



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Myanmar Country Brief

February 2020



Photo: Schoolchildren enjoy a mid-morning nutritious snack during WFP Myanmar Country Director's visit to Lashio Township, northern Shan State. ©WFP/Sai Tun Tun Aung

Operational Context

Myanmar continues to present a complex and dynamic operating context where ongoing socio-economic and political challenges, including conflict, displacement, widespread poverty and food insecurity, hinder development efforts. An estimated 24.8 percent of its 54 million population live near or below the poverty line. Many struggle with inadequate physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, with women, girls, persons with disabilities and minorities affected most.

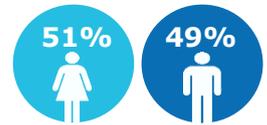
Malnutrition is a major challenge, and wasting rates prevail at 6.5 percent nationally. Likewise, Myanmar is one of the world's 20 high tuberculosis (TB) burden countries. It is also among the 35 countries accounting for 90 percent of new HIV infections globally. Ethnic conflict exacerbates an already fragile situation. Over 1 million people have been displaced from their places of origin since June 2011. With restrictions on movement and limited access to livelihoods, many conflict-affected people urgently need food assistance.

WFP implemented its first operation in Myanmar in 1978 in northern Rakhine and established its first office in 1994. Given the protracted humanitarian crisis in Rakhine, high rates of malnutrition country wide, and high susceptibility to natural hazards, WFP remains committed to improving coordination with its national and international partners and developing innovative solutions to meet acute needs across the country.



- Population: **54.1 million**
- Income Level: **Lower middle**
- 2019 Human Development Index: **145 out of 189**
- Chronic malnutrition: **29% of children aged 6-59 months**

In Numbers



619,500 people assisted in February 2020

3,620 metric tonnes of food distributed

US\$ 1.3 million cash-based transfers made

US\$ 28.3 million six months (March - August 2020) net funding requirements

Operational Updates

- Rakhine:** In February, intensified conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, a Rakhine ethnic armed group, resulted in fresh population displacements. Despite minor delays in food distribution given the unstable security situation, WFP reached 13,800 newly displaced people across Rakhine.

In northern Rakhine, WFP assisted 95,000 conflict-affected people in February with emergency food and nutrition assistance, including 2,800 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and 16,560 children aged 6-59 months in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. While in central Rakhine, WFP provided 130,500 food-insecure people with relief food and cash assistance, including 26,800 children aged 6-59 months and 5,500 PLW who received fortified blended food.

Meanwhile, the Government of Myanmar re-imposed a temporary suspension of mobile internet services in four townships of Rakhine State and Paletwa Township of Chin State. The internet shutdown hampered WFP's ability to communicate on a timely basis on operational issues with its cooperating partners.
- Kachin:** WFP assisted 44,500 displaced people with cash-based transfers. In addition, WFP provided fortified blended food to 1,200 children aged 6-23 months and 1,710 PLW.
- Shan:** WFP distributed food and cash to 10,300 people displaced across northern Shan State. WFP's monthly nutrition assistance benefited 1,780 children aged 6-23 months and 950 PLW.
- Southeast:** In Myawaddy Township of Kayin State, WFP conducted feasibility assessments for potential assets creation and livelihoods activities. The proposed projects include land development and road rehabilitation, aiming to provide returnees and food-insecure populations with livelihood opportunities and to minimise the risk of flooding in the low-lying areas during the monsoon season. WFP staff, together with its cooperating partners, is coordinating with the local authorities on the programme planning and implementation, which is expected to be rolled out in the second half of 2020.

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Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Mar – Aug 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
425.3 m	131.1 m	28.3 m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Crisis-affected people in food-insecure areas meet their food and nutrition needs all year round.

Activities:

- **Activity 1:** Provide unconditional food transfers and/or cash-based transfers (CBTs) to populations affected by crisis.

Strategic Outcome 2: Vulnerable people in states and regions with high food insecurity and/or malnutrition have access to food all year round.

Activities:

- **Activity 2:** Provide technical advice, policy support and training for the Government to improve delivery of national social protection and emergency preparedness programmes and food systems.
- **Activity 3:** Implement a comprehensive social school feeding programme in targeted schools in support of the national programme.
- **Activity 4:** Provide conditional food or cash-based assistance in support of the creation and rehabilitation of assets, combined with nutrition messaging for targeted populations.

Strategic Result 2: End malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Children under 5 in Myanmar have improved nutrition in line with national targets by 2022.

Activities:

- **Activity 6:** Provide implementation support, research-based advice and technical assistance on national policies and action plans for the Government and partners.
- **Activity 7:** Implement preventive nutrition interventions for adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and girls, and children under the age of two, and roll out community infant and young child feeding programmes, CBTs for mothers of young children, and social behaviour change communication SBCC.
- **Activity 8:** Provide specialized nutritious foods for the treatment and management of acute malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls, and children under the age of five.
- **Activity 9:** Provide unconditional food and/or cash-based assistance combined with nutrition messaging and counselling for people living with HIV and TB patients.

Donors & Funding Sources to WFP Myanmar Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)*

Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT), Luxembourg, Myanmar Humanitarian Fund, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Private Donors (including Japan Association for WFP), Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, Republic of Turkey, United Kingdom, United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, United States of America

*Listed in alphabetical order.

Operational Updates continued

- **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network:** In February, WFP attended the formation meeting of the SUN Business Network Advisory Committee. The multi-stakeholder committee, comprising government, private sector, UN and civil society representatives, discussed the strategy for the start-up phase of the SUN Business Network in Myanmar. The feedback gathered from the meeting was conducive to preparing for the kick-off in April 2020.

Challenges

- Due to a volatile security situation, WFP was unable to reach 750 beneficiaries in Buthidaung Township in northern Rakhine. Similarly, insecurity resulted in WFP not being able to assist 1,100 beneficiaries in Kyauktaw and Minbya townships of central Rakhine.
- WFP was obliged to reduce its rations of monthly fortified blended foods (wheat soya blend) by half for 42,000 children aged 6-59 months across Rakhine due to issues of delayed funding and long procurement lead times. WFP hopes to resume full rations by April.

Paving a safer way for remote communities in Myanmar's Wa Region

Situated along the China-Myanmar border, the hilly and isolated Wa Self-Administered Division is one of the regions worst-affected by severe food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition. As the only UN agency present in Wa Region, WFP has been providing food assistance and creating livelihood opportunities for vulnerable populations while helping to build assets that benefit the entire community.

In a hillside village in Naung Khit Township, the indigenous communities depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood. Before the project, the villagers had to rely on a loose footpath to access their paddy fields. During the monsoon season, days of torrential rain often clogged the slippery trail, rendering the walkway inaccessible.

To improve regular and safe access to farmland, WFP supported 71 villagers to participate in a motorbike road construction project in return for cash assistance. With a good quality road, the communities are no longer constrained by seasonal closures of roads. Instead, this critical link facilitates the transport of harvested crops, thereby improving food security and agricultural productivity.



Photo: The route leading to farmland, before and after the motorbike road construction project. © WFP/Aik Rong