



WFP EVALUATION



**World Food
Programme**

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Evaluation of the Corporate Emergency Response in Myanmar (2018-2022)

Centralized evaluation report – Volume I

OEV/2020/015
Office of Evaluation

October 2023

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team is particularly grateful to the more than 250 individuals in Myanmar, and from the World Food Programme (WFP) in many countries who took the time to share their insights into how WFP performed in Myanmar.

Putting this central piece of evidence together would not have been possible without the dedicated team at the Office of Evaluation who reviewed and advised on various drafts of the report.

Our appreciation goes in particular to the management team and staff of the Myanmar country office for taking the time to share their reflections and for facilitating country visits and remote interviews.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are those of the evaluation team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the World Food Programme. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by WFP of the opinions expressed.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the maps do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.

Photo cover: WFP/Kaung Htet Linn

Key personnel for the evaluation

OFFICE OF EVALUATION

Anne Claire Luzot	Director of Evaluation
Andrea Cook	Director of Evaluation (up to 15 February 2023)
Michael Carbon	Evaluation Manager
Sameera Ashraf	Research Analyst
Natalia Meléndez Fuentes	Research Analyst (up to 18 May 2023)

EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM

Emery Brusset	Team Leader
Landis MacKellar	Deputy Team Leader
Teresa Hanley	Senior Evaluator
Marian Meller	Senior Researcher
Ye Min Thant	National Expert
Wah Wah Htun	National Expert
Thet Htar Myint	National Expert
Karen Ortiz Palomá	Project Manager and Researcher
Herma Majoor	Quality Assurance Expert

Contents

Executive Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Evaluation features	1
1.2. Context.....	1
1.3. Subject being evaluated	6
1.4. Methodology	10
2. Evaluation findings	14
2.1. WFP strategic positioning in relation to evolving needs	14
2.2. WFP effectiveness in achieving CSP objectives.....	22
2.3. Connectedness of WFP assistance	38
2.4. WFP partnerships and coordination with the wider humanitarian sector	45
2.5. Humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations	49
2.6. Efficiency	57
3. Conclusions	70
4. Recommendations	75
5. Acronyms.....	81

List of figures

Figure 1: Myanmar, prevalence of insufficient food consumption (May 2022).....	5
Figure 2: Overall theory of change including budget revision changes	7
Figure 3: Main donors 2018-2022 (USD)	10
Figure 4: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex (2017-2022)	10
Figure 5: SO1 Beneficiaries by modality, 2018-2022	23
Figure 6: Selected outcomes SO1, 2018-2022: food consumption score.....	24
Figure 7: WFP beneficiaries against humanitarian response plan beneficiaries (2018-2022).....	35
Figure 8: Lines of communication.....	39
Figure 9 Levels of analysis	42
Figure 10: Number of WFP staff by location in Myanmar (2016-2022)	58
Figure 11: Aggregated share of flexible funding (including CSP-level earmarked funding) in total allocated contributions for CSP Myanmar (2018-2022).....	61
Figure 12: Proportion of allocated resources spent (2018-2022, by activity)	62
Figure 13: Actual annual cost per beneficiary in USD (2018-2021, by activity and primary modality)	64
Figure 14: Transfer and implementation costs per USD of transfer value (2018-2022, by activity and primary transfer modality)	65

List of tables

Table 1: Strategic outcomes, activities and budget revision shifts under the CSP 2018-2023	8
Table 2: Cumulative financial overview (USD) (2018-2022).....	9
Table 3: Evaluation modules and questions.....	12
Table 4: Information sources accessible to WFP	14
Table 5: Assumptions listed in CSP (2018-2022)	18
Table 6: Selected outcome indicators SO1	25
Table 7: Actual versus planned beneficiaries, SO2, Activity 3.....	27
Table 8: Actual versus planned beneficiaries, SO2, Activity 4.....	28
Table 9: Selected outcome indicators, SO2, Activity 4.....	29
Table 10: Actual versus planned beneficiaries, SO3	31
Table 11: Selected outcome indicators, SO3	32
Table 12: Actual beneficiaries as a percent of planned beneficiaries (2018-2022).....	34
Table 13: Household decision making on modality use, 2019	37
Table 14: Top pivotal factors and examples of work-arounds and mitigation measures.....	44

List of boxes

Box 1: WFP definitions of humanitarian principles	50
Box 2: Key protection risks to affected populations.....	52
Box 3: Examples of community engagement mechanism data use in 2021-2022	57
Box 4: Some observations on cost efficiency at activity and modality level from the evaluation's overall quantitative efficiency analysis	65

Executive Summary

Introduction

EVALUATION FEATURES

1. The evaluation of the WFP corporate emergency response in Myanmar assessed WFP's work in the country from September 2017 to December 2022 to meet accountability requirements and identify learning to inform the design of a new interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for Myanmar and WFP's emergency response practice globally. While the focus of the evaluation was on the corporate emergency response to consecutive level 3 and level 2 crises in Myanmar,¹ it also covered WFP's work under the entire country strategic plan (CSP) for 2018–2022, with a special emphasis on the period from 2020 onwards.

2. The evaluation applied a theory-based, mixed-methods approach. As well as a document review, the evaluation team conducted more than 250 interviews with WFP employees and external stakeholders, structured group interviews, focus group discussions and site observations. A mobile phone survey of 380 beneficiaries was also conducted and additional questions were added to monitoring surveys. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed at several stages of the evaluation process with the WFP country office and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, which are the immediate users of the evaluation.

CONTEXT

3. Myanmar has an ethnically diverse population of 53.7 million people, 70 percent of whom live in rural areas.² An estimated 13 percent of the population live with a disability.³ Minority population groups face increasing challenges related to armed conflict, human rights violations and land rights.⁴

4. Since 2017, the country has faced four major shocks that have significantly affected WFP operations: the Rohingya conflict, which escalated in August 2017; the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which started in March 2020; the military takeover of February 2021; and the ongoing economic crisis, which is characterized by a decline in food security and living standards due to an inflationary wave whose causes include the collapse of the exchange rate, economic sanctions, supply chain disruption and increasing security-related restrictions on movement.⁵

5. Myanmar has seen significant but uneven progress in poverty reduction, with the poverty rate halving between 2005 and 2017. In 2020, poverty affected 24.8 percent of the population,⁶ but by early 2022, the estimated poverty rate was 46.3 percent.⁷ Since February 2021, increasing price volatility and high transport costs and agricultural input prices have aggravated food insecurity, especially in conflict-affected

¹ The level 3 emergency response was activated in response to the Rohingya crisis on the Bangladesh–Myanmar border and lasted from September 2017 to February 2018. In March 2018, the emergency was downgraded to level 2. Level 3 emergencies are now called “corporate scale-up” operations and level 2 emergencies are “corporate attention” operations. See WFP. 2018. *Decision Memorandum: Extension of the WFP Level 3 Emergency Response for the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh and downgrade to a WFP Level 2 Emergency Response in Myanmar* (not available online).

² World Bank. 2021. [Population, total – Myanmar](#).

³ Myanmar Information Management Unit. 2019. [Disability in Myanmar 2014–2019](#) (accessed on 17 April 2023).

⁴ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. 2021. [Indigenous peoples in Myanmar](#) (accessed on 17 April 2023).

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and WFP. 2022. [Myanmar: DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 3. Results and recommendations, July 2022](#).

⁶ United Nations Development Programme. 2020. [Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene](#).

⁷ United Nations Development Programme. 2021. [Impact of the twin crises on human welfare in Myanmar](#) (accessed on 17 May 2023); World Bank. 2019. [The World Bank and Myanmar's Rakhine State](#).

areas.⁸ In 2023, 15.2 million people are facing moderate or severe food insecurity, up from 13.2 million in 2022.⁹

6. While internal population displacements have continued for decades, there was a significant increase in incidents in 2021. In 2017, 635,000 people were reported to be internally displaced,¹⁰ increasing to 1.8 million in April 2023 – about 3 percent of the total population.¹¹ There are an estimated 630,000 Rohingya stateless persons in Rakhine State.¹²

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	53.7	2021
	Population, female (% of total) (1)	50.2	2021
	Global Hunger Index (rank and score) (2)	71 of 121 15.6	2022
	Internally displaced persons (million) (3)	1.8	2023
	Population living in poverty (% of total population) (4)	46.3	2022
	Gender Inequality Index (rank and score) (5)	125 of 170 0.498	2021
	Literacy rate (% of population > 15 years) (6)	89.1	2019
	Prevalence of stunting (% of children of 0–5 years of age) (7)	25.2	2020

Sources: (1) World Bank. 2021. [World Development Indicators](#); (2) [Global Hunger Index – Myanmar](#); (3) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2023. [Myanmar Emergency Update, as of 10 April 2023](#); (4) estimated in United Nations Development Programme. 2021. [Impact of the twin crises on human welfare in Myanmar](#); (5) United Nations Development Programme. [Human Development Report 2021-22. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World](#); (6) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics. 2019. [Myanmar country page](#); (7) estimated in Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others. 2022. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable](#).

⁸ WFP. 2021. [WFP Myanmar. Situation Report #5. October–November 2021](#).

⁹ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2023. [Humanitarian Needs Overview – Myanmar](#) (accessed on 23 August 2023).

¹⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2018. [Global Trends – Forced displacement in 2017](#).

¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2023. [Myanmar Emergency Update, as of 10 April 2023](#) (accessed on 17 April 2023).

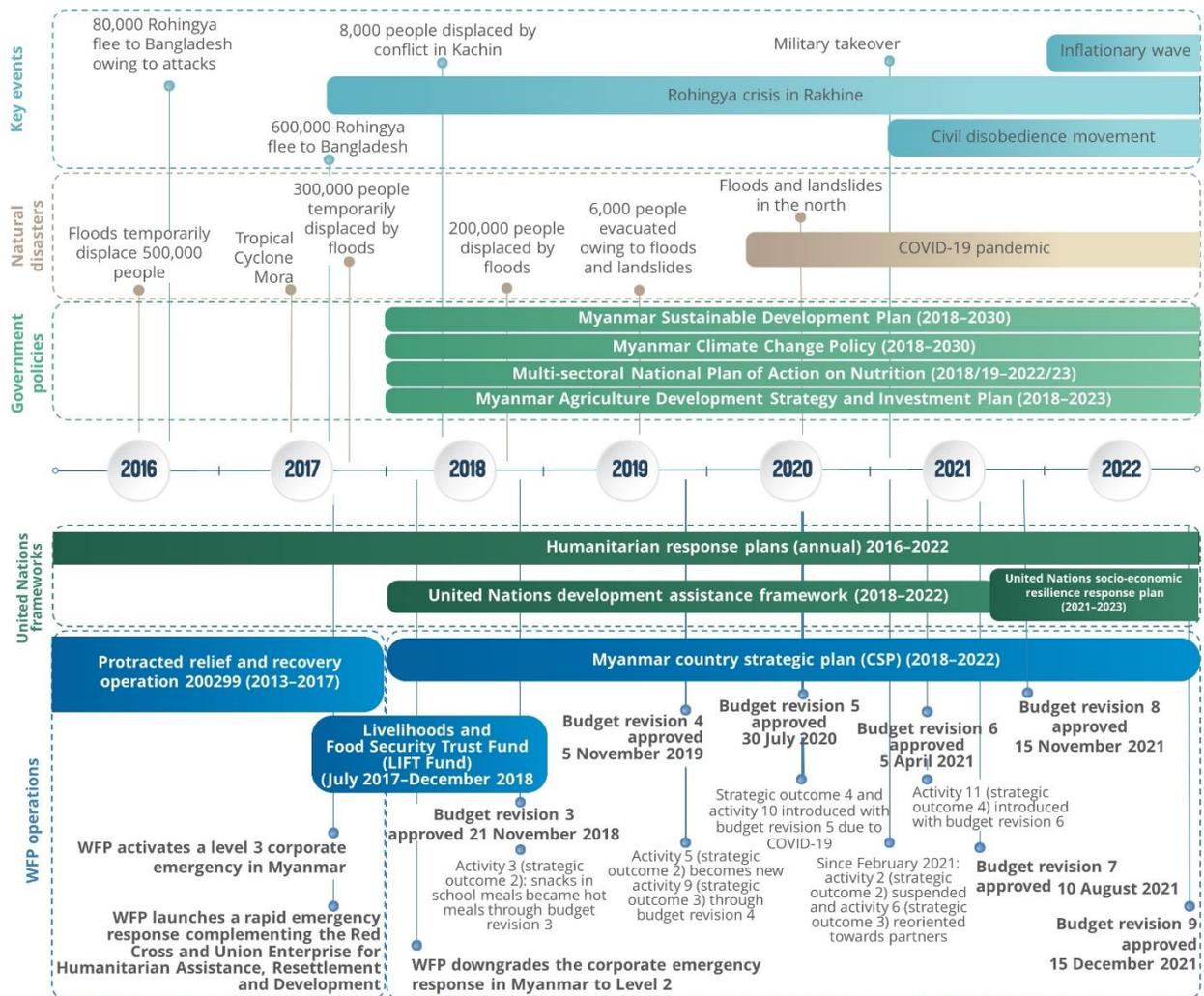
¹² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. [Data Portal: Myanmar situation](#). (Data as of 31 December 2022).

7. In February 2021, the Central Bank of Myanmar imposed limits on cash withdrawals from banks, resulting in generalized cash shortages. In addition, limited access and growing insecurity have hampered data collection and humanitarian efforts across Myanmar. Assistance is currently provided under the United Nations socioeconomic resilience response plan, which runs until the end of 2023.

WFP EMERGENCY RESPONSE

8. The current CSP for Myanmar originally covered the five-year period from January 2018 to December 2022 and has undergone nine budget revisions. Through the latest budget revision, the CSP was extended until December 2023 to align the new interim CSP for 2024–2025 with the United Nations transitional cooperation framework for 2024–2025.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview, 2016–2022



Source: Elaborated by the WFP Office of Evaluation based on the [CSP document and budget revisions](#), [WFP annual country reports for 2018–2022](#), and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs humanitarian response plans for 2017–2022.

9. The CSP was designed around four strategic outcomes focusing on crisis response; resilience building through asset creation and school feeding; nutrition support; and the provision of humanitarian services.

10. The original needs-based plan estimated the total cost of the CSP at USD 310.8 million. At the end of 2022, the latest needs-based plan, approved through the ninth revision of the CSP and its budget, estimated the cost at USD 860.6 million, with USD 452.3 million allocated and USD 336.4 million spent between 2018 and the end of 2022 (table 2). The main sources of funding have been the United States of America, multilateral flexible funding sources, Japan, private donors, Australia and Switzerland.

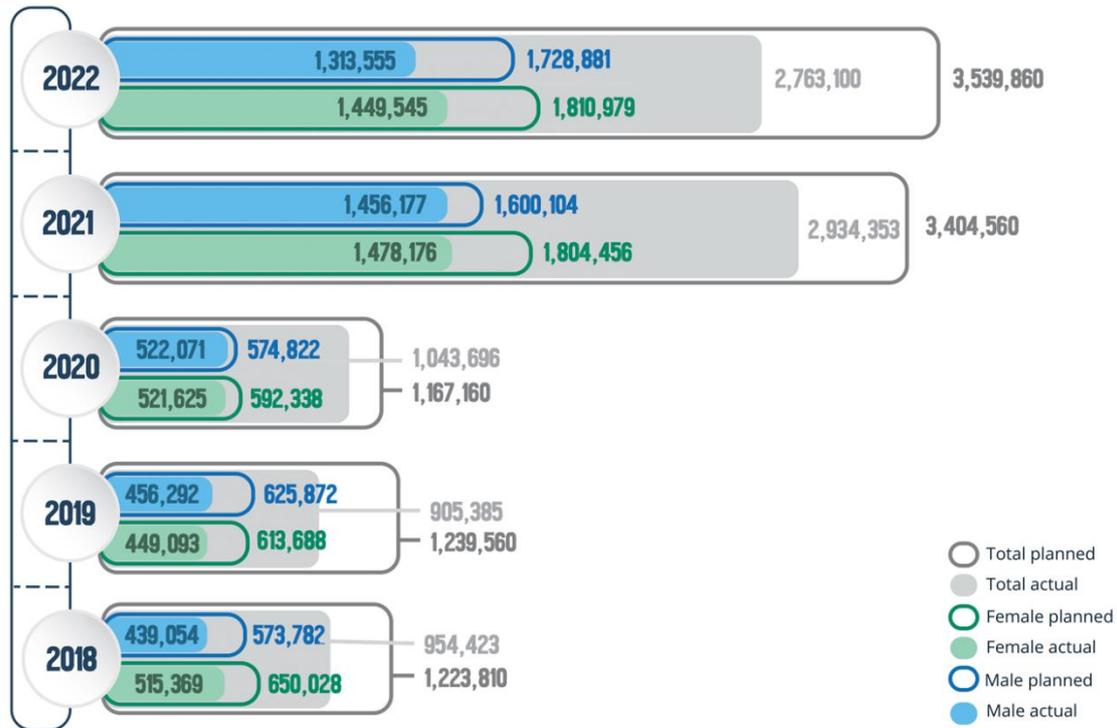
TABLE 2: CUMULATIVE FINANCIAL OVERVIEW, 2018–2022

Focus area	Strategic outcome	Activity	Original needs-based plan (2018–2022) (USD)	% of total	Latest needs-based plan (2018–2022) (USD)	% of total	Allocated resources (2018–December 2022) (USD)	% of latest needs-based plan	Expenditures (2018–December 2022) (USD)	% of allocated resources
Crisis response	1	1	111 754 379	41	525 093 717	67	320 618 191	61	247 685 476	77
	Subtotal		111 754 379	41	525 093 717	67	320 618 191	61	247 685 476	77
Resilience	2	2	8 806 477	3	8 076 615	1	1 714 546	21	1 479 417	86
		3	55 605 444	20	94 538 499	12	21 947 433	23	20 777 092	95
		4	39 450 579	14	52 588 860	7	15 712 767	30	12 792 299	81
		5	17 310 034	6	5 247 554	1	1 135 373	22	1 135 373	100
	Subtotal		121 172 534	44	160 451 528	21	40 510 119	25	36 184 181	89
	3	6	3 155 580	1	2 893 540	0	1 701 384	59	1 185 229	70
		7	10 619 959	4	16 929 895	2	9 297 880	55	6 040 265	65
		8	27 611 078	10	45 216 816	6	26 114 398	58	21 803 438	83
		9	n.a.	n.a.	17 120 344	2	4 037 517	24	3 352 770	83
	Subtotal		41 386 617	15	82 160 595	11	41 151 179	50	32 381 702	79
Crisis response	4	10	n.a.	n.a.	2 789 041	0	1 532 682	55	1 465 733	96
		11	n.a.	n.a.	11 751 505	2	1 835 616	16	1 835 616	100
	Subtotal		0	n.a.	14 540 546	2	3 368 298	23	3 301 349	98
Non-strategic outcome-specific			-	-	-	-	2 471 353	-	-	-
Total operational costs			274 313 530	100	782 246 386	100	408 119 140	52	319 552 708	78
Total direct support costs			16 156 538	-	26 728 806	-	21 416 411	80	16 865 132	79
Total indirect support costs			20 332 905	-	51 608 727	-	22 721 511	44	0	0
Total			310 802 973		860 583 919	-	452 252 063	53	336 417 840	74

Sources: Original CSP needs-based plan data, CSP budget revision 9 (of 13 December 2022), country portfolio budget resources overview 18/01/2023. Data as of 31 December 2022.

11. The initial number of 2.79 million planned beneficiaries of the CSP was progressively increased to 5.76 million under the latest budget revision. Beneficiary coverage fluctuated between a low of 73 percent of the planned number in 2019 and a high of 89 percent in 2020. Overall, WFP was able to mobilize adequate resources for the scale-up of its emergency response during the first five years of the CSP.

Figure 2: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex, 2018–2022



Source: WFP Myanmar annual country reports 2018–2022.

Evaluation findings

WFP'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING IN RELATION TO EVOLVING NEEDS

Use of evidence to inform strategy and interventions

12. The WFP country office in Myanmar uses a wide range of means to collect information on population needs and the coverage of those needs, relying on its decentralized sub-offices and network of cooperating partners, surveys and its community engagement mechanism. While access constraints in some areas have led to knowledge gaps and very approximate estimates of needs, the information provided by the country office is generally appreciated by partners.

13. The multidimensional nature of the information required for management decision-making makes streamlined information management a challenge. The country office uses multiple software systems and is attempting to integrate these into a management dashboard approach, reflecting similar efforts at the corporate level.

Adaptability to changing contexts

14. The information gathered following the main shocks faced by the country allowed WFP to make appropriate CSP and budget revisions in response to changing conditions. Following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the military takeover in 2021, WFP expanded its emergency assistance to reach new states and population groups – most notably in peri-urban Yangon – while making efforts to maintain gains under its “changing lives” agenda.

15. WFP's decentralized decision-making structure allowed it to make timely operational adjustments. COVID-19 forced a fundamental change in the methods and practices used to protect affected people and

humanitarian personnel, and WFP mobilized its logistics capacity to help its United Nations and other humanitarian and development partners continue to function during the crisis.

16. Since the military takeover in February 2021, in line with the United Nations principles of engagement with the *de facto* authorities, WFP has suspended its capacity strengthening activities for institutional partners and shifted towards the provision of support to civil society actors and communities.

Internal coherence

17. The CSP is well aligned with the WFP strategic plan for 2017–2021 and specific WFP policies. It covers all the strategic objectives of the corporate strategic plan, including through an optional strategic outcome related to service provision to partners, which was activated during the COVID-19 crisis. The overall CSP framework remained relevant even when shifts in emphasis were required.

18. The general assumption underlying the CSP was that conditions were in place for an evolution from a focus on emergency response to the provision of longer-term development support and a gradual handover of WFP operations to state institutions. While the assumptions stated in the logical framework of the CSP appeared valid at the time of its design, they overlooked the fact that political stability and adequate capacity in national institutions were critical factors. The emergence of new constraints has invalidated some of the CSP's underlying assumptions, such as security, and drawn attention to the importance of additional factors, such as price stability, but the resulting challenges are being managed by the country office.

Targeting and tailoring of assistance to needs

19. Geographical targeting, based largely on food security and livelihood surveys supplemented by information gathered by sub-offices and cooperating partners, has been adjusted flexibly to address the expanding crisis. The targeting of individuals and households was primarily status-based. Some challenges were met in identifying certain population groups because of social stigma. The tracking of internally displaced persons as a priority target group was difficult owing to their mobility, but WFP was able to rely on its network of cooperating partners and community-based organizations. Vulnerability-based targeting was used in peri-urban areas and for the beneficiaries of protracted relief operations in some areas.

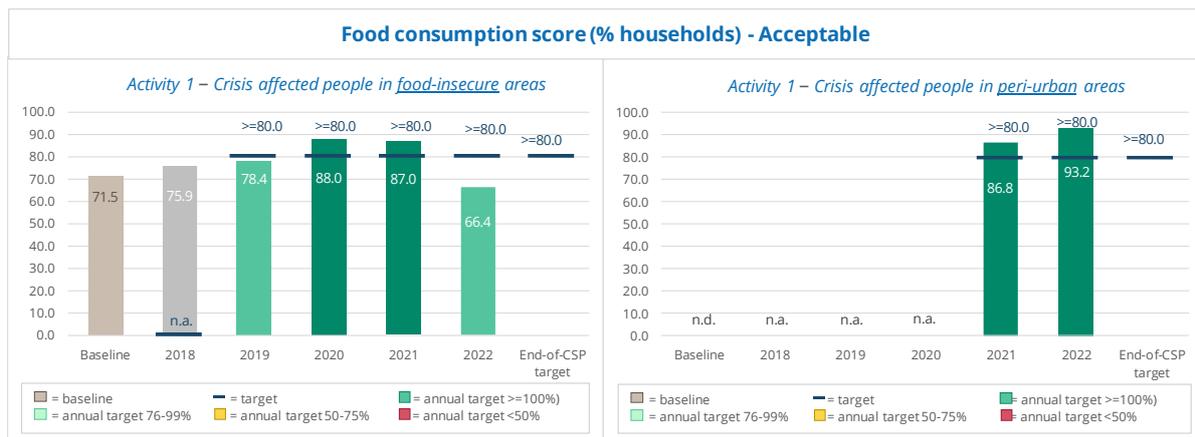
20. Over the period of CSP implementation, delivery modalities have been flexibly adjusted to maximize coverage and efficiency while adjusting to conditions. WFP has reflected beneficiaries' preferences including when they prefer to receive cash, which maximizes their choice and agency. Cash support is based on the minimum expenditure basket agreed by the inter-agency cash working group but owing to challenges in obtaining frequently updated market price information, adjustments to the minimum expenditure basket have sometimes lagged behind the rapid rate of inflation. Electronic cash transfers currently cover about 20 percent of WFP cash beneficiaries, but their rollout is hampered by banking regulations.

WFP'S EFFECTIVENESS IN ACHIEVING COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

Contribution to strategic outcomes

21. **Strategic outcome 1:** Despite operational difficulties, WFP succeeded in expanding the scale of its unconditional food assistance to reach people and communities affected by crisis. This activity was initially focused on people in food-insecure areas, particularly internally displaced persons concentrated in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin and Shan states, but was expanded during the surge in needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and in the aftermath of the military takeover in 2021. The inclusion of peri-urban Yangon in 2021 added 1.7 million beneficiaries to the operation and unconditional food assistance reached 2.3 million beneficiaries in 2021 and 2022. Composite food consumption score targets have largely been met although about a third of assisted households outside peri-urban Yangon continued to have "borderline" scores. The proportion of assisted households resorting to livelihood-based crisis and emergency coping strategies has remained high in all areas covered by WFP assistance.

Figure 1: Households with acceptable food consumption scores compared with targets



Abbreviations: n.a. = not applicable; n.d. = no data.

Data on peri-urban areas available for only 2021–2022.

The colours of the vertical bars indicate the percentages of the targets reached.

Sources: Annual country reports 2018–2022.

22. **Strategic outcome 2:** Capacity strengthening support for the Ministry of Social Welfare, including for the establishment of a social protection management information system, was interrupted in 2021. WFP has maintained some complementary activities under its own programming and recently explored opportunities for contributing to social protection in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

23. Prior to 2020, school feeding in some areas already suffered from challenges related to protection, funding, water and sanitation and community involvement. The COVID-19 pandemic and the military takeover led to severe disruption in the education system. WFP still managed to help feed a significant number of children by adjusting its delivery methods and modalities, including by distributing take-home rations, but was generally unable to meet its targets. After the military takeover, the number of primary schoolchildren reached rose from 25 percent of the target of 500,000 in 2021 to 50 percent in 2022. According to the 2023 humanitarian response plan, 3.7 million of the 13 million children in Myanmar are currently out of formal schooling. Without WFP's school feeding programme, this figure would likely be even higher.

24. Asset creation activities were affected by social distancing measures during the pandemic. The proportions of planned beneficiaries reached were highest in 2021, for cash-based transfers (CBTs), due to an increase in funding, but somewhat low in other years and generally lower for in-kind food assistance because of food transport restrictions. It is likely that WFP contributed to improved food security for participants in asset creation activities. According to annual country reports, the targets for food consumption scores were achieved in 2020 and 2021, but not in 2022. A high proportion of beneficiary households continued to rely on emergency or crisis-level coping strategies even though the 2022 end-of-year target was achieved, with 46.8 percent using such strategies against a target ceiling of 51.8 percent. Assets created included family and community gardens, rural roads, water points, irrigation infrastructure, and soil and water conservation measures. Long-term follow-up is required to assess the contribution of those assets to resilience.

25. **Strategic outcome 3:** Country capacity strengthening in nutrition included WFP's support for national nutrition assessments, planning and coordination. Following the military takeover, among other actions WFP contributed to the development of food-based dietary guidelines in collaboration with UNICEF.

26. Activities aimed at the prevention of chronic malnutrition and the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition did not reach their targeted number of beneficiaries owing to the earmarking of funding and access constraints. The achievement of beneficiary targets was satisfactory under activities for the prevention of acute malnutrition, thanks to better access and the alignment of those activities with emergency relief. Capacity strengthening activities and CBTs for people living with HIV/AIDS and/or tuberculosis largely met their beneficiary targets, but for the latter, access issues limited the provision of in-kind food assistance.

27. Progress towards planned outcomes was poor for chronic malnutrition prevention activities, indicating that assistance was insufficient to significantly improve the dietary diversity of mothers and ensure a minimum acceptable diet for young children. However, the achievement of outcome targets, including those for mortality and recovery rates, was highly satisfactory among children treated for moderate acute malnutrition. Outcome targets for nutrition support provided to people living with HIV/AIDS and/or tuberculosis, including adherence to treatment, 12-month survival rate and nutritional recovery rates, have all been exceeded, which can be largely ascribed to WFP programming given the scarcity of other support provided to these target groups.

28. **Strategic outcome 4:** This strategic outcome was introduced in July 2020 following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and had the aim of facilitating access to reliable common services for WFP's humanitarian and development partners in Myanmar. It reflects WFP's comparative advantages, particularly in logistics, throughout the country. The services provided, including personnel transport via WFP-operated flights and supply chain services, were highly appreciated by partners.

Coverage of assistance and humanitarian response

29. While access issues and other operational constraints have affected the coverage of WFP interventions for people in need, WFP has performed consistently well in reaching planned beneficiaries with emergency in-kind food assistance. Cash-based assistance received a boost during the pandemic but its further expansion was curtailed by the introduction of more stringent banking regulations and a lack of official approval in some areas.

30. In 2022, WFP covered 71 percent of the total number of people reached as reported by humanitarian organizations.

Preparedness for and response to consecutive crises

31. Good preparedness for and early response to crises are salient characteristics of WFP's work in Myanmar, underpinned by its wide geographical presence, strong supply chains, logistics capability and decentralized but very integrated management approach, under which access and risk management issues are dealt with directly by the country office senior leadership. The country office was able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the military takeover and their wide-ranging consequences proactively and collaboratively within the broader humanitarian system.

Mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment

32. The country office has consistently aimed to implement gender-sensitive programming, including by taking the "intersectionality" of various vulnerability factors into account in targeting exercises and vulnerability assessments. WFP has sought to ensure gender parity in its own human resources, community committees and asset creation activities. Evidence suggests that women's representation in household-level decision-making, such as on how to spend cash transfers, is reasonably equitable in Myanmar, but there may be pronounced ethnic and cultural variations. WFP has participated in working groups, networks and task forces on protection, gender-based violence and child rights violations and has partnered with the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on gender-related research.

CONNECTEDNESS OF WFP'S ASSISTANCE

Extent to which WFP assistance in Myanmar taps into local capacities and is community-driven

33. Cooperating partners are central to WFP operations and played a key role in delivering assistance and providing WFP sub-offices with contextual knowledge. The sub-offices implemented considerable capacity strengthening interventions for cooperating partners aimed at enhancing the partners' use of participatory methods and their understanding of the risks faced by people and communities affected by crises. The relationship between WFP and its cooperating partners was closer and more collaborative at the sub-office than the country office level, where there was limited consultation of cooperating partners on strategic planning and coordination.

34. Cooperating partners have been selected based on their programming and operational strengths. The engagement of cooperating partners in assisted communities shows that adequate attention was being paid to beneficiaries' needs, but external factors, including the processes required by international organizations or changes in national regulations, sometimes constrained partners' ability to adapt

assistance to local needs and customs. Where cooperating partners were not able to operate, WFP could sometimes implement activities directly.

Humanitarian–development–peace nexus

35. The country office has shifted its focus back to emergency response. Most resilience building initiatives were based on asset creation and nutrition, focusing on the individual, household and community levels and constituting a relatively small component of the WFP portfolio of activities. The resilience of communities, institutions and systems was not considered in a formal, structured manner in strategic and results measurement frameworks. For example, the provision of on-demand logistics services, while demonstrating connectedness between humanitarian and development activities, was not framed as part of a proactive resilience building approach that could strengthen institutions and systems, and there was no clear strategy for strengthening food systems through local procurement.

36. Managing the potential effects of its activities on the dynamics of conflict and peace has been a priority for the country office. Staff were continually adapting to, negotiating with and considering the local setting. WFP occasionally considered the enhancement of social cohesion as a way of strengthening its programming, but its contributions to peace were not measured.

Social and environmental sustainability

37. From 2018 to 2021, reflecting what many other country offices were already doing, the Myanmar country office took environmental risks into account by using basic environmental screening checklists to inform the design and implementation of its asset creation and livelihoods activities. In 2022, the country office started to introduce the expanded WFP environmental and social standards to its staff and cooperating partners, using new screening tools. This is expected to lead to enhanced tracking of social and environmental risks and mitigation measures.

WFP PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION WITH THE WIDER HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

Coherence and alignment with the wider United Nations and humanitarian sector

38. The CSP and subsequent WFP engagement have been fully integrated into United Nations and humanitarian assistance frameworks and the country office has played an active role in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, including as lead or co-chair of several clusters, working groups and committees.

Partnerships

39. In the early stages of CSP implementation, the country office's relationship with central government improved, but after the military takeover WFP, in line with the United Nations principles of engagement with the *de facto* authorities, adapted its partnership strategy by moving away from direct engagement with state institutions and deepening and expanding its engagement with other United Nations agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

40. The collaboration established with international partners has been extensive and highly versatile, reflecting the priority given to the delivery of assistance. The country office is seen to have played a highly constructive and transparent role in its relations with donors and humanitarian partners, thanks to capable staff and networks of collaborators.

41. It was more often necessary for WFP to engage with the *de facto* authorities than it was for most other agencies because WFP is involved in food security and nutrition emergency assistance and must frequently discuss humanitarian access to conflict areas with those authorities.

HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES, PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Humanitarian principles

42. The country office has made consistent and varied efforts to ensure that its programmes and operations did not increase social tensions or risks to people or communities. Those efforts included conducting situational analyses, empowering experienced national staff to take operational decisions and implementing specific measures to mitigate the risk of tension between population groups.

43. In line with the broader organizational culture of WFP described in previous evaluations,¹³ the country office has given priority to the principle of humanity while following attentively all four humanitarian principles. WFP made its best possible effort to prevent assistance from benefiting groups associated with the military, although the formal guidance and support provided by WFP headquarters have been limited in this area. When facing possible trade-offs between the principles of humanity or impartiality, on the one hand, and independence or neutrality, on the other, WFP has explored scenarios for a principled approach, carefully assessing the options and risks. When faced with dilemmas related to humanitarian principles, there was no focal point nor a formal escalation mechanism for the country office or regional bureau to request and receive headquarters guidance.

Protection and accountability to affected populations

44. The WFP country office has detailed knowledge of the protection risk environment and has taken appropriate measures to mitigate such risks, in particular in relief operations. However, the expansion of its programmes in Myanmar has outstripped the country office's capacity to manage all protection risks, even with the support of new technologies.

45. Cooperating partners made significant contributions to WFP's analysis of area-based protection risks. Digital technology, training and the careful drafting of contracts were the main ways in which protection challenges were avoided. However, the budgets allocated to cooperating partners did not include provisions for responsibilities and activities related to protection.

46. There has been a progressive expansion of WFP's community engagement mechanism for receiving feedback from affected populations, demonstrating WFP's commitment to ensuring the relevance and high quality of its programmes. The use of the mechanism is still challenged by low beneficiary awareness and technology limitations, and its coverage has lagged behind the growing operations. The role of cooperating partners in accountability to affected populations is significant and valued but not maximized.

EFFICIENCY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Human and financial resources

47. WFP secured adequate human resources for most of its expanding operations, except in a few sub-offices. Staff continuously operated under conditions of high pressure, and various initiatives were undertaken to improve staff well-being. Country office staffing levels may require a clearer rationale. The recruitment of specialized staff was a challenge, and the deployment of international staff was affected by entry and travel restrictions.

48. Overall, WFP secured adequate financial resources for its operations, with higher levels of funding for emergency response, at more than 75 percent of the needs-based plan for the period from 2018 to 2022, than for school feeding (31 percent) and asset creation activities (37 percent). Fundraising was aided by the country office's strong investment in building relationships with donors and its timely adjustments to activities during CSP implementation. While some flexibility of funding has been achieved, the earmarking of funding, including at the geographical level, is still a challenge.

Timeliness

49. The timeliness of operational response and the implementation of plans was satisfactory for most activities considering the challenging environment. Levels of expenditure were adequate in most years for the largest activities, indicating a successful scale-up. Restrictions on access to affected populations, which have been more severe since the military takeover, have delayed the implementation of interventions. WFP has taken adequate measures to ensure the timeliness of its interventions, including through the use of advance financing mechanisms, the maintenance of stocks and personnel rosters and the use of local procurement. Overall, strong leadership in the country office led to a flexible, innovative and problem-solving approach, which facilitated the smooth and relatively timely running of operations.

Cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness

50. A range of factors that are under WFP's control have improved the cost-efficiency of the operations, including low levels of loss from supply chains, sound financial management, improvements in information

¹³ "[Summary evaluation report on WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian contexts during the period 2004–2017](#)" (WFP/EB.A/2018/7-C).

and data analysis, and technological developments. WFP's operations in Myanmar achieved economies of scale as they grew, particularly following the introduction of cost-efficient assistance in peri-urban Yangon. The modest increase in staffing numbers compared with the expansion of operations has also contributed to costefficiency.

51. The distribution of CBTs has been more cost-efficient than that of in-kind food transfers in Myanmar (in line with global findings), but a more detailed analysis would be needed in order to compare cost-efficiency among the range of ways in which CBTs are provided – as cash in envelopes, cash over the counter or electronic transfers.

52. WFP has considered the cost-effectiveness of various processes, such as the targeting and prioritization of assistance and the choice of modality. However, cost-effectiveness analyses were not carried out systematically and were rarely included in reviews and evaluations of WFP's work in Myanmar.

Risk management

53. WFP responded consistently and appropriately to the highly diverse and continually evolving risk environment, relying on increasingly detailed risk analyses and mitigation measures. The attentive oversight and advisory role of the regional bureau has been key to those efforts, while WFP headquarters and the New York office have not consistently provided policy guidance in, for example, the areas of engagement with the *de facto* authorities, advocacy for increased humanitarian space, and staff recruitment and retention.

54. WFP's well-developed risk management systems are primarily focused on WFP staff in the country, who show a detailed knowledge of the risk environment. There is an explicit transfer of risks from WFP to cooperating partners but it is not clear what support WFP could provide should those risks be realized, and cooperating partners' risk management costs are covered by WFP to only a limited extent.

Conclusions

55. The evaluation found a mature and well-focused operation that achieved high levels of responsiveness to events and coverage of communities and people in need in very adverse circumstances. The operation is underpinned by well-managed human and financial resources, strong economies of scale and, above all, risk management practices that closely mirror corporate guidance on decentralized risk management systems that are constantly updated. The ability of the country office to work closely with donors, the humanitarian country team and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific have ensured that challenges were foreseen and prepared for, and good performance was maintained. While the accessibility of people in need and the scale of their needs are likely to remain a major challenge, many elements of WFP's approach should be continued under the upcoming ICSP.

56. **Conclusion 1.** During the period of CSP implementation, WFP achieved a major scale-up of its operations in response to consecutive crises thanks to the wide foundation laid by the CSP framework, which permitted flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances via budget revisions. With regard to funding, the successful scale-up testifies to WFP's good reputation among donors as an agency able to deliver assistance effectively at scale in a highly complex and constrained environment. Decentralized decision-making coupled with regular guidance from the regional bureau were critical to the country office's high degree of adaptiveness.

57. **Conclusion 2.** In a situation of simultaneous humanitarian, governance and security crises, WFP's role as a humanitarian agency in Myanmar has grown. WFP has played this expanded role prudently and effectively. Its coordination with and complementarity to United Nations partners have been exemplary. WFP has carefully balanced the difficult tensions between the various humanitarian principles. Protection and operational risks were managed well, albeit with a tendency to underestimate both the degree to which cooperating partners assume risks and the need for constant communication with affected populations. Guidance on principled access and related risks was provided by the regional bureau but was limited from the corporate level.

58. **Conclusion 3.** The monitoring of food security was found to be adequate in areas where WFP or its local partners have access. The monitoring of nutrition, gender, resilience and social cohesion outcomes is more challenging. The availability of information declines in areas where access is poor – which are typically those affected by conflict – despite innovative data collection approaches. It is likely that humanitarian

needs in such areas are significantly underestimated, possibly leading to gaps in the coverage of assistance. Considerable attention is devoted to targeting the geographical areas, households and individuals most in need of WFP assistance, with adequate consideration of gender equality and broader social inclusion aspects. An elaborate community engagement mechanism is in place, but several factors limit its use.

59. **Conclusion 4.** Several shocks in Myanmar have diverted WFP from its original CSP goal of providing support for medium-term, government-led development. At the same time, WFP has continued to support activities aligned with national policies such as those in nutrition and school feeding. The mitigation of social and environmental risks is an emerging area, and there are some indications of WFP making contributions to peace. This brings the operations close to a triple (humanitarian–development–peace) nexus approach. However, the fact that the CSP was not fully conceived as such means that it failed to live up to its full potential. A central element of the triple nexus in Myanmar was resilience building, for which WFP lacked a strategic approach for the community, institution and food systems levels and which was not integrated into all strategic outcomes of the CSP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.	Adaptation and scale-up Maintain and enhance the capacity to work at scale. Factors enabling operational flexibility should be actively maintained, along with staff well-being.					
1.1	WFP should enhance its capacity by continuing fundraising for and policy dialogue on the forgotten crisis in Myanmar, with headquarters support; identifying and addressing gaps between the various digital information systems; and maintaining the matrix-based management structure, which brings together responsibilities for operations, programmes and geographical coverage.	Operational	Country office		High	End of ICSP implementation
1.2	The country office should continue to promote measures that enable the rapid adjustment of operations, such as the use of flexible, multi-modal field-level agreements with partners, backed up by the country office tool for managing effectively, and the WFP Information Network and Global System; the maintenance and expansion of rosters; and agreements with suppliers and financial service providers. These mechanisms should be supported by proactive capacity development work with civil society organizations in areas such as the preparation of proposals and reporting.	Operational	Country office operations unit	Country office programme unit	High	End of ICSP implementation
1.3	WFP should maintain the staff capacity needed to deliver high-quality assistance under pressure. It should establish culturally appropriate processes for tracking staff well-being and enabling staff to share any concerns. The highly constrained recruitment of staff should receive greater attention from the Human Resources Division at headquarters. Opportunities for leave, internal training, temporary duty assignments and other options for staff should be expanded to promote career development in Myanmar.	Strategic	Country office operations and human resources units	Headquarters Human Resources Division	High	End of ICSP implementation

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.	An inclusive, principled and risk-sensitive approach Difficult ethical and practical choices related to the humanitarian principles and the balancing of risk management priorities will continue to present themselves into the near future. WFP must find ways to sustain consistency in internal decision-making processes. Support for the individuals making decisions must be constant and tailored to operational situations. The key role of cooperating and service partners calls for fuller consideration of their capacities and status in operations than is granted under existing corporate systems. Current efforts in communication regarding WFP's humanitarian positioning should be extended to a wide range of stakeholders.					
2.1	At the corporate level, WFP must consider the formulation of mechanisms for country offices and regional bureaux to request support from higher levels of the organization when they need to make difficult ethical decisions regarding the humanitarian principles and risks in settings of high political sensitivity and polarization. When required, the corporate senior management team must give support to the senior management of the country office when issues and proposed choices are passed up for corporate endorsement. All relevant guidance on the applicable processes for addressing access issues and dilemmas regarding the humanitarian principles, such as the authority of the country office to make certain trade-offs between risks to populations and risks to operations, should be shared.	Strategic	Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, Operations Management Department	Headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division	High	June 2024
2.2	WFP should define how it can respond when a partner or contractor is exposed to risks (such as the loss of their authorization to operate or the arrest of their staff) and provide support where possible. WFP should consider establishing feedback processes to ensure that cooperating partners do not feel pressured to undertake activities in high-risk areas. A financial facility should be in place to address the actual and potential risks transferred to cooperating partners, for	Operational	Country office operations unit	Country office programme unit	High	End of ICSP implementation

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	example those related to their staff safety, security, organizational reputation and ability to operate.					
2.3	WFP should continue to expand its understanding of the risks to people and communities who are affected (indirectly, and either positively or negatively) by its food security and nutrition activities, beyond its collection of quantitative perception-based data via the community engagement mechanism. Knowledge gaps can be addressed through the enhancement of existing post-distribution monitoring surveys and the application of environmental and social safeguards with, for example, the inclusion of data on social cohesion and the simplification of post-distribution monitoring and its extension to affected population groups who are not WFP beneficiaries. There is also a need to collect more ethnographic data from beneficiaries and non-beneficiary population groups to ensure that no harm is done, and to follow up on complaints. Consideration must be given to linguistic and ethnic factors in developing trust and communication.	Operational	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Country office protection and accountability to affected populations unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation
3.	Information and feedback systems Adjustments to the qualitative and community-based data collected will allow WFP to transmit, internally and to beneficiaries, a fuller picture of activities that impinge on food security and nutrition. Such information should not increase the quantity of text and figures presented in reports and other communication materials but should rely on integrated digital tools to a greater extent than is currently the case.					
3.1	The country office should identify gaps in the digital systems it uses with a view to enabling the user-friendly presentation of quantitative and qualitative data – such as geospatial maps, conflict factor maps, process monitoring reports and “sentiment analysis” reports on the dignity of recipients of assistance, in ways that facilitate the analysis of trends and the experiences of affected populations for decision-making at the country office level. The country office should review the frequency of	Operational	Country office operations unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	periodic reporting from sub-offices to ensure that it is optimal and use management meetings to highlight specific issues coming up at the sub-office level.					
3.2	WFP must take measures to obtain access to the knowledge that partners draw from their own community information systems by establishing a simple communication process. Cooperating partners play a key role in information gathering owing to the time they spend in the field and the relationships they develop with communities. Greater use should be made of that information.	Operational	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Country office programme unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation
3.3	There should be regular reviews of communities' knowledge of and trust in WFP's community engagement mechanism and of cooperating partners' use of that mechanism across all states, with adjustments made when appropriate.	Operational	Country office protection and accountability to affected populations unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation
4.	Integration of resilience in the emergency response The interim country strategic plan period of two years should be used to test and gradually integrate a wider resilience perspective throughout the programme so as to address structural vulnerabilities. The aim will be to ensure that when shocks occur, communities can rely on local capacities and will require less humanitarian assistance. Focusing on communities and systems can help to create stronger links between the strategic outcomes in the long term and can strengthen the coordination across teams in the matrix-like structure of the country office. This will enhance the relevance and use of resources for affected people, given that the crisis is likely to be protracted.					

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.1	A new approach that takes into account the ability of affected people and communities to respond to shocks and stressors should include the creation of a framework for resilience that applies across the interim country strategic plan as a cross-cutting outcome. The framework could also be applied at levels lower than strategic outcomes in the interim country strategic plan line of sight.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Regional bureau	High	October 2023
4.2	A resilience perspective should be integrated into the strategic outcome on crisis response, in particular as regards disaster risk reduction. Among resilience capacities and assets there should be an assessment of social cohesion and how to avoid creating tensions. Social cohesion and the avoidance of tension are factors in the resilience of communities to shocks.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Regional bureau	High	End of ICSP implementation
4.3	The resilience perspective should include an extensive analysis of key community-level assets and basic infrastructure and should encourage the increased localization of emergency response, for example through local procurement aimed at strengthening food systems, or through support for emergency preparedness capacities for managing sudden-onset crises. This work could also include capacity strengthening for private sector entities engaged in common services provision or home-grown school feeding in order to help build local food systems.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Regional bureau	High	End of ICSP implementation

1. Introduction

1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

1. The Office of Evaluation (OEV) of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) mandated Participo to deploy nine international and national consultants to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all programmes and operations in Myanmar under the current country strategic plan (CSP) for the period running from September 2017 to December 2022, with a special emphasis on the more recent period from 2020 onwards. The evaluation is to feed into the development of the new interim country strategic plan (ICSP), intended for Executive Board consideration in November 2023.
2. The purpose of this corporate emergency evaluation (CEE) is twofold: to provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders, and to provide evaluation evidence and learning on WFP performance in order to inform country-level strategic decisions and the development of the ICSP, which is set to be drafted for 2024-2025.
3. The focus of the evaluation is on the CSP 2018-2022, the corporate emergency response to consecutive Level 3 (L3) and Level 2 (L2) crises,¹ including organizational responses to the rise of armed conflicts and displacement in several states, floods and landslides, the disruption caused by the global pandemic of COVID-19, and the deterioration of access and protection conditions following the 2021 military takeover. Additional information on subject, scope and objectives is included in Annex 1.1, Summary terms of reference (ToR).

1.2. CONTEXT

Socio-political overview

4. Myanmar has a population of 53.7 million, of which roughly 70 percent lives in rural areas.² An estimated 13 percent of the population live with a disability.³ The population encompasses over 135 different ethnic groups.⁴ Minorities face increasing challenges related to armed conflict, human rights violations and land rights.⁵ After decades of military rule in place since 1962, a phase of transition began in 2011, which would lead to the election victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 2015. This phase of relative optimism for international development actors, during which the CSP was prepared, was overshadowed by considerable challenges.⁶
5. The CSP preparation period was followed by four major unexpected shocks, both consecutive and overlapping, which have affected WFP operations in Myanmar and demanded significant changes to the original CSP, namely: a) the Rohingya conflict, which escalated in August 2017; b) the COVID-19 pandemic

¹ The L3 emergency response was activated in response to the Rohingya crisis along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border from September 2017 to February 2018. In March 2018, Level 3 was downgraded to a Level 2 emergency in Myanmar. L3 and L2 emergencies are now called operations of corporate scale-up and corporate attention, respectively. WFP. 21 March 2018. *Decision Memorandum: Extension of the WFP Level 3 Emergency Response for the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh and downgrade to a WFP Level 2 Emergency Response in Myanmar*.

² World Bank estimates on distribution of female population is 50.2% in 2021. Sources: i) World Bank Data. 2021. Myanmar: population total. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=MM>. ii) World Bank. 2021. Myanmar: Population, female (% of total population). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS>.

³ Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU). 2019. *Disability in Myanmar (2014-2019)*. Available at: <https://themimu.info/disability-analysis> (accessed on 17 April 2023).

⁴ Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in Brazil. 2023. *General information of Myanmar*. Available at: <https://myanmarbsb.org/site/general-information/>.

⁵ IWGIA. 2021. *Indigenous peoples in Myanmar*. <https://www.iwgia.org/en/myanmar.html> (accessed on 17 April 2023).

⁶ A study visit carried out by the team leader implemented a number of focus group discussions (FGDs) in May 2018, which noted that the Government was keen to attract foreign direct investment but faced capacity difficulties in implementing new regulations. There was also from 2015 a rise of isolationist tendencies, and a stoking of nationalism fuelled by the rapid growth of digital media and mobile phone usage. This was accompanied by issues of inclusion, corruption, and a certain cynicism towards civil society among business and government elites.

since March 2020; c) the military takeover of February 2021; and d) the ongoing economic crisis characterized by the decline in food security and living standards due to the 2022 inflationary wave, including the collapse of the exchange rate, supply chain disruptions and increasing security restrictions on movements.⁷ In 2022, an estimated 11 million people (20 percent of the total population) were facing acute food insecurity, according to a household survey jointly conducted by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

6. Since the late 1970s, the Rohingya ethnic minority group has faced institutionalized discrimination, such as exclusionary citizenship laws, and persecution, compelling hundreds of thousands of Muslim Rohingya to flee their homes to Bangladesh, as well as to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Mainly located in Myanmar's Rakhine state, the Rohingya trace their origins in the region to the 15th century. Yet, since its independence from British India, successive governments in Burma (renamed Myanmar in 1989) have refuted the Rohingya's historical claim, refrained from granting them citizenship, and categorized them as illegal immigrants. Effectively made stateless, the Rohingya are required to carry national verification cards that identify them as foreigners, and experience restrictions on marriage, family planning, employment, education, religious choice and freedom of movement. In August 2017, Myanmar's army undertook a military operation in Rohingya communities, following renewed attacks of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. At least 6,700 Rohingya were killed and an estimated 742,000 fled to Bangladesh.⁸

7. Since February 2020, the series of containment and mitigation measures enacted by the Government largely managed to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. However, according to the Household Vulnerability Survey, an overwhelming majority of households (83.3 percent) reported a drop in income from 2019 to 2020. A large majority of these households have associated this decline with COVID-19-related restrictions.⁹

8. Alleging widespread irregularities and fraud in the November 2020 elections, Myanmar's military took back control of the country in February 2021.¹⁰ As a result, conflicts in Myanmar's border regions have been reignited and a resistance movement has emerged. The National Unity Government was formed in exile. Protesters have resorted to both non-violent and violent means to counter the military through a civil disobedience movement, the declaration of a "people's defensive war" in September 2021, the establishment of the People's Defence Force across the country, and the creation of informal coalitions with ethnic armed organizations.¹¹

9. Armed conflict and intercommunal violence have triggered internal displacement in Myanmar for decades. In 2017, 635,000 people were reported to be internally displaced¹² but there was a significant increase in incidents in 2021. As of 10 April 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 1.4 million civilians have been displaced within Myanmar since February 2021 – out of a total of 1.8 million estimated internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country – roughly 3 percent of the total population.¹³ More than two thirds of those (717,700 people) have been displaced in 2022 alone.¹⁴ Approximately 447,700 civilians are displaced in the southeast and around 1.1 million in the northwest, with

⁷ Three rounds of the household survey Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) in Myanmar were done in March, June and July 2022 to track this rapid deterioration. In July, 61 percent of surveyed households were affected by at least one shock compared to 55 percent in the second round. See: FAO. 2022. *Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) in Myanmar*. March, June and July 2022.

⁸ i) UNHCR. 2019. *Rohingya emergency*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>. ii) The New Humanitarian. 25 August 2021. *The Rohingya*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/in-depth/myanmar-rohingya-refugee-crisis-humanitarian-aid-bangladesh> (accessed on 18 April 2023).

⁹ The reported income average year-on-year reduction was 46.5 percent between 2019 and 2020. See: UNDP. 2021. *COVID-19, coup d'état and poverty: compounding negative shocks and their impact on human development in Myanmar*.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch. 2022. *Myanmar: Events of 2021*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/myanmar-burma>.

¹¹ UNHCR. 2022. Myanmar Situation - Inter-Agency Operational Update - 05 July 2022.

¹² UNHCR Global Trends 2017.

¹³ UNHCR. 2023. *Myanmar Emergency - UNHCR Regional Update - 10 April 2023*. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100115> (accessed on 17 April 2023).

¹⁴ Ibid.

the highest number in the Sagaing region (around 750,000). There are an estimated 630,000 Rohingya stateless persons in Rakhine state.¹⁵

Economy and poverty

10. Myanmar was upgraded to lower middle-income country status in 2015 after decades of steady economic growth in its gross domestic product. Myanmar saw significant yet uneven progress in poverty reduction, with its poverty rate halved between 2005 and 2017. In 2020, poverty affected 24.8 percent of the population.¹⁶ Resulting from the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the military takeover, Myanmar's economy contracted by 18 percent in 2021, with detrimental implications for livelihoods and future growth. Since the military takeover, Myanmar's currency (kyat) lost more than 60 percent of its value, putting even more pressure on food and fuel prices.¹⁷ By early 2022, the estimated poverty rate in Myanmar was 46.3 percent.¹⁸ People in urban areas were hit especially hard by COVID-19 and the military takeover, with the poverty rate increasing threefold in cities by early 2022, especially in Yangon and Mandalay.¹⁹

11. Gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) are pursued in Myanmar under the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013–2022). Myanmar's ranking on the Gender Inequality Index has dropped from 106th out of 189 countries in 2017 to 125th out of 189 countries in 2021. The women's labour participation rate is significantly lower than men's (41 percent versus 70 percent), and women rarely rise to positions of power.²⁰ Facing significant barriers to inclusion in the labour force and in the economy, women are more affected by poverty than men. Myanmar women have disproportionately suffered the effects of COVID-19, displacement and the military takeover.²¹ The first contributed to an increase in domestic violence in the context of lockdown and an increase in care duties, including the sick and children who stayed home from school. The military takeover led to massive shutdowns in government services, education and health, all sectors where women account for a large share of the workforce. The incidence of sexual violence in the context of conflict in Myanmar is well documented.²²

12. Prior to 2020, Myanmar maintained high enrolment rates for primary education which, however, considerably decrease with age. As of 2019, the adult literacy rate (aged over 15) was at 89.1 percent (92.4 percent for men and 86.3 percent for women). As a result of COVID-19 and the military takeover, nearly all of Myanmar's 12-13 million schoolchildren have missed almost two years of education. While two thirds of schools reopened at the end of 2021, many remain closed due to sanitary or security concerns, and many teachers are refusing to return to work as a gesture of civil disobedience. According to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan, 3.7 million children out of 13 million are currently out of formal schooling across Myanmar.

13. A range of economic measures have been imposed by numerous countries against Myanmar. These measures include arms embargoes, trade embargoes, asset freezes and travel and investment

¹⁵ UNHCR. 2022. Data Portal: Myanmar. Retrieved from: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/myanmarsituation>. Data as of 31.12.2022.

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2021. Human Development Report 2020.

¹⁷ Reuters. 2021. *Myanmar currency drops 60% in weeks as economy tanks since February military takeover*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmars-junta-powerless-currency-drops-60-four-weeks-economy-tanks-2021-09-29/> (accessed on 18 April 2023).

¹⁸ i) UNDP. 2021. *Impact of the Twin Crises on Human Welfare in Myanmar*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/impact-twin-crises-human-welfare-myanmar> (accessed on 17 May 2023); ii) WB. 2019. *The World Bank and Myanmar's Rakhine State*. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/statement/2019/06/12/the-world-bank-and-myanmars-rakhine-state>.

¹⁹ UNDP. 2021. *Impact of the Twin Crises on Human Welfare in Myanmar*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/impact-twin-crises-human-welfare-myanmar> (accessed on 17 May 2023).

²⁰ UNDP. 2021. Human Development Report 2021/22.

²¹ UN Women, UNDP. 2022. *Regressing Gender Equality in Myanmar: Women living under the Pandemic and Military rule*. Available at: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/mn-Myanmar-Women%20Report-NEW-06032022.pdf>.

²² E.g. by the UN Human Rights Council in: HRC. 2019. Sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) in Myanmar and the gendered impact of its ethnic conflicts. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/session42/Documents/A_HRC_42_CRP_4.docx (accessed on 18 April 2023).

sanctions. Economic sanctions have been reinforced following the February 2021 military takeover, affecting economic growth and employment, increasing pressure on the poorest and most food-insecure sectors of the population and exacerbating the humanitarian situation.²³

14. Prior to the military takeover, Myanmar's development policy operated under the aegis of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030). The Myanmar sustainable development plan was structured around three pillars: peace and stability; prosperity and partnership; and people and planet.²⁴ Some 15 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes²⁵ have developed the United Nations Socio-Economic Resilience Response Plan (UN SERRP), which runs until the end of 2023. Given the current context, the United Nations country team (UNCT) has agreed to launch a transitional cooperation framework for two years (2024-2025).²⁶ No other framework for immediate support is currently in place (that is, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), formerly known as United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)), and the UN SERRP work as an interim plan for the United Nations country team in Myanmar.

Food security and nutrition

15. Myanmar ranked 71st out of the 121 qualifying countries in the 2022 Global Hunger Index. With a Global Hunger Index score of 15.6, Myanmar had a moderate level of hunger - a situation that has improved since 2000,²⁷ when the country scored 39.9 (alarming hunger).²⁸ Prevalence of stunting was estimated at 25.2 percent of children 0-5 years of age in 2020.²⁹

16. Since February 2021, increasing price volatility, high transport costs and agricultural input prices have aggravated food insecurity, especially in conflict affected areas.³⁰ More than 13.2 million people (1 in 4) are in moderate or severe food insecurity in 2022.³¹ As to insufficient food consumption, the most affected regions are Chin, Magway, Nay Pyi Taw, Shan, and Kayah (Figure 1).

²³ Vivekananda International Foundation. May 2021. *Sanctions: An Ineffective Tool in Myanmar*.

²⁴ Government of Myanmar. 2018. Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030).

²⁵ FAO, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN-HABITAT, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNDP, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Women, WFP, World Health Organization (WHO).

²⁶ UN Myanmar. September 2021. *UN Socio-Economic Resilience Response Plan*. Available at: https://minio.dev.devqube.io/uninfo-production-main/f9eccc03-e7c4-468b-bc8a-15a37ca790e3_UN-SERRP_FINAL_Web_Version.pdf.

²⁷ Myanmar was one of the three countries that achieved the largest reductions in hunger between 2000 and 2016. Source: Global Hunger Index. 2016. *The Global Hunger Index 2016 – Getting to Zero Hunger*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-hunger-index-2016-getting-zero-hunger> (accessed on 17 April 2023).

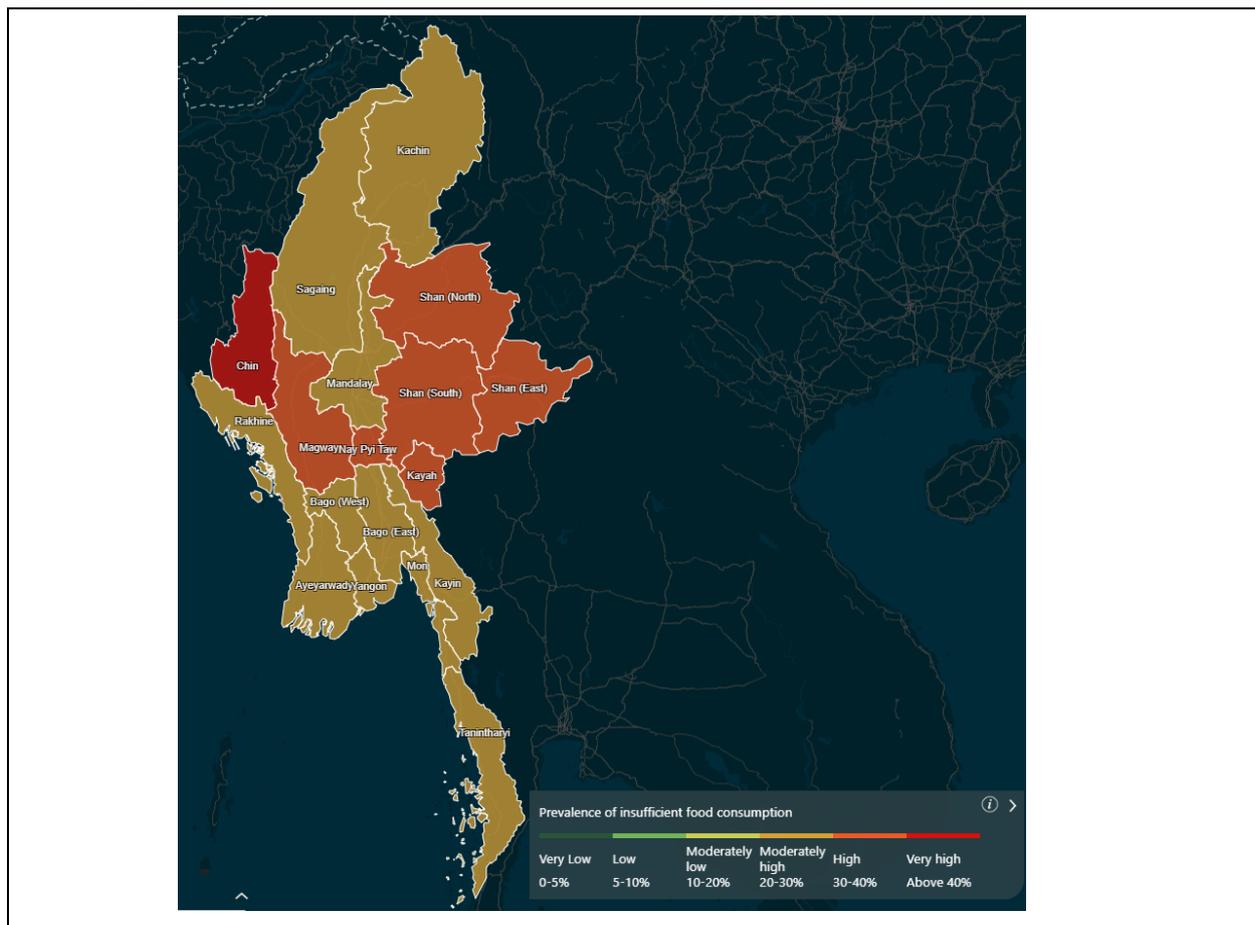
²⁸ Global Hunger Index. 2022. *Myanmar*.

²⁹ Estimated in: UNICEF. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*.

³⁰ FP Myanmar. October-November 2021. External Situation Report N.5.

³¹ Food Security Cluster estimate based on assessments conducted in 2021. See: WFP. 2023. *Myanmar*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/myanmar> (accessed on 17 April 2023); <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/myanmar-emergency> (accessed on 17 May 2023).

Figure 2: Myanmar, prevalence of insufficient food consumption (May 2022)



Source: Hunger Map. April 2023. Myanmar.

17. In peri-urban Yangon, data from the evaluation-commissioned phone survey among beneficiaries of a WFP stunting prevention programme show that social assistance has declined (according to two thirds of the households and for vulnerable women) and food prices have sharply risen. Households state to be most affected by price increases of staples, proteins and oil (and particularly vulnerable households also by price increases of vegetables).

Humanitarian response and United Nations in Myanmar

18. After February 2021, limits on bank cash withdrawals imposed by the Central Bank of Myanmar resulted in aid organizations, businesses and consumers experiencing extreme cash shortages. In addition, limited access and growing insecurity have hampered data collection and humanitarian efforts across Myanmar. Despite these challenges and a shrinking space for the humanitarian response,³² humanitarian organizations continue reaching increasing numbers of people affected by the expanding conflict.³³ These and other challenges have been navigated in close collaboration and consultation with local partners.³⁴

19. Following 1 February 2021, the Myanmar UNCT reframed the United Nation's programmatic work to ensure that it could continue to deliver assistance to people in need, while not acting in a way that could be perceived as legitimizing the de facto authorities. Noting that it is Member States that confer recognition rather than the United Nations, the organization has been referring to the military leadership as the "de facto authorities". It also limits its engagement with the State Administration Council and the de facto

³² Humanitarian presence in the country decreased by 27 percent between August 2020 and May 2021. See: WFP Myanmar. October-November 2021. External Situation Report No. 5.

³³ OCHA. January 2023. Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.

³⁴ Ibid.

ministries to exchanges that are strictly necessary for the principled delivery of humanitarian assistance that accrues directly to affected populations.³⁵

1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

20. The current CSP for Myanmar was designed in the course of 2017 and covered the five-year period from January 2018 to December 2022. It was extended until December 2023 to ensure that the subsequent interim CSP 2024-2025 would be aligned to the United Nations Transitional Cooperation Framework (2024-2025). In this manner, this CEE will feed into the design of the ICSP 2024-2025.

21. Following the assumption of power by a civilian government and the graduation of the country to lower middle-income status, the original CSP adopted specific shifts, which included: a) moving to cash-based transfers (CBT), taking into account protection risks; b) focusing on social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) and feeding practices for nutrition; c) increasing rice fortification; d) establishing a nationally owned school feeding programme focused on on-site school feeding; e) promoting school feeding and livelihoods as social protection mechanisms, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment; f) ensuring all activities are nutrition-sensitive; g) assisting adolescent girls, including those who are pregnant and breastfeeding; and h) maximizing gender- transformative programming.³⁶

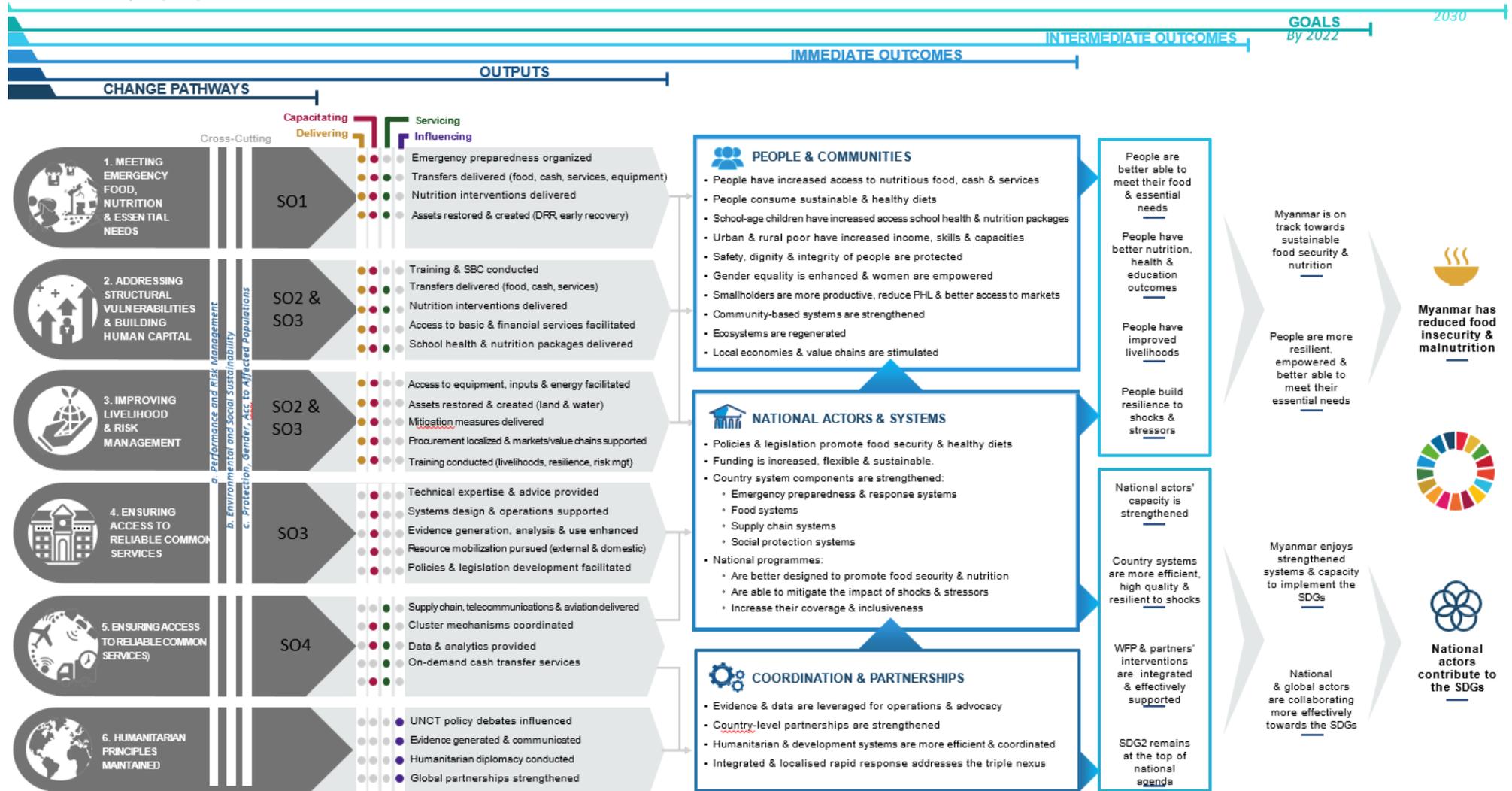
22. Nonetheless, the CSP document recognized in a footnote that “while WFP seeks to effect long-term change, the pace of the transition may need to be adjusted in the light of the events in Rakhine state on and following 25 August 2017.” There has been a significant expansion of the programme post-military takeover to support: a) peri-urban communities; and b) new conflict affected internally displaced persons (IDPs).

23. The CSP was designed around three strategic outcomes (SOs). A fourth strategic outcome was introduced in 2020 to support the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While Figure 3 presents an overview of the CSP strategic outcomes and outputs, Table 1 dives into strategic outcome activities and their main changes through the nine budget revisions (BRs).

³⁵ International Peace Institute. 2021. The UN's Response to the Human Rights Crisis after the Military takeover in Myanmar: Destined to Fail?

³⁶ WFP. 2017. Myanmar CSP 2018-2022.

Figure 3: Overall theory of change including budget revision changes



Source: Evaluation team.

Table 1: Strategic outcomes, activities and budget revision shifts⁵⁰ under the CSP 2018-2023

Activity	Modality	Main shifts through budget revisions (BR)
SO1. Crisis-affected people in food-insecure areas meet their food and nutrition needs all year round.		
Activity 1: Provide unconditional food transfers and/or CBTs to populations affected by crisis.	Unconditional resource transfers – food, cash and voucher transfers	BR03 increased number of beneficiaries in northern and central Rakhine State and an accelerated shift to cash. BR04 expanded the assistance provision from 2020 to 2022. BR07 increased the budget and number of beneficiaries receiving emergency relief assistance under Activity 1 due to COVID-19 and the military takeover. BR09 expanded partnerships with local NGOs and community-based organisation to reach newly displaced persons, pilots disability inclusion top-ups.
SO2. 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.	Institutional capacity strengthening	<i>Activity suspended since February 2021.</i>
Activity 3: Implement a comprehensive school feeding programme in targeted schools in support of the national programme.	School snacks and meals (on-site and take-home rations) – food and cash	BR03 promoted a shift from snacks to hot school meals in November 2018. BR08 increased the cash-based transfers (CBT) ration size for school meal programmes. BR09 adapted the school feeding model to include informal education settings by providing either cash for school meals, high-energy biscuits or alternative take-home rations.
Activity 4: Provide conditional food or cash-based assistance in support of the creation and rehabilitation of assets, combined with nutrition messaging, to targeted populations.	Asset creation and livelihood support – food, cash and capacity strengthening	BR09 expanded asset creation and livelihood activities in conflict-affected areas and strengthened collaboration with development partners for integrated resilience building activities.
Activity 5: Provide unconditional food and/or cash-based assistance combined with nutrition messaging and counselling for people living with HIV and tuberculosis (TB) patients.	Unconditional resource transfers – food and cash	Activity 5 was active until BR04 in Nov. 2019, when HIV/TB patients transitioned into Activity 9 under SO3.
SO3. Children under 5 in Myanmar and other nutritionally vulnerable groups in Myanmar have improved nutrition in line with national targets by 2022.		
Activity 6: Provide implementation support, research-based advice and technical assistance for national policies and action plans to the Government and partners.	Institutional capacity strengthening	Largely suspended and re-oriented towards UN, International NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) since Feb. 2021.
Activity 7: Implement preventive nutrition interventions for adolescent girls, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls (PBWG), and children under 2, and roll out community infant and young child feeding programmes, CBTs for mothers of young children, and SBCC.	Malnutrition prevention – food and cash and capacity strengthening	BR03 decreased budget due to reduced number of beneficiaries, reflecting data from the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the changing malnutrition guidelines.
Activity 8: Provide specialized nutritious foods for the treatment and management of acute malnutrition among PBWG, and children under 5.	Malnutrition treatment and prevention – food, and capacity strengthening	BR03 decreased budget due to reduced number of beneficiaries, reflecting data from the HNO and the changing malnutrition guidelines. BR09 expanded treatment of moderate acute malnutrition.
Activity 9: Provide unconditional food and/or cash-based assistance , combined with nutrition messaging and counselling, to people living with HIV and TB patients.	Unconditional resource transfers – food, cash and capacity strengthening	This was initially Activity 5 under SO2 and became Activity 9 under SO3 with BR04 in Nov. 2019. BR08 expanded MAM (moderate acute malnutrition) treatment and prevention support. BR09 expanded support to HIV/TB patients.
SO4. Humanitarian and development partners in Myanmar have access to reliable common services (introduced with BR05 in Jul. 2020).		
Activity 10: Provide on-demand services to humanitarian and development partners.	Service delivery	Introduced with BR05 in July 2020 to respond to COVID-19 pandemic.
Activity 11: Provide on-demand cash transfer services on behalf of UN and other partners to help affected populations meet their essential needs.	Service delivery	Introduced with BR06 in April 2021 based on the interest of humanitarian and development partners to utilize WFP CBT services post-coup.

Source: CSP operational document and BRs 03-09.

24. The original needs-based plan (NBP) in the 2018-2022 CSP required USD 310.8 million; as of end-2022, the needs-based plan 2018-2023 approved through BR09 amounted to USD 860.6 million, with USD 452.3 million actually allocated and USD 336.4 million actually spent from 2018 to end of 2022 (Table 2).⁵¹ Hence, allocated resources at the end of 2022 were only 53 percent of the needs-based plan in BR09.

⁵⁰ Budget revisions (date of approval): BR03 (21.11.2018), BR04 (05.11.2019), BR05 (30.07.2020), BR06 (05.04.2021), BR07 (10.08.2021), BR08 (15.11.2021), BR09 (16.12.2022).

⁵¹ BR09 (approved 15 December 2022) extended the CSP by one year.

However, this BR09 added USD 217.2 million to fund the 2023 one-year extension. Allocated resources at the end of 2022 actually amounted to 63.3 percent for the first five years of the needs-based plan as per RB09 (2018-2022) (see also Annex 1.7.1).

25. The change in WFP plans over the CSP period is apparent from the fact that actual 2018-2022 expenditures on SO1 of USD 247.7 million were roughly 2.5 times higher than the original CSP needs-based plan estimate for SO1 of USD 111.7 million. SO1 is at the core of the WFP mission and accounts for most resources (the resources allocated to SO1 in 2018-2022 represent 71 percent of total allocated resources and SO1 accounts for about two thirds of the needs-based plan of the last budget revision).⁵² As per BR09, the SO2 and SO3 (resilience) needs-based plans have also increased in terms of budget but decreased as a proportion of the total operational costs, from 44 to 21 percent for SO2, and from 15 to 11 percent for SO3.

Table 2: Cumulative financial overview (USD) (2018-2022)

Focus Area	Strategic Outcome	Activity	NBP as per original CSP (2018-2022)	% of total	NBP as per BR09 (2018-2023)	% of total	Allocated resources (2018- Dec 2022)	% of NBP BR09	Expenditures (2018- Dec 2022)	% of allocated resources
Crisis response	SO 1	Act.1	111,754,379	41%	525,093,717	67%	320,618,191	61%	247,685,476	77%
	Sub-total SO1		111,754,379	41%	525,093,717	67%	320,618,191	61%	247,685,476	77%
Resilience	SO 2	Act. 2	8,806,477	3%	8,076,615	1%	1,714,546	21%	1,479,417	86%
		Act. 3	55,605,444	20%	94,538,499	12%	21,947,433	23%	20,777,092	95%
		Act. 4	39,450,579	14%	52,588,860	7%	15,712,767	30%	12,792,299	81%
		Act. 5	17,310,034	6%	5,247,554	1%	1,135,373	22%	1,135,373	100%
	Sub-total SO2		121,172,534	44%	160,451,528	21%	40,510,119	25%	36,184,182	89%
	SO 3	Act. 6	3,155,580	1%	2,893,540	0%	1,701,384	59%	1,185,229	70%
		Act. 7	10,619,959	4%	16,929,895	2%	9,297,880	55%	6,040,265	65%
		Act. 8	27,611,078	10%	45,216,816	6%	26,114,398	58%	21,803,438	83%
		Act. 9	n.a.	n.a.	17,120,344	2%	4,037,517	24%	3,352,770	83%
	Sub-total SO3		41,386,617	15%	82,160,595	11%	41,151,179	50%	32,381,702	79%
Crisis response	SO 4	Act. 10	n.a.	n.a.	2,789,041	0%	1,532,682	55%	1,465,733	96%
		Act. 11	n.a.	n.a.	11,751,505	2%	1,835,616	16%	1,835,616	100%
	Sub-total SO4		0	n.a.	14,540,546	2%	3,368,298	23%	3,301,349	98%
Non-SO specific			-	-	-	-	2,471,353	-	0	-
Total operational costs			274,313,530	100	782,246,386	100	408,119,141	52%	319,552,708	78%
Total direct support costs			16,156,538	-	26,728,806	-	21,416,411	80%	16,865,132	79%
Total indirect support costs			20,332,905	-	51,608,727	-	22,721,511	44%	0	0%
Grand total cost			310,802,973	-	860,583,920	-	452,257,063	53%	336,417,840	74%

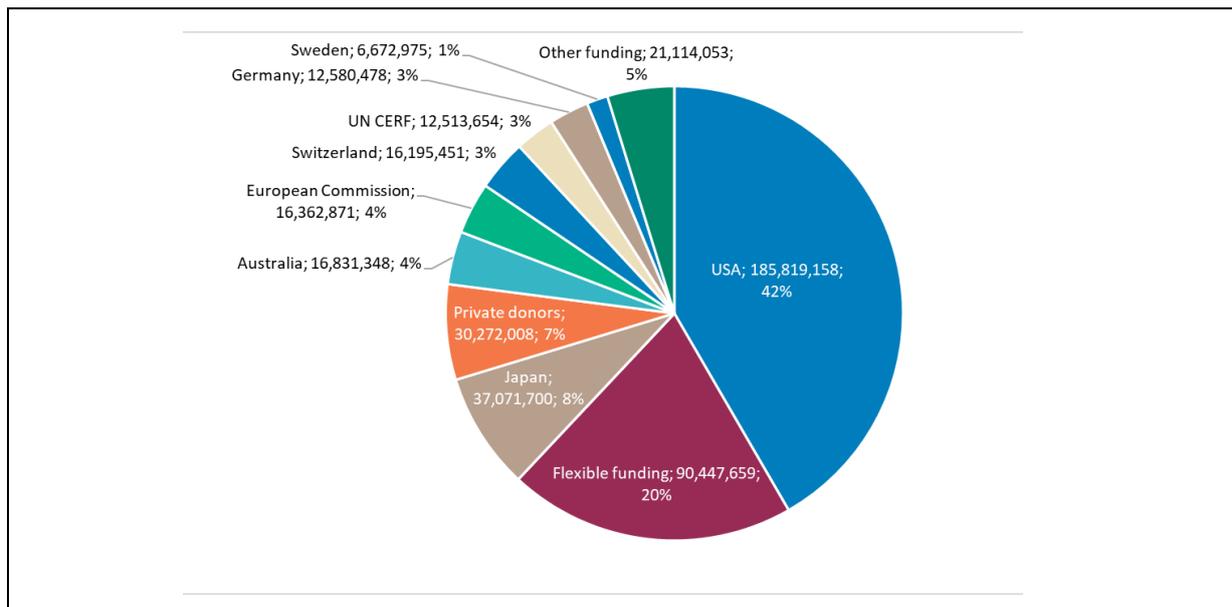
Source: SPA PLUS for original CSP NBP data, CSP BR 09 – CPB (rev 13.12.2022) for NBP BR09 and EV CPB Resources Overview (18012023) for Allocated resources and expenditures, data as of 31 December 2022.

26. The main sources of funding have been the United States of America (USA) (41 percent of total funding), multilateral flexible funding⁵³ (20 percent), Japan (8 percent), private donors (7 percent), Australia and Switzerland (both around 4 percent). Donor variety has increased over the years, in line with the evolution of the emergency in the country, and the donor base has shifted from mainly bilateral donors in 2017 and 2018 to progressively include multi-lateral entities and international funds.

⁵² IRM Analytics. 2018-2022. *EV CPB Resources Overview*. Data extracted on 18 January 2023.

⁵³ A Flexible contribution is one for which donors do not impose conditionalities, thus allowing WFP to determine the country programme or its activities in which the contribution will be used and how it will be used. Retrieved on 25/10/2022 from: <https://www.wfp.org/flexible-funding>.

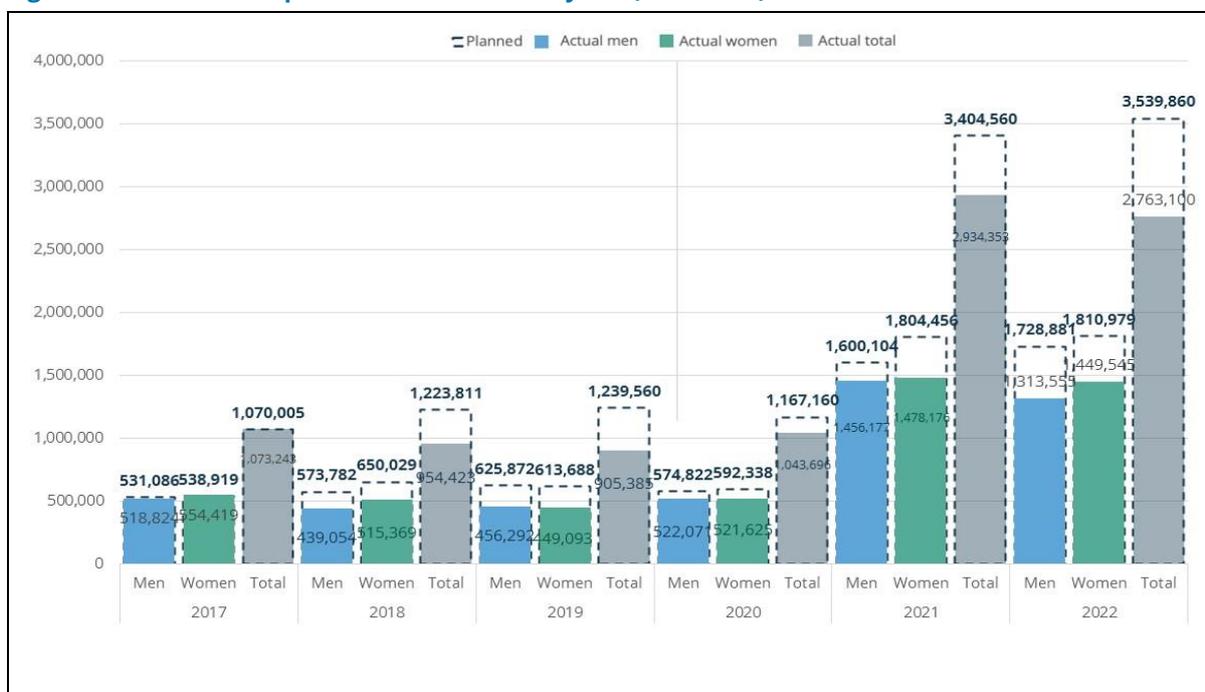
Figure 4: Main donors 2018-2022 (USD)



Source: FACTory. 15 January 2023. Distribution, Contribution and Forecast Stats.

27. The initial number of 2.79 million planned beneficiaries of the CSP was progressively increased to 5.76 million under the most recent budget revision, BR09. Beneficiary coverage fluctuated between a low of 73 percent of the planned number in 2019 and a high of 89 percent in 2020. Aggregating across strategic outcomes, the main finding is that, when the number of planned beneficiaries expanded from 1-1.2 million in 2018-2020 to 3.4 million in 2021 and grew further in 2022, WFP was able to mobilize resources for, and implement delivery of, a major scale-up. Figure 5 presents the details disaggregated by sex.

Figure 5: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex (2017-2022)



Source: Standard Project Report 2017; ACRs 2018-2022.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

28. The evaluation was designed around an evaluation matrix, presenting the evaluation questions (EQs) and main lines of enquiry, which had been determined during the inception phase on the basis of an in-depth desk review, a preliminary data analysis, a reconstructed theory of change of the CSP, and the

main learning needs expressed by the WFP country office (CO) and other evaluation stakeholders. To ensure timely contributions to the design process of the new interim WFP CSP, the evaluation was delivered through six consecutive modules, which were presented and discussed with the country office and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok (RBB) during three internal debriefing sessions.

29. The evaluation used a theory-based approach, relying on a reconstructed theory of change of the CSP to assess the likelihood of WFP contribution to strategic outcomes in Myanmar, by considering mechanisms of change and validity of assumptions.

30. Data collection and analysis at the subnational level were structured around five case studies, which focused on specific aspects of the WFP response and allowed an analysis of the evidence for specific evaluation questions within different geographical contexts. Field work for the five case studies⁵⁴ was conducted by national consultants, and relied on diverse data collection tools, for example, satellite imagery, focus group discussions (FGDs), and a phone survey. The evaluation team collaborated with the WFP country office to achieve the most optimal access to information.

31. The complete methodology, data collection methods and evaluation matrix can be found in Annexes 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.9, respectively. The main data collection methods and the six modules of the evaluation matrix, including the key evaluation questions, are summarized below:

- **Primary data collection** by the evaluation included: i) semi-structured interviews (250+ were conducted); ii) observation of activities in the case study areas, structured group interviews and one focus group discussion; iii) an independent mobile phone-based survey with 380 beneficiaries of the WFP-supported stunting prevention programme in two townships of peri-urban Yangon (see Annex 1.4); iv) use of satellite imagery in close collaboration with the WFP Asset Impact Monitoring System (AIMS) service to inform the effectiveness analysis of Activity 4 in asset creation activities in Pakokku (see Annex 1.5).
- **Secondary data collection** included WFP and cooperating partner (CP) reports and information databases, a country office-managed post-distribution monitoring (PDM) survey covering 1,500 beneficiaries, in which the evaluation inserted ten additional questions, as well as additional country office and development partners' (United Nations and non-governmental organization (NGO)) data, which were obtained with the support of the Office of Evaluation (OEV) and in collaboration with the country offices' research, assessment and monitoring (RAM) team.

⁵⁴ The case studies were applied at sub-office level to Sittwe, Myitkyina, Pang Kham, Pakokku and Peri-Urban Yangon.

Table 3: Evaluation modules and questions

Evaluation Modules	Evaluation questions
<p>Module 1 – WFP strategic positioning in relation to evolving needs (<i>Appropriateness, understanding of local context, internal coherence</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How credible is evidence from assessments, research, monitoring, audits, and evaluation and how is it used by WFP to inform its strategy and interventions? • How well did WFP adapt its assistance to the changing context and needs including the Covid-19 pandemic since mid-2020 and the military take-over in February 2021? • To what extent have the CSP and consecutive budget revisions remained internally coherent and based on a credible theory of change and clear key assumptions? • How well did WFP target and tailor its assistance to address the needs of the most food insecure and vulnerable population groups?
<p>Module 2 – WFP’s effectiveness in achieving CSP objectives (<i>Effectiveness, coverage, gender equality</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did WFP deliver activities, outputs and strategic outcomes foreseen in its CSP and subsequent budget revisions? • What was the depth and breadth of coverage of assistance compared to needs and to the overall humanitarian response? • How well prepared was WFP at different levels to respond to the consecutive crises in Myanmar? • To what extent are objectives on gender equality and empowerment of women mainstreamed and achieved in WFP assistance?
<p>Module 3 – Connectedness of WFP assistance (<i>Connectedness, participation of primary stakeholders, localization, environment</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is WFP assistance in Myanmar tapping into local capacities and community-driven? How does WFP envision transition and exit, tailored to local capacities and context? • What strategic linkages did WFP manage to establish along the triple nexus between humanitarian action, development, and contributions to peace? • How well does WFP take into consideration environmental and social sustainability and the environmental footprint of its interventions?
<p>Module 4 – WFP partnerships and coordination with the wider humanitarian sector (<i>Coherence, coordination</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is WFP assistance coherent and aligned with the wider UN and humanitarian sector? • How has WFP developed appropriate and effective partnerships, including for joint implementation or collective operational action within the humanitarian response?
<p>Module 5 – Humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations (<i>Coherence, protection</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what way does WFP adhere to humanitarian principles and “Do No Harm” in all phases of its assistance? How does WFP manage the trade-offs between humanitarian principles? • What are the main protection challenges faced by WFP target populations groups and personnel, and how well does WFP manage these challenges? • How does WFP ensure accountability to affected populations?
<p>Module 6 – Efficiency (<i>Efficiency</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what level has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, timely, predictable, and flexible resources to finance its evolving assistance in Myanmar? • To what extent are WFP activities and outputs delivered within the intended timeframe? What are the factors that explain the timeliness of the initial WFP emergency response and following assistance? • In how far are WFP’s activities cost-efficient in delivery of its assistance? What are the factors that explain the cost-efficiency of WFP assistance? • How adequate was corporate support from headquarters and the regional bureau during the consecutive crises? • How well does WFP identify and manage risks to operations?

Source: CEE ToR with adjustments from the evaluation team.

32. One country visit allowed the evaluation team leader to support the national consultants in data collection and present preliminary findings to the country office. Two members of the Office of Evaluation joined the country visit and assisted with data collection from internal WFP systems. The evaluation could access all the necessary information to provide answers to the evaluation questions as per the terms of reference.

33. The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards⁵⁵ and WFP ethical guidelines in particular with respect to independence of judgement, transparency, impartiality, honesty and integrity, accountability, the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and communities, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, and the avoidance of risks, harm to, and burdens on those participating in the evaluation. The evaluators were also sensitive to religious beliefs and practices, gender roles, disability, ethnicity, manners, culture and local customs, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and marginalized groups). Concrete ethical measures and safeguards are presented in Annex 1.2.2.

⁵⁵ UNEG. 2020. *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*. Available at <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>.

34. One of the main limitations of the evaluation was the very tight timeline designed to feed preliminary findings into the ICSP design process through a modular process. There were, on the other hand, difficulties in obtaining approval for the two field missions initially planned. This ultimately led to the cancellation of the first in-country mission; the data collection was done through remote interviews while the field work was done by the national consultants allocating one week per case study. This limited primary data collection on the interaction between WFP and cooperating partners with affected populations. Another limitation has been the sensitivity of information, which required particular care in the presentation of findings.⁵⁶ The country office has been very collaborative, provided full access to information to the evaluation team and actively participated in discussions and reflections with the evaluation team all along the process.

⁵⁶ Due to the complex operating environment in Myanmar and the scale and breadth of WFP interventions, not all individual activities are individually reported upon in the evaluation.

2. Evaluation findings

2.1. WFP STRATEGIC POSITIONING IN RELATION TO EVOLVING NEEDS

EQ 1.1: To what extent is evidence from assessments, research, monitoring, audits and evaluation credible, and how is it used by WFP to inform its strategy and interventions?

Understanding of the context and the needs of the affected population

Summary (1.1a): WFP uses a wide range of means to collect information on population needs and the extent to which they are being covered. While it faces difficulties of access and recognizes that estimates understate national needs, its information is highly appreciated by partners in Myanmar, including United Nations agencies, development partners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The credibility of WFP information is attributable, in particular, to its decentralized sub-office structure and network of cooperating partners, including community-based organizations (CBOs).

35. WFP Myanmar uses a wide range of information sources to understand population needs, to which it contributes, building on its network of sub-offices,⁵⁷ cooperating partners, including community-based organizations, face-to-face or mobile telephone surveys, and public feedback tools, particularly the community engagement mechanism (CEM).⁵⁸ See Table 4.

Table 4: Information sources accessible to WFP

Type of assessment	Frequency	Commissioner	Distribution
Food security and livelihoods assessments	3 times a year	FAO and WFP country office	Public
Post-distribution monitoring (PDM)	3 times a year	Research, assessment and monitoring (RAM) team	Programme and sub-offices
Market price monitoring	Monthly	Sub-offices	Public
Distribution activity reports	Based on delivery	Sub-offices	Programme and sub-offices
Accountability to affected populations (AAP) reports	Monthly and annual analysis	Protection, gender and AAP (PGAAP) team	Senior management and country office
Decentralized evaluations, reviews	Ad hoc	Country office, OEV	Public
Operational studies	Ad hoc	Country office, RBB, RAM team	Targeted based on type

Source: Evaluation team.

36. Of special importance are quantitative data collected through market surveys (Market Functionality Index) and the food security and livelihoods assessments conducted jointly with FAO. Information specific to the results of WFP assistance for its beneficiaries is collected through distribution activity reports and post-distribution monitoring. WFP also carries out process monitoring through direct observation. These ad hoc reports are combined with cooperating partner distribution reports to identify the number of beneficiaries reached, as well as commodities and cash distributed.

37. The credibility of the information that WFP collects is constrained by the difficulties that international organizations face in accessing populations in need in Myanmar. Information is collected both formally and informally and shared across the country office. This is encouraged by an internal culture of open information exchange. The RAM team is able to use technical support and resources across the country office (for example the presence of frequently contracted external enumerators working with sub-

⁵⁷ There are ten area offices and field offices or subordinated operations: Hpa-an area office, Lashio area office, Pakokku area office, Myitkyina field office, Sittwe field office, Maungdaw field office, Pang Kham operation, Taunggyi operation, Loikaw operation and the Yangon peri-urban operation. The evaluation will use the term sub-office to include them all.

⁵⁸ This is the WFP community feedback mechanism in Myanmar.

offices) and within RBB. However, extrapolating existing information to the country as a whole understates affected populations' needs and affects estimates of coverage.

38. Collecting primary nutrition data is significantly more difficult than collecting food security data, since anthropometrics cannot be collected remotely and require high-frequency monitoring (twice a year being good practice in WFP). Therefore, there is a reliance on outdated anthropometric data.⁵⁹

39. Nonetheless, donors and international organizations appreciate WFP data, in particular due to its wide geographic scope. WFP data are seen as providing a more comprehensive overview of the needs of people affected by the crisis than other United Nations entities and NGOs, as further reflected in the section on partnerships.

Use of the data available.

Summary (1.1b): In a country where different humanitarian actors concentrate on different areas and there are access and timeliness issues, WFP relies on its own data collection and analysis systems. The multi-dimensional nature of information requirements – from household (sometimes even individual) level to supply chain and inter-agency coordination – makes streamlined information management a challenge. WFP thus uses multiple software systems but is trying to integrate them into a management dashboard approach.

40. At individual and household levels, information on food availability, distribution and consumption is consolidated in the country office by the RAM team and the programmes team, and shared widely across all country office units. This is transmitted to the operations support and partnerships team, who also use their own digital systems to deal respectively with data on supply chain and access and information on other United Nations agency activities and donor priorities. Internal data sharing has sometimes been delayed, with, for example, sub-offices waiting months to receive field assessment results due to long data analysis times.

41. The country office is considering the creation of dashboards to overcome the fact that all types of data are filed into separate software systems and applications (COMET,⁶⁰ WINGS,⁶¹ SCOPE⁶² mostly; preliminary analysis is via Excel spreadsheets). The aim is to monitor operations and programmes in an interlinked frame, possibly using the DOTS platform.⁶³ This will facilitate systematic data utilization by the country office senior team for oversight and assist with coordinated decision making between units in programme, operations and partnerships.

42. Significant examples of data use leading to programming shifts include the expansion of assistance across the country in 2020 following the generalization of food insecurity due to COVID-19, the development of the peri-urban intervention in 2021 and shifts in CBT modalities that reflect the assessed needs of the beneficiary population.

⁵⁹ Since the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2015-2016 and Myanmar Micronutrient and Food Consumption Survey (MMFCS) 2017-2018 were published by the Government, there have been no reliable nutrition assessments conducted in Myanmar.

⁶⁰ The Country Office Tool for Managing (programme operations) Effectively (COMET is the adopted acronym) is the principle programme design, monitoring and reporting application of WFP.

⁶¹ The WFP Information Network and Global System (WINGS) is the interface to SAP (enterprise resource management software) used to manage the many facets of WFP operations, including programme/project planning and implementation, procurement, supply chain, finance, travel and human resources.

⁶² SCOPE is the WFP beneficiary and transfer management platform that supports the WFP programme intervention cycle but it is used to a limited extent in Myanmar due to privacy concerns.

⁶³ A data pooling system based on the Palantir Foundry.

EQ 1.2: How well did WFP adapt its assistance to the changing context and needs including the COVID-19 pandemic since mid-2020 and the military takeover in February 2021?

Adjustments in the CSP to respond to the main shifts

Summary (1.2a): By making appropriate budget revisions following the main shocks faced by the country, WFP was able to respond to changing conditions in Myanmar. COVID-19 led WFP to expand its services to humanitarian actors and to make multiple shifts in methods and modalities. With the military takeover, WFP focused on its role as a provider of emergency relief while working to maintain gains toward the 'changing lives' agenda, even although its work to strengthen the capacity of government institutions was paused.

43. Over the CSP period, nine budget revisions were required (of which six were considered fundamental)⁶⁴ to respond to shocks to the food security and nutrition of the population. These were BR03 and BR04 (July and November 2018 for Rakhine), BR05 (July 2020 for the COVID-19 pandemic) and budget revisions 6 to 8 (April-November 2021, for the combined effects of COVID-19 and the military takeover). BR09 came in response to the increasing number of internally displaced persons due to conflict, compounded by a significant increase in food and fuel prices resulting from the aftermaths of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The WFP response has been continuously fine-tuned and adapted.

44. BR05 (July 2020) marked the adjustment to COVID-19. The country office changed the profile of its programming to expand life-saving measures and reduce some asset creation activities (which also had to be scaled back because of social distancing measures). The main response was still for internally displaced persons, most of which were in central and northern Rakhine. Assistance to quarantine and treatment centres (including those for the wave of returning migrants) was significant. Given difficulties imposed by lockdown conditions, sometimes two to three months of food distribution were combined into one.

45. With BR07, WFP increased the number of planned beneficiaries under Activity 1 from approximately 0.575 to 2.77 million, mainly to include vulnerable people living in peri-urban areas affected by poverty, COVID-19 and the economic crisis. The ambition of WFP to strategically evolve from emergency humanitarian assistance to longer-term development-oriented work was interrupted by the cumulative (COVID-19, then the military takeover) shocks and by the loss of the Government as a key partner under the United Nations guidelines on engagement with the de facto authorities.⁶⁵

46. With cooperation with the Government on social protection paused, WFP is working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) on an interim social protection strategy, reflecting longer-term WFP plans to scale down humanitarian assistance and effect a transition to a social assistance approach to be supported with development financing. However, the absence of a national partner for engagement (as per the WFP Social Protection Strategy) raises fundamental feasibility issues.

47. Currently, the National Social Protection Strategy has been drastically de-prioritized; of eight public programmes foreseen, only the maternal and child cash transfer (MCCT) programme and social pensions remain functional, while facing a number of challenges including limited outreach and budget cuts. The inter-agency interim strategy is to directly implement activities that are in line with the National Social Protection Strategic Plan. WFP has managed to continue a limited amount of school feeding and stunting prevention activities with the acquiescence of local civil authorities. The precise design of, and institutional engagement with, social assistance outside public agencies, and the donors ready to engage with the proposed social assistance approach, remain unclear.

⁶⁴ Fundamental BRs encompass changes relating to a shift in the WFP role or strategic focus in a country and are defined as an addition and/or deletion of one or more WFP SOs in the CSP. This type of BR requires a revision of the CSP logframe.

⁶⁵ UNCT. 2022. *Programmatic Engagement Guidelines*. Version one plus (final draft as of February 2022).

Adequacy of mechanisms to adapt WFP assistance to the context.

Summary (1.2b): The WFP decision structure allowed it to make timely operational adjustments. Major examples were the adaptation of programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic and the expansion from relief programmes concentrated in the northwest to a broader geographic orientation, including peri-urban Yangon.

48. From 2020, the country office shifted from a focus on capacity development and operations mainly in the northwest of the country, to humanitarian assistance with a progressively broader geographic and population category coverage in 2021 and 2022, including new states and population groups such as peri-urban populations in Yangon.

49. COVID-19, in addition to posing problems of scale (an entire country effectively shutting down, leading to the mass disruption or destruction of livelihoods), forced a fundamental change in methods. The immediate response of WFP was to adapt the programme by mandating social distancing measures, remote work practices, masks, hand hygiene, etc. When borders closed and the country locked down, WFP mobilized its logistical capacity to serve the entire humanitarian and development partner community. WFP operated the Humanitarian Air Service flights, which became the only way in and out of the country. WFP enabled UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) to distribute personal protection equipment (PPE). WFP was instrumental in setting up a COVID-19 hotline and a physician network for United Nations staff, as well as arranging with hospitals to admit United Nations staff. WFP efforts played an essential role in keeping the United Nations and other humanitarian and development partners functional during the crisis, as confirmed in multiple interviews with United Nations staff.

50. WFP provided food to quarantine centres. When schools were closed, WFP maintained the distribution of takeaway snacks and cash transfers through monthly take-home rations through school teachers where possible. In-person food distribution was replaced with e-cash transfers and monitoring switched from in-person to remote. WFP staff interviews indicate that the COVID-19 response was largely country office and RBB-led, in keeping with the decentralized structure of WFP. Government management of the COVID-19 crisis was constrained by endemic challenges in Myanmar's health system, such as a critical shortages of health commodities, understaffed and under-resourced health facilities and severe pressure on health workers.⁶⁶ WFP attempted, as much as possible, to work through existing government health and social protection systems, a move in line with the WFP corporate social protection strategy. With expanding population needs, government interest in social protection grew.⁶⁷

51. Post-military takeover, WFP operates within the United Nations principles of engagement with the de facto authorities. This is rendered particularly difficult by the range of actors exercising power and control in different parts of the country. WFP maintains various points of contact with multiple actors to allow it to fulfil its humanitarian mission, in particular for access.

52. To respond to a looming humanitarian crisis in Yangon, WFP rapidly rolled out a peri-urban food assistance programme, reaching 1.7 million people in 2021 (see EQ2.1).

53. The fact that WFP was able to respond flexibly and quickly to exogenous shocks in an unstable environment speaks well for its decentralized decision structure (see EQ6). WFP strategic positioning adjustments over the CSP period have allowed it to strengthen its core advantage as a deliverer of humanitarian assistance. At an operational level, WFP performed well, as discussed under efficiency (EQ 6).

⁶⁶ WHO. April 2023. *Ensuring Health for All in Myanmar: The Need for Urgent Action*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/myanmar/news/detail/07-04-2023-ensuring-health-for-all-in-myanmar--the-need-for-urgent-action>.

⁶⁷Source: World Bank interview.

EQ 1.3: To what extent have the CSP and consecutive budget revisions remained internally coherent and based on a credible theory of change and clear key assumptions while remaining consistent with WFP corporate policies, strategies and guidance?

Evolution of the theory of change of the CSP

Summary (1.3a): The original CSP was sufficiently general and aligned with WFP corporate strategy that it was able to accommodate flexible adjustments as the situation changed.

54. Although there was no theory of change for the CSP at the time of its design,⁶⁸ the general, underlying assumption was that conditions were in place for an evolution from emergency response to longer-term development support as described in the CSP and the mid-term review. The CSP goal was to strengthen government systems through technical assistance and capacity building, making the transition from relief to development and stable livelihoods, and eventually handing over operations to state-driven development. Within the CSP, WFP had foreseen a transition from food security to a more nutrition-based approach, balancing cash-based as opposed to in-kind support.

55. The CSP logical framework contains assumptions that were valid at the time. The emergence of new constraints has in part invalidated some assumptions and generated new ones (such as security conditions and price stability, respectively). Resulting challenges are largely being managed. Table 5 summarizes the situation:

Table 5: Assumptions listed in CSP (2018-2022)⁶⁹

Assumption Originally Listed in the CSP	Realized	Addressed by WFP although not eliminated	Evidence in the evaluation report
Security conditions remain stable and access to crisis-affected populations is granted in a timely manner.	No	Yes	Discussed in the context section and across the report as the principal constraining factor
CPs are able to implement and coordinate with WFP in an effective way.	Yes	Yes	EQ1.1, EQ1.3, EQ3.3, EQ5.3 and EQ6.4
Commodity supply is stable, food prices are stable.	No	Yes	EQ1.2, EQ2.3, EQ6.2.
Local food purchases by WFP are possible.	Yes	Yes	EQ2.4, EQ3.2, EQ6.2 and EQ6.3.
CPs are able to implement gender, protection and nutrition-sensitive programming in line with WFP's expectations.	Unclear	Yes	EQ2.4,
Beneficiary groups, including in culturally conservative contexts, are willing to address gender disparities and protection risks and support social inclusion objectives.	Unclear	Unclear	EQ2.4, EQ3.3, EQ5.2, EQ6.4.
Surveys can be conducted, and information is available and disaggregated.	No	Partially	EQ1.1, EQ1.4 and EQ5.3

Source: WFP. 2018-2022. Myanmar CSP (2018-2022) and evaluation team analysis.

56. In line with general donor optimism at the time, the CSP did not acknowledge political stability as a critical assumption. While the military takeover could not have been predicted, the political situation remained volatile in a context of continued military influence in politics, high levels of corruption, persistent capacity problems in political parties, weak channels of political representation⁷⁰ and “continued ethnic conflict and unrest”, including the “events in Rakhine state on and following 25 August 2017”.⁷¹ Also well

⁶⁸ Activity-level theories of change were developed by the country office in 2019.

⁶⁹ An assumption is addressed when it is recognized through specific programming and operational decisions. It does not mean that it is eliminated from the underlying programming framework.

⁷⁰ Vakulchuk et al. 2018. *Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis*. Available at: [Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis \(researchgate.net\)](https://researchgate.net).

⁷¹ WFP. 2017. Myanmar Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022).

known, and also not made explicit in the CSP, was the low capacity of the public administration after years of isolation and authoritarian governance.

Alignment of programme implementation with the logic of intervention

Summary (1.3b): Implementation has aligned well with the original logic of the CSP and subsequent budget revisions.

57. The most important finding is that the nature of the planning process did not obstruct adaptive implementation. There has been constantly adjusted, needs-based, annually planned target-setting for delivery, backed up by budget revisions and consideration of evolving estimates of beneficiary needs (relying, in particular, on the periodic joint FAO-WFP food security and livelihoods survey data,⁷² but also broader data as described above). As confirmed during interviews, adaptations to implementation often already started before final approval of the budget revisions to avoid undue delays.

58. The budget revisions are structured by activity and fully justified in the corresponding rationale. Apart from abandoning capacity strengthening and adding a service provision SO4 to reflect United Nations partners' urgent need for support, the basic structure of the original CSP remained in place.

Alignment of the CSP and emergency response with WFP corporate strategies, policy and guidance

Summary (1.3c): The CSP fully aligns with the corporate strategic plan and specific policies (gender, nutrition, social protection, peacebuilding, and basic commitments to humanitarian principles including protection).

59. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and corresponding Revised Corporate Results Framework had five strategic objectives: (a) end hunger by protecting access to food; (b) improve nutrition; (c) achieve food security; (d) support Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation; and (e) partner for SDG results.⁷³ The WFP Myanmar CSP (2018-2022), was fully aligned with the corporate strategic plan; its original three strategic objectives corresponding to (a), (b) and (c) above and with a fourth strategic objective on supporting partner agencies added in the context of COVID-19. Its indicators reflect a large proportion of those in the WFP Corporate Results Framework (2017-2021).

60. The WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021) specified that CSPs at the country level should be "context-specific and adaptable, to facilitate appropriate responses to changes in the operating environment; promote links between humanitarian and development assistance; and enable effective resilience-building by ensuring that crisis response supports recovery". The CSP in Myanmar has been well aligned with each of these characteristics. A common characteristic of all CSPs is that no objective or modality is considered mandatory, and reprogramming is always possible through the budget revision process. The Myanmar CSP covered all the bases (emergency response, resilience building and country capacity strengthening) with even an optional strategic outcome related to service provision to partners, which could be (and was) activated in case of a large, unexpected emergency. This way, even after several radical shifts in emphasis were required to the initial needs-based plan, the overall CSP framework could remain relevant. The budget revision process allowed WFP to make the required shifts in priority and plans in response to evolving needs in the country, and there was no need for a restructuring of the overall CSP framework.

⁷² For example, see: i) FAO/WFP. July 2022. *Agricultural livelihoods and food security in the context of COVID-19*, Monitoring report; or ii) WFP/FAO. May 2021. DIEM – Data in Emergencies, Monitoring brief, round 3, Results and recommendations.

⁷³ The corresponding strategic results were: (a) everyone has access to food (SDG Target 2.1); (b) no one suffers from malnutrition (SDG Target 2.2); (c) smallholders have improved food security and nutrition through improved productivity and incomes (SDG Target 2.3) and food systems are sustainable (SDG Target 2.4); (d) developing countries have strengthened capacity to implement the SDGs (SDG Target 17.9) and policies to support sustainable development are coherent (SDG Target 17.14); and (e) developing countries access a range of financial resources for development investment (SDG Target 17.3) and sharing of knowledge, expertise and technology strengthen global partnership support to country efforts to achieve the SDGs (SDG Target 17.16).

61. WFP Myanmar aligns with the most important corporate policies relevant to the country, such as gender⁷⁴ and nutrition,⁷⁵ and the recent social protection strategy⁷⁶ with its emphasis on building resilience to reduce the scale of recurrent humanitarian needs (discussed in the effectiveness section, EQ 2). The CSP and country office have demonstrated a strong understanding of humanitarian principles (see section on principles, EQ 5). The policy on protection and accountability to affected populations emphasizes a continual effort to identify entry points for “better mainstreaming of accountability and inclusion efforts in WFP programmes, and a clear understanding of how the WFP accountability to affected populations (AAP) framework could be operationalized”.⁷⁷ The country office has carefully pursued this, leading to a well-developed system of guidelines and reporting in a highly sensitive environment.

62. The WFP peacebuilding policy⁷⁸ encourages WFP towards conflict-sensitive operations and local-level peacebuilding, while national-level peace is seen as an area to be entered into with United Nations mandates and with other partners. As a United Nations agency, WFP acted along with the whole UNCT under the United Nations principles of engagement with the de facto authorities. Yet, the policy was written in 2013, when stabilization and peacekeeping operations were dominating, a situation which is quite different from the current complex situation in Myanmar. Interviewees consider that the updated WFP guidance published in 2021 is based on general good practice but remains rather formulaic. The evaluation’s review of these documents⁷⁹ indicates that they propose consultations of a confidential and internal nature, which are not feasible in Myanmar. There is little guidance on operating in environments where a mosaic of polarized domestic actors – the de facto authorities, armed groups and their political wings, and groups associated with transnational organized crime – confront each other in a fraught international context.

EQ 1.4: How well did WFP target and tailor its assistance to address the needs of the most food-insecure and vulnerable population groups?

Identification of the needs of the most vulnerable

Summary (1.4a): Geographic targeting has adjusted flexibly to meet the expanding crisis. Tracking internally displaced persons, a priority target group, is difficult, but WFP was able to rely on its network of cooperating partners and community-based organizations for information. Targeting of individuals and households was primarily status-based.

63. Targeting proceeds in two stages. The first level of targeting is geographic, largely based on the WFP-FAO food security and vulnerability surveys, supplemented by direct observation and information gathered by sub-offices and cooperating partners. Thereupon, within villages or township wards, targeting is either status-based or vulnerability-based. The weakness of nutrition data as a tool for targeting (EQ1.1) means that geographic targeting of activities against malnutrition has not been adjusted since 2020.

64. Most distributions are either blanket distributions in villages or wards, or targeted distributions to households and individuals with a particular status (internally displaced persons, host populations, schoolchildren, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls (PBWGs), children under 5, persons with HIV/AIDS and/or tuberculosis, etc.). The largest targeted population group are residents. In turn, internally displaced persons have represented from 10 to 23 percent of total beneficiaries, and their sometimes wide and diffuse movements have been difficult to monitor. Returns have been slower than foreseen at the time the CSP was drafted: returnees were only assisted in 2018 and 2019 and represented less than 1 percent of total beneficiaries. Targeting internally displaced persons poses specific problems. If a distribution is delayed due to security reasons, the distribution is not rescheduled, because the targeted internally

⁷⁴ See: WFP. 2022 *Gender Policy*. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-gender-policy-2022>.

⁷⁵ The nutrition policy weaves nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches to address both the immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition across the three SOs. See: WFP. 2017. *Nutrition Policy*. Available at: https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000037221.

⁷⁶ WFP. 2021. *Protection and Accountability Policy*.

⁷⁷ WFP. 2020. *Protection and Accountability Policy*.

⁷⁸ “WFP’s Role In Peacebuilding In Transition Settings” (WFP/EB.2/2013/4-A/Rev.1).

⁷⁹ i) WFP. 2020. *Minimum Standards for Conflict Sensitive Programming*. ii) WFP. 2021. *Conflict Analysis and Conflict Sensitivity Risk Assessment Guidance Note*.

displaced persons may have moved on – and thus fallen through the net when assistance was most needed.

65. Cooperating partners provide support with geographical targeting, especially within townships to select the villages for distribution. Household or individual targeting is done by the cooperating partners with the support of public services and community representatives. PBWG, children and persons with HIV/AIDS and/or tuberculosis (TB) can be identified by standard means, which would largely involve the public health system, but which has weakened under the stress of COVID-19 and post-military takeover. Stigma and unawareness of their infection poses challenges to the identification of HIV/AIDS populations and, probably less so, TB sufferers. There are specific difficulties in identifying persons with disabilities, a significant group in conflict affected areas, who may be isolated at home, or reluctant to self-identify because they were injured in a conflict.

66. Vulnerability-based targeting was used in peri-urban areas and for protracted relief beneficiaries in Kachin and northern Shan. Households were prioritized with the help of community representatives according to indicators of economic stress (rising indebtedness, decline in the number of income earners, high ratio of dependents to income earners), as well as more traditional vulnerability indicators (poor housing, households headed by women, and low education of household head). In peri-urban Yangon, targeting of emergency in-kind assistance had to be coordinated with ward authorities but targeting of nutrition activities was done independently by cooperating partners.

67. In peri-urban Yangon, the evaluation-commissioned beneficiary phone survey in selected townships showed that stunting prevention through cash transfers has aided a relatively vulnerable beneficiary population that has been exposed to multiple shocks since 2020. While the survey data did not provide evidence of a special gender- (for example, single mothers or mothers with heavy care duties) and disability-related vulnerability focus on beneficiary selection, it showed that beneficiaries of cash transfers for stunting prevention were vulnerable in many other dimensions, including food security, income, socioeconomic shocks, and limited other social assistance.

68. Asset creation under Activity 4 contains a large self-targeting component, as communities are involved in the identification of projects through a community-based participatory planning exercise, following which individuals and households deemed eligible for assistance decide themselves whether they wish to exchange their labour for cash or in-kind food assistance.

Delivery modalities

Summary (1.4b): Delivery modalities (in-kind, cash-in-envelopes, E-cash, rice-plus-cash, cash-plus-commodity voucher) have been flexibly adjusted over the CSP period to maximize coverage and efficiency while adjusting to context.

69. WFP has flexibly switched between delivery modalities, responding to the evolving situation. While in-kind assistance has always dominated, CBTs became more prominent in 2016 with cash-in-envelopes, progressively shifting to digital cash from 2017 onwards in the form of e-money (using a short message service (SMS) notification for beneficiaries to collect cash from mobile payment agents). Hybrid transfer modalities, such as rice-plus-cash, and cash-plus-commodity voucher, also apply variously to specific situations, based on resources available in that location. A more stringent application of “know your customer” rules made the roll-out of e-cash more challenging in certain areas. E-cash currently covers about 20 percent of the CBT beneficiary population.

70. Cash support is based on an inter-agency cash working group minimum expenditure basket, adjusted in terms of prices and components to reflect inflation and market situations. Due to challenges in obtaining frequent market price information, adjustments to the minimum expenditure basket have lagged behind the rapid inflation partly caused by equally rapid depreciation of the currency.

71. WFP has reflected beneficiary preferences, including where they prefer cash, which maximizes choice and agency. In peri-urban Yangon, the evaluation-commissioned beneficiary phone survey indicated that most cash was spent on food. In other settings, beneficiaries prefer in-kind because the market may be far and the trip to-and-from market may present risks. When it was noted that 50 kg rice sacks were difficult to transport, particularly for women, WFP switched to 25 kg sacks in peri-urban Yangon. For asset-creation

activities, cooperating partners used CBT feasibility assessments to assess beneficiary preferences on in-kind or cash.

2.2. WFP EFFECTIVENESS IN ACHIEVING CSP OBJECTIVES

EQ 2.1: To what extent did WFP deliver activities, outputs and strategic outcomes foreseen in its CSP and subsequent budget revisions?

SO1. Crisis-affected people in food-insecure areas meet their food and nutrition needs all year round.

Summary (2.1a): Despite operational difficulties, WFP succeeded in expanding the scale of Activity 1 while meeting its output targets. The inclusion of peri-urban Yangon added 1.7 million beneficiaries to the operation, reaching approximately 2.3 million in 2021 and 2022. Composite food consumption score (FCS) targets have largely been met though around one third of assisted households outside peri-urban Yangon remained in a borderline situation. The proportion of assisted households resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies has remained high in all areas covered by WFP assistance.

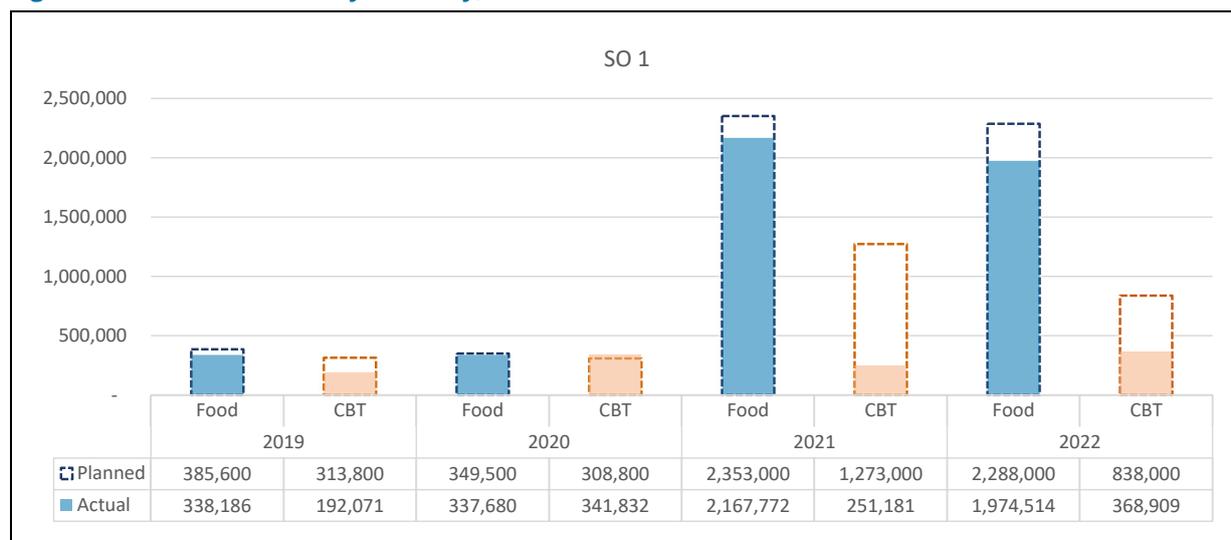
72. The 2020 COVID-19 crisis and consequences of the military takeover in February 2021 required WFP to expand its Activity 1 relief operations beyond their previous limited geographic focus. The number of beneficiaries skyrocketed in 2021 with the inclusion of peri-urban Yangon (this target group will be scaled down in 2023 due to the decision to shift peri-urban Yangon from a humanitarian emergency to a social protection approach).

73. Through Activity 1, (provide unconditional food transfers and/or CBTs to populations affected by crisis), WFP distributes food or cash to people affected by shocks and crises in order to help them meet their food and nutrition needs throughout the year. This activity was initially focused on people in food-insecure areas and, in particular, on internally displaced persons. Before COVID-19 and the military takeover, estimates of the population in need of humanitarian assistance typically were about 1 million persons, mostly internally displaced, concentrated in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states. The situation deteriorated post-military takeover and in the context of the third wave of COVID-19 to the point where, at the end of 2021, the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview's (HNO) estimated population in need leapt to over 14 million, as compared to 6 million the year before.

74. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, the number of actual WFP beneficiaries under SO1 soared in 2021, largely because the inclusion of peri-urban Yangon added 1.7 million beneficiaries.⁸⁰ The number of total (food and cash combined) actual beneficiaries increased from 674,277 in 2020 to 2,361,756 in 2021, a near-quadrupling. This followed an increase in the actual number of total beneficiaries under SO1 by 28 percent between 2019 (530,257) and 2020 (674,277), as the COVID-19 crisis required WFP to expand its relief operations well beyond their previous limited focus on Rakhine, Kachin, and northern Shan. In 2022, actual beneficiaries were 2,336,456 – close to the 2021 record.

⁸⁰ Post-military takeover (i.e., between 2020 and 2021), the number of beneficiaries receiving SO1 CBTs declined markedly (341,831 to 251,182), in part because the de facto authorities were concerned by fear of diversion, particularly in Yangon where the increment to SO1 beneficiaries was concentrated. As peri-urban Yangon support progressed, the de facto authorities adjusted their position; for example, CBTs are now accepted for targeted stunting prevention in peri-urban Yangon implemented by World Vision and Terre des Hommes.

Figure 6: SO1 Beneficiaries by modality, 2018-2022



Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. No data available in 2018.

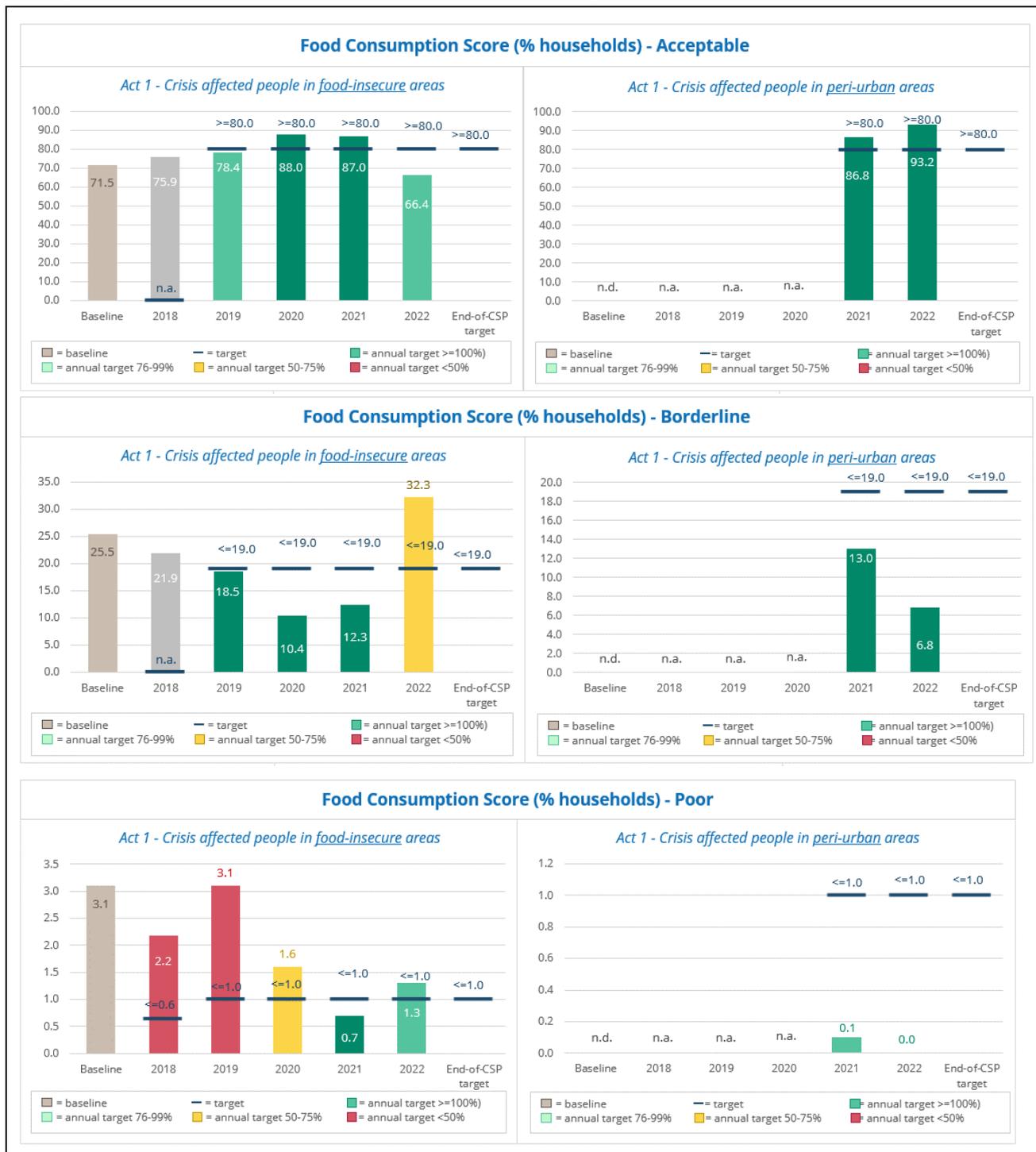
75. The rationale behind adding assistance to peri-urban populations was to avoid a humanitarian emergency. Nonetheless, the humanitarian country team (HCT) decided to not include the peri-urban Yangon response in the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) due to an assessment that the crisis was no longer acute, and considering that the Socio-Economic Resilience Response Plan is the more appropriate framework. According to BR9, the peri-urban response is being scaled down from October 2022, prioritizing 250,000 of the most vulnerable, specifically PBWGs, children under 2, and persons with disabilities or older than 85 years, with cash support.

76. Composite food consumption scores have in recent years satisfied annual targets, except the proportion of households outside peri-urban Yangon in a borderline situation in 2022 (middle left-hand panel of Figure 7), which was 32.3 percent, above the target of less than 19 percent and the 25 percent CSP baseline.

77. In peri-urban Yangon, the evaluation-commissioned phone survey indicated that over 90 percent of households benefiting from cash transfers for stunting prevention had an acceptable food consumption score, although some food groups were consumed irregularly (legumes, dairy products, proteins).⁸¹ One third of households ate fewer than three meals per day. The households in Hlaing Tharyar, but also vulnerable women or beneficiaries without other assistance, consumed different food groups less frequently and hence had a lower (although generally still acceptable) food consumption score than their respective peers. The same pattern held for the number of meals per day.

⁸¹ Many other factors influence this score when it comes to changes in the FCS in peri-urban areas, including movement restrictions, such as martial law, easing of COVID-19-related movement restrictions, variable access to markets, income earning opportunities, forced closures of informal settlements in some areas of Yangon, price fluctuations of essential food items, etc.

Figure 7: Selected outcomes SO1, 2018-2022: food consumption score



Source: 2018-2022 Myanmar ACRs. Notes: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Peri-urban areas data only available for 2021-22. Colours of the vertical bars indicate percentage of target reached.

78. As a result of the cash transfer, half of the beneficiaries increased food expenditure, and over 90 percent bought a greater variety of food (for children or other household members). In more than 60 percent of households, children ate more meals due to the cash transfer. The cash transfer was mostly spent on babies/children (food or clothes) and on food for the household, health care and education. The most vulnerable households were even more inclined to spend the cash on their children.

79. Coping strategy outcomes related to SO1 are presented in Table 6, the upper panel referring to crisis affected persons in food-insecure areas (essentially internally displaced persons) and the lower panel to persons in peri-urban areas. The multiple shocks forced many households in food-insecure areas and in

peri-urban areas to adopt crisis or emergency coping strategies in 2021 and 2022, as evidenced below. These include depleting savings, selling assets and borrowing money, increasing vulnerability to future shocks.

80. This is confirmed by the evaluation-commissioned phone survey in peri-urban Yangon, which found that COVID-19 affected almost all households through loss of labour income, but also through pandemic-related price increases in 2020/2021 (one half of households) and increased health expenditure (one third). The survey confirmed that single mothers and households headed by women, and households without other assistance, adopted these strategies more frequently than others.

Table 6: Selected outcome indicators SO1

Selected Outcomes	Base-line	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		End-CSP target
		Target	follow-up									
Crisis-affected people in food insecure areas												
Consumption-based Coping Strategy Index (Average)	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	<10	4.8	<10	5.3	<10	3.9	<10
Dietary diversity score	5.32	>4.50	5.5	>4.50	5.5	>4.5	5.78	>4.5	5.6	>4.5	4.8	>4.5
Livelihood-based Household Coping strategies (% households)												
Not using	29.1	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	<29.1	29.1	≥29.1	23.8	<29.1	14.1	≥29.1
Crisis coping strategies	21.1	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	<21.1	21.1	<21.1	18.1	<21.1	35.1	<21.1
Emergency coping strategies	2.6	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	<2.6	2.6	<2.6	4.2	<2	10.3	<2.6
Stress coping strategies	47.4	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	<47.2	47.2	<47.2	53.9	<47.2	40.4	<47.2

Selected Outcomes	Base-line	2021		2022		End-CSP target
		Target	follow-up	Target	follow-up	
Crisis-affected people in peri-urban areas						
Consumption-based Coping Strategy Index (Average)	n.d.	<10	2.64	<10	1.8	<10
Dietary diversity score	n.d.	>4.5	5.5	>4.5	5.5	>4.5
Livelihood-based Household Coping strategies (% households)						
Not using	n.d.	≥29.1	12	≥29.1	22.3	≥29.1
Crisis coping strategies	n.d.	<21.1	31.2	<21.1	24.6	<21.1
Emergency coping strategies	n.d.	<2.6	2.7	<2	5.6	<2
Stress coping strategies	n.d.	<47.2	54.1	<47.2	47.6	<47.2

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. Note: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Colour coding: Red= equal or below 50%; Orange= between 51% and 65%; Yellow= between 66% and 85%; Green= between 86% and 100%; Dark green = equal or above 100%.

SO2. Vulnerable people in states and regions with high food insecurity and/or malnutrition have access to food all year round.

Summary (2.1b): Under Activity 2, WFP has made some progress in 2020 in assisting Myanmar to develop a national social protection strategic plan and providing technical support to operationalize this flagship plan, but this was interrupted by the military takeover. Conditions are not conducive to sustaining the institutional WFP capacity strengthening contributions. Nonetheless, WFP has continued to maintain some complementary activities through its own programming and recently explored opportunities around social protection in partnership with UNICEF and UNOPS.

81. SO2, while historically underfunded, was central to the country and corporate ambition of WFP to move beyond relief to a more development-oriented strategy. WFP sought to contribute to the food security of vulnerable groups through school feeding (Activity 3), asset creation and livelihood support (Activity 4) and unconditional transfers and nutritional messaging to people living with HIV/AIDS and/or TB (Activity 5 – transitioned to Activity 9 at the end of 2019 and discussed under SO3). Activity 2 was intended

to build government capacity to deliver social protection programmes and increase emergency preparedness.

82. Prior to 2021, through its 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), WFP aimed to work with government agencies (specifically, the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare) to strengthen national capacity to implement the national social protection strategy elaborated with WFP support (amongst others), and adopted at the end of 2014. WFP also supported the Ministry of Social Welfare in establishing a social protection management information system (for example, creating beneficiary lists, establishing a stronger basis for monitoring and policy making, etc.).⁸²

83. Following the military takeover, this technical assistance and capacity building was reoriented towards development of an interim inter-agency social protection strategy and technical guidance on direct implementation of social protection activities in partnership with UNOPS and UNICEF (see also EQ 3.3). Given the observed de-prioritization of social assistance by the de facto authorities (confirmed by the peri-urban Yangon phone survey) and massive turnover in the civil service, conditions are not conducive to sustaining WFP capacity strengthening contributions.

Summary (2.1b): Prior to 2020, school feeding (Activity 3) already suffered in some areas from challenges related to protection, funding, water and sanitation and community involvement. With COVID-19 and the military takeover, the education system was severely disrupted. By adjusting delivery methods and modalities, WFP still managed to help feed a significant number of children but was generally unable to meet its targets.

84. School feeding was considered an SO2 flagship element. Under Activity 3, (implement a comprehensive school feeding programme in targeted schools in support of the national programme), WFP provided school feeding, mostly at the primary level (with some pre-primary schools), in the form of hot meals or high-energy biscuits (HEB). During school closures due to COVID-19, WFP continued its support for pre-primary and primary students through the provision of high-energy biscuits. Some school committees received cash to purchase food and prepare take-home school meals for the children, with possible resilience building via income creation in the local community.⁸³ Partnership with the Government under Activity 3 was developing well. Ministries involved included Health (nutrition messages), Education, Agriculture and Social Welfare.

85. Turning to annual trends over the crisis period, challenges were observed already in 2019, ascribed to protection concerns, funding constraints, and inadequate water and sanitation at some schools, as well as the lack of community involvement in some areas.⁸⁴ In that year, 323,099 of 420,000 planned primary schoolchildren (76.9 percent) were reached with high-energy biscuits. A total of 33,739 out of 62,800 planned primary schoolchildren (53.7 percent) received school meals funded by WFP cash assistance to schools. In 2020, the year of COVID-19, high-energy biscuits were distributed to 266,467 of 382,000 planned primary school student beneficiaries (69.8 percent) and only 13,524 of a planned 68,000 (19.9 percent) benefited from school meals via cash transfer to schools. The gap was reduced by providing students with 136,257 unplanned take-home rations. Distribution was managed by remaining teachers and parents. The number of primary school students receiving some sort of support was 92.5 percent of planned beneficiaries during the first year of the pandemic, a remarkable achievement.

86. Post-military takeover, the strategy that had been developed with the Ministry of Education and others could no longer be implemented. There was a massive reduction of teaching staff resulting from the civil disobedience movement.⁸⁵ Many parents were afraid to send their children back to school for fear of violence. In 2021, only 114,480 out of a planned 450,000 primary school students (25 percent) were reached

⁸² WFP Myanmar. 2020. *Annual Country Report*.

⁸³ Exceptionally, in 2020 during school closures due to COVID-19, WFP provided a one-off cash transfer to parents in lieu of school meals for pre-primary children. Source: WFP. 2020. *ACR*. p. 15.

⁸⁴ WFP. 2019. *ACR*, p. 11.

⁸⁵ This was widely reported phenomenon. See: i) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/13/how-myanmars-popular-uprising-aims-to-topple-the-junta>; ii) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17577438211037202>.

with on-site school feeding. In 2022, 209,525 out of 374,000 planned primary school students were fed on-site (56.0 percent) and 43,517 out of a planned 126,000 received school meals funded by WFP cash assistance to schools (34.5 percent). Taken together, this amounts to 50.6 percent of planned beneficiaries. Enrolment is now estimated by interviewees to be some 40 percent of pre-military takeover levels. According to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan, 3.7 million children out of 13 million are currently still out of formal schooling across the country. Without the school meals programme, this figure could possibly have been even higher, although there is no comparative evidence to support this claim.

Table 7: Actual versus planned beneficiaries, SO2, Activity 3

Activity 03: Implement a comprehensive school feeding programme in targeted schools in support of the government's national programme											
Modality	Detailed indicator	Sub-activity	Sex	2019		2020		2021		2022	
				Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
CBT	Children (pre-primary)	School feeding (alternative take-home rations)	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	1,423	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	1,440	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	2,863	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Students (primary schools)	School feeding (alternative take-home rations)	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	12,400	0	11,357	n.a.	n.a.
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	12,855	0	11,820	n.a.	n.a.
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	25,255	0	23,177	n.a.	n.a.
		School feeding (on-site)	Female	30,993	16,532	33,555	6,591	25,000	6,860	61,740	20,453
			Male	31,807	17,207	34,445	6,933	25,000	7,735	64,260	23,064
			Total	62,800	33,739	68,000	13,524	50,000	14,595	126,000	43,517
Food	Children (pre-primary)	School feeding (alternative take-home rations)	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	14,428	0	13,555	n.a.	n.a.
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	14,594	0	13,488	n.a.	n.a.
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	29,022	0	27,043	n.a.	n.a.
		School feeding (on-site)	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	12,130	0	3,551	0	3548
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	12,318	0	3,706	0	3693
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	24,448	0	7,257	0	7241
	Students (primary schools)	School feeding (alternative take-home rations)	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	66,902	0	77,378	n.a.	n.a.
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	69,355	0	80,535	n.a.	n.a.
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	136,257	0	157,913	n.a.	n.a.
		School feeding (on-site)	Female	207,275	158,319	188,498	129,871	225,000	56,095	183,260	104,134
			Male	212,725	164,780	193,502	136,596	225,000	58,385	190,740	105,391
			Total	420,000	323,099	382,000	266,467	450,000	114,480	374,000	209,525

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. No data available in 2018 for the selected outputs. Note 1: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Colour coding: Red= equal or below 50%; Orange= between 51% and 65%; Yellow= between 66% and 85%; Green= between 86% and 100%; Dark green = equal or above 100%. Note 2: Food includes high-energy biscuits or cooked meals. CBT is cash transferred to school committees to locally purchase ingredients for cooked meals.

Summary (2.1b): Activity 4 (asset creation) was affected by the social distancing measures under COVID-19. Beneficiary achievement rates were highest in 2021, using CBT, but lower in other years and generally lower for in-kind assistance due to food transport restrictions. It is likely that WFP contributed to improved food security for participants in the asset-creation programme. Targets for the food consumption score were achieved in 2020-2021 but not in 2022. A high proportion of beneficiary households continued to rely on emergency or crisis-level coping strategies. Longer-term follow-up is required to assess the contribution of assets created to resilience.

87. Under 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, WFP seeks to promote livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalized populations by means of conditional cash or food support for asset creation - essentially small-scale infrastructure projects such as family and community gardens, rural feeder roads, water points and irrigation infrastructure and soil and water conservation measures. The near-term goal is to provide livelihoods and immediate food needs in conflict affected areas and areas chronically food-insecure, and the longer-term goal is to promote resilience.

88. Activity 4 includes a substantial social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) component, focused on nutrition but also utilized to raise awareness regarding COVID-19. Post-military takeover, it has been possible to maintain awareness-raising through SBCC, albeit at a reduced level. Activity 4 was disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions, and the number of participants had to be limited. Armed opposition occupied some areas, increasing restrictions on food transport.

89. Donor earmarking restricted activities to the traditional areas of Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, and Shan, although the needs and opportunities were more widespread. WFP has estimated that in 2021, 86 percent of planned activities had been implemented in its asset-creation and livelihoods programme.⁸⁶ There was a 75 percent increase in the number of beneficiaries due to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and an increase in funding. A total of 140,450 persons (plus 3,452 PBWG), benefited from CBTs under Activity 4, as opposed to 97,257 (and 3,797 PBWG) in 2020.⁸⁷ At close to 90 percent of the planned 160,800, this is a significant achievement. Also in 2021, 9,335 persons benefited from in-kind food assistance, up from 5,125 in 2020, but still significantly short of the planned 18,000.

90. The year 2022 was also characterized by sub-activity shortfalls: 94,699 actual recipients of cash-based food for assets as opposed to 152,600 planned; 6,750 actual recipients of food out of 17,000 planned, and 20,290 actuals out of 28,000 planned for capacity building transfers.

Table 8: Actual versus planned beneficiaries, SO2, Activity 4

Activity 04: Provide conditional food or cash assistance in support of the creation and rehabilitation of assets, combined with nutrition messaging, to targeted populations											
Output indicator	Detailed indicator	Sub-activity	Sex	2019		2020		2021		2022	
				Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
CBT	All	Food assistance for asset	Female	63,401	30,681	63,201	40,269	64,160	50,723	76,300	50,656
			Male	95,499	47,594	95,199	56,988	96,640	89,727	76,300	44,043
			Total	158,900	78,275	158,400	97,257	160,800	140,450	152,600	94,699
	Pregnant and lactating women	General Distribution	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	3,797	0	3,452	n.a.	n.a.
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	3,797	0	3,452	n.a.	n.a.
Food	All	Food assistance for asset	Female	7,341	6,131	7,341	2,122	7,182	3,379	8,500	3,916
			Male	11,059	9,514	11,059	3,003	10,818	5,956	8,500	2,834
			Total	18,400	15,645	18,400	5,125	18,000	9,335	17,000	6,750
Capacity strengthening transfers	All	Food assistance for asset	Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	11,200	8,594	13,720	8,429
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	16,800	16,227	14,280	11,861
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	28,000	24,821	28,000	20,290

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. No data available in 2018 for the selected outputs. Note: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Colour coding: Red= equal or below 50%; Orange= between 51% and 65%; Yellow= between 66% and 85%; Green= between 86% and 100%; Dark green = equal or above 100%.

91. It is likely that WFP contributed to improved food security for those provided with cash and in-kind assistance under its asset-creation programme. As shown in Table 9, targets for the food consumption score were achieved among beneficiaries in 2020 and 2021, and close to achieved in 2022. A high proportion of beneficiary households continued to rely on emergency or crisis-level livelihood coping strategies even if the end-year target was achieved in 2022 (46.8 percent against a ceiling target of 51.8 percent).⁸⁸

92. In the Pakokku area, geospatial analysis was undertaken to observe the effects of asset creation. Of a sample of ten assets (nine terraced gardens and one irrigation canal),⁸⁹ there is evidence that positive changes in vegetation productivity were larger (since their creation) than in nearby control sites, even though some of this reflects recovery effects after land clearing to build the assets. In the absence of

⁸⁶ WFP Myanmar. 2021. *Annual Country Report*. P. 17.

⁸⁷ This is the beneficiaries under social protection cash top up to PBWG during COVID-19 of Activity 2, which has no tier 1 beneficiaries and thus the activity was registered under Activity 4.

⁸⁸ WFP ACRs 2020-2022.

⁸⁹ This is not representative of the overall population of assets created as sampling was not random as explained in Annex 1.5, Geospatial analysis of assets.

longer-term follow-up, it is difficult to say whether, overall, the assets created are having a strong contribution to resilience.

Table 9: Selected outcome indicators, SO2, Activity 4

Outcome Indicator	Base line	2018	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	End-CSP
		Target	Follow-up	Target								
<i>Activity 04: Provide conditional food or cash assistance in support of the creation and rehabilitation of assets, combined with nutrition messaging, to targeted populations</i>												
Target Group: Vulnerable people with high food insecurity/or malnutrition - Location: Myanmar - Modality: Cash, Food - Subactivity: Food assistance for asset												
Consumption-based Coping Strategy Index (Average)	6.05	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	<2.38	2.38	<2.38	1.8	<2.38	5.76	<2.38
Dietary Diversity Score (Overall)	4.89	n.a.	n.a.	>4.5	5.42			>4.5	5.9	>4.5	5.49	>4.5
Percentage of households with Acceptable Food Consumption Score	40.2	>=89	76.9	>=80	73.3	>=80	86	>=80	88.2	>=80	74.5	>=80
Proportion of population in targeted communities reporting benefits from an enhanced asset base	0	n.a.	n.a.	>=44	39	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	>=50
Livelihood-based Coping Strategy Index (% of households using emergency or crisis coping strategies)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	<51.8	46.8	n.a.

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. Note: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Colour coding: Red= equal or below 50%; Orange= between 51% and 65%; Yellow= between 66% and 85%; Green= between 86% and 100%; Dark green = equal or above 100%.

SO3. Children under 5 in Myanmar have improved nutrition in line with national targets by 2022.

Summary (2.1c): The capacity building work under SO3 (Activity 6) had to be suspended post-military takeover. WFP worked with alternative partners on development of nutritional guidelines. Beneficiary target achievement was low for prevention of stunting with specialized nutritious food (SNF) under Activity 7 and outcome target achievement was poor pointing to insufficient support to those receiving assistance. Outcome target achievement was high for children treated for moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) under Activity 8, but beneficiary target achievement was low across the years. Under Activity 9 capacity strengthening and CBTs have largely met beneficiary targets and outcomes targets have usually been met or exceeded. Earmarking towards conflict affected areas combined with insecurity and travel denials for specialized nutritious foods limited delivery of assistance.

93. Activities under SO3 are expected to improve nutrition of PBWGs, adolescent girls and children under 5 and people living with HIV/AIDS and/or TB in crisis and non-crisis settings in line with the WFP Nutrition Policy (2017–2021).⁹⁰

94. Under Activity 6, (Provide implementation support, research-based advice and technical assistance for national policies and action plans to the Government and partners), WFP provided technical assistance to the Government in implementing the Multi-Sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN), including national-level planning and coordination support, and completed a 'Fill the Nutrient Gap' analysis to assess gaps and barriers in adequate nutrient consumption in communities across the country in coordination with the National Nutrition Centre. The activity was reoriented following the military takeover. WFP provided continued support for the interim MS-NPAN and contributed to developing food-based dietary guidelines for use in school feeding, local health clinics and by community-based organizations in collaboration with UNICEF, without participation of ministerial/governmental entities. This has included the finalization of nutritional guidelines for PBWGs.

95. Activity 7, (implement preventive nutrition interventions for adolescent girls, PBWGs, and children under 2, and roll out community infant and young child feeding programmes, CBTs for mothers of young children, and SBCC), focused mainly on prevention of chronic malnutrition (observed by stunting in children) by providing PBWGs and mothers of children aged 6-23 months with CBT in Yangon peri-urban areas and specialized nutritious food (SNF) in Kachin, Magway, Nagaland and Shan, together with awareness raising on nutritious diets. Activity 8, (provide specialized nutritious foods for the treatment and management of acute malnutrition among PBWG, and children under 5), provided appropriate specialized nutritious food to children aged 6-59 months and PBWG in Magway, Rakhine, Kachin, Kayin and Yangon peri-urban areas for the prevention of acute malnutrition (observed by wasting) and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition. Activity 9 (which initially was Activity 5) was to provide unconditional food and/or cash-

⁹⁰ Activity 5 became Activity 9 under SO3 following BR4 in mid-2019 (see discussion of Activity 9 below).

based assistance combined with nutrition messaging and counselling to people living with HIV/AIDS or TB patients.

96. Table 10 presents beneficiaries reached versus those planned for activities 7, 8 and 9. Beneficiary achievement rates were low both for stunting prevention (Activity 7) and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (Activity 8) because earmarking of funding towards conflict affected areas prevented WFP from carrying out its planned expansion to non-conflict affected areas, and due to access constraints into some geographical areas earmarked by the main donor. According to interviews conducted in Pakokku, it is particularly difficult to deliver specialized foods under Activity 8 where access is constrained. Beneficiary numbers met or even exceeded targets for prevention of wasting under Activity 8, due to increased access in Rakhine and the strategic alignment of malnutrition prevention and treatment activities with the emergency relief programme, as well as the successful implementation of a one-off blanket supplementary feeding programme to 50,000 children in Yangon peri-urban areas in 2022. Under Activity 9, targeting the nutrition needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and/or TB, capacity strengthening, and cash-based measures have largely met planned targets (with significant shortfalls in CBTs to anti-retroviral therapy (ART) patients in 2020 under lockdown and less serious ones in 2021). However, there have been persistent shortfalls in in-kind food support to both ART and TB treatment clients, again mostly explained in interviews by access issues.

Table 10: Actual versus planned beneficiaries, SO3

Output indicator	Detailed indicator	Sub-activity	Sex	2019		2020		2021		2022	
				Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
<i>Activity 07: Implement preventive nutrition interventions for adolescent girls, PBWG and children under 2, including the roll-out of Community Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), maternal cash programmes, and SBCC</i>											
CBT	Children	Prevention of stunting	Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0	303	0	360
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0	294	0	398
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0	597	0	758
Food	PBWG	Prevention of stunting	Female	3,000	n.d.	3,500	2,290	4,000	673	4,000	552
			Male	7,545	2,935	7,545	7,029	7,545	6,324	8,902	4,676
			Total	15,700	5,893	15,700	14,389	15,700	12,934	15,700	9,572
Food	PBWG	Prevention of stunting	Female	9,500	4,433	9,500	8,267	9,500	7,608	9,500	5,929
			Male	8,155	2,958	8,155	7,360	8,155	6,610	6,798	4,896
			Total	15,700	5,893	15,700	14,389	15,700	12,934	15,700	9,572
<i>Activity 08: Provide specialised nutritious foods for the treatment and management of acute malnutrition of PBWG and children under 5</i>											
Food	Children	Prevention of acute malnutrition	Female	35,910	38,858	31,000	27,493	27,895	39,046	30,150	55,782
			Male	39,090	35,502	33,990	23,776	30,105	30,211	36,850	73,943
			Total	75,000	74,360	65,000	51,269	58,000	69,257	67,000	129,725
	Children	Treatment of moderate acute malnutrition	Female	16,954	7,056	16,954	5,190	21,805	8,830	21,825	8,612
			Male	17,646	6,447	17,646	4,578	22,695	6,991	26,675	11,416
			Total	34,600	13,503	34,600	9,768	44,500	15,821	48,500	20,028
	PBWG	Prevention of acute malnutrition	Female	24,500	15,991	26,700	13,926	19,700	15,619	16,700	14,636
			Male	7,000	521	7,000	969	7,000	1,888	7,000	4,797
			Total	7,000	521	7,000	969	7,000	1,888	7,000	4,797
PBWG	Treatment of moderate acute malnutrition	Female	7,000	521	7,000	969	7,000	1,888	7,000	4,797	
		Male	7,000	521	7,000	969	7,000	1,888	7,000	4,797	
		Total	7,000	521	7,000	969	7,000	1,888	7,000	4,797	
<i>Activity 09: Provide unconditional food and/or cash assistance, combined with nutrition messaging and counselling, to PLHIV and TB patients</i>											
CBT	ART clients	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	411	n.d.	795	60	1,060	781	1,060	1,085
			Male	589	n.d.	705	103	940	630	940	903
			Total	1,000	n.d.	1,500	163	2,000	1,411	2,000	1,988
	TB treatment clients	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	190	0	1,258	1,060	3,430
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	306	0	1,892	940	4,679
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	496	0	3,150	2,000	8,109
Food	ART clients	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	3,062	624	3,947	509	3,947	607	3,947	1,018
			Male	4,388	893	3,503	866	3,503	1,396	3,503	2,287
			Total	7,450	1,517	7,450	1,375	7,450	2,003	7,450	3,305
	Children	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	n.a.	n.a.	0	43	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	0	65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	0	108	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
TB treatment clients	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	5,512	2,154	7,108	2,323	6,979	2,491	7,108	2,973	
		Male	7,898	3,086	6,302	3,690	6,431	4,297	6,302	5,006	
		Total	13,410	5,240	13,410	6,013	13,410	6,788	13,410	7,979	
Capacity strengthening transfers	ART clients	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,184	1,114	5,007	5,159
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,016	1,981	4,443	3,134
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3,200	3,095	9,450	8,293
	TB treatment clients	HIV/TB Care&treatment;	Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5,145	3,661	8,168	6,260
			Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4,655	5,973	7,242	9,828
			Total	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	9,800	9,634	15,410	16,088

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. No data available in 2018 for the selected outputs. Note: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Colour coding: Red= equal or below 50%; Orange= between 51% and 65%; Yellow= between 66% and 85%; Green= between 86% and 100%; Dark green = equal or above 100%.

97. Table 11 presents selected outcome indicators for beneficiaries of activities 7, 8 and 9. Outcome target achievement was poor for malnutrition prevention activities under Activity 7 pointing to insufficient assistance to dramatically improve dietary diversity for mothers and ensure a minimum acceptable diet for young children receiving support. Outcome target achievement was highly satisfactory for children treated for moderate acute malnutrition under Activity 8. COVID-19-related treatment centre access restrictions increased treatment default rates in 2020. Based on reporting from cooperating partners, WFP country office staff estimate that approximately 28 percent of HIV/TB clients enrolled in WFP nutrition support programmes are experiencing malnutrition. Outcomes for Activity 9 (adherence to treatment regime ART, ART 12-month survival rate, nutritional recovery rates for both ART and TB patients, treatment default rates, TB treatment success rates) have all exceeded targets over the CSP period, which can be in great part

ascribed to WFP programming considering the overall nutritional situation and scarcity of other support provided to this target group.

Table 11: Selected outcome indicators, SO3

Outcome indicator	Baseline	2018	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	End-CSP
		Target	Follow-up									
Activity 07: Implement preventive nutrition interventions for adolescent girls, PBWG and children under 2, including the roll-out of Community Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), maternal cash programmes, and SBCC												
Target Group: Children under 5 and other nutritionally vulnerable groups in food insecure areas - Location: Myanmar - Modality: Food - Subactivity: Prevention of stunting												
Minimum Dietary Diversity - Women	83.7	n.d	83.7	≥84	56.5	≥84	70.5	≥84	67.5	≥84	62.7	≥84
Proportion of children 6-23 months of age who receive a minimum acceptable diet	42	>70	42	>70	58	>70	45	n.a	n.a	>50	43	>50
Activity 08: Provide specialised nutritious foods for the treatment and management of acute malnutrition of PBWG and children under 5												
Target Group: Children under 5 and other nutritionally vulnerable groups in food insecure areas - Location: Myanmar - Modality: Food - Subactivity: Treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM)												
MAM Treatment Default rate	5	<15	5	<15	14	<15	25	<15	7	<15	6.2	<15
MAM Treatment Mortality rate	0	<3	0	<3	0	<3	0	<3	0	<3	0.1	<3
MAM Treatment Non-response rate	3	<15	3	<15	6	<15	4	<15	3	<15	3.9	<15
MAM Treatment Recovery rate	92	>75	92	>75	80	>75	71	>75	90	>75	89.8	>75
Activity 09: Provide unconditional food and/or cash assistance, combined with nutrition messaging and counselling, to PLHIV and TB patients												
Target Group: Children under 5 and other nutritionally vulnerable groups in food insecure areas - Location: Myanmar - Modality: Food - Subactivity: HIV/TB Care&treatment												
ART Adherence rate	99	>80	99	>99.50	96	>99.5	96	>99.5	95	>99.5	97	>99.5
ART Default rate	5	<15	5	<15	10	<15	3	<15	12	<15	15	<15
ART Nutritional Recovery rate	87	n.a	n.a	>75	55	>75	67	>75	68	>75	68	>75
ART survival rate at 12 months	89	n.a	n.a	>89	92	>89	93	>89	90	>89	89	>89
TB Nutritional Recovery rate	84	>75	84	>75	74	>75	71	>75	73	>75	67	>75
TB Treatment Default rate	3	<15	3	<15	7	<15	3	<15	6	<15	6	<15
TB Treatment Success rate	83	>85	83	>85	82	>85	82	>85	87	>85	81	>85
Target Group: Children under 5 and other nutritionally vulnerable groups in food insecure areas - Location: Myanmar - Modality: Food - Subactivity: HIV/TB Care&treatment (only in ACRs 2018 and 2019 under Act.5)												
PLHIV Nutritional Recovery rate	70.6	>75	87	>75	n.d	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	-	>75
PLHIV survival rate at 12 months	87.7	>85	89	>85	n.d	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	-	>85

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. No data available in 2018 for the selected outputs. Note: "n.a.": not applicable. "n.d.": no data. Colour coding: Red= equal or below 50%; Orange= between 51% and 65%; Yellow= between 66% and 85%; Green= between 86% and 100%; Dark green = equal or above 100%.

SO4. Humanitarian and development partners in Myanmar have access to reliable common services.

Summary (2.1d): With the onset of COVID-19, WFP assumed unique importance because of its humanitarian flights, which effectively became the only way in or out of the country. WFP provided multiple, vital services to the United Nations and international community, which were highly appreciated by partners.

98. SO4 was introduced in July 2020 following COVID-19 to facilitate access by humanitarian and development partners in Myanmar to reliable common services through Activity 10, (provide on-demand services to humanitarian and development partners), introduced with BR05 in July 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This reflected the WFP advantage, compared to others, particularly in logistics throughout the country. Services rendered ranged from personnel and supply transport via WFP-operated flights when Myanmar was closed off from the rest of the world, to providing warehousing and storage facilities, transport services, and procurement (for example, personal protection equipment (PPE) for WHO,

school handwashing equipment for UNICEF). Agency satisfaction with WFP services (cost efficiency, reliability, etc.) was high.⁹¹

99. According to United Nations agency partners, during COVID-19, WFP support in the form of medical evacuations (ambulances to Yangon, medevac flights out of the country) was vital; in addition, the WFP twice-weekly humanitarian flights were essentially the only way in and out of the country during the border closure period. In 2021, fuel price inflation and the increased demand for warehouse space posed difficulties, as the de facto authorities restricted the movement of humanitarian supplies. Nonetheless, partner satisfaction remained high. One United Nations agency shared the view that WFP logistical support was a lifeline that allowed them to continue operating.⁹²

100. Activity 11, (provide on-demand cash transfer services on behalf of United Nations and other partners to help affected populations meet their essential needs), was introduced with BR06 in April 2021 based on the interest expressed by humanitarian and development partners to utilize WFP CBT services post-military takeover. In 2022, WFP transferred USD 1.6 million to 238,300 people on behalf of the UNOPS Livelihoods and Food Security Fund.

EQ 2.2: What was the depth and breadth of coverage of assistance compared to needs and to the overall humanitarian response?

Coverage and adequacy (breadth and depth) of assistance and humanitarian response

Summary (2.2a): Access issues as well as other operational constraints have affected coverage of people in need. Despite the highly effective decentralized structure of the country office and its valuable information sources in the form of local cooperating partners and community-based organizations, there are gaps in WFP knowledge. Under SO1 WFP has performed consistently well in reaching planned beneficiaries. In general, WFP has performed better (actual versus planned) in delivering food than cash – except for highly specialized foods to prevent and treat malnutrition, in part because of the varying state policies.

101. Table 12 presents actual versus planned beneficiaries as a percentage by strategic outcome and activity. Trends in coverage compared to plans for each activity are discussed above under EQ2.1. As also illustrated in Figure 4, food delivery for relief (SO1), the largest component of WFP support, consistently performed well in terms of reaching planned beneficiaries. Even in 2021, the year of steepest increase in need, WFP reached an estimated 89 percent of planned in-kind assistance beneficiaries under Activity 1. Delivery of in-kind assistance continued to be strong in 2022 (88 percent of planned beneficiaries).

102. After an initial boost in beneficiary achievement rates for cash transfers, with the number of cash beneficiaries exceeding the number of in-kind beneficiaries in 2020 during the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, the achievement rates strongly declined in 2021 in part because the de facto authorities were initially concerned in some localities about possible diversion. WFP revised its targets for CBT beneficiaries downwards for 2022, although managed to actually increase the absolute number of cash beneficiaries slightly above 2020 levels, despite the recent enforcement of more stringent “know your customer” rules in the banking system, which limited the expansion of e-cash.

⁹¹ See Annual Country Report 2021, p. 22, for specific examples of services and logistical support provided.

⁹² This finding is also reflected in “Evaluation of the WFP Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic” OEV/2020/062, Office of Evaluation January 2022, Centralized Evaluation Report.

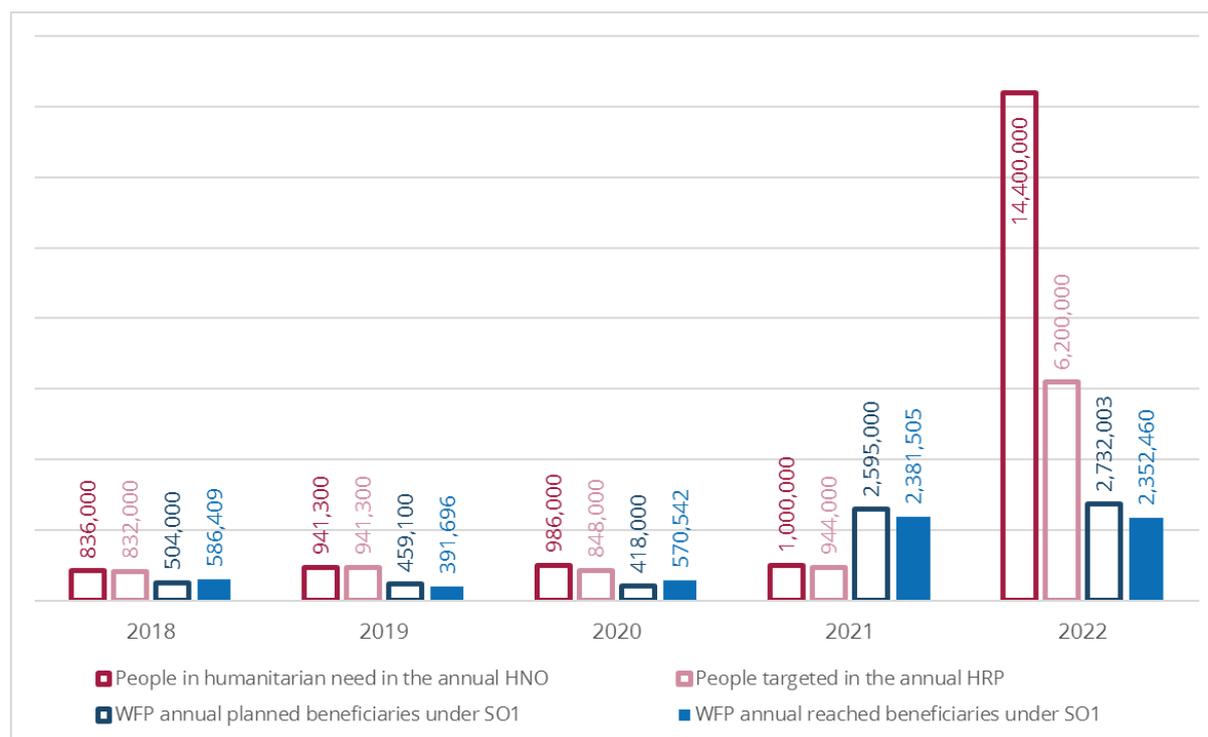
Table 12: Actual beneficiaries as a percent of planned beneficiaries (2018-2022)

SO		SO1	SO2			SO3			
Activity		Act 1	Act 3	Act 4	Act 7	Act 8		Act 9	
Modality	Sub-activity	General distribution *	School feeding*	Food assistance for asset*	Prevention of stunting	Prevention of acute malnutrition	Treatment of moderate acute malnutrition	HIV/TB Care & treatment	
2019	Food	Planned	385,600	420,000	18,400	25,200	99,500	41,600	20,860
		Actual	338,186	323,099	15,645	10,326	90,351	14,024	6,757
		% of planned	88%	77%	85%	41%	91%	34%	32%
	CBT	Planned	313,800	62,800	158,900	3,000	n.a.	n.a.	1,000
		Actual	192,071	33,739	78,275	n.d.	n.a.	n.a.	n.d.
		% of planned	61%	54%	49%				
2020	Food	Planned	349,500	382,000	18,400	25,200	91,700	41,600	20,860
		Actual	337,680	456,194	5,125	22,656	65,195	10,737	7,496
		% of planned	97%	119%	28%	90%	71%	26%	36%
	CBT	Planned	308,800	68,000	158,400	3,500	n.a.	n.a.	1,500
		Actual	341,832	41,642	101,054	2,290	n.a.	n.a.	659
		% of planned	111%	61%	64%	65%			44%
2021	Food	Planned	2,353,000	450,000	18,000	25,200	77,700	51,500	20,860
		Actual	2,167,772	306,693	9,335	22,542	84,876	17,709	8,791
		% of planned	92%	68%	52%	89%	109%	34%	42%
	CBT	Planned	1,273,000	50,000	160,800	4,000	n.a.	n.a.	2,000
		Actual	251,181	37,772	143,902	1,270	n.a.	n.a.	4,561
		% of planned	20%	76%	89%	32%			228%
2022	Food	Planned	2,288,000	374,000	17,000	25,200	83,700	55,500	20,860
		Actual	1,974,514	216,766	6,750	15,501	144,361	24,825	11,284
		% of planned	86%	58%	40%	62%	172%	45%	54%
	CBT	Planned	838,000	126,000	152,600	4,000	n.a.	n.a.	4,000
		Actual	368,909	43,517	94,699	1,310	n.a.	n.a.	10,097
		% of planned	44%	35%	62%	33%			252%

Source: 2018-2022 ACRs. No data available in 2018. Note 1: Activity 5 was active until BR04 in November 2019, when HIV/TB patients transitioned into Activity 9 under SO3.

103. Before COVID-19, the population in need of humanitarian assistance in the humanitarian needs overviews (HNOs) typically were about 1 million persons. At the end of 2021, the humanitarian needs overview-estimated population in need leapt from 6 million in 2021 to over 14 million in 2022. In the 2023 humanitarian response plan, peri-urban populations were not included in the targeted caseload (although they remain in the estimates for the population in need). Operational capacity, partner presence, and forecast funding levels will reduce the humanitarian response plan targeted population to 4.5 million. Tighter targeting is expected by the country office programme team to sharply reduce the number of WFP urban beneficiaries under BR09.

Figure 8: WFP beneficiaries against humanitarian response plan beneficiaries (2018-2022)



Source: Humanitarian Needs Overview (2017-2022); Humanitarian Response Plan (2017-2022); WFP Standard Project Report 2017; COMET CM-R020 2018-2022.

104. WFP coverage compares favourably with the humanitarian system as a whole. While beneficiary numbers must be treated with care for comparability, it is estimated by the 2023 humanitarian response plan that all organizations reached 3.9 million people at the end of 2022 (of which WFP reports to have reached around 71 percent) out of a targeted 6.2 million.⁹³ The WFP figures reflect a similar trend to that of all humanitarian agencies that reached four times more people than two years earlier. The proportion of people in need as per the humanitarian needs overview assisted by WFP slightly decreased in 2019 and 2020. The year 2021 marked a sharp contrast, with WFP targeting many more than had been identified in the humanitarian needs overview for that year, due to the introduction of the peri-urban population group.

105. As a result of the estimation problems discussed under EQ1.1, coverage is difficult to assess with full rigour. In areas with regular access, especially camps, coverage is not a major issue; humanitarian agencies interviewed state that WFP can meet needs. In areas where access is more difficult or denied, needs estimates are very approximate as identified in EQ2.1 and confirmed through multiple interviews.

106. An important component of adequacy, and quality of support, is the nutritional content of in-kind support. According to annual country reports (ACRs), the distribution of rice fortified with micronutrients increased in the first years of the CSP, reaching 55,000 beneficiaries in 2019, but declined in the latter years from around 11 percent in 2020 to 2 percent of total rice distributed in 2022. Among other factors, there are no testing facilities in-country, and some beneficiaries find it unappetising. Interviews indicate that in the case of cash transfers, the adequacy metric is food purchasing power in the market. International partners regard WFP as the most reliable source of food market price information, and the amount of CBT is adjusted regularly in line with the estimated price of a model food basket, although with some time lag due to difficulties in monitoring prices and the speed of change (see also EQ1.4).

⁹³ WFP. 2023. Humanitarian Response Plan.

EQ 2.3: How well-prepared was WFP at different levels to respond to the consecutive crises in Myanmar and how well did it respond?

Summary (2.3a): Good preparedness and early response are salient characteristics of WFP Myanmar. The country office was able to respond proactively and collaboratively with the broader humanitarian system to the COVID-19 pandemic, the military takeover and their wide-ranging consequences.

107. WFP Myanmar's analysis and programming were capable of dealing with transitions and changing assumptions (EQ1.2 and EQ1.3). EQ6.2 demonstrates the exceptional timeliness and efficient personnel management of WFP. Its wide geographical presence, distributed decision making and rapid risk management have enabled a rapid response to changing circumstances and needs.

108. These qualities are underpinned by a strong supply chain and logistical capability, and a very integrated management (in which access and risk management are dealt with directly by the country office senior leadership). In February 2020, while the full potential impact of COVID-19 was not yet fully grasped around the globe and before WHO declared a global pandemic, WFP Myanmar prepared a business continuity plan,⁹⁴ which anticipated the common services under SO4 (support supply chain service for medium/small scale emergency health support) to prepare for the potential widespread impact of a pandemic. Documentation shows that four days after the military takeover (1 February 2021),⁹⁵ a survey of cooperating partners and United Nations partners was conducted by WFP to anticipate the effects of the military takeover on operations. This led to active sharing of information on the identified risks, over and above the regular fortnightly logistics coordination meeting. More than 70 percent of participants stated at the time that there could be a significant impact on the local procurement market and incoming international shipments and further delivery from the transit warehouse to field operational areas. As stated in EQ1 and EQ6, this was then overcome thanks to the agile WFP response. An internal conflict-sensitivity risk analysis was conducted in mid-2022 looking at a number of scenarios including escalation or new conflict, and proposing possible mitigation measures. The evaluation was able to confirm in its case studies that these measures are actively implemented.

EQ 2.4: To what extent are objectives on gender equality and empowerment of women mainstreamed and achieved in WFP assistance?

Summary (2.4a): The country office has consistently aimed to implement gender-sensitive programming and parity in its human resources. WFP has sought to ensure gender parity in community committees and asset creation. Evidence suggests that the representation of women in household-level decision making is reasonably equitable, although there may be pronounced ethnic and cultural differences.

109. Gender in the country office is the concern of the protection, gender and accountability to affected populations (PGAAP) team, as is disability, some of it due to conflict-related trauma injuries. There are PGAAP focal persons in sub-offices.

110. Virtually all data collected by WFP are gender-disaggregated and have revealed the significant disadvantage of households headed by women in food security and livelihood coping strategies. The country office has consistently aimed to implement gender-sensitive programming, including taking intersectionality into account in targeting and vulnerability assessment.⁹⁶

111. The interaction effects of gender with other factors determinant of need have been considered. All activities with high gender relevance (Activities 1, 3, 4, and 7-9) received a Gender and Age Marker 4, indicating full integration of gender and age. Activities 2 and 6, both consisting of technical assistance and

⁹⁴ WFP. 2020. Draft Concept Note to support Health Emergency response 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Myanmar 15 February 2020.

⁹⁵ WFP. 2021. Survey results of potential Supply Chain challenges in Myanmar.

⁹⁶ Intersectionality refers to interaction effects; e.g., that the vulnerability of a woman who is simultaneously a head of household and a member of an ethnic or linguistic minority is greater than the linear combination of each vulnerability factor considered independently.

capacity building, were not gender-marked, but had strong gender aspects, as they concerned social protection and food systems.

112. Cooperating partners are required to consider gender (and disability) in targeting and the design of support delivery. Female headship was one of the variables used by WFP in household vulnerability assessment, and gender is also a factor included in deciding on transfer modality and distribution frequency. While less developed than in the case of gender (largely because of lack of data), disability (especially impaired mobility) and chronic medical conditions are factored into vulnerability assessments and programme design to the extent possible. There have been consultations with persons with disabilities and a concerted attempt to increase the availability of disability data. There has also been a disability top-up pilot (under SO1, targeting protracted relief beneficiaries receiving CBT support in Kachin and northern Shan) aligned with the disability cash grant of the National Social Protection Strategic Plan.

113. In its asset creation work (Activity 4), WFP enforces equal payment for men and women, and takes into consideration the fact that women who contribute may have to bear increased care costs. The Guidelines on Community Committees,⁹⁷ covering food management committees, project management committees and school meals committees all incorporate gender equality. The participation of women in asset creation has been about one third in recent years. While shares vary widely and some states such as Rakhine are far from parity, overall women’s representation in committees across all intervention areas ranges from about half in relief committees up to two thirds in asset-creation committees (See Table 6). The extent to which their voice is heard would require more investigation.

114. SBCC activities implemented in the context of asset creation heavily targeted women, as did nutrition training delivered through school-based feeding programmes (Activity 3). While understandable from an effectiveness point of view, such targeting may have the undesirable consequence of reinforcing stereotypes and traditional domestic roles. In response to rising numbers of women seeking to escape gender-based violence (GBV), WFP provided food assistance to women in shelters. Information on support for those subjected to gender-based violence was disseminated at WFP cash /food distribution points.

115. The CSP mid-term review (January 2021)⁹⁸ gives some indication of the beneficiary representation of women in decision making on the use of WFP assistance (Table 13). The peri-urban Yangon phone survey confirmed that women have a strong say in how the cash transfer is spent – more than 95 percent of the respondents decided equally, mainly, or even alone on the use of the money received.

Table 13: Household decision making on modality use, 2019

Household decision making on use of WFP food / cash / voucher support (% of households)	
Women make decisions	64
Men make decisions	22
Women and men jointly make decisions	14
Composition of decision making entity-committees, boards, teams, etc. (% members women)	
Relief	54
Asset creation	66

Source: WFP Myanmar. 2021. Country Office CSP 2018-2022 Mid Term Review, January 2021. Page 38.

116. In coordination terms, WFP has participated in the Protection Sector Working Group (with a sub-group on gender-based violence), the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Country Network, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, which covers grave child rights violations, and the Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. WFP has partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on joint research on gender equality and gender-based

⁹⁷ These were introduced as part of the CEM roll-out and are designed for use by sub-office staff and cooperating partners. These have been translated into the Myanmar language in mid-2021. The tailored implementation of the guidelines is particularly focused on central Rakhine, including for example norms stipulating that in some cases food management committees for relief assistance should not be used, given the misuse of power especially where committee members are from the local community rather than from the camp population. A revised guidance has been drafted specifically for Rakhine State to describe “community helpers” including a code of conduct.

⁹⁸ WFP Myanmar. 2021. Country Office Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022) Mid-Term Review.

violence in cash transfer programmes (in Kachin and Shan) and with UN Women on women's empowerment in central Rakhine.

117. WFP Myanmar human resources have complied with the corporate Gender Policy (2022). Internally, WFP has attempted to achieve gender parity, with a 2021 workforce structure of 44 percent women/56 percent men. In early 2023, there was roughly gender parity in international staff positions,⁹⁹ and around 60 percent of national management staff positions were held by women.¹⁰⁰ There has been a consistent increase in the proportion of women. There have been regular gender capacity building activities for staff, and WFP has a zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) on reporting and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse were introduced in 2020 with accompanying WFP staff training. Cooperating partners are expected to adhere to equally stringent standards, although monitoring of small local cooperating partners is difficult.

118. None of the data presented in Section 2.2 above, when looked at in gender-disaggregated form, reveal significant gender differences in outputs and outcomes (except in activities targeting women such as nutrition training and stunting prevention). There are examples where WFP actions, by hiring women as workers, by implementing equal pay, and by treating women as equal stakeholders, have widened women's space and achieved some degree of beneficiary empowerment, but these are limited in scope and spatial scale.

2.3. CONNECTEDNESS OF WFP ASSISTANCE

EQ 3.1: How well is WFP assistance in Myanmar tapping into local capacities and to what degree is it community driven?

Interface between WFP and affected communities

Summary (3.1a): WFP relies on a web of relations with local institutions and civil society for its access to information and programming. This takes place mainly through a sub-office to cooperating partner nexus, although on occasion it takes place through direct WFP operational involvement. This has functioned well thanks to a highly calibrated approach developed over time.

119. The interface between populations and WFP is made possible thanks to a process of engagement with cooperating partners as well as field visits by sub-office staff. However, severe limits to access restrict the direct interface with affected individuals, households and communities. As described under EQ5.3 community-level interaction remains limited and highly constrained. Difficulties in reaching communities are a recurrent theme in reporting, in particular all the annual country reports (ACRs). Security controls¹⁰¹ and COVID-19-related restrictions have created a further distancing effect.

120. Outside cooperating partners, the interface with the affected populations is ensured by camp management committees in the case of internally displaced persons settlements (Kachin and Rakhine), and community representatives. Access authorization is required for many intervention areas by central state and regional-level authorities.

121. The cooperating partners are the principle actors responsible for distribution and reporting. They are selected through annual calls for proposals based on experience, capacity and ability to operate in given areas. There are 30 cooperating partners with ongoing field-level agreements (FLAs) at the start of 2023, of which 12 are international and 18 are local NGOs.¹⁰² Their profiles span organizations skilled in distribution, monitoring or protection activities, those working in food security assessments, advocacy for food and nutrition-related issues, or local coordination of food security and health and nutrition activities.

122. The relationship with cooperating partners is close at the sub-office level, where most of the detailed programming is done, in particular by activity leads. The cooperating partners then connect with

⁹⁹ WFP. 2023. *Gender balance of International Professional Staff*. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/gender-parity>.

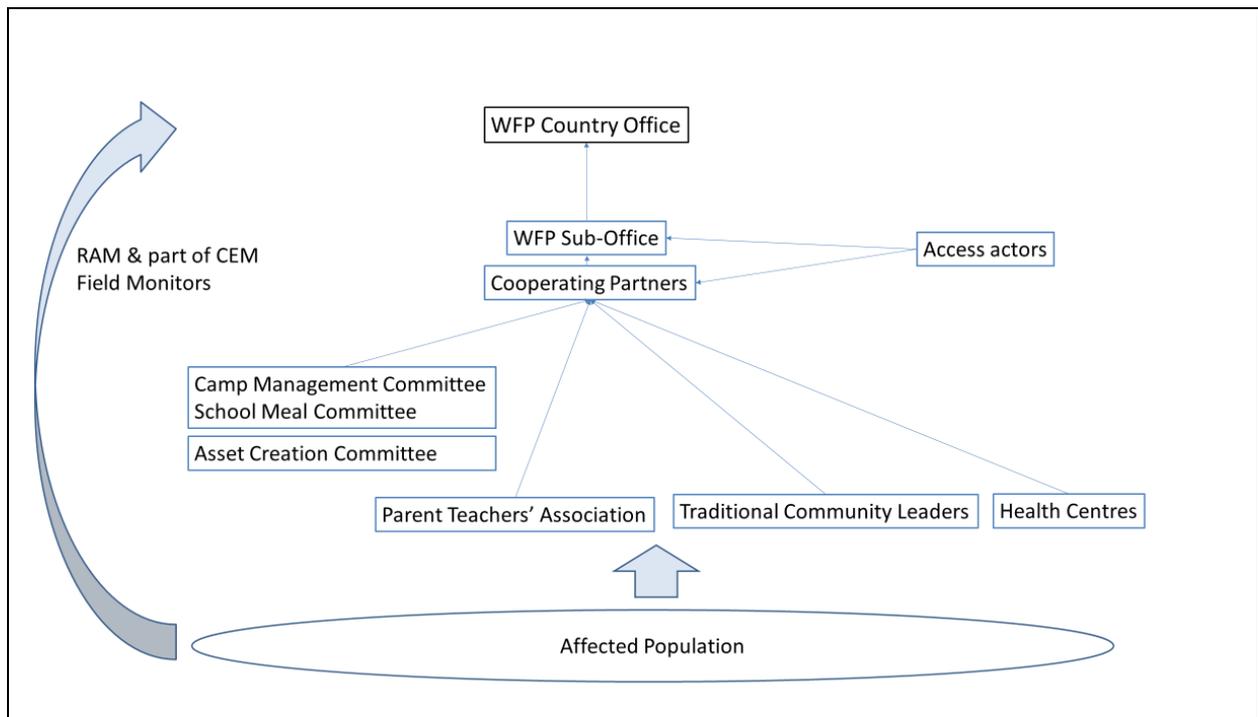
¹⁰⁰ See Annex 1.7 on Quantitative Efficiency Analysis, sub-section 1, availability of financial and human resources.

¹⁰¹ Access to conflict-affected zones is heavily restricted.

¹⁰² In other words, entirely Myanmar-based – not part of international networks or alliances, or branches of an INGO.

the various stakeholders to create the configuration of the interface between the affected population and WFP, as illustrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 9: Lines of communication



Source: Evaluation team.

123. The cooperating partners demonstrate a considerable ability to provide contextual information – within the strictures of security-related access granted to them. In some cases, it is easier for the cooperating partners to operate alone, in other cases they do so more easily accompanied by sub-office staff.

124. WFP has in some cases retained the option of operating directly in interface with local stakeholders. In this scenario, the cooperating partners are replaced by the sub-office personnel. This happens when there is a pressing need to deliver (mostly emergency activities) and when the operations face restrictions due to the absence of viable partners, or their lack of capacity. In one case study, in Pang Kham direct implementation has been taking place over many years.

125. Cooperating partners play a key role for the sub-offices in delivering assistance and providing contextual awareness, including helping to identify protection risks. Sub-office personnel join them in assessment trips, joint monitoring trips, activity orientation and community engagement mechanism support. Cooperating partners provide immediate responses to any question by WFP focal persons.¹⁰³ The cooperating partners report that WFP sub-office personnel are very available to contact by email, Microsoft Teams, and mobile phone calls.

126. An independent interface is ensured at the country office level by the work of the RAM and the PGAAP function. It is represented in Figure 8 above by a lateral arrow that flows from the population to WFP. Large-scale data collection is carried out approximately three or four times a year - in particular post-distribution monitoring assessments (see EQ1.1). The targeting process takes place with selected community representatives who are asked to provide lists of beneficiaries, which are checked by WFP field monitors and cooperating partners.

¹⁰³ Slide presentation by Danish Refugee Council in Myitkyina.

Strengthening the participatory and bottom-up orientation of the cooperating partners

Summary (3.1b): Cooperating partners are central to WFP programmes and operations. The Myanmar country office follows standard corporate procedures to select and contract cooperating partners. The sub-offices provide considerable capacity strengthening to cooperating partners to enhance their participatory methods and better understand the risks faced by affected populations. The relationship between WFP and its cooperating partners is closer and more collaborative at the sub-office level, while the consultation of cooperating partners for strategic planning and coordination at the central country office level is more limited.

127. The sub-offices provide considerable capacity strengthening to cooperating partners to enhance their participatory methods and better understand the risks faced by affected populations. There is, for example, a considerable library of guidance material generated by WFP in Myanmar as concerns PGAAP (more than 15 were identified by the evaluation team, all translated into the Burmese language). Training has been given systematically by the protection team to cooperating partners as well as training on environmental and social standards (ESS), and the interviews and practices show that these are appreciated and applied. The cooperating partners speak highly of the variety of capabilities that WFP shares, over and beyond training in cross-cutting issues.

128. There are limits, however, to the bottom-up approach. The exchange between WFP and cooperating partners is reportedly closer and more collaborative at the sub-office level than at the national one, as reflected across a wide range of interviews. In asset creation, for example, cooperating partners report that they do not have the required delegation of authority to ensure that the commitments made to communities are respected. Although WFP may wish to make adjustments, the relationships with affected populations lie with the cooperating partners. Beyond the calls for proposals and field-level agreements, the interaction of the country office in Naypyitaw and Yangon with the cooperating partners is limited and mostly of a transactional nature due to the emphasis that must be given to formal relations and to countrywide uniform treatment of all NGOs. Cooperating partners are little involved in strategic discussions and broader planning processes.

Organizational capacities to ensure a satisfactory degree of community involvement.

Summary (3.1c): Cooperating partners have been selected based on their programming and operational strengths. The engagement of cooperating partners into the communities shows adequate attention to beneficiaries' needs thanks to the quality of their local relations but external factors, including the processes required by international organizations or changes in national laws and regulations, may constrain the cooperating partners' ability to adapt assistance to local needs and customs. Where cooperating partners are not able to operate, WFP can sometimes implement activities directly and ensure strong community involvement.

129. WFP has selected cooperating partners with a strong community orientation, developed over the years and across all regions. Communities are engaged in several ways. For example, the evaluation was able to observe in Sittwe, Myitkyina and Pakokku how this was ensured through a regular dialogue with camp management committees, by scrupulously applying COVID-19-related restrictions, or by actively using feedback boxes every month to address issues of exclusion. Cooperating partners often have strong local informal networks, and faith-based organizations are particularly able to combine WFP assistance with local donations to enable crosslines work. Their local anchor is a useful asset.

130. Cooperating partners have been observed to provide a significant flow of programme-related information to sub-offices, as shown by their participation in the focus group discussion with one of the sub-offices. This allows WFP to deal rapidly with large numbers of decisions using real-time information in a highly diverse and rapidly evolving operating environment.

131. There are, however, external challenges to the ability of cooperating partners to ensure harmonious community involvement in design and delivery. Many international humanitarian actors including WFP propose a set menu of assistance options with a standardized approach across the country or a large geographical area leaving cooperating partners very little scope to adjust the assistance package to local context and needs. Also, different United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organization (INGOs) / local NGOs set different cash transfer values based on their organizational and

programmatic objectives and the duration of their programme.¹⁰⁴ This can lead to perceptions of unfairness, debate and questioning by affected communities, all borne by cooperating partners. In a recent situation, the three-month field-level agreement timeframe introduced by WFP as a temporary measure to cope with the new registration law¹⁰⁵ precluded most asset-creation activities that require community engagement over a longer period than three months. While this situation has now been resolved, cooperating partners found that these strictures led to an inability to meet local needs and strategies, and so affected their credibility with the affected communities in conditions where trust is essential.

132. Where local cooperating partners are not present, WFP has worked on its own to ensure community involvement. In the Wa Autonomous Region (northern Shan), cooperating partners have entirely left the region as they have been discouraged by local authorities and there has been no need for relief work. WFP has instead used direct implementation to support school feeding and asset creation. This has taken place in a climate of trust and direct community dialogue, including in the use of the language of indigenous groups in that region (the Lahu speakers, who live in high levels of isolation and poverty). WFP, based out of the Pang Kham field operation, has extended its expertise to do the work that is done elsewhere by the cooperating partners.

EQ 3.2: How does WFP envision transition and exit, tailored to local capacities and to context? What strategic linkages did WFP manage to establish along the triple nexus across humanitarian action, development and contributions to peace?

Transition between humanitarian relief and resilience / the Humanitarian-Development (HDP) Nexus

Summary (3.2a): WFP Myanmar has shifted back to a strong emergency response focus. Resilience-building is mostly operationalized around asset creation and nutrition, focusing on the individual, household and community levels. The community, institutions and systems levels of resilience are not considered in a strategic and structured way within the country office's strategies and measurement frameworks.

133. The multi-year intent to connect development and humanitarian needs is projected in the theory of change (Figure 3) drawn up by the evaluation as an interpretation of the CSP. Over time, the range of immediate outcomes has become much more limited, resulting from the focus on emergency operations. Thus, the WFP assistance modality remains to a large extent that of unconditional assistance and a responsive approach to humanitarian needs ('saving lives'). WFP does not deploy conditional assistance to build resilience capacities within its emergency response.

134. The shocks and stressors confronting the population in Myanmar call for systemwide capacities. The specific consideration by WFP of the population's capacities has been limited to the modestly funded activities that are asset creation or nutrition (including school feeding) focused (activities 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9). These rely on relatively limited mechanisms, such as economic community initiatives, or schools. Referring to the categories of analysis that WFP applies to resilience,¹⁰⁶ the country office's focus has largely remained on the individual, household and community levels. The community, institutions and in particular the

¹⁰⁴ The Inter-Agency Cash Working Group has formed a task team to discuss cash for work/asset creation activities, to help achieve a more coordinated approach among the organizations.

¹⁰⁵ The three-month FLAs were a temporary measure to bridge the period of registration under the new law. This was a one-off action taken end-2022 to maintain emergency operations while the impact of the recently announced Organization Registration Law was assessed (ORL announced in November 2022). After WFP and other humanitarian/development actors had fully assessed the potential consequences of the law, FLAs were extended to cover 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Under the 2015 Resilience Policy and resilience measurement initiative, WFP has developed a Resilience Toolkit, a resource that can be applied to resilience-building programmes of any size or scale. It builds on existing WFP guidance, such as the programme guidance manuals, toolkits, standard operating procedures and guidelines.

systems levels of analysis are not dealt with in a strategic and structured manner. There is for example little evidence of the application of corporate tools, such as the Three-Pronged Approach (3PA), besides the community-based participatory planning done by cooperating partners.¹⁰⁷

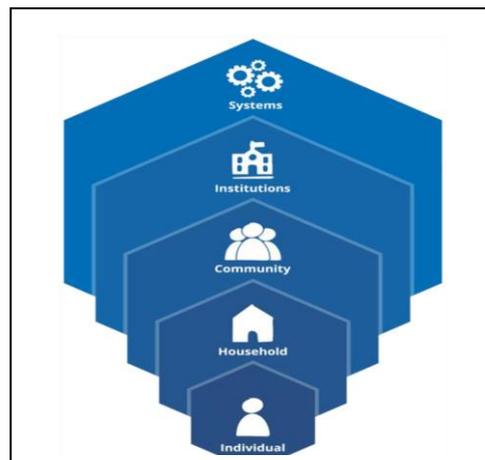
135. There is scope to more formally define and mainstream resilience at the systems level. Resilience of food systems could, for example, be strengthened by developing value chains of local producers. This could entail a change in procurement specifications so that local lower-quality products or new commodities or products can be procured, in line with the small-scale practices of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) business network.¹⁰⁸ However, the SUN business network describes the current specifications as too demanding to be favourable for local procurement. The local procurement of supplies demonstrated in planning documents remains driven by the logic of emergency response.

136. SO4 was proposed to address disruptions in humanitarian supply chains and provide on-demand services to the humanitarian system. BR06 aims to make available to the humanitarian system the provision of cash transfer services thanks to the solid relations of WFP with financial services providers. However, addressing shortages and supporting humanitarian partners, while demonstrating connectedness between humanitarian and development activities, was not framed in a proactive strategic approach to build a more resilient humanitarian system.

137. As regards social protection systems, prior to the military takeover in February 2021, WFP supported the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare to strengthen its MCCT programme and provided a one-time top-up to the universal social old-age pension. WFP supported all phases of MCCT, from targeting to cash distribution and accounting, with particular attention to the digitalization of the system, essentially installing a computer database of beneficiaries and benefits, and the move to CBT, both essential to effective social protection systems.

138. The decision to provide food assistance to peri-urban Yangon in 2021 was the subject of some discussion among development partners because, in most other contexts, this would be considered a public social assistance problem. The decision to provide food assistance was because a humanitarian emergency was imminent, if not already present. A significant proportion of the population was in a crisis-equivalent category and met general criteria for populations relevant to operations of corporate scale-up and attention.¹⁰⁹ Recent assessments have indicated that the period of acute crisis in peri-urban Yangon has passed; as a result, while targeted humanitarian relief will be maintained, WFP agrees that it is more appropriate that a social protection programme assists the chronically food-insecure in these settings (see also EQ1.2 and 2.1).

Figure 10 Levels of analysis



Source: WFP Resilience Building Blocks.

¹⁰⁷ The Three-Pronged Approach (3PA) is a programming approach consisting of three consultative and technical processes at three different levels: integrated context analysis (ICA, at the national level); seasonal livelihood programming (SLP, at the subnational level); and community-based participatory planning (CBPP, at the local level). (WFP 2018). Currently the sub-offices only apply CBPP for asset-creation activities. The CO was not able to conduct the ICA (first part of the 3PA) due to insufficient national data.

¹⁰⁸ This is a private sector initiative, part of the Global SUN Movement, designed to facilitate (in economic and physical terms) the provision of nutritious and safe foods for everyone, especially for those who are vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies. It operates in 12 countries including Myanmar.

¹⁰⁹ "In some pockets of the country, including peri-urban Yangon, the nutrition context before 2020 reflected particular vulnerability including a high rate of child wasting (9.3%), stunting (28.8%) and maternal underweight (13.7%) while the coverage of essential nutrition and health services was low in Yangon's informal settlements. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically worsened the nutrition situation with estimations suggesting an additional 110,000 children under-5 have become wasted." UNOPS. 2021. *Peri-Urban Yangon Approaches a Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Face of Loss of Livelihoods*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/peri-urban-yangon-approaches-food-and-nutrition-crisis-face-loss-livelihoods>.

Summary (3.2b): Managing potential effects of activities on conflict and peace has been a priority for WFP Myanmar. Staff are continually adapting, negotiating and considering the local context. Enhancing social cohesion is also occasionally considered by WFP to strengthen programming, but, overall, WFP contributions to social cohesion and peace remain little measured.

139. WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) commits the organization to “systematically assess complex threats, risks, and opportunities (...) to reduce risks and mitigate their consequences.”¹¹⁰ The country office takes this into account most systematically from the perspective of the population for cross-cutting priorities, such as protection and AAP. In a less formal manner, its personnel also reflect a high level of awareness of the conflict sensitivity of WFP operations.

140. Effects of WFP activities on conflict and peace are referred to as externalities by headquarters (HQ) staff, that is, secondary or lateral effects.¹¹¹ Managing such externalities has been a priority for WFP Myanmar. Staff are continually adapting, negotiating and taking into account the local context.

141. For example, the threats for the populations, as assessed through the phone survey conducted as part of the peri-urban Yangon case study of this evaluation, are tangible. Armed conflict or military action is not widespread in this location (or is at least reported by only 4 percent of all beneficiaries), but the evaluation survey found that 65 percent of beneficiaries report tensions in their communities. The most reported reasons for these tensions are crime, theft, illegal activities (experienced by 81 percent of those reporting some tensions, or by 52 percent of all beneficiaries in this location), followed by feuds between families or concerning family issues (45 and 29 percent, respectively).

142. WFP has not conducted any assessments measuring the effect of its operations on social cohesion and peace. As part of the last 2022 relief post-distribution monitoring survey, the evaluation team requested that a module of five questions be included to assess the contribution of WFP to peace in the form of promoting social cohesion. This phone-based survey revealed that between 87.4 and 95.4 percent of beneficiaries in each of the three surveyed states indicated that they experienced some tensions or arguments in their communities. The levels of trust within communities were low, although the more homogeneous settlements in Rakhine demonstrated greater social cohesion. A total of 47.8 percent of beneficiary parents in Rakhine state would definitely or probably leave their children with neighbours in case of emergency. In other regions, this percentage only reaches between 15.2 and 25.5. Between 62.4 and 71.4 percent of respondents stated that WFP assistance received had reduced tensions in their communities. Of significant concern, however, the survey also found that between 13.6 and 21.9 percent of respondents in each region said that the assistance received had caused some tensions (much less so in Rakhine than in Chin and Kachin states).

143. Evidence collected by the evaluation team also indicates that WFP actively responds to the most significant conflict risks facing affected populations. The focus group discussion with one of the sub-offices has identified a list of top drivers of change or pivotal factors in the operational context. As can be seen from Table 14, WFP has responded to these effects in its programmes and operations.

¹¹⁰ WFP. 2021. *WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025)*. Executive Board, Second regular session, Rome, 15-18 November 2021, p. 19.

¹¹¹ Conflict sensitivity is defined as maximizing the positive effects of an activity on peace and minimizing its effects on conflict. As this is not the primary but rather the secondary effect of the activity, headquarters Programme Division personnel interviewed refer to it as managing an externality. Externalities in WFP have also been called ripple effects, multiplier effects, or lateral effects.

Table 14: Top pivotal factors and examples of work-arounds and mitigation measures

Pivotal factors (in order of priority ranking by participants)	Work-arounds	Mitigation measures
Military takeover	Work with NGOs and UN partners	Discrete and principled engagement with the de facto authorities
Increases in armed conflict	Remote data collection	Security protocols and risk management
Increasing displacement		Focus on food assistance to IDPs and host communities
Increasing difficulty in sending money	Alternative transfer modalities	WFP modalities
Reduced freedom of movement	Remote data collection	Access negotiations
	Reliance on national staff and local organizations	Food contingency stocks in warehouses across the country

Source: Evaluation team.

144. WFP either finds solutions to work around conflict effects (for example, alternative transfer modalities, remote data collection) or mitigates their negative consequences (for example, security protocols, adherence to United Nations guidance on engagement with the de facto authorities, food assistance to internally displaced persons and host communities, etc.).

145. Closely related to preventing or alleviating conflict, social cohesion¹¹² is also occasionally considered by WFP to strengthen programming, as for example, in northern Rakhine, where WFP support targeted both Rohingya and Rakhine communities to reduce inter-communal tension. Social cohesion could in future also be considered part of resilience, as it creates capacities to respond better in the face of shocks and stressors,¹¹³ operationalizing the WFP contribution to peace.¹¹⁴

EQ 3.3: How well does WFP and its cooperating partners take into consideration environmental and social sustainability and the environmental footprint of its interventions?

Summary (3.3a): WFP Myanmar has closely tracked the evolution of the environmental and social safeguards at the corporate level. New guidance introduced in 2022 could lead to the tracking of risks and mitigation measures.

146. From 2018 to 2021, similar to what many other country offices were doing upon request from donors and partner governments, the Myanmar country office considered environmental risk classification by using basic environmental screening check lists, applied primarily in relation to the environmental effects of asset creation, and to disaster risk mitigation. WFP Myanmar expanded the concept in 2022 to include social risks in line with international standards, after the introduction of the WFP environmental and social standards¹¹⁵ in March 2021 followed by new screening tools for cooperating partners.

147. The annual country reports include descriptions of the environmental management conducted in Myanmar. WFP ensured that its asset-creation projects directly addressed environmental challenges. Projects focused on terraced land development that can reduce slash-and-burn practices in hilly regions. In flood affected areas, dike construction and the rehabilitation of embankments helped prevent flooding

¹¹² Social cohesion is defined as a network of mutual recognition among members of a society that facilitates collaboration – vertical when it concerns institutions, and horizontal when it concerns other population identities. It is characterized by trust, a sense of belonging, and willingness to participate towards common good. This reflects more than norms and attitudes; it is a behavioural manifestation in the face of shocks and stressors.

¹¹³ WFP. 2015. *Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition*. Rome.

¹¹⁴ For example, there have been attempts at creating a Social Cohesion Index in a few COs. The most recent attempt was the Population-Centred Risk Indicator Measurement and Engagement initiative.

¹¹⁵ docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000143339/download/

following heavy rain. Prior to the military takeover, WFP provided emergency preparedness support to government counterparts through infrastructure and equipment, and through its advisory role.

148. From 2019, WFP Myanmar began analysing information on the potential risks and forecast impacts of climate hazards on the most vulnerable populations. Building on the successful fuel-efficient stoves pilot in 2019, WFP expanded the programme and distributed stoves to 7,858 households in four townships in Rakhine state, coupled with trainings on how to use them.

149. The application of environmental and social standards now forms part of WFP reporting requirements. This is still under implementation in Myanmar. WFP started introducing environmental and social standard concepts to staff and cooperating partners in March 2022. Environmental and social risk screening checklists were translated into the Myanmar language and shared with sub-offices and cooperating partners in July 2022. These were included in the new field-level agreements to ensure that sub-offices and cooperating partners identify negative environmental or social impacts of programme activities and set out how they would avoid or manage them.

150. The evaluation found a clear concern in the sub-offices for environmental and social standards. The sub-office staff individually reflect on and describe the environmental and social risks that come with WFP programmes and operations, and the measures taken to address these risks at an operational level. However, they still demonstrate limited knowledge of the guidance. The interviewed sub-office management personnel were aware of such standards, while no further corporate documentations on this topic were cited during the interviews.

151. Measures taken to avoid negative consequences include, for example, encouraging internally displaced persons' settlements into areas that have less risk of expropriation in Pakokku and taking into account the sensitivity of internally displaced persons having to cross a bridge with many security controls. In-kind assistance is provided instead of cash to help reduce the need for internally displaced persons to make long trips to the market.

2.4. WFP PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION WITH THE WIDER HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

EQ 4.1: To what extent is WFP assistance coherent and aligned with the wider United Nations and humanitarian sector?

Alignment and coherence of the CSP with the wider United Nations strategic framework for Myanmar

Summary (4.1a): The CSP and subsequent WFP engagement has been fully integrated into the United Nations and humanitarian assistance frameworks and WFP Myanmar played an active role in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

152. The WFP Myanmar CSP 2018-2022¹¹⁶ was written in alignment with the first United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)¹¹⁷ coinciding in time. The larger context was the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda and the principle of leaving no one behind. The CSP noted the important role of United Nations agencies (singling out FAO and UNICEF, both of which cooperated with WFP in the national strategic review of food and nutrition security informing the CSP), civil society, and private sector partners (for example, the SUN business network)¹¹⁸ in food security and nutrition.

153. In line with the WFP corporate strategic plan, the Myanmar CSP strategic outcomes are primarily oriented towards SDG 2 (hunger), which lies at the heart of the WFP mandate, and SDG 17 (partnerships), the particular concern of activities 2 and 6 on strengthening country capacity and SO4 on supporting

¹¹⁶ WFP Myanmar. 2017. Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022).

¹¹⁷ UNDAF. 2018. Draft Myanmar-United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018-2022.

¹¹⁸ Quoting from its orientation PowerPoint, the Scaling Up Nutrition business (SUN) network is a global network with the purpose to facilitate the private sector to improve availability, affordability and accessibility (economic and physical) of nutritious and safe foods for everyone, especially for those who are vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies. Based on interviews, the Myanmar branch of the SUN network has been relatively inactive.

partner institutions. The CSP stipulated that outputs would also contribute to SDGs 1 (poverty), 3 (health), 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (water and sanitation); 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (inequalities), 13 (climate) and 15 (life on land).

154. WFP, as the largest humanitarian actor in Myanmar, has played a leading role in coordination, and this role was increased substantially by the Rohingya crisis; then further by COVID-19. In response to the crisis following the military takeover, education, food security, nutrition and protection clusters were activated in August 2021. WFP co-chairs the Food Security Cluster with FAO. It hosts the Secretariat of Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH) for the UN Network for Nutrition and is an active member of the UN Network for Nutrition and the Nutrition Cluster.

155. WFP also leads the COVID-19 Logistics Sector Coordination Group, is actively engaged with the United Nations socioeconomic response and co-leads on social protection with UNICEF and on community resilience with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, WFP co-chairs the inter-agency Cash Working Group and the inter-agency AAP/Community Engagement Working Group. The WFP Country Director chairs the UN Myanmar Operations Committee, a key role discussed further below. All partners interviewed have expressed a positive opinion of the participation and contribution of WFP, with particular praise for its role in the Cash Working Group and the Operations Committee.

156. Through the joint FAO-WFP food security and agricultural livelihoods assessments, most recently in 2021, April 2022, and August-September 2022, the two agencies play the lead role in contributing estimates to the food security section of the annual humanitarian needs overview, which in turn forms the basis of the humanitarian response plan.

EQ 4.2: How has WFP developed appropriate and effective partnerships, including for joint implementation or collective operational action within the humanitarian response?

Evolution of partnerships

Summary (4.2a): The multiple transitions in the relations of WFP with key partners led to rapid adaptations by WFP, particularly in its relationship with the authorities, through the precautionary measures taken during the pandemic and through programmatic adjustments in the areas of nutrition and social protection.

157. According to the CSP mid-term review, relations with central Government were strained at the time the CSP was launched,¹¹⁹ but these improved with the move by WFP to Nay Pyi Taw in 2018¹²⁰ allowing for improved and regular face-to-face contacts.

158. In line with its long-term overall goal of moving from a crisis response to a development stance, WFP provided technical assistance to adapt social protection programmes. The specific aspects of social protection are dealt with under EQ2.1 and 3.2.

159. An unanticipated benefit of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was that partnership with the Government strengthened in line with soaring needs. Coordinating with the Government's response plan, WFP was able to provide immediate aid in a number of critical areas: a feeding programme for quarantined returning migrants, personal protection equipment supply and vaccine cold chain, and work with the Department of Disaster Management under the Ministry of Social Welfare to support locked-down villages. In the context of support to the national Multi-Sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition 2018–2022,¹²¹ WFP provided guidance on coordinating nutrition-sensitive interventions under COVID-19.

160. The WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014-2017)¹²² informed the WFP Myanmar partnership strategy and provided a foundation for the early months of the CSP, replaced in March 2023 by a new draft

¹¹⁹ WFP Myanmar. 2021. *Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Mid-Term Review*. P. 4: "WFP faced particular difficulties with the Government at the time of the launch of the CSP due to a disputed assessment published in 2017. The situation was compounded when High Energy Biscuits were found in an Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army camp."

¹²⁰ WFP. 2018. *Myanmar Country Brief*. September 2018.

¹²¹ Government of Myanmar. 2018. *Multi-Sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) 2018/2019 – 2022/2023*.

¹²² WFP. 2014. *Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014–2017)*.

partnership action plan specifically for WFP in Myanmar. Under post-military takeover engagement principles with the de facto authorities,¹²³ WFP, like other United Nations agencies, adapted its partnership strategy to pivot away from direct institutional engagement with the de-facto authorities.¹²⁴ WFP reduced its engagement with all state institutions and expanded its engagement with international and national organizations; United Nations agencies, INGOs and NGOs and community-based organizations with knowledge of the local context. These partnerships pre-dated the military takeover, but, as demonstrated during partner interviews and case study visits, became deeper, the latter particularly in terms of operations at the sub-office level.

Strategic partnerships with humanitarian and development actors.

Summary (4.2b): The collaboration established with different partners has been extensive and highly versatile, reflecting the priority given to the delivery of assistance.

161. WFP collaborated with other United Nations agencies, including launching a joint research activity with UNFPA on gender equality and gender-based violence in CBT programming,¹²⁵ and working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on returnees during the COVID-19 emergency.

162. FAO and WFP jointly lead the Food Security Cluster and collaborate on emergency preparedness and response, monitoring and evaluation, gender equality, vulnerability analysis and mapping and nutrition-sensitive approaches. They conduct a quarterly joint survey on food security, which is a crucial diagnostic and targeting tool throughout the United Nations family and broader humanitarian community.

163. In theory, WFP and FAO should be collaborating globally on the food security assessment, a global public document that compiles all available data for needs estimation and resource mobilization purposes. This has been suspended in Myanmar because of the lack of contact with the de facto authorities. There have been some small joint activities (for example, in forestry), but there is effectively a division of labour because WFP concentrates on emergency response while FAO works on longer-term capacity and resilience building. There has been complementarity in activities where WFP provided relief, allowing FAO to step in with seeds and other inputs so that farmers would be able to resume production when the emergency passed. FAO uses WFP warehouse capacity and, when the FAO Representative is out of the country, the WFP Country Director steps in. The two agencies are co-located in the United Nations common office in Nay Pyi Taw and also share offices in some areas in the field.

164. Examples of collaboration between WFP and UNHCR include WFP logistics support received during COVID-19 (not current), and joint assessment missions in Rakhine for refugees and internally displaced persons. UNHCR is appreciative of WFP work in the Cash Working Group, where WFP has taken a leading role in dealing with liquidity, banking and banking access issues.

165. WFP also has a close relationship with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with the highly flexible WFP operating as a first line agency providing relief under the OCHA coordination framework. OCHA coordination of access negotiations and travel authorizations on behalf of various humanitarian partners relies on WFP analysis, made possible by its wide access and network of local, community-based partners.

166. WFP and UNICEF have cooperated closely on relations with the Central Bank. Prior to the military takeover, WFP and UNICEF provided technical assistance and policy support on social protection, essentially MCCT, to the Department of Social Welfare as described above. Post-military takeover, WFP and UNICEF were able to jointly maintain cash transfers for stunting prevention in line with the national MCCT programme. Encouraged by the European Union (EU), which finances this joint initiative (with UNOPS managing the funds through the Nexus Response Mechanism), the two agencies are continuing to work

¹²³ UNCT. 2022. *Programmatic Engagement Guidelines*. Version one plus (final draft as of February 2022).

¹²⁴ Based on a review of partnership counts provided by the CO, 29 CBO partnership agreements were initiated immediately post-military takeover; there were none previously reported during the CSP period. Partnerships with government agencies, which had dramatically increased in 2020, to 15, were cut to half or less than half that number in post-military takeover 2021 and 2022.

¹²⁵ WFP. 2022. *Myanmar Annual Country Report 2021*. Partnerships, p.10.

together to continue stunting prevention activities that would previously have fallen under social protection.

167. Also currently missing from the social protection field in Myanmar is the International Labour Organization (ILO), despite the fact that school feeding, MCCT, and the non-contributory old-age social pension (important elements of its incrementalistic policy package for developing social protection in poor countries) are all in place under the National Social Protection Strategic Plan formerly supported by WFP (and in whose preparation ILO participated).

168. For the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the collaboration with WFP is by far the most solid and heavily coordinated partnership in the country. It is very operational, making the most of the headquarters agreement between the two organizations. In central and northern Rakhine, the collaboration began at the start of the 2017 crisis and has since evolved in line with the two organizations' comparative advantage. ICRC appreciates the fact that WFP can mobilize quickly because it works closely with local partners; also, because it was able to quickly deliver cash by working with local agents, whereas ICRC is still delivering food.

169. In the context of their move from blanket (essentially geographically targeted) to more household-targeted relief, ICRC and WFP have done joint vulnerability studies. In southern Shan, when new concentrations of internally displaced persons were identified outside areas of regular assistance, WFP was able to respond quickly because of its expertise in more targeted assistance. WFP was also a valued information source; for example, reporting on two townships where ICRC had been unable to deliver assistance, triggering discussions that perhaps WFP, with its superior access in that particular area, should take them over temporarily.

170. The World Bank is now in the process of setting up a Rakhine pilot project with WFP and ICRC. This will move marginally beyond food/cash humanitarian relief, to include asset creation in the form of small-scale infrastructure (access roads, small irrigation) and livelihoods.

171. According to World Bank representatives, both ICRC and WFP are regarded as trusted agencies with a long-term presence that can deliver results. The World Bank wanted a diversified partnership, hence the involvement of both agencies. WFP is attractive because it can handle significant amounts of money and has long experience in negotiating its way through the situation in Myanmar. WFP leads on the humanitarian response component and ICRC on the resilience component of the programme – an arrangement that may not be entirely based on both agencies' comparative advantages in Myanmar.

Breadth (quantity) and depth (quality) of WFP partnerships

Summary (4.2c): The country office is seen to have played a highly constructive and transparent role in its relations with donors and humanitarian partners, thanks to capable staff and networks of collaborators.

172. That WFP has many partnerships in multiple dimensions – donors, international and national NGOs, and United Nations and other international agencies – is not in doubt. WFP has a high reputation among humanitarian actors (including donors) in Myanmar. "More than most," one said, "WFP is agile and able to make a difference at scale." A donor partner characterized the WFP comparative advantages as: its clear mandate (even if considered rather one-dimensional by some); a high degree of organization compared to other humanitarian agencies; its skill and experience in political engagement; its logistical capability; and its ability to gain access due to its global reputation and highly experienced and skilled international and national staff. Also cited were the large number of local partners and its ability to reach the areas hardest to access.

173. A further comparative advantage of WFP is its ability to rely on long-term national staff, who work at considerable risk to themselves and their families. Because of their knowledge of the local context and long experience in the Myanmar humanitarian community, they enhance the value of WFP as a partner. The sub-offices' ability to identify reliable cooperating partners and form relationships with local cooperating partners is especially important.

174. WFP partners appreciate that its engagement with the de facto authorities is often more necessary than that of other agencies because it is dealing with food security and nutrition emergencies and because it must frequently discuss humanitarian access to conflict areas. The information and insight it gains must be managed with strict confidentiality. WFP is reported by peers to have been scrupulous in using this

privileged access carefully and in managing the public opinion response that comes as a result of engagement. It has, for example, managed to maintain a principled dialogue on humanitarian access.

175. WFP is characterized by fellow humanitarian country team agencies as constructive and transparent. WFP is, according to fellow members interviewed, very transparent in the humanitarian country team about what it can and cannot do, avoiding the temptation to overstate its capabilities in the competition for donor funds. It is a leader in discussions about security of staff and security measures. As one United Nations partner put it, WFP has taken a long-term view, putting it in the forefront of United Nations rethinking and recalibrating to navigate through the multiple restrictions.

176. Cooperating partners have expressed concern about an overly decentralized authority, characterizing this as “localization at the expense of strategic thinking”. Most comments concern the difficulties caused by the context but aggravated by corporate guidelines. WFP only gives a maximum 30 percent “down payment” on the field-level agreement value, that is, an initial payment of costs up front with a commitment to pay the remainder during implementation (monthly fixed overhead costs) and on completion of the work (variable, distribution-related costs). This can cause cash-flow problems, particularly due to the situation of the banking system.

2.5. HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES, PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

EQ 5.1: In what way does WFP adhere to humanitarian principles and “do no harm” in all phases of its assistance? How does WFP manage the trade-offs between humanitarian principles?

Commitment to “do no harm”

Summary (5.1a): In accordance with the do no harm principle, there is a consistent and multiform effort by WFP Myanmar to ensure that the programmes and operations do not increase social tensions or risks for the population.

177. The CSP time period has been an extremely complex, challenging and dynamic context for any humanitarian or development organization to steer its assistance planning and implementation in ways that do no harm. The do no harm principle¹²⁶ is part of the Policy on WFP’s Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings, and the WFP Protection and Accountability Policy and is reflected in the country office’s commitment to work in ways that avoid exacerbating social tensions and conflict.¹²⁷ These concerns are reflected in regular programme and management meetings, with measures taken to address issues. An example is the housing, land and property due diligence process to review the WFP assistance in northern Rakhine.¹²⁸ Land rights are often disputed, and when WFP is supporting asset creation it is aware that this might give legitimacy to one group’s claims over another.

178. In Sittwe, efforts were made to achieve some balance in reaching both Rohingya and Rakhine beneficiaries.¹²⁹ In addition, modalities of assistance have been encouraged to increase contact between the two groups; for example, cash-based assistance can result in increased contact between communities as internally displaced persons shop in local markets. Staff show an alertness to the implications of the changing language abilities, as a new Rohingya generation has grown up in camps without learning the Rakhine language as their parents did.

179. Factors supporting integration of due diligence into operations include the recruitment of specialist expertise, maximizing long-term international deployments, and conducting situation analyses and

¹²⁶ “Obligation to do no harm: Anyone working in fragile settings or with people in vulnerable situations has a duty not to put them at risk of negative consequences or to increase their vulnerability to, among other things, retaliation from governments, clans, factions and families, loss of income or stigma. In addition, it must be ensured that activities support social cohesion and trust and do not exacerbate or promote conflict or cause harm to the environment.” Taken from WFP. 2020. *Protection and Accountability Policy*.

¹²⁷ Additional detail to the development of the system is in Annex 1.6 on Protection and AAP timelines.

¹²⁸ WFP. 2021. Housing, land and property due diligence review.

¹²⁹ WFP. 2021. PGAAP Mission report. Rakhine, August 2021.

perception surveys (for instance, for school feeding programmes). The operational experience of staff helped such analyses. International personnel have been in-country for relatively long periods and have experience in other complex contexts. Senior national staff are empowered to take operational decisions, in particular relating to emergency response.

Adherence to humanitarian principles

Summary (5.1b): In line with the broader organizational culture, WFP Myanmar has given priority to the principle of humanity, while following attentively all four humanitarian principles in this fraught environment. WFP has made its best possible efforts to avoid its assistance benefiting groups associated with the military, but the country office has acted with limited WFP formal guidance or headquarters support. When facing possible trade-offs in adhering to the principles of independence or neutrality, WFP actively explored scenarios for a principled approach, carefully assessing options and risks.

180. In its policy on humanitarian principles¹³⁰ WFP defines the core humanitarian principles as humanity, impartiality and neutrality. In more recent guidance material, it also recognizes the fourth principle of operational independence (see Box 1).

Box 1: WFP definitions of humanitarian principles

Humanity: WFP will seek to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it is found and respond with food assistance when appropriate. It will provide assistance in ways that respect life, health and dignity.

Impartiality: WFP assistance will be guided solely by need and will not discriminate in terms of ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion, gender, race or religion.

Neutrality: WFP will not take sides in a conflict and will not engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. Food assistance will not be provided to active combatants.

Operational independence: WFP will provide assistance in a manner that is operationally independent of the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where such assistance is being provided.

Source: WFP. 2004. Policy on humanitarian principles and Board Note.

181. It is difficult in some environments to fully apply and to be seen to apply all humanitarian principles simultaneously, as there can be tensions in their application, requiring trade-offs. For example, (in line with the principle of humanity) it may be unavoidable to engage with one party of a conflict to obtain access, which may give this party legitimacy, creating a perception that the organization is taking sides, thus challenging the principle of neutrality.¹³¹

182. Previous evaluations, including the evaluation of the humanitarian principles and access policies (which included evidence from

Myanmar), described the organizational culture of WFP as one in which the principle of humanity, often described as the humanitarian imperative, trumped other principles, driven by a culture that prides itself in the priority of assistance.¹³² This is also the case in Myanmar, though country office management is well aware that adherence to neutrality and independence are very important to ensure continued donor support and the safety of humanitarian personnel.

183. The 2017 Rohingya crisis was explored in the Rosenthal Report¹³³, which criticized the United Nations for being overly close to the authorities and inadequately speaking out about human rights abuses. The report's findings were very present in WFP thinking in the first years of the CSP. The donor community reacted to the findings by scrutinizing financial transactions, seeking a guarantee that funding would not be benefiting groups associated with the military. This fell heavily on WFP expenditure, particularly for local procurement. Due diligence processes were extended beyond what was described as the usual WFP procedures. However, WFP was clear that, despite its best efforts, it would not be possible to track all connections through audit or investigations. It developed a complementary approach, acknowledging the difficulty, but explaining how procedures were being applied in Myanmar. Rather than absolute guarantees,

¹³⁰ WFP. 2004. Policy on humanitarian principles and Board Note.

¹³¹ Haver, K. 2016. *Tug of war - Ethical decision-making to enable humanitarian access in high-risk environments*. Humanitarian Practice Network Paper No 80. November. London: Overseas Development Institute.

¹³² WFP. 2018. Evaluation of policies on humanitarian principles and access in humanitarian practice.

¹³³ Rosenthal, G. 2019. A brief and independent inquiry into the involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018.

donors accepted the organization's best possible efforts. The continuation of funding indicates this approach was at least satisfactory and illustrates WFP independence. It is a process that risks leaving the senior management of the country office quite isolated in conducting its arbitration, an aspect for which there is limited formal WFP guidance or headquarters support.

184. In Rakhine in 2018, WFP actively explored scenarios for a principled approach with papers detailing options and risks.¹³⁴ While this did not remove the challenges, it ensured that decisions on assistance were well informed. The preference was to provide assistance, but with appropriate risk mitigation measures. Elsewhere, WFP has carefully analysed the risks of delivering assistance to conflict affected groups.

185. The military takeover catalysed a collective response. The UNCT agreed a programmatic approach that was to be principles, rights and needs-based. It put in place a framework to guide engagement with the de facto authorities. This rejected engagement unless it was essential for humanitarian assistance. Subsequently, a peer review process was established to support and ensure that individual United Nations agencies' decisions were part of a collective process.

186. External stakeholders confirmed that WFP has been a constructive participant in the approach, from national to local levels. These approaches were developed collectively with OCHA and others and in turn involved some trade-offs. The evaluation found that managers at all levels were well able to refer to the principles regarding their programmes, particularly with reference to the non-engagement with the de facto authorities unless necessary.

187. WFP negotiates with the de-facto authorities for travel authorization for personnel, food and cash, into and within the country. It has also provided logistics services to UNICEF in Rakhine, where WFP has a service-level agreement to deliver hygiene items, which UNICEF is not able to deliver itself.

188. External stakeholders viewed WFP influence as a key factor in improvements in access. These described a positive view of WFP relative to other United Nations agencies, attributable to the scale and visibility of the assistance it provides. This position brings with it responsibility, mentioned by stakeholders.

189. In negotiations for expansion of operations into some new areas, WFP engaged with the de facto authorities at the state level for access, at some risk to the safety of its own management who travelled for the negotiation. As a last resort, WFP agreed to implement operations directly, rather than through cooperating partners and chose the volunteers who would distribute WFP assistance.

190. WFP has maintained the agreed United Nations stance around the provision of assistance to people being relocated in Rakhine, in contrast with political comments made around this much-debated issue – pointing to the importance of communication between agencies and communication around any assistance in such sensitive situations.

191. Based on the above, the evaluation concludes that WFP Myanmar has taken adequate measures to adhere to all humanitarian principles and worked thoughtfully through the challenges in balancing tensions in their application. However, as confirmed by headquarters interviews, there was no formal corporate mechanism or identified focal point at headquarters for the country office or the regional bureau to call upon, to receive guidance and official backing on how to address these dilemmas. The focus of responsibility consequently fell largely on the country director and to some extent the regional bureau.

EQ 5.2: What are the main protection challenges faced by WFP target populations groups and personnel, and how well does WFP manage these challenges?¹³⁵

Early, localized and differentiated identification of protection challenges

Summary (5.2a): The WFP country office has detailed knowledge of the protection risk environment and takes appropriate measures to mitigate such risks, in particular in relief operations. The expansion of the

¹³⁴ WFP CO Myanmar. 2020. Working Document on Protection Dilemmas and Scenarios for WFP's Response in Rakhine State, October 2020.

¹³⁵ NB: Issues relating to gender mainstreaming and equity more generally and inclusion of persons with disabilities are covered in more detail in other EQs, particularly EQ2 on effectiveness, and, to some extent, EQ6 (e.g., in relation to gender parity in HR). Environmental concerns are addressed in EQ3 on connectedness.

programme has outstripped country office capacity to manage all protection risks even with support of new technologies.

192. The evaluation's review of the WFP risk registers in 2019-2022 show that protection is regularly considered at strategic and operational levels. Detailed and nuanced analyses of protection risks and planning for mitigation takes place in specific protection, gender and accountability to affected populations (PGAAP) analyses, and in the PGAAP team's work with country office and sub-office colleagues, and cooperating partners. A snapshot of protection risks identified by WFP in one quarter and shared in a regular internal report is presented in Box 2.

193. The evaluation finds a highly developed awareness of area-specific protection issues among staff at all levels.¹³⁶ Documents point to high levels of gender-based violence and statelessness faced by the Rohingya people in Rakhine. Another area-specific example is the impact of socio-cultural practices affecting women's ability to reclaim their land when they return to Kachin.

194. Most protection concerns are addressed at the field level, so the nuanced understanding and capacity to respond at this level is of importance. Risks for women and girls, youth, children, adolescents, older people, persons with disabilities and people potentially marginalized due to their ethnicity or sexual orientation were analysed. Annual country reports and PGAAP reports include details of mitigation measures for these protection risks, particularly in relation to gender and disability-related issues.¹³⁷

195. The country office has recognized the increasingly important area of data privacy through specific assessments. Specific processes have been commissioned to consider data privacy assessment and gender-based violence risks in CBT programming.¹³⁸

196. Operations at the sub-office level follow a specific risk assessment process, which incorporates protection risk analysis. Each operation that is carried out is signed off by a range of people within the country office, following a full risk assessment. Part of this process is consideration of risks for beneficiaries.

197. Mitigation strategies included careful selection of local partners known to WFP and with experience in the area, ideally working closely with religious and other leaders in the community, and distributions taking place as close as possible to communities.

Box 2: Key protection risks to affected populations

- Right to life – exposure to physical safety risks in moving in conflict areas, arbitrary targeting for harm.
- Forced displacement resulting from air strikes, attacks.
- Arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, enforced disappearance, assassinations.
- Forced recruitment into armed groups.
- Grave violations against children's rights
- Freedom of movement (curfews, road blockages and landmine risks).
- Increased gender-based violence, including sexual violence and trafficking.
- Occupation or destruction of civilian infrastructure, including schools, churches and mosques.
- Breaches of privacy through search and seizure in public and private locations.
- Denial of humanitarian access.
- Mobile internet block out, ban on social media and attacks on journalists.

Source: WFP. 2021. PGAAP Update. Quarter 4.

¹³⁶ i) WFP. 2022. Protection Gender and Accountability to Affected People Analysis. WFP Myanmar Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022), Summary Highlights Report. ii) WFP. 2022. Analysis of the Myanmar Context for Protection Gender and Accountability to Affected People. September 2022. iii) WFP. 2022. Protection Gender and Accountability to Affected People in WFP Myanmar Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022) Implementation. September 2022.

¹³⁷ Additional data received by email include the following examples: i) care with communications linked to HIV/TB programming to avoid identifying beneficiaries as being HIV positive; ii) consultation with LGBTQIA+ CSO and UNFPA LGBTQIA+ specialist on the options for collecting data on gender identity and sexual orientation, including discussion at inter-agency level with agenda item requested by WFP; iii) recognizing that the greater risk to LGBTQIA+ people affected by COVID-19 is being overlooked by well-wishers and in the response (due to often not being registered in urban area but being unwilling/unable to return to home village where ARVs are less available), and providing work opportunities in the Yangon warehouse and hiring people to do conduct beneficiary awareness raising on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; and iv) conducting a staff session on the LGBTQIA+ inclusion Module 8 in September 2022.

¹³⁸ WFP. 2021. PGAAP updates.

198. This risk focus has been aided by the growing PGAAP capacity, though it remains limited in relation to demand. The WFP PGAAP team responsible for protection at the country office level has grown from one or two people in 2017 to five in 2023. Focal points are present in each field office, though some focal points are allocated only 10 percent of their time to work on PGAAP issues and only three are full-time. Stand-by partners and some consultancies have shored up country office capacity at times, although they may lack key prior experience of the Myanmar or WFP. Other challenges have been attracting applicants for some positions or obtaining visas, where international staff may be less exposed to bias or perception of bias for certain protection roles.

199. WFP prioritized protection in relief operations and specifically in Rakhine up to 2020. The growth in capacity has been outstripped by the expansion of the scale of programming. Some economies of scale have been achieved through technology, such as helplines and data analysis, however the work is dependent on building human relations at the community level.

Participation of partners in informing WFP protection analysis.

Summary (5.2b): The clusters and joint assessments are fully used by WFP to monitor and plan on the basis of protection and accountability standards. Cooperating partners make significant contributions to WFP analysis of local protection risks.

200. The participation of WFP¹³⁹ in inter-agency consultations at field and national levels is valued by external stakeholders for locations that have not been accessible. Of particular note has been the agreement of WFP as co-leader of the Food Security Cluster, to integrate protection indicators into its 2023 workplan, one of the first clusters to do so.

201. The case study visits found that partners make significant contributions to WFP analysis of area-based protection risks. The context and analysis that cooperating partners are able to share is enabled by their staff having time to build trust, and to listen to and engage with communities in informal data collection. Important measures have included protection training by WFP for its partners, including transporters in Rakhine, which was carried out in the local language and tailored to local risks. The increasing range of types of partners in the operation makes this even more important as organizations enter into WFP partnerships with less experience in the humanitarian sector than some INGOs and others with which WFP partners.

202. Important spaces to discuss and identify risks and challenges include joint missions between PGAAP and programme staff. Other strengths are supporting protection training for staff and partners in local languages and tailored to local risks, as described under EQ1.1 and EQ3.3.

203. Use of community feedback to help identify protection risks is discussed under EQ 5.3 below.

Adaptation of the programme to address protection challenges

Summary (5.2c): Digital technology, training and careful drafting of contracts are the main ways in which protection challenges are avoided. However, provisions for protection responsibilities and activities do not feature in the budgets allocated to cooperating partners.

204. Extortion is one of the top protection risks identified by inter-agency mechanisms, for example in some camps in central Rakhine.¹⁴⁰ Evidence shows that WFP has long been aware of the risk of extortion. Interviews report that WFP has made efforts to ensure this is a subject discussed at inter-agency level. Minutes of community engagement mechanism focal points dating back to 2020 show a dedicated meeting to discuss the challenge of some food committees acting without integrity in their role and steps needing to be taken by different offices, notably Kachin and Rakhine, which had the highest number of beneficiaries. Steps included changing the composition of food committee members, dissolution of food committees completely in some cases, and training and support in others.

¹³⁹ On participation of affected populations, see EQ 5.3.

¹⁴⁰ i) UNHCR. 2022. *CCCM protection dashboard, Complaint Response Mechanism, Central Rakhine, August 2022*. ii) UNHCR Protection Cluster. 2022. *Extortion Snapshot, Central Rakhine, December 2022*.

205. Technology may assist in future with a potential resumption of the e-transfers plan. The much-delayed implementation of SCOPE will go ahead in Rakhine in 2023. The use of biometric data for registration is anticipated to reduce the space for extortion and fraud, though it also brings up some new data privacy risks.

206. Field-level agreements with partners include annexes in English and Burmese detailing their responsibilities for security as well as for data collection and management. Guiding principles for PGAAP were also attached to contracts; though in the example seen by the evaluation team, this was only in English.

207. Protection responsibilities and activities are not always included in partners' budgets, which is a concern. WFP corporate field-level agreement formats do not have separate budget lines for costs associated with protection for human resources or equipment. Sub-office budgets include protection-relevant items for cooperating partners, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), but this is limited. WFP physically provided PPE items to partners through the field offices in the initial phase of the pandemic. Later, WFP asked partners to include PPE items in their field-level agreement budget unless cooperating partners received PPE from their mother organization. However, other costs associated with identifying and responding to protection risks, principally staff time, are not explicitly included in WFP support to partners.

208. Partner interviews indicated that sometimes partner provisions for protection have been cut. In budgets reviewed there were no specific mentions of partner staff with responsibilities for security or protection, in spite of the skillset needed. A lack of financing is a concern, given the importance of partners' analysis for WFP protection planning. It is especially important in locations where there are no other organizations with an explicit protection mandate to whom WFP can refer.

EQ 5.3: How does WFP ensure accountability to affected populations?

Evolution and application of the accountability to affected populations system

Summary (5.3a): There has been a progressive expansion of the community engagement mechanism to receive feedback from affected populations demonstrating commitment to ensure context relevance and programme quality. Use of the community engagement mechanism is still challenged by low beneficiary awareness of its existence and technology limitations, while its coverage has lagged behind the growing operation. The role of cooperating partners in accountability to affected populations is significant and valued but not currently maximised.

209. The expansion and upgrading of AAP systems demonstrates a commitment to ensure context relevance and programme quality.¹⁴¹ The launch in 2020 of a community engagement mechanism was preceded by a complaints and feedback mechanism in 2016-2017, itself built on more informal and less systematic approaches. The community engagement mechanism system was made to focus more on community engagement than complaints (in contrast with the corporate approach) in order to be more culturally appropriate in a context where beneficiaries are reluctant to complain about assistance. WFP Myanmar's community engagement mechanism covers three key areas: information provision; consultation and participation; and feedback and improvements. A range of different methods have been used to engage with the community and these have evolved over time, including in response to changes in context such as at the time of COVID-19 restrictions. Methods combine in-person means of interaction with remote methods by phone, SMS, feedback boxes, radio communication and others. Over the past two years, the scope of the community engagement mechanism has broadened from its initial focus on emergency assistance (SO1) to cover SO2 and SO3. There have been regular updates of the community engagement mechanism guidance and standard operating procedures for partners and area offices. The SugarCRM software was adopted to improve case management, as well as tablet-based data collection.¹⁴² WFP added MODA, KoboToolbox and ODK as software alternatives, and created a dashboard.¹⁴³ This ensured

¹⁴¹ Additional detail to the development of the system is in Annex 1.6, Protection and AAP timelines.

¹⁴² SugarCRM is a customer relationship management software used by WFP to manage feedback from recipients of assistance. MODA stands for Mobile Operation Data Acquisition and is a mobile application used by WFP for data collection in the field. KoboToolbox and ODK (Open Data Kit) are other applications for conducting surveys.

¹⁴³ WFP. 2022. NFR CEM Advisory Group Meeting. May 2022.

cooperating partners could introduce cases and be assigned cases to follow up - but not see closed cases, run reports or close cases.

210. Information regarding WFP assistance and the community engagement mechanism itself has been provided to affected populations through posters and other printed materials. These are complemented by in-person helpdesks at distributions, announcements during the distribution, and through information communication via cooperating partners.

211. However, the 2021-2022 monitoring data for protection found that less than 50 percent of the WFP target population in peri-urban Yangon felt well informed about their entitlements and assistance, including its duration, eligibility and other crucial factors. This stood in stark contrast to other indicators, for which annual country reports show near 100 percent achievement of targets – for example, the targets for proportion of people receiving assistance unhindered, without safety concerns and with dignity.¹⁴⁴ While consultations with the country office found that specific conditions around the operation exacerbated the challenge for communication (for example, due to its fast-moving nature, scaling up by over one million persons in a few months), the example of the situation in Yangon highlights the need for communication approaches that can cope with such situations.

212. A dedicated community engagement mechanism manager was recruited in 2021 and a series of focal points identified in each field office. Some sub-offices have developed and expanded their own hotlines. When new operations began, such as the peri-urban programmes, a new dedicated hotline was established. However, this was initially overwhelmed as rumours circulated rapidly that it enabled people to be added to the beneficiary list.

213. There are limitations to using the phone as a feedback channel. Public data show that mobile connections in Myanmar exceed 100 percent of the total population, but WFP staff estimate that in fact around one third of the population does not use a phone and men are more likely to own and have access to a phone than women. Also, while quantitative data enable trends to be observed, they may create a distortion due to a bias to show gratitude. This implies that more qualitative processes are crucial, which WFP intends to address.¹⁴⁵ In-depth consultations complement feedback by phone but may have been prevented by contact restrictions imposed during COVID-19 and following the military takeover. This reduced the potential for in-person contact in some locations and increased the reliance on remote methods, including the hotline.

214. The corporate software for case management of individual complaints and queries (SugarCRM) has caused many issues, some of which have remained unresolved after two years. Problems include its limited reliability, sometimes exposing data for one country to another country's team, undermining privacy. In addition, the fact that each individual user of the system needs a personal license makes it an inflexible system in a context where agility is key. These issues have been raised at headquarters in Rome but remain unresolved.

215. Cooperating partners play an important role in promoting both WFP and inter-agency systems for accountability to affected populations, and sometimes also run their own systems. The limited funding provided by WFP in partnership contracts means they often fund these activities themselves.

Accessibility of WFP systems

Summary (5.3b): While the community engagement mechanism is actively used by affected populations primarily for inclusion into beneficiary lists, the expansion of the coverage is proportionately very small in relation to the (expanding) number of beneficiaries and is mainly linked to two sub-offices.

216. The number of people using the community engagement mechanism (CEM) has increased year-on-year, both in terms of absolute numbers but also geographically, suggesting improving access.¹⁴⁶ In 2018, the number of complaints or feedback cases amounted to 1,102 emanating from 356 women and 691 men

¹⁴⁴ Annex 1.6 provides detail on these indicators.

¹⁴⁵ At the corporate level the issue of collecting and using qualitative data has been on and off the table since 2020, but little progress has been made so far.

¹⁴⁶ i) WFP. 2022. CEM data 2020-2022- trends. ii) WFP. 2018-2022. ACR 2018-2022.

beneficiaries. By October 2022, the CEM system was dealing with nearly 24,700 individual cases,¹⁴⁷ increasing at a faster rate than the beneficiary caseload. Cases increased almost five times between 2018 and 2021 and by 64 percent between 2020 and 2021, with queries and complaints about inclusion on beneficiary lists the most frequent subject. Furthermore, not all engagement with communities is reported in the system, with informal contact of cooperating partners at the community level not quantified.

217. Annual country reports show a higher level of usage of the CEM among men than women but the difference in levels has reduced from 2018 to 2021. In 2019, women made up approximately 38 percent of CEM users. By 2022, there were nearly equal participation rates (which may be attributable to factors other than WFP, of course). The participation of persons with disabilities in the CEM is still low. It stood at 3 percent in 2021, which is considered in WFP analysis to be low, particularly, when 13 percent of the overall population has disabilities.¹⁴⁸

218. Among the CEM users with disabilities there were 7 percent more women than men (2021 data) and they were more likely to be elderly (20 percent, compared to 11 percent for households without persons with disabilities). Efforts to ensure that the CEM system is inclusive include visits to people with disabilities, cooperation with organisations providing services for people with disabilities, and proactive outreach to women.

219. Despite the expanded scope of the CEM, numbers engaged are still small in relation to the growing scope. Beneficiary numbers increased significantly from 2020 to reach 2.9 million in 2021 (targeting over 3.4 million in 2022). While the pace of scaling up of CEM has been impressive, contact on record with communities is still with a very small proportion of recipients of assistance (less 0.1 percent).

220. The vast majority of CEM users in 2020 came through Sittwe and Myitkyina. These offices made up over 1,000 users of the nearly 1,200 people providing feedback in 2020. Later in 2021, they were joined by Yangon, when the peri-urban programme and CEM system geared up. The mechanism has broadened its accessibility through including people targeted for WFP assistance as part of SO2 and SO3, (non-relief activities). This focus was appropriate given the scale and complexity of humanitarian issues in Rakhine and limited resources in the national PGAAP team.

221. WFP implements quality assurance processes on its CEM systems. The main means for this is a survey of people who have made a complaint in order to assess their satisfaction levels and how their complaint was dealt with. In 2021, the WFP CEM quality assurance report found a nearly 100 percent satisfaction rate with the mechanism service and how cases were managed.¹⁴⁹ However, people may be reluctant to complain further, and the sample was just 100 respondents.

222. Community consultations during the evaluation found that community members consulted were comfortable to use engagement methods with some preference for face-to-face methods, letters and the hotline. Feedback boxes were found not to be trusted in all contexts, due to a lack of privacy.

223. Some WFP programme staff expressed doubts about the extent of communities' access to, understanding of and, most importantly, comfort with using the system. In low-access areas, the challenges to accountability are accentuated, which increases the importance of qualitative feedback via cooperating partners.

Responsiveness – use of the community engagement mechanism for accountability and programme improvement

Summary (5.3c): The country office has been expanding the qualitative information it receives about the appreciation of the community engagement mechanism, and actively tracks the high degree of processing of complaints.

¹⁴⁷ SugarCRM. 2022. CEM: General information panel, October 2022.

¹⁴⁸ WFP. 2022. Protection Gender and Accountability to Affected People Analysis, WFP Myanmar Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022), Summary Highlights Report.

¹⁴⁹ WFP. 2022. Protection Gender and Accountability to Affected People Analysis, WFP Myanmar Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022), Summary Highlights Report.

224. WFP tracks the number of open cases and the time taken to respond to them as well as user satisfaction. Quality is reflected in the example that in Quarter 4 of 2021 only 165 queries out of over 1300 cases were still open at the end of the quarter.¹⁵⁰ A challenge in responding to complaints received through referral systems from other agencies comes from the absence of details to enable WFP to follow up on individual cases. External stakeholders indicated that cross-agency referral is an area that will be a focus of inter-agency work in 2023.

225. Several examples illustrate the county office team’s responsiveness to CEM findings. The Myanmar country office has integrated qualitative aspects into the dashboards. This is a time-consuming process done manually but is valuable for relevance of the content. Active encouragement by senior management, clear presentations and analysis, and advice to work through the CEM data implications have enabled adjustments.

Box 3: Examples of community engagement mechanism data use in 2021-2022

- A change in the composition of rice distributions was made to reduce the proportion of broken rice provided from 25 percent to 15 percent. This change was made due to sustained complaints about the quality, the reported higher cost of cooking the broken rice and the difficulty of chewing it, particularly for older people, thus reducing its nutritional value. The case illustrates the level of effort needed to make change, as responding to such a change has knock-on implications for the supply chain as well as the programme. The overall process was relatively fast from the provision of information from the CEM to the change in practice in WFP. It was approximately four months, which, given the complexity of changing the composition of rations, is good.
- CEM provided evidence that contribution towards change in transfer values for CBT is particularly important, as prices fluctuated in 2021 and the purchasing power of the original entitlement had reduced.
- CEM data contributed to enhancements to key messages and frequently asked questions (FAQs) to address confusion during the banking liquidity crisis.
- CEM data highlighted integrity issues and poor behaviour, which led to the reform of community committees.

Source: WFP. 2021-2022. CEM Results.

2.6. EFFICIENCY

EQ 6.1: To what extent were the required resources (financial and human) available when needed and how well was their use monitored?

Degree of match between human resources needed and those available

Summary (6.1a): WFP has broadly secured adequate human resources for its operation. This was achieved through flexible approaches. Staff and senior management operate under conditions of high pressure. Areas requiring further attention include a clearer rationale for staffing levels and a better tracking of staffing composition by additional characteristics such as ethnicity. Recruitment of specialized staff is a challenge, and the effective deployment of international staff is affected by entry and travel restrictions.

226. As illustrated in Figure 11, staffing levels dropped up to 2020, followed by an expansion. The staff headcount¹⁵¹ grew by 14 percent over the evaluation period, with an acceleration of 33 percent to the end of 2022. Over 20 additional positions were added each year between 2020 and 2022.

227. While restructuring partly explains the drop in staff numbers in 2016 and 2017, the trends observed between 2018 and 2022 are linked to adjustments in operation. Between 2017 and 2019 emphasis was given to capacity building rather than relief. The increase since 2020 relates to the expansion

¹⁵⁰ WFP. 2021. CEM Quarterly report.

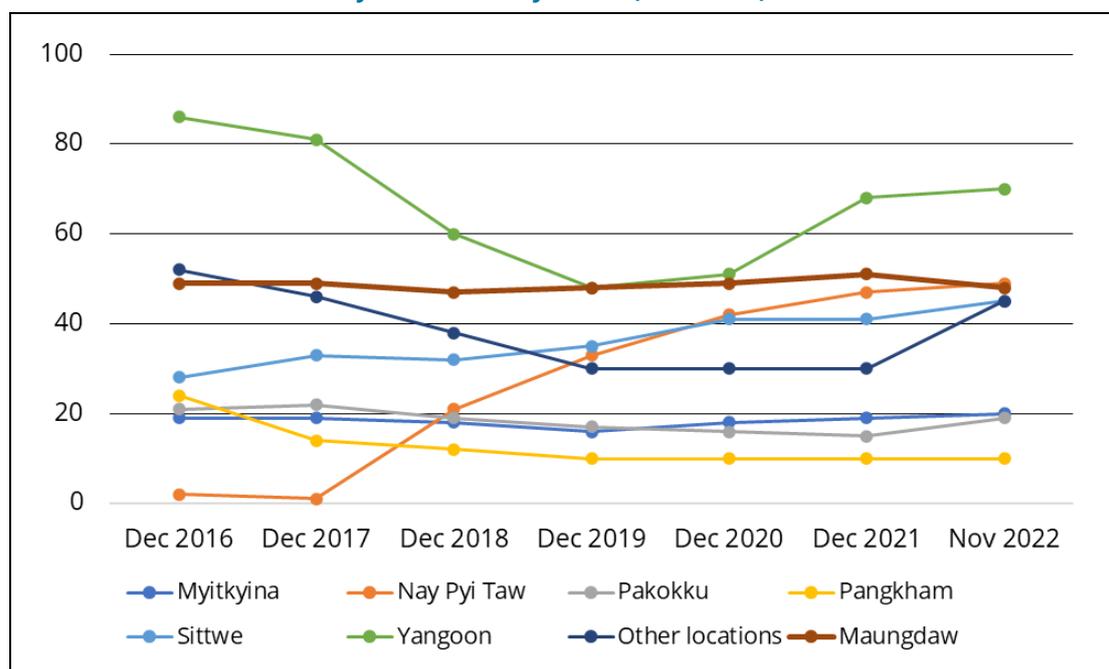
¹⁵¹ The term ‘staff’ discussed in this evaluation refers to employees irrespective of their contract type as employees or consultants, services contracts or special contract agreements.

of the emergency operation by a factor of three, with the number of planned beneficiaries under SO1 increasing from around 334,000 in the initial CSP needs-based plan to 2.8 million by the end of 2021 (BR08), and WFP expenditure increasing from USD 43.2 million in 2018 to USD 102.99 million in 2022.

228. The country office moved to Nay Pyi Taw in 2018 with national office functions associated with programme and representation. Other functions, including supply chain, finance and administration, remained in Yangon for reasons such as proximity to warehousing. Since 2021, Yangon has also housed an operational team to support the large-scale peri-urban programme. The proportion of staff in these two cities has increased from 33 percent in 2018 to 37 percent by 2022.

229. There have been more limited increases in staff numbers in sub-offices despite the growing scale of operations and responsibilities. Only the area office for Rakhine – the area of the largest operation at the time – shows a significant increase, from 32 in 2018 to 45 in 2022. An office like Pakokku, which is one of two offices with significant responsibilities for complex operations since the military takeover, had no significant increase in staff.

Figure 11: Number of WFP staff by location in Myanmar (2016-2022)



Source: Evaluation team analysis of WFP. 2022. Full list of staff provided by CO (November 2022). Other locations include: Hakham, Kalay (only 2016), Khamti (from 2017), Lashio, Loikaw (only 2022), and Mawlamyine.

230. Changes in staffing reflect efforts to ensure adequate capacity. The 2018 staff review recommended a reduction of 46 positions.¹⁵² The 2022 light staff review¹⁵³ put emphasis on sub-office capacity strengthening though recommending only a small staff increase in some sub-offices including Myitkyina, Pakokku and Rakhine.

231. Staffing reviews have been an important factor contributing to adequate human resource levels in the operation, though with limitations. Reviews were conducted annually up to 2018 but stopped until 2022.¹⁵⁴ Recommendations were implemented but a 2019-2020 audit critiqued insufficient documentation of the rationale for staffing levels. The audit found that organizational changes had not been accompanied by a capability mapping exercise to ensure appropriate skills to achieve the CSP.

232. The composition of staff shows some positive trends towards diversity. There has been some improvement in the proportion of women staff. The men-to-women ratio evolved from 63 percent in December 2017 to 58 percent men in November 2022. National staff made up 95 percent of the country

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ WFP. 2022. Light Staff Review.

¹⁵⁴ i) WFP. 2016-2018. Staff reviews 2016, 2017, 2018. ii) WFP. 2022. Light Staff Review.

office workforce by the end of 2022 compared to 92 percent in 2018, though the proportion of national officers (employees with longer term staff contracts) has slightly declined from 13 percent in 2018 to 10 percent in 2022.¹⁵⁵

233. Staff interviews indicate that some positions are judged to be better taken by international staff in order to ensure a higher perception of neutrality and independence. This includes local leadership positions such as in Rakhine, which is in a highly divided region. A 2019 audit critiqued the nationalization of some roles, such as head of human resources and finance.¹⁵⁶ The audit judged the change as premature and based on assumptions regarding the strategy that had not yet materialized, that is to say, that the shift towards capacity building would result in a reduced budget and headcount.

234. Securing the needed human resources has been challenging given the competitive job market in Myanmar pre-military takeover and the difficult operational context. Interviews indicate that there are difficulties in finding the expertise required – in particular specific roles for security, protection and information and communications technology (ICT).

235. Ethnicity is part of the dynamics of conflict and unrest in Myanmar. Interviews indicate that WFP operates a system of non-discrimination in recruitment to ensure all appointments are merit-based. However, some international staff stated that it is difficult for them to understand the implications of national identities for WFP staffing. This may result in staff patterns unintentionally misrepresenting the intent of the organization through a dominance of groups, either on a national or a local level. Given the sensitivities in the country, it is surprising to find this is not tracked.

236. The evaluation found in interviews that there were indications of stress and burnout caused by the sustained workload and working conditions during COVID-19 (associated with working from home and in relative isolation from work colleagues) as well as working in the post-military takeover environment. This impacted national staff in particular.

237. Various initiatives contributed to people's well-being, in line with the 2021 people policy that encourages the provision of learning and development opportunities for all staff.¹⁵⁷ While the extent to which people took these opportunities was variable, it was a welcome steer. A staff well-being committee has included activities such as stress management sessions and advice on how to achieve a work-life balance. Peer well-being officers were established in each office. While management was mindful of the importance of these initiatives, the evaluation found that most systems to support staff well-being have been stretched in the past two years and need a refresh in 2023.

238. A "Respect+ Process" corporate initiative to ensure understanding was launched in 2020 but has only been rolled out, mainly since July 2022.¹⁵⁸ Some staff found this a useful process and one that helped overcome some hierarchical divisions and cross-cultural misunderstandings.¹⁵⁹

239. Staff retention was low among national staff in the first half of the CSP. Turnover fell from a high number of departures (61) in 2017 to an average of 20 each year, making up less than 10 percent of the staffing total.¹⁶⁰

240. Filling international positions has been particularly difficult since the military takeover.¹⁶¹ Even when successful appointments were made, delays for visas resulted in some candidates withdrawing their application. WFP worked around this using remote deployments and short-term missions, but this has not been ideal as the roles require significant contextual knowledge and close working relationships. More generally, international staff turnover combined with very rare sub-office visits due to slow travel approval processes and security restrictions means that new people coming into the country office have very limited

¹⁵⁵ For details see Annex 1.7, quantitative efficiency analysis.

¹⁵⁶ WFP. 2020. *Internal audit of WFP operations in Myanmar*. Office of the Inspector General, Internal Audit Report AR/20/11.

¹⁵⁷ WFP. 2021. *People Policy (2021-2025)*.

¹⁵⁸ WFP. 2022. *Human Resources, Respect process PowerPoint pillars 1, 2, 3*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ WFP. 2022. *HR separation data 2017-2022*.

¹⁶¹ The UN decided to evacuate international dependents on 30 March 2021 and Myanmar became a non-family duty station for WFP.

opportunities to meet sub-office staff in-person, which sometimes makes it harder to understand and trust fellow staff members and to work well together. This aspect does not seem to be captured in staffing reviews.

Degree of match between needed and available financial resources

Summary (6.1b): WFP secured adequate financial resources for its operation, especially its emergency response. This was aided by the country office's strong investment in building relationships with donors and timely adjustments during CSP implementation. While some flexibility of funding has been achieved at the overall level, earmarking of funding, including geographic earmarking, still represents a challenge for the WFP operation in Myanmar.

241. Although the picture varies across activities, between 2018 and 2022, WFP raised 93 percent on average of its annual implementation plans (varying between 79 percent (2020) and 137 percent (2018) across the years) and nearly two thirds of the needs-based plan for the CSP period.¹⁶² This is a relatively good level of funding and compares well with the overall humanitarian response plan.

242. WFP secured excellent coverage of resources for its emergency response, but struggled, both before and after the military takeover, to secure funding for its capacity strengthening and resilience activities. Activity 1 (unconditional resource transfer) secured over 75 percent of its overall needs-based plan across the CSP's first five years (2018-2022) and 106 percent of the sum of annual implementation plans for the same time period. However, activities 3 (school feeding), 4 (assets creation) and 9 (assistance for people living with HIV/TB) attained funding equal to 22-36 percent of their needs-based plans.

243. The low financial coverage of the initial needs-based plan, but better coverage of annual implementation plans for activities 3, 4 and 9 over five years, reflects significant re-budgeting and de-prioritization of the latter activities. WFP would have been able to cover a higher percentage of the needs in these areas if further and timely funds had been available.

244. Overall, investment in time and energy to help donors better understand WFP programmes, operational context and funding needs has paid off. Strategies included the provision of regular, informal information to key donors through various methods (for example, e-bulletins), regular meetings, the facilitation of visits to WFP activities, and general relationship building.

245. In its reports, advocacy and discussions, WFP dwelled heavily on the level of earmarking of funding, which constrained its flexibility to respond rapidly to new needs in new places. This features in all annual country reports and is mentioned routinely in discussions on funding. The sustained advocacy by WFP for flexible funding and its clear communication of priorities, including just after the military takeover,¹⁶³ have led to an increasing number of donors moving towards flexible funding. Overall, however, a significant proportion of funding remained earmarked at least in relation to the factors formally tracked by WFP corporately: flexible funding varied between 22 percent in 2022 and 56 percent in 2021. These include funding with no earmarking at all or with earmarking only at the level of the CSP.¹⁶⁴ Some of the latter funding may be geographically targeted, as discussed below.

246. WFP interviews indicated that seven donors (in 2022) decreased the level of earmarking of their funding to reduced or no constraints, although these donors tend to provide smaller levels of funding relative to others who continued to earmark. The biggest donor has always provided funds earmarked at the activity level.

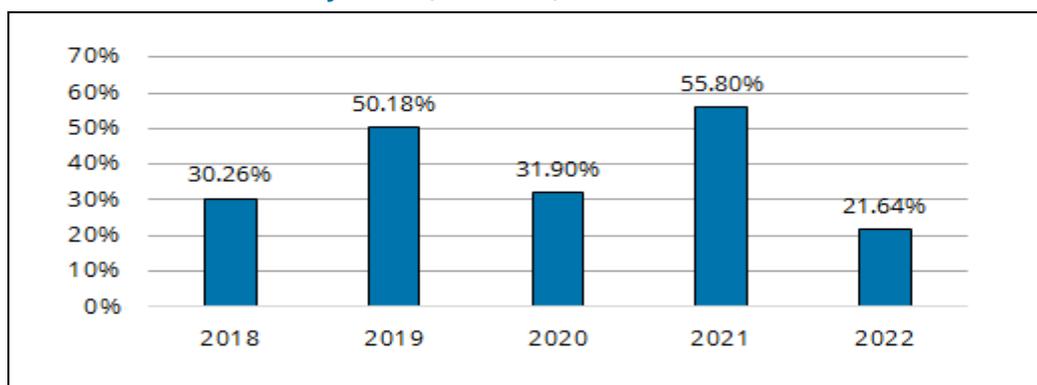
247. The overall proportion of flexible funding decreased in 2022 with a significant hike in donor earmarking to activity level (78 percent). However, interviews indicated this was predominantly for Activity 1, being prioritized for fundraising and implementation to donors by WFP itself.

¹⁶² See Annex 1.7, quantitative efficiency analysis, for details.

¹⁶³ For example: WFP. 2022. Operational Briefing to Humanitarian Donors Group, June 2022.

¹⁶⁴ See Annex 1.7, section 1 on availability of financial and human resources.

Figure 12: Aggregated share of flexible funding (including CSP-level earmarked funding) in total allocated contributions for CSP Myanmar (2018-2022)¹⁶⁵



Sources: Evaluation team analysis of the following data: i) Earmarked funding from WFP. 2023. WFP FACTory: Distribution Contribution and Forecast Stats (accessed on 15 January 2023); ii) Annual total allocated resources from WFP 2022. MN01 Annual Resources Situation Report (as of 31 December 2022); iii) Flexible funding was calculated as the difference between total allocated resources and the sum of all earmarked funding; iv) Years refer to contribution years, that is, the years in which the grants were made available for use by the donors.

248. Geographic earmarking, which is not identified in the corporate financial systems, has been an issue, with approximately 67 percent of received funds being geographically earmarked to a certain degree.¹⁶⁶ Geographic earmarking reduces the flexibility of the country office to respond to access opportunities when they arise. This is one of the principle constraints in the post-military takeover environment, with a less predictable access to affected populations.

249. Significant factors enabling the mobilization of appropriate resources in a timely manner included appropriate budget revisions when needed and use of internal advance financing mechanisms.

EQ 6.2: To what extent are WFP activities and outputs delivered within the intended timeframe? What are the factors that explain the timeliness of the initial WFP emergency response and following assistance?

Summary (6.2a): The evaluation found good levels of timeliness considering the challenges of the context and based on a review of operation responses, implementation of plans and levels of expenditure against plans for most activities. Levels of expenditure were adequate in most years for the largest activities indicating a successful scale-up. The restrictions on access to affected populations, in place most strictly since the military takeover, have been an important factor constraining CSP implementation. WFP has made good use of available financing options and taken other measures to ensure timeliness as far as possible. Overall, the country office's strong leadership translated into a flexible, innovative and problem-solving approach, which facilitated the smooth and relatively timely running of the operation in the constrained conditions.

250. As regards the timeliness of WFP responses to crises, the initial WFP response was rapid both for natural disasters and for conflict-related displacements. These were provided within days for the sample reviewed, particularly the distribution of high-energy biscuits. WFP has also scaled up quickly with new types of assistance or in new contexts.

251. A second measure used by the evaluation team was to review expenditure for different activities and how it relates to plans. This is a useful proxy for implementation rates. In 2018 and 2019, expenditure was below allocated resources – sometimes substantially – for all activities (Figure 13), possibly due to

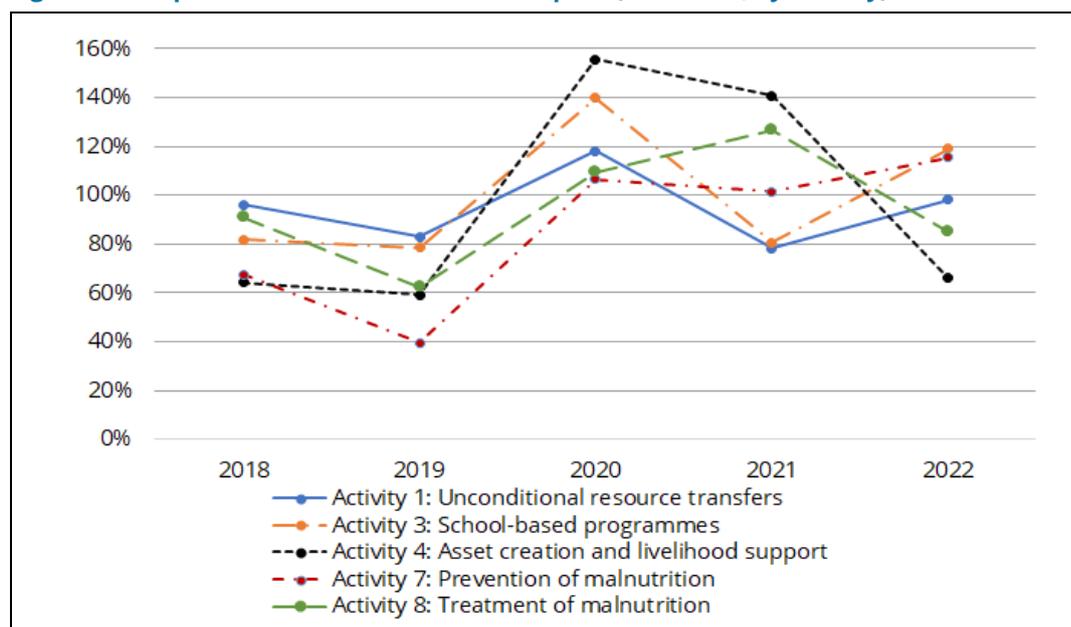
¹⁶⁵ Further details on efficiency analysis can be found in Annex 1.7.

¹⁶⁶ WFP Myanmar, Budget Programming Unit. 2018-2022. Contribution tracking matrix. Note: according to the contribution tracking matrix of the country office, the degree of geographic earmarking varies in terms of flexibility, from certain grants being earmarked to a specific location (e.g., Rakhine only) to others that are destined to emergency response areas. Other funds can be used for any geography in the country, except for peri-urban Yangon.

budgeting challenges (over-estimating costs). The annual rate for the entire country portfolio reached its minimum in 2019 (73 percent of expenditure of allocated resources)¹⁶⁷ before improving in 2020.

252. Activities 1 and 3 have achieved high levels of expenditure despite their expanded budget and targets in 2021 and 2022, indicating a successful scale-up of capacity. Activity 7 (preventive nutrition) had the lowest level of implementation against plans despite funds being available. This low rate of implementation was caused in part by the longer lead times for procurement. Inputs for these interventions are imported. Activities 5 and 6 were also low, affected by changes in the strategy, that is, suspension of many activities under Activity 6 following the military takeover and transit of Activity 5 beneficiaries in 2019 to Activity 9.

Figure 13: Proportion of allocated resources spent (2018-2022, by activity)¹⁶⁸



Source: Evaluation team analysis of WFP. 2023. CPB Resources Overview EV (accessed on 18 January 2023). Note: The figure only includes main activities, i.e., activities carried out in all years (2018-2022) and with a minimum NBP of USD 1 million in at least one year.

253. A key factor supporting timeliness in Myanmar has been the leadership and support for changes that country office management has provided. This leadership was key to identifying timely solutions to operational (for example, addressing access issues), contractual (for example, overcoming the limitations of WFP corporate field-level agreement formats) or financial (for example, ensuring financial liquidity) challenges faced during implementation.

254. Overall, one of the most constraining factors to timeliness has been the restrictions on access to affected populations: a requirement for travel authorization as well as separate authorizations needed to transport cash and goods with no guaranteed timeline for approvals, which, once received, are valid only for the month. Some international staff have not been able to visit sub-offices after six months or more in Myanmar. Moreover, the recruitment of international personnel has been hampered by major delays or even outright refusal of visas.

255. In some situations, WFP has joined inter-agency advocacy to promote access. For example, interviews with WFP and external stakeholders found that in Sittwe, the inter-agency group advocated for the reduction of checkpoints controlling access to the town in 2021-2022 and to secure assurance from the de facto authorities at state level of the availability of a person to issue travel authorizations. At other times

¹⁶⁷ See details in Annex 1.7.2 on Timeliness.

¹⁶⁸ Only the main activities are depicted (activities 1,3,4,7,8). Activities 2, 5, 9, 10, and 11 were only implemented in some years, and Activity 6 was very small. Full data for all activities are available in Annex 1.7, section 1 on availability of financial and human resources.

WFP has negotiated access directly through senior management. More frequently, sub-office staff negotiate for access.

256. Measures taken by WFP to increase the timeliness of assistance include: a) use of logistics capacity in-country and the ability to engage transporters; b) local procurement both in-country and where possible within the state in which the sub-office is located; c) use of revolving stocks as emergency supplies, for example, in the peri-urban Yangon immediate response in 2021; and d) expansion of warehouse capacity, bringing total capacity up to 15 warehouses in 11 locations, sufficient for storage of nearly 40,000 metric tons of goods.¹⁶⁹ In some cases when there was a pressing need to deliver (mostly emergency activities) and when the operations faced restrictions due to the absence or weakness of viable partners, WFP operated directly in interface with local stakeholders. More generally, direct implementation has been supported by calling on volunteers from identified civil society organizations to whom WFP provided incentives.

257. The Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) and Immediate Response Account (IRA) played a critical role in enabling the relatively rapid large-scale expansion of emergency response and the prevention of pipeline breaks. The country office has made frequent use of the Immediate Response Account to overcome funding allocation delays. A total of USD 71,305,533 in advance loans was accessed from Oct 2017 to June 2022 in 36 grants. Seven of these totalling USD 15,098,864 were not repaid but were converted to grants. The main non-repayments were from 2017-2018, so possibly used for the Rakhine response.¹⁷⁰ Since 2021 the GCMF funded early procurement. The GCMF also helped to purchase commodities at favourable prices.

258. WFP has also made good use of its own flexible funds, that is to say, those that are not earmarked by donors or provided by the WFP Strategic Resource Allocation Committee. They have been used to support the procurement of meals to returnees from Thailand on the border during COVID-19 in 2020. Some funds were also allocated to the procurement of items with a high nutrition value, which are imported, requiring a longer lead time.

259. WFP took an innovative and potentially high-risk approach to the disruption of banking services in early 2021. It drew on the status and negotiation skills of current and former staff in negotiations with Yoma bank. It transferred all banking business to this bank, which helped the treasury as the bank was willing to forward money to the country office while it was waiting approval from the Central Bank of Myanmar. This allowed payment to key suppliers in ways that reduced the impact of unfavourable exchange rates. The WFP approach provided more liquidity than was possible for other agencies, which diversified their banking custom. WFP efforts were crucial following the initial closure of, and later severe restrictions on, banking.

260. Short-term grants, some of which are only six months in duration, have a slow start-up rate, which does not take account of the time taken to put in place the field-level agreements and programme launch. Given that the country office Myanmar has taken on average 3.4 months to start expenditure on activity-level grants, this is problematic.

261. The evaluation found numerous examples of obstacles to grant implementation causing at least short-term delays. These were often area-specific and included restrictions on movement of goods and people. While the situation regarding expenditure rates varies from one grant to another, a significant number of grants – 16.52 percent of grants for the CSP period – hit their termination date with monies unspent.¹⁷¹ Although Activity 1 grants are characterized by a slow start, rapid implementation of the distribution once they start mean that it only made up 14.23 percent of funds unspent at terminal disbursement date.

262. A key factor supporting flexibility in Myanmar has been the county office's ability to overcome the limitations of WFP corporate field-level agreement formats with cooperating partners. The country office, in consultation with headquarters, has developed a system referred to by some interviewees as "shadow field-level agreements" (also variously described in country office interviews as "floating" or "standby" field-level

¹⁶⁹ WFP. 2023. Data provided by CO Supply Chain (REF- SC ppt from training materials from January 2023) and interviews.

¹⁷⁰ WFP Myanmar, Budget and Programming Unit. 2018-2022. Advance financing record.

¹⁷¹ See Annex 1.7 for the full quantitative efficiency analysis.

agreements) for use of a different modality that will increase transition between cash and in-kind. In effect this is an annex that prepares for an amendment in the field-level agreement in any one month when the original form of transfer is not feasible and so allows a more rapid shift to an alternative - usually a move from CBT to in-kind assistance.¹⁷²

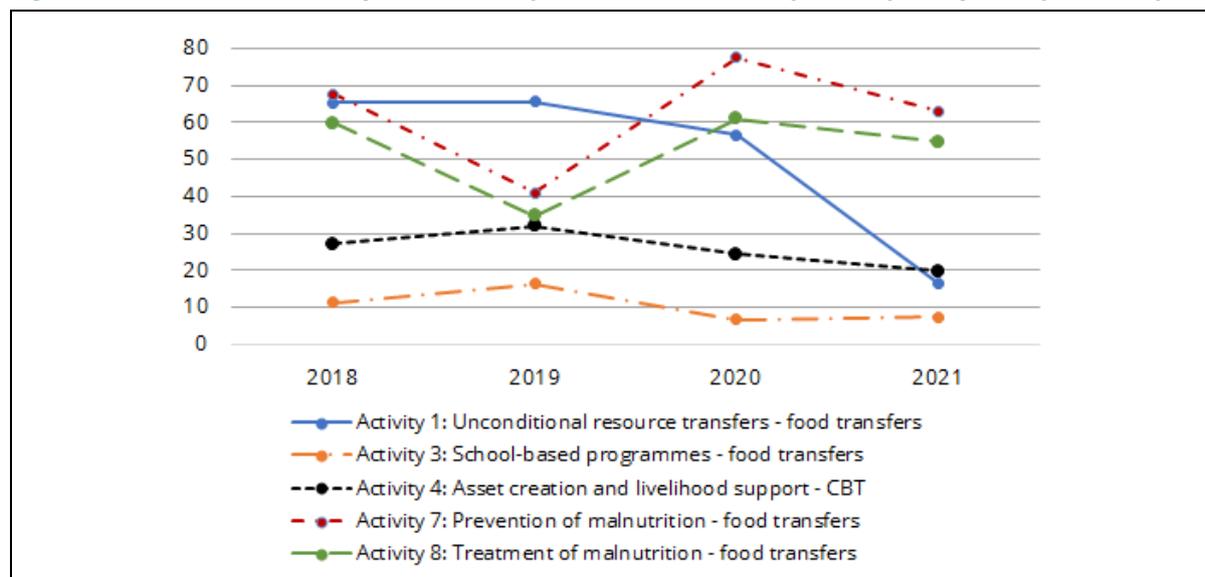
EQ 6.3: What are the factors that explain the cost efficiency of WFP assistance? How well was cost effectiveness considered in WFP decision making?

Cost efficiency in WFP assistance¹⁷³

Summary (6.3a): A range of factors under WFP control have improved the cost efficiency of the operation, including low supply chain losses, sound financial management (including exchange rates), improvements in information and data analysis, and technological developments. The Myanmar operation achieved economies of scale as the operation grew, particularly since 2020. The modest increase in staffing numbers compared to the expansion of the operation has also contributed to cost efficiency.

263. WFP maintained low costs per beneficiary (see Figure 14) in relation to WFP global average costs.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, each USD of transfer value received by beneficiaries required the country office to typically spend between 30 cents and 1 USD on transfer and implementation costs, with a downward trend observed after 2019 (see Figure 15).

Figure 14: Actual annual cost per beneficiary in USD (2018-2021, by activity and primary modality)



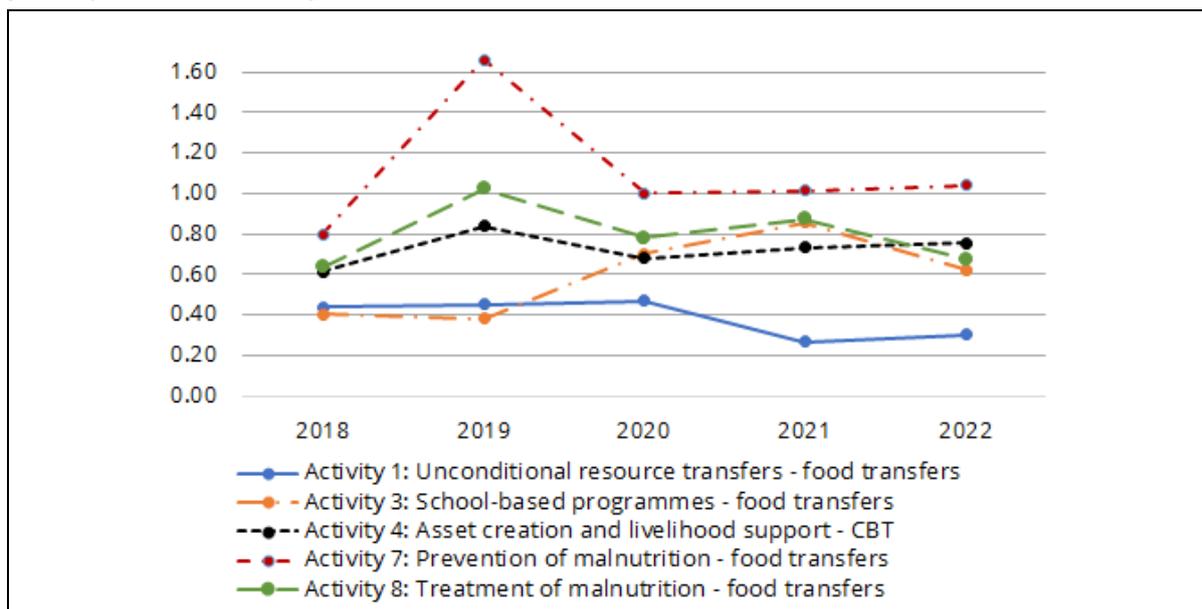
Sources: Evaluation team analysis of the following data: i) Myanmar (NBP and expenditure): WFP. 2018-2022. ACR-5 annual country reports; ii) Global: 2018-2021 (expenditures) from Statement V of WFP. 2019-2022. Audited Accounts 2018-2021. 2022 (planned) from Table III.5 of WFP. 2021. Management Plan 2022-2024. Note: Some activities, such as Activity 1, entail the transfer of emergency rations, which are not the full basket, and do not do monthly distribution. These aspects might have an impact on the total cost per beneficiary.

¹⁷² An example reviewed was the FLA with KMSS -Bamaw Jan-Dec 2021/14/ A2.

¹⁷³ OEV defines cost efficiency as the extent to which activities and outputs are delivered at the lowest possible cost, with attention to their quality and externalities.

¹⁷⁴ WFP. 2019-2022. *Annual Performance Reports 2018-2021*. Until 2020, the CBT category also included commodity vouchers while the 2021 CBT data are without commodity vouchers. Annual costs per beneficiary are only available in these reports from 2020.

Figure 15: Transfer and implementation costs per USD of transfer value (2018-2022, by activity and primary transfer modality)



Sources: Evaluation team analysis of the following data: i) Myanmar (NBP and expenditure): WFP. 2018-2022. ACR-5 annual country reports; ii) Global: 2018-2021 (expenditures) from Statement V of WFP. 2019-2022. Audited Accounts 2018-2021. 2022 (planned) from Table III.5 of WFP. 2021. Management Plan 2022-2024.

264. As illustrated in Box 4, a range of factors have impacted on the cost efficiency of operations. Overall, economies of scale are associated with the expansion of Activity 1 and CBT. The expansion to the relatively less costly operational setting of peri-urban Yangon, also contributed to reducing costs in the post-military takeover period. In addition, WFP was generally able to secure reasonable prices for inputs as well as increasingly ensure a cost-efficient management of activities post-military takeover.

265. Some measures facilitating timeliness have also impacted positively on cost efficiency. This was the case of the negotiations with financial service providers to facilitate payments and reduce exchange rate losses. Other improvements have been enabled by the use of digital management information systems, including Salesforce¹⁷⁵ to track donor trends, WINGS to track information on suppliers and support tender processes, and digital technology for data gathering.

Box 4: Some observations on cost efficiency at activity and modality levels from the evaluation’s overall quantitative efficiency analysis

The annual cost per beneficiary for Activity 1 (see Figure 14), but also the ratio of the total transfer and implementation costs to transfer value (see Figure 15), significantly decreased as the number of beneficiaries grew. This is likely linked to both economies of scale and the more economical operation in peri-urban Yangon.

For Activity 3, school feeding, transfer and implementation costs per USD transferred increased over 2019-2021. This may be explained by the adjustments made to the implementation approach during COVID-19 or other factors driving higher implementation costs or alternatively a reduced total transfer value from 2019 to 2021, possibly due to reduced numbers of students in each school or fewer meals per student.

Activities 7 and 8 (moderate acute malnutrition) are associated with high levels of annual cost per beneficiary in relation to other activities. Although they also show the highest transfer and implementation costs relative to transfer values, the difference is smaller in relation to other activities. This can be explained by nutritional inputs being relatively expensive compared to general food assistance, for example, so making a higher transfer value per beneficiary.

¹⁷⁵ Salesforce is WFP’s corporate tool for donor intelligence and forecasting.

Transfer and implementation costs were higher for in-kind transfers than for CBT. Costs for in-kind transfers (procurement, transport, storage, physical food distribution) were higher at all scales of implementation than for CBT. This means that CBT has been more cost-efficient to implement than the in-kind transfer in Myanmar (in common with global findings), though a detailed analysis could be done to take account of the range of ways CBTs are provided in the country, for example, cash-over-counter, cash-in-envelopes and e-transfers. The high cost efficiency levels for CBT, especially when there is a higher value transfer, add justification to the strategy for the planned increase by WFP of CBT as a proportion of assistance.¹⁷⁶

266. A significant contributing factor to the efficiency of the operation has been the very low rates of supply chain losses since 2018, which contrast to the previous years' results. Reports revealed a high level of losses in 2017, at triple the global average,¹⁷⁷ predominantly due to problems at the supplier stage (pre-delivery) and due to civil strife. From 2018, average losses in Myanmar compared very favourably with the WFP global average.¹⁷⁸ Local procurement, as close as possible to the distribution sites, was mentioned as one of the measures to reduce pre-delivery and transport-related losses.

267. Another factor contributing to cost efficiency has been the level of staffing, which has grown at a rate below the expansion of the operation. Most new staff positions have been national (less expensive than international staff), and while the proportion of staff covered by direct support costs (for example, information technology (IT) staff, human resources officers, business support assistants) has grown, the increase in direct support costs has been smaller than the scale of the budget of the operations (measured through total direct costs). The ratio of direct support costs to total direct costs declined from 5 percent in 2018 to 2.5 percent in 2022, reflecting economies of scale achieved.¹⁷⁹

Consideration of cost effectiveness in planning

Summary (6.3b): WFP has considered cost effectiveness through various implicit and explicit processes, including in the targeting and prioritization of assistance, and in the choice of modalities. However, cost effectiveness analyses were not systematic and rarely included in reviews and evaluations.

268. Cost effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention contributes to its intended outcome at the lowest possible costs.¹⁸⁰ Interviews show that WFP has considered cost effectiveness aspects in its decision making. This has happened through various implicit and explicit processes and was particularly visible in modality selection, for example, through consideration of transfer values, specific costs associated with the modality and the proportion of general overhead costs absorbed.¹⁸¹

269. The country office used beneficiary and client satisfaction information on effectiveness for decisions. For example, there was careful exploration of acceptability to beneficiaries of cash-over-the-counter in the Shan emergency response in 2020.¹⁸² Similar consultations took place when deciding the modality for assistance provision in Rakhine (following the 2022 suspension of food assistance)¹⁸³ and in developing the WFP response to the introduction of the "know your customer" regulation. Beneficiary

¹⁷⁶ WFP. 2022. WFP Global Operational Response Plan, Update #5.

¹⁷⁷ Overall, 1.65 percent (702 mt) of the total food distribution was lost, triple the global average. Losses were predominantly due to problems at the supplier stage (pre-delivery) and due to civil strife. Sources: i) Data for Myanmar: CO and evaluation team analysis of: WFP. 2023. *Losses report provided by CO Myanmar*; ii) Global data from: WFP. 2022. Report, sub-section on *Global Losses for the Period from 1 January to 31 December 2021*; iii) Data for 2017 refer to PRRO 200299. iv) Data for 2018-2022 refer to the Myanmar CSP. Notes: Pre-delivery losses are those that occur before legal title to food passes to a government, usually at the first delivery point in the recipient country. Post-delivery losses are those that occur after food arrives in a recipient country and before it is distributed to people in need.

¹⁷⁸ Some caution is called for in relying on the figures in any absolute way, given the limitations on WFP monitoring in some places due to access constraints.

¹⁷⁹ Calculations of the evaluation team based on: WFP. 2018-2022. ACR-5 annual country reports.

¹⁸⁰ WFP. 2021. Technical Note on Evaluation of Efficiency in Country Strategic Plan Evaluations.

¹⁸¹ WFP. 2022. Transfer modality and selection mechanism.

¹⁸² WFP. 2022. Decentralized evaluation. WFP's relief food and cash assistance for conflict affected people in Kachin and Northern Shah.

¹⁸³ WFP. 2022. NFR, Transfer modality and mechanism selection recommendation.

feedback led to stopping the expansion of e-money in certain areas. The provision of common services by WFP placed an emphasis on tracking customer satisfaction with logistics through annual surveys.

270. However, these data remain too limited to formally and systematically rely on for cost effectiveness considerations. Evaluations and reviews rarely included efficiency or cost effectiveness as key questions.¹⁸⁴

EQ 6.4: How well does WFP identify and manage risks to operations?

Use of corporate systems and tools

Summary (6.4a): WFP responded consistently and appropriately to the continually evolving risk environment. This has generated increasingly detailed analysis and measures, with remaining gaps progressively identified and addressed. The attentive oversight and advisory role of RBB has been key, while headquarters and the United Nations System and Multilateral Engagement Division (NYC) have not consistently provided policy guidance and advocacy support.

271. To summarize the risks mentioned previously across the report, using the principle categories of WFP enterprise risk management, one finds:

- **strategic:** skill shortages due to difficulties in recruitment and retention; public misinformation about WFP activities; restrictive donor funding; prevalence of conflict and economic crisis;
- **operational:** difficulty in applying safeguards and providing support to cooperating partners in many remote areas; difficulties in monitoring remote areas;
- **fiduciary:** personal safety concerns; high pressure on staff psycho-social well-being; risk of misappropriation of resources; and
- **financial:** price volatility; banking and financial transfer restrictions.

272. The evolving operation (even within modalities such as for cash-in-envelopes and e-transfers) has exposed the operation to new risks. In response, WFP Myanmar's risk management evolved significantly during the CSP time, guided by the WFP Enterprise Risk Management Policy,¹⁸⁵ and the three-lines of defence model (updated in 2020),¹⁸⁶ which emphasise the proactive contribution, communication and collaboration across different levels of responsibility.

273. The WFP Enterprise Risk Management Policy articulates that WFP will push forward to reach affected people with assistance when possible but without putting staff and its finances at high risk. At a strategic level this is reflected in senior management priorities, for which RBB oversight and support has been unwavering. RBB has provided frequent and specific support to the country office in navigating the fraught environment and assessing mitigation measures. The provision of some key RBB staff on temporary duty assignments (TDY) has also bolstered country office capacity and helped to build RBB understanding and working relationships between the teams.

274. Headquarters' "second line of defence" inputs have been more mixed, constrained by distance and access. While some country office units commented positively on the practical support from colleagues in headquarters (for example for the development of flexibility in field-level agreements), others describe limited understanding and strategic input by headquarters. Areas of shortfall confirmed through interviews include:

- a) senior management guidance in navigating engagement with de facto authorities under international sanctions, considering the shortage of written guidance in this area despite other country precedents;

¹⁸⁴ i) WFP. 2017. *Evaluation Report: Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200299*. "Supporting Transition by Reducing Food Insecurity and Undernutrition among the Most Vulnerable". ii) WFP. 2020. *Decentralized evaluation. WFP's relief food and cash assistance for conflict affected people in Kachin and Northern Shah*. iii) WFP. 2021. *Mid-term review of Myanmar CSP*.

¹⁸⁵ WFP. 2018. Enterprise Risk Management Policy.

¹⁸⁶ WFP. 2020. What's New: the "Three Lines Mode" replaces the Three Lines of Defence.

- b) advocacy support to increase humanitarian space. Respondents describe the potentially complementary roles for headquarters and the United Nations System and Multilateral Engagement Division to complement country office advocacy; and
- c) practical support to address staff recruitment challenges, in particular finding ways to retain staff while waiting for visas so that successful appointments are not lost.

275. WFP Myanmar has reviewed its risk matrices every six months,¹⁸⁷ intending to move to a quarterly system. The annual matrices for 2019-2022 demonstrate increasing detail for risk definition, controls and mitigation measures.¹⁸⁸ A dynamic first line of defence management exists that is partially documented through specific risk matrices for particular decisions.¹⁸⁹

276. A 2019 internal audit identified shortcomings, such as the lack of a process to assess the multiplicity of assistance modalities. The country office responded with some delays due in part to COVID-19.¹⁹⁰ A 2022 assessment by RBB highlighted other areas to address, such as the frequency of the resource management committee meetings, staffing levels for budget and planning, and the need to accelerate spending of the Immediate Response Account.¹⁹¹ Interviews found that these issues are being addressed by the country office.

277. Analysis of risks to beneficiaries is undertaken for new programming and contexts, for example scenarios for Rakhine over 2019-2021,¹⁹² and the continuation of school feeding following the military takeover.¹⁹³ Testing on a small scale is used, such as for new types of CBT in northern Shan.¹⁹⁴ While WFP was critiqued in the 2019 internal audit for not adequately assessing pilots, this was rectified from 2021-2022. Additional measures to manage risks include due diligence on cooperating partners and suppliers (such as financial service providers), and informal checks with key contacts in an area before travelling.¹⁹⁵

278. Some changes to reduce health risks or address access restrictions increased risk elsewhere. For example, the shift to remote monitoring of beneficiaries increased the risk of fraud (because identities of respondents could not be checked) and overlooked important cultural feedback.¹⁹⁶

Inclusiveness of risk management processes

Summary (6.4b): The high degree of risk awareness and well-developed systems are primarily focussed on WFP staff in-country, who show a detailed knowledge of the risk environment. There is an explicit transfer of risks from WFP to cooperating partners but what support can be provided by WFP should risks be realized remains unclear and cooperating partners' risk management costs are only covered by WFP to a limited extent.

279. Weekly meetings involving all key strategic outcome, activity and sub-office heads provide a regular forum for sharing contextual and operational developments and concerns. These meetings inform the whole team's contextual understanding and support a collective risk management approach. They also help inform rapid decisions, such as when a travel authorization is granted. Sign-off processes relating to fund

¹⁸⁷ Only the annual versions of the risk matrices were seen by the evaluation team.

¹⁸⁸ WFP. 2019-2022. CO Myanmar risk matrix 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022.

¹⁸⁹ WFP. 2022. Example risk matrix - Developed for Kalay, in response to a request from Pakokku area office to undertake an LP operation in September 2022.

¹⁹⁰ WFP. 2020. *Internal audit of WFP operations in Myanmar*. Office of the Inspector General, Internal Audit Report AR/20/11; Summary of OI observations and CO responses (updated 5th August 2021).

¹⁹¹ WFP. 2022. RBB Budget and Planning Oversight Report, August 2022.

¹⁹² WFP CO Myanmar. 2020. Working Document on Protection Dilemmas and Scenarios for WFP's Response in Rakhine State, October 2020.

¹⁹³ WFP Myanmar, School feeding programme team. 2022. Orientation to WFP School feeding programme, August 2022.

¹⁹⁴ WFP. 2020. Decentralized evaluation. WFP's relief food and cash assistance for conflict affected people in Kachin and Northern Shan.

¹⁹⁵ WFP. 2022. Example risk matrix - Developed for Kalay, in response to a request from Pakokku area office to undertake an LP operation in September 2022.

¹⁹⁶ It should be noted that this approach of remote monitoring was agreed during the COVID-19 response – see WFP. 2022. *Evaluation of WFP's COVID-19 Response*.

release and travel are used to manage risks. This sustained communication and interaction is in line with the WFP Enterprise Risk Management Policy.

280. Sub-office staff display detailed knowledge of the risk environment. This is less documented than at country office level, outside mandatory measures. Such analysis is shared in meetings and ad hoc communication.

281. Peer and management support have been provided within the country. Security, data management and information and communications technology briefings are provided to staff. The country office team includes specialist staff, for example, in protection, security, data privacy and information and communications technology. Each of these functions is stretched in terms of its workload and some functions have been affected by recruitment challenges.

282. Contracting includes an explicit transfer of risks from WFP to cooperating partners. Transferred risks mostly relate to staff safety and well-being, and organizational reputation. These are discussed with partners, but some WFP staff are uneasy at the lack of provision should such delegated risks materialize. There is also uneasiness that WFP manages its fiduciary risk concerning staff safety by transferring this risk to the partners' staff. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity on what steps to take should risks be realized, for example if cooperating partner staff were arrested, or partners' operations were shut down.

283. Some of the management of this risk category relates to financial cover in cooperating partner budgets. This is currently covered to a minimal extent, for example in insurance for supplies and assets. However, cooperating partners also risk their staff, security and their own organizational reputation and ability to operate (for example, they could be closed down by the authorities). There may be costs attached to some of these risks if they are realized, for example, legal costs for any cooperating partner staff arrested or injured while undertaking the operation. These financial costs are not covered in WFP plans or agreements with cooperating partners. Furthermore, there remains an ethical dimension that WFP Myanmar, like WFP country offices in similar complex contexts, navigates alone. An additional point that the evaluation found in interviews is that while WFP seeks to be transparent about its risk transfer in discussions with cooperating partners, some cooperating partners have understood discussions regarding risks they are willing to undertake to access vulnerable populations, as pressure to move ahead with operation - either to move with distributions on a specific day or in relation to their broader cooperation agreement with WFP. This is a difficult discussion that may need guidance to sub-office staff and a process to check its implementation. The priority in the WFP risk appetite is to reach people. However, this contradicts fiduciary risk aversion, indicating a potential for more planning around the duty of care towards cooperating partners.

284. The most significant and likely risks noted in WFP country office risk matrices show an increasing focus on security, staff safety and operational space.¹⁹⁷ In 2019, the top risks related to donor restrictions on Rakhine state, the growing anti-United Nations sentiment in the country and concerns for staff safety. By 2022, while donor-associated restrictions were still of concern, priority was given to staff safety and humanitarian space for implementation.

285. New mitigation measures are introduced yearly for each risk category, indicating an increasingly complex environment. By 2022, safety of staff had eight controls in place for general safety plus a raft of measures specific to COVID-19, health and well-being, which were not in earlier risk matrices. Furthermore, seven new mitigation measures were introduced for safety risks. These reflect the growing significance of electronic devices and data protection.

¹⁹⁷ WFP Myanmar. 2019-2022. Risk matrix 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022.

3. Conclusions

286. This evaluation analyses WFP achievements, challenges and risks in the constrained and complex environment of Myanmar. These were reviewed from the point of view of the strategic positioning of WFP, its effectiveness in relation to the CSP objectives, its relations with local partners and population, the quality of its partnerships with donor and operational agencies, its application of humanitarian principles, protection and accountability, and its efficiency.

287. The evaluation found a mature and well-focused operation, achieving a high level of responsiveness and coverage in very adverse circumstances. This is underpinned by well-managed human and financial resources, strong economies of scale, and above all risk management that closely mirrors corporate guidance on decentralized and constantly actualized systems. The ability of WFP to work closely with donors, the humanitarian country team and RBB has ensured that challenges were anticipated, and performance maintained. While the accessibility of people in need, and the scale of these needs, are likely to remain a major challenge, many elements call for continuity in the upcoming ICSP.

288. This section presents an interpretation of the evaluation findings, drawing four main cross-cutting conclusions relevant to one or more of the evaluation questions.

Conclusion 1: Operational adaptation and scaling up. During the period of CSP implementation, WFP achieved a major scale-up of its operations in response to consecutive crises thanks to the wide foundation laid by the CSP framework, which permitted flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances via budget revisions. With regard to funding, the successful scale-up testifies to WFP's good reputation among donors as an agency able to deliver assistance effectively at scale in a highly complex and constrained environment. Decentralized decision making coupled with regular guidance from the regional bureau were critical to the country office's high degree of adaptiveness.

289. Four major shocks¹⁹⁸ have forced WFP into two strategic shifts, for which the original CSP proved a robust and flexible instrument. The first shift was the increased emergency operation and the added role for WFP to support sister-United Nations agencies in areas of WFP comparative advantage such as logistics and coordination (Finding 4.2b). The second was actually a roll-back of the shift initiated with the CSP towards a stronger focus on country capacity strengthening, with ambitions of handover to the Government. As a result, the focus of WFP in Myanmar has remained very much on "saving lives" (Findings 1.2a, 3.2a).

290. The implementation of WFP programmes and operations in Myanmar maintained its internal coherence thanks to motivated, decentralized decision making – in particular through budget revisions and responding to well-understood risks (Findings 1.2a, 1.2b, 5.1a, 6.4a-b) that made programmatic adjustments possible.

291. Planned outputs, except for CBT, have been largely delivered thanks to the fact that WFP has been flexible and adaptive. In 2021, the year of greatest crisis, WFP planned to reach 3.4 million beneficiaries, and reached 2.9 million. In 2020, 1.04 million out of a planned 1.2 million were reached (Finding 2.1a). It represents two thirds of the overall caseload reached in Myanmar in 2022 under the humanitarian response plan.

292. The context is highly demanding and staff at all levels carry considerable responsibilities in navigating safe access for provision of assistance to affected people (Findings 6.1a). Flexible approaches to utilizing the available expertise and skills within the country have assisted the operation. The need for a finely distributed system of negotiation and coordination has taxed the resourcefulness and strained the risk tolerance of senior managers (Findings 6.4a-b). RBB has provided effective support in this area.

293. In very difficult conditions WFP, aided by interactive relationships with donors, secured adequate resources for the operation (Finding 6.1b). Donors, recognizing the experience and ability of WFP to deliver

¹⁹⁸ The Rakhine crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the February 2021 military takeover and subsequent economic crisis and geographical expansion of armed conflict, and the global increase in fuel and food prices.

results at scale, have provided the needed growing resources. Some outcomes, while generally exceeding CSP targets, have been impeded by the context – particularly the reduction in reliance on livelihood-based strategies to maintain food consumption and the treatment of acute malnutrition (Finding 2.1a-c).

294. Considering the context, the operation has achieved impressive results in terms of timeliness over the CSP duration. The use of advance financing, maintenance of stocks, rosters and use of local procurement have contributed significantly (Finding 1.2b). In addition, the country office's effective development of a network of relationships and use of staff experience and expertise in negotiation has been important to enable the sustained flow of assistance as far as possible.

295. The operation has also achieved high levels of cost efficiency (Findings 6.2a, 6.3a), in part through economies of scale and the growing focus on relief (pushed furthest with Activity 1 for peri-urban populations in Yangon). The trend towards CBT where possible is positive given its cost efficiency. The ability to implement both cash and in-kind modalities and in a range of ways (for example a range of CBT approaches, such as cash-over-counter, cash-in-envelopes), or activities that address specific vulnerabilities despite their higher costs, provided the flexibility demanded by the needs and context (Finding 1.4b).

Conclusion 2: Relations to partners and management of risks. In a situation of simultaneous humanitarian, governance, and security crises, the role of WFP in Myanmar has grown. WFP has played this expanded role prudently and effectively. Its coordination with and complementarity to United Nations partner agencies has been exemplary. WFP has carefully balanced the difficult tensions between the various humanitarian principles. Protection risks and risks to operations were managed well, albeit with a tendency to underestimate both the degree to which local cooperating partners are assuming risks and the need for constant communication with affected populations. Guidance on principled access and related risks was provided by RBB but was limited from the corporate level.

296. WFP is acknowledged as having a negotiating weight with all actors that goes beyond other agencies due to the visibility and value of WFP assistance. WFP, as a key member of the humanitarian community, constantly faces a choice of whether to use this leverage beyond its food security agenda (Finding 4.2c). Any approach to the de facto authorities to expand access authorizations must be mindful of WFP efforts to maintain the safety of its staff and partners (Finding 5.2a-b) due to what the humanitarian response plan describes as a “culture of both online social punishment and persecution” by all sides. The role of WFP in the Operations Management Committee, especially during the COVID-19 emergency, and its role in facilitating cash payments in the face of Central Bank delays, was found essential.

297. The multiple shocks and diverse contexts in different parts of the country have presented considerable obstacles to all international assistance organizations. WFP was uniquely able to maintain its coverage of needs and remain closely coordinated with key partners, particularly in the UNCT. There are multiple examples of complementarity when a division of labour was needed and synergy when collaboration was in order (Finding 4.2b). Joint activities with FAO and UNICEF have been particularly fruitful.

298. WFP demonstrates use of a broad range of formal and informal processes to understand and analyse the evolving operational context and the challenges it presents to programme implementation (Findings 1.1a-b), and to develop programme strategies in ways that aim to adhere to humanitarian principles and, also, “do no harm” (Findings 5.1a-b). Some of these are exercises initiated by the country office. Some processes would be useful to integrate formally into decision making, notably those that consider conflict sensitivity, in order to routinely consider the risk and mitigation strategies to enhance social cohesion at a community level.

299. WFP has actively engaged with issues around tensions between humanitarian principles (Finding 5.1b) through its more practical application in access negotiations. In line with the overall organizational culture, the principle of humanity or, in other words, pursuing access, has tended to win out in the balancing of options. Still, this has been done in an informed, considered way within the country office and in line with the collective UNCT approach. Effective support has been provided by RBB, but at the corporate level, WFP remained surprisingly unable to formulate guidance or provide management support (Findings 5.1b, 6.4a) in facing strategic dilemmas around access and risk taking, beyond what the country office and RBB had already tried.

300. The country office has a proactive approach to risk management. (Findings 6.4a-b). It fulfils the corporate requirements but more importantly the country office has adapted risk management tools well to decision making for its operations. WFP conducts excellent analyses of protection risks and has good approaches to managing these (Findings 5.2a-c). The protection risk and challenging environment are complex and dynamic. WFP has kept well abreast of these dynamics through processes that have focused in particular on the dignity and safety of people in accessing WFP assistance.

301. WFP explicitly transfers risks to partners for implementation in the interest of both reaching affected populations and protecting WFP personnel, and thus strengthens its ability to sustain operations (Finding 6.4b). Risks borne by cooperating partners include risks to the safety and freedom of their staff, their reputation and their ability to operate. Through this transfer WFP manages its fiduciary risk, that is to say, it maintains the safety of its own staff and the operational continuity of WFP. These risks are discussed by WFP with the cooperating partners. Yet, however explicit and open the discussion between WFP and partners is when they take on these risks, a power imbalance remains between the organization that holds the resources and the cooperating partner. The cooperating partner is more exposed, particularly as a local organization, and its staff are personally vulnerable without the weight of an international organization behind them. The issue, tied to a common way of working in WFP, has practical implications in terms of ensuring costs of cooperating partners are covered but also an ethical dimension.

Conclusion 3: Targeting and accountability to affected populations. The monitoring of food security was found to be adequate in areas where WFP or its local partners have access. The monitoring of nutrition, gender, resilience and social cohesion outcomes is more challenging. The availability of information declines in areas where access is poor – which are typically those affected by conflict – despite innovative data collection approaches. It is likely that humanitarian needs in such areas are significantly underestimated, possibly leading to gaps in the coverage of assistance. Considerable attention is devoted to targeting the geographical areas, households and individuals most in need of WFP assistance, with adequate consideration of gender equality and broader social inclusion aspects. An elaborate community engagement mechanism is in place, but several factors limit its use.

302. Food security monitoring, despite being challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic and by increased access constraints since the military takeover, is found to be adequate, except for nutrition (Findings 1.1a, 1.4a), where remote monitoring is inherently difficult. Monitoring of gender, resilience and social cohesion outcomes is even more challenging. Cooperating partners in many hard-to-access areas represent the eyes and ears of WFP.

303. Information from areas to which WFP has access is trusted (Finding 1.1a) and provides a good basis for programming, although the qualitative information gained at sub-office levels is not easily shared across the whole country office structure. The availability of information declines in areas where access is poor, typically areas affected by conflict. Despite innovative approaches to gathering data (in particular mobile phone surveys) and the development of informal information networks, it is likely that humanitarian needs in such areas are significantly underestimated (Finding 1.1a) possibly leading to significant gaps in coverage.

304. WFP maintains a long-standing support for pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and HIV and TB sufferers, and school-aged children in the form of school feeding, although there have been shortfalls, some scattered and some recurrent (Finding 2.1c). WFP increasingly tries to mainstream disability in its activities. The lack of reliable community-level information in some areas, however, makes it difficult to identify the most vulnerable groups. This is not only due to access, but to characteristics such as remoteness, ethnic diversity and linguistic isolation, which quantitative data and remote data collection methods cannot overcome.

305. Gender equality and participation in asset creation, the consideration of gender factors in CBT, implementation of separate consultations for men and women, and the incorporation of messaging to counter gender-based violence at distribution points, are good examples of the application of WFP gender guidelines (Finding 2.4a). WFP has also instituted good-practice gender equality human resource policies, particularly in community participation and asset creation. Both internally and externally, WFP has a zero tolerance approach to sexual abuse and exploitation. However, it is difficult to monitor local cooperating

partners and concerted efforts across all organizations are still insufficient to ensure a culture in which PSEA can be discussed and identified and abuses reported for safe response.

306. WFP has devoted resources to the systems for engaging communities, adapting corporate systems well to the Myanmar context (Findings 5.3a-c). In particular, the country office has expanded access to and use of the community engagement mechanism system. The organization has consulted with affected populations for the design of operations including taking into account linguistic differences, literacy levels and other factors that influence affected people's access to the community engagement mechanism and to information provision.

307. The country office has shown leadership in this agenda based on a thorough understanding of the operational benefits of good engagement. This has been sustained and increased in line with the operational scope, scale and complexity of WFP operations (Findings 5.3a).

308. While the use of the community engagement mechanism has increased over time, the proportion of affected people using it remains small in relation to the number of beneficiaries and its use is uneven across the country. The evaluation found signs that not all communities were aware of it and partners were not always consistently promoting it. Affected populations are reluctant to communicate what they believe will be interpreted as complaints, and in many areas face difficulties in using mobile phones. Other problems relate to the prevalence of ungrounded rumours and the biases of purely quantitative data (Findings 5.3a-b).

309. Communication strategies play a major part in responding to needs, with communication of any changes to assistance plans needing excellent communication to affected people. This is an area around which there is concern externally, as WFP moves towards targeted assistance given the potential of changes in assistance eligibility as well as delays to cause unrest (Findings 5.3a-b).

Conclusion 4: Integration of emergency response, resilience and sustainability. Several shocks in Myanmar have diverted WFP from its original CSP goal of providing support for medium-term, government-led development. At the same time, WFP has continued to support activities aligned with national policies such as those in nutrition and school feeding. The mitigation of social and environmental risks is an emerging area, and there are some indications of WFP making contributions to peace. This brings the operations close to a triple (humanitarian–development–peace) nexus approach. However, the fact that the CSP was not fully conceived as such means that it failed to live up to its full potential. A central element of the triple nexus in Myanmar was resilience building, for which WFP lacked a strategic approach for the community, institution and food systems levels and which was not integrated into all strategic outcomes of the CSP.

310. The initial Myanmar CSP could be regarded as an important test case for the WFP corporate vision. This is to enable a fluid transition from emergency relief to a broader focus on social protection, development, and resilience while respecting environmental and social (sustainability) standards – and maintaining the ability to return to the emergency end of the spectrum when and where needed (Findings 2.1a, 2.3a). This high-level goal was well formulated in the CSP but has been frustrated by repeated crises as well as the military takeover, which removed the Government as a legitimate partner. The results have been that the WFP country programme has become more entrenched in the 'saving lives' mode. (Finding 1.2a). The crisis shows no sign of ending. All signs point to a continuation of this situation in 2023 and the future interim CSP. WFP has, however, continued engagement with its longer-term strategic goal through engagement with UNICEF and UNOPS on social protection outside state-run systems (Findings 1.2a).

311. Resilience is mentioned at a high level in the CSP documentation but is not operationalized as such beyond asset creation (Finding 3.2a). The understanding of resilience in the country office is also limited mostly to asset creation, with limited concrete applications in the country beyond livelihoods (Findings 3.2a-b). The focus is insufficiently geared towards the way communities and systems absorb, adapt and transform shocks and stressors. The context nonetheless requires a transition to a stronger resilience perspective, in line with the corporate Strategic Plan (2022-2025). This would consider capacities at community and systems-levels to respond to shocks and stressors requiring a more extensive analysis of local capacities including local emergency preparedness and response infrastructure and mechanisms (Finding 3.2a). In Myanmar, the focus was insufficiently geared towards the way communities and systems absorb, adapt and transform shocks and stressors.

312. There is considerable willingness and interest among the staff of WFP to address and mitigate environmental and social risks (Findings 3.3a). The capacity dedicated to that effort is relatively new (reflecting the guidance in early 2022) and its formalization can help shift WFP positioning within the triple humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Currently, the environmental and social risks are analysed primarily for livelihoods and infrastructure-related activities, which is an overly narrow focus. They have a limited application in community-based participatory planning (Finding 3.2a). The open-ended nature of reporting creates a positive bias concerning the presence and mitigation of risks. There are considerable assets for a forward-looking organization. When combined with the continued risk of sudden onset disasters, the absence of state partnerships and the continuation of forced displacement, this dictates the need of a broader triple nexus approach to balance the high emergency responsiveness of WFP Myanmar.

4. Recommendations

313. There is a broad opportunity to explore areas that could create a viable model of operation for WFP in a context of low state legitimacy and difficult humanitarian access. Four areas are recommended for improvement, each one relating to specific aspects linked to the context of Myanmar, but also reflected in other locations in the world. These areas for improvement are based on the conclusions presented above.

314. The recommendations are aimed at the upcoming ICSP and country office planning implementation. The first area concerns operational readiness for scale and the second concerns relations with partners and the risk footprint. The third concerns the expansion of the types of data that WFP collects, to include more qualitative information, communicated in a more digitalized form. The fourth area relates to emerging WFP thinking around the triple nexus, which could be used as a lens to enable WFP to facilitate the changing life trajectories of the affected populations.

315. When reading these recommendations, one should keep in mind that they concern marginal developments around existing capabilities. The principal constraints on performance are continually being addressed by WFP. The internal strengths of the organization can be more fully enshrined at the corporate level, the partners are waiting for confirmation of their roles, the dialogue with communities can be enhanced while streamlining reporting work, and a systems approach to resilience that already exists in incipient form could be expanded.

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.	Adaptation and scale-up Maintain and enhance the capacity to work at scale. Factors enabling operational flexibility should be actively maintained, along with staff well-being.					
1.1	WFP should enhance its capacity by continuing fundraising for and policy dialogue on the forgotten crisis in Myanmar, with headquarters support; identifying and addressing gaps between the various digital information systems; and maintaining the matrix-based management structure, which brings together responsibilities for operations, programmes and geographical coverage.	Operational	Country office		High	End of ICSP implementation
1.2	The country office should continue to promote measures that enable the rapid adjustment of operations, such as the use of flexible, multi-modal field-level agreements with partners, backed up by the country office tool for managing effectively, and the WFP Information Network and Global System; the maintenance and expansion of rosters; and agreements with suppliers and financial service providers. These mechanisms should be supported by proactive capacity development work with civil society organizations in areas such as the preparation of proposals and reporting.	Operational	Country office operations unit	Country office programme unit	High	End of ICSP implementation
1.3	WFP should maintain the staff capacity needed to deliver high-quality assistance under pressure. It should establish culturally appropriate processes for tracking staff well-being and enabling staff to share any concerns. The highly constrained recruitment of staff should receive greater attention from the Human Resources Division at headquarters. Opportunities for leave, internal training, temporary duty assignments and other options for staff should be expanded to promote career development in Myanmar.	Strategic	Country office operations and human resources units	Headquarters Human Resources Division	High	End of ICSP implementation

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.	An inclusive, principled and risk-sensitive approach Difficult ethical and practical choices related to the humanitarian principles and the balancing of risk management priorities will continue to present themselves into the near future. WFP must find ways to sustain consistency in internal decision-making processes. Support for the individuals making decisions must be constant and tailored to operational situations. The key role of cooperating and service partners calls for fuller consideration of their capacities and status in operations than is granted under existing corporate systems. Current efforts in communication regarding WFP's humanitarian positioning should be extended to a wide range of stakeholders.					
2.1	At the corporate level, WFP must consider the formulation of mechanisms for country offices and regional bureaux to request support from higher levels of the organization when they need to make difficult ethical decisions regarding the humanitarian principles and risks in settings of high political sensitivity and polarization. When required, the corporate senior management team must give support to the senior management of the country office when issues and proposed choices are passed up for corporate endorsement. All relevant guidance on the applicable processes for addressing access issues and dilemmas regarding the humanitarian principles, such as the authority of the country office to make certain trade-offs between risks to populations and risks to operations, should be shared.	Strategic	Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, Operations Management Department	Headquarters Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division	High	June 2024
2.2	WFP should define how it can respond when a partner or contractor is exposed to risks (such as the loss of their authorization to operate or the arrest of their staff) and provide support where possible. WFP should consider establishing feedback processes to ensure that cooperating partners do not feel pressured to undertake activities in high-risk areas. A financial facility should be in place to address the actual and potential risks transferred to cooperating partners, for	Operational	Country office operations unit	Country office programme unit	High	End of ICSP implementation

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	example those related to their staff safety, security, organizational reputation and ability to operate.					
2.3	WFP should continue to expand its understanding of the risks to people and communities who are affected (indirectly, and either positively or negatively) by its food security and nutrition activities, beyond its collection of quantitative perception-based data via the community engagement mechanism. Knowledge gaps can be addressed through the enhancement of existing post-distribution monitoring surveys and the application of environmental and social safeguards with, for example, the inclusion of data on social cohesion and the simplification of post-distribution monitoring and its extension to affected population groups who are not WFP beneficiaries. There is also a need to collect more ethnographic data from beneficiaries and non-beneficiary population groups to ensure that no harm is done, and to follow up on complaints. Consideration must be given to linguistic and ethnic factors in developing trust and communication.	Operational	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Country office protection and accountability to affected populations unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation
3.	Information and feedback systems Adjustments to the qualitative and community-based data collected will allow WFP to transmit, internally and to beneficiaries, a fuller picture of activities that impinge on food security and nutrition. Such information should not increase the quantity of text and figures presented in reports and other communication materials but should rely on integrated digital tools to a greater extent than is currently the case.					
3.1	The country office should identify gaps in the digital systems it uses with a view to enabling the user-friendly presentation of quantitative and qualitative data – such as geospatial maps, conflict factor maps, process monitoring reports and “sentiment analysis” reports on the dignity of recipients of assistance, in ways that facilitate the analysis of trends and the experiences of affected populations for decision-making at the country office level. The country office should review the frequency of	Operational	Country office operations unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation

#	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Recommendation type</i>	<i>Responsible WFP offices and divisions</i>	<i>Other contributing entities</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deadline for completion</i>
	periodic reporting from sub-offices to ensure that it is optimal and use management meetings to highlight specific issues coming up at the sub-office level.					
3.2	WFP must take measures to obtain access to the knowledge that partners draw from their own community information systems by establishing a simple communication process. Cooperating partners play a key role in information gathering owing to the time they spend in the field and the relationships they develop with communities. Greater use should be made of that information.	Operational	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Country office programme unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation
3.3	There should be regular reviews of communities' knowledge of and trust in WFP's community engagement mechanism and of cooperating partners' use of that mechanism across all states, with adjustments made when appropriate.	Operational	Country office protection and accountability to affected populations unit	Country office research, assessment and monitoring unit	Medium	End of ICSP implementation
4.	Integration of resilience in the emergency response The interim country strategic plan period of two years should be used to test and gradually integrate a wider resilience perspective throughout the programme so as to address structural vulnerabilities. The aim will be to ensure that when shocks occur, communities can rely on local capacities and will require less humanitarian assistance. Focusing on communities and systems can help to create stronger links between the strategic outcomes in the long term and can strengthen the coordination across teams in the matrix-like structure of the country office. This will enhance the relevance and use of resources for affected people, given that the crisis is likely to be protracted.					

#	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Recommendation type</i>	<i>Responsible WFP offices and divisions</i>	<i>Other contributing entities</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Deadline for completion</i>
4.1	A new approach that takes into account the ability of affected people and communities to respond to shocks and stressors should include the creation of a framework for resilience that applies across the interim country strategic plan as a cross-cutting outcome. The framework could also be applied at levels lower than strategic outcomes in the interim country strategic plan line of sight.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Regional bureau	High	October 2023
4.2	A resilience perspective should be integrated into the strategic outcome on crisis response, in particular as regards disaster risk reduction. Among resilience capacities and assets there should be an assessment of social cohesion and how to avoid creating tensions. Social cohesion and the avoidance of tension are factors in the resilience of communities to shocks.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Regional bureau	High	End of ICSP implementation
4.3	The resilience perspective should include an extensive analysis of key community-level assets and basic infrastructure and should encourage the increased localization of emergency response, for example through local procurement aimed at strengthening food systems, or through support for emergency preparedness capacities for managing sudden-onset crises. This work could also include capacity strengthening for private sector entities engaged in common services provision or home-grown school feeding in order to help build local food systems.	Strategic	Country office programme unit	Regional bureau	High	End of ICSP implementation

5. Acronyms

3PA	Three-Pronged Approach
AAP	Accountability to affected populations
ACR	Annual country report
AIMS	Asset Impact Monitoring System
AO	Area office
APR	Annual performance reports
ART	Anti-retroviral therapy
BR	Budget Revision
CBO	Community-based organization
CBT	Cash-based transfer
CEE	Corporate Emergency Evaluation
CEM	Community engagement mechanism
CFM	Community feedback mechanism
CO	Myanmar country office
COMET	Country Office Tool for Managing (programme operations) Effectively
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CP	Cooperating partner
CPP	Corporate Planning and Performance Division (HQ)
CSO	Civil society organization
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DSC	Direct support costs
DoE	Director of Evaluation
EM	evaluation manager
EQ	Evaluation Question
ESS	Environmental and social standards
ET	Evaluation team
EU	European Union
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Food consumption score
FFA	Food assistance for assets
FGD	Focus group discussion
FLA	Field-level agreement
FO	Field office
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCMF	Global Commodity Management Facility
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GFD	General food distribution
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDP	Humanitarian and development partner
HEB	High-energy biscuit
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/ Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HQ	Headquarters
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan

ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICSP	Interim Country Strategic Plan
ICT (IT)	Information and communications technology
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFI	International financial institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing partner
IRA	Immediate Response Account
IRG	Internal Reference Group
ISC	Indirect support cost
KII	Key informant interview
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MAM	Moderate acute malnutrition
MCCT	Maternal and child cash transfer
MMK	Myanmar Kyat
MS-NPAN	Multi-Sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition
MT	Metric tons
MTR	Mid-term review
NBP	Needs-based plan
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEV	Office of Evaluation of WFP
PBWG	Pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
PGAAP	Protection, gender and accountability to affected population
PPE	Personal protection equipment
PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
RAM	Research assessment and monitoring
RBB	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
SBCC	Social and behaviour change communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SER	Summary evaluation report
SMS	Short message service
SNF	Specialized nutritious food
SO	Strategic outcome
SOP	Standard operating procedures
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition business network
TB	Tuberculosis
TDD	Terminal disbursement date
TDY	Temporary duty assignments
TIC	Transfer and implementation costs
TL	Team leader

ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UN SERRP	United Nations Socio-Economic Resilience Response Plan
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNEG	United Nations Evaluations Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHAS	UN Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USD	United States of America Dollar
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WINGS	WFP Information Network and Global System

Office of Evaluation

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70

00148 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 65131 wfp.org/independent-evaluation