

A map of Southeast Myanmar is shown, with the landmass filled with a dense layer of white rice grains. The map is set against a light beige, textured background. The title text is overlaid on the lower right portion of the map.

# Scenario Plan

**SOUTHEAST MYANMAR**

**AUGUST  
2025**

CONFIDENTIAL - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

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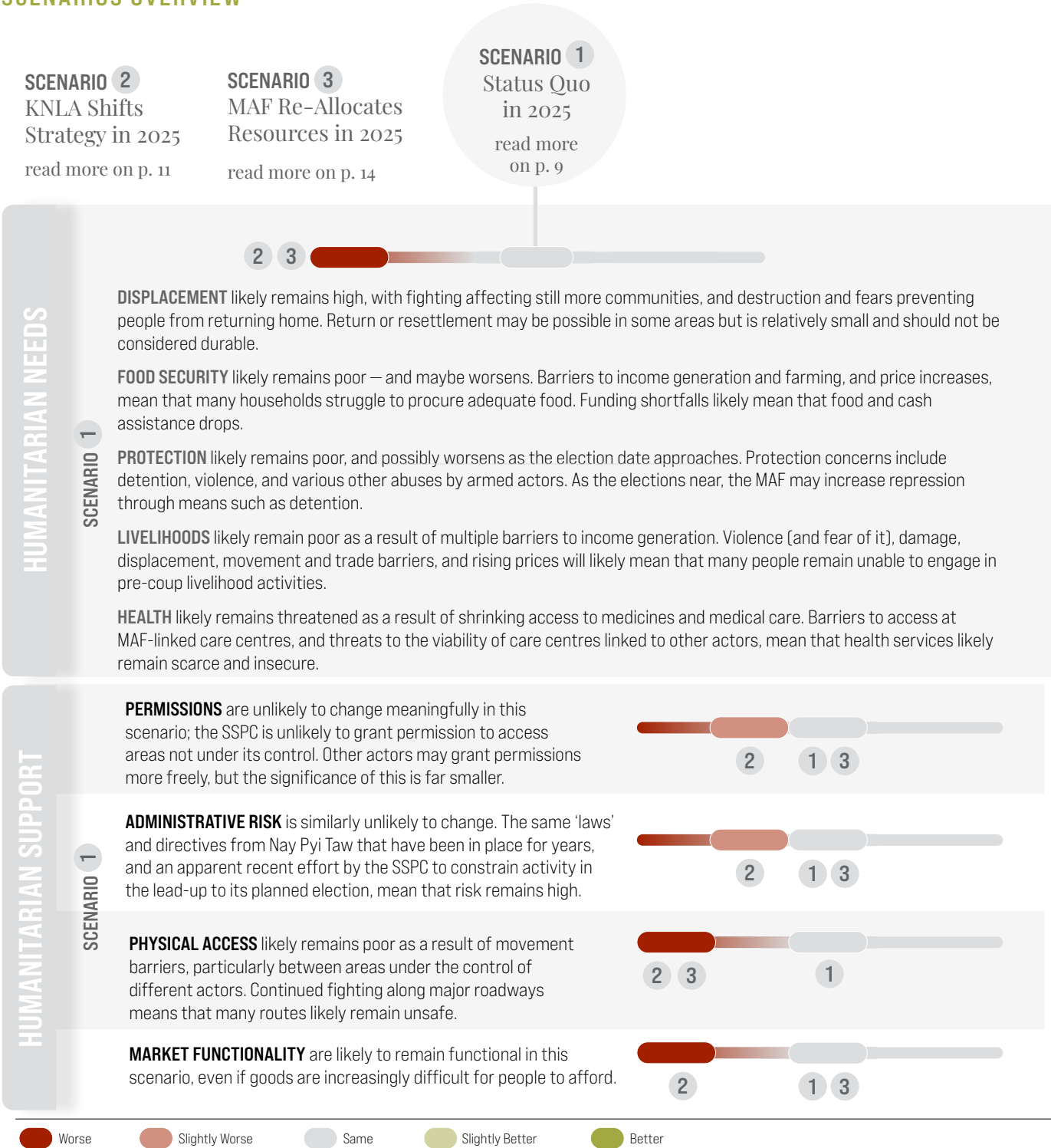


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Scenario Plan presents southeast Myanmar-based context projections for the purposes of response planning and strategy. The most likely scenario over the next six months is a continuation of the status quo, characterised by steadily rising humanitarian needs and diminishing support capacity. However, other scenarios to consider — though they are of lower likelihood — include a shift in strategy by either the Karen National Liberation Army or the Myanmar Armed Forces that results in more fundamental territorial shifts.

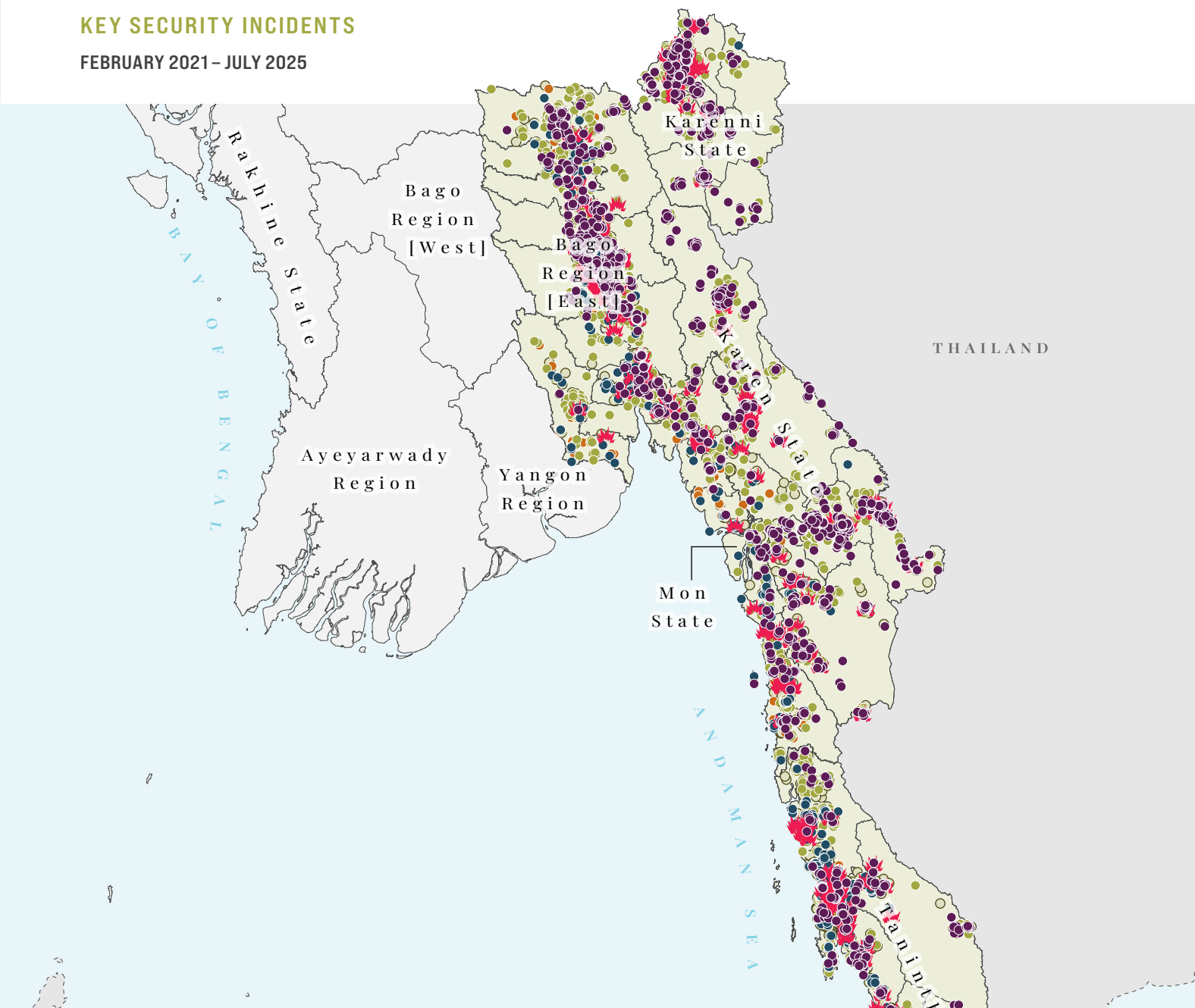
While this Scenario Plan provides general guidance, responders may make adaptations to suit the needs, priorities, and strategies of their respective organisations.

SCENARIOS OVERVIEW



## KEY SECURITY INCIDENTS

FEBRUARY 2021 – JULY 2025



### Legend

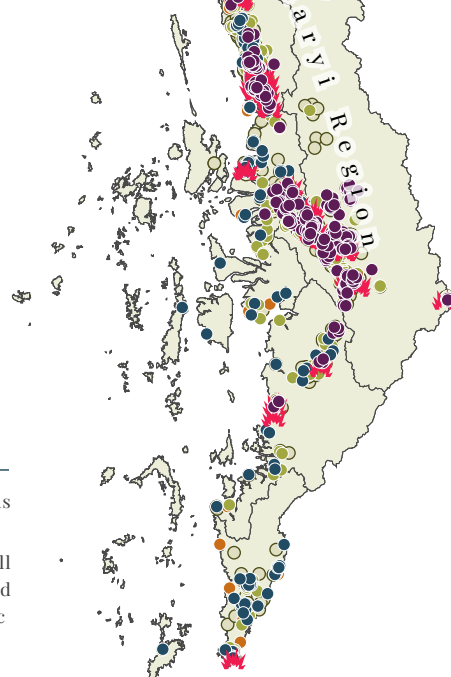
#### Security Incidents

- Airstrike/Drone attack
- Arrest/Detention/Abduction/Kidnapping
- Targeted killing
- Clash/Shelling\*
- 🔥 Landmine/UXO incident
- Other security incident

\*including explosive device attacks. (Incidents with unidentified locations are not displayed on the map)

The information on this map is sourced from both traditional media and social media such as Facebook. The information should not be considered comprehensive.

Disclaimer: This product is designed for information purposes only. This map may not show all topographical areas due to scale limitations. Administrative boundary is sourced from MIMU and copyrighted to MIMU at <https://themimu.info/mimu-terms-conditions>. The accuracy of specific attributes and their geo-locations are manually added and cannot be confirmed.



In the first half of 2025, a significant share of the fighting in southeast Myanmar took place along key roadways: the [Asia Highway](#) through Karen State, the [Union Highway](#) through Tanintharyi Region, a spur of this highway running to the Thai border at [Htee Khee](#), and the roads connecting [Moe Bye](#) village tract (in Southern Shan State) to Loikaw and Demoso towns in Karenni State. The Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) recently recaptured the Kyo-ndone-Kawkareik stretch of the Asia Highway, but still cannot easily use the stretch from Kawkareik to the Thai border at Myawaddy. The MAF also recently appeared to make headway in Karenni State, pushing from Loikaw toward Demoso. Meanwhile, armed actors led by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) have overrun many of the MAF's positions along the Thai border; according to the Karen National Union (KNU), it now controls [90 per cent](#) of the border between Thailand and KNU-defined Karen State.

Across much of the southeast, conditions since the coup have been characterised by fighting, instability, and a medley of different local governance structures. Non-state armed actors have fought with the MAF in many areas, and this has often led to localised increases in MAF airstrikes and artillery fire. Control of territory has also become even more of a patchwork — though typically MAF presence is limited to urban areas and roadways. For example, in Karenni State, the MAF administers Loikaw and has troops stationed in Demoso, Hpruso, Bawlakae, and

Hpasawng towns, while Shadaw and Mese townships, Maw Chee and Ywar Thit towns, and various rural areas across the state are controlled by Karenni forces. Non-state governance has likewise expanded, especially in Karenni State, where the Karenni IEC (Interim Executive Council) has established local administrations in 16 out of 18 townships (as it defines them), operating public services such as health, humanitarian aid, and emergency response, and has initiated taxation. In parts of Tanintharyi Region without MAF presence, governance activities are carried out by the KNU, National Unity Government (NUG)-aligned actors, or independent local groups, depending on the area.

Fighting and monsoon season rains have driven widespread and increasing humanitarian needs, particularly due to significant displacement. According to UNHCR, as of [4 August](#) there were 215,100 IDPs in Tanintharyi Region, 91,600 in Mon State, 257,400 in Karen State, 219,100 in Bago Region (East), and 131,700 in Karenni State, bringing the total to approximately 915,000 total IDPs in the southeast. However, these figures may be low, as suggested by a local Karen CSO member who said that approximately 1 million people in KNU areas (out of 1.8 million) were displaced, and by the Karenni Civil Society Network's [report](#) that there are 282,615 IDPs in Karenni State and neighbouring Moe Bye.

Livelihoods have also been severely undermined, meaning that not only IDPs are in need of assistance. Violence and weapon use, the presence

of explosive ordnance, and flooding and landslides during the monsoon season have undermined agricultural activity, as have rising prices for fuel and agricultural inputs. Physical roadblocks, transport restrictions, safety concerns, financial costs have also undermined trade and movement, hurting most economic activity. Some people rely on remittances from family members working abroad, continue to work that has become insecure, or have shifted to new (and sometimes [dangerous](#) or [unhealthy](#)) work, but many people lack any opportunity to earn income. Accordingly, there are widespread needs for food, shelter materials, medicines, livelihood support, and access to services such as healthcare and education. Markets remain functional in many places, but the costs of goods have increased significantly since the coup.

Humanitarian response activity has also continued, but the scope and scale of aid delivery has suffered significantly in the past six months. First, the overall funding for humanitarian response activities took a major hit in early 2025 with the termination of USAID funding, affecting most organisations in Myanmar. Second, fighting and restrictions have limited access for international organisations — particularly in contested areas — and even local responders in some cases. Meanwhile, governance actors, such as the Karenni IEC and the KNU's associated departments and civil society organizations, have [tried](#) to provide aid but struggled to meet needs with limited resources. ■

KEY ARMED STAKEHOLDERS

● Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF)

In power since 2021 coup; gatekeeper on engagement by international stakeholders, and has capacity to stifle local organisations where it has troops

Hundreds of thousands of troops spread across Myanmar

Engaged in nationwide recruitment drive since early 2024; has reportedly recruited at least 60,000 new troops

Key positions include Southeast RMC (Mawlamyine), Coastal RMC (Myeik)

● Karenni Joint Forces

Includes Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), Karenni Army (KA), Karenni National People’s Liberation Front (KNPLF), and others

Estimated strength: over 11,500 troops

Increased coordination since 2021, both militarily and with Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC)

● People’s Defence Forces (PDFs)

Smaller groups formed after coup in 2021

Mainly operate under leadership of Karenni Joint Forces in Karenni State and under leadership of KNLA in the rest of the southeast, but also operate independently (or under NUG command) in Tanintharyi and Bago regions

● Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)

Long-standing EAO, with territory across Karen, Mon, Tanintharyi, Bago (East), and Nay Pyi Taw divided into seven military and administrative regions

Estimated troop strength up to 15,000

KNDO is original armed wing of Karen National Union (KNU), but now functions as secondary defence force while KNLA conducts most armed operations

Has expanded military reach in Tanintharyi Region since 2021

● Mon Resistance Actors

Estimated strength 2,500

Increasingly coordinated opposition to MAF following NMSP-AD formation (2024) and formation of Rehmonnya Joint Column (2025)

Primarily active in southern Mon State, but have increased coordination with KNLA in Kawkareik and Kyainseiky townships

\* Kawthoolei Army (KTLA)

Formed in 2021, split off from KNDO

Fights against MAF but also has adversarial relationship with KNLA

Primarily active in northern Tanintharyi Region

\* Karen Border Guard Force (BGF)

Estimated strength of around 7,000 troops

Nominally distanced itself from MAF in 2024 but appears to still work with MAF, KNLA, and other actors as conditions permit

Derives revenue from scam centres — and maybe other illicit business — along Thai border in Myawaddy Township

\* Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA)

Estimated strength of around 500 troops

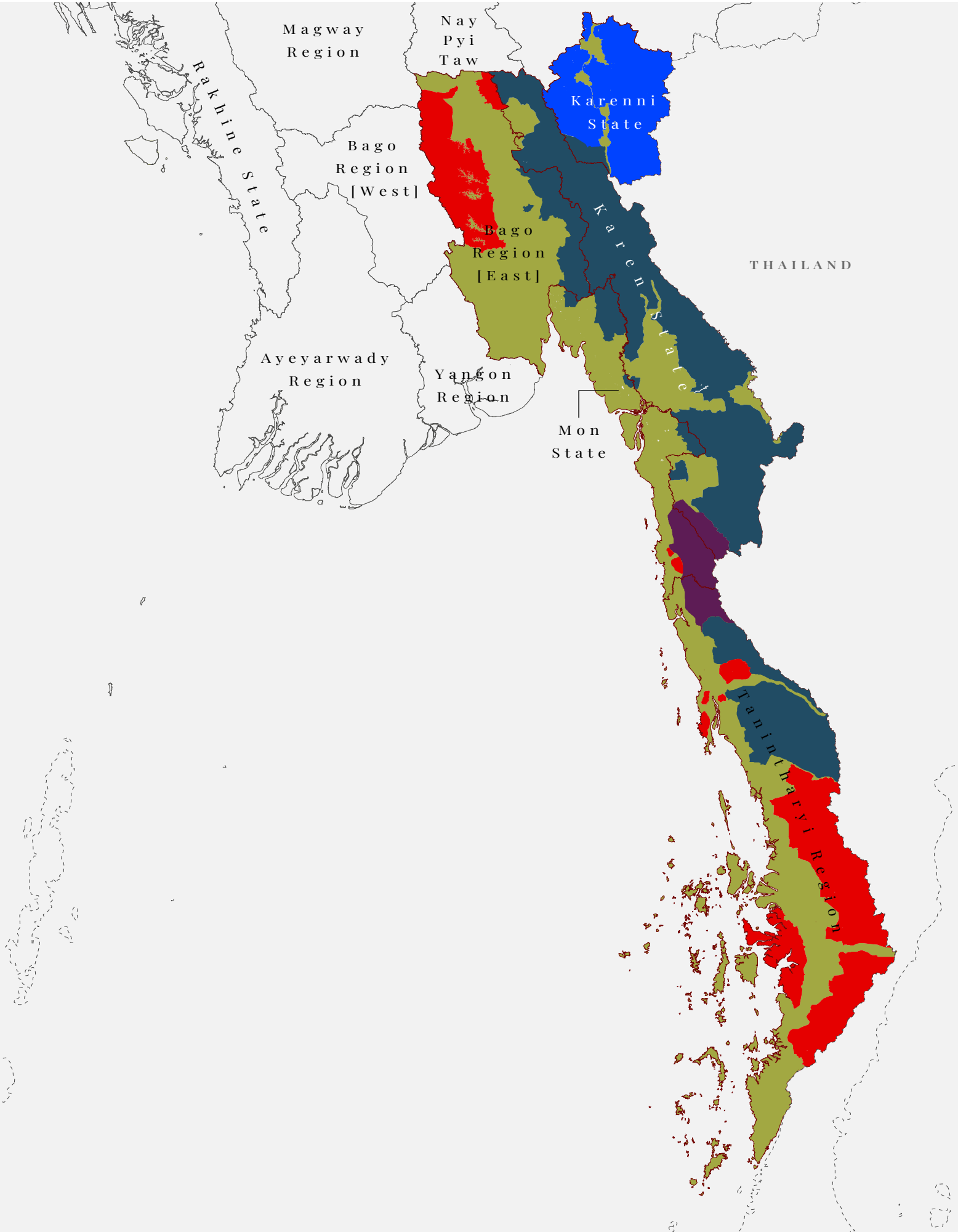
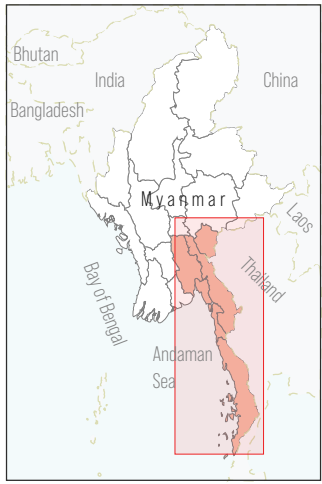
Neutral EAO; independent from MAF but has not opposed it

Weakened through split: several battalions left in 2024 to form NMSP-AD

\* Other neutral parties

Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, and KNU/KNLA-Peace Council (PC) in Karen State, Kayan National Land Army in Karenni State: all smaller forces maintaining their own interests

DKBA and PC both signatories to 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement



ARMED ACTOR PRESENCE

APRIL 2025

Disclaimer: In many areas across Myanmar, control is contested or mixed. However, for simplicity of viewing, this map does not show gradations of control or break down control by type.

The information on this graphic is from various open sources including open sources from social media. The information should not be considered comprehensive. This product is designed for information purposes only, and may not show all topographical areas due to scale limitations. Administrative boundaries are indicative only and provided by MIMU (copyrighted to MIMU at <https://themimu.info/mimu-terms-conditions>).

## KEY VARIABLES AND LIKELY IMPACTS

<div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>	<b>SSPC elections</b>	<b>New flooding, landslides</b>	<b>Migration to Thailand</b>
	<b>Location:</b> All southeast	<b>Location:</b> All southeast	<b>Location:</b> All southeast
	<p>Greater securitisation of urban areas, more frequent detentions</p> <p>PDF attacks on election infrastructure and volunteers, primarily in Bago and Tanintharyi</p>	<p>Displacement, damage to croplands and property, reduced yields</p> <p>Disruption of roadways, affecting movement, trade, and humanitarian response</p> <p>Greater prevalence of WASH issues, water- and mosquito-borne disease</p>	<p>Drain on labour (e.g. in agriculture, fisheries)</p> <p>Changes composition of households and communities (young men more likely to leave)</p>
<div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>	<b>Concerted pre-election MAF offensive</b>	<b>MAF reinforcement</b>	<b>EAO/resistance takeover of border</b>
	<b>Location:</b> All southeast	<b>Location:</b> All southeast	<b>Location:</b> Border areas
	<p>Increased militarisation and fighting along roadways</p> <p>More checkpoints, greater financial costs and security threats to transportation</p> <p>More restricted movement, especially between MAF-controlled and non-MAF-controlled areas</p> <p><b>Expansion of MAF air power usage (air, drone, paramotor strikes)</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> All southeast</p> <p>Increased threats to IDP camps, other civilian areas</p> <p>Closures of schools, health centres, other facilities</p> <p>More civilian deaths, displacement, destruction</p> <p>Greater overall insecurity</p>	<p>Greater troop presence</p> <p>Greater detentions, raids, artillery fire</p> <p>Greater ability to retake key roadways</p> <p><b>Development of <u>heavy industries</u> in Dawei SEZ</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Yebyu Township</p> <p>Increased displacement, MAF presence</p> <p>Attacks from PDFs and Mon actors, increased fighting</p>	<p>Increased pressure/incentive for talks with Thai officials</p> <p>Easier to conduct small-scale cross-border trade</p> <p>Greater safety near the border, though not from airstrikes</p> <p>MAF push to retake key cross-border trade routes</p>
<div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>	<b>Tensions between Karen actors</b>	<b>Increased MAF naval efforts</b>	<b>Easing of Thai restrictions</b>
	<b>Location:</b> Karen, Tanintharyi	<b>Location:</b> Mon, Tanintharyi	<b>Location:</b> Border areas
	<p>Greater fragmentation, weakening of opposition to MAF</p> <p>Disrupted coordination between areas under control of different groups</p> <p><b>Concerted pre-election resistance offensive</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> All southeast</p> <p>Possible short-term gains for resistance actors</p> <p>Heavy MAF attacks on civilian areas</p> <p>Major increase in displacement, humanitarian needs</p>	<p>Greater MAF shelling from riverways and coastline</p> <p>Greater MAF ability to strengthen isolated positions</p> <p>Harm to fisheries, riparian agriculture, transport</p>	<p>More cross-border trade, greater availability of goods</p> <p>Possibly easier movement, displacement from border areas</p> <p>Particularly significant if it occurs in Tanintharyi: greater access to goods, re-emergence of smaller markets</p>



# Status Quo in 2025

In this scenario, fighting continues, and conditions remain poor, across much of the south-east. There may be changes of control or presence in specific areas — such as a stronger MAF in some urban areas of Karenni State, or a stronger KNLA along the Thai border — but there are no major territorial shifts as seen in Kachin, Shan, or Rakhine State. Fighting persists primarily in rural areas, where various resistance actors launch attacks on MAF positions, and the MAF conducts airstrikes, raids, and shelling that have severe negative impacts on communities. PDFs launch smaller attacks on MAF personnel and convoys, and in urban areas, possibly resulting in marginal gains. These smaller attacks increase in the lead-up to December, when the SSPC has planned its nationwide election and is likely to facilitate polling in urban areas. Meanwhile, MAF raids, detention of community members, and forced recruitment continue to destabilise communities and lead to further displacement and needs.

Conditions are particularly poor in Karenni State, where the MAF likely recaptures territory in Demoso Township. This affects tens of thousands of IDPs there, including those long displaced within Karenni State and people recently displaced by fighting in neighbouring Pekon Township, by pushing them into more remote areas where access is even more challenging. Conditions also notably degrade in Tanintharyi Region, both around Dawei and Launglon townships and farther south on the Union Highway, where fighting drives needs upward and there are shortages of both resources and local response infrastructure. ■

LIKELIHOOD: ■■■■□

The likelihood of this scenario is premised on past trends and current conditions. With the exception of Operation 1111 in Karenni State (which was later largely reversed by the MAF) and the takeover of the Asia Highway in Karen State (partially reversed by the MAF), there has been little major change in the southeast. Rather, EAOs and resistance actors have continued to grind away at MAF positions, primarily in rural areas, but the MAF has kept its presence in urban areas and ability to reach most locations. At the same time, the MAF appears to lack

the capacity to decisively rout its opponents in this part of the country, particularly given its inability to retake the Kawkaik-Myawaddy stretch of the Asia Highway over the past 1.5 years — despite having troops on both ends and seemingly cooperative actors in the area.

Though it appears that little is likely to change in the near future, a major shift in MAF priorities or resourcing, or a major shift in EAO strategies, could result in a definitive change from the status quo.

## IMPACT:

IN THE 'STATUS QUO' SCENARIO, HUMANITARIAN NEEDS ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE INCREASING ACROSS MOST OF SOUTHEAST MYANMAR, ALONG WITH DISPLACEMENT. HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT IS ALSO LIKELY TO DECLINE, IN LIGHT OF RESOURCE SHORTAGES, BUT ACCESS CONSTRAINTS AND MARKET FUNCTIONALITY ARE UNLIKELY TO FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE.

## HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

**DISPLACEMENT** is likely to remain high in this scenario, as continued fighting affects still more communities, and past destruction (and fears of newer fighting or attacks) prevent people from returning to their homes. While return or resettlement may be possible in some areas, this should not be considered durable or expected to drastically decrease overall displacement.

**FOOD SECURITY** is likely to remain poor — and even to degrade — in this scenario. First, the same barriers to income generation, as well as ever-rising prices, mean that it is challenging for many households to procure adequate food. Disruptions to farming also hurt households' ability to provide for themselves. Second, funding shortfalls likely mean that food (and cash) assistance drops. ►



### HUMANITARIAN NEEDS (cont.)

**PROTECTION** likely remains poor in this scenario, and possibly degrades as the planned SSPC election approaches. As over the past five years, protection concerns include detention (incl. for recruitment), violence in the form of gunfire and explosives, and various other abuses by armed actors. As the elections near, the MAF may increase repression through means such as detention.

**LIVELIHOODS** likely remain poor in this scenario, as a result of multiple barriers to income generation.

Violence (and fear of it), damage to cropland, displacement, movement and trade barriers, and rising prices will likely mean that many people remain unable to engage in pre-coup livelihood activities.

**HEALTH** is likely to remain threatened in this scenario, as a result of shrinking access to medicines and medical care. Barriers to civilians' access at MAF-linked care centres, and threats to the viability of care centres linked to other actors, mean that health services are likely to remain scarce and insecure.

### HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

**PERMISSIONS** are unlikely to change meaningfully in this scenario; the SSPC is unlikely to grant permission to access areas not under its control in the southeast, as elsewhere in Myanmar. Other actors may grant permissions more freely, but the significance of this is far smaller given the difficulties of reaching areas under their control.

**ADMINISTRATIVE RISK** is similarly unlikely to change. The same 'laws' and directives from Nay Pyi Taw that have been in place for years, and an apparent recent effort by the SSPC to constrain activity in the lead-up to its planned election, mean that administrative risk remains high.

**PHYSICAL ACCESS** is likely to remain poor in this scenario, as a result of general barriers to movement, particularly between areas under the control of different actors. Continued fighting along major roadways means

that these and spurs from them will likely remain unsafe, increasing the significance of smaller roadways — some of which may be impassable during the rainy season.

**MARKET FUNCTIONALITY** are likely to remain functional in this scenario, even if goods are increasingly difficult for people to afford.

### IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Prepare to respond to sporadic displacement, mainly in rural areas, with the understanding that durable solutions remain out of reach;
- Scale up funding in order to maximise the impact of existing access, and increase cash-based assistance to offset rising costs of goods and destruction of livelihoods;
- Plan to source supplies from local markets, but be aware that budgets and/or targets may need to be adjusted to respond to high and increasing cost of goods;
- Continue to work with local civil society to the greatest extent possible in order to mitigate access challenges, including interruptions to travel and transportation related to restrictions, violence, infrastructure damage, and weather;
- Support local partners and other civil society actors in navigating the security concerns and pressures that arise from shifting areas of control; and
- Closely monitor contextual developments and consult frequently with local staff and partners to ensure conflict sensitivity best practices are adapted to shifting realities on the ground.

# KNLA Shifts Strategy in 2025

In this scenario, the KNLA broadens its aims from its current strategy of solidifying control of rural areas, to a strategy of capturing towns and urban areas, leveraging its successes in removing MAF positions from the areas around them. In this scenario, the KNU would be likely to start with attacks on smaller towns that are further removed from its key strongholds in Karen State, likely in East Bago or Tanintharyi Region. Administration in newly-captured towns would likely be a mix of KNU, NUG, and local bodies, depending on the specific location. Depending on its success and appetite for administration in these places, it may then shift into capturing towns in Karen State itself. The attacks themselves would likely be akin to a siege, with KNLA-led troops surrounding the MAF's key positions and moving closer until the remaining troops there flee or surrender. In response, the MAF would increase its attacks — primarily airstrikes — on civilian populations in and around these towns, rendering them damaged and largely depopulated. The MAF would also restrict movement around the areas where this takes place, making it more difficult for goods to get in or civilians to get out, while air dropping supplies to its embattled troops there. ■

LIKELIHOOD: ■■■■■■

Until now, the KNLA has primarily focused on taking MAF positions in rural areas across KNU-defined Karen State, with the exception of attacks on MAF positions in Kawkaik and Myawaddy towns in 2024. However, this strategy could change, for one of two reasons. First, with the SSPC's planned election approaching, the KNLA may be increasingly inclined (or face increasing pressure from resistance allies) to launch a larger-scale attack and increase momentum against the MAF in the south-east. Second, particularly if the KNLA is successful in overrunning MAF bases on the border with Thailand, it may increasingly be forced to decide between attacking MAF positions in towns or not attacking at all; that is, it may have effectively achieved all of its less contentious objectives.

Despite these potential motivating factors, the KNLA still appears unlikely to make such a change. It has likely avoided attacking around urban areas because this would be extremely costly for the civilian populations living there, many of whom contribute to its support base. Where it has made such attacks in the past, such as in Kawkaik, this has indeed resulted in massive civilian displacement and humanitarian needs, as well as further MAF attempts to bolster its own presence there — resulting in more fighting and little gain.

## TRIGGERS AND INDICATORS

### CHANGES THAT WOULD LIKELY DRIVE OR LEAD TO THIS SCENARIO INCLUDE:

- Increased pressure on the KNU/KNLA from constituents and resistance allies
- KNLA success in removing the MAF from most rural positions

### ACCORDINGLY, KEY INDICATORS FOR THE ONSET OF THIS SCENARIO INCLUDE:

- Statements (e.g. the NUG, resistance-affiliated media) suggesting that towns in the southeast have been captured or are being contested
- Statements from the NUG suggesting that the election will be opposed through armed operations (going beyond pin prick attacks)
- Announcements that MAF border positions have been captured

## IMPACT:

### HIGH AND NEGATIVE

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** IN THIS SCENARIO, HUMANITARIAN NEEDS CAN BE EXPECTED TO RISE ACROSS THE BOARD, WHILE PHYSICAL ACCESS AND MARKET FUNCTIONALITY WILL ALSO LIKELY SUFFER, IN AND AROUND TOWNS WHERE FIGHTING TAKES PLACE.

Permissions and administrative risk would likely not substantially change, but there would be even fewer areas to which the SSPC/MAF would allow humanitarian responders to access. Depending on the location, fighting in towns may also affect humanitarian needs and support capacity elsewhere (e.g. if it takes place along a major road).

#### HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

**DISPLACEMENT** is very likely to increase in this scenario, as urban and per-urban populations flee. Town residents likely flee due to the fighting itself, destruction of their property, and fear of being hit by airstrikes or stray munitions. To a lesser extent, airstrikes and artillery fire from the town may displace surrounding communities, and may result in multiple waves of displacement.

**FOOD SECURITY** is likely to degrade in this scenario, as fighting undermines the functionality of markets in urban areas, and as MAF restrictions on roads leading to the area prevent goods from reaching there. This also affects food security in surrounding areas that rely on town markets. To the extent that the towns are along main roads, these factors may also affect availability of food goods further afield.

**PROTECTION** is likely to degrade substantially in this scenario, at least in and around locations where there is fighting. While the removal of MAF troops may reduce protection concerns in the longer term, the fighting required for this puts many civilians in harm's way – or sends them to displacement camps where there are also protection concerns.

**LIVELIHOODS** are likely to suffer in this scenario. Fighting and transport restrictions are likely to make economic activity even more challenging, while displacement and damage to farmland will likely make agricultural work impossible for many farmers.

**HEALTH CONDITIONS** are likely to worsen in this scenario, as healthcare becomes more challenging to access for people living in and around towns under attack. Healthcare facilities are likely to be damaged, destroyed, or otherwise shut down, forcing locals to seek care elsewhere. In addition, transport restrictions would likely affect the availability of medicines.

**PERMISSIONS** are unlikely to change substantially in this scenario. They are already sparsely seen, but in this scenario the amount of territory in which permissions can be secured shrinks.

As with permissions, **ADMINISTRATIVE RISK** is not likely to change in this scenario, but there would likely be an even greater amount of area in which humanitarian response activities carry such risk.

**PHYSICAL ACCESS** is likely to suffer in this scenario, as fighting makes travel unsafe and MAF restrictions limit the area that humanitarian responders can reach. While local responders may still be able to reach embattled areas, this would come with major security risks. However, in the longer term, the removal of MAF troops from towns in southeast Myanmar could ultimately increase the reach of local responders.

**MARKET FUNCTIONALITY** is likely to be seriously damaged in towns where fighting takes place in this scenario, because of both physical destruction and population movement. As people flee from embattled towns, this will shrink both supply and demand at town markets, with impacts on communities in the surrounding area.

### IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Support local partners in conducting iterative, localised needs assessments with IDPs and other communities, in order to gauge the rapidly changing scope of needs;
- Closely monitor contextual developments and consult frequently with local staff and partners to ensure conflict sensitivity best practices are adapted to shifting realities;
- Scale up funding, and increase cash-based programmes to offset the rising costs of goods and destruction of livelihoods, as well as to maintain efficiency and flexibility in a context that may change rapidly;
- Plan to source supplies from local markets, but be aware that budgets and/or targets may need to be adjusted to respond to high and increasing cost of goods; and
- Strengthen relationships with local partners and civil society actors that have greater ability to reach populations in affected areas, in order to mitigate access challenges, including interruptions to travel and transportation related to restrictions, armed violence, poor infrastructure, and weather.



# MAF Re-Allocates Resources in 2025

In this scenario, the MAF makes a more concerted effort to take positions lost across the southeast, drawing on its conscription efforts, as well as troops and weapons from elsewhere in Myanmar. It shifts troops and materiel into the southeast, and then uses main roads to re-establish its presence in more territory, albeit suffering losses from frequent attacks on convoys as it does so. It aids its re-expansion efforts through the frequent use of airstrikes (and drone attacks), particularly in villages near roadways and towns, and in locations where it perceives resistance actors to be located. In the face of a greater imbalance of arms, EAO-led attacks rely more on drone strikes and hit-and-run tactics, resulting in MAF troop losses but limited effectiveness in stopping MAF movement. As more MAF troops enter the region, urban areas and transport corridors are the first places to become increasingly securitised, meaning that some economic activity can take place but civilians in these places are highly restricted — and at risk of detention or other punishment. More civilians flee from urban to rural areas, but they may be displaced multiple times as the MAF tries to expand a buffer zone around the areas in which it has — or retakes — control. ■

LIKELIHOOD: ■■■■■

The MAF has recently scored some victories (e.g. in Shan State and northern Mandalay Region), reportedly through a combination of troop strengthening (through forced recruitment), material strengthening (e.g. drone support from China), and increased confidence in support from international allies and in its own longevity. It could try to sustain this momentum through a concerted effort in the southeast, and would likely be able to shore up its relationship with Thailand by doing so, particularly in combination with the SSPC's planned election. **It is worth noting that this scenario could become more likely if the elections — assuming they take place — result in a change of military leadership.**

However, as with Scenario 2, this is unlikely in the next six months and would be a major departure from

past practice. The MAF, particularly under Min Aung Hlaing's leadership, has largely opted to spread itself across all corners of Myanmar (at least where possible). The failures of the [Aung Zeya Column](#), which has tried for the past 1.5 years to recapture the Kawkaik-Myawaddy section of the Asia Highway, is a testament to this, as are the MAF's losses along the coast in Tanintharyi Region; it has ample human and material resources (including planes, naval ships, and munitions) in Myanmar to support its troops in these specific locations but continues to spread them thin (such as by sending more naval ships to [Sittwe](#)). Particularly given that it can likely still conduct elections in most major towns across the southeast, it does not appear to have motivation to change its tactics in the next six months.

## TRIGGERS AND INDICATORS

### CHANGES THAT WOULD LIKELY DRIVE OR LEAD TO THIS SCENARIO INCLUDE:

- Shifting of MAF troops and resources from elsewhere in the country
- Economic pressure on the SSPC, pushing it to seek expansion of trade across the Thai border
- Greater support from smaller armed actors, or a weakening otherwise of EAOs and/or other resistance actors

### ACCORDINGLY, KEY INDICATORS FOR THE ONSET OF THIS SCENARIO INCLUDE:

- Naval ships leaving Rakhine, Mon, or Tanintharyi
- Large military convoys moving overland into (or within) the southeast
- Visible breaks between EAOs, resistance actors, or both

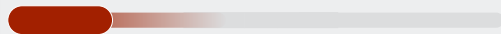
## IMPACT:

### HIGH AND NEGATIVE

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** IN THIS SCENARIO, HUMANITARIAN NEEDS CAN BE EXPECTED TO RISE ACROSS THE BOARD, BUT HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT CAPACITY (AND MARKET FUNCTIONALITY) ARE UNLIKELY TO CHANGE SUBSTANTIALLY.

As ever, changes in control may disrupt established patterns of response activity and require travel along different routes, but local responders will likely still be able to reach populations in need, and increased MAF presence may even increase the reach of international responders.

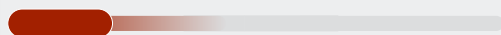
#### HUMANITARIAN NEEDS



**DISPLACEMENT** is likely to rise in this scenario, as MAF attacks and securitisation in more places leads to destruction of property and safety concerns. Depending on the extent to which resistance actors try to disrupt MAF efforts, MAF raids and attacks on civilians may be more or less intense, particularly along roadways.



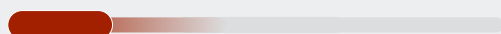
**FOOD SECURITY** is likely to decrease in this scenario, as more communities are displaced or otherwise affected by violence and property damage. As well, MAF movement along larger roadways is likely to disrupt movement of people and goods.



**PROTECTION** is likely to significantly worsen in this scenario. In the short term, MAF efforts to retake positions and territory is likely to be accompanied by shelling, airstrikes, and other attacks that affect civilian security. In the longer term, where MAF troops are able to re-establish a presence, their presence will present continued threats.



**LIVELIHOODS** are likely to worsen in this scenario, as fighting and a greater MAF troop presence undermines movement and agricultural activity. Destruction from fighting and other factors (e.g. flooding), as well as remaining explosive ordnance, is likely to disrupt agricultural activity in the longer term.



**HEALTH** is likely to worsen in this scenario, as fighting disrupts healthcare service delivery and access to medicines. Although healthcare facilities may remain (or even increase) in areas retaken by the MAF, there will likely be continued barriers (and hesitancy) to civilians using them.

## SCENARIO 3 – MAF RE-ALLOCATES RESOURCES IN 2025

### HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

**PERMISSIONS** are unlikely to change significantly in this scenario; they are likely to remain poor. However, to the extent that the MAF regains territory (and feels militarily secure there), the SSPC may be willing to grant permissions over a wider area.

As with permissions, **ADMINISTRATIVE RISK** is unlikely to change significantly in this scenario, but risk may decrease in areas retaken by MAF forces.

**PHYSICAL ACCESS** is likely to get slightly worse in this scenario, as fighting and MAF checkpoints disrupt movement. Physical access may still be possible along smaller, secondary roadways, but will take longer and be more expensive.

**MARKET FUNCTIONALITY** is unlikely to change significantly in this scenario. While fighting may temporarily disrupt economic activity in specific locations, and MAF presence may affect the flow of goods on some routes, markets will likely continue to function even where these troops increase.

## IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Preposition aid, to the greatest extent possible, in anticipation of waves of displacement on the routes taken by MAF troops;
- Reduce administrative burdens (e.g. reporting requirements) and increase flexibility, allowing local partners to quickly adapt programs to respond to needs as they arise;
- Shift to remote, zero-visibility modalities where not already existing; and
- Engage with local authorities in border-adjacent areas, where possible, to facilitate the flow of assistance from the border inward.

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## Scenario Plan

### SOUTHEAST MYANMAR

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