



World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

Executive Board
Annual session
Rome, 18–22 June 2018

Distribution: General	Agenda item 8
Date: 7 June 2018	WFP/EB.A/2018/8-B
Original: English	Operational matters
	For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Comprehensive update on the Myanmar country strategic plan (2018–2022) in view of recent developments

Executive summary

This comprehensive update on the Myanmar country strategic plan (2018-2022) focuses on WFP's response to the evolving situation in Myanmar since the previous update presented to the Executive Board at the 2018 first regular session in February. From January to May 2018, WFP reached 535,000 internally displaced, conflict-affected and other vulnerable people through its crisis response and resilience building activities in the country. Despite the access restrictions faced by other humanitarian organizations in Rakhine State, WFP was allowed to provide uninterrupted food assistance to at least 227,000 conflict-affected people in all ten of the targeted central and northern townships. As an exceptional measure, local authorities granted travel permits for WFP international staff based in and outside Rakhine to visit Sittwe and Maungdaw districts. At the request of the Government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and WFP conducted a crop and food security assessment mission in Rakhine State, the findings of which are currently being analysed. Armed conflicts intensified in Kachin and Shan states, forcing more than 20,000 people to leave their places of origin. Most of these people remain displaced, and WFP is planning a response to assist them when it becomes possible to do so. WFP is continuing its efforts to provide nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive food and cash-based assistance while increasing its focus on national capacity strengthening and protection-sensitive and gender-transformative programming, replacing in-kind food with more efficient and effective cash-based transfers where appropriate.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the comprehensive update on the Myanmar country strategic plan (2018–2022) set out in document (WFP/EB.A/2018/8-B) in view of recent developments.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Focal points:

Mr D. Kaatrud
Regional Director
Asia and the Pacific
email: david.kaatrud@wfp.org

Mr D. Scalpelli
Country Director
email: domenico.scalpelli@wfp.org

1. Operational framework

1. Following the first comprehensive update on the Myanmar country strategic plan (CSP) (2018–2022) presented to the Executive Board at the 2018 first regular session in February, and given the volatility of the evolving situation in the country, the Board requested a second comprehensive update for its consideration.
2. WFP continued implementation of the CSP having received from funding partners USD 25 million of the USD 70 million annual requirements. From January to May 2018,¹ WFP reached 535,000 internally displaced, conflict-affected and other vulnerable people in Myanmar through its crisis response and resilience building activities.
3. Local authorities granted WFP operational access for distributions in Rakhine State. WFP international staff based in Yangon, including senior management, also received travel authorization to visit Sittwe and Maungdaw districts in May 2018. The Government endorsed a strategic review of food and nutrition security, sponsored by WFP and conducted by an independent research institute, which identified gaps and challenges and proposed actions for best supporting Myanmar in making progress towards zero hunger. A new letter of understanding with the Government, however, has still not been finalized because of internal protocol procedures for which no timeline has been set. The letter of understanding is critical for the successful longer-term and sustainable implementation of the CSP.

2. Crisis response

2.1 Rakhine State

4. *Food security situation.* In Maungdaw Township, local authorities allowed WFP only a limited period in February 2018 in which to carry out a village profiling exercise for beneficiary targeting. WFP was not able to complete the profiling in time and requested an extension, which has not yet been approved. As a result, WFP has not shifted from blanket to targeted distributions. At the request of the Government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and WFP conducted a crop and food security assessment mission from 29 April to 9 May 2018. The assessment teams received the necessary travel authorization and were able to visit 14 townships in the southern, central and northern parts of Rakhine State, where they spoke with community members who included farmers, fishers, casual labourers, elderly people and women. As no organization had been authorized to carry out assessments in Maungdaw District since August 2017, the assessment will provide a valuable picture of the food security situation, helping humanitarian and development actors, the Government and other stakeholders define how best to assist all vulnerable people in Rakhine State. The assessment teams are currently analysing data and consolidating their findings, which will be used to inform the development of programmes for addressing the needs identified. The information gathered will be analysed and cross-checked with other data before any final conclusions and/or related recommendations are reported in July. This procedure conforms to global standards and procedures for this type of assessment. It is standard practice eventually to make the final report of a crop and food security assessment mission publicly available.

¹ In this report, all the figures regarding populations assisted apply to the reporting period of January to May 2018.

5. *Access.* International non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies continued to face extraordinary challenges in obtaining travel authorization and implementing their programmes in northern and central parts of Rakhine State, threatening the delivery of life-saving assistance. When travel was authorized, local authorities agreed to extend the period of validity from two weeks to one month in order to ease the administrative burden. As an exceptional measure, WFP received travel permits lasting three months for its international staff.
6. *Food and nutrition assistance.* In central Rakhine State, the improved security situation allowed WFP's cooperating partners gradually to resume their activities after six months of direct implementation by WFP. Transporters contracted by WFP also resumed normal activities, increasing the previously restricted transport capacity. WFP stopped using the Government-supplied trucks that had been the only ones available, and food could be transported without police escort. Following the closure of some camps for internally displaced persons in Kyauktaw Township in February 2018 WFP ended unconditional assistance for the resettled populations, who will be considered for inclusion in conditional targeted food assistance for assets (FFA) activities if still found to be food-insecure. WFP and some other international organizations were invited to attend a Government-led workshop held in early June 2018 with the aim of developing a national strategy for the closure of camps for internally displaced persons.
7. WFP assisted 127,000 displaced and conflict-affected people through relief food assistance in Kyaukpyu, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon, Pauktaw, Rathedaung and Sittwe townships of central Rakhine. WFP separated the blanket supplementary feeding programme for children under 5, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls from general food distribution in order to ensure more comprehensive targeting of these vulnerable groups, and added a nutrition package that includes screening of mid-upper arm circumference, a referral system for acute malnutrition treatment and the promotion of nutrition and optimal infant and young child feeding. Almost 18,000 children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls were reached with blanket supplementary feeding combined with other nutrition interventions. More than 1,000 children and pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls suffering from moderate acute malnutrition were admitted to the targeted supplementary feeding programme for treatment in Kyauktaw, Minbya, Pauktaw and Sittwe townships. Forty FFA projects supporting the construction of ponds, roads, dykes and irrigation canals were carried out in central townships.
8. In Maungdaw District, WFP reached 100,000 people, including 10,000 children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls who benefited from blanket supplementary feeding in 123 Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu villages in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. WFP coordinated with the Red Cross Movement and the Government's Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in order to avoid overlaps or gaps in distributions. WFP has implemented 16 FFA projects such as renovation of dams and ponds and home gardening in Buthidaung Township.
9. *Repatriation.* The Government of Myanmar gave permission for 2,223 Muslim refugees whose previous residence in Rakhine State of Myanmar had been verified to return from Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Of the 8,032 people identified for repatriation by the Government of Bangladesh, these 2,223 were the first to be cleared for return by the Government of Myanmar.

2.2 Kachin State, Shan State and the return of refugees from Thailand

10. *Kachin and Shan states.* Armed conflict has intensified in Kachin State over recent months. In the northern townships of Machanbaw, Sumprabum and Puto-O, the main road reopened, allowing humanitarian supplies and food to reach the area in March 2018 after a three-month blockade caused by the destruction of major bridges by armed groups. In late April 2018, skirmishes occurred in Chipwi, Injangyang, Hpakant, Momauk, Mogaung and Tanai townships and in the Laiza area. Air attacks continued in Injangyang Township. More than 14,000 people were reported as displaced by the latest fighting, with some civilians unable to leave the conflict-affected areas of Injangyang, Hpakant and Tanai townships. People fleeing the fighting were sheltered in local churches, at existing displacement sites or with host families where they received initial humanitarian assistance from the Government and local organizations. In May 2018, humanitarian actors in Kachin conducted two multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessments in the Tang Hpre and Trinity Kachin Baptist Convention areas of Myitkyina Township, where 1,800 displaced people fleeing conflict were sheltered in churches and communal halls. Immediate humanitarian support and supplies were provided by the churches, central and state authorities and private donors. The food supply was reported as sufficient for up to three months, although supplementary food for vulnerable people will be required. WFP has been closely monitoring the situation and is developing a response plan for assisting displaced populations in the coming months.
11. WFP cash-based transfers and food distributions for 43,000 internally displaced persons in 99 camps in areas of Kachin State that are under government control took place without major interruptions. Since June 2016, no United Nations agency, including WFP, has been granted access by the authorities to non-government-controlled areas of Kachin State, where more than 36,000 internally displaced persons are reported as residing, of whom 6,000 have reportedly faced severe food shortages since April 2018.
12. In northern Shan State sporadic fighting continued, displacing more than 6,000 people, most of whom have already returned to their places of origin. WFP and other United Nations agencies jointly conducted a multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessment. WFP has continued to monitor the situation and is ready to provide immediate food assistance should any gaps be identified at the locations of temporary shelters. WFP assisted 16,000 internally displaced persons and was able to move food to support conflict-affected communities in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone. There were movement restrictions in the northern part of Wa Special Administrative Division, however, due to deterioration in the security situation.
13. The situation remained volatile in Kachin and Shan states, and continued to affect the most nutritionally vulnerable populations, including women and children. Undernutrition increases the risk of children dying from common infections and the frequency and severity of such infections, and contributes to delayed recovery. WFP carried out a blanket supplementary feeding programme for children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls who were members of the internally displaced households targeted for life-saving food assistance to prevent wasting. In villages affected by the crisis in Kachin and Shan states, WFP also provided a nutrition package to treat moderate acute malnutrition and prevent wasting, with a blanket supplementary feeding programme that included the promotion of optimal infant and young child feeding.

14. *Return of refugees from Thailand.* On 7 May 2018, 93 Myanmar refugees who had fled to the Thai border to escape conflict in Kayin State decades ago returned to Myanmar. The local authorities and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provided non-food items and cash-based assistance to cover one month of food and transport costs. Through a new operational agreement with the International Organization for Migration in Thailand, WFP provided six months of cash assistance – 2,100 Thai bahts (USD 67) per person – to the returnees.

3. Resilience building

15. *National capacity strengthening.* The first phase of a warehouse refurbishment project in which WFP supported the National Department for Disaster Management was completed with the full refurbishment and equipping of a warehouse in Yangon. The next phases of the project will cover logistics training for government staff and the development of guidance on warehouse management. WFP continued to build the Government's capacity in disaster management systems. An engineer supported by WFP's stand-by partner RedR Australia was deployed to Rakhine State to work with local authorities and service providers on the construction of a new logistics hub in Sittwe, which is expected to begin in the last quarter of 2018.
16. *Asset creation and livelihoods.* Where possible, WFP continued to integrate nutrition-sensitive FFA activities into its recently established school meals programme in areas of the dry zone, Chin, Rakhine and Shan states where 21,000 women and men benefited from food and increasingly cash for assets. Given Myanmar's high vulnerability to natural disasters, WFP and its local authority partners are preparing to carry out FFA activities in disaster-prone Chin State starting in 2019 with the aim of establishing long-term climate change mitigation measures.
17. *School meals.* In January and February 2018, school meals for 185,000 pre-primary and primary schoolchildren were distributed without major interruptions in all the areas countrywide where WFP provides school meals except Maungdaw District where most schools remained closed because of the security situation. The academic year ended in February 2018, and WFP school meals are expected to resume, after a delay, in July instead of June 2018 when schools reopen. In the 2018/2019 academic year, WFP will target 400,000 pre-primary and primary schoolgirls and boys with midday high-energy biscuits or hot meals cooked at the schools. In 2018, the Ministry of Health and Sports is expected to replace the Ministry of Education as WFP's government focal point in integrating school meals into national school health and nutrition programmes. The new focal point will play a leading role in the nationalization of WFP's school meals. A national school meals programme already features in the Government's multi-sector national plan of action for nutrition – which is being developed by the Ministry of Health and Sports – in two of the plan's envisaged activities: school meals using locally available nutritious ingredients; and health, nutrition and hygiene promotion for schoolchildren and their parents.
18. *Nutrition.* To improve the nutrition of children under 5 through the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, WFP provided specialized nutritious foods and a comprehensive nutrition package to 50,000 pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls and young children in Kachin, Magway, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan and Yangon. As the chair and an active member of the United Nations Network for Scaling Up Nutrition in Myanmar, WFP has contributed to the second phase of developing the multi-sector national plan of action for nutrition led by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

4. Cross-cutting issues

19. *Protection.* With intensified armed clashes in Kachin and northern Shan states and increased civilian casualties due to landmines, WFP engaged with specialized organizations in “humanitarian mine action”.² In March 2018, staff of WFP field offices in Myitkyina and Lashio and of cooperating partners received training in humanitarian mine action provided by the Danish Refugee Council in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and with technical assistance from the Danish Demining Group. Awareness of mine risks is expected to make the delivery of assistance to targeted communities safer for WFP and its cooperating partners.
20. Given the status of stateless Muslim populations in camps of internally displaced persons in central Rakhine, and the lack of proper identification documents, verifying the identity, origin or household composition of displaced people is a challenge. As the ration card system has not proved to be fully effective, WFP will start the rollout of its digital beneficiary and transfer management platform SCOPE in several areas of Rakhine State where most internally displaced persons have enrolled for the national verification card. Given the need for sensitivity when collecting personal data from people in Rakhine State, a comprehensive privacy impact assessment was carried out in one location in April 2018, with the intention of expanding it to other areas.
21. *Gender.* With the increased use of cash-based transfers by both the Government and aid actors in Myanmar, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and WFP are planning joint measures to ensure the sustainability of this form of programming and to maximize its outcomes. The two organizations will conduct a detailed gender analysis focusing on household dynamics and decision making regarding cash-based transfer programmes, particularly in WFP’s electronic cash-based transfer or e-wallet project in Kachin State. In support of WFP’s gender-transformative cash-based transfer programmes, UNFPA will develop complementary targeted behaviour change activities for communities where WFP electronic cash transfers are implemented, with the aim of setting best standards in gender-transformative cash-based programming.
22. *Cash-based programming.* WFP’s strategic goal is to become a “cash integrator” in Myanmar in the long term. In Rakhine State, WFP plans to replace in-kind assistance with cash-based transfers where markets are able to supply basic food commodities, or a mixed modality of rice and cash-based transfers where markets are not viable or where the risk of inflation is high. The change of modality is expected to start in July 2018 and to be scaled up after that. In Kachin State, where relief assistance is already cash-based only, WFP will start working with more financial service providers to extend electronic cash transfers beyond the initially piloted six camps in Myitkyina and Waing Maw townships.

² “Humanitarian mine action” refers to activities that aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of land mines.