

Special Study of Arakan Affairs

Health challenges faced by the people in Arakan

No. 1 Health Sector



Aftermath of the airstrike on Mrauk-U Hospital, December 10, 2025
(Photo Credit Via Mrauk-U Youth Association)

March 3 , 2026

1. Introduction

- (a) Main Topic: Health-related challenges faced within Arakan (Rakhine Region)
- (b) Geographic Area: Seventeen townships in Arakan, including Paletwa Township in southern Chin State, which are respectively controlled by the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) (military junta) and the Arakan Army.
- (c) Time Period: A five-month period from October 2025 to February 2026.

Since November 2023, due to the resurgence of armed conflict, Arakan has been experiencing instability in security conditions, transportation blockages, internal displacement caused by armed clashes, and destruction of infrastructure. As a result, the region has been facing significant social and economic hardships. The health challenges faced by local populations have reached an alarming level.

This study primarily focuses on the health-related challenges encountered by people in Arakan, based on reports from local media, statements issued by relevant organizations, and testimonies from local residents.

2. Brief Descriptions

October 2025

(a) **Pregnant women and children in Mrauk-U have lacked healthcare for years:** In Mrauk-U Township, due to blockades on both land and water routes imposed by the SSPC, there are severe shortages of medicines and healthcare services. At the 50-bed public hospital, the lack of skilled doctors and insufficient medical supplies has led to a healthcare crisis, particularly affecting pregnant women, children, and patients with chronic illnesses.

(b) **Child deaths due to malaria in Paletwa Township:** Five children from Maung Village, Buddha Village, and Kyetaw Village in Paletwa Township died due to malaria. Additionally, in villages between Paletwa Township and Mindat Township, malaria has been resurging due to seasonal weather changes, creating an urgent need for medical assistance.

November 2025

(c) **A 13-year-old child dies of malaria in Kyauktaw Township:** “When he arrived at the hospital, they took a blood sample. After testing, they said the malaria parasite had reached his brain. The grandfather and grandson had come seeking treatment. They had to walk on foot, crossing about two mountains, so he became even more unwell from exhaustion. The grandfather carried him on his back. The child had already stopped speaking along the way,” said a female relative.

(d) **Around 300 local residents and traders in Paletwa District infected with severe diarrhea:** A diarrheal disease that spread from border areas of Mizoram State in India infected more than 300 local residents and traders in Paletwa. As a result of the outbreak, up to six people died.

December 2025

(e) Displaced people on Mose Kyun Island in Rathedaung suffer from skin diseases: On Mose Kyun Island in Rathedaung Township, where thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are sheltering, around 700 people have been suffering from skin diseases. Similarly, in Kyaukphyu, Ramree, Ann, Taungup, Ponnagyun, and Mrauk-U townships, many displaced people and local residents have also experienced contagious skin diseases. Currently, displaced persons who cannot afford medical treatment are relying on traditional medicines. They have expressed the urgent need for medical assistance and access to proper treatment.

(f) Airstrike on Mrauk-U Hospital leaves 33 dead and up to 80 injured: A public hospital in Mrauk-U Township was bombed by a military jet fighter of the SSPC. According to local residents and a witness, the attack resulted in 33 deaths and at least 80 injuries.

January 2026

(g) Rising Cases of Pneumonia and Seasonal Flu Among Children in Arakan: In areas controlled by the Arakan Army, during the seasonal transition period, cases of respiratory illnesses among children under two years old, such as seasonal influenza, pneumonia, asthma, and bronchitis, have been increasing. As a result, the number of pediatric patients in hospitals and clinics has been rising. In addition, members of the health community have noted that there is a need to ensure regular administration of influenza vaccines (Gene) for children during the winter season.

(h) Restrictions on Transporting Medicines for Patients Returning from Yangon to Sittwe and Kyaukphyu: Patients from Sittwe and Kyaukphyu who received medical treatment in Yangon and returned by air have been facing restrictions imposed by the SSPC on carrying sufficient quantities of medicines. Due to these limitations, patients with chronic illnesses in the region are experiencing difficulties in maintaining uninterrupted access to essential medications, thereby increasing health risks.

February 2026

(i) Healthcare Crisis in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu

In the military junta or SSPC - controlled areas of Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, armed conflict and transportation difficulties have led to severe shortages of medicines and restrictions on access to medical treatment. Patients suffering from HIV, cancer, and other chronic diseases are unable to access necessary medications, resulting in worsening health conditions. Additionally, in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, inadequate access to clean water and limited healthcare services have increased the risk of infectious disease outbreaks, according to civil society humanitarian organizations.

3. Findings

1. Residents living in the 17 townships of Arakan and Paletwa Township in southern Chin State, which are areas respectively controlled by the Arakan Army (AA) and the SSPC, are facing health-related challenges that have emerged both directly and indirectly as consequences of the conflict.
2. In the three remaining townships under the control of the junta, particularly in Manaung, people are facing shortages of medicines and medical supplies, as well as an insufficient number of doctors. In Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, restrictions imposed by the junta on transporting medicines, along with transportation blockades, have further limited access to essential drugs. As a result, patients with chronic illnesses are confronting an urgent healthcare crisis in which even basic health services are inadequate.
3. In the more populous and geographically larger areas controlled by the Arakan Army, local communities are also experiencing various health-related challenges. On December 10, 2025, the bombing of Mrauk-U Hospital by the military junta resulted in the deaths of numerous patients receiving treatment. This incident highlights the severe threats to the safety and security of individuals seeking medical care.
4. Over the past five months, child deaths due to malaria have been reported in Paletwa and Kyauktaw, with medicine shortages and transportation difficulties cited as the primary causes. Additionally, during the seasonal transition period, cases of respiratory illnesses among children under two years old, such as seasonal influenza, pneumonia, asthma, and bronchitis, have increased significantly. There is a pressing need to ensure regular administration of influenza vaccines (Gene) for children.
5. Furthermore, in Paletwa, some deaths were reported due to the spread of acute diarrheal disease. In Kyaukphyu, Ramree, Ann, Taungup, Ponnagyun, and Mrauk-U, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local residents have suffered from skin infectious diseases. In Rathedaung, on Moe Sei Kyun, approximately 700 displaced persons were affected by the disease. According to reports, financially vulnerable residents are relying primarily on traditional medicines due to lack of access to formal healthcare, underscoring the urgent need for medical assistance.

4. Analysis

In townships controlled by the SSPC, health-related challenges are not only due to transportation restrictions but are also linked to a lack of political prioritization and weaknesses in governance and management. On the other hand, in areas under the control of the Arakan Army, the challenges are primarily caused by external transportation blockades, security vulnerabilities due to ongoing conflict, shortages of medicines, medical supplies, and healthcare personnel, as well as difficulties in domestic travel. However, there may also be some gaps in administrative capacity.

In terms of responses, the health department of the United League of Arakan (ULA) has been distributing antiretroviral therapy (ART) medicines for HIV patients, initiating childhood vaccination programs, and establishing medical training schools. Nevertheless, the current health challenges are having direct impacts on the daily lives of local populations, as well as on their mental and physical well-being, and may further exacerbate social insecurity. Limited access to basic healthcare services across different social groups may also lead to declining public trust in local governance and service delivery systems.

About Center for Arakan Studies

The Center for Arakan Studies is an independent, non-partisan research organization established in December 2021 by journalists, political analysts, researchers, and social workers. The Center aims to enhance understanding of Arakan affairs by publishing rigorous research on human rights conditions, political, economic, and social developments in Arakan, as well as issues related to

Arakan within Myanmar and internationally.

The Center produces policy briefs and monthly reports on topics related to Arakan, which are published through its website and various publications.

© 2026 Arakan

Contact – info@arakanstudies.org, www.arakanstudies.org