Issue Brief

Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities Across Arakan State

No. (13/2026)

Challenges and Protection of Persons with Disabilities



Persons with disabilities receiving assistance at a location in Arakan State. (Photo: DVB Burmese)

November 12 , 2026

1. Introduction

(A) Main Focus	Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities
(B) Geographic Scope	Across Arakan State
(C) Study Period	From August 2024 to October 2026.

According to the 2014 census, 2.3 million people, representing 4.6% of Myanmar's total population, were reported to have a disability. Subsequently, in 2019, the Daw Aung San Suu Kyi-led government, NLD, released updated figures indicating that the number of persons with disabilities had risen to 6 million, accounting for 12.8% of the national population. However, following the military coup, the junta's population report based on its 2024 census stated that approximately 2.3 million people or 7.6% of the population aged five and above, experience at least one form of disability in Myanmar.

According to United Nations assessments, approximately 15% of the 5.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), who account for 13% of Myanmar's total population, are living with at least one form of disability. Furthermore, the findings reveal that 40% of displaced households include one or two individuals with disabilities. Among the 5.9 million persons with disabilities, 3.5 million are women, who often face disproportionately complex and heightened challenges compared to their male counterparts.

According to data from the 2019 Inter-censal Survey, Rakhine State alone with a population of over 3 million population accounts for more than 500,000 persons with disabilities. However, due to ongoing military conflicts and violence, the number of persons with disabilities continues to rise steadily compared to previous figures.

Myanmar ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in 2011. Under this convention, persons with disabilities are guaranteed full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

However, following the military coup, persons with disabilities in Myanmar face not only everyday social challenges but also perilous threats that endanger their basic survival. Across the country, the Myanmar military has committed severe human rights violations, including targeting and torturing persons with disabilities, arresting and imprisoning disability rights activists, and restricting or blocking necessary medical supplies and humanitarian aid. According to reports from human rights organisations, at least 117 persons with disabilities were killed by the Myanmar military between the time of the coup and early 2025, a figure that has since risen significantly. Furthermore, between 60% and 90% of displaced children with disabilities have been completely deprived of their basic rights, including the right to education.

This study is primarily based on reports published by local media outlets, findings from human rights organisations, statements issued by the United Nations and other international organisations, and interviews conducted by our Centre for Arakan Studies (CAS).

2. Summary of Findings

August 2024

(1) Over 500 civilians become disabled in four Arakan's townships during conflict (Myanmar Peace Monitor-MPM)

The disabilities were caused by airstrikes, artillery and small arms fire, landmine explosions and blasts from unexploded remnants of war, resulting in physical, hearing and visual disabilities.
Ma Htwe May, General Secretary of the Rakhine State Association of Persons with Disabilities, said: "Most of the disabled people are physically disabled. There are also some with hearing and visual impairments. And there are also people who are disabled due to fire damage to their bodies."

According to the organization's records, there are 230 disabled people in Mrauk-U Township, 129 in Minbya Township, 90 in Kyauktaw Township and 47 in Ponnagyun Township, making a total of 496.

November 2024

(2) Critical Emergency Aid Required for People with Disabilities in Arakan (Border News Agency-BNA)

In the Arakan region, civil society organisations and local residents report that people with disabilities are in need of humanitarian assistance.

As a result, people with disabilities are unable to receive protection or assistance, and they also lack essential supplies and medical aid. This has left them facing numerous challenges related to food, shelter, and healthcare, according to civil society organisations.

"People with disabilities are experiencing the most severe hardships in terms of basic survival. Among them, displaced individuals with disabilities are facing even greater difficulties. It is crucial for international aid to be provided," said a civil society activist to Border News Agency.

(3) Urgent Assistance Needed for Disabled Female War Refugees (Border News Agency-BNA)

Disabled women living under the administration of the Arakan People's Revolutionary Government are reportedly in urgent need of assistance, according to displaced persons.

These disabled women are said to require more support than other displaced individuals, as they are facing significant challenges in securing basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare.

A disabled female war refugee told the Border News Agency. "It's even worse in places where transportation is difficult. No one comes to help, and no organisations provide any support. Even securing basic necessities like food and shelter has become extremely challenging,"

December 2024

(4) International Day of PWD: Rakhine State CM attended the event (Myanmaritv)

The ceremony of 2024 International Day of Persons with Disabilities was held at Khine Thazin Hall in Sittwe Township of Rakhine State on 3rd December.

At the event, Chief Minister U Htein Lin emphasized the importance of raising awareness and understanding of disability issues, promoting the dignity, human rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities, and advocating for their support.

(5) Disabled War Refugees from Rakhine Facing Discrimination in Yangon (Border News Agency-BNA)

Disabled war refugees in Yangon report experiencing discrimination from the Myanmar junta's forces. They claim that Rakhine disabled individuals and refugees from Rakhine are subjected to even greater discrimination.

These disabled war refugees reported that, despite successfully passing interviews for schools and jobs under the control of the Myanmar junta, the responsible personnel- often disabled former soldiers- refuse to admit or provide opportunities for disabled Rakhine war refugees or those who have come from Rakhine. Instead, they are being turned away and excluded.

Additionally, disabled war refugees reported that those from Rakhine are being discriminated against in vocational training programs and job applications.

May 2025

(6) Enrolment Open for Students with Disabilities and Visually Impaired Students (One News)

The Department of Social Welfare, under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, announced it is accepting enrolments for students with disabilities and visually impaired students who cannot attend conventional basic education schools for the 2025–2026 academic year.

Applicants with physical or intellectual disabilities who are aged 6 to 18 and unmarried may apply to attend the Training Schools for Children with Disabilities in Yangon and Mandalay, regardless of religious affiliation. Parents or guardians must personally accompany and register the students.

June 2025

(7) Urgent Aid Needed for Disabled Victims (Border News Agency-BNA)

People with disabilities and residents of Arakan say that assistive devices for rehabilitation are needed among the disabled community there.Those who have lost their limbs need support for rehabilitation, including crutches, prosthetic legs, and prosthetic arms, among other assistive devices, according to people with disabilities.

“Around here, it's difficult to get around without crutches. Every time I try to go somewhere, my body just can't keep up. I can't even afford to buy prosthetic legs. Even to walk lightly, I need help from others. If I had crutches, moving around would be much easier,” said a disabled man from Kyauktaw Township to Border News Agency.

February 2026

(8) One Civilian Killed and Four Injured by Explosive of War in Maungdaw Township (Border News Agency–BNA)

A blast caused by explosive remnants of war left by military junta forces killed one civilian and injured four others in Maungdaw Township around 10:00 AM today, February 10, according to local villagers.

The deceased was identified as 22-year-old Feruz Khan from Shwe Zarr Gohn Nar Village in Maungdaw Township. The four injured individuals were identified as 18-year-old Atta Ahmad, 23-year-old Muhamad Nur, 30-year-old Muhamad Zunai, and Muhamad Hussain, according to the residents.

Villagers stated that the explosion severed both legs and arms of Feruz Khan, causing

his immediate death, while Muhamad Nur, Muhamad Zunai, Muhamad Hussain, and Atta Ahamad sustained severe injuries.

March 2026

(9) Rakhine landmine victims need prosthetics and other assistance ((Burma News International-BNI)

A number of Rakhine landmine victims need prosthetics and other assistance to survive in a dignified manner, as they are currently facing difficult situations to maintain their livelihoods.

U Aung San Htay from Zedi Pyin village in Rathedaung township of Rakhine State said, "Currently, I am only able to walk with a small crutch provided by the ICRC. When I was hit by a landmine, the ICRC measured my height and weight. Since it was a fighting period, I was unable to get a prosthetic. So I am hoping now to get a prosthetic."

Aung San Htay was walking on Mayu mountain on 1 March 2023 and when he prepared to cut bamboos unknowingly struck a landmine, which exploded. He lost one of his legs in the accident.

(10) International Assistance Needed for Landmine Clearance in Rakhine (Burma News International–BNI)

Social activists have urged that international assistance is essential to completely clear landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Rakhine State, as the casualties caused by these hazards continue to rise daily.

During the conflict in Rakhine from 2023 to 2025, the Myanmar military planted thousands of landmines around its military bases. Furthermore, minefields containing various types of landmines have reportedly been laid in the areas surrounding Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, where active fighting continues.

According to data compiled by Narinjara, landmines and explosive remnants of war killed 21 civilians, including women and children and injured 81 others in Rakhine State in 2025. Nationwide, a report by UNICEF Myanmar indicated that landmines and ERW caused 1,082 casualties in 2024, including 314 children.

May 2026

(11) Two Men Arrested by Arakan Army for Raping Woman with Disability (Burma News International-BNI)

In Kywi Chai Village, Gwa Township at Arakan State, a 25-year-old woman with congenital polio

was reportedly raped on May 1 by two men from the same village, identified as Nga Aung (37) and Si Thu Win (38), according to a local resident. The Arakan Army (AA) reportedly arrested the perpetrators and opened a case against them.

Although the AA's Department of Law Enforcement and Public Security (DLEPS) has continued to arrest and take action against perpetrators, concerns and fear among local residents remain high. Rakhine residents and activists have called for effective and decisive action to prevent further cases of rape and sexual violence.

(12) Cases of Child Sexual Assault Reported in Kyauktaw and Buthidaung (Western News-WN)

Three young females were reportedly sexually assaulted in Kyauktaw and Buthidaung townships in Rakhine State, with one perpetrator remaining unapprehended. Additionally, in Thandwe Township, a 13-year-old girl with a disability was sexually assaulted and murdered on April 11.

June 2026

(13) ICRC offers free rehabilitation services across 7 nationwide centres (Global New Light of Myanmar-GNLM)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is providing services to thousands of people with disabilities through seven physical rehabilitation centres located in Kachin, Kayin, Shan, and Rakhine states, as well as Yangon, Bago, and Magway regions.

ICRC and its partner organizations also provide prosthetic services, assistive devices, walking aids, wheelchairs, and physiotherapy to help people with disabilities regain their mobility and independence. ICRC has announced that all rehabilitation-related services are provided free of charge according to individual needs.

July 2026

(14) Three Dead and Multiple Townships Inundated Due to Heavy Rainfall and Flooding in Rakhine (Western News–WN)

Torrential rains and rising river levels in Rakhine State have left three people dead, according to a statement issued by the Humanitarian and Development Coordination Office (HDCO) of the United League of Arakan (ULA).

To ensure timely evacuation to safer ground when water levels rise, community-based emergency preparedness measures, such as securing buoyant plastic drums, rubber tubes, boats, or rafts, must be arranged in advance.

The HDCO strongly urges households with children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities, or individuals with chronic illnesses to evacuate as early as possible before conditions worsen and immediate danger arises.

August 2026

(15) Survivors Recall Mass Killing of at Least 70 Villagers in Byain Phyu Village, Sittwe (Western News–WN)

The Diplomat reported, citing testimonies from survivors, that military junta forces tortured and killed at least 70 villagers and detained approximately 800 men in Byain Phyu Village, Sittwe Township, Rakhine State, between May 29 and May 31, 2024.

On February 12, 2026, five survivors recounted their experiences during the atrocity. According to survivor accounts, four junta soldiers gang-raped a woman with a psychosocial/intellectual disability on the night of May 30.

(16) People with disabilities need to be given opportunities (One News TV channel)

Vice President Daw Nan Ni Ni Aye stated that persons with disabilities are an important part of society and that efforts must be made to ensure they enjoy equal rights and opportunities on an equal basis with others.

She made the remarks while delivering an opening speech at a meeting of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held on August 20 in the meeting hall of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in Naypyidaw, where she also serves as the committee's chairperson.

She added that the government was working to fully implement the necessary laws, rules, and policies for persons with disabilities and to ensure equal access to opportunities in education, healthcare, employment, and transportation.

September 2026

(17) Efforts Underway to Apprehend Fugitive Rape Suspects, Says DLEP (DMG)

In areas under the control of the Arakan Army, several rape perpetrators have evaded arrest and remain at large. Outstanding unapprehended cases include a child rape case in Pha Doo Chae Village, Weera Thani (Pauktaw) Township; the sexual assault of a woman with a disability in Thandwe Township; and a rape-and-murder case in Paletwa Township.

Women's rights activists noted that these perpetrators remain at large due to weak law

enforcement, bribery, and the practice of settling cases out of court through financial payments.

October 2026

(18) Victims Disabled by Military Junta Violence in Rakhine Struggle for Survival (DVB)

Individuals rendered disabled by the military junta's violent attacks in Rakhine State, along with families who have lost loved ones, are facing severe struggles to rebuild their lives and sustain their livelihoods, according to local sources.

Ko Thein Htoo, deputy head of the Arakan Relief Emergency (ARE) coalition, stated that those who suffered physical amputations or impairments, as well as hearing and visual loss due to military airstrikes, explosive ordnance, and heavy artillery shelling, alongside households that lost their primary breadwinners, are enduring acute livelihood hardships.

(19) Rakhine Records Highest Military Activity and Second-Highest Civilian Casualties, Says NLTA (DMG)

Rakhine State recorded the highest level of military activity and the second-highest number of civilian casualties across Myanmar between October 2 and October 8, according to a new report by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica (NLTA).

According to NLTA's records, at least 108 targeted attacks on civilians occurred across 58 townships during this period, resulting in 40 civilian deaths and 121 injuries. Among these incidents, airstrikes conducted by the military junta were the most frequent, accounting for 39 attacks, followed by 22 instances of civilian arrests. In terms of civilian casualties resulting from targeted attacks, Rakhine State ranked second nationwide, with 9 civilians killed and 33 injured.

3. Key Findings

1. In Arakan, civilian populations are suffering severe injuries and getting various forms of disability, including physical limb loss as well as visual and hearing impairments, due to the military junta's airstrikes, heavy artillery shelling, small arms fire, and landmine explosions. Over the five months from April 1 to August 27, 2026, attacks by the Myanmar military comprising airstrikes, artillery fire, and explosive remnants of war resulted in 77 innocent civilian fatalities and left 262 individuals injured.

2. Persons with disabilities living in displacement sites, particularly women and children with disabilities, face extreme hardship in accessing basic food supplies, shelter, and medical care. Although local humanitarian groups attempt to provide support, their capacity remains severely constrained by the military junta's multifaceted restrictions, telecommunication cutoffs, and the threat of airstrikes. Due to conflict-induced movement restrictions and delayed aid delivery, these individuals encounter immense daily challenges to their survival. Furthermore, those who have suffered amputations, alongside displaced persons with disabilities, are experiencing severe

depression, anxiety, and a loss of self-confidence, often leading to deep isolation within their own homes.

3. Individuals who have suffered limb amputations due to landmine explosions and armed conflict urgently require prosthetic limbs, therapeutic equipment, and assistive mobility devices such as white canes. Although international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provide free rehabilitation services, the volume of assistance remains critically insufficient. Moreover, due to the military junta's regional blockades and the severe lack of local rehabilitation services, landmine survivors and amputees face immense obstacles to independent mobility and social reintegration. While the military junta holds talks regarding the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities, tangible assistance and effective services remain urgently needed on the ground in conflict-affected Rakhine State.

4. Displaced persons with disabilities, particularly local Rakhine IDPs with disabilities, face systemic discrimination in accessing employment, education, and healthcare opportunities. Displaced children with disabilities in Yangon are unable to attend school during their formative years, forfeiting both their educational opportunities and basic children's rights. Furthermore, young women with disabilities and individuals with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities remain acutely vulnerable to sexual violence, including rape and fatal sexual assaults. Arakan Army security forces have reportedly been arresting perpetrators and taking legal action in such cases.

5. Among the innocent civilians displaced by conflict, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and young children constitute a particularly vulnerable group when natural disasters such as heavy rainfall and flooding strike, severely hindering their ability to evacuate to safer areas on time. Additionally, individuals who have lost family members to the military junta's multifaceted land, sea, and air attacks are left without a support system, enduring profound psychological trauma.

6. Former members of the Myanmar military dominate the majority of livelihoods and workplaces, actively restricting the rights of displaced persons. Displaced refugees note that such discriminatory practices foster racial hatred, even among individuals sharing similar experiences of disability. Similarly, displaced Rakhine individuals who have fled to Yangon face severe struggles to secure necessities, such as food, shelter, and security, due to a total lack of educational opportunities, employment prospects, and humanitarian assistance. Compounded by these immense hardships, many desire to return to their homeland in Rakhine State; however, military restrictions and the continuous threat of airstrikes leave their prospects for safe return entirely uncertain.

4. Analysis

Disability takes various forms and can broadly be categorised into congenital disability (present from birth) and acquired disability (resulting from external or internal post-birth factors). Disability can also be classified as physical, psychological, or intellectual. Among these

categories, the findings in the preceding study primarily focus on individuals living with congenital physical and psychological disabilities, as well as those who have acquired disabilities as a direct result of military conflict. Among these populations, displaced persons with disabilities face particularly severe adversities.

As one of the most vulnerable groups in any society, persons with disabilities require dedicated protection and care from the government authorities and civil society organisations; this duty of care is critical because individuals with physical impairments face disproportionate challenges during times of war and natural disasters.

Tragically, the number of civilians acquiring disabilities from landmines, artillery, and airstrikes during the ongoing armed conflict in Rakhine State continues to rise daily. Compounding this crisis, the military regime's tight restrictions on international aid reaching areas under the control of the Arakan Army, combined with a general decline in global humanitarian aid, have severely eroded access to external support for persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, women and girls with disabilities living under the control of the Arakan Army frequently endure incidents of sexual exploitation. Similarly, military regime forces have explicitly targeted persons with disabilities in atrocities such as the Byain Phyu Village massacre. These surrounding circumstances demonstrate that under the current military and political crisis, persons with disabilities face compounding layers of adversity, compounding misfortune upon existing hardship. Therefore, relevant governing authorities and civil society organisations must formulate targeted policies and dedicated action plans to effectively address and alleviate their struggles.

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.

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