



## **Forgotten Voices: Addressing Challenges Faced by the Double Minority Groups in Arakan**



Center for Arakan Studies

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# Forgotten Voices: Addressing Challenges Faced by the Double Minority Groups in Arakan

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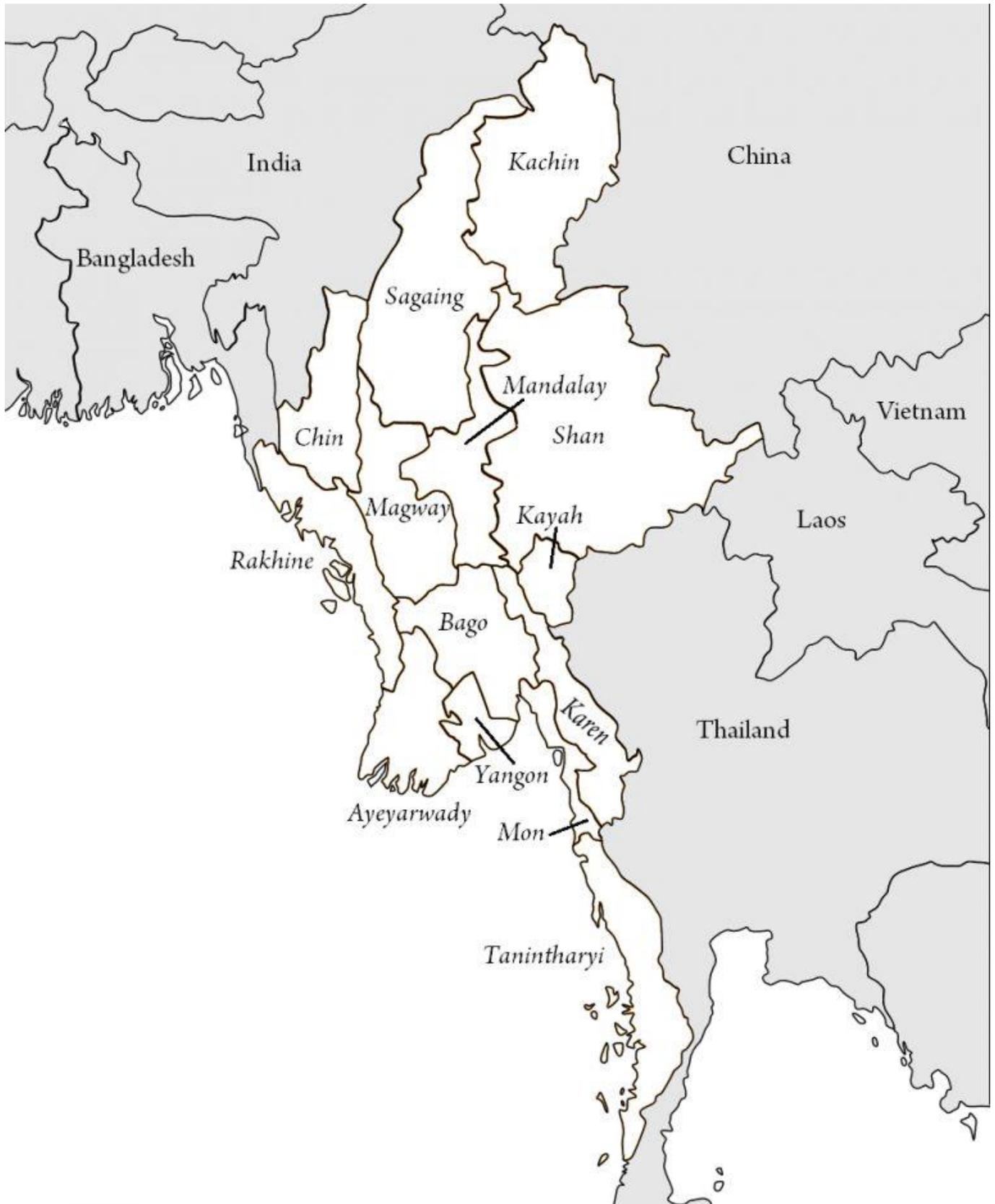
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## Executive Summary

- Arakan, known as Rakhine state, is home to multiple ethnic and religious groups. In addition to the two dominant groups, Rakhine and Rohingya, eight other ethnic and religious groups—Chin, Daingnet, Hindus, Kaman, Khumei, Maramagyi, Mro, and Thet—coexist within the region. This report collectively refers to them as ‘Double Minority Groups’ (DMGs).
- While these eight groups can be categorized under the DMGs, there are significant differences among them. These differences include political and legal representation, socio-political mobilization, economic wealth, population size, demography, and accessibility and affordability to public services in the areas.
- Apart from the Chin ethnic group, all other communities among the DMGs lack effective and meaningful political platform to present their voices and needs. The lack of political representation of the DMGs also partly comes from the existing pro-majoritarian political system and institutions established in the political environment of Arakan and Myanmar.
- The emergence of communal and armed violence within Arakan in recent decades, starting from 2012, has had visible impacts on the DMG population. However, their suffering has been disproportionately addressed by both the government and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, their voices are often ignored and marginalized.
- The DMGs have been negatively affected by violent incidents based on their locations and social-cultural characteristics and practices. In all three types of violent junctures, impacts were different. During the ‘2012 communal violence,’ DMGs such as Hindus, Kaman, and Maramagyi were mainly affected. When the armed conflict broke out in 2016 and 2017 between the Myanmar military and ARSA, other DMGs like Mro, Thet, and Daingnet living in the northern parts of the state were harmed due to their locations. The intensive armed conflicts between the Myanmar military and AA from 2018 to 2020 also negatively impacted Khamei, Chins, and Mro ethnic groups within the DMGs.
- The treatment of the government authorities toward the conflict affected DMGs in each juncture is also different. In the case of 2012 communal violence, non-Buddhist DMGs experienced the lack of appropriate protection by the authorities whereas the situation was slightly different in 2016-17 violence issue where the government efforted to rescue the DMGs in Maungdaw and Buthidaung areas. However, during the armed conflicts from 2018-2020, it is found that the DMGs also suffered from the absence of effective government protection.
- Due to various reasons such as a lack of communication, accessibility, and adaptability, the DMGs are often ignored in assistance programs initiated by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) community. Moreover, the failure to consider the DMGs, especially the smaller and weaker ones, as the key to eradicating poverty, promoting rural development and an inclusive society, and improving human rights in the region is the key challenge for the better future of the DMGs in Arakan.

*Keywords: minority, double minority, discriminations, marginalization, violence, NGOs*

- Map of Myanmar's regions and states



## Introduction

Rakhine State, historically known as Arakan, is situated on the eastern bank of the Bay of Bengal, separated by the Arakan Roma Mountain ranges from other parts of Myanmar. Within Myanmar, it shares borders with Chin State to the north, and the Magway, Bago, and Irrawaddy Regions to the east. In the northwest, it has an international border with the Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts of Bangladesh. While the term "Rakhine" formally refers to a group of mainly Buddhist Rakhine-speaking majority population in the state, there are also several non-Rakhine and non-Buddhist people in the region. Sittwe serves as the capital city of Rakhine State, and the total estimated population in the state ranges between 3 to 4 million people.

Nestled along the western edge of Myanmar, Rakhine State embodies a tapestry of cultural diversity and historical resonance. However, beneath its surface lies a complex narrative of economic underdevelopment, positioning it among the most marginalized regions in the country. Within this dynamic, the experiences of double minority groups emerge as a poignant and pressing concern. These communities, representing a mixture of ethnicities, grapple with a unique set of challenges stemming from their minority status within the complicated socio-political situations of Myanmar.

In the wake of the year 2012, Rakhine State underwent transformative events, marked predominantly by communal conflicts and demographic shifts. The state has also experienced a worsening socio-economic situation since inter-communal conflicts erupted in 2012. These conflicts escalated into armed confrontations between the Myanmar government and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), in 2016. This led to widespread displacement, food insecurity, and disrupted livelihoods. In August 2017, a major military operation by the Myanmar military further intensified the conflict, resulting in a significant refugee crisis<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, as mentioned in the paper "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict" written by Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin (2019), both local and international communities ignored the roles and feelings of double minorities groups (DMGs) locating themselves in Rakhine State while mentioning only the victims of Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine people<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed, these events have not only left an indelible mark on the region but have also significantly impacted the trajectory of double minority communities. Till now, their voices have been ignored in different ways. Therefore, in this report, the author will embark on an expansive and intricate exploration, aiming to navigate through the multi-layered challenges and difficulties encountered by these groups in Rakhine State, spanning from the pivotal year of 2012 through to the present day.

Through meticulous research, empathetic inquiry, and intimate narratives, this report seeks to not only uncover the struggles of double minority groups but also provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. It endeavors to go beyond mere documentation of difficulties; rather, it aspires to amplify their voices and highlight the resilience that defines their journeys. Moreover, this report endeavors to be a foundation for transformative change. It calls for policies and interventions that not only address the immediate challenges faced by these communities but also empower them towards a more equitable and inclusive future. It envisions a Rakhine State where inclusivity, equity, and empowerment are not just aspirations, but concrete realities for every community, ensuring that no voice goes unheard, and no challenge goes unaddressed. This report is not just a chronicle; it is a testament to the strength and potential of the double minority groups in Rakhine State.

To convey the report's contents effectively, it will commence by providing an overview of Rakhine State and introducing the double minority groups within the region. This introductory section will illuminate the reasons behind their classification as double minorities, presenting profiles and historical backgrounds to provide context. Secondly, the report will elucidate the overarching challenges encountered by double minority groups (DMGs), spanning from limited access to fundamental services to the erosion of rights in historical contexts, during the Cyclone Mocha crises,

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<sup>1</sup> Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin, Edited by Radka Antalíková, PhD, "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict", PLRI, September, 2019. (Accessed: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/myanmar/15642.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> Read Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin. "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict."

and amid the current conflicts. As the third, the report will delve into the specifics of conflict-related displacements experienced by DMGs in critical years such as 2012, 2016 and 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, detailing the adversities they faced and the subsequent impact on displacement. Following this, in the fourth section, the focus will shift to the crucial role played by leading community organizations—such as Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organizations, and International Non-Governmental Organizations—in supporting DMGs in the fourth chapter.

The report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their involvement and contributions. In sum, the report will offer an overview and synthesis of the persisting needs and aspirations of DMGs. It will encapsulate the challenges they have confronted across various crises, documenting instances of marginalization and discrimination. The ultimate objective is to present concrete policy recommendations tailored for government authorities and policymakers. These recommendations will address the multifaceted challenges faced by double-minority communities, propose social and economic interventions to enhance living conditions and opportunities, and suggest advocacy and awareness strategies to cultivate understanding and empathy for double-minority communities within the broader population."

## **Part I: Understanding the Double Minority Groups (DMGs) in Rakhine**

### **A. Minority Vs Double Minority**

While Rakhine state is named after the majority inhabitant Rakhine ethnic people, it also comprises different ethnic groups with diverse roots and characteristics. Therefore, before defining double minorities, it is essential to understand the concept of 'minority' in the nation. A minority group, whether defined by ethnicity, religion, or language, comprises fewer than half of a state's total population. Its members share common cultural, religious, or linguistic traits, either individually or in combination. Belonging to such a minority is a matter of personal choice and doesn't necessitate citizenship, residency, official acknowledgment, or any particular status<sup>3</sup>. In line with Human Rights Committee principles, the following points define who qualifies as a member of a minority:

(a) Indigenous peoples can fall under the categories of linguistic, religious, or ethnic minorities within the countries they reside in. These classifications are not mutually exclusive and do not negate any relevant rights as a minority or indigenous person.

(b) When determining if a group is a linguistic, religious, or ethnic minority, the entire territory of a state is considered, rather than one of its smaller political or territorial subdivisions.

(c) One of the key objective criteria for identifying a group as a minority in a state is numerical. A minority in a state implies that it does not constitute the majority. This objectively means that an ethnic, religious, or linguistic group comprises less than half of a country's population.

Therefore, minority rights need to be recognized worldwide. How about the double minority? Christopher Win (2023) provides a clear definition of the term 'double minority' as referring to a 'minority within a minority.'<sup>4</sup> It can be based on race, religion, culture, skin type, gender, etc. In most cases, the term 'double minority' denotes a subgroup of minorities, encompassing sexual minorities,

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<sup>3</sup> OHCHR, "About minorities and human rights, Special Rapporteur on minority issues", Accessed: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-minority-issues/about-minorities-and-human-rights#:~:text=Concept%20of%20a%20minority%3A%20mandate.combination%20of%20any%20of%20these>

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Win, "Episode #186: A Double Minority", August 2023. Accessed: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/31/episode-186-a-double-minority#:~:text=us%20on%20Patreon-%E2%80%9CThe%20term%20'double%20minority'%20simply%20means%20a%20'minority,smaller%20group%20than%20the%20Rohingya!>

women, and individuals from lower social strata, who are included within the officially recognized minority category (Das, 2009). As outlined by Beerli and Saad (2014), minorities within minorities are distinct groups that identify themselves separately from the broader minority population based on factors such as ethnicity, nationality, or religious beliefs<sup>5</sup>.

In the case of Rakhine state, in line with the official government recognition, the region is reported to have approximately 3-4 million people comprising seven indigenous distinct ethnic groups, namely Rakhine, Kaman, Khamei, Daingnet, Maramagyi, Mro, and Thet. However, Rohingya are not officially considered to be 'an indigenous ethnic group.' Of these, the Rakhine group is the predominant ethnicity in the state. On the other hand, Thet, Khamei, Daingnet, and Maramagyi are minority ethnic groups, primarily residing in the hilly areas. Additionally, the Chin ethnic group, who have migrated and settled in Rakhine State, contribute as one of the ethnic communities in the region. There are also some Hindus and other people of Indian heritage in the area<sup>6</sup>. In short, based on the ethnic and religious compositions, the eight groups such as Chin, Daingnet, Hindus, Kaman, Khamei, Maramagyi, Mro, and Thet residing in Rakhine State can be characterized as 'double minority groups' or 'minorities within minorities.' Succinct descriptions of their backgrounds will be discussed for better understanding.

## B. Profiles of Double Minority Groups (DMGs)

In this sector, the background information and socio-political state of the DMGs will be introduced. Since the names, definitions, and historical backgrounds of the DMGs are still in a complex state, the following introduction should be considered as providing general information rather than confirming a particular narrative or claim.

### 1. Chin (ချီင်္ဂ)

The Chin ethnic group is one of the largest groups in Rakhine state. Although regarded as an indigenous group in Myanmar, they are not considered to be part of the Rakhine ethnic collection. According to one source, Rohingya constitutes the second-largest group in this region, followed by the Chin's population, estimated to be around 100,000<sup>7</sup>. However, another media source, Burma News International (BNI) 2020's news, describes that approximately 200,000 Chin people are believed to predominantly reside in Taunggoke, Thandwe, Ann, Minbya, Myebone, Mrauk-U, and Kyauktaw townships in Rakhine State<sup>8</sup>. Some sources suggest a total population is only around 100,000<sup>9</sup>. According to a government source in 2017, there are approximately 81,030 Chin individuals in Rakhine State, making up 2.67 per cent of the total population in the state<sup>10</sup>.

Their primary livelihoods include lowland agriculture, mountainous farming, trade, and transportation. Additionally, there are claims of seven distinct tribes among the Chin ethnic group in Rakhine State. Some claim that the Chin in Rakhine state is 'Acho Chin,' comprising various clans such as Louktu, Laytu, etc. Despite their longstanding presence in Rakhine State, the voices and rights of these groups have historically been marginalized and overlooked.

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<sup>5</sup> Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin, Edited by Radka Antalíková, PhD, "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict", September, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Smith. "Arakan (Rakhine State): A land in conflict on Myanmar's western Frontier." Transnational Institute, December 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/RightToLand/RohingyaSubmission.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Kyaw Lynn. "The nature of Parallel Governance and Its impact on Arakan Politics." Transnational Institute, February 2022. Accessed: <https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-nature-of-parallel-governance-and-its-impact-on-arakan-politics>.

<sup>8</sup> BNI, "Rakhine State's Chin Community Struggling Amid Ongoing War, Restrictions on Movement", May 27, 2020. <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/rakhine-states-chin-community-struggling-amid-ongoing-war-restrictions-movement>.

<sup>9</sup> See Narinjara News on April 7, 2022. [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=5361658523846181&id=151742128171206](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=5361658523846181&id=151742128171206).

<sup>10</sup> MIMU, Population by Ethnic Group in Maungdaw District and Rakhine State Jul2017.xlsx, 29-Sep-2017. (Accessed: <https://themimu.info/node/59448>)

As a distinct ethnic community in the state, the Chin people have the right to appoint an ethnic minister at the state-level cabinet by the 2008 constitution. There is no distinct Chin ethnic political party in Rakhine state, but many Chin people are members of the respective dominant political parties such as the Arakan National Party (ANP), National League for Democracy (NLD), and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). They have various tribe-based associations, including 'culture and literature organizations,' and notably, the 'Chin University Students in Rakhine State' (CUSRS), which engages in activities such as fundraising for internally displaced people and conducting training programs for youth development. The Chin community in Rakhine State is also experiencing the effects of the ongoing unrest in the region.

## 2. Daingnet (Chakma) (ဒိုင်နက်)

The Daingnet people, also known as the 'Thetkama' or 'Chakma' people in Rakhine state are considered as belonging to the larger Tibeto-Burman tribal category. Genetically, they exhibit close affinities with Tibetans, Burmans, and Rakhines<sup>11</sup>. Their self-reported population in 1995 was approximately 60,000, increasing to an estimated 80,000 by 2011. According to some sources, the overall population of the Daingnet ethnic group in the country is approximately 50,000<sup>12</sup>. Conversely, a government report from 2017 stated that the total Daingnet population in Rakhine State is 17,093, constituting just 0.56 per cent of the state's total population<sup>13</sup>. However, during the CAS's Webinar with DMGs on 17th February 2024, an individual representative from Daingnet claimed that they only have around 30,000 total population.<sup>14</sup>

While their physical appearances are similar to the Rakhine people, the Daingnet possess a unique language and cultural identity. They share close ethnic ties with the Chakma community of Bangladesh and Northeast India, with their languages being mutually understandable<sup>15</sup>. The Daingnets have been devout followers of Theravada Buddhism for centuries, diligently upholding its principles and teachings<sup>16</sup>. Their primary settlements are in townships like Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Kyauktaw, and Mrauk-U in Northern Rakhine State, as well as the neighboring Paletwa township<sup>17</sup>.

The majority of the Daingnets primarily engage in agriculture, while a portion are involved in trading. Their economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, making them susceptible to fluctuations in weather patterns. The community's primary livelihood activities encompass agriculture, and for those residing in mountainous areas, slash-and-burn cultivation is a common practice. Unfortunately, due to limited economic development, widespread poverty persists among the Daingnet population.<sup>18</sup> A large segment of the population also lives in rural areas. Regarding the question of political involvement and community-driven efforts, the Daingnet people have established a political entity known as the 'DaingNet National Development Party (DNDP).' This party advocates for the cultural rights and socio-economic progress of their ethnic community. Historically, the DNDP secured a seat in the Rakhine State Parliament during the 2010 general election in Buthidaung township. However, in the aftermath of the recent military coup, the party is reportedly facing challenges in registration due to new election laws that impose higher financial and resource requirements for party registration. On this matter, U Aung Kyaw Zaw stated (March 14, 2023, Narinjara)<sup>19</sup>, "To complete the

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<sup>11</sup> သက္ကမ (ဒိုင်နက်) တိုင်ရင်းသားများ အမျိုးသားနေ့ ကျင်းပ". burmese.dvb.no (in Burmese). Retrieved 20 September 2018.

<sup>12</sup> DVB, "သက္ကမ (ဒိုင်နက်) တိုင်ရင်းသားများ အမျိုးသားနေ့ ကျင်းပ," January 7, 2018, (Accessed:<https://burmese.dvb.no/post/247045>.)

<sup>13</sup> See <https://themimu.info/node/59448>.

<sup>14</sup> Notes from CAS Webinar with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Talukdar, S. P. (2010). Genesis of Indigenous Chakma Buddhists and Their Pulverization Worldwide. Delhi India: Kalpaz Publications. p. 27. ISBN 9788178357584.

<sup>16</sup> Hattaway, Paul (2004). Peoples of the Buddhist World. United Kingdom: Authentic Media. p. 42. ISBN 1-903689-90-2.

<sup>17</sup> DVB, "သက္ကမ (ဒိုင်နက်) တိုင်ရင်းသားများ အမျိုးသားနေ့ ကျင်းပ," January 7, 2018, (Accessed:<https://burmese.dvb.no/post/247045>.)

<sup>18</sup> Diran, Richard K. (1997). Vanishing Tribes of Burma. Amphoto Books-Random House. ISBN 0-8174-5559-0.

<sup>19</sup> Narinjara, "A Party Representing Rakhine Ethnic Group Stripped of Registration for Election Failure to Comply with UEC Rules", March 14, 2023

registration, a deposit of 100 lakh kyats is necessary. Additionally, offices must be established in 5 townships at the state level. Given our small population and limited resources, we are unable to acquire 100 lakh kyats. This is the primary reason for our inability to register. I won't elaborate further."

On April 26, 2023, U Aung Kyaw Zaw from the DNDP expressed regret over the party's dissolution, attributing it to the opposing faction's superior influence. Despite this setback, he affirmed their commitment to advocating for their people, especially the Daingnet community, in times of oppression and adversity. The key notable change is the party's inability to issue official statements<sup>20</sup>.

### 3. Hindus (ဟိန္ဒူ)

The Hindu people in Rakhine State distinguish themselves from Rohingya Muslims, considering themselves ethnic Bengali and followers of Hinduism. However, they prefer to be called 'Hindus' based on their religious identity. They primarily reside in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Sittwe, and Kyaukphyu townships. While some estimates claim a population exceeding 20,000, a government source in 2017 reported approximately 8,520 Hindus in Rakhine State<sup>21</sup>. During the conflict in 2017, over 1,200 Hindus sought refuge in camps located in the townships of Maungdaw and Sittwe. They fled from the massacre and threats of the ARSA that, in August 2017, set fire to their residences and targeted members of their community, resulting in the loss of lives.<sup>22</sup>

Their economic activities include fishing, operating barber shops, engaging in trade, and agriculture. Unlike the Rohingya population, many Hindus are eligible and hold cards for 'naturalized citizenship' status, granting rights to education, healthcare, and land ownership. However, despite this legal recognition, many still face political and social discrimination.<sup>23</sup> This is often exacerbated by travel restrictions due to bureaucratic hurdles and challenges in obtaining necessary documents.

Unfortunately, the Hindu community lacks a significant political or social platform to advocate for their rights. They rely largely on religiously organized groups for community organization and support.<sup>24</sup> They are also one of the most affected communities by the communal conflict in Rakhine State in 2017, and certain displaced Hindus who sought safety in different regions of Rakhine state during the crackdown in August 2017 have expressed reluctance to return to their original residences.<sup>25</sup> Hindu communities in Rakhine State can be regarded as one of the underprivileged and underrepresented communities based on different observational sources.

### 4. Kaman (Kamein) (ကမန်)

The Kaman sometimes known as the Kamein, are widely recognized as a South Asian ethnic group native to Rakhine State, Myanmar. They predominantly practice Islam as their primary religion and are chiefly found in this region only. The term "Kaman" is said to originate from Persian usage, signifying "bow." According to a popular account, they are regarded as the descendants of those who once served as skilled "bowmen or archers" in the court of Mrauk-U for generations. However, some assert that the "Kaman" are also the descendants of the people who came to Mrauk-U along with the arrival of the Indian Royal prince, Shah Shuja, after losing a power struggle at the court of the Mughal empire in the late 17th century.

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Accessed:<https://www.narinjara.com/news/detail/641047e366b6f3021f33eab7#:~:text=The%20Daingnet%20National%20Development%20Party%20%28DNDP%29%2C%20a%20political,Union%20Election%20Commission%20%28UEC%29%20under%20the%20Military%20Council>

<sup>20</sup> DMG, "Vox Pop: Dissolved political parties see roles still to play" 26 Apr 2023.

(Accessed: <https://www.dmediag.com/interview/dsoseov.html>).

<sup>21</sup> MIMU, "Population\_by\_Ethnic\_Group\_in\_Maungdaw\_District\_and\_Rakhine\_State\_Jul2017.xlsx"

29-Sep-2017. (Accessed: <https://themimu.info/node/59448> )

<sup>22</sup> Radio Free Asia, Nearly 200 Hindu refugees to be resettled in Myanmar's Rakhine state, 3 August 2018, (Accessed: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bb72e05a.html> [accessed 21 November 2023]).

<sup>23</sup> CAS Team Observation from Local Researchers, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> CAS Team Observation from Local Researchers, 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Benar News, "Myanmar's Hindu Refugees in Bangladesh Want to Go Home, But None Have so Far", 9 December, 2019. (Accessed:<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/bengali/Rohingya-Hindus-09122019184431.html>).

Being officially recognized as an indigenous ethnic group, the Kaman are officially identified as one of the seven ethnic groups that constitute Rakhine State.<sup>26</sup> They also hold national identity cards (i.e., full citizenship cards), affirming their status as citizens of Myanmar.<sup>27</sup> According to the 2014 census, their population in Rakhine is estimated at approximately 28,000. However, community leaders assert that the national population is closer to 45,000<sup>28</sup>, while Mizzima News (2015) described their total population as around 50,000<sup>29</sup>, also Population expressed by the Kaman National Progressive Party is about 50,000.<sup>30</sup> Conversely, a government report in 2017 stated that there were approximately 14,359 Kaman individuals in Rakhine State, constituting only about 0.47 per cent of the state's overall population<sup>31</sup>.

The Kaman people maintain strong cultural connections with the Rakhine ethnic groups. As they practice Islam more liberally, they also predominantly speak the Rakhine language. They are primarily and currently concentrated in Kyaukphyu, Rambree, Sittwe, and Thandwe townships, engaging in occupations related to agriculture, trade, and basic commodity production. Addressing their political representation and community organizations in the region, there are some political and social platforms in the Kaman community. The Kaman people are politically engaged through the 'Kaman National Development Party' (KNDP), which has around 4,000 members. The party obtained official registration on July 5, 2010, and its central office is situated in Yangon.<sup>32</sup> Despite participating in the general elections of both 2010 and 2015, the party did not secure a seat.<sup>33</sup> Their primary focus lies in advocating for equality among diverse communities in Arakan State. The party is dedicated to elevating the status of individuals in Arakan by striving for legal safeguards that align with the principles of human dignity. The party's vision is centered on ensuring fair representation and protection for all members of the ethnic communities in Arakan. Regarding that, in 2020 BNI news<sup>34</sup>, U Tin Win Hlaing, the General Secretary of the party, emphasized,

"Our foremost objective is to establish equality among the diverse communities in Arakan State. We are dedicated to elevating the status of individuals in Arakan, ensuring that they receive legal protection that upholds human dignity. This involves collaborating on the amendment of laws to transition towards a federal system, as well as fostering a harmonious society among the various communities, all for the sake of regional peace, tranquillity, and development." In April 2023, U Tin Ngwe from the KNDP also expressed a desire for unity in the political sector but acknowledged that new laws pose a significant challenge to their party's survival. They regret that not all tribes can participate in elections due to these laws. Despite being an ethnic minority party, they feel they do not have substantial rights and can only address tribal challenges. Although the party no longer exists, they are committed to ensuring the voices of the Kaman people are still heard and plan to operate as a civil society organization<sup>35</sup>.

In terms of community-driven initiatives, the 'Kaman Ethnic Youth Association' (KEYA) stands as a vibrant youth organization. Their advocacy primarily centers around championing equal protection of the rights of their ethnic minority group. For instance, when the name 'Kaman' was not

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<sup>26</sup> Than Tun Win. "Composition of the Different Ethnic Groups under the 8 Major National Ethnic Races in Myanmar". *Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Brussels*. Retrieved 15 November 2013.

<sup>27</sup> "Ethnic Kaman in Arakan Still Face Travel Restrictions". Narinjara. 25 June 2011. Archived from the original on 15 November 2013. Retrieved 15 November 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Frontier Myanmar, "The Kaman: Citizens who suffer", MAY 28, 2018. (Accessed:<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-kaman-citizens-who-suffer/>).

<sup>29</sup> Mizzima, Kay Zun Nway, Myanmar Now "Newly arrived Kaman Muslims in Yangon defy govt pressure to return to Rakhine State", 23 December 2015. (Accessed:<https://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/newly-arrived-kaman-muslims-yangon-defy-govt-pressure-return-rakhine-state#:~:text=A%20group%20of%2022%20Kaman%20Muslims%20who%20came,are%20legally%20allowed%20to%20move%20freely%20throughout%20Myanmar>)

<sup>30</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>31</sup> MIMU, "Population\_by\_Ethnic\_Group\_in\_Maungdaw\_District\_and\_Rakhine\_State\_Jul2017.xlsx" 29-Sep-2017. (Accessed: <https://themimu.info/node/59448> ).

<sup>32</sup> Bni, (Tun Khaing (Narinjara)), "The policy and pledges of Kaman National Development Party", September 28, 2020. (Accessed: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/policy-and-pledges-kaman-national-development-party>).

<sup>33</sup> See BNI, <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/kaman-party-rep-responsibility-and-accountability-are-essential-political-system>

<sup>34</sup> See BNI News, <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/policy-and-pledges-kaman-national-development-party>.

<sup>35</sup> DMG, "Vox Pop: Dissolved political parties see roles still to play" 26 Apr 2023. (Accessed: <https://www.dmediag.com/interview/dsoseov.html>).

mentioned in the speech delivered by the chief of the Myanmar military on 'Rakhine State Day' on December 16, 2022, Kaman youths publicly questioned that message<sup>36</sup>.

*Notes: The Kaman people practicing Islam are often identified for their close connections with the Rakhine community, sometimes referred to as Rakhine-Kaman individuals; however, conflicting oral histories hinder a definitive understanding of their narrative. In 2014, at the Kyauk Phyu Conference, a decision was made to include Kaman as an Arakan ethnic group<sup>37</sup>*

## 5. Khamei (Khami) (ခမိခမိ ခမိခမိ)

The Khamei (also known as Khami and Khumei, people originally lived as clan or tribe-based communities, with occasional gatherings of several clans forming larger family groups. Initially concentrated in the Mechaung, Kyaukpadaung, and Nilarpadaung regions of Paletwa Township (near) Rakhine State, they eventually migrated to the southern areas of the state. According to their oral history, Mechaung was their initial settlement. Generally, they can be divided into two categories of Khamei people based on geography: the 'Awa Kahmei,' residing near the mouth of Mechaung and the lower Kalardan river, and 'Chaungphyar Khamei' (upper Khamei) living in the upper reaches of Mechaung and Kalardan rivers. They consider Kyaukpadaung Hill in Paletwa township as a significant ancient dwelling place. Even today, a substantial number of Khamei still live in proximity to this hill and along the Mechaung River<sup>38</sup>.

There are different pronunciations regarding the name of the 'Khamei' people. Inside Rakhine state, they are mostly called as 'Khami' (or) 'Khamei' while in Paletwa township, the names such as 'Khumi' (or) 'Khumei' are commonly used. The Khamei ethnic group constitutes one of the largest indigenous DMGs in the region. Currently, Khamei communities are predominantly located in the vicinity of townships such as Sittwe, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Pauktaw, Rathaedaung, Buthidaung, and Maungdaw in Rakhine State, as well as Paletwa Township in Chin State.<sup>39</sup> According to estimates, their population is approximately 30,000 inside Rakhine state<sup>40</sup>, 40,000 inside Paletwa<sup>41</sup> and a government report from 2017 indicated a total of 35,171 Khamei individuals in Rakhine State, accounting for about 1.16 per cent of the state's overall population<sup>42</sup>. However, according to a report by Dr. Myint Myint Than (2019), the number of Khamei is more than 80,000 in all of Rakhine State according to local records.

The Khamei community demonstrates a balanced religious composition, with followers practicing both Buddhism and Christianity. Much like other ethnic groups, the Khamei predominantly engage in agriculture, cultivating various seasonal crops in mountainous regions. They possess a distinct language and culture, and there is a notable social movement aimed at attaining recognition and rights from both government authorities and other communities. Within this sphere, a prominent political entity in Rakhine State, the 'Kha Me National Development Party' (KNDP), participated in the general elections of 2010 and 2015. Their primary objective is to advocate for the rights of their community and enhance the socio-economic well-being of their people<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Soe Thu Aung, Mizzima, "Kaman organizations question Tatmadaw's Rakhine State Day message", 18 December 2020. (Accessed: <https://www.mizzima.com/article/kaman-organizations-question-tatmadaws-rakhine-state-day-message>).

<sup>37</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Myint Myint Than, "A Study of the Religion and Culture of Khami Ethnic Group in Northern Rakhine State", University of Mandalay, Research Journal, Vol. 10, 2019. (Accessed: <https://meral.edu.mm/records/5880?community=um>).

<sup>39</sup> Myint Myint Than, "A Study of the Religion and Culture of Khami Ethnic Group in Northern Rakhine State", University of Mandalay, Research Journal, Vol. 10, 2019. (Accessed: <https://meral.edu.mm/records/5880?community=um>).

<sup>40</sup> Kyaw Lynn. "The nature of Parallel Governance and Its impact on Arakan Politics." Transnational Institute, February 2022. Accessed: <https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-nature-of-parallel-governance-and-its-impact-on-arakan-politics>.

<sup>41</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>42</sup> See <https://themimu.info/node/59448>

<sup>43</sup> Mizzima, Aung Aung Htoo, "KNDP says they will contest elections to get their correct ethnic identity," October, 2020. Accessed: <https://www.mizzima.com/article/kndp-says-they-will-contest-elections-get-their-correct-ethnic-identity>.

The term " Khamei" is believed to have evolved from "khwmtu," which originated from "khwmtu" denoting the dark cave or world before the emergence of the primitive sun and moon. "Khwmti" refers to the people in this dark cave or world; hence, " Khamei " signifies the primitive man or caveman<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, this word bears resemblance to the Northern Chin term "mi," meaning man<sup>45</sup>. In ethno-cultural terms, the Khamei are part of the Chin ethnicities. While other ethnic groups may have different names for the Khamei, they assert that the pronunciation "Khami" is the accurate one for their entire group.

## 6. Maramagyi (မရမာကြီး)

Based on the data from Maramagyi Youth Network after the Coup in 2021, the population of the Maramagyi ethnic group is estimated to be under 8000 inside Rakhine state<sup>46</sup>and total 10,000 individuals including those in Rakhine State<sup>47</sup>, while the total population is around 15,000 in the whole country<sup>48</sup>. However, some sources claim it to be only around 9,000<sup>49</sup>. According to official government data, there are approximately 8,776 Maramagyi individuals in Rakhine State, constituting about 0.29% of the state's total population<sup>50</sup>. The community resides in various areas, including Sittwe, Ponnagyun, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Maungdaw, and Kyaukphyu in Rakhine State, as well as in parts of Mandalay Region and Shan State.<sup>51</sup> Like many other ethnic groups in the state, the livelihoods of the Maramagyi people predominantly revolve around agriculture, trade, and mobile farming, particularly in the mountainous terrains.

They share linguistic affinities with the Rohingya community as one of the Chittagonia Bengali language speakers, with historical ties to communities in present-day Bangladesh<sup>52</sup>. However, in contrast to the predominantly Muslim Rohingya, the Maramagyi adhere to Buddhism, akin to the Barua people of Bangladesh with whom they share a cultural connection. These groups are believed to have potentially been part of a migration of indigenous Indian Buddhists seeking refuge from the advancing Mughal Empire during the 16th century. Notably, two highly esteemed 20th-century masters of Vipassana meditation, Anagakira Munindra and Dipa Ma, both hailed from the Barua ethnicity.<sup>53</sup>

Regarding community engagement, they have founded groups like the 'Maramagyi Literature and Culture Association,' the 'Maramagyi Youth Network,' and 'Maramagyi Maha Bodi Society'. While they do not currently have an official political party, these social entities are vigorously involved in

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<sup>44</sup> Myint Myint Than, "A Study of the Religion and Culture of Khami Ethnic Group in Northern Rakhine State", University of Mandalay, Research Journal, Vol. 10, 2019. (Accessed: <https://meral.edu.mm/records/5880?community=um>).

<sup>45</sup> Ethnic Cultures, (1968). 39.

<sup>46</sup>Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>47</sup> Insight Myanmar, "Episode #186: A Double Minority", AUGUST 1, 2023. (Accessed: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/31/episode-186-a-double-minority#:~:text=us%20on%20Patreon-%E2%80%9CThe%20term%20'double%20minority'%20simply%20means%20a%20'minority,smaller%20group%20than%20the%20Rohingya!>)

<sup>48</sup> BNI, "မရမာကြီးတိုင်းရင်းသားများ၏ သမိုင်းစာတမ်း မူကြမ်းပြုစုနေ", July 25, 2022. Accessed: <https://www.bnionline.net/mm/news-92537>.

<sup>49</sup> Kyaw Lynn, The Emergence of the ULA/AA and Question of the Rohingya Crisis, Tni, 26 January 2023. (Accessed: <https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-emergence-of-the-ulaaa-and-question-of-the-rohingya-crisis>.)

<sup>50</sup> See <https://themimu.info/node/59448>

<sup>51</sup> MITV, 7TH MARAMAGYI NATIONAL DAY: RAKHINE PEOPLE CELEBRATE ITS NATIONAL DAY", 16 May, 2022. (Accessed:<https://www.myanmaritv.com/news/7th-maramagyi-national-day-rakhine-people-celebrate-its-national-d>)

<sup>52</sup> Insight Myanmar, "Episode #186: A Double Minority", AUGUST 1, 2023. (Accessed: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/31/episode-186-a-double-minority#:~:text=us%20on%20Patreon-%E2%80%9CThe%20term%20'double%20minority'%20simply%20means%20a%20'minority,smaller%20group%20than%20the%20Rohingya!>)

<sup>53</sup> Insight Myanmar, "Episode #186: A Double Minority", AUGUST 1, 2023. (Accessed: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/31/episode-186-a-double-minority#:~:text=us%20on%20Patreon-%E2%80%9CThe%20term%20'double%20minority'%20simply%20means%20a%20'minority,smaller%20group%20than%20the%20Rohingya!>)

charitable initiatives. They also work towards safeguarding cultural rights and strive for increased representation of their community in Rakhine State. They have had no representative political platforms until now. In November 2020, in an interview with Myanmar Now, Win Myat from the Maramagyi Youth Network expressed disappointment, stating, "Our optimism faded with the Union Election Commission's announcement. We had intended to support a Rakhine ethnic party, anticipating positive shifts for our community." He worries that there won't be anyone advocating for Maramagyi's concerns.<sup>54</sup> According to the attendance to CAS's Webiner for DMGs' Society, a representative from Maramagyi Society, expressed and claimed that in order to get the full political presence, there should be the specified policy for the DMGs' Society, set up by the state or any authorities who are accountable for it, regarding the political present and representation as they only possess lesser amount of population compared to other ethnic people and less political consistency<sup>55</sup>.

## 7. Mro (မြို)

The Mro people are often classified as a sub-group within the Chin community, but other sources also claim that they have unique ethno-cultural characteristics. Their presence is notable in various parts of northern Rakhine State, Chin State, including the townships of Matupi and Paletwa, as well as the regions of Samechaung and Michauung. As members of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, they have preserved their distinct language, culture, and customs. Related to their beliefs and religions, the Mro ancestors initially adhered to traditional spirit worship. However, over time, a majority transitioned to Buddhism, while a portion embraced Christianity. Estimates place the Mro ethnic group's population in Rakhine State between 30,000 and 50,000 individuals, predominantly concentrated in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Ponnagyun, and Kyauktaw<sup>56</sup>. However, according to the Rakhine State government's 2017 census, the Mro population was reported as 40,388, accounting for approximately 1.33 per cent of the state's overall population.<sup>57</sup> The Mro people are primarily engaged in agriculture, plantation work, and other primary industries for their economic sustenance.

In terms of political representation, the Mro community has three distinct parties: the Mro National Development Party (MNDP), the Mro National Democracy Party (MNDP), and the Mro National Party (MNP)<sup>58</sup>. Among these, the MNDP, established in December 1988 after the pro-democracy 8888 uprising, has shown increased activity. Despite the MNDP winning a seat in the 1990 general election in Kyauktaw township, subsequent attempts in the 2010 and 2015 elections did not yield success. These four parties were working together under the 1988 Ma Ta Fa Ta Era but later, due to the personal differences within the party, it divided.<sup>59</sup>

After the coup in 2023, the junta's UEC announced that the Mro Ethnic Party in Rakhine State had applied for registration as a new political party with Myanmar's Union Election Commission.<sup>60</sup> On March 27, 2023, the party's chairman, U Aye Tun, stated that this move aimed to represent the Mro community effectively and engage in dialogues with other political entities and the military government. The re-registration is also intended to create a legitimate platform for discussions with

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<sup>54</sup> Emily Fishbein, Kyaw Hsan Hlaing, 'Our voice has been killed' – Rakhine's smaller ethnic groups shut out of political process by vote cancellations', Myanmar Now, November 6, 2020. (Accessed:<https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/our-voice-has-been-killed-rakhines-smaller-ethnic-groups-shut-out-of-political-process-by-vote-cancellations/>).

<sup>55</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>56</sup> "Minority Mro children lack access to Mro literature and language education in schools, resort to self-learning strategies", Narinjara, 31 March 2023. (Accessed:<https://www.narinjara.com/news/detail/6426708c66b6f3021f33eb09#:~:text=They%20predominantly%20reside%20in%20rural%20areas%20and%20support.30000%20and%2050000%2C%20according%20to%20U%20Zani%20Phyu>)

<sup>57</sup> MIMU, [Population by Ethnic Group in Maungdaw District and Rakhine State Jul2017.xlsx](#), 29-Sep-2017. (Accessed: <https://themimu.info/node/59448>)

<sup>58</sup> Emily Fishbein, Kyaw Hsan Hlaing, 'Our voice has been killed' – Rakhine's smaller ethnic groups shut out of political process by vote cancellations', Myanmar Now, November 6, 2020. (Accessed:<https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/our-voice-has-been-killed-rakhines-smaller-ethnic-groups-shut-out-of-political-process-by-vote-cancellations/>)

<sup>59</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>60</sup> MYANMAR NATIONAL PORTAL, "Allowing Mro Ethnic Party to register as political party", ပြန်ကြားရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန/ နေပြည်တော် / MAY 05, 2023.

the government on various Mro community initiatives while adhering to legal frameworks. However, a decision on participating in elections conducted by the UEC will be made later.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to political representation, the Mro community boasts civil society organizations such as the Mro Literature and Culture Association (MLCA), which advocates for cultural rights, including the right to education in Mro culture and literature, as well as the organization of cultural events on ceremonial occasions. Moreover, the Mro Youth Organization (MYO) plays a pivotal role in various community affairs.

## 8. Thet (သက်)

The Thet ethnic group is a smaller community primarily residing in Rakhine State. They possess a unique language, culture, and traditions, and their way of life is characterized by fishing, agriculture, and skilled artisanal crafts. Like numerous ethnic minority groups in Myanmar, the Thet people encounter challenges concerning representation and the preservation of their cultural heritage, contributing to the rich tapestry of ethnicities in the country.

Considered indigenous to Rakhine State, the Thet community comprises around 3,000 individuals, making them the smallest ethnic group by population<sup>62</sup>. According to a report from the Rakhine State government in July 2017, there are roughly 2,711 Thet individuals, accounting for just 0.09 per cent of the state's total population<sup>63</sup>. They predominantly reside in the northern townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung. Engaged in Buddhism, they are actively involved in agricultural pursuits, including farming and the cultivation of various crops.

Possessing a distinct language and culture, the Thet community employs a variation of Brahmi scripts for their written communication. Within the Thet ethnic group, two prominent tribes, the 'Samouk' and 'Bouk', can also be identified. Unlike certain other ethnic groups in Rakhine State, the Thet community has seen limited development of notable social organizations, such as political parties, women's groups, and youth associations. This is primarily due to their smaller population size, restricted resources, and networks, with religious associations being one of the few exceptions.<sup>64</sup>

## Part II: Challenges Faced by the Double Minority Groups (DMGs)

The DMGs have endured a long history of discrimination and marginalization, facing a complex array of challenges in their daily lives. This includes grappling with socioeconomic barriers, such as limited access to employment opportunities and lower wages, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. Additionally, these groups contend with restricted access to essential services like education, healthcare, and transportation, further exacerbating their marginalized status within society. The confluence of these obstacles underscores the pressing need for proactive measures to address systemic and structural disparities and foster greater inclusivity and equity for double minority communities. In this chapter, I will point out their challenges and marginalized conditions in their daily lives, providing real-life examples and case studies.

### A. Accessibility to Basic Services and Rights: Education, Healthcare, Transportation, and Legal Accessibility

According to field observations conducted by the CAS team in Rakhine State, double minority communities, including the Mro, Thet, Daingnet, Maramagyi, Chin, Hindu, Kaman, and Khami, confront significant challenges in accessing education for their respective communities. Many of these

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<sup>61</sup> BNI, "Mro Ethnic Party in Rakhine applies for registration with UEC", March 27, 2023.

(Accessed: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/mro-ethnic-party-rakhine-applies-registration-uec>).

<sup>62</sup> See Kyaw Lynn (TNI), <https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-nature-of-parallel-governance-and-its-impact-on-arakan-politics>.

<sup>63</sup> See MIMU, "Population by Ethnic Group in Maungdaw District and Rakhine State Jul2017.xlsx" 29-Sep-2017. (Accessed: <https://themimu.info/node/59448> )

<sup>64</sup> CAS team Observations, 2023.

communities' grapple with transportation barriers due to their remote locations, resulting in limited and unreliable means of transportation. Additionally, they commonly encounter difficulties in establishing education centers and schools within their areas, particularly in their residing villages. Furthermore, in instances where schools do exist, they often lack essential facilities and resources conducive to a comprehensive curriculum.

The Mro ethnic people, primarily residing in remote villages in the northern part of the state, lack access to essential services like markets, education, healthcare, and social amenities, greatly hindered by inadequate transportation infrastructure. Specifically, those in the Yoe Chaung and Thalu Chaung regions of northern Kyauktaw township face significant challenges with limited road access, predominantly relying on waterways for transportation. In Mro ethnic areas, located at a considerable distance from urban centers in western Myanmar, school-age children face a decreased likelihood of attending school, primarily attributed to a shortage of consistent teachers.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, their community members also do not experience an inclusive approach to teaching and learning within the schools. One example includes the members of the Mro ethnic group who have voiced their desire for inclusive education, lamenting the lack of opportunities in mainstream schools. They have highlighted that the omission of Mro literature from the curriculum in basic education schools attended by Mro children in Rakhine State has led to the creation of independent learning institutions focused on imparting Mro language and cultural knowledge.<sup>66</sup> In Thiho Aye village of Maungdaw Township, a Mro youth group led by Ko Maung Hla Win is currently conducting a Mro literature course for 97 participants, focusing on foundational terms and characters, initially introduced in 2017 by the Mro Literature and Culture Association across various areas. Regarding the inclusive teaching style at schools, U Zani Phyu, chair of the Mro Literature and Culture Association, expressed his willingness to Narinraja<sup>67</sup>, "We aspire for Mro children to be well-acquainted with our literary heritage. As long as the Mro community endures, so will our literature. However, formal acknowledgment of Mro literature within the educational system would guarantee its enduring legacy. Therefore, we earnestly urge government schools to include the teaching of Mro literature as an option. While Mro literature may not face immediate peril, it is imperative to safeguard its long-term vitality."

Likewise, the Kaman, one of the other double minority groups (DMGs), witnessed their experiences of facing limitations for the rights to education. Ma Hnin Hnin, a founder of the "Pure Together Women's Development Group," a women's group for the rights of their people, mentioned that they do not get access to education at Taungoke University as they are Kaman, and there are also other limitations over educational rights. She said that<sup>68</sup>, "The Kaman people, despite being part of the Rakhine community, face restrictions in attending universities within Rakhine State. They are only permitted to pursue higher education in other regions, and even in those instances, it is conditional upon possessing travel documents, as confirmed by Kaman youth."

One of the Kaman representatives from Kaman society who attended the CAS's Webiner for DMGs expressed that the discrimination over their people has happened since historical period and the target over education was broad after the 2012 conflict. Before the 2012 conflict, Kaman students attended the B.E.H.S (1), (4) and (6). After it, there was total suppression and discrimination over the Education for Kaman people by the Society in Rakhine State, mainly in Sittwe township. After 2012, Kaman people were not allowed to join the school in areas and forced to attend the rescue schools together with Rohingyas. Although the Party asked for and discussed the rights for people, it was still

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<sup>65</sup> DMG, "Hundreds of Mro people seek better prospects in less remote resettlement", 02 Apr 2022. Accessed: <https://www.dmediag.com/news/mro-etn.html>.

<sup>66</sup> Narinraja, "Minority Mro children lack access to Mro literature and language education in schools, resort to self-learning strategies", 1 March 2023. Accessed: <https://www.narinjara.com/news/detail/6426708c66b6f3021f33eb09#:~:text=They%20predominantly%20reside%20in%20rural%20areas%20and%20support.30000%20and%2050000%2C%20according%20to%20U%20Zani%20Phyu>.

<sup>67</sup> Narinraja, "Minority Mro children lack access to Mro literature and language education in schools, resort to self-learning strategies", 1 March 2023. Accessed: <https://www.narinjara.com/news/detail/6426708c66b6f3021f33eb09#:~:text=They%20predominantly%20reside%20in%20rural%20areas%20and%20support.30000%20and%2050000%2C%20according%20to%20U%20Zani%20Phyu>.

<sup>68</sup> BNA, Mra Hnin Phyu, "စုံလင်ကွဲပြားမှုတွေကြား တွဲလက်ညှိမယ့်လေးသံများ", သံတွဲဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၆. Accessed: <https://www.facebook.com/share/9QcSoRTw5Ks8PPVq/>.

neglected. The discriminated word included “By finishing the 8th grade, you can become a mason, it is enough”.<sup>69</sup>

Next, according to the overall observational findings from the CAS team, the Thet community faces challenges accessing town, healthcare, and education, particularly in remote areas. While some villages near town have easier transportation, those in distant locales encounter difficulties due to military checkpoints and high transportation fees. Limited medical access has led to fatal cases, with government-assigned healthcare services often falling short in remote regions. Educational inconsistencies arise, with some villages lacking regular teachers, compelling the hiring of local youth as substitutes. Efforts like education foundations address high school education challenges. In brief, the Thet community grapples with distance-related obstacles, yet there are initiatives showing progress in improving essential services.<sup>70</sup>

Besides, the Chin ethnic Community in Rakhine state also faces substantial challenges in transportation, healthcare, and education. Transportation hurdles include historical reliance on water transport, which, though now supplemented by a dirt road, remains challenging and poses safety risks. Escalating fuel costs exacerbate transportation expenses, impacting community members' ability to travel conveniently. Moreover, the lack of electricity raises security concerns, limiting mobility and safety in downtown areas. Access to healthcare is hindered by the absence of local clinics or hospitals, relying on a non-certified medical treater locally known as ‘Dat-Tin’ or ‘Yangku’.

Public hospitals require patients to cover costs, resulting in financial constraints, and recent political changes have exacerbated challenges in obtaining medical treatment. In education, government schools serve as the primary source, but limited offerings and infrastructure hindrances, especially in remote areas, impede educational opportunities. The lack of school buses forces children to walk long distances, leading to dangerous incidents. The disruption caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 and the military coup has further hindered regular attendance and quality teaching in some areas, affecting students' education levels.<sup>71</sup>

Based on the observational reports of CAS data collections from local residents, the double minorities in Rakhine State also grapple with limitations for healthcare and transportation. Access to healthcare varies among communities. While some enjoy convenient access, there are instances where government-appointed nurses are theoretically assigned but face practical challenges, particularly in remote areas where safety concerns arise. Additionally, certain communities may experience limited or challenging access to healthcare services. In a news article from DMG in early 2022, it mentioned that some Mro individuals highlighted the absence of basic amenities such as telephone connectivity and adequate transportation. Furthermore, the lack of a nearby health clinic poses a significant challenge in accessing necessary medical care, resulting in preventable fatalities.<sup>72</sup>

## **B. Accessibility to Basic Services and Rights: Freedom of Movement**

Due to frequent armed conflicts between the SAC and AA in the northern parts of the state, local residents from conflict areas need to move into safe areas. There are numerous checkpoints from both SAC and AA, where residents must show identification (Identity Cards) for free movement. Some ethnic double minorities in Rakhine face restrictions on their freedom of movement even within the region. In particular, Kaman, Hindu, and Maramagyi communities are confronting these challenges.

According to a report conducted by the Rohingya Post (RP) in April 2020, Hindus in Maungdaw Township without Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSCs) must provide Village Departure Certificates or inform their Village Administrator for overnight or out-of-township travel. This requirement also applies to obtaining National Verification Cards (NVCs) for those lacking citizenship documentation. Hindu communities in Maungdaw Township now face curfews and Village Departure Certificate mandates due to conflict-affected conditions. Although facing fewer restrictions, Maramagyi communities in Mrauk U Township must notify their Village Administrator and sometimes obtain travel permission. With proper documentation, usually Citizenship Scrutiny Cards, Maramagyi

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<sup>69</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>70</sup> CAS data and observations, 2023.

<sup>71</sup> CAS data and observations, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> DMG, “Hundreds of Mro people seek better prospects in less remote resettlement”, 02 Apr 2022. Accessed: <https://www.dmediag.com/news/mro-etn.html>.

individuals can move relatively freely, similar to Hindu communities in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships.<sup>73</sup>

Kaman community members still encounter restrictions even with CSCs. Many lack the necessary documentation and are issued NVCs instead. Discrimination based on race and religion is common for Kaman individuals at security checkpoints, regardless of their proven documentation. In the central parts of Rakhine State, particularly in Myebon and Sittwe townships, more significant restrictions exist compared to Thandwe township in southern Rakhine State<sup>74</sup>. Related to that situation, a Kaman individual from Sittwe Township shared their experiences in mid-2020, "In situations of nighttime emergencies, we find ourselves compelled to pay the police at the checkpoint to be allowed to cross, even when the situation is urgent. For instance, when a patient requires immediate attention at a clinic during the night, we are not permitted to proceed without making a payment. By offering some fees, we can then proceed to the clinic with the patient." After the coup d'état in 2021, the freedom of movement conditions became worse. For Kaman people, the 4th level (form 4) of travel permission is required in order to come from the village to the city, you have to show IDs.<sup>75</sup>

Due to job scarcity and lack of opportunities in the region, many residents migrate to foreign countries for their livelihoods, where most double minority people seek that opportunity. Getting a passport becomes a matter of external migration for some, as they are not allowed to have passports currently. Yet, their efforts to travel through unofficial channels are frequently met with apprehension, as they lack the necessary passports and often end up facing arrests. Regarding having national identities and passports, DGM news described that in the past, Kaman ethnic groups could get passports. Unfortunately, since September 2022, they are not allowed to do so anymore. People from the Kaman ethnic group, who possess National Registration Cards but practice Islam, cannot apply for passports at the Myanmar Passport Office in Sittwe at that time.<sup>76</sup> In the news from BNI in late 2023, U Thein Tun, a resident of Thin Ga Net (Kaman) Village in Sittwe Township, lamented<sup>77</sup>, "When we seek to travel abroad for better opportunities, we encounter significant barriers in obtaining passports. Even though we hold National Registration Cards, we are still denied this crucial document. If we try to explore alternative routes, we face the risk of legal repercussions. It's disheartening to see our community denied many fundamental human rights."

In conclusion, many members of the DMGs are still confronted with formidable challenges in accessing basic services, particularly in the domains of education, healthcare, and freedom of movement. These challenges are notably pronounced in remote locations, where transportation barriers persist due to inadequate infrastructure, resulting in limited and unreliable means of travel. Education centers and schools within these areas often lack essential facilities and resources, hindering the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum. The inclusive teaching approach is lacking, as exemplified by the Mro ethnic group's desire for inclusive education and the establishment of independent learning institutions to preserve their language and cultural knowledge. Similarly, the Thet community faces hurdles in healthcare and education, with limited access to town due to military checkpoints and high transportation fees. The Chin community members encounter substantial challenges in transportation, healthcare, and education, grappling with historical reliance on water transport, escalating fuel costs, and limited availability of teachers. Overall, the DMGs in Rakhine State confront a complex array of obstacles that impede their access to fundamental services and rights, necessitating comprehensive and targeted interventions to address these disparities and promote inclusivity.

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<sup>73</sup> Rohingya Post, "FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN RAKHINE STATE | REPORT BY INDEPENDENT RAKHINE INITIATIVE", 13/04/2020. Accessed: <https://www.rohingyapost.com/freedom-of-movement-in-rakhine-state-report-by-independent-rakhine-initiative/>

<sup>74</sup> Rohingya Post, "FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN RAKHINE STATE | REPORT BY INDEPENDENT RAKHINE INITIATIVE", 13/04/2020. Accessed: <https://www.rohingyapost.com/freedom-of-movement-in-rakhine-state-report-by-independent-rakhine-initiative/>

<sup>75</sup> Notes from CAS Webiner with Double Minority Group (DMG) in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

<sup>76</sup> "Kaman Ethnic Muslims in Rakhine State Denied Passport Access", September 06, 2023. Accessed: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/kaman-ethnic-muslims-rakhine-state-denied-passport-access>

<sup>77</sup> "Kaman Ethnic Muslims in Rakhine State Denied Passport Access", September 06, 2023. Accessed: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/kaman-ethnic-muslims-rakhine-state-denied-passport-access>

## Part III: Conflict and Displacement

### A. A Series of Communal and Armed Violence

In previous decades, Rakhine State has unfortunately played host to various types of violence, including 'communal violence' and 'armed violence.' In all instances of violence, the DMGs inside Arakan have experienced various negative consequences, ranging from physical threats and cultural discrimination to psychological insecurity. In the case of the outbreak of the 2012 conflict, the initial trigger was the reported rape and murder of a Buddhist woman by three Muslim men in Ramree Township, located in the central part of the state. In the ensuing weeks, inter-communal violence swiftly expanded to Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Sittwe townships in the north. Initially, these clashes were viewed as a manifestation of "Rakhine-Rohingya" tensions.<sup>78</sup> However, by October, attacks had extended to Mrauk-U, Minbya, Thandwe, and other areas of the state, where ethnic Kamans and other DMGs such as Maramagyi and Hindus were similarly targeted.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, when a more severe form of armed violence broke out in the years 2016 and 2017 between the Rohingya militant group known as ARSA and the Myanmar armed forces, DMGs such as Mro, Thet, and Daingnet living in the northern part of Rakhine State were also negatively affected. Thousands of individuals were forcibly displaced from their homes, leading to widespread food insecurity, disruptions to livelihoods and education, and a notable lack of access to essential markets.<sup>80</sup> A more violent series of incidents broke out in August 2017 when the Myanmar military indiscriminately responded to the armed attacks by the ARSA. This event triggered one of the most substantial refugee crises of 2017.

According to the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State's report (the Kofi Annan Report), it was confirmed that the poverty rate in Rakhine State stood at 78%, nearly twice the national average.<sup>81</sup> Simultaneously, a cursory examination of local and international media sources reveals that the description of the communal conflict in Rakhine State evolved over time. International reports primarily implicated the Myanmar military and the Rakhine ethnic armed group (AA) as instigators. Meanwhile, local reports tended to portray the Rohingya ethnic group as Muslim extremists and terrorists.<sup>82</sup> However, in line with the 2019 report, there were forgotten voices in the areas that were also affected by the conflicts and displaced people. Regrettably, the perspectives and proposed solutions of these grassroots-level stakeholders have been overlooked in previous studies analyzing the Rakhine conflict.<sup>83</sup> These people are double minority groups in the region.

Later on, armed conflicts between the Myanmar army and the Arakan Army, a Rakhine ethnic armed group, broke out starting in 2015 but in a more violent degree between 2018 and 2020. As the armed violence mainly started in the Paletwa region and later spread into the central and northern parts of the state, beyond the Rakhine and Rohingya, DMGs such as Khumei, Mro, Chin, and Maramagyi ethnic groups were also severely affected by the negative consequences of the armed violence.

### B. How the Violence Affected the DMGs

Since the outbreak of the 2012 communal conflict between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists, hundreds of displaced people, including double minority groups in Arakan, have faced significant challenges. As these disruptions persist, the issue of population displacement has emerged

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<sup>78</sup> International Crisis Group. "The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar", Asia Report No.251, 2013, p.7.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp.7-8; Nyein Nyein, "Six Suspects Confess to Thandwe Murders: Home Affairs Ministry", The Irrawaddy, 15 October 2013.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations Children's Fund. (2015). Rakhine State: A snapshot of child wellbeing. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/>.

<sup>81</sup> Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin, Edited by Radka Antalíková, PhD, "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict", PLRI, September, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin, Edited by Radka Antalíková, PhD, "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict", PLRI, September, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin, Edited by Radka Antalíková, PhD, "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict", PLRI, September, 2019.

as a significant crisis in Arakan's political and social landscape. During the conflict, the outbreak areas were Maungdaw, Buthitaung, Rathaetaung, Minbya, and Mrauk Oo, spreading to other areas in the northern part of Rakhine State and extending throughout the whole country, including the central part of Myanmar (Mandalay, Makehti-La).<sup>84</sup> Simultaneously, a continuous exodus of young people from various ethnic groups is observed, both within Myanmar and abroad.

In recent years, the diaspora in exile has become a significant force in nationalist activism, encompassing both Rakhine and Rohingya communities.<sup>85</sup> The communal conflict between Muslims and Buddhists led to social violence based on religion and languages. Under that case, the other targeted DMGs at that time were Maramagyi, Hindus, and Kaman, based on appearances similar to Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists, resulting in social violence. However, based on observations, those groups received insufficient protection from the government, and their voices were ignored.<sup>86</sup> According to Mro participants, the strained relationships between Muslims and other ethnic groups following the 2012 communal conflict had a significant impact on the local economy. Farmers faced a scarcity of available employees, compelling them to travel to townships to sell their agricultural products since traders could not reach their villages anymore.<sup>87</sup>

In a local media outlet in February 2023, it was expressed how the Kaman community in Rakhine State faced the worst experiences of discriminations and challenges in the conflicts from 2012 to continuous conflict. Following the communal violence in 2012, numerous Kaman youths faced substantial setbacks in their lives, particularly in education, living conditions, and employment opportunities. Despite being part of an ethnic group in Rakhine State, their adherence to Islam subjected them to discrimination and despair from both sides of the Rakhine-Rohingya divide. The 2012 conflict resulted in significant human and material losses, with 192 fatalities, 265 injuries, over 8,600 homes destroyed, and approximately 100,000 people displaced, according to the Rakhine State Conflict Investigation Commission's April 2013 report.<sup>88</sup>

Starting from 2016, with the rise of ARSA again in Rakhine State, there were outbreaks of conflicts.<sup>89</sup> In 2017, the incident reached its peak when the Myanmar military responded and tried to eradicate ARSA by installing an extensive military campaign in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung townships, reportedly involving the burning of villages.<sup>90</sup> At that time, although the Rohingya communities were regarded as the impacted minorities by the whole international community, there were also other impacted DMGs whose voices were not being expressed at any posts. According to their residential status and findings, DMG groups such as Mro, Thet, and Hindus were the most affected as they live in those conflicted areas.<sup>91</sup> They mostly faced physical violence amidst the crises of ARSA and the military (junta)<sup>92</sup>. Fortunately, those DMGs at that time received some degree of protection from the Myanmar authorities and military.

Regarding those impacts, during the conflicts of 2016-2017, a Hindu and the Maramagyi community were exposed to highly violent situations. Besides, a Hindu woman conveyed that she struggled to focus on any tasks and lacked the motivation to initiate a business, given the perpetual nature of the conflict, requiring constant vigilance from the sound of bombs in the community.

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<sup>84</sup> BBC, "Why is there communal violence in Myanmar?", 3 July 2014. (Accessed:<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18395788>.)

<sup>85</sup> Martin Smith, "Arakan (Rakhine State)-A Land in Conflict on Myanmar's Western Frontier", Transnational Institute (tni), December, 2019. (Accessed:<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/RightToLand/RohingyaSubmission.pdf> )

<sup>86</sup> CAS team observation in 2023.

<sup>87</sup> Htoo Htet Naing and Kyaw Zin Lin, Edited by Radka Antalíková, PhD, "Hidden Truths of the Invisible: The Experiences of Double Minorities in Northern Rakhine State during Violent Conflict", September, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> BNA, Mra Hnin Phyu, "စုံလင်ကွဲပြားမှုတွေကြား တွဲလက်ညှိမယ့်လေးသံများ", သံတွဲဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၆. Accessed:<https://www.facebook.com/share/9QcSoRTw5Ks8PPVq/>.

<sup>89</sup> International Crisis Group, "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase", Asia Report No. 292, 7 December 2017.

<sup>90</sup> Parveen K Parmar, Jennifer Leigh, Homer Venters, Tamaryn Nelson, "Violence and mortality in the Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar, 2017: results of a quantitative survey of surviving community leaders in Bangladesh", Vol 3 March 2019. (Accessed:[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanplh/PIIS2542-5196\(19\)30037-3.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanplh/PIIS2542-5196(19)30037-3.pdf) )

<sup>91</sup> See BBC Burmese report, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=601460230678097>

<sup>92</sup> See Irrawaddy report, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ethnic-mro-murdered-maungdaw-n-rakhine.html>

Continuously, the intensification of conflict between the Arakan Army (AA) and the military since January 2018 led to tensions reaching a climax when the police fired upon several young protesters demonstrating against the cancellation of a patriotic event in Mrauk U. Since 2015, numerous individuals had been detained on suspicion of affiliations with the AA.<sup>93</sup> The AA progressively penetrated the regions of Rakhine and Paletwa in 2018, with their activities intensifying.

By the close of 2018, they had reached the periphery of four townships, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, and Kyauktaw in northern Rakhine State where attacks on the military army were happening.<sup>94</sup> From December 2018 to November 2020, there was intense conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine with the AA's pursuit of self-determination in the state.<sup>95</sup> At the time of intense fighting between AA and the military junta, there were a lot of vulnerable communities, Rakhine, Rohingya, and other DMGs who were residing along the conflicted areas. In this time, as the armed conflicts mainly broke out in the Paletwa region and central townships of Arkan, the DMG groups mostly affected by the armed conflicts include Khamei, Chin, Mro, and Thet. During the difficult times of the intense armed fighting, they also lacked appropriate protection and support from the authorities ranging from food and shelf provision to physical and community security. Moreover, during the conflicts, there were restrictions (including curfews and the use of Village Departure Certificates) for movement in the region. Previously, these measures were primarily directed at Rohingya and, to a lesser extent, Kaman communities. However, they have now been expanded to impact all communities in areas affected by conflict. While there may be valid security reasons for some of these measures, there are concerns about their implementation leading to potential human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests and restricted access to essential services.<sup>96</sup>

Since February 2020, over 50,000 people have been displaced due to intense conflict in northern and central Rakhine State. Many are unable to return home or resume normal activities. Non-displaced Rakhine residents in affected areas must now obtain recommendation letters from Village Administrators to pass through checkpoints and access medical care, as mandated by military personnel. Failure to adhere to strict curfews, implemented under Section (144) of the Myanmar Code of Criminal Procedure, can lead to arrest or violence. This conflict has a particularly gendered impact on young Maramagyi men, who often flee their villages upon encountering Tatmadaw soldiers and avoid checkpoints for fear of arbitrary arrest.<sup>97</sup> A Maramagyi from Mrauk-U township said, "In pagodas and monasteries, we feel anxious due to discrimination. Despite being devout Buddhists, our appearance and speech lead others to mistake us for Muslims."

Also, some double minorities are affected by the conflicts, and they were displaced in those conflicts. Among them, many Mro ethnic communities in Ponnagyun and Kyauktaw townships in the State were displaced due to previous armed conflicts. Although there's been an informal ceasefire since November 2020, numerous Mro individuals are hesitant to return home and are exploring alternative resettlement options. U Than Win, an ethnic Mro from Htonebu village in Ponnagyun Township, expressed concerns about the risks associated with unexploded weapons in their war-torn native village<sup>98</sup>. He stated in mid-2022, "It's no longer viable to sustain ourselves there, so we're planning to relocate to another area for a better life." To address this situation, the junta authority in the state has arranged the relocation of some Mro people to vacant land near Kyaukpandu village, situated at the southern end of the Mayu mountain range in Maungdaw Township. This new

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<sup>93</sup> See, "Arrests under Article 50(a)(i) of the Counter-Terrorism Law, 4 June 2014 multiplied when the AA was declared a terrorist organization on 23 March 2020. (<https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/930dc8/>)

<sup>94</sup> The Irrawaddy, "The Causes and Likely Effects of the Arakan Army's Attacks", January 12, 2019. (Accessed: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/datetime/causes-likely-effects-arakan-armys-attacks.html>)

<sup>95</sup> Radio Free Asia, "Clashes between junta forces and Arakan Army rattle Rakhine, Chin states", 16 August, 2022. (Accessed: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/arakan-army-clashes-08162022180544.html>)

<sup>96</sup> Rohingya Post, "FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN RAKHINE STATE | REPORT BY INDEPENDENT RAKHINE INITIATIVE", 13/04/2020. (Accessed: <https://www.rohingyapost.com/freedom-of-movement-in-rakhine-state-report-by-independent-rakhine-initiative/>)

<sup>97</sup> Rohingya Post, "FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN RAKHINE STATE | REPORT BY INDEPENDENT RAKHINE INITIATIVE", 13/04/2020. (Accessed: <https://www.rohingyapost.com/freedom-of-movement-in-rakhine-state-report-by-independent-rakhine-initiative/>)

<sup>98</sup> DMG, "Hundreds of Mro people seek better prospects in less remote resettlement", 02 Apr 2022. Accessed: <https://www.dmediag.com/news/mro-etn.html>.

settlement will accommodate 867 individuals from 160 households originally hailing from Kyauktaw, Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Ponnagyun townships.<sup>99</sup>

Besides, the subsequent armed violence from 2012 to 2020 in Arakan also affected the DMGs negatively in both direct and indirect ways. The continuous conflicts brought mental breakdowns, socio-economic deterioration, loss of possessions (including homes, farms, things, etc.). Moreover, among the conflicts, feelings of unsafety and the break of freedom of movement towards some double minorities had doubled negative impacts on them for their livings. Living under pressures and fear during the conflicts are nightmares for their societies. Even after the immediate conflicts subsided, the double minority communities continued to face challenges in terms of displacement, limited access to basic services, and discrimination. These ongoing issues have had a profound and lasting impact on their lives and well-being. Efforts to address the plight of these communities and work towards sustainable solutions remain crucial in the broader context of peace and stability in Rakhine State.

### C. Impacts of the 2021 Military Coup

While Rakhine State has been plagued by prolonged conflicts, notably the 2012 communal tensions and subsequent armed clashes in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, these conflicts have led to extensive displacement, food insecurity, disrupted livelihoods, and limited access to essential services.<sup>100</sup> The state of humanitarian access in Rakhine has further deteriorated since the onset of the political crisis in February 2021, raising concerns about potential food shortages and restricted entry to displacement sites.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, the residents in the State, particularly from the northern areas of Rakhine State, including the DMGs, are seriously impacted due to the continuous conflicts between the Arakan Army (AA) and the regime.

As marginalizations are ongoing issues happening over the DMGs in Rakhine State, the coup in 2021 added more hardships and challenges to their living conditions. Related to that matter, a local media outlet in August 2023 expressed that the Maramagyi community in Rakhine claimed pervasive discrimination across various aspects of life, including health, education, and employment. They assert that restrictions prevent them from working in government positions and other jobs, leading to systematic discrimination, encountering racially demeaning comments, and being subjected to abuse, arbitrary actions, looting, and even threats to their lives.<sup>102</sup>

Since in the past of 2012 and crisis time, their appearances are look like with Rohingya and those kinds of discriminations are continuous. Despite being listed as 'one of the indigenous ethnic groups' in Myanmar, Maramagyi people face discrimination as Muslims, enduring hardships dating back to the 2012 communal conflict where their houses were destroyed, forcing some to live in refugee camps. As a result of this discrimination, Maramagyi individuals have been compelled to leave their homes, facing unjust killings and threats. Livelihood challenges are exacerbated by the aftermath of the Mocha cyclone, further straining their financial resources for education, leading to discrimination in educational opportunities.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the added situations of the coup in 2021 and the Mocha Cyclone in 2023 forced them to face more and more difficulties in terms of their economic and livelihoods, also their access to basic services.

There were also limitations over the DMGs in their transportation after the coup, like it happened before the coup too. For instance, Mro authorities have confirmed that on May 6, 2023, a group of Mro individuals from Rakhine, including 31 novices and 13 girls from Upper Myat-Hlae-

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<sup>99</sup> DMG, "Hundreds of Mro people seek better prospects in less remote resettlement", 02 Apr 2022. Accessed: <https://www.dmediag.com/news/mro-etn.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Su Myattun, Niki Ignatiou, Etienne Bergès, Yeeshu Shukla, Lal Muani and Than Hla, "Histories and hierarchies of localisation in Rakhine State, Myanmar ", Issue 79, Article 6, Humanitarian Practice Network, May 25, 2021. (Accessed:<https://odihpn.org/publication/histories-and-hierarchies-of-localisation-in-rakhine-state-myanmar>).

<sup>101</sup> Su Myattun, Niki Ignatiou, Etienne Bergès, Yeeshu Shukla, Lal Muani and Than Hla, "Histories and hierarchies of localisation in Rakhine State, Myanmar ", Issue 79, Article 6, Humanitarian Practice Network, May 25, 2021. (Accessed:<https://odihpn.org/publication/histories-and-hierarchies-of-localisation-in-rakhine-state-myanmar>).

<sup>102</sup> BNA, "ရခိုင်က မရမာကြီးလူမျိုးတွေ ခွဲခြားဆက်ဆံခံနေကြရ", 21st August. Accessed:<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/81saeHwMjS6XKyW1/>

<sup>103</sup> BNA, "ရခိုင်က မရမာကြီးလူမျိုးတွေ ခွဲခြားဆက်ဆံခံနေကြရ", 21st August. Accessed:<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/81saeHwMjS6XKyW1/>

Village Monastery in Ponnagyun Township, were prevented from proceeding at the junta checkpoint after leaving Thandwe town. As a result, they were compelled to return instead of reaching their intended destination, Maungdaw Thone Mile Monastery in Shwe Pyi Thar township, Yangon Region, where they had planned to pursue their studies.<sup>104</sup> Those kinds of limitations, plus the impacts of the resurgence of armed conflicts after the coup and Mocha cyclone, cause the DMGs' livelihoods, socio-economic situations, safety, and other access to basic services worse than ever.

Recently, in late October 2023, starting from the "1027 Military Operation" by the Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BTAs), the conflicts are becoming intensive also in Rakhine State from November 13, 2023. As the conflicts and fights are quite intensive, and AA made several seizures over the junta military positions in the northern part of Rakhine State, SAC started to target and fight against the civilians and residents. Therefore, the impacts are seriously affected to the residents, including to the DMGs in the areas of the State. As an example, in Buthidaung Township, there was intense fighting between the SAC and AA near Kathila village. On November 18, the AA attacked the military council's border police outpost, leading to a fierce exchange with heavy weapons. The conflict persisted on November 19, with ongoing fighting and the military council utilizing heavy weapons and helicopter gunships.<sup>105</sup> "Today, a helicopter came and shot us. I heard they shot about 30 points. We live in the forest because we are worried. "The fighting is fierce," said a Mro local ethnic man from Lay Eain Su (Mro) village to Development Media Group on 19th November 2023. The situation has compelled about 60 residents of Lay Eain Su (Mro) village, located more than 3 miles from Kathila village, to evacuate to a safer location due to the severe fighting.<sup>106</sup> There are also many DMGs community members who are affected by the conflicts currently.

## Part IV: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and DMGs

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in advocating for, empowering, and supporting double minority communities in Rakhine State. This chapter delves into the invaluable contributions of these organizations, shedding light on their initiatives, programs, and projects designed to uplift and provide essential services to these marginalized groups. By examining success stories, we gain insight into the tangible impact of these interventions, showcasing the transformative potential when communities and organizations collaborate. However, amid these commendable efforts, persistent challenges persist, presenting a complex landscape that demands strategic solutions. This chapter also delves into the ongoing obstacles and limitations that NGOs confront in their unwavering commitment to the advancement of double minority communities. Through a comprehensive exploration of these dimensions, we uncover the multifaceted dynamics of community-driven development and the essential role of lead community organizations in Rakhine State.

In the desk research and secondary data findings, there is limited information in seeking out the real on-ground success stories of NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs for reaching out to humanitarian supports and other basic services towards the double minorities in Rakhine State. It can be said that it is a

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<sup>104</sup> BNA, "The coup council bans some Mro people from Rakhine from traveling to Yangon", Ponnagyun, May 7. Accessed:<https://www.facebook.com/bordernewsagency/posts/pfbid02pQCmB88PAsiAK9n4pds34222p8CxYZbSV2eCz3SB6GjSLP2QuLwFMFzEPaQr93yTl>.

<sup>105</sup> Development Media Group, "ဘူးသီးတောင်တွင် စစ်ကောင်စီနှင့် AA တို့ တိုက်ပွဲပြင်းထန်နေ", နိုဝင်ဘာ ၁၉.

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<sup>106</sup> Development Media Group, "ဘူးသီးတောင်တွင် စစ်ကောင်စီနှင့် AA တို့ တိုက်ပွဲပြင်းထန်နေ", နိုဝင်ဘာ ၁၉.

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research limitation for this report. However, based on some secondary online data, since in the past history, those double minority communities in the region have not received full packages for accessing humanitarian assistance or are still left out in receiving those humanitarian supports from INGOs, NGOs, and CSOs, both local and external.

According to a Mid-Term report from Search for Common Ground-Myanmar (January 2020), minorities, particularly double minority communities like Mro, Khumei, Thet, Daingnet, and Maramagyi expressed their wishes for local CSOs and the international community to provide humanitarian support for them. Due to the armed conflicts in the state, the actions of INGOs and UN were also concerned with giving attention to Rohingya people, and there was a slow response to their communities.<sup>107</sup> Currently, there are still similar situations during the continuous conflicts and crises, including Cyclone Mocha and after-cyclone relief actions where double minority communities, particularly in rural areas, are still marginalized.

## A. Mocha Cyclone and the Quest for Assistance

Among the many crises of political and socio-economic factors, the Cyclone Mocha can be added as another layer of serious challenges that the DMGs have experienced. Here, the aid and support from humanitarian organizations are being expected by those communities to meet their emergency needs and for future livelihoods. Therefore, it becomes the reason for finding out the activities and actions made by local CSOs, NGOs, and INGOs for Mocha-affected communities, including the DMGs in the areas. Under the limitations from the junta authorities, these entities can promote support for the region's humanitarian efforts, including the impacted double minority communities in the State.

Among the instances, BNA news expressed that the Mro, Khumei, Thet, and Daingnet communities have been severely affected by the Mocha Cyclone in Rakhine, particularly in Ponnagyun township and the Tawphyrchung area, causing extensive damage and leaving the locals in desperate need of food and rehabilitation support. More than 50 small villages along the Taw-Phyr-Chung area, inhabited by the Mro, Khumei, Thet, and Daingnet peoples, have suffered significantly. These communities, relying on agriculture for their livelihoods, face urgent challenges as the storm destroyed all their farms.<sup>108</sup> The affected communities highlight the difficulties in receiving assistance, citing the challenges of traveling by road and waterways to the Taw-Phyr-Chung areas. Moreover, limited access to telephone and internet communication further compounds the challenges they face in seeking aid. Urgent assistance is needed to address the immediate needs of these double minority communities grappling with the aftermath of the cyclone.<sup>109</sup>

According to a report from UNHCR, as of August 2023, the ongoing conflict between AA and junta in Rakhine State has displaced 51,590 individuals across 10 townships in Rakhine State. Additionally, 4,472 individuals have been displaced in Paletwa township in Chin State, bringing the total number of displaced persons to 56,062. Moreover, there are an additional 4,174 individuals who have recently been displaced in Mrauk-U, Kyautaw, Sittwe, Myebon, Minbya, Rathedaung, Buthidaung, and Ponnagyun townships. UNHCR, in collaboration with partners and other UN agencies, has been actively providing essential relief items, emergency shelter support, dignity kits, and cloth masks to approximately 44,917 individuals in affected areas since January 2023.<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, the data from local news say that the effectiveness of reliefs and support by CSOs, CBOs, NGOs, and INGOs is still less for the cyclone-affected people in the remote areas in Rakhine State where the double minorities are also one of the most needed communities. In the

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<sup>107</sup> "Social Cohesion through Service Delivery in Rakhine State",

Accessed: [https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SFCG-Myanmar\\_MTReview\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SFCG-Myanmar_MTReview_Report_2020.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> BNA, "ပုဏ္ဏားကျွန်းမြို့နယ်တောဖျားချောင်းဒေသပြန်လည်ထူထောင်ရေး အကူအညီတွေလိုအပ်နေ", 5th June, 2023.

Accessed: <https://www.facebook.com/share/GTuuf1oG869ETpGX/>

<sup>109</sup> BNA, "ပုဏ္ဏားကျွန်းမြို့နယ်တောဖျားချောင်းဒေသပြန်လည်ထူထောင်ရေး အကူအညီတွေလိုအပ်နေ", 5th June, 2023.

Accessed: <https://www.facebook.com/share/GTuuf1oG869ETpGX/>

<sup>110</sup> See UN report, Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmarrakhine-and-chin-state-response-displacement-linked-aa-tatmadaw-conflict-jan-aug-2023-enmy#:~:text=In%20Rakhine%20State%2C%2051%2C590%20individuals,of%20displaced%20persons%20to%2056%2C062.>

Irrawaddy news on June 2023, it described that various DMGs residing in remote and economically underprivileged areas of northern Rakhine State are urgently seeking humanitarian assistance for recovery and rehabilitation and bore the brunt of the destruction in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha on 14th May 2023.<sup>111</sup> U Shwe Maung, a member of the Mro ethnic group residing in the impoverished agrarian village of Ma Kyar Se in Mrauk-U Township, reported that some families in his community still face difficulties in rebuilding their homes due to a lack of aid.<sup>112</sup> He mentioned, "We haven't received any help yet. We have to resort to cutting down trees in the jungle to repair our houses."

The storm resulted in the destruction or severe damage to approximately 130 houses in Ma Kyar Se, including a school and clinic. U Shwe Maung further expressed concern for the health of both children and adults in the village, as they are experiencing diarrhea and skin infections, conditions often linked to a shortage of clean water. In Mrauk-U Township, there is a small village called Maung Nha Ma, which is currently facing a severe food shortage, particularly among the Kamei ethnic community.<sup>113</sup> A resident mentioned, "We are experiencing a shortage of food in our village. We are having to approach the local monastery to share their rice with us."

Related to the local authorities' support towards the double minority groups, efforts are not enough in all-inclusive formats, particularly the junta's lack of support for the whole communities besides these double minorities. In news in June 2023, it was also reported that local sources have additionally conveyed that the DMGs are not receiving any urgent assistance in ULA-governed rural regions encompassing Buthidaung, Ponnagyun, Myebon, Minbya, and Ann townships. In response, responsible officials clarified that all double minority groups are encompassed in ULA's emergency relief efforts, but logistical constraints have hindered aid teams from reaching all affected areas at present. Detailed statistics regarding the support extended to specific ethnic groups will be disclosed at a later juncture, they affirmed.<sup>114</sup> According to the volunteers from local CSOs, there is a lack of better communication and transportation towards some of the double minorities residing areas for reaching out to their reliefs. One local volunteer expressed aid shortages at the Irrawaddy news agency<sup>115</sup>, "Even in impoverished communities near Mrauk-U town, assistance has not yet reached. Consequently, extending aid to the minority populations residing in remote areas poses a considerable challenge. ---Rural ethnic minorities face impoverishment and isolation, often lacking the knowledge or means to seek assistance. Consequently, their autonomous recovery presents a formidable challenge,"

Overall, consider the situations and real-ground conditions about the humanitarian support of INGOs, NGOs, and CSOs towards Rakhine State throughout the historic conflicts and after 2021. Since 2018, Rakhine State has witnessed a transformation in its civil society dynamics, marked by increased government control over larger CSOs. The armed violence has exposed missed opportunities in understanding Rakhine's civil society complexity, leading to violence affecting diverse ethnic groups. Humanitarian access has further declined due to a political crisis, raising concerns about food shortages. Covid-19 restrictions have shifted perceptions, creating opportunities for locally owned responses. Positive sentiments toward international assistance have emerged, but reduced INGO access has prompted greater reliance on ethnic CSOs.<sup>116</sup> This highlights a changing landscape, with local CSOs playing an enhanced role as INGO access diminishes.

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<sup>111</sup> Nora, "Rakhine Minorities Report Food, Shelter Crisis as Aid Fails to Arrive", June 7, 2023. Accessed:<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rakhine-minorities-report-food-shelter-crisis-as-aid-fails-to-arrive.html>

<sup>112</sup> Nora, "Rakhine Minorities Report Food, Shelter Crisis as Aid Fails to Arrive", June 7, 2023. Accessed:<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rakhine-minorities-report-food-shelter-crisis-as-aid-fails-to-arrive.html>

<sup>113</sup> Nora, "Rakhine Minorities Report Food, Shelter Crisis as Aid Fails to Arrive", June 7, 2023. Accessed:<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rakhine-minorities-report-food-shelter-crisis-as-aid-fails-to-arrive.html>

<sup>114</sup> Tni, "Assessing What is Happening in Arakan One month after Cyclone Mocha", A Myanmar commentary by Border News Agency\* 29 June 2023. Accessed:<https://www.tni.org/en/article/assessing-what-is-happening-in-arakan>.

<sup>115</sup> Nora, "Rakhine Minorities Report Food, Shelter Crisis as Aid Fails to Arrive", June 7, 2023. Accessed:<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rakhine-minorities-report-food-shelter-crisis-as-aid-fails-to-arrive.html>

<sup>116</sup> Su Myat Tun, Niki Ignatiou, Etienne Bergès, Yeeshu Shukla, Lal Muani and Than Hla, "Histories and hierarchies of localisation in Rakhine State, Myanmar ", Issue 79, Article 6, Humanitarian Practice Network, May 25, 2021. (Accessed:<https://odihpn.org/publication/histories-and-hierarchies-of-localisation-in-rakhine-state-myanmar>).

Despite the evident need for humanitarian assistance among Double Minority Groups (DMGs) affected by conflicts and Cyclone Mocha, reaching these communities presents considerable challenges. These include limited engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), difficult transportation, isolation stemming from historical conflicts, and mistrust among communities. Moreover, some DMGs lack the knowledge and resources to effectively advocate for their rights or engage with CSOs, NGOs, or INGOs to access essential humanitarian services. The situation is exacerbated by limited educational opportunities, underscoring the pressing need for improved access to basic services and educational resources for these communities.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, while we can categorize all eight ethnic and religious groups under the title of 'Double Minority Groups' (DMGs), visible differences among them still exist. Analyzing their prolonged historic experiences of marginalization and discrimination, these DMGs grapple with socio-economic barriers due to limited transportation, communication, and being left out. These challenges include limited job opportunities, lower wages, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage, and obstacles in accessing fundamental services like education, healthcare, and transportation, amplifying their marginalized status. Additionally, except for the Chin ethnic group in Rakhine State, all DMGs suffer from a lack of political and legal representation in both state and union political institutions. The difficulties are particularly pronounced in remote areas, where inadequate infrastructure impedes travel and hinders educational and healthcare opportunities. Pressing needs for targeted interventions to address disparities and promote inclusivity and equity for double minority communities are illustrated, exemplified by challenges faced by the Mro ethnic group in preserving their language and cultural knowledge.

Beyond the inaccessibility of daily service provisions, conflicts in Rakhine State from 2012 onwards have had profound impacts on DMGs. Due to the 2012 communal conflicts, the state has grappled with communal conflicts and demographic shifts, with DMGs including Maramagyi, Hindus, and Kamans facing displacement, violence, and a lack of support. Their voices are often ignored amidst larger Rakhine-Rohingya tensions, facing distinct challenges amid societal complexities. The 2017 conflict, triggered by the military's response to armed attacks, resulted in one of the most substantial refugee crises. While Rohingya communities drew international attention, DMGs like Hindus, Mro, and Thet faced displacement and violence without garnering attention from the international community. During that fighting, DMGs, especially those physically hurt and attacked, experienced severe violence.

Likewise, conflicts intensified from 2018 to 2020 due to clashes between the Arakan Army (AA) and the military junta, impacting DMGs, including Khumei, Chin, Mro, and Thet, who faced displacement and hardships. At that time, without sufficient assistance and protection from the semi-civilian government led by NLD, DMGs faced the hardest time. The ongoing conflicts, coupled with the military coup in 2021, exacerbated challenges for DMGs like discrimination, restrictions, and violence, affecting health, education, and employment. The coup further limited the freedom of movement for some DMGs (Kaman, Maramagyi, Hindus), making their already difficult living conditions even more precarious. DMGs encountered severe economic and livelihood challenges, worsened by the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha in May 2023. As conflicts continue and outbreak in October 2023 due to the "1027 Military Operation," these ongoing conflicts intensify the struggles of DMGs, affecting mental well-being, access to basic services, and economic stability, necessitating urgent attention and sustainable solutions for lasting peace.

Assessing humanitarian assistance to DMGs through different tenures reveals a complex landscape shaped by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international entities. While these organizations play a pivotal role in advocating for and supporting DMGs, limitations persist. Success stories are still scarce, and despite expressions of need from DMGs like Mro, Khumei, Thet, Daingnet, and Maramagyi, slow responses, limited access, and logistical constraints hinder relief efforts. This is especially evident in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha in 2023 due to the junta's blockages over the assistance and notes for Travel Authorizations (TAs). Communication gaps, transportation issues, and the enduring impact of past conflicts impede the effective delivery of aid to DMGs, emphasizing the urgent need for improved access to essential

services and educational resources in these communities. Throughout different conflicts and crises, DMGs are ignored and face discrimination and marginalization even in receiving assistance.

In essence, DMGs in Rakhine State have been struggling with existing marginalized and discriminated behaviors, coupled with the impacts of complex conflicts where their voices and bitterness are ignored and left out. While the region is composed of all these ethnicities, it is essential for local authorities and the international community to consider the resilience of these double minority groups if they wish to establish a peaceful community in the coming days. Currently, Rakhine State stands at a crossroads. Amidst complex political, social, and geostrategic affairs, the affairs of these DMGs should not be overlooked.

According to the findings, there is a need for positive change by highlighting the challenges faced by DMGs in Rakhine State. This report calls for policies that empower DMGs, aiming for a future that is fair and inclusive. Our vision is a Rakhine State where everyone's voice is heard, and challenges are addressed. By empowering DMGs, we can create a future where every voice matters, and challenges are met with solutions that are inclusive and transformative. The journey toward a fair and inclusive Rakhine State calls for global attention to the stories of those whose narratives have often been overlooked.