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## DECENTRALIZED EVALUATION

WFP's relief food and cash assistance  
for conflict-affected people in Kachin and northern Shan

January 2016 – December 2019

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WFP Myanmar Country Office  
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## Executive Summary

- World Food Programme (WFP) Myanmar Country Office (CO) commissioned a mid-term evaluation of its relief food and cash assistance for conflict-affected people. The programmatic scope is the **provision of unconditional food transfers and/or Cash-Based Transfers (CBT) to populations affected by crisis, main activity** the Strategic Outcome 1 of both the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200299 from January 2016 to December 2017, and the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) from January 2018 to December 2019.<sup>1</sup> The geographic scope is the conflict-affected areas of Kachin and Northern Shan States (excluding Konkyan township).
- Since 2011, people in Kachin and Northern Shan have been facing a resurgence of armed conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAO), as well as between EAOs. This conflict has undermined the access to basic services, the economic growth and the capacity of vulnerable people to produce and access sufficient, diversified, and nutritious food. It has also led to the protracted displacement of about 97,000 IDPs in 140 camps in Kachin and about 8,800 people in 33 camps in Northern Shan.<sup>2</sup> In June 2018, the Myanmar Government announced its Camp Closure Policy, but conditions are not yet conducive for large-scale returns.
- To reply to these needs, WFP worked with its Cooperating Partners (CPs) to provide in-kind monthly assistance to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from 2012 to 2016. In 2016, WFP progressively switched from in-kind assistance to unconditional cash assistance. In 2018, WFP's relief assistance reached 48,000 IDPs in Kachin and 7,500 IDPs in Northern Shan.
- The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the general food distributions and cash transfers in the camps, host communities and return/relocation sites, with dual objectives of **accountability** and **learning**. The evaluation is being commissioned at this time to examine, reflect on and synthesise lessons learned from the first 18 months of the CSP, as well as the preceding 2 years of implementing relief activities. As the primary audience of this evaluation, WFP CO plans to use the evaluation to take stock of the relief activities implemented in Kachin and Northern Shan, and, if required, to adjust the design/implementation of the programme for the remainder of the CSP (2018-2022). Other intended users include the WFP CPs, donors, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement (MSWRR) the broader humanitarian community in Kachin and Northern Shan.<sup>3</sup>

## Methodology

- The Evaluation Team (ET) evaluated Strategic Outcome 1 against the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) criteria of (i) Relevance/Appropriateness, (ii) Effectiveness, (iii) Impact, (iv) Coherence, and (v) Sustainability.<sup>4</sup> The ET implemented a mixed-methods approach, based on various sources of primary<sup>5</sup> and secondary, quantitative and qualitative data, including: 80 documents reviewed, 50 Informants Interviews (KIIs), 38 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with male and female recipients and Food Management Committees (FMCs), and a household survey of 325 households in Northern Shan and 300 in Kachin.
- The main limitations included (i) evaluating the sustainability criterion due to the emergency nature of activities and the context,<sup>6</sup> and not being able to interview returnees, (ii) generating evidence and findings

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<sup>1</sup> While initially designed to focus on the January 2016 - May 2019 period, the Evaluation Team (ET) and the Evaluation Committee (EC) agreed to extend the scope to December 2019 because: 1. WFP CO was interested in generating evidence about programmatic changes made to the design in May/June 2019; and 2. WFP implemented an activity that is included in the Terms of Reference (ToR).

<sup>2</sup> OCHA, 'Myanmar Humanitarian Need Overview 2019', 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The main donors are Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway Poland, Switzerland, the Republic of Turkey, and the United States of America.

<sup>4</sup> The ET sought to answer to the following evaluation questions: (i) To what extent has WFP assistance been relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of conflict-affected people? (ii) To what extent were targeted crisis-affected people in food insecure areas able to meet their food needs all year round? (iii) What impact has WFP's cash assistance had on women's capacity to participate in the leadership role of the community, and on women's role within the family? (iv) To what extent has WFP assistance been and remained coherent with its internal policies and complementary with the intervention of other actors? (v) To what extent has WFP's relief programme been connected with other actors' programmes and devised an exit strategy from its relief operations?

<sup>5</sup> 25 camps in 10 townships were targeted by the primary data collection,

<sup>6</sup> The Government of Myanmar had not finalised its Camp Closure Policy, whose objective is to frame the return process of IDPs, at the time of data collection.

for a period of 4 years, as interviewees were not always able to recall events/facts dating the beginning of the evaluation period, and (iii) several limitations with primary data collection.<sup>7</sup> Measures to mitigate against these included (i) ensuring that documents on camp closure policies and changes in the context were analysed, as well as sufficiently covering the topic during KII, (ii) relying on secondary sources of information, and (iii) the exclusion<sup>8</sup> and/or triangulation of primary data.

## Key Findings

### **Evaluation Question (EQ) 1 (Relevance): To what extent has WFP assistance been relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of conflict-affected people in Kachin and Northern Shan?**

- WFP's choice of modality, i.e. mixed modalities and then cash assistance, and design, i.e. unconditional and unrestricted monthly cash grants whose transfer value was based on nearby market prices, was, and remained, relevant to the food needs of the assisted people and to the context in the Northern Shan and Kachin States. Several factors account for this success: (i) the comprehensive and thorough cash feasibility assessments in both states, with detailed findings for each township, (ii) the design of the programme, which included the findings and risks identified during the assessments, (iii) the progressive change of modalities from in-kind, to cash + rice, to cash in order to pilot the modality, (iv) the regular monitoring of market access / functionality / prices, and other protection-related issues to ensure that the design remained appropriate and to make adjustments when necessary, and (v) the transfer values that were adapted at camp and township levels.
- Each WFP Sub-Office (SO) revised its targeting, introducing vulnerability criteria in 2016. While the inclusion and exclusion criteria were relatively similar for both states and predominantly relied on access, or lack thereof, to livelihoods, each SO designed different entitlements. Despite the high awareness of the targeting criteria, excluding household members do not present in the camp from assistance is seen as a barrier to accessing livelihoods in Kachin, while the exclusion of boarding schools children is not understood by beneficiaries in Northern Shan. Based on the data collected, the inclusion and exclusion criteria may not be appropriate to fully meet Strategic Outcome 1, i.e. IDPs meet food needs all year round. This is especially true for Kachin State, because there is a mismatch between theoretical and real livelihood opportunities.
- In Kachin, after a successful pilot from 2017 to 2019 in 6 camps, in 2019 WFP SOs changed their transfer mechanisms from cash in envelope to cash over the counter in 2 townships. The shift was only partially successful, as some households were not able to cash out the assistance during the first few weeks.<sup>9</sup> While WFP, CPs and the Financial Service Providers (FSPs) were still trying to understand these technical challenges, this led to beneficiaries' mistrust of this transfer mechanism, and it negatively impacted their satisfaction with the programme modality.
- WFP CO set up quite a comprehensive Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) based on several communication channels: hotline, letter, email, and in-person complaints through WFP and CPs' staff. The CFM was well known and accessible to all recipients. However, all complaints were not systematically recorded to allow the CFM to become a more useful tool for decision-making and for Accountability to Affected Population (AAP).
- While the vast majority of beneficiaries were satisfied with the support received from WFP and the resulting distribution processes, they voiced concerns about WFP's monthly beneficiary list update process and related exclusion criteria. These are seen as a factor that blocks them from seeking livelihood opportunities, especially in Kachin State.

### **EQ 2 (Effectiveness): To what extent were targeted crisis-affected people in food insecure areas able to meet their food needs all year round in Kachin and North Shan States?**

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<sup>7</sup> It included the omission of eggs as part of weekly animal protein consumption in the data collected to assess Food Consumption Score (FCS), and the fact of not being able to present data for the FCS for Kutkai township (because the ET deemed the results of data collection on FCS not to be sufficiently reliable).

<sup>8</sup> E.g. the exclusion of the 83 respondents from the FCS analysis, mainly in Kuktai.

<sup>9</sup> They were able to do so after a few weeks, thanks to the support of CPs.

- WFP’s partially achieved Outcome 1 (“Crisis-affected people in food-insecure areas meet their food needs all year round”), with the Household Diet Diversity Score (HDDS) reaching its objective<sup>10</sup> and the Food Consumption Score (FCS) being very close to being achieved.<sup>11</sup> However, the data collected to measure outcome indicators may present potential biases:
  - a. The time lags between WFP support and data collection - these are not harmonised, as data is collected 1 week after distribution in some camps, and 3 weeks after in others. As a result, the FCS and HDDS can vary significantly across camps, and the data may not be comparable.
  - b. WFP collects Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) on Relief Activities data in November (outside of the lean period<sup>12</sup>), when the rice harvest creates job opportunities for IDPs, and when food prices start to decrease, according to WFP price monitoring and Kachin Seasonal calendar.
- The transfer value was calculated to meet 2,100 Kcal per person per day. Despite the fact that WFP support is highly valued – as it is the only regular and constant support received by IDPs – the amount provided was not considered to be sufficient to meet food needs and ensure diet diversity.
- Except for the monthly beneficiary verification process that prevented recipients from accessing livelihood opportunities, especially in Kachin, there were no significant negative unintended outcomes at household or community levels.
- Both beneficiaries and other humanitarian actors do not consider the return package to be enough to support return efforts. To ensure a significant amount of support for restoring livelihoods, the package should be increased to at least 12 months to cover at least one full agricultural production cycle. However, the same KIIs were concerned that such an increase would be a push factor in cases where not all the conditions for a safe and dignified return could be ensured.

**EQ 3 (Impact): What impact has WFP’s cash assistance had on women’s capacity to participate in the leadership role of the community, and on women’s role within the family?**

- While WFP was successful in ensuring equal participation of women in FMCs and WFP/CPs’ sensitisation sessions built up their confidence, this has not systematically led to a more prominent role of women in decision-making at the camp level regarding the design and the implementation of the assistance. In fact, the FMC role decreased over time with the shift in modality in some camps, as Camp Management Committees (CMCs) became CPs’ main coordination partners.
- In both Kachin and Northern Shan, women are the main decision-makers in how to use the cash assistance, with no/limited oversight from men, mainly because men are outside of the camps seeking livelihood opportunities. This is primarily attributable to the context, and is external to WFP’s relief assistance. While beneficiaries’ participation in awareness-raising sessions hosted by different humanitarian organisations, including WFP, may have also contributed to this change, there is not sufficient evidence to ascertain this claim.

**EQ 4 (Coherence): To what extent has WFP assistance been and remained coherent with its internal policies, and complementary with the intervention of other actors in Kachin and Northern Shan?**

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