-making and contribute to improving the safety, dignity, and well-being of IDPs across Karenni State."

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Annexes: Survey Questionnaire · Data Tables · Photos/Maps

