



Evaluation of WFP's relief food and cash assistance to conflict-affected people in Kachin and Northern Shan, Myanmar

BACKGROUND

Since 2011, the World Food Programme (WFP) has provided monthly food assistance to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who have been affected by a resurgence of armed conflict in Kachin and northern Shan state. The conflict has undermined access to basic services, economic growth and the capacity of vulnerable people to produce and access sufficient, diversified, and nutritious food.

From 2016 onwards, WFP progressively shifted from in-kind assistance to first a combination of rice and cash, and then to cash only to better respond to the needs of vulnerable populations. In 2018, WFP's relief assistance reached 48,000 IDPs in Kachin and 7,500 IDPs in Northern Shan.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide the evidence base required to take informed decisions to refine programme design and make adjustments to the implementation strategy. The general food distributions and cash transfers in the camps, host communities and return/relocation sites were assessed during this evaluation.

The objectives of the evaluation were two-fold: accountability to programme stakeholders and learning. The performance and results of the relief activity were evaluated. The findings and recommendations will be used for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and Country Strategic Plan Evaluation (CSPE) of the CSP to address specific evidence gaps.

METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) assessed Strategic Outcome 1 against the criteria of (i) Relevance/Appropriateness, (ii)

Effectiveness, (iii) Impact, (iv) Coherence, and (v) Sustainability. The ET used a mixed-methods approach, based on various sources of primary and secondary, quantitative and qualitative data. Eighty project documents were reviewed, 50 Key Informant Interviews and 38 Focus Group Discussions held, and a survey among 325 households in Northern Shan and 300 in Kachin conducted.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitations included (i) inability to interview returnees, (ii) evaluating the sustainability criterion due to the emergency nature of activities and the context, (iii) generating evidence and findings for a period of four years, as interviewees were not always able to recall events/facts dating the beginning of the evaluation period, and (iv) limitations with primary data collection.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation found that the project was relevant, as WFP had appropriately designed the support in accordance with household size and cost of commodities, and based on monitoring of market access, functionality and price, allowing an adaptation of the transfer value to maintain the theoretical coverage of 2,100 Kcal per person, per day.

Cash assistance was found to be appropriate over the evaluation period. The report recommends that the intervention could be made more relevant by critically assessing the vulnerability criteria that are currently solely based on access to livelihoods, reviewing monthly exclusion criteria, and improving the existing complaints and feedback mechanisms by introducing systematic complaint records.

The evaluation found the intervention to be overall effective. However, a potential for bias in the measurement methodology of post distribution monitoring was found,

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which needs to be addressed. No major unintended outcomes were found during the evaluation.

Regarding **impact**, the evaluation found that women's roles in day-to-day management of cash at the household level had increased, but that it was largely due to men's absence seeking work during the day rather than due to humanitarian intervention. Men's absence, combined with WFP's Gender Policy and awareness sessions, were found to have increased women's participation in decision-making bodies.

In regard to **coherence**, the ET concluded that WFP's relief assistance is aligned with internal (Gender, Protection, Accountability to Affected Populations) and external (SPHERE, Core Humanitarian Standards) standards. Coordination was considered to be effective when it comes to relief activities, thanks to the township/camp division of roles between the different actors. The main coordination gaps are linked to livelihoods, particularly around how to support the return process in an intersectoral manner.

In regard to **sustainability**, the ET concluded that the current exit/transition strategy is adapted to the context, despite a gap in the integration of asset creation/rehabilitation with relief activities. Having a formal exit strategy, given the context, did not appear relevant. Furthermore, a six-month return package was not considered sufficient to cover the transition period in places where safe and dignified returns can be ensured.

LESSONS LEARNT

- ◆ Providing food assistance to all IDPs at camp level was considered an effective strategy to avoid tensions within the community, especially in smaller camps where the feeling of equity is of paramount importance.
- ◆ The shift from cash-in-envelope to mobile money led to an increase in IT-related complaints. These need to be better anticipated and integrated into the CFM to demonstrate the reliability of this technology.
- ◆ The use of mobile money led to a decrease in the Sub-Offices' level of control over the delivery mechanism and the technology issues beneficiaries face. The absence of a formal standard operating procedures (SOP) including the Financial Service Providers appears to be a barrier to the scale-up of this transfer mechanism, and this situation should be avoided in the future.
- ◆ The high level of communication with and integration of the community in the process of vulnerability criteria, transfer amount, and CFMs

had a positive impact on beneficiary acceptance and awareness of WFP's activities.

- ◆ The consideration of commodity prices and the cost of transportation at township level to define the food basket had a positive impact on the relevance of the support provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: WFP Myanmar should critically review the vulnerability criteria set in 2016 and assess whether they remain relevant.

Recommendation 2: WFP Myanmar should strengthen the CFM to handle all complaints in a timely manner and contribute to improving the programmatic orientation of relief activities.

Recommendation 3: Review the rules of inclusion/exclusion for programme recipients who travel outside of the camps.

Recommendation 4: Design SOP regarding the monthly beneficiary lists update.

Recommendation 5: Revise the SOP for PDM on relief activities.

Recommendation 6: WFP Myanmar could play a more significant role in the IDPs' return process.

Recommendation 7: WFP Myanmar should clarify and officialize the role and responsibilities of the Food Management Committee (FMCs) in coordination with Camp Management Committee (CMCs).

The evaluation is available at: [WFPgo](#) – [WFP.org](#)

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