



A village in Yinmarbin Township after a SAC attack in March 2022.
Courtesy of Radio Free Asia

CAR AREA ASSESSMENT

Sagaing Region

March 2023



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About the NRM

The NRM is an EU-funded programme designed to fund and implement innovative, tailor-made, flexible, and rights-based activities along the humanitarian-development-peace (H-D-P) spectrum in Myanmar. The NRM's overall objective is to contribute to lasting peace and national reconciliation, security, stability and sustainable development in Myanmar by reducing vulnerabilities and building the resilience of communities affected by conflict or natural disasters. The NRM is managed by UNOPS, which serves as the programme's Secretariat and implements the decisions of the EU-led Steering Committee. It began operations in January 2020 and is expected to continue through December 2023.

About the CAR Facility

The Conflict Analysis and Research Facility (CAR) is a research and analysis facility provided by an independent organization and managed by the NRM Secretariat. The CAR conducts joint assessments, ad hoc research, provides strategic guidance to the NRM Steering Committee and Secretariat, and manages the Response Perspectives Platform. The CAR also conducts third party contextual monitoring of the NRM's programming areas with a specific emphasis on human rights challenges and issues. The CAR is thus both a driving component of the NRM and a service provided to NRM-funded partners and programmes.

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Methodology

This assessment was conducted between August 2022 and December 2022. It was compiled using a combination of secondary data - including social media, local media, and international organisation sources - as well as 60 key informant interviews and local sources, including civilians, business figures, CSO workers, IDPs, governance officials, and armed group members. Further information on the methodology of given displacement figures is provided in the displacement section of this report. All information should be taken as general findings, and not as a comprehensive or activity level needs assessment.

Executive Summary

The primary objective of this CAR Assessment on Sagaing Region is to support the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM) and its partners in assessing current needs, priorities, and dynamics for the purposes of response planning. However, it is also designed as a public document, to be made available to the wider Myanmar aid community to better enhance understanding of local contexts, present community perceptions, and identify thematic and geographic dynamics and issues. It is not intended as a comprehensive or project-level needs assessment - it is instead intended as a broad and holistic assessment of the humanitarian, development, and political situation and operating environment in Sagaing Region.

Prior to the February 2021 coup, the predominantly Bamar Sagaing Region was largely peaceful, and although it was underdeveloped and impoverished it was also highly agriculturally productive. Since the coup, Sagaing Region has become one of, if not the, epicentre of the Myanmar crisis. Sagaing Region's population was heavily supportive of the National League for Democracy (NLD), and mass protests against the coup quickly turned to SAC crackdowns, and anti-coup armed group formation in the form of NUG-aligned People's Defence Forces; indeed, Sagaing hosts more PDFs than any other region in the country. Now, the region is characterised by widespread violence, daily human rights abuses, regular village raids and burnings, and one of the largest ongoing displacement crises in the world.

Responding to this context should be considered one of the paramount challenges facing the international Myanmar aid community; this is complicated by the fact that Sagaing region poses one of the most severe access challenges in Myanmar. Direct programming in Sagaing region is complicated not only by ongoing conflict conditions, but by political barriers imposed by the SAC and the fact that the large majority of pre-conflict CSOs in Sagaing Region have been dissolved. However, local responders do exist; albeit in a variety of forms. New CSOs have been established throughout Sagaing, with varying capacities, and largely funded by local and international private donations. New NUG-aligned revolutionary governance structures also exist, having largely supplanted SAC structures in many parts of the region, and vary widely in capacity, authority, and reach. New education and healthcare networks have formed, although they operate under considerable constraints and should by no means be considered sufficient for the needs facing the population.

There are three key thematic considerations in Sagaing Region:

- › Sagaing region hosts the largest number of displaced people in Myanmar. Much of this displacement is temporary, with IDPs fleeing from their villages during conflict, raids, and crackdowns. Much of it is not; hundreds of villages have been fully or partially destroyed, and many displaced people will not return to their villages of origin for the foreseeable future. The displacement situation in Sagaing region is now a long term concern, with few prospects for durable solutions.
- › Local livelihoods have been devastated by the conflict; that said, there are still opportunities to contribute to local livelihoods provision, and doing so is essential. Agriculture is the cornerstone of Sagaing's economy. Producers are under significant pressure due to skyrocketing costs and access restrictions, and many are wholly unable to farm their fields due to conflict and displacement. That said, Sagaing region is still producing agricultural goods, and markets do remain largely functional even in areas that have fallen out of the control of the SAC; indeed, some parts of Sagaing region are exporting crops to other parts of Myanmar. These functional local agriculture systems are critical to not only the population reliant on them for livelihoods, but the population of IDPs that are now reliant on locally produced agricultural goods.
- › SAC education and healthcare systems have largely collapsed in much of Sagaing Region. NUG-linked systems and local education and healthcare networks are functional in many locations, and are attempting to fill gaps; private clinics also remain functional in some locations. However, their capacity is limited by both funding and access constraints. Moreover, both alternative healthcare and education providers appear to be seen by the SAC as indistinguishable from local armed revolutionaries; as such, they are regularly targeted by security forces. These systems are under severe pressure and face numerous risks; however, they are also critical to meeting skyrocketing needs.

Context

Sagaing Region is the second largest of Myanmar's states and regions, after Shan State, and is the fourth most populous, with 5,325,347 inhabitants according to the 2014 census.¹ It is located in the northwestern part of the country, bordering India — specifically Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh — to the west; Chin State to the southwest; and Kachin and Shan States to the east. The Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers, which play a crucial role in transportation, communication, and trade, flow from north to south. Geographically, Sagaing Region is highly diverse and it includes plains in the south and centre as well as rugged and densely forested hills and mountains in the north.

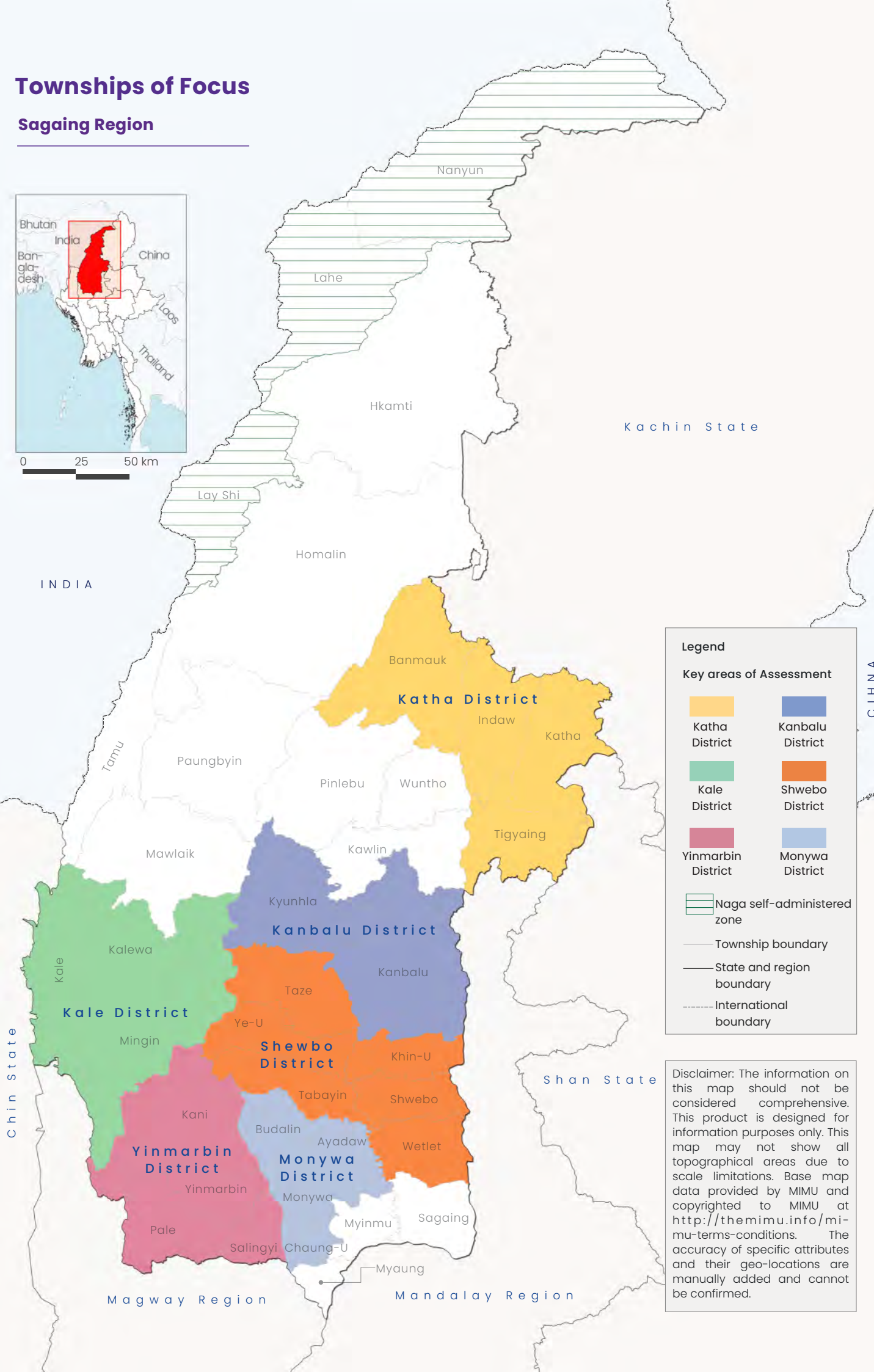
Agriculture has traditionally driven the local economy, but extractive industries such as logging and gold, coal, and copper mining have also been major sources of income. According to most socio-economic indicators, the southern plains are more developed, while socio-economic conditions are worse towards the northwest. Indeed, the townships in the Naga Self-Administered Zone are among the most remote and least developed areas of the country.

Townships of Focus

Sagaing Region










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



Legend


Key areas of Assessment

 Katha District	 Kanbalu District
 Kale District	 Shwebo District
 Yinmarbin District	 Monywa District

 Naga self-administered zone

 Township boundary

 State and region boundary

 International boundary

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Regional Divisions

This assessment considers the six districts in Sagaing Region that are most affected by conflict and changing dynamics: Kanbalu, Shwebo, Kalay, Yinmarbin, Monywa, and Katha. There are five other districts in Sagaing Region, as well as the Naga Self-Administered Zone, but these will not be considered in depth in this assessment, due to time and resource limitations.

Kanbalu District

Kanbalu District comprises two townships, Kyun Hla and Kanbalu, and borders Mandalay Region to the east, Shwebo District to the south, Mawlaik and Kalay Districts to the west, and Katha District to the north. It is a mix of lowland in the south and west and hilly terrain in the north and east. The Irrawaddy and the Mu rivers flow from north to south, are navigable, and are the region's primary sources of water. The largest dam in Myanmar, the Thaphan Seik dam, is located here.

Kanbalu District is an economic hub in Sagaing, with locals primarily engaged in agriculture. It is connected to other regions by railways, roads, and waterways, making it easily accessible and convenient for trade and business. Furthermore, the district's orchard industry products, such as fruits, flowers, and other food products, are primarily exported from here to Mandalay City. There are also people who work in freshwater fishing in the rivers near the Thaphan Seik Dam, with a pre-coup annual catch of over 1,000 tons. Other relevant activities are sugarcane cultivation and sugar production, as well as timber extraction and forest product manufacturing.

Approximately 40,1887 people live in the District, of whom 12% inhabit urban areas and 88% inhabit rural areas. The main ethnicity is Bamar, but Kachin, Chin, and Shan minorities are also present. The main Religion is Buddhism, but 7% of Kanbalu's population is Muslim, and there are small Christian and Hindu minorities.²

Shwebo District

Shwebo District comprises six townships, Shwebo, Wetlet, Khin-U, Tibaying, Ye-U, and Taze, and borders Mandalay Region to the east, Yinmarbin and Kalay Districts to the west, Monywa and Sagaing Districts to the south, and Kanbalu District to the north. It is mostly flatlands, with a few highlands and hills. The Irrawaddy and Mu rivers flow from north to south and are the primary waterways and sources for water for farming. The climate is dry, with scarce rainfall.

According to local sources, 70% of the population in Shwebo is employed in the agriculture and livestock sectors; local rice production reportedly more than covered local needs prior to the conflict, and thus much rice was (and still is) exported.³ Such abundant output is enabled by efficient irrigation systems and three dams, allowing for two harvests per year. Freshwater fish farming is also a growing industry, meeting the region's needs. Commerce has traditionally been facilitated by good transport infrastructure along waterways, railways, and roads, and Shwebo is an important economic hub in Rakhine state.

¹ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census Sagaing, Region Census Report, Volume 3-E. (Ministry of Immigration and Population) p10. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sagaing_Region_Census_Report_-_ENGLISH_1.pdf

² Ministry of Union Government Office. Kanblu District Profile. 2019. https://www.mougo.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/k_hla18-19.pdf

³ Ministry of Union Government Office. Shwebo District Profile. 2019. https://www.mougo.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/k_hla18-19.pdf

Approximately 1,154,819 people live in the district, of whom 12% inhabit urban areas and 88% rural areas. The main ethnicity is Bamar, but Kachin, Chin, Rakhine, and Shan minorities are also present, along with Chinese and Indian communities. The main religion is Buddhism, while 1.3% of the population is Muslim, and 0.6% Christian.⁴

Kalay District

Kalay District is the westernmost district of Sagaing Region and comprises three townships: Kalay, Kalewa, and Mingin. It borders Chin State and India, and Tamu and Mawlaik Districts to the north, Shwebo District to the east, and Yinmarbin District to the south. Its territories are hilly and crossed by rivers. The main landmarks are the Yarzagyo dam, which enables the irrigation of 8,000 acres of nearby farmland, and coal mines in Kalay and Kalewa. The land and climate are tropical and favour the growth of fruit and vegetables; thus most of the population is employed in farming. The main crops are rice, fruit, beans, peanuts, and sunflower; products are often exported to India from the Tamu border or Chin State. Fisheries and livestock are also relevant sectors but they hold a smaller share of the market than other agriculture products as they have not been supported by the government to the same degree. People within the district also trade with China, importing clothes, cosmetics, and machinery, sometimes buying and directly reselling to Indian markets.

Approximately 512,754 people inhabit the district, with 27% in urban areas and 73% in rural areas. They belong to Chin, Bamar, Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, and other ethnicities; while the main religion is Buddhism, there also are Christian communities, mostly made of Chin people.⁵

Yinmarbin District

Yinmarbin District comprises four townships: Yinmarbin, Kani, Pale, and Salingyi. It borders Magway Region to the south and west, Monywa District to the east, and Kalay and Shwebo Districts to the north. Its terrain is a mix between lowland and hills, crossed by forests and the Chindwin river.

The District is inhabited by approximately 500,000 people.⁶ Buddhism is the main religion, but there also are Christian, Hindu, and Muslim communities. Most of the population is involved in agriculture, mainly producing grains, wheat, sesame, chilli, maize, onion, and garlic, and often selling them to the Monywa market. Wood and wooden products also cover a relevant share of the market, as do cultural products such as bamboo hats and traditional cotton apparel.

Monywa District

Monywa District comprises four townships: Monywa, Budalin, Chang-U, and Ayadaw. It borders Shwebo District to the north and east, Yinmarbin District to the west, and Sagaing District to the south. Its territories are mostly lowlands with sporadic hills and are crossed by the Chindwin river, connecting the district to the sea. Monywa city is the capital of Sagaing Region and a major trade centre. Most people are employed in the agriculture sector, with tanaka, sunflower, millet, sesame, beans, peas, and cotton as main crops. However, agricultural production shifts towards tomato, onion, garlic, chilli, and flowers along the river while rice can only be grown in irrigated areas. Forestry is another relevant sector, producing teak, bamboo, and hardwood products.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ministry of Union Government Office. Kalay District Profile. 2019. <https://www.mougo.gov.mm/district/%E1%80%80%E1%80%9C%E1%80%B1%E1%80%B8%E1%80%81%E1%80%9B%E1%80%AD%E1%80%AF%E1%80%84%E1%80%BA/>

⁶ Key informant interview on file with the CAR facility.

7 Myanmar Ministry of Labor, Immigration, and Population. 2014 Census. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/2014-myanmar-population-and-housing-census-thematic-report-population-dynamics-census#:~:text=For%20instance%2C%20before%20the%20Census,less%20than%20the%20previous%20estimate.>

8 Ministry of Union Government Office. Katha District Profile. 2019. https://data.opendevopmentmekong.net/library_record/township-profiles-of-myanmar-sagaing-region/resource/51d7c9d4-a9c7-430b-b0c0-efb9e73ade19

9 Ministry of Union Government Office. Katha District Profile. 2019. <https://www.mougo.gov.mm/district/%E1%80%80%E1%80%9E%E1%80%AC%E1%80%81%E1%80%9B%E1%80%AD%E1%80%AF%E1%80%84%E1%80%BA/>

The district's textile industry is also renowned for its traditional clothes and blankets.

Approximately 757,358 people inhabit the district, with 32% in urban areas and 68% in rural areas.⁷ The main ethnicity is Bamar and the main religion is Buddhism. Still, there are Muslim, Christian, and Hindu communities as well as traditional animists.

Katha District

Katha District comprises four townships: Bamauk, Inndaw, Katha, and Tigyaing. It is in northern Sagaing, bordering Kachin State to the north and Shan State to the east. It is crossed by the Irrawaddy and Shweli river valleys, and is mainly flat in the east and south and mountainous and forested in the north and west. The two main rivers and several additional streams are the main water source for agriculture and waterways for trading, making Katha District one of the most economically relevant areas of the Region, along with its railway and road networks. The climate is hot and dry and the majority of the population is employed in agriculture; in general, Katha district is locally self-sufficient in terms of agricultural production.⁸ Main agricultural outputs are rice and sugarcane, timber, and other forest products, often exported. Freshwater fishing is another relevant industry, followed by mining of gold and other minerals, often carried out informally.

Approximately 501,110 people inhabit this District, of whom 12% live in urban settings and 88% in rural areas. The main ethnicity is Bamar, but the Shanni compose a major community, and there are also Kadu, Ganan, Kachin, and Naga minorities. Buddhism is the main religion.⁹



Houses are seen burning in Thapyay Aye village. Courtesy of Myanmar Now

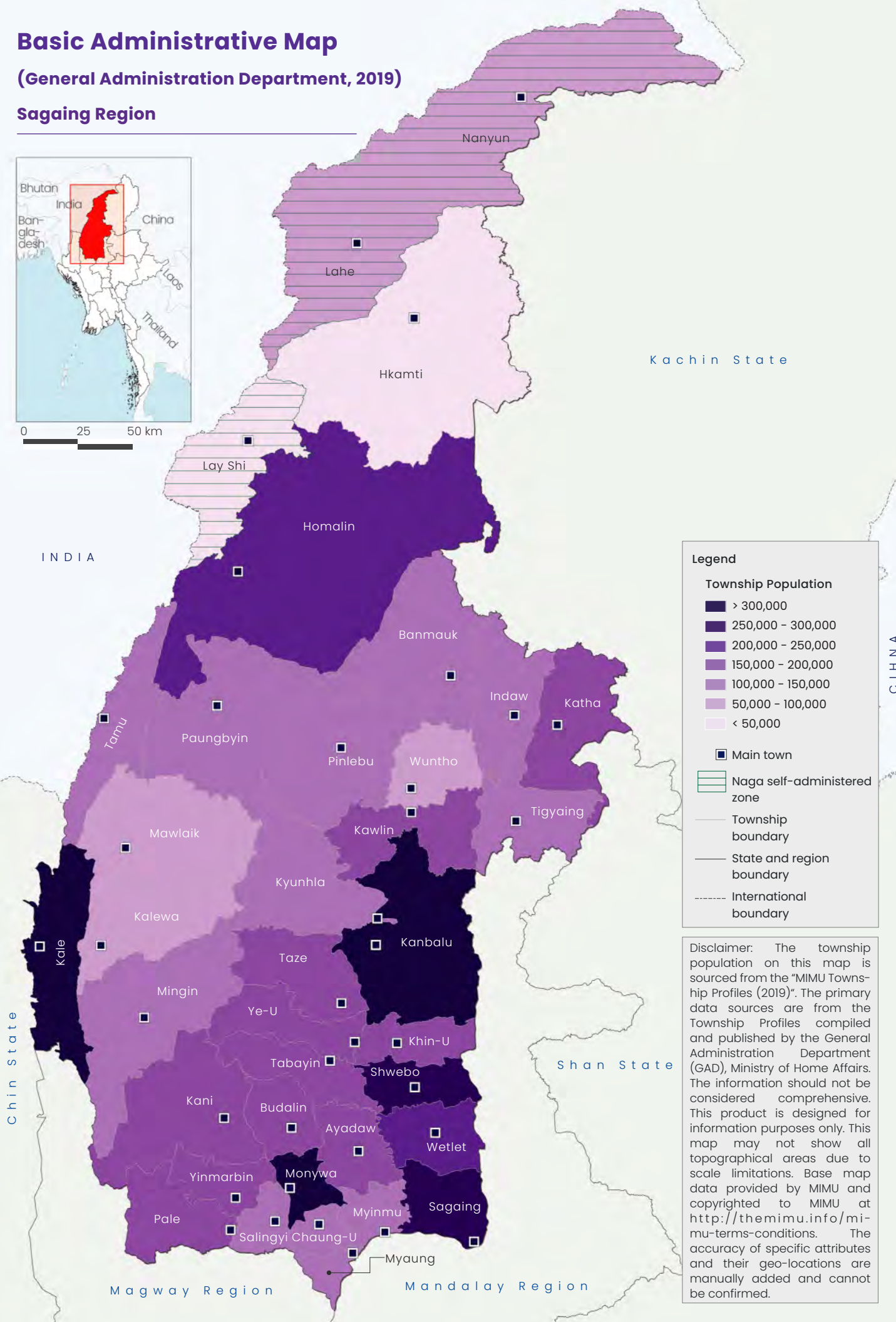
Basic Administrative Map

(General Administration Department, 2019)

Sagaing Region



0 25 50 km



Legend

Township Population

- > 300,000
- 250,000 - 300,000
- 200,000 - 250,000
- 150,000 - 200,000
- 100,000 - 150,000
- 50,000 - 100,000
- < 50,000

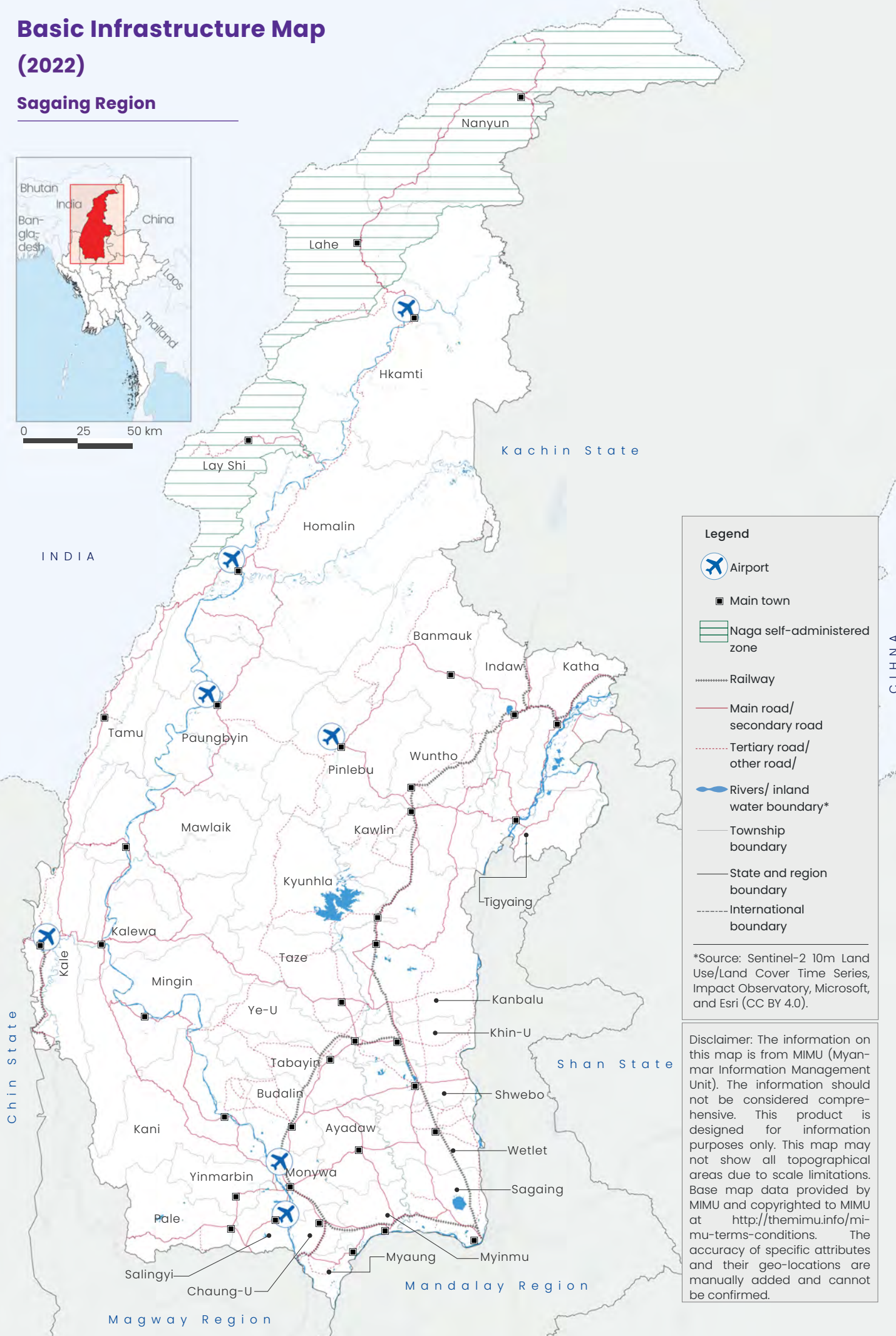
- Main town
- Naga self-administered zone
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary

Disclaimer: The township population on this map is sourced from the "MIMU Township Profiles (2019)". The primary data sources are from the Township Profiles compiled and published by the General Administration Department (GAD), Ministry of Home Affairs. The information should not be considered comprehensive. This product is designed for information purposes only. This map may not show all topographical areas due to scale limitations. Base map data provided by MIMU and copyrighted to MIMU at <http://themimu.info/mimu-terms-conditions>. The accuracy of specific attributes and their geo-locations are manually added and cannot be confirmed.

Basic Infrastructure Map

(2022)

Sagaing Region



Legend

- Airport
- Main town
- Naga self-administered zone
- Railway
- Main road/secondary road
- Tertiary road/other road/
- Rivers/ inland water boundary*
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary

*Source: Sentinel-2 10m Land Use/Land Cover Time Series, Impact Observatory, Microsoft, and Esri (CC BY 4.0).

Disclaimer: The information on this map is from MIMU (Myanmar Information Management Unit). The information should not be considered comprehensive. This product is designed for information purposes only. This map may not show all topographical areas due to scale limitations. Base map data provided by MIMU and copyrighted to MIMU at <http://themimu.info/mimu-terms-conditions>. The accuracy of specific attributes and their geo-locations are manually added and cannot be confirmed.

¹⁰ The Guardian. 2012. "Burmese troops crack down on mine protest before Aung San Suu Kyi visit." *Guardian*. 29 Nov 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/29/burma-mine-protest-letpadaung>

¹¹ Burma News International. 2020. "Sagaing Locals Demand Tatmadaw, Shanni Army Cease Fighting." *BNI*. 27 Apr 2020. <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/sagaing-locals-demand-tatmadaw-shanni-army-cease-fighting>

Demographics and Background

As noted above, Sagaing Region is heavily composed of Bamar Buddhists, albeit with small Christian and Muslim communities and a plethora of different ethnic minorities such as the Chin, Kachin, and Naga. Sagaing Region, alongside neighbouring Magway and Mandalay Regions, holds a central space in Burmese nationalist conceptions of Myanmar, and the three are often seen as the 'Burmese heartland'. This is in large part because Burmese nationalist narratives generally begin with ancient and mediaeval Burmese kingdoms; the Pagan Kingdom of the 11th century, which many Burmese would credit as the first recognizable Burmese kingdom, had its origins in Sagaing Region. Sagaing Region has thus long been seen as being part of any nationalist conception of 'Burma', as opposed to the ethnic states where the Myanmar military has engaged in conflict for decades. The Myanmar military has long prioritised recruitment from Sagaing Region (as in many other Bamar-majority areas), and people from Sagaing Region occupy prominent positions throughout both the previous National League for Democracy (NLD) government and the post-coup State Administration Council (SAC).

Prior to the coup there was little to no conflict in Sagaing Region, except for two major security dynamics of note. The first was a major crackdown on a public protest against the Letpadaung copper mining project near Monywa in November 2012, which attracted international attention and questioning of the nature of the 'democratic transition' then being emphasised in Myanmar.¹⁰ The second was a series of anti-Muslim riots which took place multiple times starting in 2012. There was not significant activity by armed groups in Sagaing Region in the years preceding the coup, except for the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) in the upper Chindwin river area,¹¹ and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) near the border with Kachin State.

Despite the ties of many in Sagaing Region to the Myanmar military, much of the region's population enthusiastically supported the NLD, which won a large majority of seats in the 2015 elections. In the 2020 elections, the NLD won every one of Sagaing Region's seats in the upper house, and 36 out of 37 seats in the lower house, with the remaining seat going to the military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

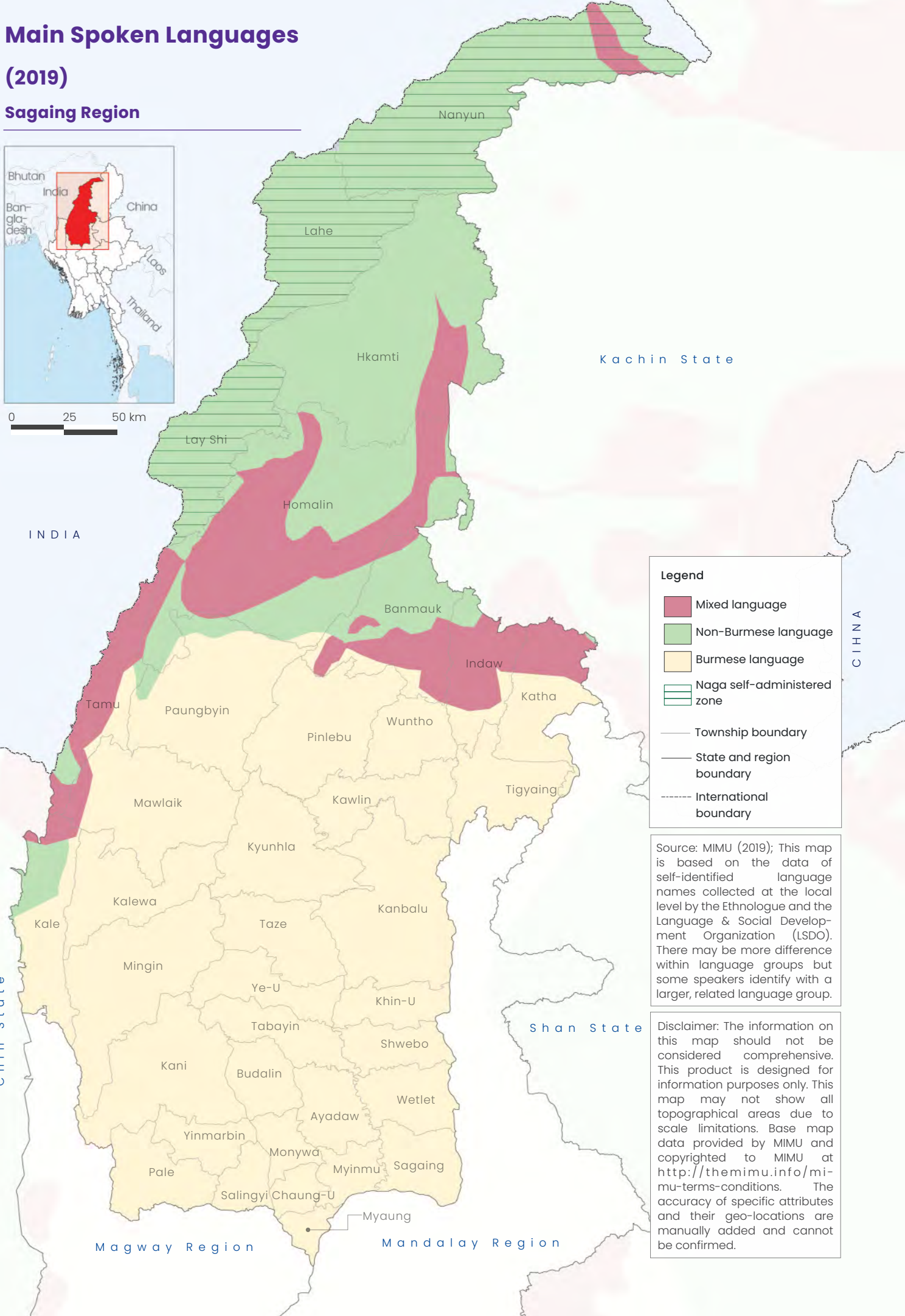
Main Spoken Languages

(2019)

Sagaing Region



0 25 50 km



Legend

- Mixed language
- Non-Burmese language
- Burmese language
- Naga self-administered zone
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary

Source: MIMU (2019); This map is based on the data of self-identified language names collected at the local level by the Ethnologue and the Language & Social Development Organization (LSDO). There may be more difference within language groups but some speakers identify with a larger, related language group.

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Chin state

CHINA

INDIA

Kachin State

Shan State

Magway Region

Mandalay Region

Myaung

Pale Salingyi Chaung-U Myinmu Sagaing

Yinmarbin Ayadaw Wetlet

Kani Budalin Shwebo

Mingin Ye-U Khin-U

Kale Kalewa Taze Kanbalu

Mawlaik Kyunhla

Tamu Paungbyin Pinlebu Wuntho

Indaw Katha

Banmauk

Homalin

Lay Shi

Hkamti

Lahe

Nanyun

Post-Coup Developments and Public Administration

Within ten days of the 1 February coup, mass protests erupted in almost every township in Sagaing Region, calling for the release of detained political leaders and the recognition of the 2020 election results. By the end of February, members of the NLD, student union leaders, and youths who led the demonstrations formed strike committees in various townships in collaboration with other strike committees across the country. Like in other parts of Myanmar, large numbers of staff from the public and private sectors in Sagaing Region also joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) in response to public calls and encouragement of prominent political leaders. The protests in major towns gradually weakened after March due to SAC crackdowns, including arrests and killings of protesters. However, anti-coup demonstrations have continued in many rural areas.

The highest reported death toll of protesters in the region was in Monywa city, where 23 protesters were killed in March. Also in March, deaths were reported in Kalay, Khin-U, Chaung-U, Kawlin, Shwebo, and Sagaing Towns.¹² As a reaction to the increasingly violent crackdowns, in March civilians began to form and join armed resistance groups known as Peoples Defence Forces (PDFs), encouraged by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the newly formed National Unity Government (NUG).¹³ A large number of these civilians and NLD members that were willing to take up arms in the region chose to link up with the KIA — taking the opportunity to receive military training — despite most not having cultural and political ties to Kachin communities. However, other local PDFs and strike committee members who remained in the region began armed resistance against the Tatmadaw using locally seized weapons and homemade rifles.

Generally, by the summer of 2021, there were three types of PDF groups in Sagaing:

- › PDF groups formed after activists received KIA training, essentially operating under the umbrella of the KIA, particularly along the Sagaing-Kachin border;
- › PDF groups formed or led by individuals that received some KIA-training, but operating independently of the KIA;
- › PDF groups formed by locals who did not receive any military training from the KIA or other ethnic armed organisations (EAOs).

Notably, while most PDF groups are nominally under the control of the NUG, they receive only small levels of ‘real’ NUG coordination. To that end, the KIA has encouraged independent PDF groups to establish regular contact and coordination with the NUG. Indeed, in late October, the KIA announced it would only supply Sagaing PDF groups under the condition that they were unified under NUG coordination structures.

By the summer of 2021, local PDF groups had initiated a series of targeted bombings against government or military infrastructure, and assassinations of village administrators, their family members, and military informants (known as “dalan”) across various townships in the region, with an increasing level of coordination among themselves and with other EAOs. In response to these

¹² This number is based on various local and national media and social media reports. The actual number of civilian deaths is likely higher.

¹³ Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, 2021. “Statement informing the right of citizens to practice self-defense in response to terrorist violence.” Last modified 14 Mar 2021. <https://crphmyanmar.org/statement-informing-the-right-of-citizens-to-practice-self-defense-in-response-to-terrorist-violence/>

14 Radio Free Asia. 2021. “ဒီပဲယင်း NLD အမတ်တွေရဲ့ မိသားစုဝင်တွေ အဖမ်းခံကြရ” [Family members of NLD MPs were arrested.] RFA. 18 Aug 2021. <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/nld-mp-family-arrested-in-tabayin-08182021052340.html>

increasing PDF activities, the SAC began to conduct mass raids and a series of arbitrary arrests.¹⁴ There has been an increase in the number of reported civilian victims, including from mass killings. For example, in July 2021, SAC troops in Kani Township reportedly arrested and killed around 40 civilians, including children, after accusing them of being PDF members. These early raids caused the displacement of thousands of people, the majority of whom eventually returned to their homes, although many remain displaced.

Following the formation of PDFs, Peoples Administration Organizations (PAOs) also began to form across Sagaing Region. PAOs are local level governance bodies aligned with the NUG, and nominally sit under the NUG’s Ministry of Home Affairs and Interior. However, in practice the large majority of PAOs actually answer to PDFs and are frequently the governance and service provision arm of local PDFs. In practice, in most areas where they exist, PAOs have relatively low capacity; that said, several have displayed considerable service provision wings, especially in education, healthcare, and justice provision. Other ‘people’s organisations’ have been set up, in concert with the PDFs and PAOs. These include the Pa Ka Pha (People Defense Team), which practically function as local village-level militias, and the Pa La Pha (People Security Team), focused on law enforcement at the township and village level. These bodies do not exist in all locations, and the relationships between PDFs, PAOs, Pa Ka Pha, and Pa La Pha are neither stable nor formalised.

By the end of October 2021, pro-military media sources reported that the SAC had launched an offensive in Sagaing Region — “Operation Alongmintayar” — as part of its larger “Operation Anawrahta”, which also targeted Chin State and Magway Region. Large-scale SAC troop movements and the widespread escalation of conflict, including aerial attacks with helicopters, became the norm in much of both lower and upper Sagaing Region. Since this time, Sagaing has hosted the most intense conflict in Myanmar, with daily clashes, airstrikes, and burning of villages. By and large, the SAC has lost control of the majority of rural Sagaing; however, some urban areas such as Sagaing town, as well as major road networks, are still under SAC control, and the SAC maintains the ability to move troops and launch raids at will throughout the region.

At the same time that conflict intensified in Sagaing Region, the SAC also stepped up its efforts to mobilise elements of the population into local pro-military militias. Known as Pyu Saw Htee, these militias are generally composed of USDP supporters, former military members, and people with Burmese nationalist tendencies. However, individuals are also regularly threatened or forcibly conscripted into Pyu Saw Htee groups. The degree to which Pyu Saw Htees have penetrated Sagaing Region is extensive, and retaliatory PDF attacks on individuals or villages that are believed to be sympathetic are common; as such, there is in many ways a civil war inside the Sagaing Region Burmese community.

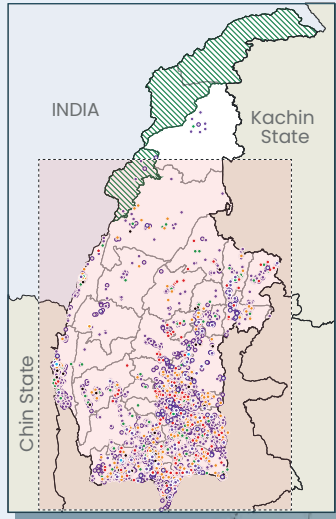
Below is a district by district assessment of the current status of control. Please note that these assessments are estimates at best, informed by local key informants; they should not be taken as authoritative or definitive.

Key Security Incidents

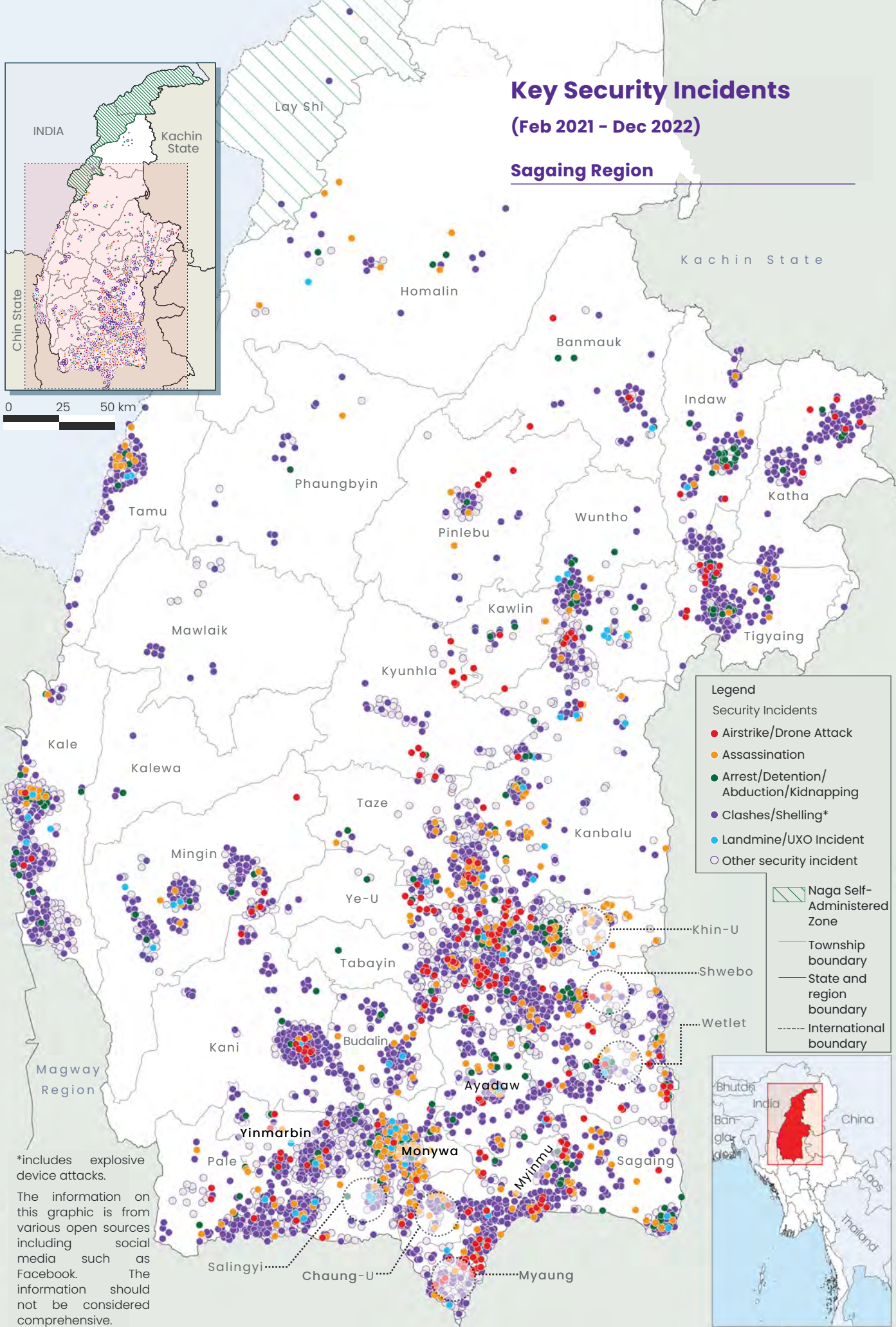
(Feb 2021 - Dec 2022)

Sagaing Region

INDIA



Chin State



- Legend**
- Security Incidents
 - Airstrike/Drone Attack
 - Assassination
 - Arrest/Detention/Abduction/Kidnapping
 - Clashes/Shelling*
 - Landmine/UXO Incident
 - Other security incident

- Naga Self-Administered Zone
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary



*includes explosive device attacks.
 The information on this graphic is from various open sources including social media such as Facebook. The information should not be considered comprehensive.

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Kanbalu District

After the 1 February coup, protests and CDM participation started to spread in Kanbalu, leading to the paralysis of SAC governance systems in rural areas as most village administrators resigned. When the SAC intensified its crackdown and political arrests, civilians started to take up arms and form local PDF groups — more or less affiliated with the NUG — to fight against security forces and provide governance. On the other hand, SAC institutions and the Pyu Saw Htee consolidated their influence in urban areas of Kanbalu.

As of December 2022, approximately 65% of Kanbalu's villages are now administered by PDF or other anti-SAC armed groups, while the remaining 35% remain in SAC hands. CDM civil servants provide education and healthcare services in PDF-led rural areas and are nominally connected with NUG ministries, aligning their programmes to NUG policies and directives; that said, the actual linkages to NUG ministries is often questionable. SAC authorities still provide such services in urban areas. As conflict continues to spread across Kanbalu District, mostly around those settlements where PDF groups are suspected to be based, continuity of services cannot be ensured.

Critically, Kanbalu District has the highest concentration of Pyu Saw Htee strongholds, with several organised by a notable local Buddhist leader who is a member of Ma Ba Tha, who has mobilised support from SAC field commanders. Notably, Kanbalu hosts much of Sagaing Region's Muslim communities, which is often cited as one of the key reasons why Ma Ba Tha has drawn considerable support in Sagaing Region. According to local reports, the Pyu Saw Htee are well organised in Kanbalu, wear proper uniforms, and are well equipped due to SAC supplies, reportedly provided from government development funds and donations for religious affairs.¹⁵

Shwebo District

After the coup, SAC administration systems collapsed in much of Shwebo District due to the massive resignation of village administrators. SAC-appointed administrators mainly remain only in urban areas and USDP strongholds; in the remainder of Shwebo, PDFs have threatened or assassinated administrators that continued to operate under the SAC system, and many have resigned. Activities such as tax collection and requesting the repayment of agricultural loans are thus essentially impossible for SAC officers in rural areas, and the SAC judiciary system is no longer functional in most communities. In March 2022, several NUG-linked PAOs were established to provide services and administration across rural areas in Shwebo in coordination with local PDFs. Still, these PAOs cannot be said to cover all of Shwebo, and numerous communities remain essentially ungoverned. Moreover, as they do not have full control over their territories, PAO administrators regularly have to flee when security forces approach. Meanwhile, the SAC has tried to establish rudimentary local level administrative bodies led by the Pyu Saw Htee groups, without much result; but Pyu Saw Htee members still extort money from communities and reportedly sometimes loot villages.

NUG-linked governance bodies are involved in education service delivery in Shwebo, mostly staffed by CDM teachers. Despite such services not being consistent and homogeneously delivered across all townships and villages, there are at least 90 NUG-linked schools in Shwebo District, covering the needs of over 300 villages, and the number of schools is growing. Healthcare

provision is far less comprehensive. Few local organisations are able to provide healthcare services in the district, but people can still refer to CDM medical workers for minor issues. Still, numerous townships are underserved or not served at all. SAC hospitals are only open in urban areas and, more often than not, locals try to avoid them, fearing security risks. Besides education and sporadic healthcare support, NUG-linked institutions rarely have the capacity or funds to cover other governance functions and are primarily used for dispute resolution, judiciary matters, and IDP support activities.

Conflict rages across the district, with SAC forces regularly raiding and burning villages, launching air strikes, killing cattle, and looting supplies. The compromised security situation also has led to a rise in other crimes, such as robbery and sexual violence. Currently, the conflict is focused primarily on the Shwebo-Mandalay road in Wetlet Township, villages to the west and east of Wetlet town, and villages on the Mu river, but clashes are quickly spreading across all other areas of the district, especially Shwebo and Tibayin Townships.

Kalay District

As in other districts, the SAC has control in urban areas but little influence over rural areas, where most village administrators resigned after the coup and other public servants joined the CDM. PAOs are taking up a governance and administrative role, trying to fill SAC gaps mainly in security, aid, education, and healthcare. Still, the NUG prioritises its resources for PDF armament, so aid to IDP communities is scarce. Overall, local sources estimate that approximately 30% of settlements are under SAC or Pyu Saw Htee control, while the remaining 70% are either managed by NUG affiliated bodies or are essentially ungoverned.

With service delivery disrupted, communities largely self-organise basic services; youth and volunteers thus play a vital role in service delivery. The SAC still provides healthcare, education, justice, and security within urban settlements under its control. In both rural and urban areas, however, people generally mistrust SAC-delivered healthcare and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, and they prefer to rely on mobile clinics and WHO support. As for education, SAC schools are open, while NUG-linked organisations are currently attempting to establish and operate more schools in areas under their influence. Christian communities also provide education and aid, especially in the northern part of the district, while monks provide greater basic services in the southern part.

As in most other parts of Sagaing, SAC forces in Kalay regularly engage in armed clashes with PDFs and attacks on civilians; raiding villages, burning down houses, and targeting civilians with arbitrary arrests and killings are common. These threats have triggered considerable displacement, and are having dire consequences on the economy — causing unemployment, rising prices, and disrupted access to job markets — and education.

Yinmarbin District

Similar to other parts of Sagaing, PDFs and PAOs have increased their influence in Yinmarbin District and now control a majority of the rural communities in the north, south, and west of the district. PDFs and PAOs provide some degree of security, healthcare, and education services in the areas they control. However, PAO school does not cover southern Pale Township or southern Salingyi Township, and PDF village medical teams are far from being

able to cater to all healthcare needs. Notably, in Kani township, local PAOs are in the process of organising a local education board and basic health care services, though they are reportedly not yet fully functional.

Yinmarbin District is one of the most conflict-affected areas of Sagaing Region. As of December 2022, the conflict is primarily centred on southern Pale Township, Yinmarbin Township, and southern Kani Township. It has directly affected the job market and local agricultural economy in Yinmarbin District. People do not feel safe commuting for work due to the unpredictability of armed clashes and fear of being arbitrarily arrested by security forces. Many have also abandoned their homes to seek shelter elsewhere, especially in light of regular SAC village raids. Of note, the Salingyi copper mine is one of the most important economic resources in Yinmarbin District; as such, it has become one of the epicentres of the conflict in Yinmarbin.

Monywa District

SAC administration systems collapsed in most of Monywa District shortly after the coup, with administrators resigning and joining the CDM. Still, the GAD system remains operational in urban areas and some areas of Budalin Township, while the remainder of Monywa is largely controlled by PDFs, PAOs, or other local bodies such as Pa Ka Phas. That said, numerous areas of Monywa district remain essentially unserved and ungoverned, with little to no service delivery and implementation. Moreover, the SAC can no longer collect on agriculture loans or collect electricity bills and, while it still runs some hospitals and administrative offices, the bulk of the education sector is in the hands of the NUG and CDM teachers.

As in the rest of Sagaing Region, the SAC regularly conducts village raids, burning down houses and arbitrarily arresting civilians. Soldiers often walk along village streets, making villagers afraid of going out. Economic activity has been deeply impacted, especially as the entire population of some villages has been forced to flee multiple times a week to escape armed conflict. Conflict has been more intense in rural areas, especially in Ayadaw Township and west and south Budalin Township. The main road connecting Monywa city to Mandalay is also dangerous due to its potential for armed clashes.

Katha District

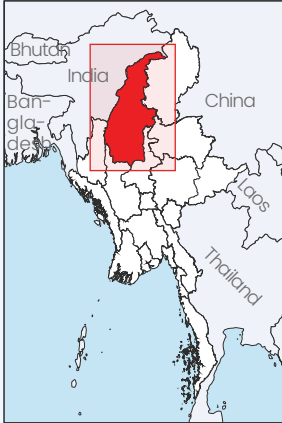
In general, NUG-linked institutions are present in most of the district. NUG governance systems or PDFs in Katha District are primarily focused on local tax collection, resolution of community disputes, natural resource management, and tackling crimes. SAC institutions are generally active only in urban areas. That said, the control of PAOs and PDFs in Katha is by no means stable, and village raids aimed at arresting PAO or PDF members is extremely common. In some areas, governance is in the hands of EAOs, such as the KIA or the SNA.

Katha District has always been ethnically and religiously diverse, and ethnic tensions existed prior to the coup. In fact, the coup contributed to unity among some previously distant communities, which now share their opposition to the SAC. However, long-standing political and social tensions between the Shanni and Kachin people has caused conflict between some villages, and the pro-SAC SNA is playing a critical role in these dynamics, deepening the divide between the Shanni population and the generally anti-SAC Kachin and Bamar populations.

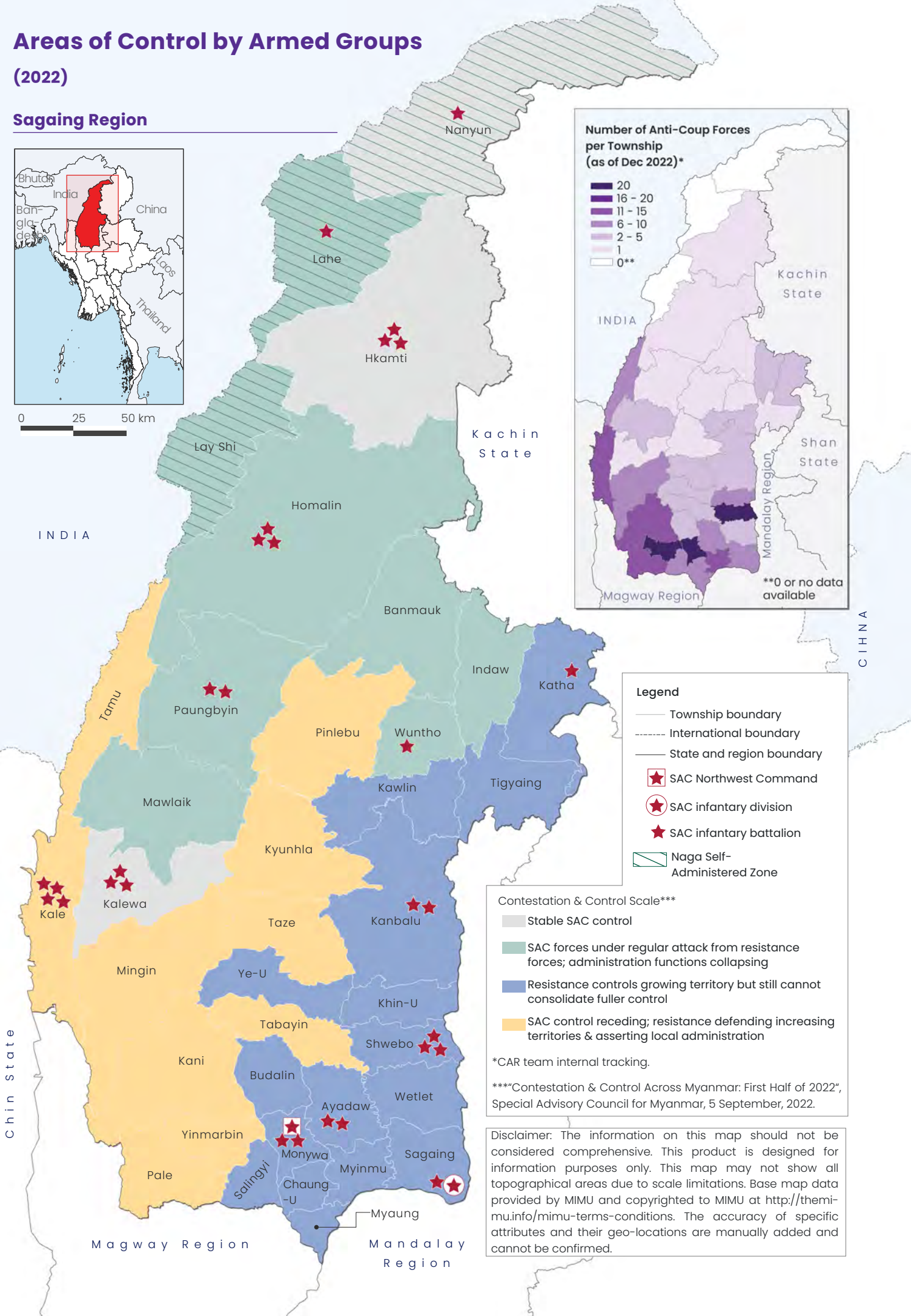
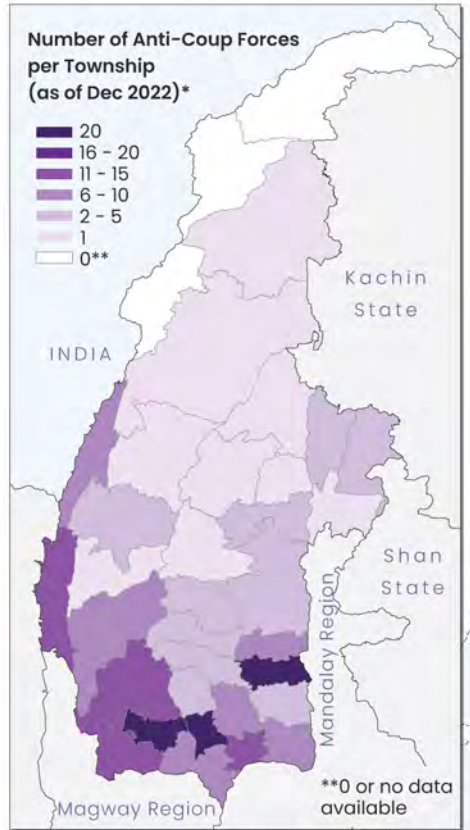
Areas of Control by Armed Groups (2022)

(2022)

Sagaing Region



0 25 50 km



A photo taken by a SAC soldier shows junta troops and Pyu Saw Htee members resting during operations in Sagaing Region in 2022. Courtesy of Myanmar Now



In Katha, there are also tensions between different NUG-aligned bodies, particularly between PDFs and PAOs regarding resource mobilisation and territorial control, but these have never escalated into open conflict. The NUG is reportedly pushing for a clearer division of roles — the PDF as a security provider and the PAO as an administrative body — but its ultimate success remains to be seen. That said, over the past six months, NUG-linked institutions have become important education and healthcare providers. There is also a growing capacity among local PDFs with respect to security provision, such as through developing early-warning mechanisms to alert the population before SAC attacks. The SAC has opened a few schools in urban areas and manages urban hospitals, having recently set up new public hospitals in Bamauk, Inndaw, Katha, and Tigyaing towns. However, locals report a scarcity of trained doctors in SAC hospitals and a general mistrust in SAC COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

While people appear to generally accept PAO and PDF administration, they are sometimes not satisfied with it, especially regarding taxation. Indeed, business owners have complained about taxes on natural resource extraction, both at the community level and to the NUG.

As conflict between NUG and SAC forces escalates, both sides commit abuses against civilians, though the SAC is the main abuser. Pyu Saw Htees and the SNA on the SAC side, and the KIA and the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) on the NUG side, are other relevant armed actors involved in the conflict. Civilian casualties are increasing, mainly during SAC air strikes or village raids. Such raids are common across the whole district.

Conflict is concentrated in villages along the Irrawaddy river, the main SAC transportation route for reinforcements and supplies. SAC ships sometimes shoot at villages when passing by, and ground troops are sometimes deployed to protect such ships, which are often targeted by anti-SAC forces.

Key Issues

Displacement

IDP Return and Resettlement Issues

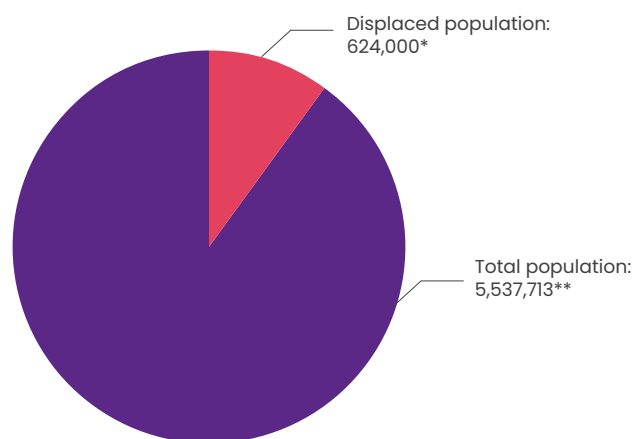
According to UNHCR, as of 30 December 2022 there were 624,000 people displaced in Sagaing Region.¹⁶ In areas with continued conflict or military presence, or where armed actors — most likely SAC or Pyu Saw Htee members — have burned down houses, civilians are taking shelter in forests or mountains, in monasteries, or in the houses of relatives elsewhere. It is difficult to assess the number of these people, because they are not in official IDP camps. According to a local youth network that tracks conflict incidents in the dry zone, there have been approximately 35,152 households burned down in Sagaing region since the coup.¹⁷ Taking as an assumption five individuals per household, this would imply that approximately 175,000 individuals - ~30% of the total recorded displacement - is likely to be long term. Additionally, in Kalay District, which is along the Indian border, approximately 10% of those displaced have fled to Mizoram State; these are mainly CDM members and ethnic Chin villagers.

In most areas however, displacement is temporary, and villagers who flee armed clashes or the presence of armed actors typically return home as soon as these actors leave, although they sometimes leave children and elders in safe areas for longer. They usually take temporary shelter in the same types of refuge — schools, monasteries, and houses of relatives — but only for a short period. In some areas, such as Katha District, a significant number of people take temporary shelter in urban areas.

IDPs in Sagaing Region do not benefit from significant international NGO assistance or from NUG assistance; though in Shwebo, Yinmarbin, Monywa, and Katha Districts, PDFs, PAOs, local CSOs, or village level structures either facilitate or directly provide food or shelter. Thus, these IDPs typically entirely rely upon local support from relatives and host communities. This assistance is most often shelter; in some cases those displaced are able to bring food when they flee. However, there are widespread shortages of food, shelter, and livelihood opportunities for IDPs in Sagaing.

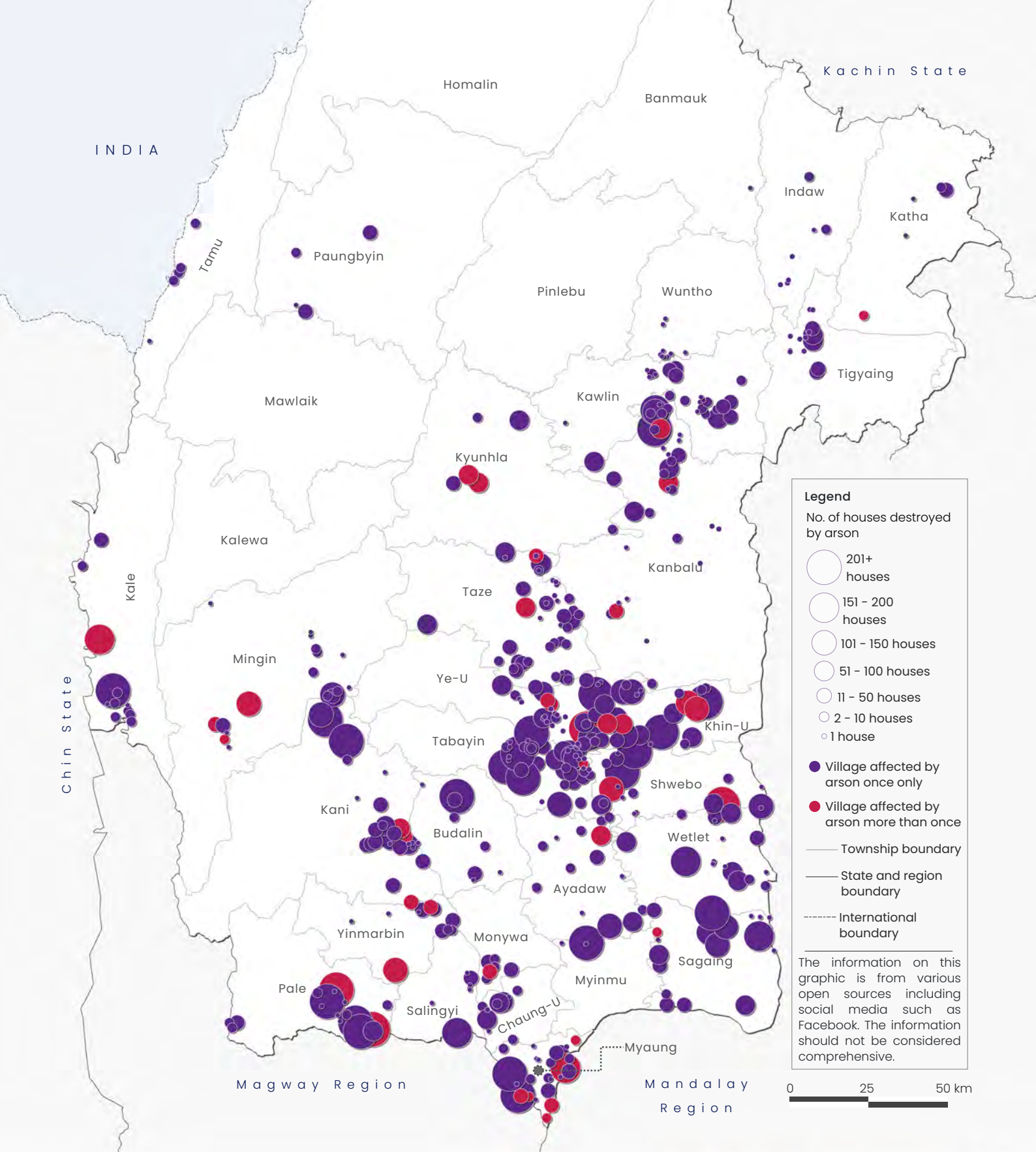
16 Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 25 | 30 December 2022

17 Key Informant interview on file with the CAR facility.



*Source: UNHCR, Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 25, as of 30 December 2022.

**Source: MIMU, Township Profiles, GAD, 2019.

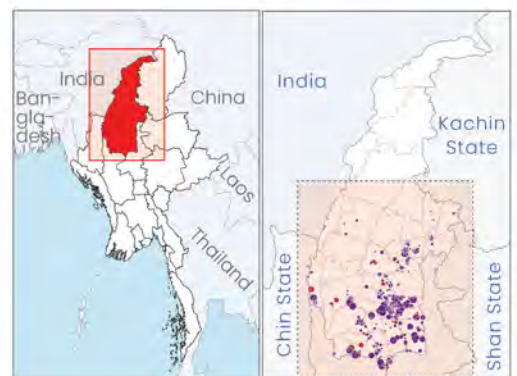


Villages Destroyed by Arson Attacks

(April 2021 - December 2022)

Sagaing Region

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People flee their homes after SAC forces raided villages in Khin-U Township, March 2022. Courtesy of Radio Free Asia



Freedom of Movement

Throughout the region, SAC checkpoints — and, to a lesser extent, Pyu Saw Htee and PDF checkpoints — prevent movement. The KIA has also set up checkpoints in some areas of its control in Katha District. Travel is also impeded by SAC- and PDF-imposed curfews, as well as by fear of conflict and explosives. In general, people refrain from non-essential travel to avoid checkpoint controls, potential encounters with armed forces, and arbitrary arrests. The SAC also continues to impose martial law in all six of these districts. It has also issued orders that two men are not allowed to ride a single motorbike together, and that its troops may shoot those violating the rule; on 1 January, it was reported that SAC troops had killed 100 such people in Sagaing Region.¹⁸

The SAC has set up checkpoints on main roads and at entry points to urban areas and other territory under its control. Soldiers check travellers' phones and belongings, and in some cases COVID-19 vaccination certificates. SAC troops have reportedly extorted 30,000-50,000 MMK (approximately 14.29 to 23.82 USD) from those lacking a vaccine certificate in Monywa and Yinmarbin Districts, and civilians are occasionally arrested or shot near checkpoints.

PDF checkpoints are reportedly more likely to be temporary and easier for civilians to pass. At least in Shwebo and Katha Districts, the Pa Ka Pha also set up checkpoints to control or tax the movement of military products, but these are also reportedly not onerous for civilian travellers. PDFs and Pa Ka Pha often establish curfews or checkpoints to warn villagers about, or prevent them from entering, areas with potential for conflict; and while violating these safeguards does not result in punishment, neither do PDFs take responsibility for harm that befalls people ignoring them. When civilians do need to travel, they often inform nearby resistance groups to ensure safety. However, despite PDFs' relative transparency about the reasons for the movement restrictions they impose, these can be particularly disruptive for traders, who cannot travel and access markets.

¹⁸ Voice of Myanmar. January 1, 2023. https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02UGDgLPt7Wlj3As1dwrBzLuDv5HmgfJosjfgHEQp3WFKRuUHnUrE6fxbQbjvPd9RI&id=123271498274532&paipv=0&eav=Afb3jcNyOlyl1xb8DDBVCgIpNq-xIRB-YYEsgMuCSDI4aLlryx2jVTIEci8HB1mpqcs&_rdr

Livelihoods and Agriculture

Agriculture

Conflict has disrupted agricultural activities in all six districts, by damaging land and crops, displacing those who work the land, and causing the imposition of travel restrictions. At least in Shwebo District, there have also been several reports of security forces arresting and sometimes killing workers in paddy fields. After production, farmers face further complications from SAC travel and import restrictions and checkpoints.

In addition to the impact of the conflict, two structural factors have dramatically impeded agricultural function. The first is the fact that the cost of fuel and agricultural inputs has also risen (nationally, but especially in Sagaing Region) due to transportation limitations and the political and financial crisis, forcing farmers to reduce their work and diminishing agricultural yields (and thereby further increasing food prices). The second is the fact that short term and low interest agriculture loans that had generally been available through the government and the GAD are no longer available in many parts of Sagaing region, as SAC administrative structures have collapsed in most rural areas. As such, farmers that were previously reliant on government loans are now almost entirely reliant on available cash reserves, forcing many farmers out of the industry entirely.

As a result, most rural households are seeing their income declining at the same time that food staple prices rise sharply. Manual labourers also face rampant unemployment and decreased daily wages, sometimes from 7,000 MMK (3.37 USD) to 3,000 MMK (1.44 USD), and many small businesses are on the verge of collapse. Indeed, more and more are choosing to migrate, searching for better economic opportunities, often informally.

Food and Markets

Both the SAC and resistance groups have restricted transportation of goods perceived to be associated with the other side, but the SAC's restrictions are much more wide-ranging and impactful. The SAC has restricted movement of cement, plastic pipes, fertilisers, electronic equipment, and gunpowder, much of which is used for agriculture but can also be used to create explosives. At least in Shwebo District, it has also restricted trade in stationary, fuel, auto parts, and clothing. Meanwhile, PDFs and Pa Ka Pha have prohibited the transportation or sale of military-produced products such as Myanmar beer, SIM cards, and other commodities.

SAC checkpoints also restrict the transportation of foods and medicines, creating shortages and creating food insecurity, particularly in rural areas and particularly affecting IDPs. Prices of staple goods such as rice and cooking oil are also increasing, in some places by up to 50% in recent months. Armed conflict is further hindering agricultural activity (and therefore the supply side), circulation of goods, market access and functionality, and purchasing power.

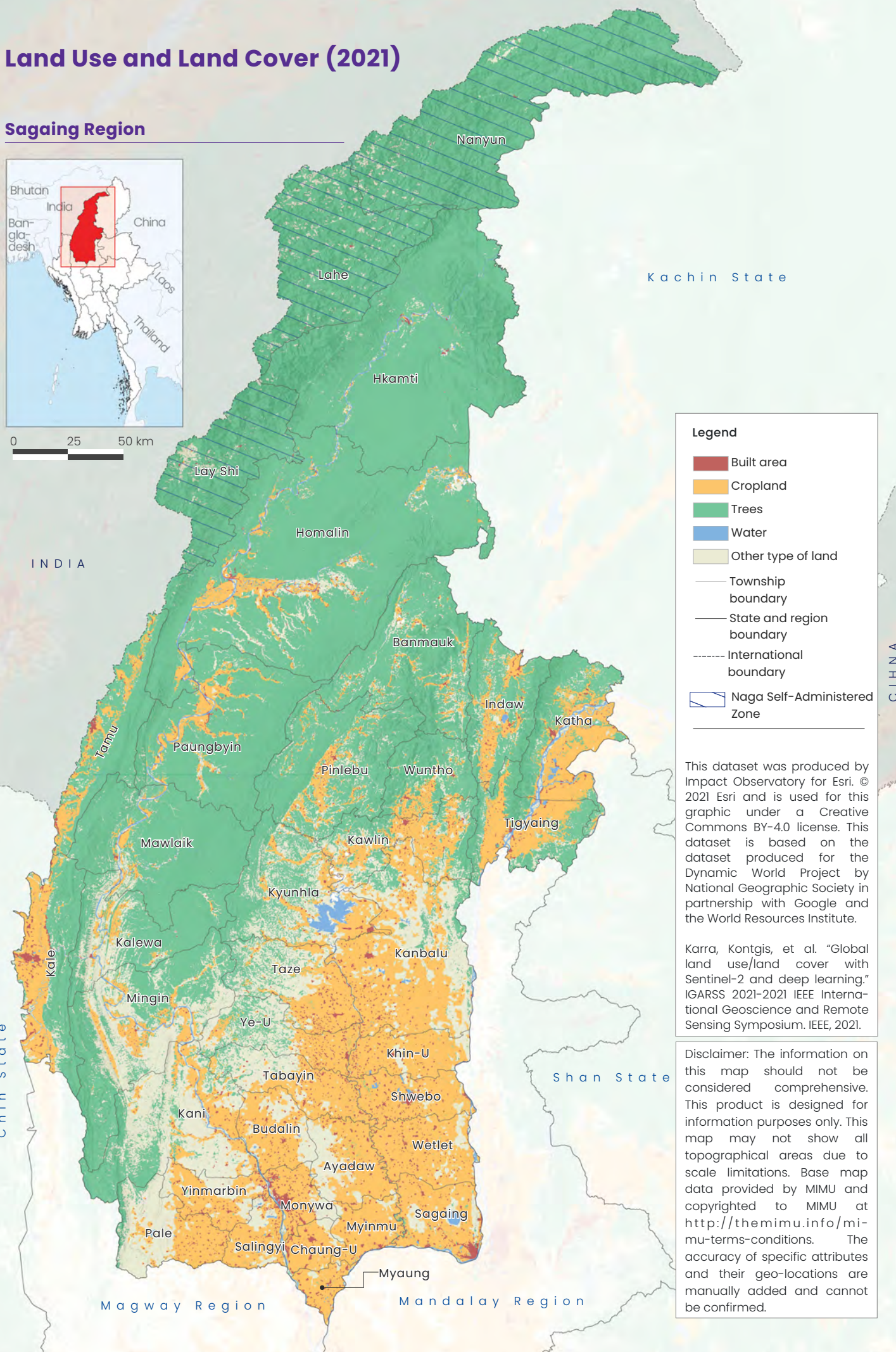
To address these issues, people have reduced their daily consumption, and some communities have started to organise bartering systems for locally-produced goods, such as exchanging rice or other crops with cooking oil. However, these systems cannot include products that need to be imported, which remain available only in urban centres at increasingly high prices.

Land Use and Land Cover (2021)

Sagaing Region



0 25 50 km



Legend

- Built area
- Cropland
- Trees
- Water
- Other type of land
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary
- Naga Self-Administered Zone

This dataset was produced by Impact Observatory for Esri. © 2021 Esri and is used for this graphic under a Creative Commons BY-4.0 license. This dataset is based on the dataset produced for the Dynamic World Project by National Geographic Society in partnership with Google and the World Resources Institute.

Karra, Kontgis, et al. "Global land use/land cover with Sentinel-2 and deep learning." IGARSS 2021-2021 IEEE International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium. IEEE, 2021.

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That said, markets do remain functional throughout Sagaing Region, even in highly conflict affected areas. Goods from other parts of the country are less available, the majority of goods are locally produced, and prices are significantly higher than in the past; however, local procurement of local goods is still very much possible, and is the default modality of most local CSOs when procuring support for IDPs.

Environmental Degradation

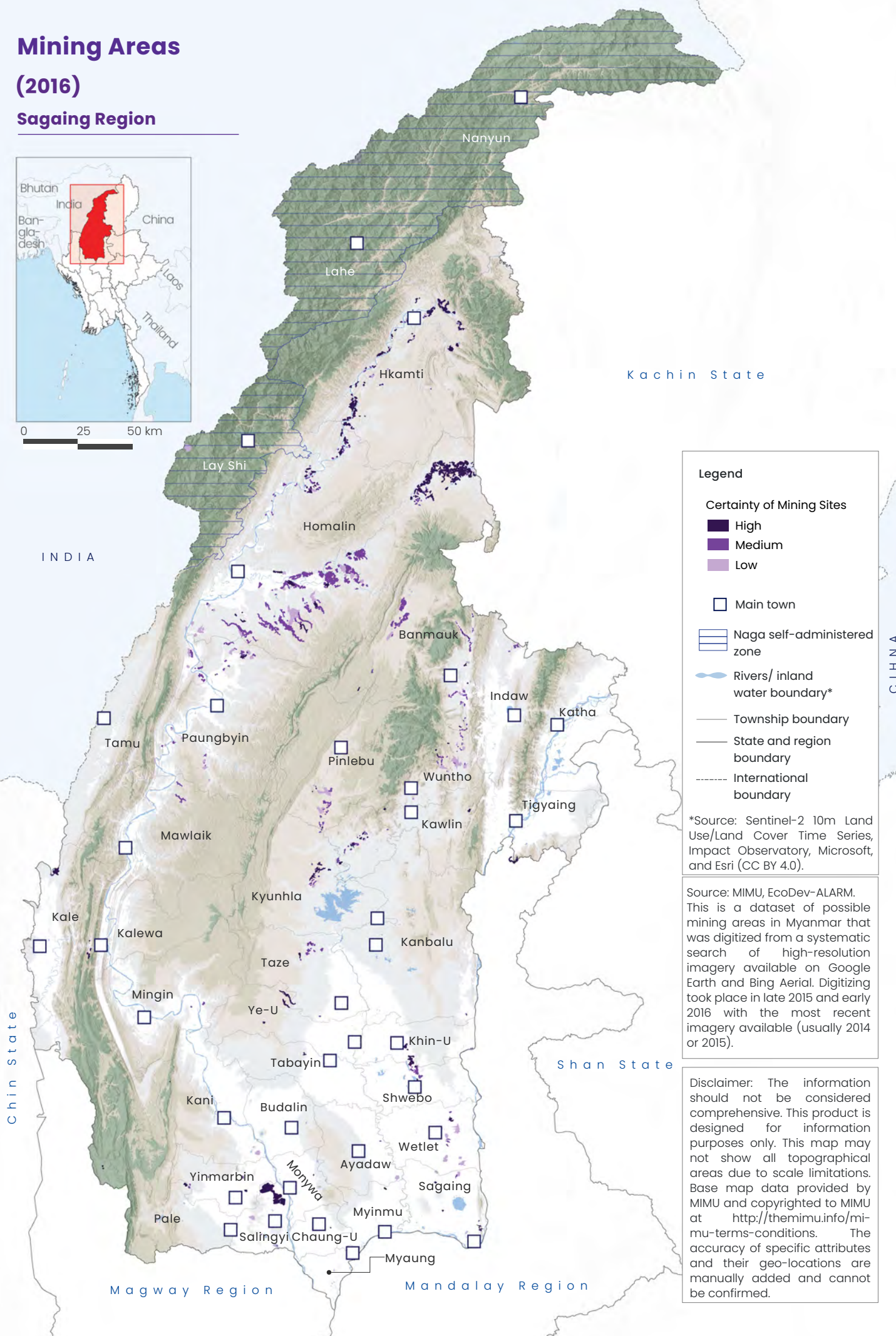
In general, communities are suffering from climate change and the depletion of natural barriers to extreme climate events. For example, excessive rains in Yinmarbin District impaired paddy and vegetable farming, further decreasing agricultural outputs. Across all of Sagaing Region, the burning of houses during village raids has worsened air pollution, and SAC land grabbing has been reported in Kalay District. Since the coup, water and air pollution in Monywa have increased, as waste disposal services declined and waste connected to industrial noodle production ramped up.

In Kanbalu District, there are reports of Pyu Saw Htee groups engaging in illegal logging, leading to unchecked deforestation. In Katha, controlling profits from timber extraction and trade has become a matter of competition between the SAC and the NUG, with little regard to environmental consequences. For example, the NUG and PDFs are levying a tax on timber production, drawing criticism for their lack of transparency on how these taxes are collected and used. Still, the NUG is trying to control logging while SAC extraction is reportedly more unsustainable. Indeed, across Sagaing, the SAC is using logging permissions as economic incentives and informal financing tools for Pyu Saw Htees and others. In Monywa District, there is also a rapid increase in deforestation to supply power for the brick production industry, causing further disruption across the territory.

Similarly, leaders of Pyu Saw Htees and other SAC-linked militias are allowed to mine gold and jade, creating environmental and health hazards such as flash flooding, which destroys houses and rice fields. This unregulated mining is also damaging critical water resources in Katha District. Indeed, the SAC is informally engaging with local businesses, accepting bribes in exchange of extended mining permits, also meaning more taxes for SAC institutions in the area. Lately, SAC forces have been seen approaching abandoned mines across Yinmarbin District.

Mining Areas (2016)

Sagaing Region



Legend

Certainty of Mining Sites

- High
- Medium
- Low

□ Main town

▭ Naga self-administered zone

— Rivers/ inland water boundary*

— Township boundary

— State and region boundary

--- International boundary

*Source: Sentinel-2 10m Land Use/Land Cover Time Series, Impact Observatory, Microsoft, and Esri (CC BY 4.0).

Source: MIMU, EcoDev-ALARM. This is a dataset of possible mining areas in Myanmar that was digitized from a systematic search of high-resolution imagery available on Google Earth and Bing Aerial. Digitizing took place in late 2015 and early 2016 with the most recent imagery available (usually 2014 or 2015).

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Gender and Protection Issues

Gender

Overall, gender-based violence has increased since the coup across all districts, including from armed forces against students and girls. Indeed, there have been reports of security forces committing rape or other gender-based violence in Shwebo, Yinmarbin, and Katha Districts. However, such cases often go unreported due to the sense of shame surrounding the events and lack of support for victims. Locals report that those areas controlled by the Pa Ah Pha and the PDF are generally safer, but tension, economic crisis, and unemployment are worsening many people's mental health, frequently resulting in increased alcohol abuse and domestic violence across the whole region. Early marriage has also increased since the coup, with poor education access driving students to drop out of school prematurely and with families struggling to provide for their children.

Many young women have taken an active role in fighting against the SAC, either by joining PDFs or by participating in the CDM, working for NUG offices in administration, judicial, healthcare, and education sectors. The conflict also pushed some into greater leadership roles and hardship when men were killed or joined PDFs, leaving women solely responsible for their households. The military, as a male-dominated institution, appears to be highly sensitive to women's resistance and thus motivated to target women for abduction, use as human shields, and other abuses.

Protection

SAC forces arbitrarily arrest, torture, and sometimes kill civilians for political reasons and during raids, often motivated by the suspected presence of people affiliated with PDFs. In a particularly brutal episode, SAC forces killed 30 civilians in Wetlet Township (Shwebo District) and burned down their village. Locals have reported that security forces captured villagers to use them as porters and human shields, and tortured and killed people during interrogation. SAC forces often extort people at checkpoints, and SAC and Pyu Saw Htee members take property during raids, seizing money, food (pork, rice, oil, salt, and other staples), and cattle.

Both SAC and Pyu Saw Htee forces carry out forced recruitment in Kanbalu, Shwebo, Kalay, and Yinmarbin (but not Monywa) Districts. In Katha District, the SNA also reportedly does so. In some Shwebo District villages, SAC forces have ordered inhabitants to keep watch; if households refuse to take their turns, they must pay 7,000 MMK (approximately 3.3 USD) for each missed day. Pyu Saw Htees also engage in forced recruitment, and this has been reported in Taze, Khin-U, and Ye-U Townships, areas where the pro-SAC group is strongest. According to locals in Kanbalu District, U Wah Thawa, the local Ma Ba Tha leader, coerces people to join Pyu Saw Htee groups — by fueling anti-Muslim sentiment, making financial threats, and threatening to burn villages down if residents do not provide recruits. In many areas, one soldier must be provided for every 10 households, and each household should provide monthly allowances to active members.

Meanwhile, PDF members have also started to raid, threaten, and beat suspected military informants, theft is increasing due to the skyrocketing cost of living (and the frequent absence of inhabitants when people flee), and social cohesion is deteriorating as governance declines, substance abuse increases, and people suspect neighbours of being informants for one faction or the other. Locals report that PDFs, Pa Ah Pha, and the NUG are working to make communities more secure and enable them to take action against such crimes; where violence against civilians is reported from PDF groups or Pa Ka Pha, the NUG tries to investigate and take action against the perpetrators. Still, tensions often arise within communities, especially when PDFs target people they suspect as informants.

Drugs

Unstable socioeconomic conditions are contributing to the spread of drug sales and consumption. PDF groups have banned such activities in their territories and, when they are not busy fighting SAC forces, have started to provide law enforcement services mainly aimed at curbing smuggling and abuse. However, locals report that members of the security forces are involved in both drug use and trade. As Katha District borders Kachin State, the PDF there often transports drug abusers to KIA rehabilitation centres. In general Katha and Kanbalu districts are known to have larger issues with drug abuse than other districts; this is largely due to the prevalence of the mining industry, and the prevalence of drug abuse amongst miners.

Health

Both the SAC and the NUG provide healthcare services, but they are generally inadequate. The SAC runs urban clinics, while PDFs, religious organisations, and volunteers try to fill the gaps as best as they can in other areas, but receive little aid to do so. Local and international organisations struggle to reach rural communities; religious institutions and CDM volunteers have better access.

SAC-affiliated hospitals are understaffed, as many healthcare workers joined the CDM. Moreover, most civilians would rather avoid SAC services, and though the SAC is still providing COVID-19 vaccines, people generally refuse to get them unless they need a certificate for travel. The SAC also lacks effective cold-chain and storage infrastructure for vaccines - not only for Covid-19, but also for basic vaccine courses such as polio - and there are rumours of people dying after getting vaccinated. Those who can afford to do so buy Indian vaccines, and the WHO supports local vaccination efforts in specific areas.

CDM and NUG healthcare is not well established yet — lacking coverage, medicines, equipment, and infrastructure — so it mainly provides restricted supplies of medicines at a high price. Where these health workers are not, citizens have to refer to private clinics and hospitals — where conflict has not yet dismantled them. Particularly for rural and IDP communities, concerns about travel safety and security make it difficult to access effective health care, and there is growing concern about infectious diseases. Rural health care for pregnant women and children, as well as vaccinations, have been suspended, and rural communities face additional challenges due to their poor living conditions, such as snake bites requiring antivenoms, now scarce and expensive. PDF medical teams provide healthcare support to some IDP communities, but these efforts are not enough to cover both IDPs and villagers' needs.

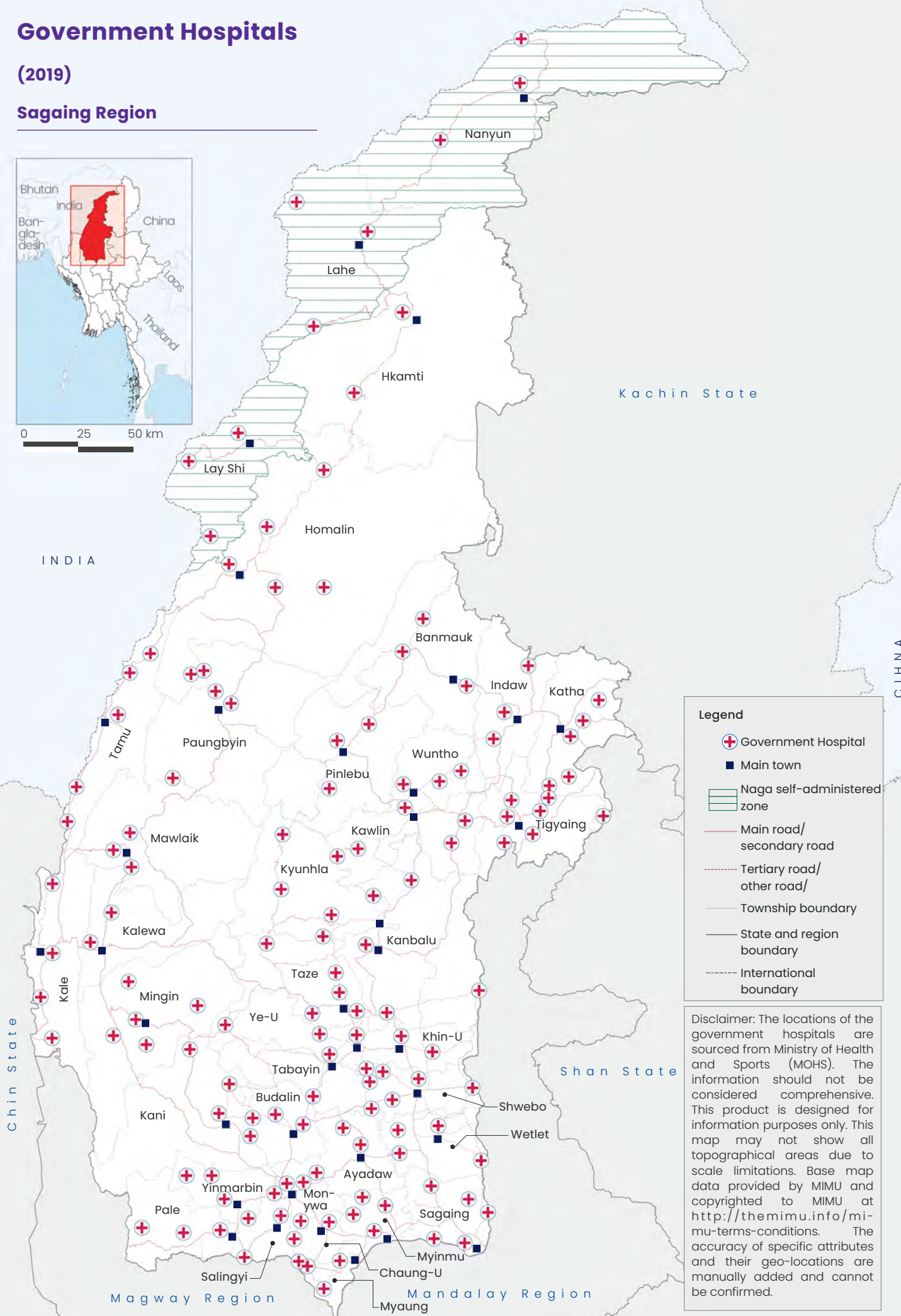
Government Hospitals

(2019)

Sagaing Region



0 25 50 km



Legend

- + Government Hospital
- Main town
- Naga self-administered zone
- Main road/secondary road
- Tertiary road/other road/
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary

Disclaimer: The locations of the government hospitals are sourced from Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS). The information should not be considered comprehensive. This product is designed for information purposes only. This map may not show all topographical areas due to scale limitations. Base map data provided by MIMU and copyrighted to MIMU at <http://themimu.info/mimu-terms-conditions>. The accuracy of specific attributes and their geo-locations are manually added and cannot be confirmed.

Due to conflict-related transportation blocks and SAC restrictions on the transportation of drugs, only basic medicines are available, at high prices, making treatment particularly inaccessible for chronic patients. There is a serious undersupply of medicines, with drug prices increasing by 50-70%. This scarcity is even more of a problem for IDP communities, which generally struggle to access healthcare, especially in informal camps.

Overall, mental health is deteriorating due to the population's constant fear of being caught in armed conflict or raided, as well as financial difficulties and worsening socioeconomic conditions. Frustration, depression, anxiety, and insomnia are common, as are domestic violence and substance abuse as toxic coping strategies.

Education

In cities and towns and other areas controlled by the SAC or Pyu Saw Htees, SAC-endorsed schools continue to operate, albeit at reduced capacity after many teachers left to join the CDM. SAC schools have appointed some new teachers, but they struggle to find personnel. Locals complain that SAC teachers are not qualified enough, driving down the overall quality of delivered education.

In rural areas, CDM teachers and young graduates — often lacking proper training — are employed by NUG schools, and students from raided and damaged villages are often taught by volunteer teachers. Most would rather join the NUG education system, but there are not enough NUG schools, students face security barriers in accessing them, and the conflict makes scheduling difficult, with students sometimes missing days when conflict flares up. In Shwebo District, there are reportedly 300-400 NUG schools open. Home schooling is also increasingly prevalent, especially amongst IDPs and in conflict affected areas.

Such schools are mainly supported by communities, as they do not charge tuition and dedicated NUG funds are insufficient. For example, in Taze Township (Shwebo District), In Taze Township, village education committees established a fee collection system to pay for teachers' living expenses: 3,000 MMK (1.44 USD) per child from kindergarten to grade 3; 5,000 MMK (2.40 USD) for grades 3-7; and 10,000 MMK (4.81 USD) for grades 8-10. Such fees are affordable to most, and low-income families are exempt. Locals report that, despite not being properly trained, NUG teachers are more highly motivated than SAC teachers to ensure children receive quality education. However, parents struggle to supply necessary materials, and Internet restrictions pose serious challenges to remote learning.

Monastic schools are another option, but not everywhere; for example, they are not common in Yinmarbin and Monywa Districts. NUG, SAC, and monastic schools are all free and generally offer the same curriculum. However, there is no mutual recognition among the different systems. Security concerns make school attendance inconsistent, as families are often temporarily displaced by attacks or fear of them; and dropout rates are high, sometimes reaching 80% and driving early marriage. Wealthier families send their children to school in major cities. In some rural areas, private education is available, with monthly fees of 3,000-25,000 MMK (approximately 1.43-11.91 USD).

Access to Information

Internet and phone access restrictions, either continuous or intermittent, prevent the free flow of information in all six districts, with repercussions for public health, safety, business, education, information, and banking where money transfer services are often delayed or barred. The cuts make it difficult for people to plan for, or travel during attacks or fighting; for students to participate in remote education; and to send or receive money transfers. Where possible, people travel to main towns to access wireless or cable internet. During emergencies, people mainly rely on short messages from family members to understand what is going on and take action, but SMS reporting is also delayed. TV is an important news source, but this system is also compromised due to the unstable electricity supply. PDFs and other resistance groups have adopted alternative means of communication to coordinate and provide early warnings to the population, such as walkie talkies or satellite radio through Indian company Tata. Fibre internet is still available in urban areas, but in other areas the population can only access 2G mobile data.

In Kanbalu District, internet access has been restricted since March 2022 and mobile connections are cut off in several rural areas. In Shwebo District, Internet access has been restricted since 4 April 2022, with only 2G mobile internet available, though in Shwebo Town those who can afford a router can access fibre internet. Due to SAC attacks, phone lines and mobile internet are often cut off for a few days in certain areas of Kalay District. Yinmarbin District faces similar problems, as the SAC has cut off internet in south Pale and north Salingyi Townships, as well as north, west, and east Yinmarbin, and sometimes also fully cuts off phone lines. Monywa District (outside Monywa Township) has faced internet cuts since October 2021, sometimes coupled with phone line cutoffs. Katha District has also faced SAC internet restrictions since October 2021 — and a total shutdown from March 2022 — and mobile phone communication is sometimes disrupted, especially during fighting.

Response Dynamics

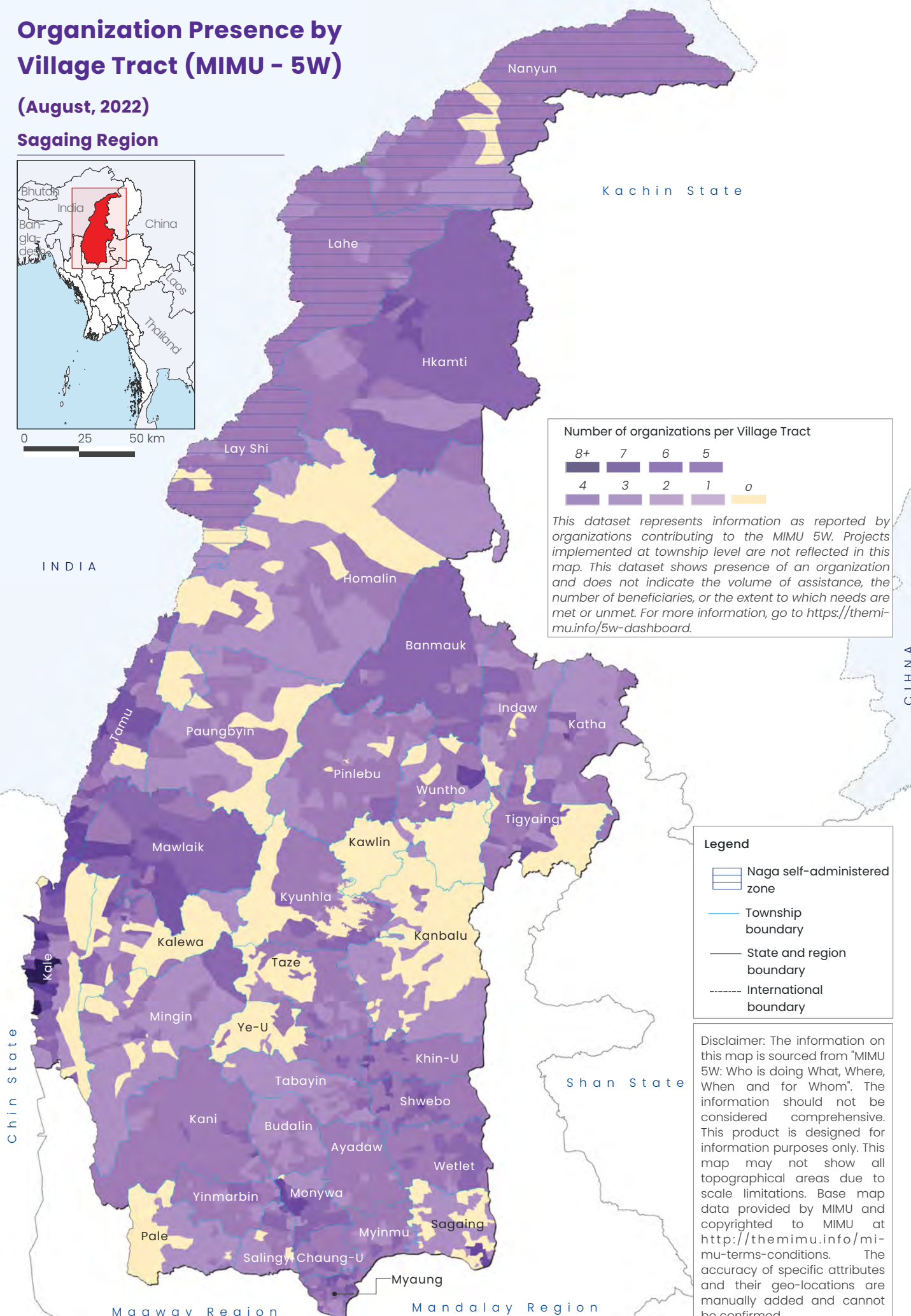
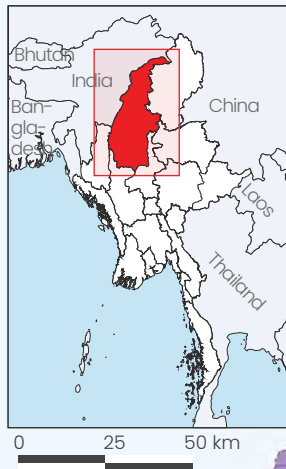
Prior to the 2021 military coup, the large majority - almost the entirety - of aid work in Sagaing was focused on development assistance, primarily in health, agriculture, and microfinance to support local agriculture. Nearly all of this work was suspended due to the conflict, or put on hold indefinitely. The local CSOs that were working in Sagaing were mainly working in healthcare or in a variety of social / democratization / cultural initiatives, and the large majority were forced to cease operations as a result of the coup and resulting conflict; most are now effectively dissolved.

As a result, the currently existing - and frankly, only - response capacities in Sagaing have been essentially built from the ground up since the coup. Initially, these initiatives were funded primarily by local and expatriate donations. These community-based organisations receive local donations, and remote cash transfers through still-functional hundi systems, and they in turn provide support to local communities in several ways. There are local organisations in Sagaing providing direct health and educational services, and many orchestrate IDP support committees. Direct cash support to people in need is a particularly common activity, as is the direct provision of in-kind goods. When this in-kind support can be procured locally - such as food provision for IDPs - it is; other goods not easily procured in Sagaing — medicines, fertiliser, etc. — are often smuggled in from Mandalay Region or Kachin or Chin State, naturally at inflated costs.

Organization Presence by Village Tract (MIMU - 5W)

(August, 2022)

Sagaing Region



Number of organizations per Village Tract

8+	7	6	5
4	3	2	1
0			

This dataset represents information as reported by organizations contributing to the MIMU 5W. Projects implemented at township level are not reflected in this map. This dataset shows presence of an organization and does not indicate the volume of assistance, the number of beneficiaries, or the extent to which needs are met or unmet. For more information, go to <https://themimu.info/5w-dashboard>.

Legend

- Naga self-administered zone
- Township boundary
- State and region boundary
- International boundary

Disclaimer: The information on this map is sourced from "MIMU 5W: Who is doing What, Where, When and for Whom". The information should not be considered comprehensive. This product is designed for information purposes only. This map may not show all topographical areas due to scale limitations. Base map data provided by MIMU and copyrighted to MIMU at <http://themimu.info/mimu-terms-conditions>. The accuracy of specific attributes and their geo-locations are manually added and cannot be confirmed.

Critically however, a significant number of the local organisations that have been created since the coup are connected to local PDFs or PAOs. In some cases, service provision is actually conducted directly by the PDF or PAO in question, usually through some form of IDP, health, or education department or committee. In other cases however, newly created CSOs are more distinct from the PDF or PAO, and instead coordinate with PDFs or PAOs. In almost all cases however, the SAC does not make this distinction; both CSOs and PDF/PAOs are considered de facto illegal, which means they face considerable security risks from the SAC and Pyu Saw Htee. Accordingly, the large majority of the humanitarian service provision and programming in Sagaing region is highly covert, and the only feasible means of international partnership with these CSOs is through remote modalities. Such modalities remain possible however, as money can be sent through hundi networks, and markets remain functional enough in most locations for local procurement.