



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Myanmar Country Brief September 2020



COVID-19 safety measures taken at a WFP distribution point in Buthidaung Township, northern Rakhine. © WFP/Abul Foyas 2020

Operational Context

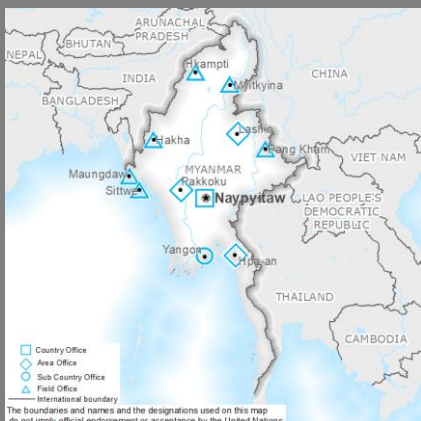
Despite making important socio-economic strides in recent years, Myanmar is faced with a multitude of challenges, including armed conflict, displacement, widespread poverty and food insecurity and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, which hinder ongoing development efforts. An estimated 24.8 percent 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, and persons with disabilities and minorities particularly affected.

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.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic presents particular risks in humanitarian settings in Myanmar, where internally displaced persons in overcrowded camps and communities in conflict-affected areas are at higher risk in the event of local-level outbreaks. Moreover, COVID-19 is likely to have a significant impact on livelihoods and further adverse socio-economic consequences on poor communities across Myanmar.

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 countrywide, 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.

Read the [Annual Country Report 2019](#) to learn more about key WFP activities and results in Myanmar during 2019.



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



510,000 people assisted in September 2020

1,340 mt of food distributed

US\$ 2.2 million in cash-based transfers made

US\$ 38.7 million in net funding requirements for all operations over next six months (October 2020 - March 2021)

Operational Updates

- Response to COVID-19:** The surge in local transmissions of COVID-19 since 16 August continued to rise through September, with hotspots in Rakhine State and Yangon Region. To complement government resources, WFP initiated short-term food assistance to government-managed quarantine sites in eight townships of Rakhine State, reaching 1,290 people by the end of September. WFP planned for an expansion of similar assistance to a treatment center located in the poorest areas of Yangon Region.

At the same time, WFP has now reached 67,100 returning migrants with short-term food and nutrition assistance for a 21-day period while they are in government-managed quarantine sites, in 10 out of 14 states and regions.

Following the Government announcement temporarily suspending domestic commercial services, WFP is working with the authorities to arrange a series of humanitarian flights to connect Yangon and Sittwe for aid partners and health workers. (Please refer to [COVID-19 Situation Report #11](#) for further details).

- Rakhine and Chin:** Following the successful relief food distribution in August at Paletwa and Samee towns of southern Chin State, WFP reached 3,400 internally displaced people (IDPs) at Samee in September, and is organizing further deliveries to Paletwa.

In central Rakhine, WFP's two-month ration of food and cash assistance in August supported the food needs of 135,300 vulnerable people through September. Moreover, in response to access challenges caused by COVID-19, WFP delivered emergency cash assistance, using electronic transfers, to 35,100 newly displaced people affected by the ongoing armed conflict between the Myanmar Military and the Arakan Army. WFP distributed two-month rations of fortified blended food in August, which provided nutrition support to 31,500 children aged 6-59 months and 5,700 pregnant and lactating women through September.

In northern Rakhine, WFP received permission, albeit delayed, to conduct September distribution of food and nutrition assistance, due to the Government's new requirement that aid workers be tested negative for COVID-19 prior to field visits. To meet beneficiary needs, WFP will start distributions in early October targeting some 96,000 people with emergency food and nutrition assistance. WFP's food assistance in September reached 2,000 new IDPs, displaced by armed conflict.

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Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Oct 2020 – March 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
427.6 m	175.3 m	38.7 m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food (SDG 2.1)

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

- Activity 1:** Provide unconditional food transfers and/or cash-based transfers (CBT) 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.

- 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 CBT in support of the creation and rehabilitation of assets, combined with nutrition messaging for targeted populations.

Strategic Result 2: No one suffers from malnutrition (SDG 2.2)

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

- 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, CBT 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 CBT combined with nutrition messaging and counselling for people living with HIV and TB patients.

Strategic Result 8: Enhancing Global Partnerships (SDG 17)

Strategic Outcome 4: Humanitarian and development partners in Myanmar have access to reliable common services during crisis and normal situation.

- Activity 10:** Provide humanitarian common services for humanitarian assistance operations in Myanmar.

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, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Republic of Turkey, United Kingdom, United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, United States of America

*Listed in alphabetical order.

Operational Updates (continued)

- Kachin & Shan:** Together with the Department of Social Welfare, WFP and partners started distributing cash grants to pregnant women in Kachin under COVID-19 social protection. Through this collaboration, the Government initially provided 17 pregnant women with US\$ 23 (MMK 30,000) each, using the Ngwe Bike mobile application.
- WFP provided relief assistance to 7,700 Kachin conflict-affected people in September, while the two-month rations distributed in August continued supporting 36,000 people. In Shan State, WFP provided 13,700 people with relief food and cash assistance, complemented by nutrition interventions.

Challenges

- COVID-19 related movement restrictions continued to pose challenges to WFP in September. WFP could not reach 9,800 children and 1,800 PLW in central Rakhine with nutrition interventions. WFP explored ways to support the Government to further increase its COVID-19 testing capacity aimed at also benefiting humanitarian frontline workers.

In search of refuge in southern Chin State

Two years ago, peace-loving farmers from Watma village in remote Paletwa Township had no idea that they would be woken up one day by sudden heavy artillery and have to flee for safety. This happened in March 2020 when insecurity forced Daw Hla Win and her neighbours to take a 48 km trek until they reached Samee Town to join thousands of others in search of refuge. "We took the waterway (by boat) half of the way and we walked the rest of the way to Samee," Daw Hla Win said.

In their early days at Samee, the IDPs relied on ad hoc rice donations and raw vegetables, such as banana trunks and banyan shoots, gathered from nearby forests. But since late March, WFP has supported these IDPs with relief food assistance and non-food items. "Now it's a welcome relief that we have received food from WFP," she said.

Although food is no longer an immediate priority for the IDPs, returning home remains only a remote possibility since clashes continue in their village. The IDPs are worried their farmlands will be destroyed, and their harvest lost. Many find it difficult to be optimistic about the future.



Conflict-affected people seen near a displacement site in Samee Town ©WFP/Laitlan Sanga 2020