Rakhine Operational Brief
WFP Myanmar

OVERVIEW
With a population of 3.2 million people before the displacement of over 700,000 people to Bangladesh in 2017-2018, Rakhine State is located in the western part of Myanmar. Rakhine is the second poorest state after Chin State, and continues to experience a humanitarian crisis. Chronic poverty and high vulnerability to shocks, including recurrent natural disasters, are widespread throughout the State. Malnutrition and food insecurity remain a significant concern, particularly in Maungdaw District. Agricultural production is constrained by inadequate access to land, credit and post-harvest storage facilities. Underdeveloped markets, limited infrastructure and movement restrictions prevent many rural households from accessing food and livelihoods opportunities.

WFP has been one of the main humanitarian organizations providing life-saving food assistance in Rakhine for several decades. Its first operation in Myanmar started in 1978 in Maungdaw District, following the return of 200,000 refugees from Bangladesh. In 1994, WFP returned to Rakhine with the establishment of an office in Maungdaw to assist with the repatriation of 250,000 people.

Since 2012, following several waves of inter-communal violence, more than 140,000 people have been internally displaced from their homes and currently reside in camps or are hosted by other communities in northern Rakhine. Following the 25 August 2017 security incidents, over 700,000 people, mainly Rohingya Muslims, reportedly fled to Bangladesh. With the support of the Rakhine State Government, WFP managed to resume food distributions in northern Rakhine on 12 September 2017 after three months of suspension, and since then has had access for monthly distributions and other activities.

In 2019, WFP continues to provide life-saving emergency relief food assistance to communities in both northern and central Rakhine State, envisioning a transition to resilience-building, including through complementary nutrition interventions. WFP also responds to new needs in Rakhine State resulting from an escalation of fighting between the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and Arakan Army, a Rakhine ethnic armed group, which has caused increased internal displacements of mostly Rakhine ethnic people.

1. In accordance with the United Nations’ position, the term Rohingya is used in this document in recognition of the right of people to self-identify. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar objects to the use of the term Rohingya.
EMERGENCY RELIEF LIFE SAVING FOOD ASSISTANCE

WFP’s life-saving food assistance targets highly food insecure and vulnerable communities of various ethnic groups in Rakhine providing them monthly relief food rations of rice, pulses, oil and salt. In 2018, WFP continued to deliver life-saving food assistance to the affected population in Rakhine reaching over 120,000 beneficiaries in central Rakhine and over 191,200 in Maungdaw District. WFP is working closely with the Rakhine State Government and other humanitarian actors to assist people displaced by the escalation in armed conflict since late 2018, and stands ready to extend assistance should new needs for emergency relief arise in Rakhine.

NUTRITION

The prevention and treatment of malnutrition are of paramount importance to prevent dramatic consequences in terms of children mortality, morbidity and/or long-term effects left by malnutrition on early child development. In Rakhine, due to high wasting prevalence, WFP implements the Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme (BSFP) and Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme (TSFP) through specialized nutritious food distribution to pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and children under the age of five in combination with nutrition education. In 2018, over 60,000 PLW and children benefited from WFP’s nutrition assistance.

SUPPORT TO PLHIV/TB PATIENTS

People living with HIV and TB need more calories and nutrients in their diet in order to strengthen their immune system. In Rakhine, WFP provides food and nutrition assistance to people living with HIV and TB patients (PLHIV/TB) who are undergoing anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and directly observed treatment (DOTs). A total of 450 PLHIV/TB patients received WFP’s nutritional support in 2018.

SCHOOL FEEDING

WFP started its school feeding programme in northern Rakhine in 1996 with the objective of promoting enrollment and retention rates of girls and boys in primary schools. Working closely with the Ministry of Education, WFP is providing High Energy Biscuits or cooked school meals to schoolchildren in 11 out of 17 townships of Rakhine State. As the pilot run of the cooked school meals in Kyauk Taw and Ponnagyun townships during 2018 proved success, WFP is planning the extension of the school meals to other townships. WFP has been integrating the school feeding programme with its community asset creation activity since 2018 helping establish kitchens and gardens in a total of 34 schools enabling fresh produce for more nutritious school meals. In 2018, over 65,700 pre-school and primary school children across Rakhine State benefitted from WFP’s school feeding programme.

COMMUNITY ASSET CREATION

WFP started its asset creation programme in Maungdaw District in 2008 to help the most food insecure and vulnerable populations through (re-) establishment of community assets such as dams, roads, farmland, water facilities, etc. The programme creates employment opportunities for the communities while the community assets contribute to their resilience and development. WFP provides in-kind food and/or cash assistance to incentivize community participation. Throughout 2018, WFP completed 116 assets creation projects in Rakhine State, including construction or renovation of roads, dykes, ponds, irrigation canals, home gardens, school gardens and school kitchens. The projects assisted over 66,200 people through food and/or cash for work and continue to contribute to the resilience of communities nearby.

PROCUREMENT

With the aim to make its activities benefit both beneficiaries and the local economy, WFP systematically seeks to purchase its food locally in Myanmar. WFP looks at options to source food as close as possible to where distributions take place. Following the August 2017 security incidents, procurement previously planned and done in Rakhine was shifted to the Yangon area. However in 2018, WFP resumed procurement from local suppliers of Rakhine State amounting to 37% of the total tonnage of rice procured locally which amounts to over US$ 10 million.