



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Myanmar Country Brief December 2020



Photo: A pregnant woman in Kachin State collecting her cash entitlements from the Government's social protection programme, supported by WFP. ©WFP/Photo Library

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.

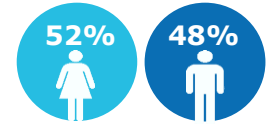
WFP implemented its first operation in Myanmar in 1978 in northern Rakhine and established its first office in 1994. Given the protracted humanitarian crisis in Rakhine, high rates of malnutrition countrywide, and high susceptibility to natural hazards, WFP remains committed to improving coordination 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



611,920 people assisted in December 2020

2,811 mt of food distributed

US\$ 2.5 million in cash-based transfers made

US\$ 39.9 million in net funding requirements for all operations over next six months (January - June 2021)

Operational Updates

- Response to COVID-19:** Myanmar saw a steady decline in reported new daily COVID-19 cases in December, from over 1,100 new cases per day in the first week, to around 700 new cases per day in the final week. On 31 December, WFP phased out its short-term assistance for returning Myanmar migrants in government-managed quarantine sites at the Myawaddy gate bordering Thailand after eight months of WFP assistance. Meanwhile, WFP will continue to provide assistance at selected quarantine and treatment sites in Rakhine and Yangon until the end of January 2021. Cumulatively, WFP has reached 99,700 people in 12 out of 14 states through this activity, including 75,900 returning migrants.

With the resumption of domestic commercial flights in mid-December, WFP phased out its domestic passenger flights. Meanwhile, WFP's weekly international flights connecting Yangon, Vientiane and Kuala Lumpur will continue to operate until full international commercial flights are restored.

- Chin and Rakhine:** In conflict-affected areas of southern Chin State, WFP provided emergency food and nutrition assistance to 8,600 internally displaced people (IDP) in Paletwa and Samee towns. WFP also provided rice to 5,000 vulnerable host community members in Paletwa and delivered cash assistance to some 800 IDPs in isolated rural villages in Meeza Town. WFP received the green light from the authorities for additional delivery of food commodities and prepositioned 720 mt of food in Paletwa.

In central Rakhine, during December, WFP distributed assistance, using electronic cash-based transfers to 35,500 newly-displaced people affected by conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army. In addition, WFP provided food and cash assistance to 120,100 food-insecure people, including 28,900 children aged 6-59 months and 5,440 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) with fortified blended food.

In northern Rakhine, WFP assisted 103,260 people with emergency food and nutrition assistance, including 18,000 children aged 6-59 months and 3,240 PLW during the month of December.

- Kachin and Shan:** In December, WFP provided relief assistance to 32,300 IDPs in Kachin State and 14,600 IDPs in Shan State, complemented by nutrition interventions.

Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Jan – Jun 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
427.6 m	187.9 m	39.9 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 in 2020*

Australia, Canada, the European Union, Germany, Israel, Japan, Republic of Korea, Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT), Luxembourg, multilateral donor funds, Myanmar Humanitarian Fund, private donors (including Japan Association for WFP), Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom, United States of America

*Listed in alphabetical order.

*This includes outstanding loans amounting to USD 6.27 million from WFP's Immediate Response Account (IRA) to be repaid.

Operational Updates (continued)

- **Social protection support in Kachin:** WFP, in collaboration with UNICEF, supported the vertical and horizontal expansion of the Government's Maternal and Child Cash Transfers programme. A one-time cash top-up of 30,000 Myanmar kyats (USD 23) per person was distributed to 3,795 pregnant women to strengthen their resilience to other shocks and stresses compounded by COVID-19 in Mogaung and Waingmaw townships in Kachin State.

Challenges

- WFP requires US\$ 29 million* to ensure uninterrupted live-saving food and nutrition assistance to more than 300,000 IDPs and other vulnerable people in Myanmar through June 2021. Another US\$ 11 million is needed for school feeding, asset creation, prevention and treatment of malnutrition and other resilience building activities.

WFP integrates technology into its assistance for Rakhine IDPs

The new challenges brought on by COVID-19 have spurred WFP to further deploy innovative approaches, technologies and digital transformation. In Rakhine State, WFP launched electronic cash-based transfers through mobile phones in its regular food assistance programme for families displaced by the ongoing armed conflict.

The new transfer system has been introduced to some 36,000 IDPs from Ann, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon, Pauktaw, Ponnagyun and Sittwe townships in central Rakhine. Upon receipt of an SMS notification from WFP, beneficiaries can then withdraw cash rations at the nearest outlet authorized by WFP. To help IDP households who do not currently possess phones, WFP lends handsets for their use until peace is restored in the region and they can return to their places of origin.

This approach minimises the risk of COVID-19 transmissions where beneficiaries receive their rations in a safe and efficient manner. Moreover, WFP cash assistance empowers the beneficiaries with the agency to make their own spending choices to buy essential goods and services, which helps boost local markets and cushions the financial burden on small retailers.



Photo: An IDP receiving WFP electronic cash transfers with a mobile phone in central Rakhine. © WFP/Mar Mar Swe