

41,510 Myanmar returnees

returned to Myanmar, mainly from Thailand, from 22 March to 7 April 2020

Over 70 per cent of returnees

returned to Bago, Mon, Shan and Kayin

74,770 total people in quarantine

as of 6 April 2020



Myanmar migrants returning from Thailand at a border crossing near Myawaddy, Kayin State. © IOM 2020/Lynn Phyo MAUNG

SITUATION OVERVIEW

From 22 March to 7 April 2020, as based on available data, a **total of 41,510 migrants** had returned to Myanmar, mainly from Thailand and through the Mae Sot to Myawaddy border crossing, with the highest numbers of returnees returning to Bago Region, and Mon, Shan and Kayin states (over 70% of the total).

As of 3 April, the number of official returns had decreased almost to zero due to the closure of the border, with only a small number of returns permitted through the Three Pagodas Pass checkpoint. But **the real number of returns is almost certainly considerably higher**, if returns from other countries and returns through unofficial border crossings are included.

Migrants are required to quarantine for 14 days upon their arrival, with most migrants primarily requested to quarantine in community-based quarantine facilities (e.g. primarily schools, monasteries); however, due to insufficient capacity, the majority have been home-quarantining. A total of 7 quarantine facilities have been set-up in Myawaddy to quarantine migrants arriving from mainly Thailand.

There are a range of immediate health-related and humanitarian needs and challenges faced by returnees, particularly during the initial two-week period of quarantine. Following the initial period of quarantine and as the crisis continues, the socioeconomic impacts on migrants and their families are also expected to become increasingly severe due to loss of livelihoods and income, including remittances.

It is expected that the borders will open again following 15 April, and increased numbers of migrants may return in subsequent weeks. There are over 3 million Myanmar migrants



Migrants at an unofficial border crossing near Myawaddy, Kayin State. © IOM 2020/Lynn Phyo MAUNG

still in Thailand, with the potential for large-scale return in the coming months. In addition, there are an estimated 10 million internal migrants in Myanmar, including an estimated 1 million in Yangon alone, who are also highly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 due to difficult and unsanitary living and working conditions and economic precarity, with tens of thousands reportedly already having lost their jobs.

There are also concerns that the mass returns of migrants could lead to transmissions among returnees at crowded border crossings, or to the seeding of new clusters in areas of return, as the majority of home communities are in rural areas unprepared for monitoring, testing and treating of COVID-19 cases that may arise.

IOM is coordinating the response of the United Nations to the situation of returning migrants in Myanmar, including through the chairing a UN Core Group on Returning Migrants. Initial priorities of the core group are coordination of immediate response measures (including mapping of existing and planned responses and identification of state/regional-level focal points), and a rapid assessment on the needs, vulnerabilities and plans of returnees affected by the crisis.

Through CSO partners in Shan, Chin and Mon states and Magway and Mandalay regions, with support from LIFT, and in coordination with state and local authorities, IOM is supporting the distribution of hygiene kits/items and IEC materials on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) on reducing stigma, reaching an estimated 12,500 beneficiaries so far, primarily returning migrants from Thailand and China.



Migrants queuing at a border crossing near Myawaddy, Kayin State. © IOM 2020/Lynn Phyo MAUNG

IOM and CSO partners in Ayeyarwady, in coordination with local GADs and with support from LIFT, are also supporting the distribution of hygiene kits and IEC materials on RCCE and COVID-19 prevention, to returnees in community quarantine facilities and to families of migrants in self-quarantine.

In line with national preparedness plans and support from the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund and Access to Health, IOM is also supporting MOHS in the logistics and procurement of supplies; in surveillance for COVID-19 near points of entry; in coordination and partnership with different actors, including with ethnic health organisations (EHOs); and in the development and distribution of RCCE materials.

This support extends to State Health Departments in Kachin, Rakhine, Mon and Kayin states, as well as to the Yangon Regional Health Department, and it takes the form of the provision of critical COVID-19 prevention supplies, such as protective equipment, hygiene items, and NFI for quarantine facilities (bedding, towels, mosquito nets, etc.).



IOM staff supporting health screenings for migrants near Myawaddy, Kayin State. © IOM 2020/Lynn Phyo MAUNG

In terms of COVID-19 surveillance support, IOM is supporting health screenings at the Myawaddy border gate in Kayin, as well as in three Myanmar-China border crossings in Kachin State (Pnawah, Wainmaw, Lwelgel), including through the renovation of health facilities at border check points and points of entry.

IOM is also engaging with EHOs, as well as provides MOHS with liaison support with these organisations through coordination meetings with EHOs in Kayin and Mon states. Health screenings by EHOs in these areas are also being supported through the provision of COVID-19 prevention supplies.

IOM is working closely with MOHS to publish and disseminate unified health key messages, and State and Township Health Departments have also been supplied with IEC and RCCE materials (including hard copies of the MOHS COVID-19 Contingency Plan) to raise awareness of COVID-19 prevention measures, with the Kachin State Health Department also receiving loudspeakers to support the dissemination of COVID-19 prevention messaging at the community level.



IOM staff providing hygiene kits to volunteers in Pakokku Township, Magway Region. © IOM 2020/Ni Ni HLAING



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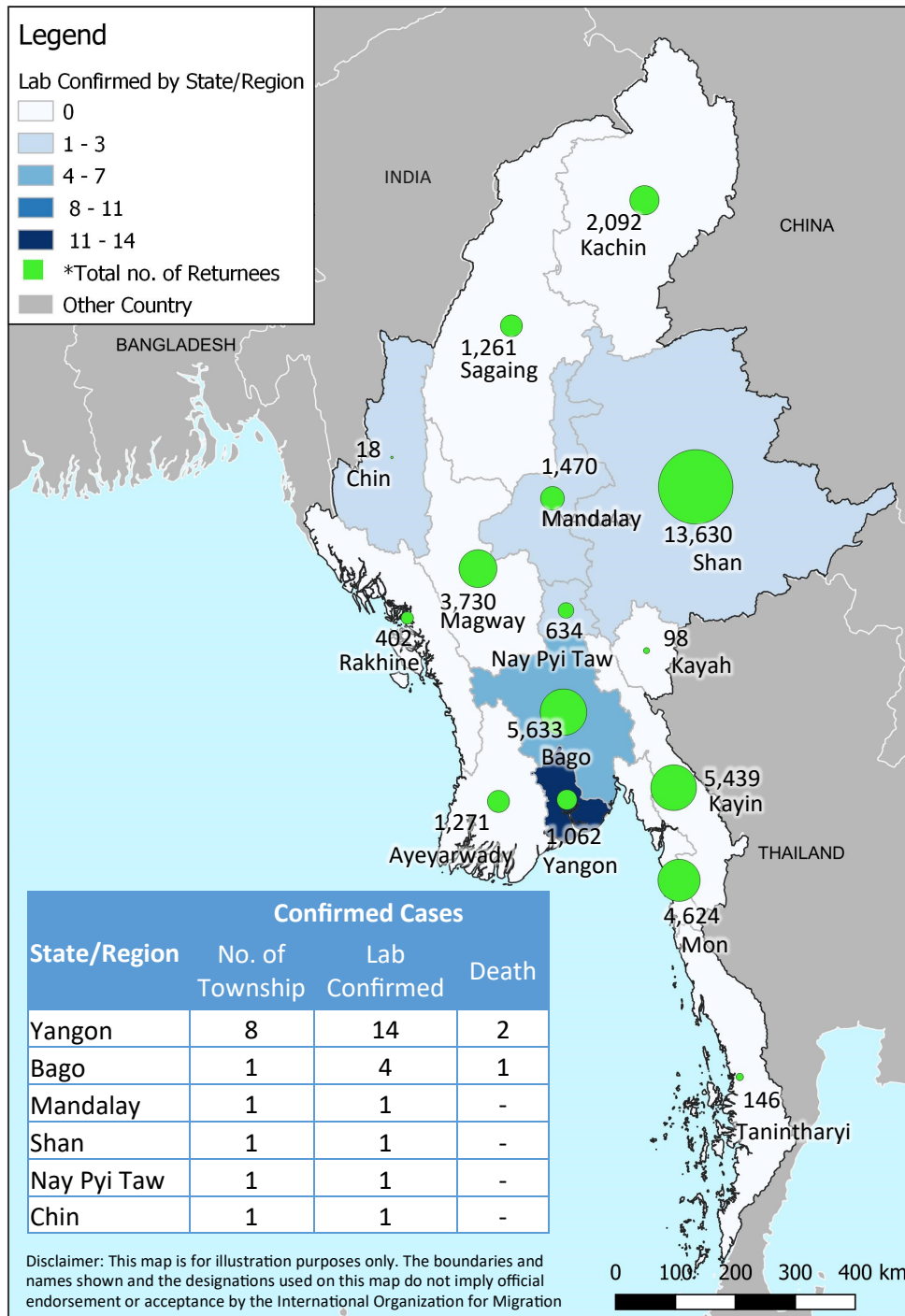
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Coronavirus Disease 2019 - Lab Confirmed Cases and Returnees Map (Myanmar)

As of: 8 April 2020



State/Region	PUI/ Suspected Cases by State/Region	No. of Facilities Quarantine List (as of 6.4.2020)	Total no. of Quarantine People (as of 6.4.2020)
Ayeyarwady	21	391	2,786
Bago	67	1,040	8,989
Chin	6	17	40
Kachin	15	214	4,883
Kayah	34	17	370
Kayin	29	35	2,746
Magway	35	73	12,546
Mandalay	99	933	6,577
Mon	14	479	8,724
Nay Pyi Taw	20	5	809
Rakhine	19	17	331
Sagaing	29	1,293	11,871
Shan	130	460	7,051
Tanintharyi	7	25	3,635
Yangon	312	79	3,412

Reference: WHO

Data source - CEU, DMS, NHL, States and Regions Health Department, MOHS, DOL.

*Migrant Returnees information as of: 22 March 2020 to 7 April 2020.